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THE YEAR OF RETURN, 2019

Exploring Narratives of the African-American

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DEDICATION

DEDICATED TO MY WIFE AND DAUGHTER

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ABSTRACT

The Year of Return narratives offered the African-Americans more than just a typical tourism experience; it became a profound journey imbued with personal significance, fulfilling desires that conventional narratives could not satiate. This study analyzed the narratives of African-Americans during their tourism experience in the Year of Return 2019 Campaign.

The study employed qualitative narrative inquiry as the data collection and analysis method. Using the negotiation identity theory and the conceptualizing of the African-American as the African diaspora, the study points out the following: the African-American had been eager to visit Ghana, not because of the Year of Return narrative, but because they had been ready to discover a part of them that is missing. The real meaning of identity is a unanimous exposure to the Ghanaian rich culture. The culture, the people, the dance, the clothes, among others, are vibrant narratives of identification – A performative expression of the imagined identity. Personal experiences influence and shape identity more meaningfully than collective, organized experiences for the African American. When you compare the various narratives, it is evident that the everyday, day-to-day tourism activities and self-travel have more meaningful experiences for the African-Americans than the visits to the slave heritage sites or the organized programs. While these visits create sober reflections and emotional gestures, they would not necessarily shape identity. On the other hand, the personal experience through the personal encounter tends to be more significant and identity-transforming. Identity transformation is a process that takes time to achieve; it is different for everyone; how one person experiences a phenomenon will not be the same way others will experience it.

Key Words: African-American, Narratives, Tourism Experience, Root tourism, Identity

1 INTRODUCTION

Roots tourism has witnessed significant growth over the years, attracting several individuals worldwide eager to explore their origins and ancestral heritage through tourism and revisitation (Higginbotham, 2012; Mehtiyeva & Prince, 2020). As extrapolated by Cohen (1979), tourists seeking to capture a meaningful and satisfying authentic life outside of everyday life in the social world are enveloped with a strong yearning for personalized experiences (Cohen, 1979) such that tourists are not just eager to visit these places for the sake of visitation but to experience, perform and be immersed in the process of discovering their roots.

The Jews are considered the oldest diaspora in the world – some of whom in America travel to visit Israel and search for their roots and heritage every year (Pinho, 2008). The desire to discover one's roots and lineage is not only associated with the Jews but also several other groups seeking to unearth their heritage and roots just like the African-American. The entire process is very similar for different groups of individuals whose history have been tainted with spots of separation, discrimination, alienation, segregation, and diverse forms of forced migration. However, the study is focusing on the African-American who is attributed to the specific history of the transatlantic slave trade, which is the main narrative of the Year of Return, 2019 in Ghana (Li & McKercher, 2016).

In the context of the study, the root tourism experience involves African-American tourists who visited Ghana in 2019 and early parts of 2020 - for the famous tourism experience dubbed the Year of Return 2019. scholars such as Bruner (2005) and Mensah (2015) have identified that the phenomenon of root tourism and the return of the African-American to the various forts and castles in Ghana for tourist adventure is not a new phenomenon. (Bruner 2005, Mensah 2015). The study admits that this root tourism experience (The Year of Return, 2019) was not only geared towards visiting one's ancestry and discovering the roots and heritage, but it was an exclusive marketing phenomenon that targeted not just African-Americans but broadly the diaspora involving other Africans who have been diffused to different parts of the world at large.

Historically, In the Post-independence era (Mensah, 2022). Several Ghanaian leaders instituted streamlined policies and initiatives to appeal to the diaspora and encourage African-Americans to return to Ghana. Precisely, some successes were made by several leaders and government officials, including the first president of the country, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, who organized the

diaspora to visit its roots after the country gained its independence, but this had not fully materialized into such a great tourism campaign as the Year of return, 2019 (Mensah, 2015; Reed, 2013).

Perceptibly, the Year of Return 2019's narratives transformed the whole dynamism of the occasional visits of African-Americans into a fascinating identity journey. This study will, therefore, focus on African-Americans as root tourists. The singular interest is to delve deep into accurate narratives and experiences of the African-American tourist, with regard to some conversations, interviews, and documented experiences shared and produced by some African-Americans during their visit to the Year of Return initiative in 2019. The paper seeks to unpack how this touristic journey has metamorphosed into a rather fulfilling experience with a sense of meaning.

1.1 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The literature on roots tourism, in general, is incredibly boundless (Tomczewska-Popowycz & Taras, 2022). Narrowing it down to the return of the African-American to Ghana is still not constricted enough. Informatively, the Year of Return 2019 in Ghana stands out as a recent and noteworthy case-study event - that drew a significant influx of African-American visitors to the African continent, specifically Ghana, with its strong campaign narratives (Gebauer & Umscheid, 2021). Recent scholarship highlights and celebrates the economic success of the Year of Return for the Ghanaian tourism economy (Ishmeal, 2023). However, one crucial dimension that remains largely unexplored is this event's influence on African-American tourists' identity. Maruyama et al.. (2010) article, which focused on 2nd-generation Chinese-American who journeys to China in search of their roots, is an eye opener on how root tourism influences identity (Maruyama et al., 2010). The context and informants are very different from those of African-American tourists visiting Ghana. Even though Dillette (2021) assessed the identity of African-Americans visiting Ghana through the lens of the double diasporic consciousness theory by Du Bois, the literature does not reconcile specifically how the Year of Return experience influences identity through narratives. Mensah (2015), on the other hand, admits that there is a connection between root tourism and identity formation for African - Americans. However, the quantitative approach used to analyze the study begs the why and how questions in a thick description analysis.

This study then argues that - the Year of Return narratives offered African-Americans more than just a typical tourism experience; it became a profound journey imbued with personal

significance, fulfilling desires that conventional narratives could not satiate. This thesis, therefore, seeks to unravel the experiences of the African-Americans through narratives. This study will build on the existing literature of the return of the African-American who participated in the Year of Return, aiming to comprehend the event's impact on their identity through their experiences.

1.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

To arrive at critical conclusions, the study will be guided by some research questions. Wording the research question can be tricky; it is one of the most critical steps in the research, as clarified by Yin (2003:7). Since the type of research question informs the research design, it is preferred to use a case study when “how” questions are posed. This study will subsequently address these key research questions, including:

1. How did the Year of Return experiences influence the identity narrative of some African-American tourists?
2. How does the African- American tourist narrate their tourism experience in Ghana?

With these questions, it is very unpredictable with the kind of data to expect. In this Year of Return case study, the boundary between the empirical data and the contextual exegesis can be carefully bridged if these exploratory ontological questions will guide the study following a narrative inquiry approach to appraise any further nuances that the study encounters.

1.3 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The year 2019 saw an influx of tourists – African Americans, including celebrities –trooping to Ghana under the “Year of Return 2019” initiative organized by the Ghana Tourism Authority under the auspices of the Ministry of Tourism Arts and Culture in conjunction with the Office of the Diaspora at the Office of the President of Ghana amongst others. It converged the “Global African Family” – especially from the Diaspora - to Ghana to commemorate the 400 years of the arrival of the first enslaved Africans in Jamestown, Virginia (YearofReturn, 2019).

Before Ghana existed as a Republic, the then territory around the ocean of Cape Coast and Elmina was actively used as a point of departure for the enslaved people and traders. These places had a strong history with the slave trade and other activities like trading. The transatlantic slave trade saw about 10 million Africans transferred to Americans, of which 16% percent alone were from Ghana (Akyeampong, 2000). It is, however, not surprising that several African

Americans have been coming directly to Ghana to experience the history (Bruner 2005). Learning about this history moved the various African leaders to devise strategies to excite the diaspora to return to its homeland and heritage. After gaining independence in 1957, Ghana had a well-planned strategy and policies for welcoming the African-Americans. One can uniformly acknowledge that Marcus Garvey’s “back to Africa” movement and the Pan-Africanism movement that sprung up was seen as an awakening to inspire several African-Americans to come back and revisit their heritage (Pinho, 2008:72). President Nkrumah projected Ghana as the “Blackstar of Africa” through his Pan-Africanist advocacy, and this inspired some prominent African-Americans such as Maya Angelo, Malcolm X, Richard Wright, Sylvia Boone, Julian Mayfield, and W.E.B du Bois to visit and even stay in Ghana (Mensah, 2021: 215).

1.4 What is “The Year of Return”?



Figure 1. Year of Return Logo

The “Year of Return, Ghana 2019” is a prominent landmark spiritual and birth-right journey inviting the Global African family, home and abroad, to mark 400 years of the arrival of the first enslaved Africans in Jamestown, Virginia. The arrival of enslaved Africans marked a sordid and sad period when our kith and kin were forcefully taken away from Africa into years of deprivation, humiliation, and torture. While August 2019 marks 400 years since enslaved Africans arrived in the United States, “The Year of Return, Ghana 2019” celebrates the cumulative resilience of all the victims of the Trans-Atlantic slave Trade who were

¹Figure 1 presents the symbol of the Year of Return, 2019 VisitGhana. (2019). *About Year of Return, Ghana 2019*. Retrieved March 30 from <https://visitghana.com/events/year-of-return-ghana-2019/>, the symbol on the Year of Return logo is a traditional symbol of star, waves and a stool “Nsoromma” on “Fawohodie” all referred to as adinkra symbols which express the Ghanaian culture.

A star is “Nsoromma” existing on freedom symbol “Fawohodie”.

scattered and displaced throughout the world in North America, South America, the Caribbean, Europe, and Asia” (Year of Return, 2019: official website).

“The Year of Return, Ghana 2019” was an initiative that sought to assemble and gather as many Africans as possible locally and those in the diaspora. The emphasis was drawn to the African-Americans mostly - because the initiative was a memorable step to mark the 400 years of the arrival of the first enslaved (trans- Atlantic slave trade) Africans to Jamestown Virginia, USA. This event commemorates a recall to history about slavery and the torture of some African-Americans (Year of Return, 2019). It is obvious that, this groups of African American tourists who are visiting Ghana are several generations younger than the actual Africans who were taken into slavery, there is however a high believe that African- Americans have the souls of their ancestors living in the African continent (Reed, 2015). African Americans, as descendants of the victims of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade, essentially trace their roots to Western and West Central Africa. As enslaved people were predominantly drawn from these regions, and Ghana was a focus of the trade, many African-Americans can trace their roots back to specific ethnic groups or even geographical locales in Ghana. The turning point for many African Americans in their exploration of roots in Ghana has been the ability to travel there and find a place of welcome and recognition (Timothy, 2023). A BBC (2020) and Forbes report indicates that between nine hundred thousand (900,000) and one million (1000000) visitors (tourists) made their way to Ghana in 2019, which superseded the expected number of tourists or visitors as 500,000 ((BBC, 2020);(McCormick, 2019)).

The initiative sought to position Ghana as the hub of tourism in Africa. With this approach, the Castles and Forts were the center of attraction, making them the coveted monuments in Ghana and Africa. However, it is not surprising that these Castles and Forts already exist on the UNESCO World Heritage List (UNESCO, 1979). As a long year-round initiative, this phenomenon will be reproduced in the coming years ²(Beyond the Return). Most participants or tourists recalled personal experiences they had and even as it is shared on YouTube and social media, The experience feels so natural and impactful. In one of the documentaries by the

² Beyond the Return is a follow-up to the Year of Return campaign dubbed the A decade of African Renaissance BeyondtheReturn. (2023). *Beyond the Return : A Decade of African Renaissance ; Let’s join hands*. Retrieved April 5 from <https://beyondthereturngh.com/>

BBC (2020), some participants can recall how the whole experience transformed their thinking and perspective (BBC, 2020).

1.5 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study seeks to achieve the following objectives including.

- The study will explore the influence of the Year of Return 2019 on the African-American narratives.
- The study will analyze, in-depth, the narratives of the African-American Tourists' experiences.
- The study will uncover the underlying motivations for African-Americans to travel to Ghana during the Year of Return Campaign through their narratives.

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This thesis holds both academic and practical significance for some of these reasons:

- **Contribute to the literature of root tourism:** By examining the Year of Return, 2019, as a case study, this study will contribute to the evolving field of root tourism by providing new insights into the motivations and experiences of African-American tourists.
- **Informing Cultural and Tourism Policies:** The findings will help inform policy decisions related to heritage tourism development in Ghana and beyond. Specifically, the study can contribute to the Beyond the Return Campaign.
- **Contributing theoretically and practically to the Tourism Industry:** Understanding the Year of Return's narrative from the African-American perspective can improve root tourism.
- **Inspiring Further Research:** This study can be a foundation for future research on diaspora engagement and identity construction through travel.

1.7 STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY

In this introductory chapter, I have presented the overview of the research context and the significance of the study. The chapter has outlined the problem statement, objectives, and research questions, setting the stage for the Year of Return 2019 in Ghana.

Chapter 2 explores the literature on tourism experience, roots tourism, and a particular focus on the Year of Return 2019 in Ghana. The literature review will underline key findings and gaps in the existing literature that need to be addressed in this study.

Chapter 3 lays the study's theoretical considerations and conceptual assumptions, focusing on diaspora, social identity construction, and negotiation through travel and tourism experience.

Chapter 4 provides insights into the research methodology and methods, beginning with the methodological position, the research design, data collection methods, ethical considerations, and reflections. It explains the rationale behind using qualitative narrative inquiry, semi-structured interviews, and narrative analysis.

Chapter 5 presents the data collected, interprets, and discusses the key findings in the research; I will explore the tourists' narratives and experiences as a way of responding to the research questions. The transformation of identity and a sense of belonging are explored in-depth, along with the tourism experiences. Findings are analyzed in comparison to previous research and the theories and concepts.

Chapter 6 is the conclusion of the thesis. Here, I summarize the key findings, present the contribution to academic knowledge, and the limitations of the thesis. I also discuss and suggest future research, and the research questions are reflected upon in a broader context; I provide a fitting conclusion to the study, offering insights into the theoretical contributions and practical implications.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, I present previous relevant literature related to the study. This chapter presents a perspective into previous narratives. While the review of related literatures assists the study to identify unresearched area which informs the point of departure for discussing theories, I will reveal the stream of academic ideas from tourism experience to root tourism to the year of Return, 2019 campaign within which the study is situated. I present previous research findings to get an overview of the academic literature on this topic.

2.1 TOURISM EXPERIENCE

The tourist experience has evolved as a critical research issue that does not have a singular representation or definition. It is, therefore, not ideal to nose-dive into a conclusion on one aspect of its conceptualization because Several scholars have attempted to conceptualize and define the tourist experience in different ways (Cutler & Carmichael, 2010). Uriely (2005 :200) categorized the scholarly work on the tourist experience as being influenced by modernity and post-modernity, establishing the evolution of the tourist experience where the ontological positions of scholars have shifted and are skeptical towards modernity. Still, growing knowledge is everchanging around post- modernity and beyond. This involves critical thinking, subjective perspectives, relative interpretations, and engaging negotiated meanings.

Despite the differing perspectives on the tourist experience by some early scholars, I do not disagree with any due to broad spectrum of contextual application of tourist experience. Still, rather I admit that contemporary conceptualization of the tourism experience could trash out the early conceptualization which is not the focus of this study. Consider the phenomenology of tourist experience by Cohen (1979); tourists are social beings in the social world who seek to capture meaningful and satisfying authentic life outside of everyday life. This desire creates the quest for tourists to yearn for personalized experiences. In support, I adapt the neo-Durkheimian perspective of MacCannel (1973), who also expounds on tourists seeking authentic life (MacCannell, 1973). The understanding of the tourist experience as a concept entails that there is a distinction between the everyday life, the banal life and the tourist experiences. I agree with the perspective that the tourist experience varies from the everyday life of an individual such that there could be a clear difference between the tourist life and the regular life of an individual. Graburn (2012:28) expressed that tourists are not generally involved in mere geographic movement, but aim at a sacred, spiritual and symbolic movement

beyond the ordinary life (Graburn, 2012; Sharpley, 2021). In a more specific way, the tourist experience has always been expressed as meaningful to the tourist (Cutler & Carmichael, 2010).

Empirically, the dichotomizing of the tourist experience from the everyday life cannot suffice with some social activities. For example, if I travel to Northern Norway on a work-related purpose, without any prior planning, I end up seeing the Northern lights, meeting reindeer, and enjoying the cozy-serene atmospheres in the mountains and the fjords just as a tourist. There is a high probability that the person has the same experience as a tourist would have. In such circumstances, tourism could be everything, and everything could be tourism, as discussed by Munt (1994:104). Furthermore Munt (1994:104) suggests the grey areas of separation as highlighted by early scholars and exposes the nuances that exist between tourism, work and leisure (Munt, 1994). On the other hand, experiences could be pluralized in as much as non-human actors, and the material elements also influence experiences - which makes the singular role given to tourist experience non-negotiable and contested, perhaps insufficient to fully understand tourist experiences. Using the case of backpackers described by Walsh & Tucker (2009), we consider the tourists and the backpack in action (Walsh & Tucker, 2009). Finally, scholars are shifting their attention to understanding that tourists can best describe and elaborate on their experiences and define their roles (Uriely, 2005).

Among the 5 modes of tourist experience identified by Cohen (1979), which can be seen to be a construction of one's actual authentic experience, the existential mode of tourist experience better explains the position of African-Americans as tourists in the year of return experience. It was a spiritual journey to discover one's heritage and ancestry, a move and a revisitation geared towards historic occurrences and events. Based on Cohen's description of the modes of tourism experience, it is easy to relate African-American as existential tourist. Bruner (2005:122) makes the argument that, during the visit of African-Americans in Ghana, they "claim a black essentialism in their discourse" the feel to relate to their roots identify them as such (Bruner, 2005; Bruner, 1996). Cohen's ideas resonate with Pine & Gilmore (1998) four realms of experience. More specifically the escapist and esthetic realm of experience. Even though elements of each experience can be seen in the other. For example, considering educational experience where tourists absorb and participate in events just like the African-Americans who experienced slave-trade history. The same is true for the escapist whose tourist event enabled them to appreciate the Castles and Forts which were the center of the slave history.

2.2 ROOT TOURISM

Previous scholarly contributions to root tourism in broad terms have been very inconsistent with the description of the terminology. The lack of an agreed umbrella terminology makes it very difficult to find the appropriate and relevant literature for the study (Tomczewska-Popowycz & Taras, 2022). Sometimes when scholars refer to diaspora tourism, ethnic tourism, heritage tourism, homeland tourism, and return tourism, they refer to root tourism or may be something close. In order not to underscore some unrelated literature, I decided to limit the discussion expressly to literature that engages the root tourism experience in Ghana; this literature review will capture and focus on very essential and calibrated works for the study. This will also form the genesis and foundation of theoretical and conceptual building. Focusing on specific literature is pivotal to exploring root tourism in Ghana contextually. Through that, I can ascertain where scholars agree, disagree, and systematically conclude based on a related research synthesis.

Tomczewska-Popowycz & Taras (2022) have done extensive studies on the terminology root tourism, reviewing several literatures and identifying the several names that have been associated with the terminology root tourism (Tomczewska-Popowycz & Taras, 2022). The study reveals that, 41 main terminologies exist to describe the phenomenon. To contribute to the concept development. They highlighted some significant flaws that scholars have made. Such as – the inappropriate referral to the phenomenon, ambiguity in establishing the meaning and classifying all the different travels in the same category – which may not be contextually applicable. Building on these findings, they aimed to spark a discussion for proper conceptual development.

Reed (2006) also invites scholars to reflect on the need for an umbrella term that fully encapsulates the intended vision and mind view of the tourist and their experience. Reed (2006) therefore advocates for the term pilgrimage tourism to be used instead (Reed, 2006). Similar ideas are evident in Schramm (2004)'s pilgrimage to Ghana article where root tourists are perceived as existential tourist whose journeys have strong spiritual inspiration and therefore should be better labbed as pilgrims (Schramm, 2004).

This study does not need to use umbrella terminology to have precise contextual application of the concept; I will instead argue that an umbrella should be framed around the purpose of the tourism experience, such that the name makes it very clear. I will connect to the terminology people (Diaspora tourism) or purpose (root tourism) rather than the traditional notion of relating

the tourism experience to the place. Even though there is a solid connection to the place, the focus on diaspora and root becomes relatively constant compared to the notion of place.

Just like (Reed, 2006), some research works involving diasporic travels and root tourism come with several names and conceptual representations. This may not be very clear and abstruse as some research deals with the concept differently. Even though their similarities may be scheming, where there are points of intersection and agreement. It is crucial to understand that the various diasporic tourism or root tourism can isolate tourism experiences. In essence, these tourism can be categorized by different names by scholars, such as - return tourism and visit tourism (Duval, 2004; Hughes & Allen, 2010; Pearce, 2012), heritage tourism, ethnic tourism (Butler, 2003; Kim & Stodolska, 2013), dark tourism (Mowatt & Chancellor, 2011) and even diaspora tourism among others (Li et al., 2020). For example, Poria et al. (2003) provide a categorization for heritage tourism that emphasizes the relationship between travelers and the tourist site (Poria et al., 2003). The general understanding often linked to diasporic tourism projects is the idea of a specific form of tourism - which is acclimatized with tourists traveling to places or societies of their heritage or ancestry with a singular purpose of leisure, visitation, and the purpose of discovering one's heritage or roots with no intention of permanent settlement or work-related duties (Maruyama et al., 2010; Mensah, 2015).

With the precise definition, this study will assume a distinction for root tourism as engaged by (Bruner, 1996; Handley, 2016; Pinho, 2008) who associates root tourism specifically with a strong history such as the slave trade history or forced migration (Li & McKercher, 2016). The understanding further emphasizes the discovery of one's roots and connectedness as very specific in this context of the tourism experience (Basu, 2017)

In the root tourism literature, where diaspora is the focus of the study, they are primarily perceived as having a complex relationship with ancestry due to historical events in the past (Cohen, 2008). Maruyama (2016) verifies that, due to the existing globalization and advanced technology, the diaspora is creating innovative relationships with their roots, using social media and easy travel access. This growing relationship is becoming complex and resilient as the diaspora has developed the quest to return to their roots - and the tourism experience is transforming into a whole new ball game (Maruyama, 2016). This could also be observed in Bruner (2005), as the relationship between African-Americans and Ghanaians is interestingly described, there are also several African-Americans who decided to settle in Ghana entirely and never return permanently to America (Bruner, 2005). Another clear example is illustrated in

Bruner (2005), where it is reported that one woman had fasted in the dungeon of the Forts and Castles for three weeks. After that, she declared that she had reunited with her ancestors (Bruner, 2005: 103). These are the existential tourists that Cohen (1979) associated with the quest to seek and achieve existential authenticity (Wang, 1999), alienating themselves from everyday social activities to the place of their authentic experience.

The advancement in technology is playing a crucial role and facilitating the reconnection process. Mehtiyeva & Prince (2020) discovers that well-organized tour groups and organizations in various countries are equally in the process of connecting people with their heritage, especially Swedish-Americans who have been ancestral tourists in Sweden. The recent upsurge in Genomic knowledge for tackling social issues is dominating the social space of roots tourism. (Fehler, 2011) agrees that African-Americans in the USA trace their ancestry by undertaking DNA test, which influences and fuels their desire to visit their roots (Fehler, 2011: 588-589).

2.2.1 APPROACH TO THE STUDY OF THE YEAR OF RETURN

A critical Observation on one of the first scholarly works on root tourism experience in Ghana shows that root tourism has been shifting in conceptual context and moving towards a place-based tourism experience rather than the politicization of the phenomenon (Gebauer & Umscheid, 2021) since the 1990s. They argue that before the Year of Return, 2019, and its campaign, roots tourism in Ghana has been upholding a Pan-Africanism conceptualized experience that is inspiring African-Americans to be Afrocentric. Political speeches and campaigns, though, are begging for a more economical sustainability. Gebauer & Umscheid (2021) observe that a tourism development's yielding efforts to sell and produce an authentic history cannot be economic alone.

These are more likely the implicit observations by Gebauer & Umscheid (2021). some other scholars, such as Edward M. Bruner (1996), during his ethnographic travel to Ghana. In the culture on tour, which later became his book in 2005 (Bruner, 2005), he posed as an insider and with his dual role as an anthropologist and a tourist, when he visited the Elmina castle and other slave castles, he heard the narratives, the history of the slave trade and he engaged the tourists. His findings on the slave history and the castles contest the monolithic perspective of the narratives on roots tourism in Ghana, either from the Ghanaian (Host) perspective or the Guest perspective. His study adapts a pluralistic construction of the narrative and the history of the

African Americans from various sources, including the Ghanaians, tour guides, African Americans, and the host communities. In this way, narratives can be precise and calibrated.

The author engages explicitly in the discourse of an emerging debate that seems to omit tourism in their discussions. The focus of several writers was on travelers other than tourists who are perceived to have transient stays. Therefore, their travels may just be superficial, unlike missionaries, traders, and researchers who are believed to be driven by a more profound passion than tourists. It is in this light that the author extrapolates on African-American tourists who return to Africa and how Ghanaians receive them. There is a controversy on meaning as African-American fundamentally wants to trace their roots to learn more about their history and heritage. The local people do not make any exemptions for the tourists but are focused on growing the economic aspect of the tourism industry. Indeed, as opined by Reed (2014), culture is contested when they encounter each other, and the genuine interest of the Ghanaian people contrasts with that of the African Americans. This could be classified as mixed ideologies. Just like social actors in the social world, tourists are not static and bound, but they are gradually creating meaning through the social forces; these same forces will influence their perceptions (Reed, 2013, 2014).

The author had captured detailed narratives surrounding the slave history and the return of the black diaspora. Interestingly, Ghanaians acknowledge the slave history and are even willing to preserve it as a heritage. Their interest is to gain revenue from selling this narrative; the contention unravels as the diaspora identifies with these narratives and is ever willing to rediscover their heritage and roots. Their sense of belonging and quest for recognition to integrate the Ghanaian should have there been much more embraced by the Ghanaian society. They ought to see them as their own and not have to benefit from them as tourists during the journey to Ghana (Holsey, 2008). After all, their ancestors lived and died in the Ghanaian space. The deeper connections that the diaspora have had to the slave history can seemingly be linked to the narratives that have been told both in the diaspora and what they get to see and hear in Ghana. The castles become the meanings to which they ascribe their identity. It is evident that some African Americans have left the diaspora and resettled in Ghana to live their lives and achieve authentic fulfillment of a sense of purpose and happiness. Similar ideas are shared by Reed (2006) in the doctoral dissertation. It captures the balance between the economic-seeking stakeholders of the Ghanaian society vis-à-vis the African American who visits Ghana seeking meaning and spiritual connection (Reed, 2006).

Unlike Bruner (1996, 2005), who elaborates on the journey of the African American and the connection to the slave historical sites such as Elmina and Cape Coast castles but is not enthused about motivations, Scholars such as Otoo et al. (2021) elaborates on diaspora motivation for travels to Ghana in the lens of social identity theory as the main driving force. It must be linked to social identity theory to understand better what transpires between place attachment and developing a relationship to the past that fuels the quest for travel and the journey to the roots (Otoo et al., 2021). It is an ideological challenge to know that the deep taught of the Ghanaian is to gain tourism revenue, while the African-American is moved to achieve self-discovery.

Some of the significant works on the Year of return to Ghana, such as Gebauer & Umscheid (2021) and Mensah (2022), just like Bruner (1996), have also expressed the conflicting expectations of tourists projected by the Ghanaian authorities who primarily are fired up to explore the wild exposition of the country as the bacon of Africa in terms of root tourism. This is reflected in the inconsistencies in the narrative of welcoming African Americans to explore history, heritage, and the pan-African experience, which becomes questionable when it all comes back to the economic benefit that the country stands to gain from the tourism experience.

Gebauer & Umscheid (2021) view the year of return experience as an evolution into a post-modern spectacle of history, where the traumatic legacy of slavery is repackaged into an engaging - interactive tourist performance. This strategy reinterprets the African continent as an experiential space wherein tourists are not mere observers but are invited to partake as cast members within the unfolding historical drama of tourism performance. This approach's primary objective is to stimulate economic growth by developing a world-class tourism sector, simultaneously solidifying the narratives of ancestry, heritage, and familial bonds that resonate with the Ghanaian diaspora's sense of identity and belonging.

Additionally, the Year of Return campaign marks a significant strategic and narrative shift within the commodification of diasporic heritage by transitioning from a singular, sober focus on the slavery epoch to fostering a broad, affirmative, and less politically charged form of tourist engagement. This move underscores the communal and celebratory facets of pan-African connectedness rather than its anguished historical ties to the slave history (Gebauer & Umscheid, 2021). They further elaborate that the targeting of African Americans in the past as tourists, specifically in Ghana, had a political ideology. This ideology metamorphosed into tangible programs for Ghana's tourism industry and tourism ministry. The tourism ministry changed its name in 2006 from the Ministry of Tourism to the Ministry of Tourism and

Diaspora Relations, which manifests the aspirational ideology of solely connecting to the diaspora (Gebauer & Umscheid, 2021; Reed, 2015).

In this review of scholarly works, it is purely non-negotiable to explicitly classify narratives expressed around the Year of Return as a progressive narrative that has been improved over the years, which will appeal to the diaspora. On further observation, the narrative not only supports elements surrounding emotional pull factors but also views other events that will create a long-lasting connection with diaspora (Beyond the Return). The Year of Return saw Ghana as pioneering in this tourism engagement.

To highlight that, the marketing strategy had elements of creating togetherness where the African-Americans were invited as brothers and sisters who should hurry and join the family (Nti, 2014). This marketing strategy is contradicted by what Soga's (2023) thesis found on the mobilities of the Ghanaian person. The narratives that were used to capture the African American were centered on blackness and the black diaspora as the lost black soul who should return home. This appears as a bait to trap African Americans. Ironically, when the African Americans arrive, they are told to invest, stay, and live among their brethren, for they are home. Yet the average Ghanaian is ready to explore opportunities in the western world (Soga, 2023).

This awakening is somewhat explored in Asempasah & Bentum's (2023) In Search of a post-transatlantic slave Trade Dwelling and Conviviality: *rethinking Ghana's 'Year of Return' with Ama Ata Aidoo's The Dilemma of a Ghost (1965)*. A critical analysis of the dilemma of a ghost is a perfect fit and a reflection of the African American's experience. The study of Aidoo's "The Dilemma of a Ghost" (Aidoo, 1985) offers a poignant commentary on the modern narrative of returning to Africa, particularly within the 'Year of Return' discourse. Aidoo challenges the oversimplified and romanticized notion of Africa as a homogenous 'home' for the diaspora, where one's troubles dissipate, and a natural sense of belonging instantly arises. The reality presented in this domestic satire is more nuanced, revealing the concept of 'home' as a pain-free zone of endless welcome of fantasy through the experiences of Ato and Eulalie. Ato, A Ghanaian student returning home from his travel overseas in North America to Ghana, comes with his wife Eulalie, who encounters difficulties integrating due to cultural shocks and differences. Aidoo demonstrates that 'home' is nuanced with moments of alienation and realizing that individuals and communities are more complicated than the idealized versions suggest. Instead of the diaspora's search for a seamless reintegration into a nostalgic home, Aidoo advocates for a process she terms 'dwelling.' This concept implies an ongoing, engaged,

and reciprocal relationship that nurtures cultural connection and understanding between Africa and its diaspora. As Aidoo illustrates, Dwelling is not passive; it is an active, conscientious practice of establishing a place of connection that acknowledges past hardships and fosters a future of collaboration and unity. It's less about reclaiming a lost past and more about forging a shared future where the ties between the continent and its global offspring are woven from real understanding and coexistence. This reimagined approach to 'returning' is not merely about physical relocation or fulfilling a symbolic journey; it's about re-rooting oneself in a transatlantic narrative that honors the full complexity of African identity (Asempasah & Bentum, 2023).

To finalize the discussion, Maruyama et al. (2010) work on “negotiating identity” comes close to the experiences of African Americans who participated in the Year of Return campaign. Their research investigates how Chinese Americans who are at least second-generation delve into their identity and sense of belonging following a trip to China. Through face-to-face, detailed conversations, it emerged that contrary to common expectations, such trips didn't infuse these individuals with a deep sense of connection to their ancestral homeland. Instead of finding a clear-cut sense of belonging, participants found themselves in a thoughtful process of introspection, reconsidering their place in the world and their identity. The research sheds light on the intricate ways that visible aspects of Chinese heritage influence this personal journey of identity (Maruyama et al., 2010). Maruyama et al. (2010) identified some research gaps which informed their work. The gap revealed little knowledge about how tourists visiting one's homeland or ancestral origins influence the identity of the person. Their findings, on the other hand, proved some form of indifference- conflicted- complex identity for the Chinese immigrants. Scholars such as Duval (2004) argue that there is a connection between root tourism and identity such that tourists can develop an attachment to their homelands, hence fostering an identity for the tourist.

Since several research reveal different results, there is no clear or vivid conclusion of how root tourism influences identity. This research cannot be a black-and-white gloomy situation of understanding the root of tourism. Therefore, The grey areas seem to be the fascinating subject I want to explore in this study. I understand that root tourism can influence identity or not, yet, deeper research is to show how and why narratives can influence tourist identity. For instance in Adu-Ampong & Dillette (2024:135)'s research, they encountered an interesting finding... *“The research established that commodification in slavery heritage tourism does not inherently destroy cultural meanings but provide new commemorative meanings for a new*

generation of Black travelers searching for more than just their roots...” (Adu-Ampong & Dillette, 2024). There is more to understand regarding how meanings have changed due to new narratives coming as well.

2.3 CONCLUSION

The literature review discussed the pool of academic literature related to the study, from tourism experience to root tourism and the Year of Return 2019 campaign. During this literature, contrary views and similar views are shared in the study. I presented the findings of previous research. This enabled me to see the research gaps and the literature I can engage for the entire discussion.

3 THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL ASSUMPTIONS

This section of the study will explore the theoretical and conceptual assumptions by uncovering the existing relationship between the various concepts of the study and their application in the study. Analytically, this chapter will dive into how the philosophical assumptions of the theories interplay vis-à-vis the understanding and its operationalization in the study.

3.1 CONCEPTUALIZING DIASPORA

Imagining diaspora as a concept can be very broad, complex, and contested by several scholars. It encompasses a wide range of phenomena- people, places, and situations. It is equally thriving in various disciplines, such as political science, cultural studies, and ethnic studies, among others (Cohen, 2022). Diaspora as a terminology would not have been a concept after all, however, due to the proliferation of its use, as suggested by Cohen & Fischer (2018) in several scholarly works and different case studies, it can pass for a concept, and the basis to render it as such cannot be overemphasized. Indeed, Cohen & Fischer (2018) emphasised that introducing social constructivism in diaspora studies is the primary basis for the conceptual debates that arise. To understand some philosophical questions such as who the diaspora is, what consists of the diaspora? Scholars are stirred to find answers to these pertinent questions, hence the evolution and gradual conceptual growth (Cohen, 2008; Cohen & Fischer, 2018). It can be overwhelming to want to understand diaspora as a broad concept or an “ideal type”; however, an ideal version of a diaspora may not exist in reality, given the global structure and changes that have emerged (Safran, 1991). To make diaspora relevant for this study, I did a content analysis and some explanation with Gerring (1999)ʼs eight qualities of a good concept – familiarity, resonance, parsimony, coherence, differentiation, depth, theoretical utility, and field utility. The checklist verifies that diaspora has rated high on most of these epistemological inferences and can pass for a conceptual framework or tool for research analysis (Gerring, 1999).

To extract the main elements needed for the study correctly, I will focus on the African diaspora as a conceptual bridge in the broad spectrum of diaspora. The expression emerged and was popular in the mid-1950s when most African countries were gaining independence. Ghana herself gained independence on 6th March 1957 (Nwosu, 2019). It is evident when the enslavement of Africans had been abolished, the African people who had been scattered abroad caused a movement; a deep search among various scholars, writers, and philosophers danced around this phenomenon, whether directly or somewhat around it. Not so long after, the

diaspora's booming scholarly work was unraveled and gained global recognition (Nwosu, 2019). George Shepperson (1966) elaborates on the terminology “African Diaspora” did emerge later into the Anglophone world in the 1950’s and 1960, but the African Diaspora as a term existed long before (Shepperson, 1966). Cohen's (2008)´s extensive work over 200 pages e-book has a clear insight on the evolving nature of the concept with the appropriate categories touching on the social constructivist approach of the ideal types of diaspora. Robin Cohen (2020) will later give 9 Critical points of departure that constitute the diaspora. As these points are very detailed, they provide a more global overview of the diaspora, not explicitly limiting it to the African diaspora. I will touch on aspects of diaspora as a broad concept, but I am more concerned about its relevance to this study. This leads me to narrow my view on the African-Diaspora concept as an approach to understanding the African American (A. Dillette, 2021).

3.1.1 AFRICAN DIASPORA AS AFRICAN-AMERICAN

Conceptualizing African diaspora demands that the concept be understood and operationalized critically and assumptions surrounding epistemological obscurities that cloud the increased amount of existing literature are clarified. Dodson (2014) engages Ruth Hamilton’s four theoretical propositions characterizing the African diaspora. From a sociological point of view, just like Dodson (2014), I view the social world of African Americans as components of the African diaspora with a common ancestral heritage and historical narrative, and their distinction from other transnational migrants is key to conceptualizing the diaspora (Dodson, 2014). Diasporic identities are complex, and their formation always occurs within the bubble of socio-political and cultural contexts. There are always different and developing identities growing in the social space. The complexity reveals itself through the loud groom of multiculturalism. We find a multi-lingual, multi-ethnic, multi-colored and hybridity correlation among diaspora (Cohen, 2008; Kokot et al., 2004).

I hop on Dodson's (2014) rethinking of Ruth Hamilton’s four theoretical propositions characterizing the African diaspora to conceptualize the African diaspora. Though Ruth Hamilton pioneered these propositions, Dodson (2014) revised them with evolving assumptions that are still relevant to understanding the African diaspora.

- *Migration and Geo-Social Displacement: The Circulatoriness Phenomenon,*
- *African Diaspora Connections: Myths and Realities of Homeland Relations,*
- *Power, Domination, Inequality: Structurations of Black Dispossession,*

• *Agents of Resistance: Diasporic Identities and Communities of Consciousness* (Dodson 2014:52).

One aspect to look at when proposing a theory on African diaspora identity is to look at race and gender as social constructs and how they play out in interactions with the world. Dodson (2014:52) further expands on the multi-layered ideas on race and gender and how these affects the African diaspora. Dodson (2014) rethinks race not just as black and gender not just as a male or female but rather approaches this from a holistic sense. This involves intersectionality, where race, gender, class, and others can be observed interacting in a situation (Sawyer et al., 2013). For example, speaking to one of my queer respondents, it turns out that they could not laudably express their sexual orientation due to how the Ghanaian society accepts people with different sexual orientations. This perspective is from the symbolic interactionism of society, where the different labels of the society interact to cause an effect (Shields, 2008). So, my respondent admitted that, comparatively, other women who were married and had kids could easily integrate into certain parts of the society than she did. As an African American person and questioning sex and gender in Ghanaian society, it was indeed a new experience. It relates to how one identifies themselves and how the tourism experience affects individuals. If we perceive gender to be culturally, historically, and socially implanted, it will be easier to understand the post-structural feminist movement and ideology. Where societal ideals and cultural and structural norms can be deconstructed. For example, predicting what is expected stereotypically when tourists are to be hosted is easier. Tourism industries may have specific gendered activities for males and females due to the gendered stereotypical ideas in the society (Sawyer et al., 2013). Several of these societal ideals influence the tourist experience and what an individual seeks to experience in their touristic journey at all sociological levels. Making it even clearer, the role of the man and the woman can be better understood through the lenses of intersectionality, where not only will we consider gender but also what society has classified beneath the various roles, such as race, and class, among others. For example, identifying as a woman and being black and a Muslim is not just about the gender anymore, but these other identities and labels further deepen the gendered aspect of the individual and can further affect the tourist experience. The same individual as a man, black and a Muslim, might have a different experience concerning the female counterpart. This construct can consequently be seen as a rippling effect on society. Taking a biased position, what might be normal, like a solo male travel, might not be the same for a solo female travel. As a female Asian tourist Seow & Brown (2018), there is a sexualized gaze and other perceived mitigating factors on the outcome of the tourist experience (Seow & Brown, 2020).

Another aspect of the proposition of conceptualizations that characterizes the African diaspora is the historical narrative of forced migration that had occurred. This is very similar to another diaspora, like the Jews, who also experienced forced migration (Nwosu, 2019, p. 216). The unique nature of the long-stretched slave history of slavery- fast forward to the emancipation of the Africans from their colonial masters awaken the diasporic influences. Dodson (2014:53) disputes the fact some scholars are referring to post-colonial migration of the Africans to the Western world as a new diaspora other than simply admitting that they are all diasporas, no new diaspora -in the sense that it is the same diaspora. As the African proverb says, “*No matter how hard it rains, it does not wash off the spots on the leopard.*” The echoes of the geo-circularity concept of movement through centuries of the African diaspora, which implies that the African Diaspora’s migration has been both voluntary and involuntary is firmly upheld by Dodson (2014:53). Nevertheless, this debate is rather seen as frivolous as all emigrated Africans can be in the diaspora category when it becomes necessary, subsequently, in this study, the African diaspora is strictly referenced to the African who trace their roots to the slave history. This can be highly contested on several levels as the reality might not be consistent with the identity. This distinction creates a unique imaginary African American who has no idea of their root and is eager to search for their roots, not just, for example, a Ghanaian born in America going back home to Ghana. Therefore, I assume an African diaspora exists with an appreciably long disconnect to the African continent and finding a way to reconnect as a result of diasporic consciousness (Gebauer & Umscheid, 2021).

Furthermore, another proposition is the “inequality tripartite” suggested by Ruth Hamilton, which includes and correlates oppression, domination, and subordination as social factors for the inequalities experienced by the African diaspora. Even though Hamilton saw this phenomenon as being systematic and continuous, extending towards the African diaspora, Dodson (2014:54) further elaborates on this understanding as a relational influence of eurocentric ideologies fueled by socio-political dominance in the global spectrum of the diaspora. With colonization came coloniality of knowledge - western ideology and philosophy purporting to be the primal epistemology over other non-Western civilizations. The idea is that other cultures cannot produce knowledge equal to European knowledge and that the latter is the hub of rational knowledge and, therefore can exert a degree of force on the dominant through a subject (Europe) and object (rest of the world) relationship whilst averting all forms of dialogue (Quijano, 2007). To better understand the African diaspora as a people and in a conceptualizing ideology, their experiences of oppression, domination, and subordination are

primarily to inspire a strong yearning for root tourism. This is a double consciousness of the African Diaspora (Dayal, 1996). The average African American is in a state of segregation, so a glimpse of what a welcoming community will feel like is an idealized solution for a touristic adventure (A. K. Dillette, 2021).

To end the discussion, I touch on diasporic consciousness (Clifford, 1994; Gilroy, 1994). This consciousness is an intricate combination of historic elements, the consciousness of an African heritage and togetherness, and identity piercing through shapes of their unique experiences and perspectives. This inspired consciousness is a daily accumulation of a deep-rooted awareness and a strong, inexplicable connection with fellow African Diaspora migrants. Nwosu (2019) describes it as a renaissance of the black origin and the ideology of Pan-Africanism sneaking through the door of enlightenment (Nwosu, 2019). There is a form of effortless togetherness that is formed without forceful approval. They stand in solidarity, sharing their struggles and aspirations, transcending borders, and resonating with the collective memory of their ancestors. Through diasporic consciousness, African Diaspora will not only rewrite their life narratives but also contribute to broader narratives of social justice, human rights, and global interconnectedness - safe to say that the space of the diaspora is much larger than a geographic space, so the African diaspora lives in imagination and that is a larger space than a country of any given geographic space or jurisdiction (Berns-McGown, 2007). Though there is a physical separation of people, the African diaspora still feels they have a strong connection with their ancestors. There is a self-awareness of an unexplored life to be lived in the African continent as stated by Bruner (1996 :298)

In black diaspora literature, there is an almost mythic image of Africa as a Garden of Eden. For black American men in that popular literature, a return to Africa is a return to manhood, to a land where they feel they belong, where they can protect their women, and where they can reconnect with their ancestry. (Bruner 1996 :298).

In conclusion, this conceptual assumptions made are simplified by Butler (2000) who defines diaspora;

At its simplest, a diaspora may be understood as the dispersion of a people from their original homeland. As transportation and communications technologies have improved throughout the twentieth century, and fewer and fewer people find themselves living in the land of their ancestors, the concept of diaspora is growing

in popularity to explain the phenomenon of living in what may persistently be labeled as a "foreign" land. However, not every movement is a diaspora. (Butler, 2000)

To make the African Diaspora conceptually relevant for this study, I framed and deconstructed African diaspora equivocal to the African American who is embodied as - what constitutes the African diaspora. Moving further, the simple but obvious question of how is the African explored and study in the context of African American? Will be explained. I therefore related the African American directly with the African Diaspora to understand the struggles, history and intersectionality of their identity. As a point of departure, it is top-notch priority for me to assess the community being studied as a distinct group and uphold narratives that characterises them substantially.

3.2 THEORIZING IDENTITY

The study appreciates the perception that, identity is a socially constructed phenomenon. For the African-Americans, it is an imagined community - as described by Powers (2011: 1374) ...”*what counts as knowledge and who gets to define knowledge and historical narratives are important in the creation and maintenance of the boundaries of the community, imagined or direct...*” Powers (2011) offers the view that, place is a very important aid for the African-Americans to imagine a shared identity as relatable commodity to the Ghanaian society. This had been easily done in the narratives of the Year of Return campaign when the slave castles and forts had been assumed as the authentic place of home and space - and by other influential groups whose activities were instrumental in attracting the African-American. There is therefore the interconnected relationship of place and space in the context of the Year of Return Campaign. In the aim of the placemaking conceptualization as an intangible element, the community space of both previous and current tourists is significant as they have been empowered and resourced to recreate meaningful relationships year after year. This is very similar to the Finnmark dogsledding in (Granås, 2018)

Ballesteros & Ramirez (2007) suggest a strong link between heritage tourism and identity, which could probably be framed around heritage tourism. The concept of identity and the theorization of an imagined community is crucial in understanding African-Americans' actions and decisions (Ballesteros & Ramírez, 2007). This study seeks to understand how identity had been co-conceptualised by the Ghanaians and the African-American in an

interlocking network. Where does the idea of feeling belonged to the Ghanaian society emerged from? even though, African-Americans might not have stepped foot in any places yet, the Year of return Campaign had an influence on why the African diaspora should partake in the touristic experience or become a part of these events. What Powers (2011) tries to elaborate is how symbolic elements in the campaign narratives are so powerful that they can influence the African-Americans to imagine and identify with the Ghanaian community. Focusing on Powers (2011), what can be imagined could be an experience (the slave castle experiences and the root specific activities), causing a symbolic meaning with memory among others. These activities have a performative approach on both the host and the tourist (Bruner,1996). By observation, the authenticity of the castles and forts that were visited also played an important role for the African-American and the physical reminders that revolves around these places cannot be erased from the painful emotional imprints that historic narratives have canvassed on their minds (Powers, 2011). In the case of the African-Americans, through social media a tourism initiative of the year of return had intrinsically embedded elements of shared identity through history, a sense of welcome from the Ghanaian people - belonging and an anticipated authentic experience posing ahead for the African-American consumption.

3.2.1 A CONSTRUCTED NEGOTIATING IDENTITY

In the broad spectrum of social identity literature lies the negotiating identity theory where identity is a reflection and a journey - not just a label. Rediscovering African roots is a process that is intertwined with the African-American experience and journey into identity. It reflects a deep yearning to connect with a history that has been forcibly blurred. Yet, it acknowledges that such a journey will lead to uncharted territory of self-discovery and transformation. How does the African-American decide their identity is the focus of this section? Acknowledges that, less attention has been given by scholars on how African diaspora tourists transubstantiate their identity in their travel process and tourism experience.

Chatman et al (2005) view identity as adaptive both for the self and the social group. How individuals construct their identities will be based on the everyday situations for personal life and as a collective identity (Chatman et al., 2005). In this study, I prefer to ride on how individuals - African-Americans negotiate their identity in their touristic journey and how this personal identity they construct themselves will contribute to forming a collective identity for the African-American. Whereas identity can be very broad and can be referred to the social roles of individuals or the communities, a sense of belonging and the broad idea of race, gender, sex among others. This study will not limit identity more especially when the goal is to produce

an overarching narrative of the African-American Narrative (Chatman et al., 2005). Even though individuals and the society construct identity, the impact and social structures (meso-level of the society, institutions, tourism organizations among others) on identity can be highly ignored casually, yet this is crucial in identity formation and development (Stets & Serpe, 2013).

The identity negotiating theory is assumed to be birthed out of intercultural interactions, direct contact with individuals' self-reflections, and the social forces acting against one another (Ting-Toomey, 2005). Another aspect of this theory focuses on meanings – specifically what meanings are derived from various experiences to form identity. In Bruner (1996) there are contested meanings of who the African-Americans are by the Ghanaian society and themselves. This struggle of meaning ends in a negotiated identity by the African-American based on the history and tourism experience. Stets & Serpe (2013) opines that, there can be multiple identity traits where individual's identities meanings intersects and their roles makes them assume multiples identities. This is very relatable for the African-American who can claim to be African and American at the sametime - and such is not nuanced, but a careful observation on intercultural interactions creates specific meanings - they ascribe themselves to these meanings and claim the possible reasons to integrate both societies.

Burke (2006) dicusssees 3 possible ways in which identity may change overtime. While all these are possibilities for every African American, Burke (2006) ideas are supportive in the overall analysis of the African-American identity. The possibilities are determinning factors in definning the African- American identity change and negotiations - engaging the different meanings of their toruism journey (Burke, 2006). To begin with, Burke (2006) talks about a **situation change in identity** due to an unmanouevrable situation. For example divorce or death of a partner can alter your identity from one state to another. This can also be a situation which gives little or no room for a shift in self identity (Stets & Serpe, 2013). A comparative analysis with the situational identity change for the African-American's identity is for the African-American to specifically have a distinctive catch-phrase attached to their identity being fully Americans. Paradoxically, they are also reffered to as Africans, even though they are American by all standards. This clealry can be traced to some historic moments in the past.

Another possibility of identity change is **overlapping in multiple identities**. Stets & Serpe, (2013:28) refers to this change as the “simultaneous activation of two or more identities in a situation”. When several identities intersect in a situation, it more likely to have some identity

meaning changing overtime. In Bruner (1996), The author had captured very detailed narratives surrounding the slave history and the return of the black diaspora. Interestingly, Ghanaians acknowledge the slave history and have preserved it as a heritage. Their interest though is to gain revenue from selling this narrative, there is a critical contention of mixed feelings that unravels as the diaspora identifies with these narratives and do not even want to be address as tourist. Their sense of belonging and quest for recognition to integrate the Ghanaian society should have been much more embraced by the Ghanaian society (their true feelings). Yet, the Ghanaians refer to them as “Obroni” (a white person) it is conflicting as they see them as their own but also see them - as so different from them. The deeper connections that the African-American have had to the build around the slave history can seemingly be linked to the narratives that have been told and what they get to see and hear in Ghana and the castles becomes the meanings they ascribe their identity to. It is evident that some African Americans have left the diaspora and resettled in Ghana to live their lives and achieve an authentic fulfilment to a sense of purpose and happiness. The fundamental goal maybe to express the full Ghanaian culture and be fully Ghanaian or be multi-cultural and dynamic in a state of rediscovery. In each case there will be a major shift in identity vis-à-vis meanings, experiences among others.

The last source of identity change is **cross-sectional discovery of identity**. This implies that changes occurs when identity does not match the meanings ascribed to them. So individual’s behavior tends to shift from their “true identity” to something which are not essentially what should be their identity of what is expected of them (Burke, 2006; Stets & Serpe, 2013).³Coming out of the door of no return, the door or the gate, which is right opposite of the sea, a strategic point where the ships would be waiting to transport the slaves. No single individual had come out of that door not feeling emotional or sentimental. It was such an enigmatic experience for them. They had been through the pilgrimage, they made it to the end, some felt sad, some felt happy, some are crying as they are being interviewed or sharing their experience. This is the expression of some African-Americans after their experience in visiting the slave castles and learning of the history and untold stories. When I observe how most of these African-Americans no longer want to be referred to as tourist but wants to be brother and sister who had come back home. They genuinely feel like they are home and this where they belong

³ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nq5FLOImA1k&ab_channel=CulturallyLitTV

but one cannot deny the fact that they are tourists. This is where the cross-sectional discovery of identity is activated.

3.3 CONCLUSION

This chapter has explored the study's theoretical and conceptual assumptions by uncovering the existing relationship between the various concepts and their application in the study. I began by conceptualizing the diaspora in general and continued by establishing the African diaspora as a distinct diaspora. In this context, I demonstrated how the African-American is defined as the African diaspora. Finally, I elaborated on how Identity can be a concept and a theory in analyzing the data.

4 METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

In this chapter, I will discuss the methodological positioning of the study. First, by introducing the philosophical discourse underpinning the research methodology and design choice. I will then focus on the methods and techniques used in the data collection, and explanations for utilizing these methods and strategies. The chapter further highlights methodological issues I encountered while using qualitative interviews to collect data from the field of research. I will then discuss how I dealt with the issues of the research, finally, important ethical issues and considerations such as seeking consent, anonymity, reflexivity, and confidentiality will also be discussed.

4.1 THE PHILOSOPHICAL DISCOURSE OF METHODOLOGY

To appreciate social research and social scientific literatures in the social sciences, specifically the tourism studies demand a peep into the philosophical world – consisting of paradigms, ontology, epistemology and methodologies and methods (Bryman, 2016). The quest to understand the social world around us has exposed several views and opinions by different social scientists about studying and understanding the world. The different world views of the study of reality are what becomes the positions that various researchers adhere to, to understand reality and be guided by these positions, that is, it becomes a sort of some set of processes that leads to the knowledge of reality. Guba & Lincoln (1994) express that “*questions of methods are secondary to questions of paradigm*”. An extrapolation of this idea is that the differing world views positions scholars and social scientist is the paradigm umbrella embodying the various philosophical ideas imbedded in them. “*They define paradigms as the basic belief system or worldview that guides the investigator, not only in choices of method but in ontological and epistemological fundamental ways*” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The key word in

this definition most relevant for the study is “*guide*”. The world views guide scholars in their research and the production of knowledge, even though it could be sometimes very implicit, it is also fair to establish that, tourism researchers and scholars have always been guided by a philosophical idea be it explicitly or implicitly.

On a reflection of an ontological question, what can be known and studied in tourism? What knowledge about reality can be acquired? (Guba & Lincoln 1994). The mere decision to know and get knowledge in the tourism world, understand and be informed in this social world leads to some of these several questions suggested by Guba & Lincoln (1994); “*How do we know what we know? what is truth? and what is the ultimate knowledge?*” these have been referred to as the epistemological assumptions, a recipe, an influence and a prototype for developing a particular scholarly world view.

On the other hand, the crucial misunderstanding is established primarily, on the methodology or the way to know about the social world. The methodology entails that, scholars reflect deeply on why the social world should be studied in a particular way. This means that, a curiosity about the choice of methods or a research design employed by scholars in tourism studies for example, are more like indicators to understand why a phenomenon exist, it this case; I will address.

1. *How did the Year of Return experience influence the identity narrative of some African-American tourists?*
2. *How does the African- American tourist narrate their tourism experience in ghana ?*

Further in this chapter I make some philosophical assumptions for the choice of research design, and some theoretical inferences to the study methods. I choose to study the social world of African-Americans based on a specific ontological position and epistemological discovery (Moses & Knutsen, 2019).

Naturalism also known as positivism embodies several rudiments in ontology, epistemology, and methodology. These qualities form the joists of the naturalism argument and world view. They have an ontology of a real world existing independently of the social events. This perception encourages an epistemological conception of being able to observe, think and access our experiences independent of the social world. Therefore, the methodology tends to suggest experimental studies, studies that are based on hypothesis and testing of patterns among others (Moses & Knutsen 2012). This inquiry paradigm has its distinctive role it plays in tourism

studies. For example, Jacobsen & Antoson (2017) were guided by the naturalism/ post positivist inquiry. Their methodology sought to test some already drafted hypothesis. They tried to be as objective as possible to represent their findings independently, using purely statistical methods to represent the social activities of motivations for trips by local people. (Jacobsen & Antonson, 2017).

Contrary to the naturalism paradigm, This study resorts to the world view of the social constructivism as a critic of the latter world view. In this study I do not try to understand African-Americans/ tourists in a linear view, neither explicitly, but rather - the focus on the study points to an inquiry paradigm, with the use of hermeneutics upholding solid critical reflections, this entails a strong front for a methodological position that will allows me to be social oriented in the research and contextual in my reflections as well. A critical contribution of this research entails that, I should rethink existing theories crucially.

Social constructivism also expressed as the interpretivism, has the joists as opposed to the positivist, ontologically, the world does not exist independently of social activities but rather our actions and experiences are contextual. It is assumed that different tourists would experience the same tourist sites differently and share diverging experiences. Epistemologically, the natural world is distinguished from the social and there is no linear view of the two, the constructivist assumes a pluralistic view in this sense. Truth is contextual and social science should be critical. Methodologically, they are reflexive and would be interested in constructing understanding and explanation (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Moses & Knutsen, 2019)

4.2 WHY QUALITATIVE RESEARCH?

Qualitative research design was adopted for this study as I am interested in understanding and exploring how *the Year of Return narratives influence the identity of some African-American tourists? How does the African- American tourist narrate their tourism experience in ghana ?* The element of research here is in the form of a symbolic interactionism where the African - Americans have had series of social interaction with Ghana, visited series of places and had diverging experiences. This study adapts the qualitative research design with a narrative inquiry knowing perfectly well that, knowledge in the social world is constructed through the interaction of the social forces. the study seeks to explore and systematically understand African-American tourists' perspective through storytelling. This is a clear element to consider when undertaking tourism research as social research always involves investigating people's

actions. Meanwhile, these people are very unpredictable (Picken, 2018). Based on the above objective, what informed my choice of methodology is the kind of information I was looking for. I am seeking to explore the perspective African-Americans and understand their experiences and stories through the Year of Return, 2019 Campaign. As noted by Taylor et al (2015), the way of approaching the empirical is essential to inform the findings of the research (Taylor et al., 2015). So, I approached my respondents with a critical mind, open and void of prejudices. I intend to create and establish some meaning by doing in-depth analysis with the empirical evidence (Taylor et al., 2015). I decided to use the qualitative research design and narrative inquiry since I will be making a lot of interpretations and drawing conclusions on narratives and stories based on the empirical data I have gathered. Even though the quantitative research design could equally be used for this study, As observed by Hillman & Radel (2018 :5,6) as I am attempting to make meaning out of African-Americans narrative, I do not want to be detached from the research process, I want to be associate with the social world of tourism experience and create meaningful findings (Hillman & Radel, 2018).

4.3 SINGLE CASE STUDY DESIGN AS A NARRATIVE INQUIRY

This study involves a subjective personal analysis of data to conclude. This is easier when exemplified in single case approach (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Baxter & Jack (2008) admits that, having a case study allows a researcher to create clever borders that confines the research in a reliable study medium. There is always the tendency to be tempted to study everthing and explore every tom,dick and harry´s case but having one specific case is a great start point. The Year of Return, 2019 case has a date and specific element of research as the African-Americans. The point of departure in the research has been clear and focus from the beginning. Additionally, the same case can be studied and observed from different angles with much clarity, avoiding grey areas in the research (Baxter & Jack, 2008). However, I wish to admit as a caveat that this study intentionally deviates from a more traditional approach of case study design by not using several types (levels) of data. As a replacement, the data finding process has been largely informed by the chosen method of data collection (Narrative inquiry) versus analysis (will be elaborated further) and the theoretical underpinnings that shapes it. I also do not employ any of the five analysis techniques suggested by Yin (2003), I rather align the inductive methodology to a narrative inquiry to loud the implicit meanings that my participants with be hiding in their stories. Such as O'Toole (2018:177) elaborates; narrative inquiry has both a philosophical and theoretical influence. As a form of operation, I stick to;

a multi-layered approach with a focus on form (how the story is told), content (what is said in the story) and context (wherein the story is produced and told) to illustrate the dimensions of temporality, sociality and place. These comprise the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space within which experience narratives are constructed (O'Toole, 2018).

This is evident in my formulation of the research questions, where I intend to explore and dig the data (Yin, 2003). The method of data collection is presented in the following section.

4.4 DATA COLLECTION; THE HOW

My data collection process was an interesting one, I collected both primary and secondary data. The primary data is the interviews with my respondents which lasted for 1 year. The secondary data involves interviews and documentaries of African-Americans from other people which were not intended for research purposes. This suggests data in real life situations where people expressed themselves and shared about their experiences organically. In all, they are about narratives and storytelling. Getting a balance of the data in this context is a check - as much as possible I want to remain neutral to the study in a critical manner. I strived to collect data from my informants objectively, I did not only limit my data collection technique to only the semi-structured in-depth interviews but collected secondary data as well.

4.4.1 THE NARRATIVE TURN

Aside the social constructivist world view which influenced my choice of research and the data collection, my data collection and theoretical consideration process were highly influenced by Kraus (2006). Kraus (2006)'s work on *the narrative negotiation of identity and belonging* combines and unpack narrative approach first as a methodological approach and next as an influence in deconstruction identity theory. As a deconstructed approach in identity narratology, the philosophical assumptions in telling identity stories can be equivalent to doing or exploratively as performative (Kraus, 2006). Kraus's (2006) questioning of coherence in narratology when dealing with identity is a deconstruction of the structuralist perception of narrative where meanings must be stable. This post-structuralist view allows me to rethink narrative as a hybrid process in both theory and methodology where meanings are fluid and subjective; based on my research questions, I view the interaction with my respondents as a deconstruction approach. I use the narratology approach as both the data collection approach and the data analysis approach. My data collection approach was in the form of storytelling and narration where my respondents, who are mostly African-Americans, tell their stories; my aim

is to create an identity narrative with my approach and interviews. Greve (2019) advocates for exploring individual narratives rather than trying to group narratives where some vital meanings may slip away, this made me interview and treat each informant differently. I did not have any group interviews or focus group discussions; all I wanted was the rich self-reflecting narrative from an individual perspective (Greve, 2019). With O'Toole's (2018) information on a narrative inquiry as an institutionalised story telling adventure, I have been preoccupied in the storytelling process in connection with the complex meaning expressed by the African-American (O'Toole, 2018)

4.5 QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWS JOURNEY

In social research, semi-structured interviews are techniques to discern meanings through thick descriptions and narrative. Thick description is the concept in social research that expands the data obtained from ordinary information into a deeper understanding and interpretation of the respondent's story. Denzin (1989) depicts the thick description as follows:

It presents detail, context, emotion, and the webs of social relationships that join persons to one another. Thick description evokes emotionality and self-feelings. It inserts history into experience. It establishes the significance of an experience, or the sequence of events, for the person or persons in question. The voices, feelings, actions, and meanings of interacting individuals are heard in thick description.
(Denzin, 1989, p. 83)

Therefore, in getting the respondents to provide the needed data, it was crucial to interact with them – this involved interviews in semi-structure and flexibility (Atkinson & Coffey, 2003). The interview was in a semi-structured form, giving me room for a guide to facilitate how to ask questions and to follow up and probe further if the desired answer is not provided. Concerning Taylor et al (2015: 335-337) I drafted the interview guide with questions and points of reference to guide me on how to ask further questions which had elements of flexibility to restructure questions when needed easily. Elliott (2005) emphasizes three key features of narrative chronological, meaningful, and social. The chronological events of the story can give a causal interpretation, which explains how the event had meaning to the individual. It is important to appreciate the reason why the informant is sharing the event and how they see this as significant. The process by which the narrator and the researcher work together to interpret the meaning is social. These features of narrative were weaved into the interview guide to understand more deeply the experiences of the African-American tourist (Elliott, 2005) As a

matter of fact, the interview took the shape of dialogue and discussion which lasted for 30 to 45 minutes approximately. This enabled the respondents to speak their minds without hesitation freely. Well, none of them was hesitant; they were vocal, free, and great storytellers.

4.5.1 MY ROLE AS AN INTERVIEWER

As suggested by Kvale (2006 :482)

Creating trust through a personal relationship here serves to obtain a disclosure of the interview subjects' world efficiently. The interviewer may, with a charming, gentle, and client-centered manner, create a close personal encounter where the subjects unveil their private worlds. A quasi-therapeutic interviewer role (Kvale, 2006)

I assumed the role of quasi-therapeutic interviewer, in a very smooth and charming approach. Even though, Kvale (2006: 483) strongly opposes using dialogue in place of interview. Clearly stating that, it is misleading and sometimes the interviewer tends to agree with the respondents, which is not the original tradition of interviewing in a one-way dialogue. Kvale (2006: 483)'s protest is that the formal aspect of asking questions and expecting responses should be the focus (Kvale, 2006). However, in this study, based on Järvinen (2001:264), the interviewer is not just a neutral receiver but an active participant in the whole knowledge production process (Järvinen, 2001). Certainly, the asymmetrical power relation of the interviewer and interviewee cannot be denied. There is always going to be someone dominating in the interview space. To keep pushing questions and wait for response like a ping-pong, was interjected with my follow-up questions and comments to relax and encourage the interview to speak more. As much as possible the interview was done in a form of a dialogue, but as the interviewer, I had maximum control of the interview. I was never distracted or not focused because of the responses, nor was I carried away in any manner during the interview because of some emotional display. This claim is a sign of constructivist world view, where I see myself involved in the knowledge process (knowledge co-production) even though I remained detached of my respondent's response (Atkinson & Coffey, 2003). All the interviews were done on-line via social media. Banyai & Glover (2012) suggests that there is an increase in online activities, and it becomes increasingly important to resort to online through social activities and data could be acquired likewise (Banyai & Glover, 2012). All except one, which was done on WhatsApp video, the rest was held on a zoom video call. Most of my informants were comfortable with a video call, only a few choose to do audio. The interview was however audio recorded only. The audio-

recorded interviews permitted me to repeatedly examine the interviewees' responses, and the entire discussion during and after the interview was transcribed. As a conversation and being fully involved in the interview process, it would have been difficult for me to take proper notes during the discussion because of the need to track what was said. Recording the interviews also informed my decisions about ethics (see ethical considerations) and seeking consent from the respondent.

4.6 SAMPLING, INFORMANTS AND SAMPLE SIZE

Leaning toward the narrative inquiry gives me the idea that purposive sampling is the ideal approach to the sampling process. Since I was looking for African-Americans who had experienced the Year of Return, and had traveled to Ghana in 2019, these participants were better fits for the study. As a key description, I was also seeking for African-Americans who never visited Ghana before and decided to travel to Ghana because of the Year of return campaign. Even though I could have interviewed any African-American who had one time, or another ever travelled to Ghana, their story, experiences, and narratives would have differed from what I have gathered. Strictly, I selected only those who had been to Ghana in 2019. Their narratives and stories, make them unique and arguably best fit to understand how they express their identity.

A sample size of 10 respondents was achieved as expected. By suggestion, Picken (2018 :205), admits that when selecting informants, it is advisable not only to consider the informants based on fulfilling the objective of the research but also consider some very practical measures such as accessibility, availability among others (Picken, 2018). Therefore, I also selected my informants based on practical measures such as availability, willingness, and eagerness. Only 1 out of the 10 is not an African-American but a tour guide who live in Ghana. All the rest are African- Americans who visited Ghana as tourist and to have an experience with the year of return initiative.

As the African-American in Ghana, they were also a ⁴gate keeper. They helped me get to the informants. Finding the informants might not have been possible without the help of my gate keeper. I found several people on Facebook; I messaged them, but none was willing to interview with me. Some other people did not even reply to my messages at all.

⁴ For the sake of confidentiality, I cannot give any extra information on who my gate keeper was in order to keep them anonymous.

Nevertheless, apart from the gatekeeper, I interviewed four males and 4 females, and one gender-fluid person. This enabled me, to get the different gendered perspectives from the narratives. With 4 males and 4 females, I get a clear-cut dichotomy in the gendered perspective on how the Year of Return 2019 affects Identity. This finding also informed me specifically, on how each gender performs and narrate their tourism experiences which gives an in-dept perspective and understanding. The responses allow me to compare the dynamism of the different travelers with regards to gender.

4.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATION AND REFLEXIVITY

Coming from a social constructivist perspective gives more room to derive deeper understanding in a study (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). As an important element in qualitative research, too, there is an opportunity to pose as an intermediary between the researcher and the audience of the study as a knowledge producer. It is always very difficult to be aloof of the whole social knowledge production, especially when posing as a force of social production. A researcher's personal involvement in the whole study process makes an interesting and interactive experience, not requiring an insider or outsider positionality (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). Even though, these philosophical ideas are guiding my research, I presume foremost that, the idea is to co-produce knowledge with the researched being fully aware of my position as a researcher and being reflexive; (a critica look at my own beliefs and assumptions vis-à-vis my informants (Bryman, 2016)) of my influence on the work. Diefenbach (2009:876) argues that, a methodological position and choice of research design tends to affect the data collected and researchers must therefore address these issues (Diefenbach, 2009). Whereas Diefenbach (2009:876) is correct, (Connelly & Clandinin (1990) clarifies that, for narrative inquiry unlike other forms of qualitative research where reliability, validity and generalizability is required, narrative inquiry relies on criteria and the language of narrative (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). This does not make me appear flawless or with nothing to worry about. I am very reflexive on the whole data collection journey: my comments, some questions if directly leading informants, and my approach in the different interviews.

I reflect on my academic background in political science and French, as well as peace studies and humanitarian studies, and I do not forget my current studies in tourism. I have reflected on this study from an interdisciplinary point of view. This reflection made me more critical with the research and even how I asked my questions during the interview. They were worded cautiously, and I was strictly conscious that I did not want to cause any harm in any way. Diefenbach (2009: p. 877) establishes that “*Researchers are humans,*” and as much as we try

to remain neutral in the research process, we are not only affected by the issues we investigate, but normally, we also may have some opinion about how the issues we are researching should be. As a Ghanaian-born, I admit that there is a tendency to want to interject criticism or backlash from my respondents in any case. Therefore, I reflected on these and made sure my involvement was only to make the narrative of my respondents clearer due to cultural differences. For example, one of my clients asked.

*...what is the name of the fancy woven cloth the women wear on special occasions
it's so beautiful I couldn't resist it...(AAF2)*

I quickly knew that was what she meant and I had to explain that that was the ⁵kente cloth (Micots, 2024). It is hand woven and can be found in the different parts of the country. Even as my informants asked me some questions during the interview, I made sure to answer them but not to be swayed away.

As an ethical consideration, anonymity and confidentiality were 2 key considerations made before conducting the interview. I deemed it crucial to assure my informants that, their identities will not be known and recognized in this study as I consider the data I collected personal data. Furthermore, I had informed my participant that, the study will avoid attributing comments and presentations that can hint any form of resemblance to them, this was not even a problem at all, they were even willing to have their names appear in the study but since they would be anonymous it was equally good for them, I did not have to register the data on NSD (The Norwegian Centre for Research Data) since my informants were going to be anonymous. We established a research trustworthiness and this made the data collection process smooth. On the issue of recording, transcribing and storing data, they were assured that, I have my private storing devices like voice recorder and Laptop which are all protected with passwords. Moreover, I assured them that I would be responsible for protecting their identity and that their names and details would be anonymized as prescribed by NSD in their guideline on handling personal data.

The history of the kente cloth is inspired by the spider web. Originally, the use of kente was reserved for Asante royalty and limited to special social and sacred functions. Even as production has increased and kente has become more accessible to those outside the royal court, it continues to be associated with wealth, high social status, and cultural sophistication. <https://smarthistory.org/kente-cloth/>

4.8 CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

To begin with, the challenge of no contact was that I could not meet my respondents in person to conduct interviews for this study. However, thanks to technological advancement, I could interview my responses online, mainly through Zoom. To understand how it poses a challenge, during some interviews, I could not see the facial expressions of my informants. For some, there were a lot of distraction from kids and friends during the interviews, this would have definitely been different in-person.

Again, the narrowing down; in this study, the scope addresses 2 key (how) research questions. I had to narrow down the study before and after data collection in order not to deviate from my original focus and motivations (See Chapter 1). The limitations can be seen in the literature review and theory sections, respectively.

4.9 CONCLUSION

This chapter focused on the study's methodological considerations (social constructivism) and the methods used in the data collection process. I duly discussed what informed my choice of the research methodology, sources of data, informant selection, sample size, positionality, and ethical reflections. I also touched on the limitations and challenges that I encountered and how I addressed these accordingly.

5 DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents and discusses the findings of the research. The research questions defined in Chapter 1 will be addressed during the discussion. I begin the analysis with a brief presentation of my informants. Then, I will briefly discuss the method and technique used for the data analysis, and the discussion will proceed.

5.1 PROFILE OF INFORMANTS

As presented in section 4.7, a total of 10 informants were interviewed. One of the 10 is a tour guide. Four of the remaining identify as males, and four identify as females. A gender fluid person was also interviewed. Below is a summary of the profile.

Table 1. Summary of informant’s profile

No	INFORMANT	AGE RANGE	GENDER
1	AA	YOUTH	F
2	AA	ADULT	F
3	AA	YOUTH	F
4	AA	ADULT	F
5	AA	YOUTH	M
6	AA	YOUTH	M
7	AA	YOUTH	M
8	AA	ADULT	M
9	AA	YOUTH	N
10	TG	YOUTH	N/A

Source: fieldwork data, 2023.

Figure 2 presents the informants' profile—to ensure my informants' anonymity during the discussion, (AAM) will be referred to as African-American Male and (AAF) African-American female. AAN is for the gender-neutral person. TG is the tour guide. There are seven youths as against 3 Adults. Youth, in this case, refers to all informants below the age of 40, and Adults are informants over 40 years. Each informant has a specific number assigned to them. This will make it easier to refer to an informant's narrative. For example, if I want to talk about informant 1, I will address them as (AAF1).

5.2 DATA ANALYSIS TECHNIQUE

The principal objective of this chapter is to answer the two key research questions guiding the study: *How did the Year of Return experience influence the identity narrative of some African-American tourists? How does the African- American tourist narrate their tourism experience in Ghana ?* How do I do this with my enormous amount of data? With a good observation of my research questions, they all answer to the how question. This indicates that, my data cannot be predicted. Still, it is an exploration of the stories from the informants, which gives room for multiple interpretations and critiques of the narrative. I used a combined approach from O'Toole's (2018:177)'s multi-layered approach, which demonstrates the 3 multi-dimensions of narrative inquiry: temporality, sociality, and place (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). I followed the O'Toole (2018:177)'s questions of *how is the story told ? what is said in the story? wherein the story is produced and told?*. In essence this led me to rethink the Year of Return, 2019 experience as a social event of tourism experience in Ghana as a phenomenon that explains temporality, sociality and place. I also used Kraus's (2006) process of narratology as a secondary step for the discussion itself. Kraus (2006: 105) admits that there are many narratives and it is prudent to choose the right one. In choosing the right narrative I have become the co-creator of the narrative. I carefully ensured my co-construction approach was limited by staying within the theoretical reality of identity and representation. To build on the first approach, I took Kraus (2006: 106)'s *“position critical to the ideological content of the idea of closure and coherence, insisting instead on the multiplicity of meanings and their interactive construction.”* Here, I tried to deconstruct coherence, which is more like replacing it with an exploration of multiple meanings. I did not seek to look for oneness all the time. Finally, I analyzed the narratives as performative, where not only the words and stories matter but an embodiment of the tourism experiences. I tried to live the experiences too. For example, one of my informants said.

I wanted to feel everything...so ...then. I walked barefooted on the beach areas, I felt the refreshing breeze of the sea waves, I ate food at the beach, men that was good...whenever I.. I you know visit any places, I capture all important moments (AAM6)

In analyzing this story, I was captivated because I feel what he is describing is relatable and real. All these activities are performed together, involving all other senses, and becoming an embodied experience (Everingham et al., 2021). As a practical element as well, I tried to project my informant's stories as natural as possible as it should to retain the accurate narrative. This is what McAlpine (2016 :33) depicts of narratives, not only featuring the social context and a temporality, but also making the speaker (narrator) an active agent in the storytelling process. Referring to Riessman (2008), narratives are best observed as a view into how identities are constructed (McAlpine, 2016). To be more precise, how people construct the stories of their experiences can be understood as connected to their expression of identity (Riessman, 2008).

5.3 DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

As a point of departure, during the data analysis and discussion. The informants' responses will be delineated in italics for differentiation. Also, in explaining the stories and narratives of my informants, I will be actively responding to the research question on how the Year of Return experience influences the identity of the African-American- through - how the African-American narrates their experiences. The data presents the findings in 4 narrative levels/stages which are Before their travel to Ghana (Stage 1), initial contact with Ghana/Africa (stage 2), During the sojourn in Ghana (Stage 3), Back to America (Stage 4). Each stage of the narrative presents a different identity transformation level for the African-American.

5.3.1 A CRITICAL RESPONSE (STAGE 1)

Chapter 1 on the Year of Return is a call for the African-American to experience and discover Africa and Ghana through the Year of Return initiative. Before elaborating on the data and the narratives from my respondents, let me briefly summarize the Year of Return narratives. Even though, the events were schedule for 2019 and beyond, the opening ceremony for the Year of Return commencement took place in September 2018 at Washington DC. This gives the idea that, the initiative had been well planned and reflected on years before. Historically it has always been an agenda for the Ghanaian Authorities to stage such a huge tourism experience. I make the arguments and an assumption that, any African-American who participated in this

event must have been attracted by the narratives of the Year of Return, 2019 or the person has some deep-rooted motivation of identity search. Especially for those who had never visited Ghana before (a key description for selecting my informants). This is reflected in the data through my informant's narrative. More especially the year 2019 was a significant period that marked the 400th year the first slave ship arrived in Jamestown (Gebauer & Umscheid, 2021). The narratives of the Year of Return, capitalized on this significant period (2019) and expressed it as celebration period of 400 years of resilience. The campaign narratives are rather positive, you do not feel the provoking moments of having to learn about the Trans-Atlantic slave history necessarily. The Year of Return (2019) used narratives like lets us “*celebrate 400 years of resilience*”, we invite all diaspora family (African- Americans) to “come home”. The Ghanaian Embassy in Luanda Angola specifically used this narrative on their website.

*We are focused on ensuring **that our brothers and sisters** have a safe, pleasant and wonderful **journey home** so they will want to come back, get involved, see the **opportunity that exists in Ghana for us to work together and begin to rebuild** what has been stolen and lost over the past 400 years (EmbassyoftheRepublicofGhana, 2019).*

Reiterating also what the president of the Republic of Ghana had said during the lunch; “*it is important that this symbolic year—400 years later—we commemorate their existence and their sacrifices*”(Tetteh, 2019). They refer to African-Americans as brothers and sisters (family) – or members of the family who are elsewhere and must come home. The same narrative projects staging and key elements of commercialization of events (Mensah, 2022). I was curious to understand how the disparity in the narratives of the year of return as a commercialized tourism phenomenon, can function simultaneously as a homecoming event. How does the idea of coming home to a family, contests being a tourist seeking meaning out of the everyday life (Cohen, 1979). I probed with a series of different questions to understand how my informants were motivated to be in Ghana specifically 2019 and their expectations. I tried to avoid the redundancy in repetitive response to gain new narratives.

You could have traveled to Ghana at any time but why did you decide to go to Ghana in 2019?

*My God, you ask very interesting questions (laughs... feeling excited). You know, living in America, **I have watched a lot of movies and seen how the African culture is expressed and the whole slave history and our ancestors were***

*inhumanly molested...I feel like...I try to connect the dots in mind, and something seems to be missing. It's like working on a puzzle and you have a missing piece...I knew there was more too African than what we see in movies and social media. **I knew I had to go to Ghana someday** and it couldn't have been better any other time, let me tell you something really strong (feeling emotional) I watched a particular documentary on the how human beings were brought from Africa to Europe and America as just some people who didn't exist, that made me really sad...well, I really wanted to go to see these places, know about the culture and a lot more...also find out where they were.. they were kept for myself and to know that this whole movement from Ghana was huge for me it did say a lot.... I'm so glad I went (AAF2).*

*I knew about "**BlackLivesMatter's**", and it did remind me of Africa all the time. I mean I have been living the American dream with a very good job and all that ...and what was left for **me I would say is to feel safe in me**, I keep imagining that and wondering why it's so difficult to be black, I would think that it can be better in Africa any day... That year (referring to 2019) things were easier, my friends helped me get the visa...(AAF1).*

*I have a lot of Ghanaian friends and they tell me about Ghana all the time. To be **honest I think we might all be from the same place cos we bonded too well and easy, and I don't know how to explain it**, but I just knew I'm from Ghana. I had nothing to prove it, but I could feel it. When my friends told me about the the year something? What do you call it?... thank you for that the Year of Return. It felt like mama is calling me home (AAM5).*

That year I was going to be 40, I had decided to go Africa, when I knew about the homecoming event, I decided on Ghana, I wanted to spend my birthday in Africa, and Ghana got lucky (AAF4).

According to the narratives presented by the informants, they demonstrate a strong sense of push factors from their own history and internal motivations (Otoo et al., 2021). Informant AAF2's narratives relate to the diasporic consciousness. She has been enlightened by movies, documentary and this has awakened an identity consciousness. Diasporic consciousness is the spark that arouse sensitivity to new forms of engagement with the history and identity (Nwosu,

2019). The quest to go to Ghana in 2019 was largely an internal motivation factor rather than the narratives projected by the Year of Return, 2019.

For AAF1, her reference to the BlackLivesMatter's movement is a clear indication of the African Diaspora Identity which connects to the history of slavery and factors surrounding the new forms of segregation against the black person. Most African-Americans living in the United States of America have faced racial violence and segregation in one form or the other (Dodson, 2014). There has been a strong influence of racial violence having a connection to the push factors of the African- American (Dillette, 2021). *If America does not feel like home for the American, where do you go?* This was a critical introspective question posed by AAF2. I think they will look for home elsewhere. In this case the Year of Return narratives aligns with the push factors of the African-American. Even though these African-Americans had the quest and desire to discover their African identity, they had not made any compelling efforts to visit Ghana. It didn't also appear as though they were eager to travel anytime soon. It can be agreed that, the year of return Narrative are very assuring. Visas were effortlessly issued and integrating measures were put in place also to allow them to relocate to Ghana under the most judicious ways possible.

The year of return narratives seems to have wooed them to believe in a better society without racial pressure, no discrimination, or insecurities of any form. The narrative "Come home", come meet your family appears as the panacea for all oppression, domination and subordination faced. The "tripartite inequality" as social factors illustrated by Dodson (2014), make the average African-American question their identity in one way or the other - and these fuels a yearn for seeking an Identity. AAF4 decision to go to the Ghana to celebrate the 40th birthday can be see as a clear parallel response to the celebrating the 400th year of slave history narrative of the Year of Return. Powers (2011) opines that, to imagine that you belong a different community is a deciding factor for visitation. That is - you are more likely to visit this community. AAM5 demonstrates an absolute sense of belonging to the Ghanaian society. By associating with his friends and the Ghanian community around him, he already sees himself as a Ghanaian. The Year of return narrative seemed like a call for him, he was motivated to travel to Ghana to discover his connection with Ghana.

In summary, stage 1 of the narrative analysis examined the response of the informants vis-à-vis the Year of return, 2019's plea to the African-American. This call of the Year of return, was an extended invitation for a celebration of the year 2019 as the year of resilience of the Africans

who were rooted out of the continent to the Americas. It was time for African American-Americans to fill in this void by coming back home. Per the narratives, the African-American was eager to visit Ghana, not because of the call per se, but because they themselves had been ready to discover a part of them that is missing- this is described by Otoo et al., (2021) as the influence of motivation shaping the tourism experience (Otoo et al., 2021). Consequently, what the narrative of the Year of return accomplished, was the release of an unfathomable approach for the African-American to visit Ghana or relocate to Ghana in the most organized way possible through years of sober reflections and deliberate strategies. It was observed that, a response in affirmation to this call, is the first step to discovering the African diasporic identity. The African-American becomes conscious of the African Identity at this stage and is willing to find out more about this identity. At this stage they can only imagine an identity based on knowledge and history. Powers (2011) shares the view that, symbolic elements create an imagined identity to a community, in this case, the African-American shares symbolic elements to the Ghanaian community. At this point, African-Americans are fully aware of some significant symbolic elements that create a personalized identity. In the narrative, like videos of some places, events, pictures, and symbolic elements are all creating an authentic identity for the African-American.

5.3.2 REDISCOVERY (STAGE 2)

One of the major findings of the study is illustrated in how the experience of the Year of Return, 2019 paved way for the informants to see Ghana beyond the ordinary through this tourism experience. All the informants I talked to had never been to Ghana before and only a few had been to some other African countries as mere tourist and not with the aim of discovering their roots. As a key criteria for selecting my informants, I wanted African-Americans who had never been to Ghana on a root tourism basis. This key criteria becomes vital when they expressed that, experiencing for yourself is truly different from what you hear and see. With the informants interviewed and spoken to, you could see excitement, feelings of fulfillment and happiness- basically mixed feeling and all the quagmire when they were narrating their experiences. They didn't hold back on any emotions at all, they expressed everything from being surprised, to sad, emotional and the endless list goes on and on. They mixed feelings with their experiences in Ghana. The key words for their expressions was mostly around rediscovery and connection of/with Ghana vis-à-vis what they have heard from friends and media. This changes in perspective from informant to informant, their narrative constructs the ideas of who their forefathers would have been, what their history is and new meanings – attempt to re-write

history and change narratives. This is the first step in how their identity is influenced. An expression of rediscovery births new realities of identity. From the data;

*1. Right on the flight, almost everyone was black... I mean I see **black people** every day, don't get me wrong, but this was **a new experience** for me, it felt different, and you **feel at home** and comfortable with everyone, you don't feel judged or very introspective of your actions. So, when we arrived, I was amazed, I cried...there were these ladies...dressed in the African regalia to welcome us with dancing and expressing that Ghanaian culture...everyone was happy around me and it was all smiles. Everyone see you and respectively says "akwaaba" (Welcome in the Akan Language) later on I found it means welcome. **I was truly welcomed** in a fanciest way you can imagine (AAF2).*

*2. I must be very frank, Ghanaians really know how to welcome you, at the Airport, in the hotels, **I really felt welcomed**...I felt these people want me here...I said to myself that I was going to have a really nice time (AAF3).*

*3. In Ghana, **I didn't feel like a different person** at all, I saw people who looked like me, when I spoke to people that brought the difference, they could make me out, and sometimes I didn't even know some people were black Americans until they spoke to me. it was like...yeah... you meet different kinds of black people from the UK, from the Caribbeans, from America and everyone is black...**I was at peace** ...I would say I was a black person among black people and that was so cool (AAF1)*

*4. when I arrived in Ghana, it was evening, ...too late and I was a little tired... the following day everything was calm **I love the environment, the energy, the vibe and it didn't feel so different from being with black people** in the US, I just felt the same connection, I don't know how to describe it to you, but when you meet fellow black people you connect with them, that is just it (AAN9).*

*5. I don't know if other African-Americans know how **it feels to be home**, man...when I got to Ghana, **I didn't have to be there for a long time to know that this place is home**, I loved it, it was so unique and refreshing, I felt like someone just handed over something precious I lost to me. I'm not really an emotional person but I was emotional (AAM8).*

6. *This experience is refreshing, ...just my arrival in Ghana was a great fulfillment and accomplishment for me, **everything felt so real and authentic for me**, it was opportunity to explore Ghana, and experience the wonderful things that I have heard, I was, amazed, happy and I didn't feel like the odd one, I met a couple of the white folks and they looked like they don't belong here (AAF4).*

I inquired from my informants, what their first and initial impression of Ghana was. They all expressed their feelings and narratives in different ways. Some felt comfortable, some felt at peace, some felt as home and for some they felt the Africanness and sameness. Generally all my informants felt welcomed. The most obvious thing for them is that their blackness becomes real. They get to meet several other black people from Africa, and some from other continents as well and that is not self-disputed. Referring to Chapter 3, this study projects the views that identity transformation of the African-Diaspora is a process that comes through self-reflection and construction, deconstruction and even negotiations.

At stage of the identity transformation process – the African-Americans agree to have a connection with Ghana. This connection reveals new meanings and new discovery which are beginning to unfold. For example, (AAM8) had expressed that, *I don't know if other African-Americans know how **it feels to be home***. From the narrative we discover that AAM8 is in touch a new meaning of reality, though we might have heard, seen and even imagined some scenarios, it is a quintessential experience to come to the reality. For AAM8 an identity negotiating process is assumed to be birthing out of intercultural interactions with the contact with Ghana. A direct contact with their individuals' self-reflections and the social forces will be acting against each another (Ting-Toomey, 2005). This is similar for AAF2 who expresses that *...but this was **a new experience** for me, it felt different, and you **feel at home***. At this stage of their tourism journey, much has not been achieved and a significant transformation in identity cannot be seen but the process is still on-going. Furthermore, AAM8 knew right from the beginning that *...when I got to Ghana, **I didn't have to be there for a long time to know that this place is home**, I loved it, it was so unique and refreshing...* he loved Ghana as it was. He installed an adaptive meaning of identity. Chatman et al (2005) views identity as adaptive both for the self and the social group as a whole. How individuals will construct their identities will be based on the everyday life situations for personal life and as a collective identity (Chatman et al., 2005). The study observes from Chatman et al (2005) views on identity as an adaptive process. The everyday life experiences in the tourism journey adds to the identity

build-up process. AAF4 expressed an idea of adapting to the black/African in comparison with the white people he saw. *I was, amazed, happy and I didn't feel like the odd one, I met a couple of the white folks and they looked like they don't belong here* (AAF4).

During my bachelor's degree in French, I observed how various early francophone authors such as David Diop wrote about desiring an African identity even though they were Africans (by birth). Recalling that, David Diop was born in Bordeaux, France, Diop is often considered one of the most promising French West African poets. His short life's work often involved his longing for Africa. Diop's parents were Senegalese, but he did not grow up in Senegal. His poems best express this a rather interesting phenomenon which relates to the African-American rediscovery. To think and long so hard to be African even though you are African can be an ironical situation, for David Diop. Likewise this is a reflection of some of the African-Americans with their roots from Africa - His poems all compiled in his book "*coup de pilons*" (Diop, 1973) is also the picture of the African-American not fully detached from the American identity but claiming an all African identity. It's a two-sided scenario. In one of his famous poems "*au pres de toi*" translated as your presence in English, evokes the individual expression of meaning to his own identity as a way of reflecting of their self-identity transformation process. Here.

Your Presence

*In your presence I have rediscovered my name
My name that was hidden so long under the pain of separation
I have rediscovered the eyes no longer veiled with fever
And your laughter like a flame piercing the shadows
Has revealed Africa to me beyond the snows of yesterday
Ten years my love
With days of illusion and abandoned ideas
And sleep restless with alcohol
Ten years of suffering poured on me from the world's breath
Suffering that burdens today with the taste of tomorrow
And turns love into a boundless river
In your presence I have rediscovered the memory of my blood
And the necklaces of laughter hung round our days
Days it was sparkling with ever new joys.*

In comparison to David Diop's poem, in your presence, I rediscovered my name. As the African-American who has never visited Africa, moves to Ghana, they rediscover they can have some African names, as a symbol of identity. Below I recall my interview with (AAF2) during which she expressed that; she had a Ghanaian name during her visit to Ghana.

Informant: ...by the way you forgot to ask me what my Ghanaian name is?

Interviewer: Hahahhahaha...yeehaw you do? so what is your Ghanaian name?

Informant: Well, I'm born on Saturday so it's supposed to be Ama, right?

Interviewer: That's correct!

Informant: Wow! I still got it.

Adapting a Ghanaian name is a not a new phenomenon among the African-Americans when they return to Ghana, in a ⁶youtube video (EfyKimora, 2023), African-Americans celebrate their names given to them by the Ghanaians in the Ashanti Region of Ghana. This celebration is a cultural ceremony that has meanings. The narrative of taking a Ghanaian name implies that you associate with Ghanaians, or you are a part of the Ghanaian society. In other ⁷cases (BLOG, 2023), there are rituals involved that goes beyond just getting a name but taking a spiritual identity. This ritual involves a baptism which an open confession you're you are now spiritually part of the community. This is also the case for (AAF2) who adapts the name or better still gets the name from the Ghanaian counterparts. In the Akan tradition, mostly Among the Ashanti's, Fanti's, Akyems, Akuapims, Bono among others. Each day of the week has male and female names that accompanies it. These names may become part of a person's registered formal names or just casual home names. Being a full fledge Akan with my father being a Fanti and my mother an Akyem, I have 2 different names for a Tuesday born. Kwabena (for the Akyems) and Ebo (for the Fanti's). what would have been your Akan name? find out from here ⁸(Aidoo, 2023).

⁶ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YTPzWD2yXBA&ab_channel=EfyKimora

⁷ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ucv7bGMNfKk&ab_channel=PBSENCHERYBLOG

⁸ <https://theculturetrip.com/africa/ghana/articles/everything-you-need-to-know-about-the-ghanaian-tradition-of-day-names#:~:text=Examples%20include%3A%20Sunday%20%E2%80%93%20Akwasie%2C,%E2%80%93%20Kwame%2C%20Kwamena%2C%20Kwamina.>

A step further, David Diop literarily illustrates, identity with rediscovery, with his metaphoric description of *eyes no longer veiled*, and revelation of *African beyond the snow* a literary way of saying, discovering Africa in the land of Africans and for Africans. Some scholars such as Dillette (2021) refer to the rediscovery as the diasporic consciousness or the double consciousness of the A—African diaspora. The veil in essence is metaphoric but it always represents the initial stage of connection and self-awareness of knowing that a part of you exist elsewhere. Whereas some African Americans embrace the consciousness of this strong connection, some African-American do not openly accept this consciousness. In A. Dillette (2021:10)'s findings, similar evidence is produced where the connection to Ghana does not awaken some African-Americans, they are indifferent and it reflects in the data presented (A. Dillette, 2021).

From my point of view, I get where both of you are coming from, I really do. For me is, this trip has given me a greater understanding of why I am the way I am, and why Black (American) culture is the way it is. Like I said earlier, I cannot claim being an African, because I am not. But I also realize that I am not fully American in the way that America tries to prescribe my identity to me. I am cut from many cloths, some of which I now know is culturally African. I know that my loud and boisterous ways, my dancing and attraction to colorful clothing can be linked to this land, and now, I can go back home and feel less apologetic about this ...we all have to realize that we are who we are, and yes, this is rooted in the horrific past of our enslaved ancestors (A. Dillette, 2021).

This narrative is reappearing in my data as well where my informant expressed a state of confusion.

I know this may sound strange and weird at the sametime for you, but the reality is I was so confused at the initial stage. I would not have travelled to Ghana, alone by myself, but my mom was not well and she back out at the last minute. All my friends developed cold feet and did not come with me. That was just by the way... so what I'm trying to say is that my mom is a firm believer of the black race and their issues. Just to be clear of where my interest stems from...right ...right...back to my point; when I arrived in Ghana, I was amazed, it was beautiful with rich culture and everything. But I did not feel one 100 percent Ghanaian as some people on social media do, it seem so dramatic and fake to me.

It feels like they are overdoing everything. To be honest, I appreciate my roots are probably from Ghana...I don't know but I appreciate my American identity as well maybe for superficial reasons, but I do appreciate both and it's confusing as...you know yeah (AAM7)

Unlike Dillette (2021) who encounters quite a few African- Americans whose initial contact and connection with Ghana and the Year of Return, 2019 portrays an indifference in identity, only (AAM7) 's narrative suggests that they are indifferent of the outcomes with the initial stage of reconnection all the rest admits that they felt a strong connection with Ghana. For AAM7, the year of return narratives have different meanings for him...*when I arrived in Ghana, I was amazed, it was beautiful with rich culture and everything. But I did not feel one 100 percent Ghanaian as some people on social media do, it seem so dramatic and fake to me. It feels like they are overdoing everything. To be honest, I appreciate my roots are probably from Ghana.* It is the natural for African-Americans, to have multiple identities. These activities are activated with meanings and at some point, they may choose to uphold the hybridity in the identity construction. That is being African and American at the sametime (Cohen, 2008; Kokot et al., 2004). There is still however, the possibility of an identity change in AAM7's situation, referring to Stets & Serpe, (2013:28) the possibility of identity change is embracing the "simultaneous activation of two or more identities in a situation". When several of these identities intersect in a situation, it more likely to have some identity meaning changing overtime. It appears that specific experiences are likely to trigger the meanings of AAM7 to have one's identity over the other. This will be observed in the next stages of the identity transformation journey.

5.3.3 CULTURAL RECONNECTION (STAGE 3)

In this stage of identity transformation, I reflect on the how the African-Americans expresses their identity through narratives surrounding the tourism experience. As I have argued that narratives are performative and the expression of narrative is an expression of identity, I will analyze the implicit and explicit ideas on how the expression of the tourism experiences influenced and gave new meanings to the African-American. In this stage – this is where African-Americans are exploring Ghana through the visitations of different places, participating in various activities among others. This stage fundamentally walks us through the touristic journey itself of the African-American, the African-American's stay in Ghana and performative

activities that transpired through the Year of Return's Campaign. The Year of Return, 2019, was a yearlong campaign that had several programs organized for the African-American. Since some of these activities are planned out by travel organizations and groups, some of them were already enforced for the tourists to participate. According to TG (Tour Guide) *we try as much as possible to tailor their activities in the way that would respond to their desires and goals.* On the other hand, some other African- American tourists engaged in their own activities based on personal motivations and experiences. I reflect on how the identities of the African-American interacts and Negotiations takes place within the tourism experience journey.

5.3.3.1 A RECALL OF HISTORY

Each time I experience a recall of history about my ancestors...that was barbaric, I find myself saddened and angry. Through my imagination I try to transport myself back to that time so I could rescue my brothers and Sisters. These voices calling out give me a pathway to them. They were denied a full joyful life so today we live for them. Sometimes I feel like I hear them, laughing and talking and crying. It hurts, but when I come out of this spiritual experience, I am a better person, I love you my ancestors AAN9.

During my interview with AAN9, they told me of a poem they had written after visiting the slave castles. I enquired about why this poem was written after visiting these places and they replied that "*That was the true home we were invited to*" ...*we were invited home to meet our brother and sister and mothers and fathers, but they are all dead*". The Year of Return narratives had a string call of the come home narrative which made me curious to inquire about how home was conceptualized and constructed by the African-American. Almost all African-Americans who visits Ghana goes to the various slave castles or forts in the country. The most common experience with the slave history narratives from my informants is the expression of deep-rooted emotions (KamaSlyTV, 2024). Does this emotional experience necessarily translate into the feeling of home? while for some of the informants it is a reflection of home, for others these experiences were way too emotional to pass as home.

5.3.3.2 WHERE IS HOME?

Ann Reed (2015) 's book on pilgrimage tourism of diaspora Africans elaborates on the diasporic longings for homeland. In the book traveling and visiting homeland involves going to the slave castles and heritages sites that inspire the historical awareness of meeting with all family members. Visiting the various sites associated with the slave trade history and

experiences is a means of reconnection to home and to the ancestors (Reed, 2015 :7). Furthermore, Reed (2013 :536) 's conclusions explore the key features of some of the reasons of the travel to Ghana. Reed (2013) identified that for some African-Americans, visiting homelands entails that, they are on a journey to complete the cycle of return that their ancestors could not fulfil. This is an important pilgrimage travel where the embodied experience can even be done on behalf of a whole community, church members, family members, as a burden lifting sigh for the other members who cannot partake in. Bruner (1996: 291) also expresses that the African-American's visit to these sites is spiritual in nature, they struggle over meanings of these castles and forts to be made authentic for their spiritual satisfaction. Recalling that, a woman had fasted in the dungeons for 3 weeks and expressed after the fasting that she had reunited spiritually with her ancestors.

These sites seem to be sacred for the African- Americans to the extent that, they did not want any renovation to be made, they wanted to smell the original stench, and the dungeons to look as organic as possible. I was very enthused by all the various meanings attributed to these slave sites and the experiences that African-American have of these sites. This made me inquire about where home truly is for the African- American. Is it the slave sites they had visited or some other places?

*...When I visited the dungeons and slave castles (Elmina castle to be precise), it was an inhuman experience, I could never imagine what happened to them...I mean that experience felt rather awkward, **I would prefer the market areas than these dungeons AAM7.***

*...It is sad. But you learn a lot from it, that is what history is all about, for us to learn and know who we were and who we have become, **these visitations call for a us to be resilient to and acknowledge that our roots exist elsewhere ...AAF1.***

AAM7 and AAF1 seem to conflict on where they felt at home, for AAM7, the market areas were more preferably and comfortable than visiting the Elmina castles. What he expressed was the historic knowledge which was not satisfying for him. I obviously followed up with a question and some injections during the answering of the question of *why did you prefer the market areas?*

*Yes, so you are a Ghanaian and you know how your markets are, very open, with a lot of people. You see people everywhere....not, live in a small town and we don't have such huge markets....what fascinated me the most was the fact that, the hawkers just come to me and say hey bro, I don't understand what they say but I guess it will be do you wish to buy that and that, **they made me feel welcomed and appreciated that instilled me some sense of belonging** (AAM7).*

AAM7's initial encounter with Ghana or stage 1 was not filled a tenacious feature of the "I felt welcomed" narrative portrayed by other African-Americans. It is implicitly fair to say that he needed to see more before he could feel a sense welcome and self-acceptance. He does not necessarily share in the identity of the African-Americans feeling at home right from the onset - when you visit as AAM8 did, he expressed that "I didn't have to be there for a long time to know that this place is home".

The expression of his experience in the market is the acceptance of the African identity amidst the African people. To compare his reflection of identity with his stage 1 narrative, being among the American people he will feels completely accepted as well. This is not the case for AAF1 though, she expresses her narrative towards the rejection of the American identity while feeling all African. Referring to Bruner (2005: 249), identity is like cultures, it has points of departure as well as point a consensus. Identity can be contested in different cases when different meanings are given to it.

The Year of Return narratives seems to create the impression that, home is at the slave castles, participating in the first bath of the return at the ancestral river, the slave cemetery among other slave heritage sites in Cape Coast and Accra. This was evident when the various tourist groups and the tourism organization tailored their events with these experiences.

As expressed AAF3 below, some of the events like the visits to the slave sites were not all the fulfilling and narratives around this slave sites and its visitation are basically (ShowtimeTravel, 2023) emotional experiences and the backlash of the colonial systems which does not necessarily shape identity. There is more to see in Ghana than just the history of the transatlantic slave trade.

*there was something I didn't like about the tourism industry and that is. you are forced to accept their program ...I had to stay for less than 2 weeks and **their activities were limiting**. I see videos of people meeting local people and having a*

lot of fun with them, but I didn't visit a lot of places in Ghana as I had wanted to. When I hear the stories that people tell me, I am amazed... I do ask myself if it is the same Ghana that I visited AAF3.

AAM6 best describes this phenomenon through his personal experiences during his travel all over the country, and that taught him who he was. he discovered his identity. He attributed what shaped his identity to his personal experiences and travels in the country. Ghana is a multicultural country and heterogenous society with over 55 different languages and several ethnic groups. I personally reflected on AAM6's narrative of identity transformation where he said *after travelling in the entire country*. what that really means is that AAM6 saw all the different culture and communities. He tasted different meals, had different encounters and experiences, and realized that - it is the nature of Africans, one people with different ethnic groups and societies. I genuinely think when several experiences shape identity it tends to be more meaningful than just participating in a ritual or some organized activities.

*I came to Ghana and realized how much that I was not taught, I realized the importance of educating myself and I was eager to explore the entire country. I went to all the regions, and it did teach me who I am, I am from Ghana, **not because of all this Year of Return stories but I personally would want to admit that, I'm African, I'm a Ghanaian by choice, American by birth (AAM6).***

TV3 which one of Ghana's biggest television station, interviewed some African-Americans- who amongst all the amazing thing they had to say, stressed on how amazing people were to them in their Year of Return visits and campaign (TV3Ghana, 2020). A synthesis of this particular and my informant's narratives make me realise that home is not necessarily a place, but it's the experiences created and the activities around people, that instills the sense of belonging and the conceptual meaning of where you feel belonged. I can conclude this section by putting narratives together to say that home is the mixture of culture, people and experiences that makes you feel belonged. The African-American who does not live in Ghana can still identify with the experiences of home even in America. According to Higginbotham, (2012 :198) "*home maybe perceived in some profound sense through an imaginative reality as mythic symbol of an emotionally powerful cultural history which does not necessarily represent a simple factual past*" (Higginbotham, 2012)

5.3.3.3 INTERSECTIONALITY OF IDENTITIES

The Year of Return, as much as focused on projecting African culture and values, presents an opportunity to explore further and understand intricacies of identity and how that affects the experience of some African - Americans. Women represent a critical subset of this group. A woman's life may have a somewhat different lens than a man's - or rather if someone is perceived as a man or a woman. Society may, on purpose or by biological design, look differently at women versus men, and especially based on the intersectionality of their collective experiences and that will influence how that shape her tourism experiences. There must be critical reflections on the informants and the numerous identity labels that we can find on people Dodson (2014). In Sawyer et al., (2013)'s article of "*studying individual identities is good, but Examining intersection is better*", social identities of race, class, gender and social status will correspond to qualitatively deduce different meanings of experiences. (Sawyer et al., 2013, p. 81). The encounter of the African-American with the strong cultural Ghanaian people can exert some force on the intersectionality of the social identities and this can influence the tourism experience in a different.

It would have been easy to think that being a black woman among black women or being a black man among black men would be easy, but it is not entirely that easy. Being white of course also has its own fair share of the experience cake. Bruner (1996) discover that, African-Americans lamented on the different prices for visiting the castles which is deliberately directed towards African-Americans. Again, though the Year of Return narratives promises a lot of packages including citizenship and integrating policies and plans (Mensah, 2023), the Year of Return Campaign can be incredibly expensive specifically for the African- American. A cumulation of the informant's narrative at one point in times stressed on the way people were targeted at them to exploit them including venders, taxi-drivers, people who willingly offered to help them as well. These arguments are stirred up by my informant's vis-a-vis the Ghanaians. One of my informants expressed, "*...I don't why the dollar got so popular in Ghana*". Most Ghanaians view African-American in the host-guest relationship as rich and opulent and therefore they can capitalize on this opportunity of their visit - to get the maximum money from them (Mensah, 2015). Even the year of return narratives explores this phenomenon of *...come and help us build that which is lost*. The narratives project the African as the panacea for all the underdevelopment problems in Ghana.

In AAN9's case, A black person, who is gender neutral had different experiences with the societies. First, it was how people assumed that their gender as being woman and addressed her

- as her- this woman among others. Then it was how her different world views did not match the values and social system of the Ghanaian communities.

*I knew that going to Ghana and being a black person was not a problem, **but being a gender fluid person and a bi-sexual will give me problems.** Well, it was far better than I taught, it is just intricately built in the society that, every person who looks like me should be a woman. The most embarrassing moment for me was when I told a group of women that I did not want to have children. It was at a saloon; I was getting my hair done and there were about 6 to 7 women and all of them had kids. In turns, they advised me to have babies with very good explanations, I must admit. Even though these women were harmless, I felt very awkward, the more I tried to explain my situation to them the more they tried to convince me to change my mind. I knew I was never going to win, If I choose to belong here, I must understand everyone and the culture AAN9.*

*The other time, I had the rainbow colors on, I wore my pride in the streets of Accra... someone approached me and had a nice conversation with me after the conversation, I understood the conversation, it was the place I was at that time, it was not advisable **to be all colorful like that** and so I got my cloth changed. Prior to that I could see people staring at me very intently AAN9.*

It felt like most of the men always tried to want to help you and do everything for you...it was a good thing, but my feminist-self didn't like that ...you know I changed my perception; I did allow them to help every other time (AAF1).

From the reality of identity to the theoretical perspective, intersectionality has primarily the capabilities of revealing the reality of our multiple identities in response to our environment (Shields, 2008). AAN9 definitely feels African - but her experience with her multiple identity influenced her tourism experience and this is not the same for everyone. Whereas AAF1 is also on the edge with the strong feminist ideology, most of my male respondents did not express any major different experience with regard to intersectionality. These layers of identity made AAN9 question the African identity of being conservative and undynamic.

5.3.3.4 CULTURAL RENNAISANCE

Africa has that magic that will ignite your soul...the is culture is solid... it is therapeutic and medicinal, trust me...these are things you don't see in

*America,....there is respect...my child learned a lot of things, and he found a lot of things to be different but positive...I didn't regret taking the leap to explore the **untamed beauty of the Ghanaian people**...people are just happy...this Continent.my god has the best culture.... **the cloths, the customs, the cultural display** all did it for me...(All Informants).*

*When I took my first trip to Ghana and started travelling around, I felt incredibly deceived, I felt I was **manipulated by narratives that we have been told**, it is partly true. Of course there is poverty, there are some issues here and there, but man, Ghana is a beautiful place, and you learn a lot through **the culture and the people**....(All Informants)*

*I always tell people, when you go to Ghana, don't only go to the slave castles and all the other historical places, they are important, but you only see fabricated history that is not necessary, who did what and that is all nonsense... if you go to the to the chief palaces, and the traditional places in Accra.... **You see the chiefs with pure Gold, raw natural riches at display, it is a lot better than**.... there is the real me, I was rich and was robbed of my riches and now I am back to myself (All Informants)*

In the above narratives, I synthesized the various narratives of my informants on how identity is expressed in relation to the reconnection to the Ghanaian culture. Bruner (1996: 300) views a consequence of tourism as a revival of culture in among the Ghanaian folks. As an Anthropologist, he is aware that, most people are usually not enthused about their culture on ordinary day, however, in times of change and the in-flow of new audience, culture tends to expose itself in the most vibrant way (Bruner, 1996). This is the case for the Year of Return where culture was displayed at its best. On the ordinary day, the Ghanaian cultures will be displayed on special occasions. As cultural images and heritages became an interest to the diaspora, the local folks saw it as a crucial opportunity and necessity to uplift the societal traditions like festivals, dance, drumming among others in order to promote the culture of the people. They would have the opportunity to demonstrate their culture to foreigners and the youth and younger generations would specially take an interest to learn and preserve the common heritage that they share. The Year of Return narratives also upholds the Ghanaian culture in many ways including meeting African-Americans at the Airport with some traditional drumming and dancing as well as - singing and welcoming them with the most fashionable

traditional outfits as a form of cultural display. Again, the symbol on the Year of Return logo is a traditional symbol of star, waves and a stool ⁹“Nsoromma” on “Fawohodie” all referred to as adinkra symbols which express the Ghanaian culture. The miners in Ghana also designed the 24-carat gold medallion which the symbols of the Year of Return and the ¹⁰Sankofa symbol of returning to one’s culture and heritage and learning from that heritage (Year of Return, 2019).

According to the narratives of my informants, the cultural display was louder than the slave history, the slave history is seen as a call to history and evidence of historic narratives. The real meaning of identity is a unanimous exposure to the Ghanaian rich culture. The culture, the people, the dance, the cloths among others are vibrant narratives of identification – Also a performative expression of the imagined identity. The cultural experience by far is the only moment no informant contest identity. Even though there are some scenarios for AAN9 when culture contest identity, it is still negotiated through new meanings (Burke, 2006).

Another narrative in relation to cultural is how some informants felt like there is so much dynamism in culture, *I feel like in Accra, you... there is influx of western culture at display as compared to when you go up north. I really taught I could readily see the ancient ways of life here in Ghana but there is a lot of development, so you barely see that....* African- American in their tourist identity are still in search of the authentic life in the Ghanaian culture – where the African-American is becoming an opposition to the modern life of the Ghanaian cultural life (Olsen, 2002).

5.3.4 NEGOTIATED IDENTITY AS A CONSTRUCTION (STAGE 4)

In this chapter, I discuss the after reflections of the African-American vis-à-vis the Year of Return experience. It is easier to analyze the overall reflection as the full picture of how the African-American narrates their experience after going back home. After 2 or 3 years of visiting Ghana for most of them, a lot has happened, and the memories and meanings created have been contested by being in America and the new environment. Analyzing using the Negotiated identity theory and the possibility of Identity change by Burke (2006), time is an important factor and indication to investigate and observe the possibility of identity change (Burke, 2006). Lee et al (2007: 115) also affirms that in a situation or a given tourism context, “the continuous

⁹ A star “Nsoromma” existing on freedom “Fawohodie”.

¹⁰ Sankofa is an Akan word which literally means “go back and take” but in the context of the Year of Return, it means go back to the roots or history and learn from history.

process of compares and negotiations directs individuals to form a sense of belonging and pride to accept the norms, attitude, symbols, and behavior of the group” (Lee et al., 2007). In context, Maruyama et al., (2010) expresses the that, root tourist will need to evaluate their identity rather than reasserting them as the visits to the heriatge sites and ancestral lands projects social consequences worthy of reflctetion (Maruyama et al., 2010). The reflections of the year of return experience in relation to time is an important to observe the resulting effect of identity negotiation.

*I wish all of the blacks in America can come to Ghana.... I don't know about other African countries. But coming to Ghana is electrifying, you don't have to be told, you need to see it for yourself. When my kids are a bit older, they have to see Ghana for themselves. I'm so sad I get to see Ghana this late...I'm gonna go back there...**I see a lot of changes in my life after this experience** (AAF4)*

*I studied about some black dudes who have made the black community proud, I now know for sure why Marcus Garvey would want to spend his last days in Ghana. Ghana is a pretty woman; she can be addictive. For real, I will be back sametime next year...**you may not see how impactful this experience is but when you come back it is a whole new game for, ya** (AAM6)*

Comparing these 2 narratives from a similar question (what your impression of Ghana was when you arrived) proves that different experiences influence our self-awareness in a different way. What is similar here with these two narratives is the fact that, the rediscovery itself comes from a place of self-reflection. Critically analyzing these 2 narratives **...I see a lot of changes in my life after this experience & you may not see how impactful this experience is but when you come back it is a whole new game for, ya**. For each of them, it is after they travelled back to America that they realized the impact of the Year of Return on their Identity. These interviews took place between 2022-2023. I can infer from these narratives as well that, narrative reflects identity as suggested by Riessman (2008) and McAlpine (2016 :33), The active position of the informants, gives new meaning to their identity. From the point of what has changed and to the point of what is a real is the process of identity change. Living in a state of cross-sectional discovery of identity is the state of denying oneself of an identity to gain another. This is a function of identity construction through tourism experience (Burke, 2006; Stets & Serpe, 2013).

5.3.4.1 SYMBOLIC EXPERIENCE AS A FORM OF IDENTITY

Powers (2011: 1363) explores the diasporic public places where diasporic tourism takes place. The article reflects how place becomes the sphere of influence for identity formation for homeland tourists (Powers, 2011). Similarly, some important symbolic elements and places stands for the African-American in the narration of their tourism experience. one of such places is the door of no return.



Figure 2. Image of the door of no return at the Cape Coast Castle, Cape Coast (Flynn, 2023)

This Ancient door of no return (figure 2) has allowed millions of people through it, first by the enslaved people who had no hope of ever returning to their homelands - and the rest, including tourists, locals, and dignitaries, among others. The former President of the United States of America, President Obama's trip to Ghana was not only political; he visited the slave castles as well as historically emphasized the authenticity of these symbols (Osei-Tutu & Ayesu, 2018). While the door of no return, just like dungeons and other castles, has a deep-rooted symbolic meaning of oppression (Osei-Tutu & Ayesu, 2018), narratives from my informants express the symbolic element of freedom of escape in identity. The performative narrative of walking through that door is not entirely emotional anymore after years of self-reflection and soberness. For most of the tours, it is usually the last stage of the tour before going into the seas. This is also influencing the significant meaning of symbolic memory that is created.

*The tour at the castles were emotional and its sad to hear that aspect of our history. But **when I stepped of the door of return, I literally felt I have escaped**.... I felt fulfilled when I came out...(AAF3).*

*..It is that same door that represented horror **that represents freedom for us today**, it like they were made to suffer for nothing so that we could live for something great.. (AAM5).*

*One of the most significant experiences for me was coming through the door of no return, you get to **experience that you are not in chains and there is no ship waiting** to transport you overseas (AAM8).*

*Well, **I shouted freedom and freedom at last for everyone**, that is what it is for me, **I'm different** (AAN9).*

It is interesting to know that the door of no return no longer represents that horrific memory of chains and Cains, but it is a symbol of freedom. The new meanings and representation of the door of no return, is an evaluation of the African-American identity (Maruyama et al., 2010) with the symbolic element of reconciliation of historical memories. This comes after some years of the Year of return, tourism experience, it is clear that, the average African- American has negotiated the symbolic identity elements of the pain and anger with escape (AAF3) freedom for us today (AAM5) you are not in chains and there is no ship waiting (AAM8) I'm different (AAN9). This narrative of my informants engages with the representation of the symbolic meanings of a community that exists as African but does not live in Africa Powers (2011).

The reflections of my informants indicate the liberation from the horrors of history and coming to meet reality.

Again, another symbolic element that established an identity for the African-American is the last bath. For (AAF4), this ceremony was symbolic for her during her 40th birthday to birth a new self and be free from all imaginary traumas. She created new meaning out of this ritual through the symbol of bath and sacredness she feels new.



Figure 3. Assin Manso, Slave River site, and the Ancestral graveyard (Duane, 2021)

Similarly, two symbolic elements stand out for (AAF2), she took a Ghanaian name, and also purchased a kente cloth which symbolizes an element of identity change.

what is the name of the fancy woven cloth the women wear on special occasions it's so beautiful I couldn't resist it...I got some for myself... you know it is easier to forget who you are but this... reminds me all the time (AAF2)

The awareness of and reinforcement of (AAF2) identity is a symbolic meaning change. Even though initially this was just a piece of cloth which looked, colorful and attractive but with time living in America, reflecting on the cloth brings a change in meaning, described by Stets & Serpe, (2013:28) as a critical element of identity change.

A final element embedded in the symbolic experience is the creation of memory and social reconciliation. Social reconciliation functions to restore unity amongst social groups through knowing the past, instituting new norms that will result in rebuilding trust (Clark, 2013). Reconciliation in this context, for the African-American is the transitions from an individualistic approach whereas individuals and a group they have been 'victims' of racial discrimination, abuse, among others. This experience heals them thoroughly for example, *I literally felt I have escaped.... I felt fulfilled when I came out...(AAF3)* and make peace with themselves *that I buried everything that was not me... I left it there; I came from that place changed (AAF4)*. This produces the concept of Mac Ginty's Everyday Peace - where symbolic elements encountered in the everyday tourism life reconciles their personal identity (Mac Ginty, 2013). Although, it is impossible to restore the losses that have been suffered, recognition of these losses and acts of honor, can provide a sense of awareness and respect.

Respect that goes to cement the fact that lessons have been learnt from the past, never to be repeated (Clark, 2013), also through (AAF4)'s narratives - *I buried everything that was not me... I left it there; I came from that place changed (AAF4)*. These lessons are also made known and learnt by, in the case of the slave trade, the descendants of the enslavers who are also targets of Heritage and Root Tourism in this context. The kind of reconciliation – “defined as the repair and restoration of relationships and the rebuilding of trust” - built through root tourism experience is the most effective weapon against the recurrence of bloodshed (Clark, 2013).

6 CONCLUSION AND GENERAL REFLECTIONS

This concluding chapter will provide a summary of the major discussion in the various chapters of the study. It also includes some reflections on the findings and how these findings have a connection with the theories and conceptual approaches of the study. Furthermore, this chapter also shares my analytical contribution the research questions, I will finally, reflect on the limit to the study and how further research and study could approach this situation as well as a general concluding remark.

6.1 FINDINGS

At the beginning of the study, I had some objectives which were first *the study will explore the influence of the Year of Return 2019 on the African-American narratives* and second; *The study will analyze in in-depth, the narratives of the African-American Tourists experienced.* Third is *the study will uncover the underlying motivations that led African-Americans to travel to Ghana during the Year of Return Campaign through their narratives.* This was the focus of the study or what I wanted to achieve at the end of this study. as well some research questions that I sought to answer. After the analyzing the data and attempting to answer the research questions, I arrived at these conclusions. The study analyzed the narratives of the African-American in 4 identity transformation stages where each stage explored the various tourism experiences of the African-American with respect to the narratives expressed.

6.1.1 WHEN MOTIVATION MEET OPPORTUNITY

In stage one, the African-American answers the pertinent call of the Year of Return narrative like a mother calling the child to come home. Per the narratives, the African-American had been eager to visit Ghana, not because of the Year of Return narrative, but because they themselves had been ready to discover a part of them that is missing- this is described by Otoo et al., (2021) as the influence of motivation shaping the tourism experience (Otoo et al., 2021). What the Year of Return narratives did was to facilitate the return process. By all standards that has been very successful. It was also observed that a response in affirmation to this call is the first step to discovering the African diasporic identity.

6.1.2 REDISCOVERY

This is the second stage of the identity transformation process. At this stage based on the narratives, African-Americans get their first encounter and impression with Ghana. Most people feel welcomed, and their identities are already being negotiated. They begin to associate with African and love African. The African-America becomes conscious of the

African Identity at this stage and is willing to find out more about this identity. At this stage they can only imagine an identity based on knowledge and history. Initial encounter of the African-American begins the identity transformation process. The consciousness of the diaspora is awakened (Dayal, 1996). However, not everyone is initially influenced by the welcome and the new environment. Everyone responds to identity change in a different way.

6.1.3 A SENSE OF BELONGING

In stage 3, a lot happens here, this is where the African-American is exposed to the Ghanaian society. This is after they visit the slave castles and heritage sites. It is interesting to know from the narratives that the African-American admits that the cultural display was louder than the slave history, the slave history is seen as a call to history and evidence of historic narratives. The real meaning of identity is a unanimous exposure to the Ghanaian rich culture. The culture, the people, the dance, the cloths among others are vibrant narratives of identification – Also a performative expression of the imagined identity. The cultural experience by far is the only moment no informant contested identity. Even though there are some scenarios for the African-American when culture contest identity, it is still negotiated through new meanings (Burke, 2006). Here, the cultural elements as gestures of people, make the African-American also feel at home anywhere they are – even in American they can still feel at home.

6.1.4 MEMORY AND RECONCILIATION

At this stage the cycle is complete and the African-American is back to America or wherever they came from. However, there is always symbolic elements that reminds them of an identity they have. At this stage everyone has that one thing that is fixed in the memory that makes them feel belonged, safe and included in the African society. For some is an item they bought, for some of them, it is a specific experience like the river bath, or a name change among others. Powers (2011) describes this as the imaginary community of the African-American who imagines a sense of belonging in the society. A final element embedded in the symbolic experience is the creation of memory and social reconciliation. Social reconciliation functions to restore unity amongst social groups by knowing the past and instituting new norms that will result in rebuilding trust (Clark, 2013). Reconciliation in this context, for the African-American is the transitions from an individualistic approach whereas individuals and as a group they have been ‘victims’ of racial discrimination, abuse, among others and have learnt their history through experience. This experience heals them thoroughly.

6.2 ANALYTICAL CONTRIBUTIONS FURTHER REFLECTIONS

At the end of the study, I observed that, Personal experiences influence and shape identity in a meaningful way than collective, organized experiences for the African American. When you compare the various narratives, it is evident that, the everyday, day to day tourism activities and self-travel have more meaningful experiences to the African-American than the visits around the slave heritage sites or the organized programmes. While these visits create sober reflections and emotional gesticulations, it would not necessarily shape identity. On the other hand, the personal experience through the personal encounter tends to be more significant and identity transforming.

Identity transformation is a process that takes time to achieve, the identity transformation is different for everyone, how one person experiences a phenomenon will not be the same way I will experience it.

Finally, memories and reconciliation are two complementary phenomena. The Average African-American is pained by the history of slavery and the alienation of the black person several years ago; there are symbolic elements that stand to create memories that are powerful enough for the African-American to reconcile everything and be totally free, feeling changed with renewed meanings and self-reflective identities.

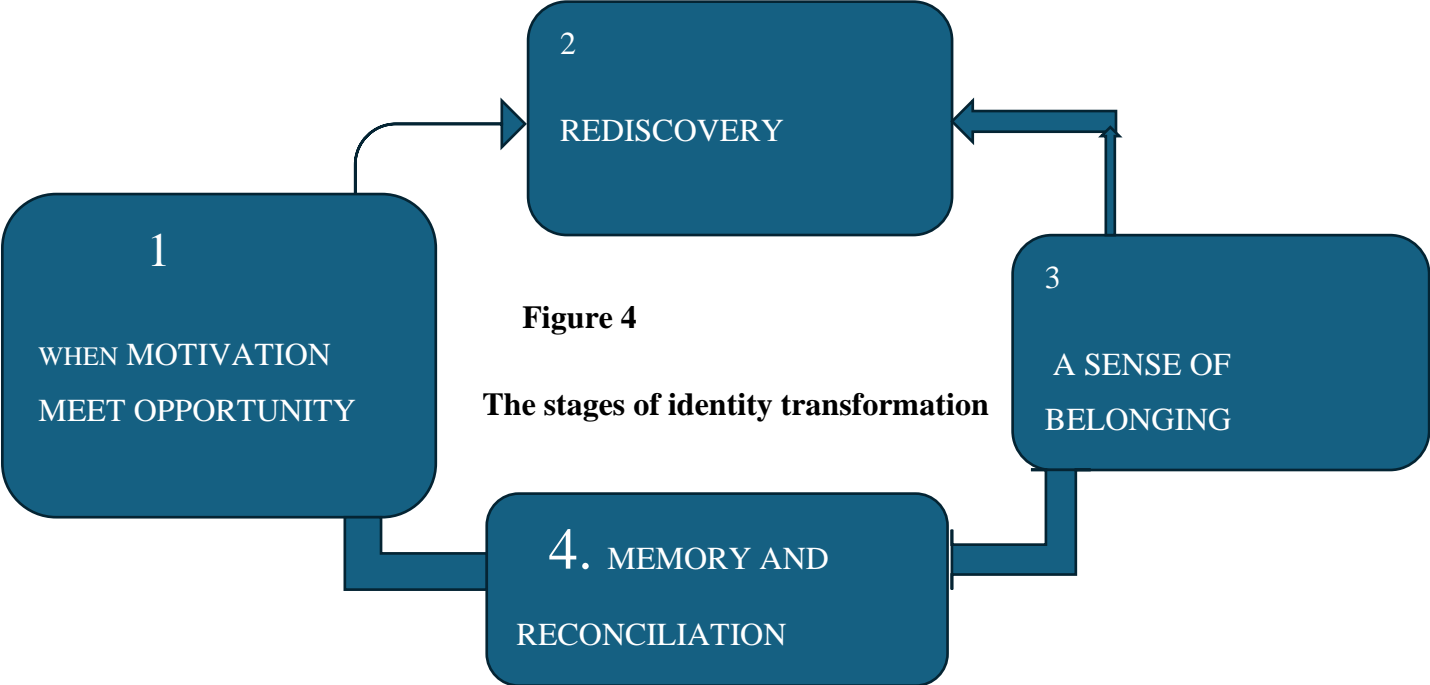


Figure 4
The stages of identity transformation

Figure 4. A pictorial view of the stages of identity transformation as described in the findings above.

STUDY LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

Due to several factors such as time, resources, and the broad research gap, the study must be limited to analyzing the influence of the Year of Return experience on the identity narrative of the African-American. The study used a narrative inquiry as a methodological tool.

There are still several areas of research that further studies can explore. An example is to build on this very research with different methodologies, methods, and theories to explore how the Year of Return experience influences identity, preferably from a feminist perspective with an ethnographic methodology background. Furthermore, it will be interesting to build up on how memory is an important recipe for reconciliation for the African-American who visits Ghana.

6.3 GENERAL CONCLUSION

This study has analyzed the narratives of the African-Americans during their tourism experience in the Year of Return 2019 Campaign. The study employed qualitative narrative inquiry as the method of data collection and analysis. Using the negotiation identity theory and conceptualizing of the African-American as the diaspora, the study points out the following. the African-American had been eager to visit Ghana, not because of the Year of Return narrative, but because they themselves had been ready to discover a part of them that is missing. The real meaning of identity is a unanimous exposure to the Ghanaian rich culture. The culture, the people, the dance, the clothes, among others, are vibrant narratives of identification – Also a performative expression of the imagined identity.

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7 APPENDIX

INTERVIEW GUIDE

STUDY – ROOTS TOURISM IN GHANA: THE CASE OF AFRICAN-AMERICANS 2019

A- AFRICAN-AMERICANS

1. A brief overview and presentation

B - MOTIVATION FOR TRAVEL

1. How often do you travel?
2. Where did you travel recently?
3. Why did you travel in 2019 to Ghana?
4. Could you elaborate on your activities during the travel?
5. Can you tell me about your general experience during the travel?

C- INFLUENCE ON IDENTITY

1. Did you visit any tourist site during your recent travel or previously?
2. Why did you choose to visit these places?
3. What activities did you engage in?
4. Do you think your travel affected your identity?
5. How you think your travel affected your identity?
6. What exactly do you base your reflections on?
7. Will you invite every African-American to visit these places?
8. Did you enjoy your stay and travel in Ghana?
9. how do you feel after travelling to Ghana

