South-North Migratory Syndrome: A Qualitative Study of Acculturation among Africans from Sub-Saharan Africa Living in the United States

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Abstract
This study looks at the concept of acculturation and the strategy of integration proposed by John W. Berry. Integration as an acculturation strategy is analyzed from the critical race theoretical framework. The purpose is to understand more about how race, accent, and other subtle social realities act as moderating factors that influence degrees of acculturation for immigrants. The issue of acculturation and the challenges encountered by Africans from sub-Sahara Africa is an important matter and has two significant reasons why it should be explored in detail. First, it ex-rays the psychosocial implications of acculturation when individuals from minority cultures come into contact with others from dominant cultures. Secondly, it identifies areas that require greater attention by decision makers as well as those who have the power and influence to shape public policies that impact mental health, migration and human rights. Using a snowball sample approach, a hermeneutical phenomenology procedure was utilized to understand the lived experiences of four immigrants in the U.S; a qualitative inquiry methodology was also employed. Interviewees' responses were analyzed utilizing thematic analysis. Findings indicate that immigrant background, language, and accent are negative influences that mitigate immigrants' ability to adapt to new societies. It is suggested that international psychologists may need to be more vigilant and actively participate in not only helping new immigrants receive the indispensable training required to facilitate integration, but also help immigrants remain cognizant of the fact that difficulties with acculturation may be influenced by subtle underlying racial implications within the host society.
Keywords: Acculturation, language and accent discrimination, ethnicity, and racial prejudice

1. Introduction
The purpose of this study is to find out the challenges African immigrants from Sub-Saharan Africa face in their efforts to live the American Dream. Why a host of these African immigrants feel more African than American, even after quite a few years in the United States, is something worth investigating. This paper navigates the challenges experienced by Sub-Saharan Africans in the United States as well as highlight some of the obstacles that thwart them from fully acculturating into the American society.

1.1 Acculturation
Acculturation is viewed as a dual process of cultural and psychological changes that take place when there is contact between two or more cultures; it occurs both within a group and as individual group members (Berry, 2015). Therefore, those changes that impact an ethnic group and occur over time in a new culture can be described as acculturation (Phinney, 2002). Change is complex, and often poses problems that arise as a result of one's adaption to cultural and psychosocial vicissitudes for those experiencing it, including immigrants (Sam & Berry, 2010). While immigrants from other parts of the world, including Asia, the Middle East, and Latin America, have been essentially studied with respect to acculturation, not much acculturation studies have been done that target African immigrants originating from sub-Saharan African countries currently living in the United States (Kim, Shen, Huang, Wang, & Orozco-Lapray, 2014; Chang, Chan, &Han, 2015; Hirai, Vernon, Popan & Clum, 2015).

With respect to acculturation scale development, Marin and Gamba (2002) suggested that populations often targeted by studies are of Hispanic origin, and not much effort has been put into developing acculturation scales that target recently arrived immigrants from sub-Saharan Africa. The current study is limited to individuals from sub-Sahara Africa who migrated to the United States from the period between the 1980s to the present., For the purposes of the current study, this population, who currently numbers approximately 1.5 million (Zong & Batalova, 2014), will be described as Recent African Americans (RAAs). Subjects in the current study will also have experienced or have relatives who must have experienced colonialism. This group is distinct from their counterparts who involuntarily migrated to the United States as a result of the trans-Atlantic save trade between 1519 and 1867 (Zong & Batalova, 2014). Because the population being studied and their ancestors were not part of the American slave trade, they have had a different lived experience from their African American counterparts.

1.2 Migration/Immigration

According to the Immigration Policy Center (2012) Africans in the United States constitute a highly diverse and rapidly growing population in the United States. The center estimates this population doubled in size between 2000 and 2010. This situation is certainly not unique to the United States. The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2011) posits there are approximately 214 million people currently living outside of their countries of origin. Migration is viewed as desirable and necessary, and can be able to reduce the negative experiences of a country's economy during a recession. The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2011) is abundantly clear on this, when they state that, "Migrant labor is desirable and necessary to sustain economic growth and rise out of the current recession. Migration is important for the transfer of manpower and skills and provides the needed knowledge and innovation for global growth" (par.4).

1.3 Relationship between Migration and Acculturation

There is therefore an inescapable relationship between migration and acculturation, and a study of acculturation challenges of sub-Saharan Africans in the USA has to take this reality into consideration (Cabassa, 2003; Padilla & Perez, 2003; Sam & Berry, 2010). The United States Immigration Policy Center estimated that close to 50% of African immigrants in the U.S. are naturalized U.S. citizens, with approximately 70% who speak only English; three quarters of them are classified as Black. Similarly the Immigration Policy Center (2012) posits that the largest number of African immigrants in the United States are concentrated in five states: California, Maryland, Texas, New York and Virginia. Most of these migrants come from Nigeria, Ethiopia, Egypt, Ghana, and Kenya. Of these immigrants the organization points out, approximately 40% of them have at least a Bachelor's degree or an equivalent credential, with 33.3% estimated to be actively engaged in occupations that are professional in nature (Immigration Policy Center, 2012). Many of these immigrants arrive in the U.S. relatively unaware of the complex racial dynamics at play. They are largely unprepared for some of the difficulties they may face as a result of their decision to migrate.

This study portrays the behaviors of individuals from the continent of Africa, Central and Latin America to migrate to Europe and North America as the South-North Migratory Syndrome (SNMS). In the past few decades, migratory trends have indicated a new wave of migrants living their homeland, to seek better opportunities, or to escape from war and instability in their home countries. According to Carling and Hernández-Carretero (2011), since the turn of the millennium more than 300,000 boat migrants primarily from Africa, have arrived the shores of Spain and Italy. Unauthorized boat migration is viewed both as a security issue, as well as a humanitarian problem, with possibilities of huge loss in lives. Some of the migrants are described as asylum seekers fleeing trouble areas in Africa and the Middle East (Park, 2015). However, of the 32million worldwide estimates of emigrants from Africa in 2010, only about 2.3million were characterized as refugees displaced by war, drought, or other causes. There are several schools of thought that have tried to explain the upscale movement of immigrants from Africa to Europe as well as North American countries like Canada and the United States.

Goff, Zarin, and Goodman (2012) for instance suggest that global organizations like the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Foresight project on Migration and Global Environmental Change attribute migration as an individual's meaningful attempt to adapt to climate change. Goff, Zarin and Goodman (2012) nonetheless, also argue that migration can primarily be driven by sociocultural factors; economics dynamics, the environment, social networks, cultural norms, and demography. Some migrants as mentioned earlier, migrate in order to seek for better opportunities for themselves and their families, as in the case of medical professionals leaving sub-Saharan Africa for Europe, America and Australia (Bundred & Gibbs, 2007; Arah, 2007). According to Arah (2007), The World Health Organization estimated that close to some 57 countries including many in Africa, where experiencing crippling healthcare workforce shortages in the medical field (physicians, nurses and midwives), particularly because a majority of these have migrated to wealthier countries (The United States, Canada, Australia and the United Kingdom). Bundred and Gibbs (2007) explains that, due to poor been instrumental in Africa's development are quitting their jobs and moving to western countries like the USA and countries in Europe (greener pastures), with the hope of getting better opportunities for quality of educational systems in many parts of sub-Sahara Africa, qualified professionals who should have themselves and their children. This is true of medical professionals and other educated elite leaving sub-Sahara Africa for Europe and the United States. Bundred & Gibbs 2007) cite the example of medical doctors who move for reasons of putting their family's future prosperity on firmer footing. While receiving countries may be benefiting from such migrants, the price of brain drain is of course bone by the immigrant's country of origin. While these movements are posing complex problems for both policy makers in Europe as well as America, as well as the countries where these immigrants come from in terms of brain drain, this study focuses on the difficulties these immigrants will likely encounter in their destination countries. The debate about immigration challenges are therefore not new for humanity. This challenge constantly reemerges with each historical development that follows every geopolitical realignment, as well as shifts in the organization

of capital (Silverstein, 2005). This was true when society was concern about nomadism considering what was designated as its challenge on stability of rule (Silverstein, 2005), and similarly today the challenge of post-colonial migrants and what others have described are their behaviors of double engagement (Grillo & Mazzucato, 2008) that poses a threat to what Silverstein (2005) has styled local national integration and unity. There are obviously an enormous amount of challenges that can be encountered by immigrants and host communities alike.

Berry considered an authority in the field of acculturation, hypothesizes that there are two main issues that may hamper an immigrant's acculturation behavior. The desire to maintain culture of origin, and the extent to which new immigrants are equipped to embrace a new cultural identity. The extent to which immigrants want to interact with members of their host community, and the extent to which members of the host community are ready to interact with the new immigrant. It is therefore posited that, based on these two criteria, four acculturation models may be developed; integration, assimilation, separation, and marginalization. Integration is explained as a situation where, an immigrant decides to maintain their heritage culture, while at the same time embracing the culture of the host community. Assimilation defining those who want to relinquish their culture of origin and embrace the host society's culture. Meanwhile, separation denotes the acculturation experience of those who completely reject the host culture and maintain their culture of origin. In the last spectrum is marginalization speaks to those who want to reject both cultures altogether (Berry, 2005).

For decades now, acculturation has been studied as a fundamental concept in disciplines like psychology and other social sciences in efforts to understand the underlying dynamics when minority groups come in continuous contact with dominant cultures (Berry, 2005; Zane & Mak, 2002). For that reason, acculturation is an important concept, which can be used to appreciate the cogent variables impacting minority groups during encounters with dominant cultures. For example, Flynn, Olson, and Yellig (2014) studied the concept within the paradigm of challenges faced by American Indians in the United States, within the framework of their ability to transition to predominantly White postsecondary situations. Kim, Shen, Huang, Wang, and Orozco-Lapray (2014), in addition to Jadalla, Hattar, and Schubert (2015), and a host of other researchers have similarly studied the concept of acculturation with respect to the experiences of immigrants in host societies. Findings from some of these studies indicate that when minority groups, including new immigrants, migrate into new cultures, they find it difficult to psychologically adapt to host societies. Entire family systems are affected, marital relations are altered, and parental relations with children are significantly impacted (Chun & Akutsu, 2002). Such difficulties impede the process of integration for immigrants.

Acculturation can become a stressful experience and constitutes an underlying factor that can impede an immigrant's ability to do several things successfully: access community resources, have functional family systems (undermining parental power and authority, increasing problem behaviors for children embracing new values; as posited in Chun & Akutsu, 2002), and access resources that determine positive health outcomes (Santisteban & Mitrani, 2002; Organista, Organista, & Kurasaki, 2002; Jadalla, Hattar, & Schubert, 2015; Vernon, Popan, & Clum, 2015). For example, Hirai, Vernon, Popan, and Clum, (2015) postulated that higher acculturation levels among Latinas/os were associated with preferences for conventional psychological treatment, whereas higher enculturation behaviors were associated with predilections for alternative psychological treatment approaches, some of which embrace culturally relevant religious treatments. Meanwhile, Organista, Organista, and Kurasaki (2002) posited a positive correlation between persistent acculturation stress and posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). These studies depict the significance of acculturation in defining health outcomes for immigrants, as well as its bearing on reducing psychological treatment challenges such as social stigma, prejudice, stereotypes, and discrimination that may often be associated with seeking psychological help amongst immigrants in host societies. Other studies have examined the role variables such as gender may have on acculturation and acculturation stress as they impact health outcomes (Castillo et al., 2015). Studies have also focused attention on the role of acculturation and/or enculturation in immigrants' parenting style. For example, Santisteban and Mitrani (2002) studied the impact of acculturation on a family's ability to provide, guide and nurture its members, while research by Kim, Shen, Huang, Wang, and Orozco-Lapray (2014) found that bi-cultural management difficulty and parental depression are important mechanisms to be considered when reviewing acculturation/enculturation and parenting styles.

All the above mentioned studies signpost the reality that with increased globalization and greater movement of people, acculturation becomes a fundamental concept capable of deciding issues of wellbeing and a determining factor in how successful both immigrants and their receiving communities can be when they are aware of the reality of cultural changes that may become an inescapable reality in the course of interaction. For example, in France, the question of ethnic self-categorization and the impact it can have on acculturation successes, as in the case of youths from North African countries, when compared to youths from Turkey, has been important for social scientists (Amin & Vinet, 2014). In the United States, the racial and ethnic landscape can be much more complex than is in France, which may lead many immigrants to struggle even more in their quests to ethnically self-categorize.

To better understand acculturation, some of its various components will need to be examined. Padilla and Perez (2003) view acculturation as constituting four focal points: social cognition, cultural competence, social identity, and social stigma. The current study takes this perspective into consideration, as is applicable to the experiences of immigrants migrating from sub-Saharan Africa to the U.S. At the same time, it is also acknowledged that regardless of criticisms levied against some of the acculturation theories for their limitations in capturing the real experiences of immigrants in new societies, acculturation remains a *sine non qua* of immigration studies, and a means through which interactions taking place between individuals in minority and dominant cultures can be understood. This is equally true for new immigrants coming into new societies who are recurrently learning and adapting to cultures that are different from their heritage cultures. This concept similarly has remained vital in ethnic psychology, and has been utilized as a means of comprehending issues of migration and general human mobility. The empirical findings of the current research utilizes a phenomenological approach as an etiological methodology to explore the challenges immigrants from Africans from sub-Saharan African countries face while adapting and integrating into American society.

2. Research Focus

The central emphasis of this study is to find out the challenges immigrants from Africa south of the Sahara encounter as new immigrants in the United States. According to Trimble (2002), transnational immigration creates significant economic, health, and socio-psychological problems. Some of these problems are encountered on the one hand because of the social changes that take place in receiving communities, and on the other hand, also because of the psychological hurdles of learning new values, behaviors, lifestyles, and new languages of the host societies, amongst others (Zan & Mak, 2002). The impetus of the current study, therefore, was to pinpoint challenges immigrants from sub-Saharan Africa face which prevent them from fully acculturating into their new societies. Possible challenges include: accent discrimination, ethnic origin discrimination, stereotypes, and stereotype threat contingencies, which can result in an immigrant's inability to access tangible resources during the acculturation process. The role of prior immigrant preparation, and immigrants' perceptions of the existing environment of the receiving culture, and how this perception influences the new immigrant's ability to acculturate, and feel accepted into a new culture were also explored.

2.1 Purpose of Study

The purpose of this research therefore is to explore the hurdles of acculturation from the vantage point of accent discrimination, employment, and coping strategies that immigrants employ to adapt to new realities. Important as well is the identification of possible gaps that may exist in the acculturation theory, vis-à-vis the lived experiences of immigrants. Last but not the least, the study also attempts to investigate from a singular perspective, the influences of racial/ethnic challenges on acculturation. The implications of the findings of the research are discussed with respect to how these can influence the work of international psychologists as agents of change within the paradigm of international psychology and acculturation.

3. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this study, as stated earlier, is based on the concept of acculturation as posited in Berry (2005), with emphasis placed on integration as a strategy for acculturation. Amin and Vinet (2014) conjectured that notwithstanding levels of ethnic self-categorization, youths from North African countries, as well as their counterparts from Turkey, both refuse assimilation and community withdrawal; instead these immigrants are opting for integration as an acculturation approach. Integration as a stratagem refers to attitudinal preferences for biculturalism (Boski, 2008). This strategy is analyzed utilizing the theoretical framework of the Critical Race Theory (CRT; Parker & Lynn, 2002) in attempts to understand the role race may play in influencing the difficulties faced by new immigrants in successfully integrating into new societies. In the United States, issues of race have remained salient in determining opportunities and life chances for people who are non-native. This is particularly true for immigrants from sub-Saharan Africa, as in the example of the four immigrants from Cameroon, Ghana, Liberia, and Senegal chosen to participate in the current research. This article looks at race from the angle taken by Silverstein (2008) as constituting,

> A cultural category of difference that is contextually constructed as essential and natural—as residing within the very body of the individual— and is thus generally tied, in scientific theory and popular understanding, to a set of somatic, physiognomic, and even genetic character traits (p. 364).

Critical race theory (CRT) was developed more than three decades ago to understand the subtle forms of racism existing in the post-Civil Rights period encountered by minorities (Huber, 2011). Acculturation for the purposes of the current study is perceived as that dual process of cultural and psychological change that take place when groups or individuals within groups come in contact with one or more cultural groups (Berry, 2005). The current study limits itself to acculturation at the individual level, and would involve changes that take place in an individual's behavioral repertoire which may help the individual adapt to realities in a receiving society/culture.

The analysis looks at how race and other social background attributes tend to influence new immigrant's ability to be bicultural in a receiving community, and consequently determine how successful new immigrants are as productive contributing citizens in a host society.

Most research on acculturation has not paid enough attention to the moderating role of race/ethnic background, and how these factors play an instrumental role in how well new immigrants from regions that have been stereotyped in negative ways (social cognition) tend to adapt to new communities. For example, how well do Africans from sub-Saharan Africa, with accents that are non-native, tend to integrate in the United States? How important is the concept of accent in determining identity, and how willing are these new immigrants to accept identity changes that include accent modifications in order to integrate successfully in their new communities? Do accents remain simply phonetics, or are accents central in determining one's language use, thus influencing job access chances, issues relating to health security, and subsequently, the degree to which an immigrant from sub-Saharan African can develop biculturalism in the United States, as designated by Berry? Can someone's accent and race play a significant role in determining his or her access to jobs, notwithstanding existing qualifications, and are these two concepts central or moderating variables determining one's level of integration in host communities?

As recently as the 20th century, debates on acculturation by scholars interested in the subject matter have attempted to designate and understand the experiences of new immigrants as they try to become incorporated into mainstream cultures (Padilla & Perez, 2003). On one had are the melting pot theorists, such as Robert Park, who studied what happens when people from diverse cultures and languages come together through the ecological framework model of three stages: contact, accommodation, and assimilation. On the other hand is Berry's concept of acculturation, which emphasizes integration (biculturalism) as the most favorable psychological outcome for immigrants (Schwartz, Unger, Zamboanga, & Szapocznik, 2010).

While empirical evidence points to the bi-dimensional approach of acculturation over earlier models such as the unidimensional approach, it is important to verify some of the difficulties the immigrants may experience in adapting the bi-dimensional strategy to achieve favorable psychological outcomes. Some of these factors, mentioned earlier, include the role that race plays and the influence of an immigrant's social background. Berry (2015) posited that from a group perspective, acculturation involves changes in social structures and institutions, as well as cultural practices. Meanwhile, at the individual level, it involves changes in an individual's behavior repertoire through prolonged contact with another culture. What promotes the phenomenon of intercultural contact then? Berry identifies several reasons why usually there may be intercultural contact. Some of the reasons he posited include: colonization, military invasion, migration, and sojourning. That said, it is important to point out that increased globalization can also be considered one of the reasons why there may be intercultural interaction.

Cultural interaction is as old as civilization, and has continually evolved over time. It takes place while people are sitting in their living rooms watching cable TV or while they use iPads to surf the net in the process of relaxation in their bedrooms. The impact of the media has become a permanent constant in American lives, and with technology, people no longer need to displace from one culture to another in order to come in contact with other cultures. Interaction between cultures is now a continuous and omnipresent phenomenon, advanced by globalization and technological development. No matter where this interaction is taking place, there is usually a dominant and a minority culture. However, when immigrants move from one country to another, they may encounter different kinds of challenges in the process of acculturation. The current study incorporates critical race theory (CRT) to better understand these acculturation-related challenges. Primarily, the concept of race within the paradigm of CRT and an immigrant's social background impacts the acculturation process. Immigrants' attitudes, belief systems, behaviors, and concepts of identity are contributing dynamics to the level of integration these individuals may encounter, and in a similar vein, attitudes and behaviors of host culture communities define perceptions of new immigrants regarding their success chances during acculturation; this should be a central piece of acculturation studies.

In the United States, for instance, the recent phenomenon of immigration indicates that there is an influx of new immigrants into the country as has never before been experienced in recent history (Schawartz, Unger, Zamboanga, & Szapocznik). The tendency in these recent circumstances is that reactions of the host community to immigration challenges may be negative, and tend to range from outright politics to economics, usually with some members of the host community exhibiting behaviors that may be categorized as guided by xenophobic beliefs. The domino effect of such dynamics has led to issues of categorization of immigrants, whether they are legal or illegal. Consequently, factors such as race, the origin of the immigrant, and accent as spoken in language may become determining factors in how well new immigrants are able to adapt and integrate into becoming what Berry (2005) termed bi-culturally acculturated.

Cabassa (2003) examined the empirical and cultural challenges of measuring acculturation, with a focus on acculturation among Hispanic populations in the United States. These individuals have largely been targeted by anti-immigrant groups in the United States, regardless of their legal status (Huber, 2011), and have

been categorized as not belonging. Cabassa (2003) views acculturation as an interactive, developmental, multi-factorial and multidimensional process. Viewed from this perspective, acculturation is considered as having diverse impacts on individuals, at different levels of functioning, including behavioral, affective and cognitive functioning (perception, thinking, reasoning, and remembering). Acculturation impacts both an individual and the group to which that individual belongs in diverse domains. Issues of race and ethnicity can become instrumental because these do moderate/mediate attitudes, interpersonal relationships, language, and behaviors that are central to acculturation as a concept. Acculturation impacts the culture of a group and has repercussions on the psychology of an individual, therefore impacting one's ability to be bicultural. Some of the impediments to biculturalism therefore are racial/ethnic, and can be understood from the critical race theory (CRT) perspective, a theory that has largely been used by Parker and Lynn (2002) as well as Huber (2011) in studying issues of race as it impacts different cultures. This theory therefore can be central in studying the experiences of non-Whites in White-dominant America.

Understanding the difficulties faced by non-White immigrants in the United States, and the role race/ethnic origin plays in mediating/moderating levels of integration can be understood by using CRT. CRT is no longer only a legal concept meant to reveal and challenge practices of subordination, and how these are perpetuated through law and policy; it can also be employed in studying the concept of acculturation as a tool through which immigrants can effectively improve levels of integration, and to understand the experiences of non-White immigrants in trying to navigate issues such as finding employment (Berry, 2005). For example, an association has been established between race and its impact on an immigrant's ability to have access to a usual source of care (USC; Chang, Chan, & Han, 2015). The authors of this study posited that access to USC for Asian Americans and Caucasians in the United States was influenced by an individual's race. An earlier similar study by Myers and Rodriguez (2002) established the view that persistent health disparities were influenced by racial and ethnic variables.

When there is a perception that the ability to acculturate is negatively impacted by one's race and/or ethnicity, and probably one's accent as well, such probabilities summarily indicate what are described as micro-aggressions (Huber, 2011; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Although these micro-aggressions represent unintended discrimination, they can nonetheless impact an immigrant's ability to learn and adapt to his or her new environments. Black adolescents, for example, are noted as often facing difficulties transitioning into new societies because of punishing contingencies that include discrimination, language barriers, cultural changes, social changes, and customs with which they are not familiar (Aikhionbare, 2008). Some of the experiences as well thought-out, have racial undertones. By and large, some of these are explained by a host society's perception of an immigrant's socio-cultural background. For immigrants who migrate to the United States and have sub-Saharan African backgrounds, their experiences are marred by negative attitudes that are demarcated by the negative stereotypes associated with the immigrant's origin. Where the host society expects the immigrants to adopt host society's culture and the immigrant want to maintain their culture of orientation, conflict can also develop. This conflict can be expressed in terms of prejudice, stereotypes, and hate crimes when either of the two groups are feeling threatened (Rohmann, Piontkowski & van Randenborgh, 2008). In such circumstances the chances for immigrants developing poor self-esteem and succumbing to the risk of stereotype threat can be an inevitable reality. This can moderate an otherwise rich interaction experience for both immigrants and members of the host community. This phenomenon can be further substantiated by the experiences of N. Fidel, Mamadu, Genevieve, and Adams, four recent immigrants residing in the United States, in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area.

3.1 Research Method

An interview guide was used to conduct four interviews with immigrants residing in the United States from four countries in sub-Saharan Africa. The study attempted to understand, and interpret the context of the lived experiences of these immigrants, from the standpoint of acculturation as experienced from an individual's subjective viewpoint. Qualitative in-depth interviews were conducted with an emphasis on the specific issue of integration as an acculturation stratagem. The interview duration for this study was approximately 48 minutes for each participant in the study. The interviewees responded to questions that ranged from demographic information on age, marital status, education, background, country of origin, and challenges encountered as a new immigrant in the United States. The qualitative data obtained from these interviews were transcribed and thematically analyzed (Fink, 2000). The background information of the interviewees is briefly described, and the themes which were obtained are shared from the primary investigator's perspective.

3.2 Participants

As revealed earlier, there were four immigrants who self-identified as having moved from four countries in sub-Saharan Africa; these include: Cameroon, Ghana, Liberia, and Senegal. The average age of all the interviewees was 46.25years; one of the participants was female and three were male. Levels of education ranged from high

school diploma to Bachelor's degrees. While 50% declared they were married, the remaining 50% were single, had not been separated from their significant others, and had not been divorced at any point in their lives. The average immigrant stay for all participants was estimated to be 18.5years.

3.4 Research Design

The research was designed following the concept of social constructivism, and utilized a hermeneutical phenomenology approach. The four interviewed immigrants were currently residing in the U.S. in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area (Washington, D.C., Maryland, and Virginia). The interview protocol consisted of 12 questions, as well as follow-up questions. The phenomenological approach looked at what factors the four immigrants have in common as they experience the common phenomenon of acculturation in the United States. Questions posed to participants ranged from asking why they had moved from their homeland to the United States, to asking about their lived experiences in their host societies, as a tool through which immigrants can effectively improve levels of integration, to their overall opinions about their immigration experiences. The questions posed were open-ended, and outlined in ways that permitted the interviewees to share perspectives, opinions, and experiences framed around the concept of acculturation as encountered in their new immigrant society.

3.5 Recruitment and Consent Procedure

A snowball sampling methodology was employed to isolate participants who could take part in this research. Participants were given an informed consent form, which provided a brief description of the study; participants were then asked to sign the forms, acknowledging their willingness to voluntarily participate in the study as interviewees. The participants understood that at any time during the study procedure, they could either refuse to answer the questions, refuse to answer a specific set of questions, or withdraw from the interview altogether if they so wished. Originally, five participants agreed to partake in the study, but one participant voluntarily decided at the last moment not to participate. The remaining four interviewees answered all 12 of the questions posed to them by the primary investigator. Names used in the study are pseudonyms, and were chosen by the research participants; they are not the actual names of the individuals who participated in the study. The rationale for this approach was to be able to guarantee anonymity for participants.

3.6 Participants' Background Information

N. Fidel, a participant in the study, is a 42-year-old male originally from Cameroon, a country in the central African sub-region, and in sub-Saharan Africa. He has been living in the United States for the past six years. Prior to travelling to the United States on a Green Card Visa, N. Fidel had never been out of his native country of Cameroon. With respect to education, he completed a certificate program in agriculture, and obtained a degree in communication sciences with a concentration in advertising while in Cameroon. In this interview, he insinuated that feelings of disappointment in his country's leadership with respect to high levels of nepotism and corruption were responsible for his decision to leave his native country. He is presently unmarried, and at the date of interview has been unemployed for an interval of close to six months due to difficulties in securing a job offer. N. Fidel speaks French and English fluently, as well as some other Cameroonian national languages.

Mamadu, the second participant in the study, is a 55-year-old male from Senegal, in West Africa. He migrated to the United States in 1989. Mamadu has several brothers and sisters, and is the second oldest son of an extended family. He completed his primary and secondary education in Senegal, and received an Associate's degree from the University of Dakar, Senegal. He came into the United States from his homeland in order to pursue higher education. He currently has a Bachelor's degree, which he obtained from a university in the United States. Mamadu is time married and resides in Silver Springs, Maryland. He speaks several languages, is fluent in both English and French, and also speaks Wolof and Bambara, two African languages spoken in Senegal. He currently works in a mental health facility in Virginia as a residential counselor.

Genevieve is a 48-year-old female from Ghana in West Africa. She moved to the United States in the 1990s to rejoin her husband who had immigrated to the U.S. earlier. She and her husband have two children. Genevieve has a high school diploma, and is currently a licensed professional nurse (LPN). Prior to moving to the United States, she was engaged in business which often took her from Ghana to countries across Europe, including but not limited to the United Kingdom. She is currently working for a private agency as a licensed professional nurse, providing services to patients in a home setting. Genevieve speaks both English and Twi, a Ghanaian national language, which she insist is the most frequent means of communication for her.

The last interviewee was Adams, a 42-year-old Liberian American male, who migrated to the United States in late 1990s. He is currently single, is a father of three, and has a Bachelor's degree. Before migrating to the United States, Adams was in Ghana, where he was engaged in an Internet business project; however, when the project was terminated, he went back to Liberia. On the advent of the civil war in Liberia, Adams moved to the United States. Since then, he has been frequently moving between the U.S., Liberia, and Guinea, where his

father had a company. Adams indicated that his father was American, born and raised in the state of Pennsylvania. His mother, on the other hand, was originally from Liberia. Adams speaks English, some French, and Twi, a Ghanaian national language he learned while residing in Ghana. At the moment, Adams works with a local government authority agency in Virginia.

4. Research Analyses and Findings

Several themes emerged from the interviews conducted with all four research participants. Some of these themes include: identity issues, language and communication challenges, feelings of rejection/marginalization, inadequate migration preparation both prior to and post-migration, divergent acculturation approaches, and the role of individualism in contributing to immigrants' psychological wellbeing in their host communities. What do the four participants think about their identities?

Of the four individuals interviewed, only one considered himself close to anything "American." When asked how he perceived himself, N. Fidel said he considered himself a Black Cameroonian living in the United States. Even though when he looks back at his country of origin, he said he was always angry at the way resources were, and are continually being plundered. He did not seem to see himself someday returning to his country of origin. At the time of the interview, N. Fidel was contemplating taking hold of the opportunity to naturalize as an American citizen. That notwithstanding, he felt very strongly about his heritage culture, and did not think he wanted to change his identity in anyway just so he could better cope with realities in his new country. This was indicative from the way N. Fidel perceived his accent. Despite his belief that his inability to speak in an American native accent was negatively influencing his ability to adapt and integrate into the American society, he was unwavering in that he did not want to change the way he spoke. In fact, according to him, the way he spoke English was marvelous, and it was crazy to change that just so he would please a majority of people in his new society.

N. Fidel's views conform to those of Genevieve, who had been living in the United States for more than two decades. She sees herself first as African, and believes that because she was not born in the United States, she will remain African. Genevieve also posited that since moving to the United States, everything about her has remained 100% African. Notwithstanding the fact that she speaks English, the language she habitually uses is Twi, a Ghanaian language. She indicated that most of her friends were from Ghana, and that a majority of the community members she interacts with are from Ghana or from some other sub-Saharan African country.

In contrast, while Mamadu, who is from Senegal, insists that he is Senegalese, African, Black, and very proud of his African culture and identity, he also believes that in order to properly acculturate, one needs to embrace new cultural values. In his own words, "It is okay as long as you do not incorporate bad behaviors or influences of the host community. Take only what is positive in the host community, and incorporate them into your own culture and values" (Mamadu, personal communication, June 15, 2015). Last but not least was Adams from Liberia. He sees himself as Liberian American, and does not believe that there is much difference between American culture and Liberian culture. In his own words, "Most of our roots have been in the U.S.," a statement which can be interpreted as his attempt to solidify the close cultural links he believes exist between the United States and Liberia.

The next question asked: How do these immigrants from sub-Saharan Africa feel about being accepted into their new communities? The success of an immigrant's acculturation is influence by perceptions of potential or existing intergroup threat, with similar out groups perceived as less threatening than dissimilar out groups (Rohmann, Piontkowski & van Randenborgh, 2008).While 25% of the participants interviewed had strong feelings that they had not been accepted into their host community, 75% declared they believed they had been accepted. N. Fidel for example, hesitantly admitted that he feels he has been accepted into his new country and community. He thinks that he has been accepted in school, work, and the community, even though he feels the acceptance level is somewhat tainted. As he stated, "My accent tells every one of my foreign roots, and perhaps it is just a stroke of luck that I can mumble enough sensible words in the English language for my interlocutors to give me some courtesy."

When asked the same question, Mamadu stated, "…depending on where you are, and which audience you talk to. If your audience is well educated, it tends to be interested in your background, to know more of your ethnic origin; therefore you are not perceived negatively as an immigrant, rather as a contributing member of the society"(Mamadu, personal communication, June 15, 2015). Genevieve, meanwhile, believes she has not been accepted into the American society. She states that her accent continues to betray her. While people may ask her where she was from, and state that she has a nice accent, she said she was sure they do not mean what they say: "They are only being polite, and in my view, they have not accepted me as part of the community" (Genevieve, personal communication, June 15, 2015). Genevieve stated that she will remain Black and will continually be viewed as an outsider, and not part of the American community. Lastly, Adams stated that it was difficult to gauge his degree of acceptance into American society. In his own words,

I do have a personal relationships, but because of my accent, people can still identify me as African.

However, I have blended well in the American culture. Even though there are people who will like to differentiate me from them. There are of course cultural differences. But I will say fifty-fifty. In the U.S. we just work round the clock. In Africa we have enough time in our hands. Here we have to work to live. This may just be the difference (Adams, personal communication, June 16, 2015).

When asked if ethnic background had anything to do with the way the participants were treated in their respective societies, all four persons interviewed stated that it was plausible their ethnic background had everything to do with it. For example, Adams argued that one's ethnic origin could either be a blessing or a misfortune, but that he sometimes felt that immigrants from Eastern Europe were better treated than their counterparts from Africa. This may be explained by the cultural similarities that exist between Europeans and native-speaking Americans. According to Rohmann, Piontkowski and van Randenborgh (2008), perceived similarity between the in-group and the out-group directly impacts acculturation attitudes. In Adams' view, color may have something to do with why East European migrants are better treated than their African counterparts in the United States. When asked what could be done to improve the immigrant experience, particularly in terms of acculturation and eventual integration into the host communities, several themes emerged from the interviewees.

N. Fidel, for example, expressed his belief that adequate preparation of immigrants prior to their departure from their home country and on arrival in their host society was an important element in preparing individuals to integrate into American culture. Other helpful tips suggested by the interviewees included the need to provide adequate education to intending and new immigrants in a new community. For example Genevieve in her own words said,

I wish I had gone to school when I came to this country, but then, I was busy having babies. For other immigrants, I will advise then to go to school, and get the best education they ever can get (Genevieve, personal communication, June 15, 2015).

As a final point, N. Fidel was of the opinion that individualism is a cultural concept, and as practiced in the United States, acted as a contributing factor to the high levels of stress that he was currently experiencing in his host society. He however acknowledged that for him to cope appropriately, he needed to make certain changes in his behavior as a means of adapting to his new society. This view was shared by Mamadu, who stated that, in order to adapt to the new homeland, immigrants need to try adjusting to the new cultural reality, taking what is positive and beneficial to them, and combining that with elements of their heritage which will keep them close to their African homeland as much as possible. All the interviewees agreed the United States as their new country had given them new opportunities they never would have thought of back in their countries of origin. However, they also mentioned that knowing what they know now, if given another opportunity, they would appreciate their cultures of heritage much differently. Notwithstanding some of the negative thoughts they shared about their experiences in the United States, the four immigrants praise the rule of law and said it was something found in the United States, which was missing from their countries of origin.

4.1 Discussion

The purpose of this study was to find out the impact of acculturation on four immigrants from four sub-Saharan African countries, and the challenges encountered in the acculturation process, from a critical race theoretical perspective. The concept of integration as proposed by Berry, and as perceived from the experiences of N. Fidel, Mamadu, Genevieve, and Adams, may be described as moderated by the immigrant's perception of discrimination based on race, ethnic origin or on accent (social cognition). The perception of host community acceptance and preparation of immigrants both before migration and post-migration are crucial to the process of acculturation. For example, in a study by Gluszek and Dovidio (2010), individuals with non-native accents experienced issues of stigmatization and discrimination, and problems with communication and feelings of belonging.

The outcomes of the current study had similar results. The approach to acculturation adopted by Genevieve, for example, reflects what Berry has described is separation. Genevieve wishes to hold on to her original culture, and she expressed that she avoids interacting with or learning from members of the dominant culture with whom she now finds herself. The quality of the interrelationships between immigrants and host society may be determined by the immigrant's willingness to adapt to the expectations of the host society (Rohmann, Piontkowski & van Randenborgh, 2008). According to Padilla and Perez (2003), the greater the perceived discrimination, the more likely an immigrant will be to identify with his or her heritage culture. This is true whether the perception is that the discrimination was directed at the individual directly, or to any member of the individual's culture. Though N. Fidel alleged that he had been accepted by his host community, his other reactions with respect to having an accent and difficulties with finding employment indicated the importance of the role that perception of discrimination may have on an immigrant's ability to fully integrate in a host community. This was illustrated in research conducted by Gluszek and Dovidio (2010), who found that non-native speakers were thought to have feelings of less belonging, as perceived from communication difficulties,

whether perceived or real, in daily interactions with members of their host community. In other studies, accent-based discrimination was found to be a problem for non-native speakers of English (Hansen, Rakić, & Steffens, 2014). Such discrimination can be ample reason for an immigrant's acculturation difficulties. The current study sought to discover the different acculturation approaches used by immigrants from sub-Saharan Africa. However, no one approach was found to be most prevalent among the participants.

Adams, originally from Liberia, used what is described as a uni-dimensional approach, an indication that he was moving toward the dominant culture. His approach can be equated to what Berry (2005) described as an assimilation model of acculturation. Mamadu, on the other hand, was much closer to what Berry (2005) described as integration. Individuals like Mamadu will produce what is called a "cultural Mosaic;" This means that in his acculturation approach, aspects of Mamadu's original culture are maintained while he is learning and participating in the new and dominant culture in which he finds himself. N. Fidel's approach to acculturation is very close to marginalization, a process in which, according to Berry, an immigrant is delineated from both the host culture and the culture of origin. In the meantime, and as mentioned earlier, Genevieve's acculturation tactics are geared toward a separation model, in which she clings to her culture of origin. Responses varied widely among the four participants, with each immigrant utilizing a different type of acculturation modality. One explanation for these variations could be the fact that these immigrants each have different lived experiences, both in terms of their countries of origin and their host communities.

Cabassa (2003) is of the opinion that prior immigration context, immigration context, and settlement context, can largely influenced an immigrant's acculturation process. This reality should be of particular interest to international psychologists, as they can be instrumental in helping immigrants develop adaptation strategies when moving into new countries to resettle. In addition, it is also important to ensure that language and accent discrimination are considered as forms of prejudice that can impede acculturation and should be viewed as a human rights issue. A persons ancestry as well as accent discrimination is forbidden under U. S. employment laws, under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, n.d), and should be a model advocated for by civil rights activists, including international psychologists. International psychologists it is posited should be at the forefront of advocacy issues, with respect to policy formulations that take into consideration the negative repercussions of poor immigrant adaptability. This is not only important for the immigrants, but also for the host community, which may feel threatened by anything foreign. International psychologists accordingly should play a gargantuan role geared toward helping develop intervention programs that support immigrants and provide avenues for important stakeholders in host societies to buy in to the notion that a society which embraces cultural diversity builds on its strength as a member of the community of nations in a globalized world.

The United States is described by many as an immigrant society. The success of immigrants in the United States is necessary if the United States needs to be a country that attracts talents. To achieve this goal the U. S. need to establish a framework that can permit for some form of collaborative action of immigration stakeholders (both those within the country of destination and those in the country of origin). That is, those directly or indirectly involved with issues of migration and acculturation in particular. Such a move can lead to a transformational integration model that is not rushed into, but one that is measured, and has strategies for monitoring and evaluating the progress of acculturation. It should be good enough to envisage challenges encountered by divergent sectors of the society, while taking cognition of the socio-psychological implications of changing communities. For example, international psychologists should be able to tackle challenges such as an immigrants' perception of discrimination, whether based on race, or ethnicity, accent, or stereotypes, that feed into attitudes that encourage negative perception of immigrants by host communities, while at the same time preparing immigrants even before an intended decision to migrate. To cite just one case in point, in a study by Gluszek, and Dovidio (2010), individuals with non-native accents were cited as having experienced issues of stigmatization and discrimination, and problems in communication, as well as feelings of not belonging. Research has indicated that it is always important to obtain the perspective of both minorities and majorities when trying to understand the dynamics underlying the acculturation process and how it impacts intergroup relations (Rohmann, Piontkowski & van Randenborgh, 2008). From an international psychological perspective, it is important to come up with programs that either help immigrants speak English in ways that will limit prejudice, or prepare the host society to understand that speaking different is just one of those endowments of diversity that a country needs to appreciate, and celebrate, rather than punish. Studies done that identify accent-based discrimination for non-native speakers of English (Hansen, Rakić, & Steffens, 2014) liken it to a type of discrimination which may further obfuscate efforts at acculturation. Acculturation can be a much more successful experience if both the minority (immigrant group) and the majority group (host society) make an attempt at figuring out the best approach in cohabitation. Successful acculturation will be determined by the ability of both the immigrants and the host society to agree on acceptable terms of interaction. For a society to best aid immigrants successfully integrate in a society, best practices may require intense discussions between major stakeholders, including the immigrants themselves. This process as mentioned earlier should commence

from the immigrants country of origin. Acculturation should be a reciprocal relationship between the minority group and the majority host society. However, according to Rohmann, Piontkowski and van Randenborgh (2008), perceived threat by an out group can play a major role in the process of reciprocal adaptation, and should be an important focus of international psychologists.

Psychologists often look at the concept of acculturation as beneficial in understanding interactions that take place between two or more cultures. The fear is that psychologists may overlook opportunities to identify an existing "social malaise" in society that promotes a contemporary U.S. immigration attitude which justifies White dominance and reinforces hegemonic power (Huber, 2011). Of course, sharing view dictates that one must belong to a particular political school of thought. That said, if an immigrant has to be successful, must she/he accomplish a specific checklist of things so to say, notwithstanding whether biologically and genetically speaking, such requirements are feasible? For example, should immigrants be told that it is a must to obtain an education that looks like what members of the dominant society have, contrarily to which, there must be repercussions? Must psychologists support the view that immigrants must speak "English" in ways that the dominant society speaks, even if their multi-lingual backgrounds do not permit them to speak without an accent? Should immigrants be judged by these standards? Should these standards be generalized to all human beings, whenever and wherever they migrate? These are some of the questions international psychologists should be asking in order to generate knowledge geared towards practice, research, program interventions and critical pedagogy.

It will be interesting as well, if future research can incorporate views of receiving community members and their perception of acculturation challenges. The impact of the changes if any, that receiving community members experience has implications on quality of life (Sam & Berry, 2010). Receiving community members' subjective opinions on what can be done in making the acculturation experience a much more rewarding endeavor for both immigrants and host communities can be a significant contribution to acculturation and immigration studies. After all, acculturation does not only impact members of immigrant communities alone, but obviously do have implications for receiving community members alike and deserves to be examined from both the immigrant and receiving community perspectives (Rohmann, Piontkowski & van Randenborgh, 2008).

5. Conclusion
Despite federal laws meant to protect immigrants from discrimination, there are specific racial attitudes that are often subtle, and are often displayed in job selections that disfavor immigrants from certain backgrounds, even if the immigrant as an applicant is not cognizant of this reality. These attitudes are displayed in institutions of higher learning, and some of these attitudes and behaviors, whether intentionally or inadvertently displayed, disfavor children of immigrants. This makes it considerably more difficult for immigrants to perform as well as their White counterparts, and similarly, immigrants may feel coerced to assimilate to the dominant culture (Dennis, 2015).

Negative racial/ethnic attitudes toward immigrants are repellant to a rich acculturation experience. These behaviors exclude and do not embrace diversity. It can be said that these attitudes are marked by xenophobic outlooks. According to Huber (2011), xenophobia is a racist and nativist phenomenon. When immigrants are told that they speak with an accent, it is subtle xenophobia, with language being used as a tool to subjugate and minimize, and psychologically prep the immigrant to think he/she is less equal to his "native" counterpart. When immigrants are told they must acculturate or integrate following the modality proposed by Berry (2005) in order to become part of the society in which they live, the question pending is: Is acculturation a new form of colonialism? Is it meant to subjugate or meant to uplift? Or can it be categorized as falling under a racist nativism culture? Huber (2011) posited racist nativism as:

> The assigning of values to real or imagined differences, in order to justify the superiority of the native, who is perceived to be white, over that of the non-native, who is perceived to be People and Immigrants of Color, and thereby defend the right of whites, or the natives, to dominance. (Huber, 2011, p. 382)

As a human rights matter, psychologists must reexamine how the concept of acculturation is studied with respect to the culture of racial nativity as it impacts the lives of Black minorities. In Europe for instance and according to Silverstein (2005), race has been categorized into hierarchies where immigrants of color are regarded as abject and anthropology's exotic others. Similarly, in the United States, while Asians and South Asians are viewed as the model minority, African Americans are marginalized and considered to be the perpetual American problem (Silverstein, 2005).The ways through which acculturation programs are designed must be examined to ensure that these programs meet the needs of Blacks of African origin, and that its content should reflect contextual reality, without necessarily promoting either directly or indirectly the notion that any one culture can dominate another simply because of sheer numbers. Future research should concentrate on strategies through which African immigrants can be adequately prepared to transition into host societies. Such preparation should lay emphasis on collaborative efforts that bring to the same table stakeholders from both cultures of origin, and destination cultures, who are directly or indirectly impacted by what may be described as "the 21century south-

to-north migratory syndrome."

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