

THE CONSCIENTIZATION OF SILENT VOICES: AN INTERPRETIVE CASE  
STUDY EXPLORING THE EXPERIENCES OF ASSIMILATION AND  
ACCULTURATION ON AMERICAN-RAISED, FIRST GENERATION AND  
SECOND GENERATION ETHIOPIAN WOMEN ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT,  
SELF-IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT AND PERCEPTION OF BEAUTY

by

Adrienne L. Wynn

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Approved by:

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Dr. Greg Wiggan

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Dr. Gloria Campbell-Whatley

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Dr. Chaung Wang

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Dr. Chris O'Brien



## ABSTRACT

ADRIENNE L. WYNN. THE CONSCIENTIZATION OF SILENT VOICES: AN INTERPRETIVE CASE STUDY EXPLORING THE EXPERIENCES OF ASSIMILATION AND ACCULTURATION ON AMERICAN-RAISED, FIRST GENERATION AND SECOND GENERATION ETHIOPIAN WOMEN ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT, SELF-IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT AND PERCEPTION OF BEAUTY

(Under the direction of DR. GREG WIGGAN)

Acculturation for Ethiopians in America systemically require adaptation to the dominant culture. Prior research findings illustrate that acculturation mechanically progress towards assimilation, an absorption of a foreign culture's psychological, sociological, and cultural characteristics. In this sense, this case study explores the impact of assimilation and acculturation on Ethiopian women academic achievement, self-identity development and perception of beauty in America. American systems promote the dominant structure ideologies through oppressive symbols, themes, and cultural dissonance of Blacks. However, the construct of race contributes to the discourse that affect Ethiopians in America by categorizing the group with Blacks based on skin color. Therefore, cultural exclusion legitimizes Ethiopians navigation of American structural practices based on issues of colorism that lends to a silencing of Ethiopian voices. Critical-race-feminism provides the framework and lens to critically analyze the underlying issue of race, and impact of assimilation and acculturation. Critical pedagogy supports the synthesis of Ethiopian women academic achievement. Congruently, case study interviews provide qualitative data to evaluate the life experiences of Ethiopian women, and ascertain information to investigate participants' academic and social experiences navigating American culture. The following six themes emerged from the

narrative data: (1) Family Centered Social Structure, (2) Maintaining Ethiopian Traditions/Customs in America Matters, (3) Struggle of Independence as a Woman vs. Family-Interdependence as a Woman, (4) Identifying as Ethiopian and Black vs. African-American, (5) School Impacts Culture When Isolated, and (6) Afrocentrism Standard of Beauty. Findings suggest Ethiopians in America have formulated structural supports inter-ethnically to safeguard culture, Ethiopians, and Afrocentric views. Findings further illustrate that Ethiopian culture promotes strong identity development, leading to increased academic achievement and the application of Afrocentricism towards constructs of beauty. The study concludes with recommendations for policy makers, educators, and community activist for future support and research on Ethiopians in America.

## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my children, Xavier and Faith Wynn. Your love and support helped me to get through this journey. I am grateful to be your mother. I hope that I can continue to make you proud and remain the example of perseverance, guidance, and strength for eternity. I want to send special love to my Goddaughters, Christina Dyson, Mykia Williams and Passion Firm. Thank you! Mommy loves each of you with all my heart, mind, body, and soul.

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## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

### **Introduction**

Ethiopians are one of the largest African immigrant groups residing in the U.S., second only to Nigerians (Anderson, 2017; Kibour, 2001). However, largely in America, Ethiopian communities appear to be oblivious to the orchestration of mainstream society; therefore, leaving many Ethiopians voiceless. Generally, Ethiopian immigrants who enter the United States form ethnic enclaves within local urban communities of large cities, where they maintain their homeland customs and traditions. Kibour (2001) suggests that the failure of American systems to be sympathetic to the needs of Ethiopians results in a systemic silencing of voices, chorale with generalizations associating Ethiopian needs, collectively, to that of people of color. As a result, the need to do research on Ethiopian needs in America has become paramount, due to the lack of research currently seeking to understand the impact of settlement issues immigrants face in the United States, such as the impact of acculturation and assimilation on the academic and social needs of students. The voices of Ethiopian women are central to this study.

Mana, Orr, and Mana (2009) argues that immigration involves acculturation and power issues. Arguably, the power issues in American structures lie in the overarching system of capitalism where race is a partisan tool historically utilized to oppress. Race caused grave effects for Blacks in America, but those effects are generalized when applied to African immigrants. Therefore, this study examines the issues that led Ethiopians to immigrate in masses, and comprehensively explore the impact of acculturation and assimilation for Ethiopian women who settle in the United States.

## **Background History of the Problem**

According to Flynn and Giraldez (2002), colonization began as early as 1571.

Flynn and Giraldez (2002) argue that, “[colonization] occurred when all populated continents began sustained interaction in a manner that deeply linked them all through global trade” (p. 4). However, neoliberal globalization transforms prior notions of globalization from a process-led concept towards a market-induced concept. Mittelman (2000) further explains that neoliberal globalization is:

...a worldwide phenomenon, globalization is a coalescence of varied transnational processes and domestic structures, allowing the economy, politics, culture, and ideology of one country to penetrate another. The chain of causality runs from the spatial reorganization of production to international trade and to the integration of financial markets. Driven by changing modes of competition...compresses the time and space aspects of social relations. (p. 3)

Neoliberal globalization in Africa has transformed the continent through the reduction of economic and political development. However, Mittelman (2000) research illustrates a comprehensive system impacted by neo-globalization practices.

Africa produces large volumes of the world's natural resources such as coltan (used to make cell phones), gold, ivory, coal, oil, bauxite, and diamonds, among other things. However, neoliberal globalized policies continue to shift the ownership and core resources into major developed countries. Additionally, globalization in this study implies interjection of privatization principles of free markets for the purposes of economic growth that purportedly “trickles-down” to lower class citizens. Those who benefit tremendously perpetuate neoliberal globalization ideology of free trading for the interest of maximizing profits and economic interests. Therefore, neo-liberalism suggests economic, social and political forces that are rooted in capitalism.

On the continent of Africa, economic and political structures have been multifaceted for centuries. Bush (2007) states that:

Part of Africa's difficulty is thus countering the intellectual deceit peddled by international financial institutions—that globalization brings universal economic growth rather than a continued subordination to the rule of capital. Globalization brings poverty and inequality to Africa as a result of the continent's uneven incorporation into the world economy. The main hope for the future is not free trade, open markets and technological gains; rather it is resistance to the impact of globalization by workers and peasants, and the construction by Africans themselves of an alternative future. (p. 32)

Insignificant growth produced sporadic economic and political development around continental Africa for decades, increasing “the continent's external debt of more than two-hundred and fifty billion dollars means that debt service obligations remain high” (Bush, p. 35). High rates of poverty promote inequality that links to the pre-colonial and colonial inheritance of domination in Africa.

Relatedly, there are issues of economic and political instability. Between 1975 and 1989, there were approximately 750,000 civil war related deaths in Africa (Toole & Waldman, 1997). However, the Ethiopian civil war resulted in one of the largest movements of refugees in Africa. Refugee movement is an overt and covert issue that relates back to economic and political turmoil. According to Toole and Waldman (1997), Ethiopian refugees in the early and late 1970s were approximately 14% of the country's population. Largely contributory to a refugee status, the Ethiopian-Ogaden Civil War was one of the most tumultuous and longest wars in African history. A pivotal point in the war happened when “fighting erupted at the strategically important train junction at Dire Dawa. The railway linked Addis Ababa with the Djibouti and from the outside world. The track was vital to the Ethiopian economy as it carried an estimated sixty percent of Ethiopia's exports and imports” (Lockyer, 2006, p. 8).

The result of the Ethiopian-Ogaden Civil War, arguably, promoted opposition politics and ethnic nationalism in Ethiopia. As a result, the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) originated “because of discontent with the policy measures of the *Derg*, as well as a widespread feeling that the Oromo were under-represented in the central government and treated as ‘second-class citizens’” (Joireman, 1997, p. 394). The All-Amhara Political Organisation (AAPO) formed subsequently to promote support for rural areas and the trans-nationalist cohesion of Ethiopia. The governmental instability and ethnic conflicts made peace difficult in Ethiopia (Joireman, 1997).

The largest ethnic group in Ethiopia is the Oromo, and the Amhara people are the second largest ethnic group. The Central Intelligence Agency fact book illustrates that Oromoians represents approximately 40% of the total population, and the Amhara people represent about 30%. There are many other ethnic groups in Ethiopia. However, the Oromos are largely represented in Ethiopia, as well as the United States (Ceglowski, Gilbert, Wiggan, Johnson, & Traore, 2011). According to Ceglowski et al. (2011), the Oromo people originates from an oral, majestic or mythical culture, while the Amharas were elite rulers. The transition of power or struggle for power has often times been between these two dominant groups in Ethiopia.

Prior to 1974, many Ethiopians saw themselves as “sojourners or exiles” (Shelemay & Kaplan, 2011). Educational opportunities propelled Ethiopians to leave their country with the hope of returning as leaders. Tumultuous transitions derailed the vast majority of Ethiopian plans to return home, and homeland revolutions such as the Ethiopian-Ogaden Civil War forced Ethiopians to begin new lives in foreign lands, such as the United States. Consequently, the United States Citizen and Immigrant Services

(USCIS) administrative records illustrates that between 1980-2011, there were twenty-seven million people, including Ethiopians, who obtained the legal and permanent right to reside in the United States (Rytina, 2013).

Data illustrates that California, New York, and Texas have the highest number of legal permanent residents' in the United States (Rytina, 2013). The United States Census Bureau 2010 report states that there were approximately 150,000 native born Ethiopians living in America. Although this data is significantly higher than the 2000 census, it is not inclusive of Ethiopians born in America, as they would be classified as Black or African-American. Furthermore, the migration information source states that 12% of immigrant women made up the total population of women in America (Bartalova, 2009). The population for immigrant women documented in U.S. census reports identify specific ethnic subgroups. However, the list failed to present Ethiopian as an itemized representative among ethnic women. Ethiopian women's representation was clustered within the overall grouping of immigrant women. This issue draws a parallel with the invisibility of Ethiopian women acknowledgment in society: a silent voice.

As Delpit (2006) notes, the silence dialogue, or in this instance, the projection of the dominant values upon the other, limits Ethiopian immigrants' cultural perspectives and prevents them from having equal opportunities. Consequently, world systems, such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, that ally their resources and finances, engage in globalized "othering" of developing countries and minority cultures around the world. This perpetuates the "culture of power" (Delpit, 2006). The values of powerful cultural groups are perpetuated through economic, political and educational systems. Educational power cultures socialize students to understand the power

hierarchy, rules of participation, as well as how to emulate the behaviors of those in power (Delpit, 2006).

Schunk (2012) explains that “people learn new actions merely by observing others performing them” (p. 118). Bandura (1986), a leading researcher of social learning theory (formally social learning theory) notes that human learning transpires in a social environment, and “...learning is largely an information processing activity in which information about the structure of behavior and about environmental events is transformed into symbolic representations that serve as guides for action” (p. 51). Therefore, the concept of learning is fluid and transcends space, which extends the framework of learning beyond the structures of school. However, DeMarrais and LeCompte (1999) further expound upon the framework of social learning and states that education happens over the course of the lifespan, in contrast to schools, where institutional forms of learning takes place. The position of educators is thereby critical. Educators are positioned to uphold or disrupt the culture of power. The caveat of “othering” children in the classroom signifies the hurdles that educators must leap beyond (Delpit, 2006). In an effort to avoid silencing the voices of minorities, educators must understand the schism between equity and power.

In the United States, issues of equity and power have been an ongoing struggle in education. Equitable funding allocation, resources, and schools are the primary concerns of many, reason being, inequitable allocation of school funds prevents access to academic resources, and school improvements. This also affects immigrants in the U.S. like Ethiopians. Furthermore, this deepens the inequality between social groups (Kozol, 2005). The adverse effects of school inequity underscore the potential of academic

achievement, making it easy for race and race relations to be central issues in equity and power conversations.

The most notable issues of equity hinges upon the ruling of desegregation in the 1954 legal case, *Brown versus the Board of Education*. This landmark case made it unconstitutional to segregate based on race. The need to desegregate presented other dilemmas in the twenty-first century school structures. Zirkel (2004) explains that:

Students' are often either reseggregated by academic tracking or reseggregate themselves along racial and ethnic lines. Students of color are disproportionately likely to find themselves in poorly-funded schools with few facilities and resources or assigned to non-college preparatory courses of study. Desegregation efforts have often been met with 'White flight' from public schools. Those students of color who do make it to college are disproportionately likely to drop out before receiving their degree. (p. 5)

As a result of twenty-first century unintentional resegregation, Tyson (2003) explains that some Black students refer to others students as "acting white." Tyson (2003) argues that using the slur "acting white" is Black students' response to internalized rejection felt by schools' non-inclusionary practices of college preparatory classes that were presented as primarily for white students. Tyson's (2003) investigation shows that schools procedurally tracked Black students in lower level classes, and white students in higher-level classes. The label, "acting white," was projected onto high performing African-American students who failed to engage, participate, or identify with Black culture. This issue can affect Ethiopian immigrants who have assimilated into Black culture. Although this may appear to be a slippery slope for Ethiopian students, research on Ethiopians in other countries, such as Israel, illustrates that academic and social issues mirror those of the U.S.

The appeal of America's wealthy economic structures and Ethiopia's civil instability enticed many Ethiopians to immigrate (Stiglitz, 2003). High unemployment rates, vast areas of concentrated poverty, and large percentages of marginalized people give rise to the influx of immigrants coming to the U.S. Stiglitz (2003) argues that the influx of immigrants in various countries affect the future of the host country's institutions. In the case of Israel, it attempted to absorb religious refugee. Ethiopians began in two phases; Operation Moses and Operation Solomon (Goldblatt & Rosenbaum, 2007). According to the Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Absorption (1996), there were approximately 8,000 Ethiopians (Operation Moses) who immigrated to Israel. The second wave of immigrating Ethiopians was in 1991 where an estimated 14,000 people left the country in "Operation Solomon" (Goldblatt & Rosenbaum, 2007; Isralowitz, Shpiegel, Reznik, & Laytin, 2009). An estimated account for Ethiopian immigration in Israel revealed 56,000 in 1996, and 100,000 in 2009 (Isralowitz, Shpiegel, Reznik, & Laytin, 2009). The doubling of Ethiopian immigrants within a decade, further drove Israel to support the case for strategic planning in order to presumably help integrate Ethiopians into the country (Isralowitz, Shpiegel, Reznik, & Laytin, 2009).

The Israeli government attempted to provide Ethiopians, who were second-class citizens, with housing, employment, and education (Isralowitz, Shpiegel, Reznik, & Laytin, 2009). However, Ethiopian youth displayed increased trends of delinquency and low academic achievement. Even after lauding the inclusive actions of the Israeli government, attention drawn to Ethiopian youth presented undertones of disparities and inequities (Isralowitz, Shpiegel, Reznik, & Laytin, 2009). Research illustrates high levels

of Ethiopians in Israel living in poverty, and the high school dropout rates further highlight systemic issues (Isralowitz, Shpiegel, Reznik, & Laytin, 2009).

Like Israel, similar trends are reflective of African-Americans and Ethiopian immigrants. In addition to being an immigrant and contending with similar issues as African-Americans, assimilation and acculturation are phenomena that Ethiopian immigrants navigate. The lack of strategic institutions designed to help Ethiopian immigrants integrate into the U.S. perhaps questions their very existence in the country. Therefore, the question that drives this study is: How has acculturation/assimilation impacted first generation, and/or second-generation Ethiopian girls' self-identity, academic achievement, and perception of beauty in America?

### **Statement of the Problem**

Approximately 80% of Blacks in the U.S. live in poverty, 10% of Black students' dropout of high school, and only 19% receive college degrees (Ballantine & Spade, 2012). These percentages are considerably low when compared to the general population. Inclusive of these percentages are the ethnicities of Blacks born in America, but have parents from African countries. What are the effects of migration to a country, when those of similar phenotype have been maligned? Immigrants must, presumably, navigate the same structures as Black Americans, while adjusting to their life in a new country.

When transitioning in the United States, Kibour (2001) argues that Ethiopians must "redefine their personal identities on the basis of the color of their skin and on fundamental principles that are foreign to their upbringing" (p. 47). Issues around race, racism, discrimination, and gender become phenomena that Ethiopians, thereby, must confront (Kibour, 2001). These are similar issues that Black Americans have confronted.

After the decline of the eugenics movement, Black American psychologists, Kenneth and Mamie Clark performed a doll experiment of children's self-perception, as it relates to race (Clark & Clark, 1939). The result of the study suggests that African-American children demonstrated internalized racism and self-hatred (Clark & Clark, 1939). The Clark's doll study has been replicated numerous times throughout the twentieth-century and illustrating similar results. The implications of these results suggest that African-American girls' self-identity reflects views of hegemony or domination. This tenable reflection denotes that African-American girls also have internalized the negative, systemic views of Black culture, thereby sending the symbolic message that Black dolls and Black girls are ugly, bad, and unintelligent (Azzarito, 2010; Clark & Clark, 1939; Decuir-Gunby, 2009; Read, 2011; Stevens, 1997).

Research also illustrates that the identity of African-American girls' develops in various dimensions from social exposure; "(1) a mainstream society, Euro-American view, (2) a devalued societal status affected by the status convergence of gender and race, and (3) cultural reference group of an Afro-American worldview" (Steven, 1997, p. 150). Therefore, African-American girls must maneuver between two views, taking into consideration gender impact as well. This dichotomous dynamic supports the propensity of African-American girls developing a complex identity. Therefore, immigrants with Black skin must contend with similar multiple views under the additional umbrella of assimilation and acculturation.

Kibour (2001) explains that the relevance of African-American racial identity development to Ethiopian immigrants' development is significant for the mere fact that

there is a commonality in minority experiences in America, and “cultural attributes are presumed to be interconnected” (p. 49). Kibour (2001) further illustrates that,

Ethiopians come from an ethnically, culturally, and linguistically diverse country that emphasizes strict family attachment, religiosity, and strong identification with one’s ethnic group. Immigration status, the cultural adaptation process, and change of status from a racial majority to a racial minority have also been identified as possible stressors for Ethiopians... (p. 49)

Kibour (2001) was responding to issues in Israel, where Ethiopians were experiencing difficulties transitioning.

However, transitioning to a country outside of the home country affects immigrants’ cultural capital in the host country. The impact of migrating affects the authenticity of the home culture by hybridizing the home culture with the receiving culture. Offspring growing and developing in the receiving country often times deviate from the home culture that lends to generational identity formation issues (Goldblatt & Rosenbaum, 2007). According to Goldblatt and Rosenbaum (2007), prior to migration, the Ethiopian culture was largely patriarchal, family oriented, and the children were reared to be respectful and obedient to elders. This cultural style is considered traditional; however, Ethiopian traditional families have socially and structurally changed after migration (Goldblatt & Rosenbaum, 2007). The dynamics shifted from parents providing the support and guidance towards Ethiopian children having to master the Israeli language, learn how to perform in school, and translate for parents, which weakened the authoritarian parent-child dynamics (Goldblatt & Rosenbaum, 2007). Accordingly, this breakdown in Ethiopian culture unprotects many children from racism, societal pressures, and other systemic issues. Without the proper support, Ethiopian children find it difficult to maintain the demands of education and eventually dropout of school (Goldblatt &

Rosenbaum, 2007). Goldblatt and Rosenbaum (2007) suggests that these prevalent issues among Ethiopians in Israel influence Ethiopian youth identity formation. Data from the study identified that Ethiopian youth “constantly struggle with integration” (Goldblatt & Rosenbaum, 2007, p. 591). Over time, the experiences of interactions with Israeli people, Ethiopian family members, and Israeli education influenced the identity of Ethiopian youth (Goldblatt & Rosenbaum, 2007).

However, African-Americans in U.S. history are devoid of a majority status that shaped American society. In separate countries, African-Americans and Ethiopians had similar experiences, which presents a quandary to understand. Thus, the question that derives is how then will Ethiopians transition in American society with such physical similarities as African Americans?

### **Purpose of the Study**

The social construction of race in early America stratified and constrained relationships; primarily amongst Blacks and Whites (Khanna & Harris, 2009; Smedley & Smedley, 2005). Social groups created and assigned reasoning to race, and negative depictions, mal-treatment, offensive epithets towards people of color reinforced the functionality of race (Anderson, 1988; Barak, Leighton, & Flavin, 2007). Therefore, the historical value race has been given in society provides foundational context to this study.

According to Smedley and Smedley (2005), “race was a folk idea in the English language; it was a general categorizing term, similar to and interchangeable with such terms as type, breed, and even species” (p. 19). Categorizing people allowed those in power to dominate and stratify people, which proved to be profitable. As a result, race became more functionally intricate and stratified within American culture.

The landmark case *Plessy versus Ferguson* illustrates an example of the importance of race in American society, where the percentage of Black lineage was debated in the judicial system. Although the courts held it constitutional for Blacks to be separate but equal, race has consistently been a primary source of contention among Americans. Therefore, the underlying origin of power struggle is rooted in race relations. This is critical for immigrants who share racial traits with Blacks in America. The transference of hegemonic systems from Blacks to similar colored immigrants natural occurs.

Ethiopian immigrants have varying shades of skin color like Black Americans. When discussing issue of race concerning Ethiopians in Israel, Mana, Orr, and Mana (2009) state, “the Ethiopian immigrant group wished to be integrated into the host group, but their distinct nomadic Ethiopian culture and their Black skin became a disadvantage and a stigma that emphasized their distinction, which immigrants and the host group alike perceived as leading to low status in the Israeli social hierarchy” (p. 452). If Ethiopians are at a racial disadvantage in Israel, how does race impact Ethiopians in America? Furthermore, if race leads towards a low social status, how does that influences Ethiopian immigrants’ self-identity?

Chacko (2003) explains that, “identity is central to the notions of assimilation and Americanization, and its formation and transformation are integral to the immigrant experience” (p. 491). Assimilation is a process of transitioning into American life. However, Mana, Orr, and Mana (2009) explains that acculturation modifies the cultural norms of Ethiopian immigrants in the host country, which is critical to their collective values and cultural identity. In essence, assimilation and acculturation posits immigrant

groups to aggressively change over time “until they become fully absorbed into and identified with the dominant society” (Cacko, 2003, p. 493). How, then does assimilation and acculturation impact Ethiopian girls in America?

Moreover, the perception of beauty is an underlying construct of identity development. Cultural perspectives of beauty impacts personal views of beauty (Poran, 2002). However, researchers suggest that Black girls lacked historical structural supports to validate positive images of beauty that affected self-identity. Scholars argue that the dominant group perceptions of beauty strongly influences the mindset of individual beauty (Poran, 2002). The controversial nature of race and skin color, purportedly, has highly influenced perceptions of beauty than that of size (Anderson, 1988; Barak, Leighton, & Flavin, 2007; Khanna & Harris, 2009; Poran, 2002; Richardson, 2000; Smedley, 1999; Toll, 1974; Witke, 1930).

Research shows that self-identity fluctuated in the early years (Kutob, Senf, Crago, & Shisslak, 2010; Poran, 2002). The introduction of technology and media introduced global prospectus on self-identity and perception of beauty (Azzarito, 2011; Poran, 2002; Read, 2011). Many argue for a return to more Afro-centric ideals; however, others adopt a hybrid view (Traore & Luken, 2006). By the age of middle school, studies state that a positive self-identity can assist Black girls’ with navigation throughout academic achievement (Kutob, Senf, Crago, & Shisslak, 2010; Poran, 2002). Therefore, it becomes imperative to consider that perhaps Ethiopian girls’ may need to develop a positive self-identity as a supportive measure to academic success. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore the underlying influence of race on, and the impact assimilation

and acculturation has on American-raised, Ethiopian girls' perception of beauty, self-identity, and academic achievement.

### **Research Question**

Comprehensively, this research analyzes the underlying influence of race on Ethiopian girls' living in America. In addition to, this study further examines the impact of acculturation and assimilation on Ethiopian girls' academic achievement, self-identity, and perception of beauty.

This study will utilize interviews to evaluate the life experiences of Ethiopian girls' in America, and ascertain the information to investigate their academic and social experiences; academic achievement, self-identity, and perception of beauty. Social-immigrant theory and data analysis provides the framework for understanding. Therefore, the coalition of investigative information led to the research questions. The research question is as follow: How has acculturation/assimilation impacted first generation, and/or second-generation Ethiopian girls' self-identity, academic achievement, and perception of beauty in America?

### **Significance of the Study**

Ethiopian immigrants are outsiders in mainstream Israel, largely living in poverty. Disproportionate rates of high school drop-out, concentrated poverty, and language barriers collectively make it difficult for Ethiopian immigrants to become successful in the U.S. Additionally, the dominant culture in the U.S. seems to have a more difficult time understanding racism, largely due to ignorance of systemic issues surrounding race. Race leaves minorities subjected to noticeable attacks, through stereotypes, discrimination, and prejudices. Barak, Leighton, and Flavin (2007) states:

There is no more powerful position than that of being ‘just’ human. The claim to power is the claim to speak for the commonality of humanity. Raced people can’t do that—they only speak for their race. But nonraced people can, for they do not represent the interests of a race. (p. 51)

The authors indirectly lend a voice to the position of Ethiopian immigrants in the U.S.

Mulat and Arcavi (2009) further examined how Ethiopian students conceptualized mathematics and science to understand how students comprehend the content. Findings identified coping strategies of the Ethiopian students and other elements fostered academic achievement (Mulat & Arcavi, 2009). The study showed that there was an internal motivation to succeed which was critical to Ethiopian immigrants, as well as having a sense of self and parental involvement (Mulat & Arcavi, 2009).

In the United States, of the African immigrants, Ethiopians are the second largest subgroup (Kibour, 2001). “Unfortunately, as the number of Ethiopians in the United States has grown, research pertaining to their adjustment needs has not accumulated proportionately” (Kibour, 2001, p. 48). Therefore, there is a limited aggregate of research that cover the needs of Ethiopian immigrants in the United States. This study adds to the body of information and understanding for Ethiopians in America.

Researchers have studied issues among Ethiopians globally, but there is limited research that delves specifically into the transition of Ethiopians girls, as they confront assimilation, acculturation, and issues of race in America. Additionally, this study draws upon understanding the impact of the latter on Ethiopian girls’ academic achievement, self-identity, and perception of beauty. Therefore, the results of this study will provide evidence of what is transpiring culturally, socially, and academically.

With the limited amount of research completed, there is limited understanding of the academic and interpersonal needs of Ethiopian girls’. The results of this study will

lend critical information necessary to be supportive. Teachers and school districts can glean insight into cultural norms and transitory issues. The Ethiopian community can utilize the information to offer additional buffers to preserve aspects of the culture as immigrants integrate with American culture. Ultimately, the results of this study will provide a narrative of the experiences of Ethiopian girls' in America. This narrative can be used to negate issues experienced in other countries, and provide structural services that promote Ethiopian immigrants' inclusion.

### **Definition of Terms**

This study utilizes terms that have conceptual meaning critical to comprehension. These terms provide the framework for foundational knowledge and tenets of this study. The terms are outlined as: neo-globalization, legal permanent residence, foreign born, immigrants, assimilation, acculturation, othering, culture of power, acting White, social learning theory, beauty, identity, social identity, social integration, race, capital, social capital, and hegemony.

#### Neoliberal Globalization

Neoliberal globalization or new globalization refers to current global trading policies, post 1960, where business practices are market led or centered upon privatization. It is referred to as neo-globalization, being rooted in neo-liberalist policies or the economic belief of free market competition with unrestricted governmental regulations, to illustrate linear regulatory practices that led to the collapse of various developing countries' fiscal market systems. Neo-globalization represents global interactions where trade demonstrate countries' fiscal interdependence that produces monetary capital and healthy fiscal markets.

#### Legal Permanent Residence

Legal permanent residence (LPR) has been outlined by the United States Department of Homeland Security as a person that is not a citizen of the United States, but have been granted permission to live in the United States. Legal permanent residence is known interchangeably as lawful permanent residence, immigrants, permanent residential aliens, and green card holders.

#### Foreign Born

Foreign born are people that are born outside of the residing country. People who are foreign born may be immigrants (those that are not born in the residing country and may or may not be a legal permanent resident) and/or naturalized citizens (immigrants that acquire citizenship to the country of residence). The difference between a naturalized citizen and legal permanent resident is that the naturalized citizen is recognized as a national in the country.

#### Immigrant

Immigrant refers to an individual that is not born in the country in which they reside. The most common understanding of the word immigrant is a person that comes to live permanently in a foreign country. The act of immigrants moving to a place is thereby called immigration. However, an immigrant can also be classified as a non-legal resident. Immigrants that do not follow the procedures to acquiring legal permanent residency and/or citizenship in a country of residency are also known as illegal-aliens/illegal immigrants.

#### Assimilation

Assimilation is a process in which immigrants gradually adapts to the ways and thinking of the dominant or host culture. According to Chacko (2003), “assimilation did

not entail the displacement of ethnic or cultural characteristics by those typical of mainstream America, over time assimilation came to imply a linear process through which immigrants discarded various home-country traditions and values and adopted those of the host country” (p. 493). This study utilizes this definition throughout the study for assimilation.

### Acculturation

Acculturation in this study is defined from a traditional immigration theory approach. This definition focuses on the cultural changes and exchanges “by which individuals change both by being influenced by contact with another culture” (Mana, Orr, & Mana, 2009, p. 452). The process of acculturation refers to, in particular, cultural norms and traditions of Ethiopian immigrants changing or integrating with the cultural norms and traditions of Americans. Mana, Orr, and Mana (2009) identify four types of acculturation tendencies; integration, separation, assimilation, and marginalization. Integration is considered the most prevalent, due to integration considers it valuable to maintain the cultural identity and characteristics, as well as maintain relationships with other groups of people. This study will look at acculturation through the lens of integration.

### Othering

Othering is a process in which children values are suppressed with the values of the dominant culture. Delpit (2006) discusses this phenomenon and explains that “the teacher cannot be the only expert in the classroom. To deny students their own expert knowledge is to disempower them” (p. 33). Delpit suggests that those that are positions of power must be careful not to “other” people’s children; as this devalues rather than edify.

This study considers othering as a form of oppression that forces dominant views onto the minority and/or immigrant group.

#### Culture of Power

Culture of power refers to those in power being given access to privileges that those outside the group are not privy. Delpit (2006) says that “those with power are frequently least aware of—or least willing to acknowledge its existence. Those with less power are often most aware of its existence” (p. 24). Culture of power implies that there is a discrepancy from the home, community, and school where the rules and codes reflect the dominant group. In this study, culture of power illustrates the power structure that accompanies assimilation and acculturation when navigating American systems.

#### Acting White

Acting White is a reference toward Black students that attended predominantly white schools. These Black students’ failed to become inclusive in socializing with other Black students while being in upper level courses, such as advanced placement. As a result, other Black students referred to this type of anti-social behavior as “acting White.” Tyson (2011) examines race in connection with academic achievement. Tyson’s research illustrates the concern with tracking in various schools, poverty, race, and how were schools different for Blacks in predominately Black schools and predominately white schools. Tyson (2011) argues that “acting white” was the resulting name calling that happened primarily when Black students in both types of school settings refused to participate with other Blacks when they tracked in higher level courses.

#### Beauty

Beauty in this study derives from the social construction of physical attributes that the dominant group deemed exceptional. Beauty is examined through, not only the dominant group, but through an aesthetic women's lens, because research states that women standards for beauty hold more importance. Additionally, this study considers that "the social construction of beauty is embedded in a larger social framework of individuality and success, and these social ideals of self and control seep into the presentation and interpretation of what it means to be beautiful" (Poran, 2002, p. 67). Therefore, the concept of beauty is derived from physical features that are defined by the dominant group to be ideal that transcends to concept of self.

#### Self-Identity

Self-identity refers to an awareness, knowledge, or belief about you as a person. Self-identity; a psychological process by which a person defines himself/herself, can be defined as a bundle of features, cultural norms, beliefs, and traditions that distinguishes a person from others. Troiden (1985) states that self-identity references a connection to a social category and characteristics that is representative in a social setting. This study utilizes Troiden's conceptual framework of self-identity.

#### Race

Race is a social construction that denotes the color of a person's skin for social purposes. Although race has been associated with political, biological, and judicial phenomenon, the social construction of race establishes that race was created to delineate for purposes of control and domination (Smedley, 2005). This study examines race from a sociological perspective. Therefore, this study lends that race was produced by humans

for purposes of social interactions. However, race is not synonymous with ethnicity. In this study, race refers to color, whereas ethnicity refers to location of origination.

### Cultural Hegemony

Gramsci research introduced the concept of hegemony. Hegemony is where a person consents to the dominant group because it is supposedly beneficial. However, cultural hegemony follows the tenets of hegemony to add that the dominant group orchestrates the culture of society through beliefs, values, perceptions, and norms. Cultural hegemony illustrates outlets, such as media and magazines, providing a platform for conveying what is acceptable in the culture for the benefit of all. The dominant group, thereby, influences society when consent from the masses reinforces the cultural power hold.

### **Summary**

Chapter one explained the historical, social and economic forces that has led to increased immigration of Africans. These policies allude to systemic collapses and economic deficiencies that left African countries such as Ethiopia vulnerable for civil unrest. The chapter also established the context for the study on Ethiopian immigrants in the U.S.

### **Organization of Dissertation Chapters**

Subsequent chapters of this dissertation provides detail on this research. Chapter two, the literature review, explains the foundation for this study. Chapter two establishes issues that African-American girls navigate academically and socially. Race is investigated to identify the impact it has on African-American development. The analysis is drawn from understanding that Ethiopian girls share the category of Black in America.

Chapter two also analyzes assimilation and acculturation as a contextual phenomenon that immigrants encounter in the host country. Understanding the impact of assimilation and acculturation establishes deductive reasoning for the impact it has on Ethiopian girls' in America. As a result, chapter two explores academic achievement, self-identity development, and the perception of beauty among Ethiopian girls'. Research on Ethiopian girls' development in host countries indicate less than positive results. Therefore, chapter two establishes research-based patterns that identify issues and solutions that are critical to Ethiopian immigrants' progressing academically and socially.

Chapter three outlines the research method for this research. This study explores Ethiopian girls' academic and social transition in America. Therefore, case study is appropriate for this research design. Case study is a descriptive exploratory analysis to a person, group, or event within context of real-life. This research investigates Ethiopian girls' experiences in America, drawing understanding from the research question: How has acculturation/assimilation impacted first generation, and/or second-generation Ethiopian girls' academic achievement, self-identity, and perception of beauty in America? In order to obtain the information, the researcher will conduct interviews of Ethiopian girls, living in America.

Chapter four provides the findings of the research in this study, as it relates to the research question. The results of the study are derived from the interviews. The data is thematically coded using qualitative research methods. Thematic codes are centralized from the data analysis, and sub-themes, and statements. Secondary data provides contextual meaning to the theme.

Lastly, chapter five, further, offers discussion on the study findings. An in-depth analysis of the findings are followed with recommendations and limitations of the study. Chapter five concludes with implications for academic and social institutions that provide services for Ethiopian female immigrants.

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Introduction**

This chapter reviews the limited research that explores Ethiopian women in America. More specifically, the literature review pays particularly close attention to how acculturation/assimilation impacted first and/or second generation Ethiopian girls' self-identity, academic achievement, and perception of beauty in America. As a result, limited research required a scale search to investigate migratory data of Ethiopians in other countries, paying particular attention to issues that centered upon acculturation/assimilation. Therefore, this study considers the findings of Ethiopians in other countries, and comparatively utilizes the research with studies in America.

### **Review of the Literature**

To begin, Ethiopian research covers a vast amount of issues from health, neonatal childcare, social identity, and acculturation/assimilation. However, the breadth of research fails to unify any Ethiopian issue comprehensively. Kibour (2001) investigates racial identity among Ethiopians in the United States, and the issue of opportunity gaps and maladjustments resonate. The results of Kibour (2001) indicate that older Ethiopians between the ages of 40 and 50 were more likely to deny their own racial group, as well as identify with European Americans if they lived in the United States for two to three years. Individuals identified in this age group experienced symptomatology of depression after four to six years (Kibour, 2001). Nevertheless, racial identity as Black is an overarching issue.

Similarly, Chacko (2003) studied identity and assimilation among Ethiopians living in the District of Columbia area of Washington. The study identified that "the young immigrants' [Ethiopians] notions of race were also complicated by inconsistencies

between the rhetoric of apparent choice and the actual practice of imposed racial labels based on physical appearance,” and that ethnicity was more fluid than race (Chacko, 2003, p. 499). Race received deference to that of ethnicity; “When questioned about their preferred ethnic identity, all of the second-generation immigrants said ‘Ethiopian American,’ whereas most (80 percent) of the 1.5 generation favored Ethiopian” (Chacko, 2003, p. 501). Ethiopians in the study were very knowledgeable of Ethiopian history, and expressed pride in the fact that Ethiopia was the only Black African state that was not colonized by western powers. However, second-generation Ethiopians continued to participate in culture celebrations, but exhibited some loss of information as to the meanings. Chacko (2003), ultimately states her findings:

It is evident that in the process of assimilation, all of the young Ethiopian immigrants with whom I spoke preferred to be Americanized into the mainstream society rather than into the native Black community. Immigrants negotiate the position of the Ethiopian as African and/or Ethiopian American but shy away from the label ‘African American.’ However, they simultaneously embrace the idea of Pan-Africanism and abstract notions of Blackness... (p. 504)

### **Historical Overview of Ethiopians from 1974 to Present**

#### *Ethiopian Civil War*

During the period of the 1970s, students were initially at the forefront of social activism in Ethiopia, preceding the revolution. Militant students and progressive students had similar concerns. Tareke (2009) identified three ways in which students had differing perspectives on the issues in Ethiopia: (1) militant students acted upon the issues rather than exhibited verbal discontent, and changed the dialogue that resulted in a systemic shift of attacks on the landed class and state bureaucracy, (2) militant students perceived the infiltration of capitalism as detriment to Ethiopia’s development and people, and (3) militant students “embraced violence as a legitimate weapon of struggle and a rational

instrument for changing contested power relations” (p. 26). Therefore, students caused a shift in paradigm that questioned authority, thus, allowing for the overarching conversation of ethno-nationalism in Ethiopia. Students provided an alternative to ideology that, according to Tareke (2009), was based on “socialism to the dominant assumptions and beliefs of society” (p. 33). As a result, revolutionaries were able to capitalize on the divide of the long march (*regime guzo*) and short march (*acher guzo*), ultimately propelling Ethiopia towards the most pivotal event in Ethiopian history, the revolution of 1974.

Public demonstrations supported the revolution’s growth as students and progressive intellectuals mobilized their dissent of the status quo, to wanting political social reform. Several factors attributed to the revolution’s progression:

- The powerful were incompetent men, whereas the monarch was compromised due to the health status of the prince and his absence.
- Systems in which power was built began to dismantle with previous alliances shifting and others being forged.
- Things that were going on in the world made it conducive to the success of the uprising.
- The military failed to uphold the systemic structures of the political elite leaving the Ethiopian government disarmed (Harris, 1994; Tareke, 2009; Tronvoll, 2009).

Spontaneity was the strength and weakness to the revolution’s continuation. There was an absence of a unifying ideology and persona. Therefore, the armed forces, police, and Territorial Army created a publication that appealed to the views of the workers and peasants. The political philosophy became known as “Ethiopian Socialism” (Tareke, 2009, p. 39). According to Tareke (2009), Ethiopian Socialism’s philosophy of “equality; self-reliance; the dignity of labor; the supremacy of the common good; and the

indivisibility of Ethiopian Unity” (p. 39) shifted the country to the ethno-nationalistic view of “Itopia Tikdem,” which means Ethiopia first (p. 39).

However, Marxist intellectuals believed that equality and justice could not be achieved without dismantling the entire Ethiopian system of social hegemony. As a result, Tareke (2009) illustrates that “the soldiers struck a blow a feudalism and encroaching capitalism by nationalizing all rural land, major industries, financial institutions, and insurance companies” (p. 41). Analysts believe this provided the pathway to great bloodshed, exile, and captivity known as “Red Terror” (Harris, 1994; Tareke, 2009; Tronvoll, 2009). Ethiopia would be immersed in civil wars for sixteen years having seen a great impact on the people.

#### *Ethiopian War and Globalization Impact*

The years of war led to Ethiopians relocating in masses to countries such as Israel and the United States of America, considering globalization as a contributor to promoting years of war (Harris 1994; Stiglitz, 2003; Tareke, 2009; Tronvoll, 2009). Globalization historically meant that world structures actively imported and exported goods to generate revenue or capital; however, Ethiopians understood that capital supports businesses and/or governmental entities to promote interdependency throughout thriving global markets (Harris 1994; Stiglitz, 2003; Tareke, 2009; Tronvoll, 2009).

Generally, neo-liberalism lead to high levels of poverty and the collapse of economic markets around the world. In the era of Post-WWII, European countries strategically rebuilt their economic structures and collectively created the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank to prevent a worldwide economic catastrophe (Stiglitz, 2003). The United States, as well as other European and Asian countries were

able to restructure their economic markets into viable, global, and wealthy entities (Stiglitz, 2003). These countries became rich in capital and resources, which illuminated opportunities for individuals to become financially sound (Stiglitz, 2003).

The Ethiopian war and the appeal of increased economic opportunities in other countries provided conditions for people to immigrate (Stiglitz, 2003). High unemployment rates, vast areas of concentrated poverty, and large percentages of Ethiopians becoming financially destitute, also compiled onto Ethiopian concerns. Therefore, lack of resources and living under the rule of violence produced a fundamental response of migration to other countries for Ethiopians. The hope of accessing opportunities, as well as the foreground of civil unrest, provided motivation for Ethiopians to illegally or legally travel great distances (Harris 1994; Stiglitz, 2003; Tareke, 2009; Tronvoll, 2009).

According to Tareke (2009), “Ethiopia was a land of war, death, destruction, despair and misery, but also one of hope, reform, and reconstruction; of struggles for national cohesion and identity but also for autonomy, freedom, dignity, and an unfettered future” (p. 1). The Ethiopian revolution revealed strong disagreements about critical policy issues. Therefore, regional nation, Israel, provided a migratory option for Ethiopian Jews to relocate. The influx of immigrants to the receiving country required strategic planning to absorb, appropriately, the impact of the Ethiopian culture (Stiglitz, 2003). Various systems were impacted, which resulted in the examination of governmental policies and structures, educational systems and schools, and social ideologies. Therefore, critical to maintaining balance within the receiving government, governmental agencies require close monitoring and authorizing citizenship to

immigrants (Stiglitz, 2003). However, in Israel, complexities occurred when illegal immigrants enter into the host country and the system had not been able to absorb, fully, the unaccounted (Stiglitz, 2003).

*Transitioning from Ethiopian to Israel: Socio-Political Perspective*

The Israeli government understood the need for integration throughout each wave of Ethiopian migration, which reflected in the Israeli government's construction of policies that incorporate Ethiopians into Israeli society (Isralowitz, Shpiegel, Reznik, & Laytin, 2009). However, the Israeli systems failed to provide inclusionary support for Ethiopians to preserve their culture while in Israel. Instead, Israeli systems reinforced assimilation processes, causing maladjustments and cultural conflicts in the Ethiopian community.

In a comparative study, Michal Tannenbaum (2008) examines Ethiopian Immigrants and Israeli natives. The study investigates if age, gender, and language proficiency contributed to their view of self. The study included a total of two-hundred and seventy-eight third grade, sixth grade, and junior high students, and the researchers utilized *The Self Description Questionnaire*, *The Nicholls Scale*, and *Language Aptitude Measures* as psychometrics assessments (Tannenbaum, 2008). Results indicate that Ethiopian immigrants found it difficult to acculturate to the Israeli culture, and this impacted their self-concept (Tannenbaum, 2008). Ethiopian children, as a result, began to gravitate to other cultures to form identities, such as the Caribbean and American, as well as the notion of returning to Africa (Tannenbaum, 2008). Nevertheless, self-concept in the latter years of development improved, especially when students demonstrate a command of the Hebrew language in reading and writing (Tannenbaum, 2008). However,

mastery of Hebrew provided the skills and acumen for Ethiopian immigrants to navigate fluidly throughout Israel's societal structures that provide resources to establish support and social networks (Tannenbaum, 2008).

*Transitioning from Ethiopia to Israel: Education Perspective*

Stavans, Olshtain, and Goldzweig (2009) explore literacy and bilingualism from the parental perspective. Ethiopian parents identified the same goals for their children as non-Ethiopian parents; to become successful in school and beyond (Stavans, Olshtain, & Goldzweig, 2009). The study examines factors that impact literacy and bilingualism at home and school, finding that Ethiopian parents want to be actively involved with the education of their offspring, but the lack of Hebrew literacy and bilingualism prevent a large number of parents from providing the adequate support for their children to do well in school (Stavans, Olshtain, & Goldzweig, 2009). Significant to this study, this research purports that a common goal should be bridging the educational practices between the two settings (home and school), and maintaining an awareness of the apprehension of Ethiopian parents to involve themselves (Stavans, Olshtain, & Goldzweig, 2009). Therefore, developing a "mutual respect and interaction between the literacy traditions could enrich the child and the parent and contribute to a greater achievement at school" (Stavans, Olshtain, & Goldzweig, 2009, p. 124).

Girma Berhanu (2005) unveil educational problems in Israeli school systems through constructs such as school achievement, identity, and deviant behavior. Ethiopian immigrants encountered educational inequities derived from the denial of total Ethiopian culture immersion within the Israeli culture, which caused great discomfort for many Ethiopian students (Berhanu, 2005; Stavans, Olshtain, & Goldzweig, 2009). The Berhanu

study acknowledged that Ethiopian students were subjugated to racism and prejudices by “Ferenj” [white] students; further promoting cultural division and cultural domination (Berhanu, 2005). Ethiopians barraged with names such as “cushi” [nigger] in public places, as well as expecting Ethiopian students to denounce Ethiopian customs, prohibited many Ethiopian immigrants from fully accepting Israeli culture (Berhanu, 2005; Stavans, Olshtain, & Goldzweig, 2009). As a result, such prohibition generated an apathy to reduce the educational disparities found in school achievement (Berhanu, 2005). However, this becomes critical, considering that school achievement is important to the identity formation of children born to Ethiopian immigrants (Berhanu, 2005). Poor school achievement prevents from high self-concept, and low self-concept leads to the dropping out of school (Berhanu, 2005). Therefore, results indicate that learning should be meaningful and transformative to address the power differences of Ethiopians and Israeli, in order to lower or eradicate Ethiopian immigrant dropout rates.

Goldblatt, Rosenblum, and Moin (2008) explored the dropout rate of Ethiopian immigrants, ages fourteen through eighteen. Utilizing *Brief Symptom Inventory*, *General Self-Efficacy*, *Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support*, and *Rey-Osterrieth Complex Figure* to analyze the dropout rate illustrated that Ethiopians’ family, socio-economic status, and identity formation contribute to the hidden dropout effect (Goldblatt, Rosenblum, & Moin, 2008). Low family income and academic achievement of the parents placed stressors on the children where learning was impacted in school (Goldblatt, Rosenblum, & Moin (2008). Additionally, this research acknowledges that lapse in learning, directly affected self-efficacy in Ethiopian children, clarifying that high

academic achievement equated to high self-efficacy, thereby increasing the chances of Ethiopian immigrants completing school (Goldblatt, Rosenblum, & Moin, 2008).

The number of Ethiopians living in poverty was numerous. Poverty was identified as a stressor of Ethiopian children being inequitably stratified, honoring that language barriers and recognizing cultural differences further affected the identity of Ethiopians contributing to academic difficulties (Goldblatt, Rosenblum, & Moin, 2008). These interpersonal difficulties within Ethiopian families were considered hidden dropout effects, due to Ethiopians cultural composition being communal and family-centered (Goldblatt, Rosenblum, & Moin, 2008). Traditionally, Ethiopian culture commonly addressed problems within the family. However, Ethiopian children brokered relationships as mediators and negotiators between the two cultures (Goldblatt, Rosenblum, & Moin, 2008). These compiled issues affected Ethiopians from completing school that resulted in large numbers of Ethiopian immigrants having difficulty in Israeli schools in a trickled-down effect of vast numbers of high school dropouts and generations of Ethiopians remaining in poverty (Goldblatt, Rosenblum, & Moin, 2008).

### **Social Ostracism**

Physical and verbal aggression are observable and measurable phenomena. Ostracism is an aversive behavior that is utilized interpersonally through micro and macro systems. Williams (1997) examines ostracism as a social phenomenon used on groups or individuals to exclude, reject, exile, banish, and the like. Many social psychologist presently refer to this form of ostracism as social ostracism (Gruters & Masters, 1986; Kerr, Seok, & Polsen, 2008; Sebastian, Viding, Williams, & Blakemore, 2010). In understanding orchestration, conformity presents as a central focus. However,

social ostracism undermines the equity of social compensation by excluding individuals or groups from vital resources, deviant behaviors, and other forms of social norms as a strategy or process for increasing social cohesion (Gruters & Masters, 1986; Kerr, Seok, & Polsen, 2008; Sebastian, Viding, Williams, & Blakemore, 2010).

Africa has had the burden of infectious diseases for most of the twenty-first century. Research shows that 69% of deaths in Africa accounts from infectious diseases, with life expectancy, poverty, urbanization, globalization, and chronic disease being contributing factors to the death percentage (Aikins, Unwin, Agyemang, Allotey, Campbell, & Arhinful, 2010). As a result, decades of attention illuminating issues such HIV/AIDS and Ebola further stigmatize African people. Ruston (2012) stated that, “in 2010, the United States repealed Section 212(a) of the Immigration and Nationality Act, which states that a non-citizen determined to have a ‘communicable disease of public health significance’ is not admissible into the country without a waiver” (p. 1). Attention was primarily concerned with those that are HIV positive.

Africa’s economy or debt, infrastructure policies and medical issues marginalized the totality of the continent, leaving it vulnerable to globalized social reproach (Aikins, Unwin, Agyemang, Allotey, Campbell, & Arhinful, 2010; Gruters & Masters, 1986; Kerr, Ruston, 2012; Seok, & Polsen, 2008; Sebastian, Viding, Williams, & Blakemore, 2010). Social ostracism through immigration policy changes became synonymous to systemic hegemony. Africans were associated with the prevalent issues, which caused America to, on one hand support Africans within their country, but on the other hand ostracize them from entering the United States (Gruters & Masters, 1986; Kerr, Seok, &

Polsen, 2008; Sebastian, Viding, Williams, & Blakemore, 2010). The impact proved great, when Williams (1997) states:

A man's Social Self is the recognition which he gets from his mates...we have an innate propensity to get ourselves noticed, and noticed favorably, by our kind. No more fiendish punishment could be devised, were such a thing physically possible, than that one should be turned loose in society and remain unnoticed by all the members thereof. (p. 2)

James explained that it is better to be treated with disdain than ignored, rejected, banned, or exiled (Williams, 1997).

Social psychologists state that ostracism causes groups or individuals to desire to be a part of the dominant group (Sebastian, Viding, Williams, & Blakemore, 2010).

Therefore, the argument lends to the notion that Africans may want to be a part of the dominant group in America. Ethiopians migrating to the United States may

unconsciously or consciously bare hegemonic repercussions attached to being African.

The double entendre of being African with Black skin bares consideration that the effects of social ostracism may have contributed to some of the reclusive functional or adaptive ways among Ethiopians living in America, perhaps promoted by globalized African ostracism and race.

### *Race in America*

Historians found evidence that illustrates race constrain relationships (Anderson, 1988; Smedley & Smedley, 2005). Prior to colonization, race was not clearly defined.

Smedley and Smedley (2005) purports that "race was a folk idea in the English language; it was a general categorizing term, similar to and interchangeable with such terms as type, kind, sort, breed, and even species" (p. 19). The disparaging relationships among primarily Whites and Blacks reinforced racial contentions. Barbaric depictions, ill-

treatment, negative epithets, and insidious schemes towards Blacks promoted oppressive symbols, themes, and cultural dissonance within the Black race, as well as among other groups (Khanna & Harris, 2009; Richardson, 2000; Smedley, 1999; Smedley & Smedley 2005).

African-Americans experienced a difficult and pioneering history in America. Enduring the trans-Atlantic slave trade, the Eugenics movement, the civil rights movement, and other historical moments illustrate the brevity of resilience shown by African-Americans. African-Americans condemned the core of prevailing and oppressive systems, as demonstrative in revolutionary acts of liberation (Anderson, 1988; Bell, 1994; hook, 1981; Lorde, 1994; Smedley, 1999). Inequity propelled African-American activists to fight for equality, whereas the scale of power and privilege glaringly tilts in favor of the dominant group in America (Anderson, 1988; Bell, 1994; hook, 1981; Lorde, 1994; Smedley, 1999).

Gender, class, and racial hegemony, thereby, provided the catalyst to broadening governmental power and fiscal independence (Anderson, 1988; Barak, Leighton, & Flavin, 2007; hook, 1981; Smedley, 1999). Poor, African-American, females were a commodity to the future establishment of America that perpetuated African-American, female slaves giving birth to future slaves for free slave labor for owners (Anderson, 1988). The long-term consumption of African-American, female slaves' illustrated practices of inhumane capitalism, where slave owners utilized extreme force and domination to generate systems of inequality endemic within America's social, educational, legal, and governmental structures (Anderson, 1988; Barak, Leighton, & Flavin, 2007; hook, 1981; Smedley, 1999). The colonization of slaves evolved to yield

resonance of cultural dominance, social power and privilege, and economic wealth (Anderson, 1988). As a result, the need for delineation provoked stratifying, social constructions such as class and race to maintain the hierarchical order (Khanna & Harris, 2009; Richardson, 2000; Smedley & Smedley, 2005).

The evolution of African-American girls continues to progress throughout American history. Primarily in urban areas, progress appears deficient and heart-wrenching to capture, resulting in self-destructive behaviors of African-American girls rising in the past ten years (McKnight & Loper, 2002). Hence, urban areas have seen a heightened increase in aggressive behaviors that has contributed to the reconstitution of how we historically have viewed normative girl behavior (McKnight & Loper, 2002). Historically, girls have been stereotyped as non-aggressive in nature, docile, and submissive. According to McKnight and Loper (2002), there has been a 13% increase in the arrest of girls in 1994. The data suggests that girls are transitioning from previous stereotypes and roles or normative behaviors placed upon them. The discourse of prior beliefs, therefore, must be re-evaluated.

Generally, aggressive behaviors have been stereotyped as the norm for boys, while girls are expected to be nurturing and soft spoken. Girls are beginning to demonstrate more atypical, stereotyped girl behaviors (McKnight & Loper, 2002). Inclusive in these behaviors are the evaluation of stereotypical household duties placed on girls such as cleaning, cooking, washing the laundry, and other duties associated with maintaining the household chores (hook, 1981). However, in America, the Industrial Revolution, World War I and II, and the Feminist Movement contributed to the redefining roles of women and girls in America, largely due to the absence of males in

the home, as they were fighting in the war, and women were working in the labor market (hook, 1981). Therefore, naturally, the role of African-American girls' would be affected by the trickle-down effect of the dominant group's expectations.

An argument hooks (1981) considers in the systemic shift is that African-American women were forced out of the home to work, leaving older siblings to serve as a surrogate caregiver. Hence, when World War I was over, America's attempt to reset the normative roles were moot. Women had grown accustomed to being independent, made the relationships between the traditional male and female role convoluted (hook, 1981). Conversely, Freire (1970) explained that it is when the oppressed understand the systems of the oppressors, and revolt, that liberation takes place (Anderson 1988; hook, 1981; Freire, 2010).

In the United States, urban industrialization influenced trends of people migrating to large, urban cities in hopes of a better life. Additionally, gender roles change. No longer were women working primarily in the home, but they were fully, commissioned partners of the work force. Urban areas had begun to view shifts in the psychology of the people that affected Blacks, and obviously Black girls (Barak et al., 2007; hook, 1981). Therefore, the proposed facts by McKnight and Loper (2002) accounting for the increase in female arrests arguably traces back to systemic changes throughout history.

Moreover, McKnight and Loper (2002) argue that poverty, sexual abuse, and academic challenges are among the reasons leading to girls' arrests or delinquency. The authors offer that the latter reasons were not predictive in female arrests or behaviors, but commonalities seen in female arrests, thereby lending the argument that socio-economic status can place girls at risk of potentially becoming arrested (McKnight & Loper, 2002).

Thus, accordingly, McKnight and Loper (2002) provide the definition for conceptually framing at risk: “the processes that predispose individuals to specific negative or unwanted outcomes” (p. 188).

African-American girls, according to Pearson (2008), “often encounter different standards applied to the same behavior, and it is the African-American woman who orients her daughter to know her place in the dominant world” (p. 84). Thus, hooks (1981) argues that African-American women have been consistently suppressed throughout mainstream America, since slavery. Therefore, the tenement for African-American girls to construct or parallel normative behavior derives from that of the African-American women. Breaking the cyclical chains of past behaviors proves cumbersome when combating against the oppressive practices of the macro-society (Barak et al., 2007; Freire, 1970; hook, 1981). Thus, African-American women were stripped of a cultural identity, and the identity of the White oppressor replaced the powerful ethos that resided for centuries, thereby giving credence to Woodson’s (1933) argument that “if you can control a man’s thinking, you can control his action. When you determine what a man will think, you don’t have to worry about what he will do (p. 84).” In the doing, African-American women are transferring the damaged legacy reconstructed by the oppressive tactics displayed throughout American history, and as a result, African-American girls are predisposed and subjugated to generations of being viewed negatively; at risk (hook, 1981; McKnight & Loper, 2002). Systemically, internalization of negativity, damages the psyche or mind if these girls.

Consequently, inflated crime rates, systemic rise in poverty, decline in academic achievement in urban areas presents a concern for the future of our country, with great

concern being that of African-Americans, primarily African-American girls (Barak et al., 2007; hook, 1981; Mcknight & Loper, 2002; Woodson, 1933). Where does the application of racial discourse begin to a people that have historically received the brunt end of social injustices and inequalities? Unquestionably, it would be difficult to place value on repairing the effects of racial disparity towards African-Americans (hook, 1981; Woodson, 1933). However, the social construct of race, reflects the ubiquitous usage of hegemony for economic stratification and social oppression (Khanna & Harris, 2009; Richardson, 2000; Smedley & Smedley, 2005).

The stratification of race placed systemic barriers on African-Americans. Skin color provided a visible method to perpetuate social oppressive behaviors that derived from the privileged and powerful (Smedley, 1999; Smedley & Smedley, 2005). Class and race are critical systemic structures used in America to oppress. However, race, further, became tantamount to the establishment of identity superiority in America (Anderson, 1988; Barak, Leighton, & Flavin, 2007; Richardson, 2000; Smedley, 1999). Therefore, migrants of African-American race or skin tone that move to America are subjected to the systemic structures of upward social mobility and hegemony.

Ethiopians in America have been inter-connected and highly communal. The impact of race on African-Americans has been tumultuous throughout American history. Therefore, the hypothesis lends to race having an impact on Ethiopians in America, as well. However, the social construction of race has been intertwined into the systemic structures. Understanding the evolution of race theoretically provides clarity to the removal of systems built upon race as an essential force of domination. The eradication of racial domination allows Ethiopian girls' to develop a self-identity independent of

overt and centralized systems, symbols, themes, and cultural norms (Anderson, 1988; Barak, Leighton, & Flavin, 2007; Khanna & Harris, 2009; Richardson, 2000; Smedley, 1999).

*Acculturation, Assimilation, and Identity Formation*

Race reflects the outward issues that Ethiopians must contend with in America, whereas identity success has been linked to immigrants' ability to transfer the sense of being in the homeland while living in America. When Ethiopians go through "the process through which immigrants are gradually steered into the American way of life," (p. 493) assimilation has transpired (Chacko, 2005). However, acculturation requires that Ethiopians adapt to the social settings (Kurman, Eshel, & Kehavi, 2005). Typically for immigrants, researchers find that acculturation procedurally leads to assimilation.

Kurman, Eshel, and Kehavi (2005) states that "immigrants are faced with two major questions: (a) whether to maintain their former cultural identity; and (b) whether to develop closer relations with members of the host society and adopt some of its values and norms of behavior" (p. 956). However, as a group Ethiopians must broker rejection or acceptance of the adaptation process for analysis of the impact for the culture, whereas individuals navigate the cultural and personal adaption process (Chacko, 2005; Kurman, Eshel, & Kehavi, 2005). On a micro-level, individual deviation to the normative behaviors of the host society shows rapid contingency based upon favorable reception by the host society. Ethiopians, therefore, must consider the following:

- Maintaining the cultural, and separating from the host society.
- Adopt the host society and cultural identity.
- Reconfigure the culture and integrate into the host society.
- Deviate completely from the culture and identity (Adapted from Kurman, Eshel, & Kehavi, 2005).

Assimilation, traditionally, moves linearly from the adaptive process of acculturation. More current models of assimilation states that race, ethnicity, class and gender are pivotal factors to, not only assimilation, but also identity formation (Chacko, 2005; Gans 1992; Portes & Zhou 1993; Zhou & Bankston 1994). Therefore, assimilation in modern day juxtaposes retaining the native or ethnic culture and maintaining prominent places in the host society. Chacko (2005) illustrated that “the children of poor minorities of color were noted to be at greater risk of downward socioeconomic assimilation” (p. 494). This suggests that Ethiopian immigrants may be at a disadvantage achieving upward mobility in America.

In American society, race and gender are twenty-first century assimilation factors that contribute to class barriers and identity formation. As a result, researchers have documented the following:

First-generation Black immigrants overwhelmingly emphasized their ethnic identities and national origins, underplaying the more generic identification as Black. Non-native Blacks in the United States resisted identifying with American Blacks for a number of reasons, including prejudices against native Blacks, general aversion to an undistinguished Black identity, and pride in national identity. (Chacko, 2005, p. 494)

Common knowledge highlights the discourse history of Black Americans as that of progressive, yet deviant. Therefore, immigrants who share the racial tone of Black Americans reject the association thereof that creates an imaginary barrier of opposition. In essence, the argument suggests that Ethiopians living in America must consider whether to maintain the culture in conjunction with, as well as navigate the hegemonic structures and stereotypes inappropriately or misappropriated upon them. Chacko (2005) states that “young immigrants may have to cope with the anxieties associated with

concerns about persevering, relinquishing, or transforming their defining cultural traits while attempting to fit into mainstream society” (p. 496).

Chickering (1969) identified the theoretical process to becoming self. These seven vector theories fluidly move from one to the other temporarily. A critical vector, development of identity, stems from the hypothetical question: who am I? (Chickering 1969; Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Therefore, development of identity vector requires an individual to consider the following:

- (1) comfort with body and appearance, (2) comfort with gender and sexual orientation, (3) sense of self in a social, historical, and cultural context, (4) clarification of self-concept through roles and life-style, (5) sense of self in response to feedback from valued others, (6) self-acceptance and self-esteem, and (7) personal stability and integration (Chickering, 1969, p. 3).

Studies illustrate girls’ identity development increases through social interaction and constructs that uses symbolism (Auty & Elliot, 2001; Grant & Stephen 2006; Souiden & M’ssad, 2011). However, for Ethiopian girls, the construct of race is an additional factor in identity development. As Chacko (2005) discovered, race was an indistinct and controversial concept. The study results indicated that Ethiopians were conflicted over acceptance or rejection of the terms Black and African-American, and when given options how to honor culture or ethnicity versus race.

### **Race as a Social Construct**

#### *Historical Framework of Race*

Social discrimination of individuals of African descent in America bred stereotypes, myths, and outlandish tales that negatively depicted the identity and culture of Black slaves (Anderson, 1988; Meyers, 2000; Smedley 1999; Smedley & Smedley 2005). The common belief that dark skinned or the Black race was inferior became the

prevailing conception or ideology (Anderson, 1988; Meyers, 2000). The widespread and pervasive nature of these systemic beliefs developed into common hegemonic practices and views, such as physical abuse and views of Blacks as unintelligent, savages, uncivilized, and ugly (Anderson, 1988; Barak, Leighton, & Flavin, 2007; Khanna & Harris, 2009; Richardson, 2000; Smedley, 1999).

Whites' views of superiority led to the attempt to prove, scientifically, that Blacks are inferior, racially and intellectually (Smedley, 1999; Smedley & Smedley, 2005). This fundamental notion propelled the eugenics movement in America. In essence, the eugenics movement scientifically attempted to prove Charles Darwin's theory of racial superiority or the "survival of the fittest" (Smedley & Smedley, 2005). However, the eugenics movement simply attempted to utilize science to enhance genetic deficiencies in humans (Smedley & Smedley, 2005). On the surface, eugenics appears to be associated with issues of birth defects and mental illnesses, such as mental retardation and schizophrenia (Smedley & Smedley, 2005). However, the term "feeble-minded" was used often to include delinquents or criminals, drug users, and individuals with communicable diseases (Smedley & Smedley, 2005).

The support of the eugenics movement by governmental officials and physicians helped to legalize the practices of "feeble-minded" diagnoses (Smedley & Smedley, 2005). Individuals declared "feeble-minded," provided legal permission for the government to sterilize citizens (Smedley & Smedley, 2005). This atrocity and inhumane act of sterilization supported public policies and opinion towards certain groups in America, with Blacks being sterilized disproportionately, as a result (Smedley &

Smedley, 2005). The eugenics movement would have undoubtedly become additive for Black sterilizations had the movement continued (Smedley & Smedley, 2005).

The dissolve of the movement began during Hitler's tyranny in Europe. The negative exposure eugenics received prevented further promulgation in America (Smedley & Smedley, 2005). However, ideology of White supremacy and domination disseminated throughout the world, along with stereotypes of superior physical traits; eye color, hair color, ear shape, tongue shape, nose contour, size, and skin color (Smedley & Smedley, 2005). Consequently, the eugenics movement played a pivotal role in attempting to link race, superiority, and beauty to science (Smedley & Smedley, 2005). The remnant effects remain evident in many of America's public policies, such as the Planned Parenthood Program, which provides birth control, abortions, prenatal care, and varying family reproductive services (Smedley & Smedley, 2005).

The eugenics movement became an influential catalyst to establishing the conceptualization of beauty in America (Smedley & Smedley, 2005). Physical traits and cultural signifiers precluded groups of people from the access of power and privilege (Smedley, 1999; Smedley & Smedley, 2005). Prohibition germinated from hegemonic systems involving race and race relations (Anderson, 1988; Barak, Leighton, & Flavin, 2007; Khanna & Harris, 2009; Richardson, 2000; Smedley, 1999). The consistent depiction of Blacks as inferior in advertisement such as political cartoons and minstrels supported stereotypes of acceptability in the degradation of individuals that were not of the White race (Toll, 1974; Witke, 1930). Additionally, the depictions of normative beauty, established during the eugenics movement, were presented in various

advertisements throughout subsequent years following its dissolution (Toll, 1974; Witke, 1930).

White women and men demonstrating the prototype of power and privilege provided a template or model through advertisement to promote standards of beauty (Anderson, 1988; Barak, Leighton, & Flavin, 2007; Khanna & Harris, 2009; Richardson, 2000; Smedley, 1999; Toll, 1974; Witke, 1930). The overt and subliminal messages found in advertisements perpetuated a detriment to children born Black in America (Toll, 1974; Witke, 1930). The silent cues were internalized by African-American children, reflecting the ideology that white is superior and Black is inferior (Clark & Clark, 1939; Decuir-Gunby, 2009; Stevens, 1997). Ultimately, this places a burden on the identity development of African-American children.

Similarly, the minstrel circuit (White actors painting their faces and body Black to perform theatrical plays) in America exacerbated the negative portrayal of being Black in America (Toll, 1974; Witke, 1930). Credence is given and reinforced through stereotypical depictions that garner Blacks as ignorant, uncivilized, and comedic (Toll, 1974; Witke, 1930). Furthermore, minstrels roles reinforced oppression in America, and maintained White superiority claims (Toll, 1974; Witke, 1930). Comprehensively, African-Americans viewed minstrels as an egregious lack of respect for their culture, identity, and intellect (Toll, 1974; Witke, 1930). However, minstrels were pivotal and effective in promoting racial dissensions throughout America (Toll, 1974; Witke, 1930). As a result, minstrels served the purpose of entertainment for White Americans at the expense of Black cultural.

Positive self-identity for Black girls to include a balanced self-view of race, gender, class, and body imagery (Azzarito, 2011; Poran, 2002; Read, 2011). The introduction of technological and media competition to the global society presents differing prospectus on Black girls' self-identity and perception of beauty (Azzarito, 2011; Poran, 2002; Read, 2011). Many argue for a return to more Afro-centric ideals, however, others adopt a hybrid perspective (Traore & Luken, 2006). Research purports show that self-identity fluctuates in the early years, understanding that by middle school a positive self-identity can assist Black girls with navigation throughout academia and social structures (Kutob, Senf, Crago, & Shisslak, 2010; Poran, 2002). Therefore, the necessity for Black women and Ethiopian immigrants to develop positive self-identities become tantamount with academic and social success.

### **Social Integration and Internalized Objectification**

The construct of race impacts Ethiopians social integration, whereas social integration focuses on intercultural understanding (Morrison, 2006). In utilizing race as a prohibition tool in America, race was utilized negatively as a tool throughout systemic structures that dissonance intercultural understanding and capital for Ethiopians (Farkas, 1996; Winkle-Wagner, 2010). Winkle-Wagner (2010) poignantly illustrates that “the foundations of racism, the idea that those who appear different from the dominant group (White in the American Context) are somehow considered inferior or morally deviant” (p. 73). Therefore, the capital of culture or the social construct of communal Ethiopian ideas are disregarded from intercultural inclusion, thereby, voiding any cultural reciprocity.

Lamont and Lareau (1988) identified that cultural capital is used institutionally to include or exclude others from the group. However, Bourdieu (1973) theorizes that cultural capital and social reproduction reinforces the ideas of the dominant group through the educational system. Studies illustrate that students immersed in academic settings, where social integration is present and allowed to display cultural capital, perform academically better (Bourdieu, 1973; Farkas, 1996; Lamont & Lareau, 1988; Winkle-Wagner, 2010). However, researchers suggest that students not belonging to the dominant group experience systemic inequality, because of systems failing to take into consideration the cultural capital and/or social integration of those outside of the dominant group. Therefore, this implies that Ethiopians are at risk of facing structural inequities, academically and socially, that may bar the opportunity for social mobility and cultural inclusion (Bourdieu, 1973; Farkas, 1996; Lamont and Lareau, 1988; Winkle-Wagner, 2010).

The motif of intermingling Ethiopian culture in social and academic settings, therefore, promotes inclusionary relationships. Traore and Lukens (2006) explain the dynamics among African and Black students, whereas these students were empowered with information regarding Afro-history. The results dispelled stereotypes and misconceptions regarding the misrepresentation of both cultures while largely having to consider the issue of race. Traore and Lukens (2006) present westernized discourse and replace them with Afrocentricity for students to make the transition from what Woodson (1933) calls “being miseducated,” and not communicating with one another, towards cultural awareness by building solid relationships with each other. The parallel occurrences emerging from students’ academic and community interactions suggests

fundamental notions for teachers, students, and society to, metaphorically, conceptualize that a book without words is empty and has nothing to offer; a people unlearned or “miseducated” about their place in history and contribution to society will be disenfranchised (Dwyer, 2005; Lareau 2003; Traore and Luken, 2006; Woodson, 1933).

“When you determine what a man will think, you don’t have to worry about what he will do” (Woodson, 1933, p. 84). The impact of acculturation and assimilation on Ethiopians arguably subjects the generations educated in America to the systemic oppression and ostracism felt by Blacks in every part of society. Therefore, Ethiopian children are vulnerable to the model of the dominant culture that set up and operate educational entities in the manner deemed adequate from the oppressors’ viewpoint (Dwyer, 2005; Lareau 2003; Traore & Luken, 2006; Woodson, 1933). However, twenty-first century media platforms outsource hegemonic ideology as a means to mass conformity and mainstream beliefs (Azzarito, 2010; Poran, 2002;). Girls’ ideology of self and body image becomes a gendered variable.

Poran (2002) argues that researchers illustrated that White women’s notion of beauty stemmed from mainstream media, whereas Black women’s were precipitated upon personality traits. Physicality and personality congruently under-support the notion of beauty and gender stereotypes. Meaning,

...in the United States, people who are perceived as attractive are also perceived as having positive personality traits, such as intelligence, sociability, virtue, nurturance, and warmth, and they are perceived as more successful in areas of work and personal life. (Poran, 2002, p. 65)

Perception constructs reality. Consequently, the perception of beauty is an underlying construct of identity development (Azzarito, 2010; Clark & Clark, 1939; Decuir-Gunby, 2009; Read, 2011; Stevens, 1997). Therefore, analysis of media narratives become

critical for the deconstruction and reconstruction of Black girls' identities and perceptions of beauty. Azzarito (2010) provides that:

Contemporary media narratives about femininity play a powerful role in producing girls' understandings of themselves and construction of their bodies. Since the 1970s women have been increasingly portrayed as physically active, healthy, even 'sporty' in all sorts of media (i.e. websites, TV, magazines, newspapers and films). The media reconstruct, present and commodify women's bodies through images that celebrate power, opportunities, desire, self-determination and success in Western society (p. 261).

Imagery proves powerful through media. Therefore, media becomes a systemic structure by which those in the dominant group can utilize for hegemonic means and/or the construction of a status quo (Khanna & Harris, 2009; Poran, 2002; Richardson, 2000; Smedley, 1999; Toll, 1974; Witke, 1930). Failure to view cultural representation in the media sends a message of invisibility. However, saturating media with images of women through physicality or sexual standards, promotes a linear perspective for women to attain. Poran (2002) states, "images of women in American media have been found to affect women's perceptions of themselves," (p. 66) lending to positive and negative adverse effects.

Studies indicate that media imagery can negatively impact how women view themselves (Myers & Biocca, 1992; Poran, 2002). The outcome of the doll study and similar studies argues that media in America has been utilized to promote White ideals that concurrently negates ethnicity. Given processes of acculturation/assimilation, American systems, and historic issues of race, how will Ethiopian women be self-identity, academic achievement, and perception of beauty be influenced? The examination of race, as well as assimilation/acculturation, is critical to analyze the historical diatribes of Ethiopian women, the effects of oppressive systems upon self-

identity and notions of beauty, and provide a solution-oriented framework of support to deconstruct and reconstruct a cultural prospectus in America.

### **Summary**

Chapter two provided an overview of the limited literature on Ethiopian immigrants in the U.S. It also presented the context for their immigration and the resulting processes of assimilation and acculturation. The next chapter outlines the method of the study on Ethiopian immigrant students in the U.S.

## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

### Research Method

Chapter three details the research method of this dissertation. Outlined in the chapter are the role of the researcher, theoretical framework, sample selection, data collection, and data analysis. Collectively, this chapter provides the structure for understanding the research questions; What were the experiences of acculturation/assimilation for first generation, and/or second generation Ethiopian girls' self-identity, academic achievement, and perception of beauty in America?

This study utilizes case study design. According to Yin (2003), “a case study investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the case) in its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident” (p. 2). Comprehensively, this exploratory research delves into Ethiopian women academic and social experiences in America. Therefore, utilizing a case study design synthesizes the understanding of their collective experiences from phenomenological and contextual perspectives. Interpretive case study design, additionally, allows exploration of the impact assimilation and acculturation may have on Ethiopian women academic achievement, self-identity, and perception of beauty while growing up in America.

The concluding interpretation of this case study provides analysis for educators, public policy makers, and social agents with information to support and assist Ethiopian women with the transition of academic and cultural experiences. Critical-race-feminism theory is utilized to frame the investigational impact of race, and the effect of acculturation/assimilation on self-identity and perception of beauty. Critical pedagogy is scaffolded simultaneously within the research to deconstruct the role race and

acculturation/assimilation has on academic achievement. Conclusively, this interpretive case study provides descriptions and narratives that frame the research discussion for Ethiopian women. As a result, the accumulation of rich data in this study, primarily from interviews, provides further examination into the phenomenon of Ethiopian women living in America.

### **Role of the Researcher**

According to Stake (1995), “The case researcher plays different roles and has options as to how they will be played. The roles may include teacher, participant observer, interviewer, reader, storyteller, advocate, artist, counselor, evaluator, consultant, and others” (p. 91). The role of the researcher in this study is tri-fold; interviewer, constructivist, and interpreter.

Daniel Sciarra states (1999) that, comprehensively, “the role of the researcher can be viewed through Blumer’s metaphor of the lifter of veils” (p. 46). In essence, Blumer references lifting the veil metaphorically identifies the exposure of the phenomenon that was hidden. The researcher’s role in this study considers the existence of hidden structures of meaning in order to understand the paradigm of truth and dominating beliefs among Ethiopian women.

Consequently, the role of the researcher in this study also serves a physical representation to speak their truth. Throughout matriculation in the Southern region of the United States, the researcher was mistaken as Ethiopian. The role of the researcher lends as a catalyst for Ethiopian women to become comfortable throughout the interview process. The role of the researcher serves as a mediator for Ethiopian women to present their perspectives on living in the United States.

Therefore, interviewing Ethiopian women serves as the initial role in which the researcher will manage. However, the researcher recruits and interview voluntary participants in a semi-structured format, where interview questions range from educational to life experiences. Transcriptions of interviews, verbatim, provide the basis of the researcher analysis. The researcher constructs an interpretive coding analysis of the interviews into logical and coherent structures of meaning that are comprehensive to the overall narratives.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Globalization and feminism prompted social justice for women from the 1950's by citizen involvement and social movements (Ferree & Tripp, 2006). The shift from government and elite domination to citizen activism publicized power centers that challenged the status quo (Ferree & Tripp, 2006). A baseline premise for the systemic shift to women's social justice developed from critical and feminist theories. Critical theory, in essence, operates on the ideology that knowledge is power, which implies that oppressed people are able to impact change from educational awareness (Humm, 1990). Whereas, feminist theory originated from the importance of equity for women by investigating individual and shared experiences, in addition to, critically analyzing how gender differences are constructed under patriarchal systems (Humm, 1990). In this study, the dual construction of critical race theory (CRT) and feminist theory provide the fundamental lens in which this study formulates analysis and context.

Yosso (2005) states that "CRT is a framework that can be used to theorize, examine, and challenge the ways race and racism implicitly and explicitly impact on school structures, practices, and discourse" (p. 70). CRT emerged as a theoretical

response to address race and racism in American society. A major structural component of CRT is that racism is embedded into society (Bell, 1987, 1992; Delgado, 1995, p. xvi). Therefore, “it [racism] looks ordinary and natural to persons in the culture,” as a result of society constructing norms based on the self-interest of the status quo (Bell, 1987, 1992; Delgado, 1995, p. xvi). Given this notion, systemic norms have been perpetuated through the legal system, as well as the educational system that structurally promotes racism. CRT is, therefore, the paradigm response for social equity in American society.

Whereas, feminist theory analyzes gender equality that questions the patriarchal systems used to oppress women. Barak, Leighton, and Flavin (2007) write:

Feminism comprises both a basic doctrine of equal rights for women and an ideology for women’s liberation from patriarchy. Feminism’s basic task is consciousness raising about oppression and encouraging actions that undo the exclusions of women’s opinions, experiences, and accomplishments. (p. 71)

Feminism challenges the status quo of male privilege, calling into question hegemonic policies and practices favoring men. The marginalization and oppression of women is important when considering their social, political, and economic experiences. The primary tenet is to combat societal exclusionary practices and ensure that gender equity becomes systemically prevalent.

Therefore, the scope of this study is viewed through the blended lens of critical race theory and feminist theory called critical race feminism (CRF). However, critical pedagogy and Afrocentricity are secondary theoretical frameworks utilized to further construct meaningful narratives of Ethiopian women, academically and socially. The totality of each theoretical framework collectively strengthens the researcher’s critical analysis, thereby providing contextual depth to the phenomenon of race, culture, gender, and life experiences in American society.

Additionally, CRF is used to examine the discourse of race and gender for the purpose of deconstructing systemic power structures that marginalize women of color. Critical pedagogy provides a student-centered framework to unveil the authoritarian praxis of teaching and learning, allowing for the investigation and analysis of Ethiopian female matriculation in America, in efforts to understand indirectly if much of the Ethiopian culture has been retained in America. Afrocentricity provides a basis of cultural relevancy to understand the perspective of the participants. Whereas, Afrocentricity also illustrates a structural praxis for empowerment that support an Afrocentric self-identity in educational and social systems. Afrocentricity is a cultural ideology that promotes a pro-African and/or African-American viewpoint, in order to affirm those of African descent in every aspect of the culture; education, history, sociology, psychology, and religion. Afrocentricity, in this study, provides the supplemental lens to understanding how Ethiopian women interacted in school, performed academically, and constructed or reconstructed their self-identity and perceptions of beauty, in America.

### *Critical Race Feminism*

Critical race feminism emergence was to address areas that were pervaded by feminist earlier. According to Barak, Leighton, and Flavin (2007),

...critical race feminists have objected both to feminist approaches that presume White middle-class women's experiences are representative of all women's experiences and to critical race scholarship that presumes minority women are not only all the same, but that they are all the same as those of their minority male counterparts. (p. 113)

The framework of CRF examines race and racism's impact on systemic structures in society, as well as challenges the disproportionality of minority/ethnic/racial

representation in the workplace, inequality in schools, structural practices and discourse (Yosso, 2005). Childers and Hytten (2015) states that:

CRF shares a number of assumptions with CRT, including belief in the following ideas: the permanence of racism in our society; the importance of narratives, storytelling, and counternarratives to disrupting taken-for-granted and normative views about the world; the social constructedness of race; the need to critique liberalism for its individualistic and context-independent perspective on the world; the reality of interest convergence, meaning that marginalized cultures have gotten ahead only when those from the dominant culture also benefit; and the importance of critical race praxis, or action to challenge the status quo.(p. 395)

However, the narrative for CRF expands to that of gender; critically analyzing the experiences of women and girls of color and negotiating the deconstruction and reconstruction of self-identity. In essence, CRF “negotiate boundaries and borders...” (Pratt-Clark, 2010, p. 27), which questions the normative gender roles and practices perpetuated by systemic structures, and navigating the discourse towards redefinition and cultural-relevancy. Evan-Winters and Esposito (2010) brokers the discussion by stating:

Today, from a critical race feminist perspective we have to raise the following question: If a young Black woman’s worth is measured through her aptitude for reproducing the next generation’s labor (i.e. capital), what would be the interest of the privileged class in assisting in the development of her educational well-being through self-empowerment or social and financial support? Once more, where does the interest of the White middle class converge with the interest of young women of African descent? (p. 18)

Consideration must, however, include the construct of race, rather than ethnicity in America, and the hegemony of gender oppression. Therefore, CRF becomes critical to unpacking the dynamics of Ethiopian women lives in American society.

CRF provides a benefit to investigating and theory building around educational issues that impact Ethiopian women. The foundational significance illustrates that women of color experiences and perspectives are different from the experiences of men of all races and white women. The theoretical tenets, therefore, frames a targeted focus on the

lives of Ethiopian women in America who may have encountered multiple forms of discrimination, due to the intersections of race, class, and gender within a system of White male patriarchy and racist oppression. Theoretically, CRF allows Ethiopian women to be considered through a multi-dimensional scope and breadth that individualizes their experiences in a culturally relevant manner (Evan-Winters and Esposito, 2010).

Therefore, CRF is utilized to analyze Ethiopian women discourse in America, and examine the opportunity for culturally-relevant structures to replace old ones (Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010). Subsequently, CRF allows the researcher to investigate the interactions of Ethiopians within the American educational system and society. The fluidity of the blended tenets allow examination of identity analysis. This flexibility provides a racial intervention in feminine discourse, necessary for the researcher to investigate concerns for the impact assimilation and/or acculturation, racial and/or gender oppression, and issues of equality has on Ethiopian women transitioning in America.

### *Critical pedagogy*

Critical pedagogy combines education with critical theory to investigate the process between what is being taught and what is being learned. McLaren (2003) writes that, “critical pedagogy asks how and why knowledge gets constructed the way it does, and how and why some constructions of reality are legitimated and celebrated by the dominant culture while others clearly are not” (p. 72). However, scholars, such as Giroux, considered that schools were derived to provide legitimacy to societal economic and political policies for the purpose of socializing the dominant ideology onto the lower class (Giroux, Critical Pedagogy).

Freire, however, theorizes that consideration of cultural capital among the oppressed mitigates power and production ideologies perpetuated in schools (Bergin & Garvey, 1985). Freire argues that there is a relationship between culture and power. Questions of culture are argued to help us relegate who has power, and how will the power be produced and noticeable en masse. Schooling is reasoned to be the primary source. Therefore, critical pedagogy denotes that the policies and philosophy of schools should represent inclusive practices that analyzes discourse ideologies and power structures, continuously, for the majority representation of all student interests.

This study investigates the impact school power structures may have had on Ethiopian women designed around issues of race, gender, class, and ethnicity. As a result, questions generated, examine school experiences and curriculum access to analyze culturally relevant practices among the teacher/student dialogue. Canoy (2013), as edited by Henry Giroux, states that:

Critical analyses of American education have stressed only its negative and exclusionary aspects – the schools’ ‘hidden’ message of subordination and failure designed to cull out those youngsters unable to handle the common curriculum.  
(p. 5)

This suggests that researchers should focus on schools’ inclusionary practices. Critical pedagogy, however, fosters transformative roles in education to aid in access of the hidden curriculum that support schools utilizing the collective voice of teachers, neighborhood agencies, and parents to promote students’ active involvement in academics. Critical pedagogy, thereby, replaces the functionalist paradigm for meeting certain goals of societies and preparing scholars for future statuses and roles, but, instead, allow schools to serve as a community resource. The dialogue then shifts towards schools

becoming an extension for the community, as well as giving teachers the authority to outline and assist students with navigating the learning process.

Critical pedagogy provides critical investigation of Ethiopian women views on teachers' fundamental role of mapping out the curriculum, and the effectiveness and allowance of them to use cultural capital and resources that come from Ethiopia.

Teachers have a responsibility to understand power structures operating in schools and create a transformative academic environment for students to draw upon a reflective lens that embodies them seeing themselves as agents of change. According to Giroux, teachers must also:

...be able to critically analyze the ideologies, values, and interests that inform their role as teachers and the cultural politics they promote in the classroom. All of their actions presuppose some notion of what it means to be a citizen and a future society and to the degree that schools are actively engaged in the production of discourses that provide others with a sense of identity, community, and possibility, they must be responsible and reflective about their actions (p. 7)

The absence of such, suggests that minority or Ethiopian students must navigate hegemonic school structures ill-equipped to project their cultural capital into educational policy, whereas critical pedagogy illustrates the framework for teachers to critically analyze what is shaping the everyday lives of students and prostrates them to develop inclusive curriculum that recognize cultural differences socially, academically, and politically.

As a result, critical pedagogy shifts the dialogue of their collective experience as Ethiopian women. Freire theorizes that by teaching those in lesser positions in society, we broker their elevation. Therefore, this study utilizes critical pedagogy to investigate the totality of Ethiopian women educational experiences in America.

### *Afrocentricity*

A critical component to Afrocentricity re-asserts that people of African descent garners a sense of agency (Asante, 2011). Agency, however, empowers people to make decisions that are individualized and indicative of personal will in order to do what is best for self (Asante, 2011). Obviously, agency has structural limitations that reduces the freedom of choice, yet requiring an introspection of factorial influences, such as race, gender, ethnicity, social class, etc. Nevertheless, Afrocentricity involves a paradigm shift from American colonialism that moves towards the inclusion of African history and/or culture.

Asante states that “Afrocentricity becomes a revolutionary idea because it studies ideas, concepts, events, personalities, and political and economic processes from a standpoint of Black people as subjects and not as objects, basing all knowledge on the authentic interrogation of location” (Parrillo, 2008, p. 33). The argument Asante illustrates is that Black ideals, values, and consciousness is critical to the evolution and development of Black people (Asante, 2011; Parrillo, 2008). Thus, Afrocentricity fundamentally asks:

What resonates more with people than understanding that Africans [Blacks] are central to their history, not someone else’s? If Africans [Blacks] can, in the process of materializing their consciousness, claim space as agents of progressive change, then they can change their condition and change the world. (Parrillo, p. 34)

Traore and Lukens (2006) expounds Afrocentricity ideology to juxtapose the stereotypical perspectives African and African-American students’ have experienced with one another in American schools. Strategies and activities were provided to expose distorted beliefs/stereotypes of the continent of Africa versus America to systemically

work through the cancellation of faulty thinking and distortions about each other (Traore and Lukens, 2006). However, the hallmark of Afrocentricity argues that if Blacks were given the opportunity to learn from an Afrocentric perspective, and dialogue about cultural beliefs, values, norms, myths and notions can dissipate, being replaced by a prospectus of positive communication.

Therefore, the framework of this study identify that Afrocentricity provides the contextual lens in which to explore how Ethiopian women find connections to their African culture in academia and American society. Thus, Afrocentricity questions the narrative of White supremacy, and brokers the development of Black or African consciousness. Sefa Dei (1994) writes:

Afrocentricity, however, is about opening up a new and transformed consciousness for all peoples, particularly those of African descent. It is about Africans taking up their right to the experiences of the continent, the enjoyment of their culture, the celebration of their historicities, and the continued survival and togetherness of African peoples, irrespective of where they have decided to reside. Afrocentricity is about inclusion, particularly, in an era in which the marginalization of African peoples' experiences and the subjugation of their identities... (p. 4)

Unfortunately, having Black skin in America fails to protect Ethiopian women from institutional –isms that have been previously projected onto African-Americans.

Ethiopians appear to be at a disadvantage; categorized into being Black in America and denied the structural recognition of their ethnicity. The social change aspects of Afrocentricity requires self-transformation to understand the effects of hegemony to have a strong sense of self, history, and culture.

Consequently, the lives of Ethiopian women are analyzed, understanding that the Afrocentric interrogations inspect the reclamation of knowledge from the notion of community and multiple parts of self. The underlying assumption aligns with African

identity; a sense of who you are as African (Conyers, 2003). Afrocentricity provides the critical lens in which to discover cultural deficiencies and intellectual inferiorities.

Deficiencies and inferiorities derived from colonization is where Afrocentricity is used to disrupt the knowledge that bar the production of an authentic self.

Knowledge, however, is used to affirm and legitimize agency in a community (Conyers, 2003). Conyers (2003) states that “we must learn about the particular insurgent responses to racial, ethnic, class, gender, cultural, and language hostility that necessitate the evoking of community...” (p. 220). Community in this study refers to that which conceptualizes Ethiopian women notions of self and their social identity. Afrocentricity allows the investigation of this phenomenon from an Afrocentric perspective.

### **Research Design**

The research design for this study is qualitative research. According to Merriam (1998), “qualitative research is an umbrella concept covering several forms of inquiry that help us understand and explain the meaning of social phenomena with as little disruption of the natural setting as possible” (p. 2). Qualitative research method was selected to investigate how race and assimilation/acculturation has impacted first generation, and/or second generation Ethiopian females’ life experiences, academic achievement, self-identity, and perception of beauty in America. This interpretive case study is framed with critical race feminism, critical pedagogy, and Afrocentricity (Creswell, 2003, 1998; Merriam, 1998).

In this study, the researcher will make interpretive meaning from the data, which is indicative of qualitative research. Creswell (2013) states that “qualitative research is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a

social or human problem” (p. 4). This research explores ten, Ethiopian women collective life experiences. The interpretive case study collects data from the exploration of a “bounded system” or a case over time (Creswell, 2003, 1998; Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2003). Yin (2003) writes that the case study research design is the “logical plan” to answer questions from the study.

The majorative point in this study allows the researcher to explore “the complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it” (Schwandt, 1994, p. 118). As a result, this study assumes that reality is socially constructed, in which the researcher, use interview techniques to unseal the reality (Cavana, Delahaye, & Sekaran, 2001). Furthermore, Creswell (1998) states that a researcher should “choose a case study to examine a ‘case,’ bounded in time or place, and look for contextual material about the setting of the ‘case”” (p. 40). Specifically, this study investigates the case of Ethiopian females and their racial and assimilation/acclturation experiences at least one year living in the America.

Case studies have an empirical inquiry that delves into the context of real-life phenomenon, thereby allowing this study to utilize direct, detailed interviews as a source of evidence (Yin, 1994). The interview analysis is processed into narrative, descriptive data for specific themes that provides aggregate information into large clusters of ideas or contextual meaning of the phenomenon. Therefore, the data collection allows the researcher to emerge with “thick, descriptive” analysis.

The analysis “requires that you combine or assemble your case study as a direct reflection of your initial study propositions” (Yin, 2013, p. 36). In this study, case study is particularly useful in providing rich information that allows the researcher to probe in

greater depth to capture “the emergent and immanent properties of life...especially where it is changing very fast” (Noor, 2008, p. 1603). Thematically coding the data into an overarching theme with sub-themes generates contextual meaning, whereas, ultimately, this study seeks to understand Ethiopian females in America. The unit of analysis derived from the interviews are interpreted to produce the case study report.

### **Sample Selection**

In qualitative research, sample selection has a profound effect on the quality of the research. The sample selection in this study is purposive sampling. According to Patton (1990), “the logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth” (p. 169). Patton explains that information-rich means that individuals chosen for the study provide an abundance of information that is critical or important to the study.

Criterion sampling is the most commonly used strategy among purposive sampling. Criterion sampling identifies cases from a predetermined set of criteria (Palinas, Horwitz, Green, Wisdom, Duan, & Hoagwood, 2013). The criterion utilized for this study is as follows: (1) born in Ethiopia or the parents were born in Ethiopia, (2) female, (3) attended school in the United States for at least a year, and (4) is at least 18 years of age. These criterion were identified as information-rich because this study is evaluating the academic and social life experiences of Ethiopian girls’ in America.

Participants will be recruited by flyers posted throughout Ethiopian religious institutions, businesses, and international studies program at local universities and colleges. Ten participants will be selected that meet the criterion. The 10 participants will

receive a \$15 visa gift card as incentive for participating in this study. The monetary incentive will be given to each participant at the end of the second interview.

### **Data Collection**

Data will be collected through semi-structured interviews. As stated by Horton, Macve, and Struyven (2004), “Semi-structured interviews were chosen in order to allow the interviewees a degree of freedom to explain their thoughts and to highlight areas of particular interest and expertise that they felt they had, as well as to enable certain responses to be questioned in greater depth, and in particular to bring out and solve apparent contradictions” (p. 340). Additionally, interviews are information rich and allows Ethiopian girls’ to discuss the impact of race, assimilation, and acculturation on their academic achievement, self-identity, and perception of beauty (Patton, 1990).

The primary researcher will recruit 10 Ethiopian girls' participants and administer the interviews. Each participant voluntarily participates in 2 interviews; an initial interview and a follow up interview. A consent form is signed by the researcher and the participant prior to the initial interview with opportunities to ask questions. The first interview will be approximately 45 minutes, with a second interview of approximately 30 minutes. All of the interviews are scheduled and held in a quiet and convenient place for the participants or on the campus of the University of North Carolina at Charlotte.

Interviews are audio-recorded and transcribed, verbatim. Transcriptions will be electronically completed and stored on a flash drive in a locked cabinet. Upon completion of the interviews and transcription, each interview participants receives a copy of their transcript in order to check the accuracy of the data and to clarify data. However, the

researcher reviews the initial transcript with each participant at the beginning of the second interview. Reviewing the transcript involves the following:

1. The researcher highlight comments and/or questions prior to the second interview for the second interview discussion..
2. The researcher gives the participant a copy of the transcribed interview.
3. The researcher provides the participant with additional time to review the highlighted items.
4. The researcher starts the second interview from the highlighted questions.
5. The researcher allows the participant to have the transcription of the first interview.
6. The second transcription of the second interview will be hand-delivered after the second interview. Follow-up concerns will be allowed at the time of delivery.

The protocol for analysis designed by the primary researcher will follow closely to the tenets of qualitative research method. The primary researcher will manage all interview data to ensure the confidentiality of participants. All identifiable information will be removed from each interview transcript during the transcription process and replaced with pseudonyms.

### **Data Analysis**

According to Creswell (2003), “the process of data analysis involves making sense out of the text and image data” (p. 190). Data analysis is an ongoing process during the collection process and reflection process (Creswell, 2003). The use of open-ended questions is utilized to “develop an analysis from the information supplied by participants” (Creswell, 2003, p. 190). Data will be analyzed through detailed description of the individuals and their experiences, as transcribed from the interviews. The data is coded, thematically, using qualitative research methods. Thematic codes are centralized from the data analysis, and sub-themes, as well as follow up data provides contextual meaning to the themes.

ATLAS.ti, a software utilized for qualitative research data analysis, enhances the coding process. The open coding options of the software provides the initial phase of the coding process. Themes derived from open coding generates additional layers of analysis or sub-themes. Themes are translated into narratives that are categorized and utilized to convey the findings of the analysis. Thereafter, the researcher provides interpretation or meaning of the data.

### **Validity and Reliability**

Validity in qualitative research is the degree to which data is trustworthy for what is being measured (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2009). Guba (1981) states that validity or trustworthiness can be established by addressing; (1) credibility, (2) transferability, (3) dependability, and (4) confirmability (p. 75-91). The researcher must acknowledge issues in the study not easily explained (credibility), utilize descriptive and context-relevant information for setting identification (transferability), address data collection solidity (dependability), as well as acknowledge the data neutrality (confirmability).

However, Maxwell (1992) identifies five criteria for validity in qualitative research. This study focuses on two of the five criteria: (a) descriptive validity or accuracy of what is stated, and (b) interpretive validity or meaning of the participants' perspective (p. 279-300). Strategies for ensuring the facilitation of trustworthiness and understanding of research findings are adapted from Guba (1981). Guba identifies several strategies for ensuring validity. This study utilizes the following strategies taken from Gay, Mills, & Airasian (2009):

- Collect detailed descriptive data that will permit comparison of a given context to other possible contexts to which transfer may be contemplated.
- Develop detailed descriptions of the context to make judgments about fit with other contexts possible.

- Establish an audit trail.
- Practice triangulation or the process of using multiple methods, data collection strategies, and data sources to obtain a more complete picture of what is being studied and to cross-check information.
- Practice reflectivity or biases that may cause you to formulate a set of questions or present findings in a particular way (p. 376-377).

### **Subjectivity Statement**

Acknowledgment and understanding of biases are important in qualitative studies.

Therefore, disclosure of personal information is tantamount to this study. I was born in 1971; at the end of the civil rights movement, where race relations in America were tumultuous. There were times when the world and systemic structures appeared Black and White. The juxtaposition that race was of importance was foreign to me at school and home. I am a woman of mixed heritage; African-American and Brazilian, who has attended predominantly Black elementary and middle schools. However, teachers during the majority of these primary years were Caucasian, middle-aged, and affluent.

Growing up, I was considered wayward, shy, and intellectually, above average. My experiences were primarily positive, academically, but socially there were many issues throughout my matriculation. The majority of the students, including myself, lived in poverty. The school population consisted largely of students from two government housing programs, and the racial composite of classes were largely African American. In some of my elementary classes, there were only eight students receiving instruction, as a result of how the school structure operated. Elective courses, such as physical education and music, were received with the general population, whereas the core courses for gifted children were provided through special education. As I developed, middle school was transitional and resembled the layout of high school.

Middle school is the age in which the social transition was most difficult. There was an acute awareness of social status, skin color, and the access and limitations of being mixed and poor in America. Academic achievement continued to grow, whereas the mental reparations of home impacted the maximum educational potential. School suspensions, isolation, and withdrawal from social events consumed much of the middle school experience. These experiences shaped and developed aspects of my thoughts over time.

Fortunately, high school experiences were the polar opposite of earlier educational experiences. I attended a diverse high school comprised of a large number of affluent students. A famous movie star graduated from my high school, prior to my attendance. Therefore, there were a gamut of resources and opportunities that were absent in previous schools. However, high school issues around class and race became more pronounced. Issues such as accessing the hidden curriculum and tracking were silent, systemic barriers. Many students of color were able to maneuver throughout advanced placement and honor courses, but a large number of students were not considered.

High school, in my opinion, had given us a real world perspective of society while providing exposure to an affluent educational environment, college readiness programs, and different social arenas. I was able to join programs like campus life, attend band camp, and participate in the theater dance program and show choir. These opportunities provided introductions to areas of society that were foreign, while exposing hidden perceptions.

It is unfortunate that with such great opportunity many issues of power and privilege existed. Many of these issues centered on ethnicity, skin color, and poverty. As

a result, I began to navigate throughout life with a sensitive awareness of similarities and differences among people. Various incidents made me aware of class, blended heritage, and gender. “Othering;” a form of silencing the voices of minorities in classrooms by those in power for conformity became my norm (Delpit, 1995). Therefore, the duplicity of living at home and school were polar opposites. There was a sense of cultural pride at home, but school structures and peer pressure censored deviation from the majority norms. The results promoted the denial of self.

Family remained a central force. Completion of high school allowed me the opportunity to explore the world. I found employment in the fashion industry where I was exposed to various cultures and treatment of girls/women. My experiences in the fashion industry exposed me to a series of negative and impactful events, such as witnessing indirect coercion of girls/women to maintain unhealthy body weight to secure jobs, forcing the changing of hair color and texture, as well as engaging in unethical and life threatening behaviors. Assignments were sometimes extreme with the spoken and unspoken requirement that good girls do not complain. Having several female friends die from drug overdoses and HIV/AIDS related illnesses prompted me to change careers and seek a college degree.

Initially, I wanted to become an international attorney; focusing on global issues of poverty and girls/women. Later those career choices changed to becoming a counselor or psychologist. Ultimately, I became a mother, mentor and an educator. My profession for the past fifteen years has been doing the following: (1) teacher of mathematics (grades 6<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup>) and special education (English/Language Arts and mathematics), (2) developmental disabilities case manager and social worker, and (3) mental health intern-

psychologist. Employment opportunities provided a plethora of experiences working in public schools, juvenile detention centers, prisons, and county agencies throughout the United States. However, as an educator and mentor of girls, I began to see a gamut of issues surrounding females in various school systems and in the media. This led to my questioning the impact of systems such as the fashion industry and media on girls' self-esteem. My employment and educational history may lend foresight to some of the issues of girls' and women, but I am fully aware of my sensitive feelings of domination and hegemonic systems placed upon girls. As a result, being reflective should provide safeguards as to not compromise the data or skew the meaning of the data.

### **Summary**

In conclusion, this is a qualitative case study. Therefore, the method utilized for analysis is interpretive. Qualitative research allows exploration or interpretive analysis of the impact assimilation and acculturation may have on Ethiopian women academic achievement, self-identity, and perception of beauty while growing up in America. Data is collected through the review of literature and semi-structured, case study interviews. Analysis of the data is thematically coded using qualitative research methods. ATLAS.ti is used as a secondary data analysis to enhance the coding process and investigate additional thematic codes. Validity and reliability will be constructed and maintained through qualitative research procedures for interviewing, storing and transcribing interviews, the use of detailed description data, and clarification/monitoring of the researcher's bias.

## **CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS**

### **Discussion of Findings**

As stated in chapter one, the purpose of this study is to explore the underlying influence of race on, and the impact assimilation and acculturation has on American-raised, Ethiopian women perception of beauty, self-identity, and academic achievement. The intentional design of the study was intended to provide the narrative experiences of Ethiopian women. Therefore, the narrations in this study aimed to explain the phenomena specifically relating to Ethiopian women raised in America. The identifying areas in this study are: self-identity, academic achievement and perception of beauty. Chapter 4 presents the findings of this study. The findings from this study derive primarily from the research question:

How has acculturation/assimilation impacted first generation, and/or second-generation Ethiopian women self-identity, academic achievement, and perception of beauty in America?

Themes were developed from the interviews conducted throughout the data collection. Thematic codes were extracted from the experiences of Ethiopian participants living in America.

Chapter one provides historical, social, and economic context for Ethiopians' migration trends. Systemic structural policies were examined and presented as contributing to the economic decline and vulnerability for civil disturbances among numerous African countries, inclusive of Ethiopia. Chapter two explains correlating issues that African-American women navigate

academically and socially in America, providing a potential narrative acknowledging that Ethiopian women share similar experiences. The analysis of assimilation and acculturation research anchors critical understanding of caustic issues immigrants encounter in the host country. This analysis is generalized to Ethiopian women living in America, and therefore examined for impact on self-identity, academic achievement, and perception of beauty. Chapter three outlines the research method for this research. Case study research design presented opportunities to explore the context of real-life narratives of Ethiopian women, making this research design appropriate to drawing understanding from the research question.

In part one of Chapter four, the participants are introduced. The five participants are descriptively listed in Table 1. Details of the participants augments the narrative understanding of their experiences, background, and identifying markers to provide contextual meaning. The range of participants vary strategically to account for experiences covering a wide range of Ethiopian women ages. The diversity of the study sample provides important information to the background narratives.

In part two of Chapter four, the themes are classified and discussed. I present four major themes that emerged from the findings. The findings in this study are viewed through multiple lens: (a) critical race feminism; theoretical perspective that analyzes the the narratives through the view of race and gender, (b) critical pedagogy; academic theory that examines the educational narratives through a student-centered perspective, and (c) Afrocentricity; cultural ideology

that considers the perspective of participants through a pro-African viewpoint.

The intersectionality of these theoretical frameworks are utilized to provide deeper meaning to their experiences. The themes that emerged from this study are:

1. Family Centered Social Structure  
Sub-theme: Paternal Dominance; Family Expectations and Preconceived Notions
2. Maintaining Ethiopian Traditions/Customs in America Matters
3. Struggle of Independence as a Woman versus Family-Interdependence as a Woman
4. Identifying as Ethiopian and Black versus African-American
5. School Impacts Culture When Isolated
6. Afrocentrism Standard of Beauty

### **PART I: Participants**

Table 1: Ethiopian Female Participants

Name	Birthplace	Age	Occupation	Years In the US
Aida	Ethiopia	27	Business Owner	15
Bethel	Ethiopia	59	Unemployed	15
Diborah	United States	18	College Student	18
Markeda	United States	20	College Student	20
Mela	United States	19	College Student	19

Table 1 lists the basic tenets of the participants in this study. (\*Names are pseudonyms.)

## Aida

Aida is 30 years old, born in Ethiopia. She moved to Washington, DC when she was 12 years old (fifteen years ago) with her mother, but her father resided in Ethiopia. Aida lived in the United States for two years, returned back to Ethiopia for a year, then resided in the Southeastern region of the United States, where she currently lives. She has been a successful Ethiopian business owner and restaurateur for approximately four years. She received a bachelor's degree in the United States, and plans to pursue her master's degree, undecidedly, in the United States or Ethiopia. Aida business serves the Ethiopian community in which she lives and provide traditional Ethiopia customs for eating and drinking coffee.

Aida lived her earlier years in Ethiopia with her traditional family. She attended primary school and middle school in her native country. Earlier memories of Ethiopia were described as:

Ethiopian people are social. I remember my parents going to work, then coming home. The neighbors would come over or we would go over to their homes and sit to have coffee and talk for hours. We would cook as a group and share.

Aida brings this core value into her restaurant business as a means to ensuring that Ethiopian customers experience the nostalgia of the home country. If you are a patron of the restaurant, her family are employees. The primary language spoken is Amharic, and most of the patrons are Ethiopians.

Aida reflects that her life in America has been closely reflective of life in Ethiopia. Many of the cultural traditions have been preserved, mainly by her

mother. She has learned to intellectually analyze her dual worlds of being an Ethiopian living in America. As a result, she hopes to eventually return back to Ethiopia to live with her dad because:

I miss the social way Ethiopians interact with one another. In America, people are not communal like back home. You rarely get to know each other here [America] unless you interact with other Ethiopians that understand the ways of back home [Ethiopia].

However, Aida plans to continue living in the United States until she has definitively decided where she will complete her next degree. She is definitely sure that once the degree is completed, Ethiopia will be her final place of residency.

Bethel

Bethel is 59 years old. She is a spirited Ethiopian born matriarch and wife who has lived in the United States for fifteen years with her daughter Aida. Bethel exhibits wisdom from the wise statements she makes when talking. She walks in a stately manner and smiles often. One is keenly aware that Bethel understands her position in the family. Demure, she speaks with quiet strength, and broken English. The Amharic accent fully dominates her dialect.

Bethel lived her childhood years and most of her adult life in Ethiopia. She recalls living through civil unrest and the years of awakening patriotism. As a little girl, Bethel grew up on a rural farm outside of the Ethiopian capital city with her mother, father, grandmother, grandfather, three sisters, and four brothers. The men worked the land and herded the animals (goats, cows, and sheep). The

women spun threads to make garments such as blankets, rugs, prayer cloths, and clothes. Bethel led a simple life.

She was fortunate enough to attend school and finished with a high school diploma. Bethel had the opportunity to attend school in the capital city of Ethiopia where she met her husband Addaba. They had been married for approximately eleven years before having their only daughter, Aida. Bethel states:

I had such a big family [growing up]. Life was hard, simple, but hard. When I met Addaba, he made me feel great about growing up on a farm. He understood that I did not want our children to grow up on a farm. So we waited, and I am glad. Aida has made us proud.

During Bethel's childhood, women had traditional roles and jobs.

According to Bethel, she remembers college educated women helped to propel changes for women in Ethiopia. The difficulty for her is during the Ethiopian Civil War, which ultimately led her to leave Ethiopia. Bethel explains:

During the [Ethiopian] civil war, a lot of families were leaving Ethiopia for Israel and the United States. Families were seeking opportunities in foreign lands in hopes that they will come back to a better and peaceful country. When I got the opportunity to come to America, my husband wanted me to stay. He knew I wanted to go, because Ethiopia was not in a good place with the economy. It was the hardest decision I made, besides leaving the farm I grew up on.

Bethel raised their daughter for the first two years in the District of Columbia where there is a large Ethiopian population. The summer before high school, Bethel decided to move to the southeastern region of the United States. She initially worked for the Ethiopian church until her daughter finished college and opened the restaurant. She supports her daughter by working at the restaurant and maintaining the traditional customs of Ethiopia. Bethel nostalgically stated:

The customs of Ethiopia are centered around social interaction. I remember my family customs of coffee making and drinking. The process took hours. By the time the process was over, we discussed so many things that concerned us. I make sure that Aida practices the same traditions at home and at the restaurant. Life always seemed much better after talking with friends and family.

### Diborah

Diborah is 18 years old, and attend the local community college in her city. She majors in pre-nursing with the hopes of transferring to the local four-year university to complete her bachelors of science in nursing. Diborah was born in the United States to Ethiopian parents. Her parents moved to the United States after fleeing from the Ethiopian Civil War. Her mother has never been gainfully employed, as her role was to take care of the children's daily needs. The father has multiple jobs, insurance agent during traditional business hours, and professional chauffeur during the evening hours.

Diborah has an older sister that attends the same community college. Although two years apart, the siblings are starkly different in how they feel about Ethiopian customs and traditions. Diborah appears to be conflicted, yet, loves her familial heritage. For instance, during the interview, Diborah stated:

I enjoy going back home to Ethiopia. The respect you give to family there and here [America] is so different. It is frustrating when I am in America and Ethiopians my age are adopting the Black trends, like the sagging pants and the hip-hop style. Some parts of that lifestyle I enjoy, but my dad is so dead against us having any parts of it. He is so closed minded at times. It's not like we are going to lose our Ethiopian identity by enjoying a style of music.

According to Diborah, family is extremely important. However, she enjoys the modern conveniences of American living. The purse that she placed on the table

was made by the designer Gucci, her clothes exhibited the taste of high fashion, and her hair had been flat-ironed straight in a pixie style cut. Diborah noted that her parents wanted her to be more traditional. Meaning, they wanted her practice the custom and traditions of the culture.

My dad is always complaining about what I wear, who I am friends with, where I am going. My mom tries to find a middle ground between us. I am not rebellious to my dad, but I enjoy the things that I like. He seems to think that I should look and act like we are back home [in Ethiopia]. I like the balance of having different friends of various cultures. We can't seem to see eye-to-eye on this subject.

Diborah is a cosmopolitan Ethiopian. She balances the dichotomy of Ethiopian living at home and American immersion in her daily interactions. Currently, she is advocating to live in an apartment with her sister. Her father is strongly opposed to her living outside the house. However, he has recently given consideration to the latter. The final decision is contingent upon her receiving a "B" or higher at the end of the semester. Therefore, Diborah illustrates strong academic achievement in order for her to broker living with her sibling after the completion of her first year of matriculation.

I currently have all "A's" in each of my classes. I am hoping that biology can stay up there. I make sure that I stay organized, have study schedules, and push really hard in my classes. I recognize that my dad sacrificed leaving his family in Ethiopia, works very hard for us to have a decent life, and wants only the best for us. I respect that. I just want him to trust that I am proud to be Ethiopian, but I like the American things too. Is that so bad? I don't think so.

Markeda

Markeda is 20 years old. She is currently living with her parents and her sibling, Diborah. Markeda is the oldest of the siblings, and has a semester to complete an associate's degree in business with a concentration on financial accounting. Her personality seems to be overshadowed when in the room with her sister. Markeda exudes confidence, a quiet resilience, and sweet disposition.

Markeda grew up in the southeastern area of the United States, but has had the opportunity to travel back to Ethiopia frequently as a young teen and adult. Family and tradition garners much priority in her life. However, she enjoys the luxuries that living in America has afforded her and the nuclear family. However, Markeda expressed that she suppresses her thoughts and wants for that of what her father dictates.

In our house, my father speaks of us marrying traditional Ethiopian men. I want to be open to consider other cultures of men to marry. However, I am afraid that this will let him down or cause him great distress. He has done so much for us and I feel nothing but gratitude towards him. It's just that I feel that he should understand that his sacrifice has opened up another set of possibilities for us.

Her actions are complicit towards following tradition, but her internal discourse challenges the essence of her traditions.

Markeda's pride in her family was obvious when she further produced a portrait of her mother, and one of the family. She discussed that her drive for education derived from years of her father expressing how difficult life had been in Ethiopia, and that in America they have the opportunity to become successful and to make their people proud. The recognition at an early age that it is important to succeed was critical to Markeda's development and current matriculation track.

However, she wishes that she was afforded the opportunity to attend college away from the city in which she resides.

I remember when I was in high school, I had dreams of living in the dorm and doing all the activities around campus. My father stated that it would be best for the family and me if I were to remain home, and attend community college. I was really hurt. I think he could tell. Instead of saying, 'Markeda, it's okay or you can go ahead,' he said that my mom needed me and my little sister. So, I stayed.

According to Markeda, she was allowed to seek employment after her first year of community college. Her father wanted to ensure that she would make excellent grades and adjust to college. She contributes to minimal household bills, and places the majority of her paycheck in a savings account. The goal is for Markeda and her sister to obtain an apartment together once her father approves of the college adjustment of the younger sibling. Markeda believes that the solitude and independence of an apartment will provide her with the courage to speak up, and function as the catalyst for her father to allow her and her sibling greater independence. She comments:

I can't wait until we move into our apartment. I make sure that my sister is doing what she needs to do, because she is sometimes feisty. She might try to do it [move out] any way. I wish I were more like that, but I am afraid that will break his heart. Perhaps when we leave, he will see that we are safe, we are making progress on our schoolwork, and that we deserve some freedoms to make our own decisions.

The family unit is vital to her father. Markeda expressed that she can definitely see the progress her father has made throughout the varying phases of her life development. She is hopeful that things will continue towards a positive trajectory.

Mela

Mela is 19 years old. She grew up in the Virginia and the District of Columbia area. Mela was raised the majority of her life in upper-middle class and upper-class neighborhoods. She enjoyed the benefit of living affluently. The majority of her matriculation in elementary, middle, and high schools were predominantly surrounded by white Americans. Mela's intellectual acumen placed her in the gifted program in elementary school, honors program in middle school, and advanced placement courses in high school. The challenges of academic achievement escaped Mela. However, she experienced social disparities throughout each grade level. However, her recognition of these phenomenon were actualized during the secondary years of her learning.

Mela describes life as traditionally Ethiopian in the household, but peculiarly American outside the home. She recall her father continuously reminding her that she was a "strong, proud, Ethiopian girl." Mela admits that she understood the reasoning of her father after the fact.

My dad use to remind me that I was a strong, proud, Ethiopian girl. I realized the meaning when I faced racism later on. Something bad happened in my class with a white student finding me attractive. Apparently, a popular white girl in the school had a crush on him. She would make snide remarks about me being black, and saying other derogatory things about me. I was hurt, but the guy liked me even more after that, and that tickled me for a moment until the gravity of the situation became starkly clear.

Family proves to be a large part of the support system for Mela. Her parents, born in Ethiopia, married in Ethiopia and came to the United States thereafter. She has a sister that resides in the Virginia area. Mela states that family traditions from

Ethiopia continues in her family, but they are not staunchly corrective in following Americanize customs.

Mela currently attends a four-year university in the southeastern region of the United States. She plans to become a forensic scientist for the Federal Bureau of Investigation or a neonatal nurse. Her family are well educated and have white-collar careers. Academic achievement necessitates many family discussions. Social interactions remained secondary to education and family. Mela explains there were no overt discussions that continuously berated social interactions. However, discussions providing acceptance of dating were absent as well.

My mom and dad were curious when I got in high school, about me wanting to date and who I might like. My dad would always encourage me to play a sport in hopes of getting a scholarship for college. When a boy found me interesting to date, my dad would find a way to discuss how I can improve my grades. I knew that he was showing his disapproval. My mom would say things about Ethiopian friends' children that would make good guy friends to go to the movies. I understood they wanted me to consider an Ethiopian boy if I dated.

Mela features closely align with African and Middle Easterners. However, she is above average height for the average height in America. Mela refrained from participating in extracurricular activities most of her life with the exception of the time she ran track in high school. Throughout her collegiate experiences, however, she reflects on the shift from having more white friends growing up, and having a network of Ethiopian friends in college.

College is a five to six hours drive away from her childhood home. Mela and her Ethiopian friends find themselves frequenting local restaurants and socializing within their close group of friends. Mela proclaims the discussions

from her father and family members provided sustenance for the exploration of her Ethiopian culture in America.

By American standards, I understand that I am less threatening in my appearance. But I find that away from home, I want to be close to my Ethiopian culture. It reminds me of home away from home. The words of my dad come back to me so clearly. I really appreciate what we have at home more, now that I am away.

## **PART II: Themes**

Part two of this chapter provides the findings and analysis of the data that materialized from the data collection and data analysis process. Data collection provided dense and valuable descriptions from which themes emerged. Themes were identified as a result of the majority participants (three out of five) sharing common experiences. The research questions were designed to extract data that accounts for Ethiopian women experiences in America. The research questions were explicitly constructed to investigate the impact assimilation or acculturation had on first generation and/or second generation Ethiopian women self-identity, academic achievement, and perception of beauty. Additionally, the research question responses were utilized to generate the categories of themes during the data collection process. The iterative process of qualitative research methodology allowed for constant comparative analysis of thematic responses. Conjointly, critical race feminism and afrocentricity provided the lens to critically analyze the narrative perspectives from the view of culture, race, and gender. The themes are reflective of the participants perspectives. The themes and subthemes emerged are as follow:

### **1. Family-Centered Social Structure**

Sub-theme: Paternal Dominance; Family Expectations and  
Preconceived Notions

2. Maintaining Ethiopian Traditions/Customs in America Matters
3. Struggle of Independence as a Woman versus Family-Interdependence as a Woman
5. Identifying as Ethiopian and Black versus African-American
4. School Impacts Culture When Isolated From Family
6. Afrocentrism Standard of Beauty

Throughout the interviews, participants answered open-ended questions regarding their educational experiences in Ethiopia and America, cultural practices, belief system, and views of self. Scaffolded questions garnished thick and rich data from the participants that provided common narratives.

**THEME ONE: Family-Centered Social Structure**

Socialization for Ethiopians involve family. Bush (2007) notes “Social relationships within the family and communities interact to provide a bulwark against globalization. Everyday struggles, the negotiation of life itself, and struggles over access to resources with communities...” (p. 42) strongly suggest that Ethiopians maintain culture and traditions to safeguard against hegemonic activity. History illustrates the colonization of most of Africa, whereas Ethiopia escapes this phenomenon. The abundance of Africa’s raw material resources supplies the world economy, lending to the prescription of countries wanting to dominate these resources through colonization efforts (Bush, 2007; Dei, 2003; Goldblatt & Rosenblum, 2007).

Throughout the African diaspora, the family unit, in rural and urban areas, interact as a large clustered entity. The modernization of Africa shifted the structure and orchestration of traditional African families (Bush, 2007; Dei, 2003;

Goldblatt & Rosenblum, 2007). However, the familial framework remains intact. The data illustrates that participants developed around strong family interactions from birth that continued throughout adulthood. Participants support and maintain the familial connections with relatives when nearby or with those who are Ethiopian when living away from relatives. All participants revealed that family interactions are integral to the Ethiopian family social structure, in Ethiopia and America.

Bethel provides an abundance of cultural background data on Ethiopian family. Bethel recalls:

In Ethiopia, family is the staple of the community. Family come over [the house] all the time. Dinnertime is always a family event. Aunts and uncles, brothers and sisters, you name it, neighbors, will bring food over and we will eat and talk for hours about the day, the joys of life, what is happening in the community. These times were always fun and joyous. We would laugh, cry, dance, think about the good days past. Family is everything in our culture.

Bethel acknowledges that family is the central foci of living for the Ethiopian culture. The family unit operates as a collective force for decision-making. Family decisions concerned topics covering education, marriage, money, birth, death, value systems, religion, and political maneuvering. Bethel states:

The family gatherings are spontaneous or organized. It depends on the situation. Whenever there is a celebration, like a child finishing school or birthday, we plan for that day. It is a wonderful occasion. The family gather, the neighbors come also. The women in the family made sure the food is prepared and everyone is having a good time. The men would talk and laugh at the kids playing and dancing. Those celebrations are big. The other gatherings are smaller. Coming home from work. Friends and family will stop by to eat dinner. They bring a dish [to eat] and we will sit and talk until everyone goes home.

Aida, the daughter of Bethel, experienced similar familial bonds. However, Aida experiences illustrated that family gatherings were not primarily with relatives, but long-time family friends adopted as members. Aida stated:

I loved growing up in Ethiopia. It was common to walk to the store and the people would say, "Oh, that's so-and-so daughter." I always felt like family members were watching us wherever we went. One day I was over my grandmother's house and it began as a small gathering until someone came and said that a cousin got a fancy job. Out of nowhere, everyone started showing up to my grandmother's house. At some point, a cousin told us that night our cousin was not really our cousin, but a friend of our uncle. I was surprised at first, but it didn't matter because in Ethiopia we were raised to understand that family is blood and sometimes those that are grafted in.

Consequently, the traditional structure of family transitioned to include familial-type bonds. Although the Ethiopian culture lends to this Afrocentric paradigm, participants born in America appreciated the role of family or familial connectivity entering into adulthood and beyond. Mela illustrates that the isolation of college away from the traditional family nurtured an appreciation for the role family played in her life. Whereas, Diborah and Markeda participates in the customs and traditions of the family, they prefer to experience socializing away from the norm of relatives and neighbors or close friends of the family.

Mela stated:

I used to get angry that we always did things with our aunts, uncles, cousins, and friends. My friends at school hardly ever talked about family gathering being so huge. It seemed like our family got together every Saturday and Sunday. When I got to college, I felt lonely, but I didn't know the reason why. I was sitting in my dorm room one Saturday and realized that all of my family were hanging out for a birthday party. The thought of them having so much fun, and I was alone made me somehow understand the big role family played in my life. I actually cried that day, because I missed them, but then I got up and decided to meet other Ethiopians to share the time.

However, Diborah and Markeda remained at home during their college years. The core values of the Ethiopian family structure were evident. Diborah exclaims:

I love the Ethiopian dinners and eating habits of my culture. When we all come together for events, the euphoric feeling is incredible. However, I don't always want to be around family, but my dad will get upset and think that I am breaking the mold of Ethiopian customs. Now that I am closer to finishing [my associate's degree], I fully understand the importance of family and how it provides me with a pretty amazing system of support.

Markeda echo similar statements. Markeda expands the dialogue to distinguish family orchestrations in Ethiopia to those of most Americans. Markeda states:

We have heard all of our lives about how close families are in Ethiopia. Things were supposed to be so much better than they are in the U.S. Family this, and family that. Our whole world centered around family there. So, now I am seeing [my parents] them replicate how things are in Ethiopia. We are constantly doing things around the family schedule, but my friends who are Black don't focus making every decision based on family members being present. I wish that we could pick and choose to go to certain family gatherings like some of our Black friends. They [my parents] act like we can't do anything without the family's approval.

Collectively, the statements of each participant strongly support that the social structure for Ethiopians are family-centered.

### *Paternal Dominance*

African families are traditionally aligned from a paternal perspective, where the father heads the household. Vocalizing important decisions stem from

the father and/or males in the family hierarchical structure. Many Ethiopian families follow this traditional pattern of governance. Paternal dominance tiers operate variably in Ethiopia compared to in the United States. The participants articulated indications of variant forms of paternal dominance throughout their interviews.

Bethel expresses paternal dominance from the vantage point of a historical perspective. She discusses the evolution of Ethiopia in the dialogue. Bethel states:

Back in Ethiopia, when I grew up, my father set order to the house. I don't recall ever doing anything without his approval. My father was the oldest of all his brothers. They came to him with family issues too. We had family traditions that meant a lot to us. I remember when my uncle died, the men came in to help her make decisions for burial, taking care of the children, and who she was going to be living with. They lived with us for about two years before she was remarried.

The paternal structure of males in the Ethiopian family offers directional transition for the family. It appears that the structure safeguards the family from dismantling during crisis situations. However, Bethel statement serves as a form of familial continuity. Meaning, the family unit utilizes paternal focus as a functional mechanism for preserving the status quo of traditions and customs.

Aida, however, accepts that fathers are respected as the head of household in the community. Paternal headed households signals respect for the tradition and customs. Aida seems to extend that family structures are flexible in the wake of circumstantial phenomenon. The understanding appears to be veiled as unique circumstances can call into question systemic changes to how families operate.

Aida expressed:

When I was young, my dad would get off work and they [neighbors] would hang out on the front yard area and talk. In Ethiopia, it was a regular thing to be see people talking and doing things together. They could be relatives, distant relatives, or family friends. I remember when we [mother and I] moved to the U.S. my dad wanted to stay back in Ethiopia. It was hard at first for me, because I was so used to having to go through him for everything. When it was just me and mom, she made all the decisions. When we moved closer to family, my uncles helped with some decisions, but my mom still make sure that we are okay. When my dad comes, sometimes it feels weird, but I am older now and can make my own decisions.

Markeda and Mela have grown up respecting paternal headedhouseholds in the family structure. However, obedience to family causes duplicitous internal conflict. Duty to family requires obedience, whereas Markeda and Mela have grown up in the United States and interact with other cultures. Markeda expressed:

My mom attends an orthodox Christian church. They men and women have traditional roles in the church. I really don't like going there, now that I am old enough to make my own decisions, but my dad insist on us attending since we still live with him. I wish he would understand that I want to make my own decisions. Everytime I try to do that he starts to talk about how in Ethiopia daughters are respectful of their fathers. So, I just stay silent.

Markeda complies with duty, whereas Mela exhibits open annoyance with paternal dominance. Mela states:

I understand that our father wants the best for us, but we are able to make our own decisions. It's frustrating talking to our mom and wanting some advice or to make decisions that we feel a mother understands and she tells us we have to wait to ask our father. When I was in high school, I remember asking her [my mother] does she ever want to do anything for herself. She asked me where did I learn that from. I told her that I wanted to be able to get approval from her sometimes. That day, she sat me down and explained to me that she loves my dad and trust him with her life. I understood love, but I had so much conflict inside, because people at school never said anything like this about their parents.

The paternal head of Ethiopian families appears to be a continuing method for leading the family structure in, both, Ethiopia and the United States.

*Family Expectations and Preconceived Notions*

Participants matriculating to college in the United States denoted expectations from the family. Expectations varied to concerns of life direction, choice of academic pursuits, and deviation away from Ethiopian traditions and customs. The culmination of expectations promoted familial preconceived notions. Participants spoke of these notions as obedience to the family traditions and customs.

Diborah matriculated the farthest for college (out of state). Now a senior, communication with family evolved over time. Diborah indicated:

When I first started college, my parents would make random trips to check on me. It was annoying, like they didn't trust me or something. My dad would borderline harass me about grades and questions about preparations for my major studies. The first two years, I made all A's in my classes. They began to ease up on me. They would send my cousins to check up on me though. Our phone calls always led to questions about attending Ethiopian events, church, and hanging with the community. Once I was able to make my own decisions, it became evident that my dad obviously wanted me to lead this life of success that he envisioned, and the family supported it.

Diborah discussed moments of contention prior to attending college where her father placed strict rules on final grade expectations. "If you make less than a 'B' in any class, you will have to come home to attend college," Diborah states.

Mela demonstrated frustration over the intrusion of life decisions. Living at home, while attending college, allows for accessibility for regulating choices conducive to the family agenda. Mela eloquently conveys:

I love my family, but living so close is a bit troublesome. It leaves me no time to collect my thoughts, make decisions for myself, and learn life lessons on my own. My dad means well, but he doesn't understand that we [my sister and I] want to be as successful as he talks about often. He has these dreams in his head of what we should turn out to become. It's like he and the family has planned out our entire lives.

The patriarch of the family take an active role in progress monitoring. The millennial-aged family members find this behavior intrusive. The intention for many of the patriarchs suggests that this approach to parenting propels children towards accomplishing the desired goals. Academic excellence is obvious. However, Markeda acknowledges that this holds true for issues concerning participation in Ethiopian culture. Markeda recalls:

I remember when I was in high school and my dad thought that I had too many American friends. I think that he wanted me to stay away from some type of corruption that goes against the Ethiopian way. He would constantly talk to me about what it is to be Ethiopian, and my duty. I use to think that he felt like I was going to one day not want to be Ethiopian. I appreciate my culture. My friends love that I am different. I sometimes wish that he [my dad] would understand.

The expectations for family to continue the trends of the Ethiopian culture proves tantamount to the core value system. Consequently, academic success for Ethiopian children lends to the reinforcing of patriarchal expectations and preconceived notions of achievement and familial duty.

## **THEME TWO: Maintaining Ethiopian Traditions/Customs in United States**

### **Matters**

According to Camfield and Tafere (2011), “Norms play a role in establishing the type of transitions children should pass through, the age at which they should experience them, and the resources required to actualize them” (p. 3). Additionally, norms play a role in the maintaining of Ethiopian customs and traditions in the United States. Many Ethiopians have come to the United States as refugees, impacted by civil war, whereas other Ethiopians came for financial opportunities (Camfield & Tafere, 2011; Papadopoulos, et al., 2004). The isolation from family for first generation Ethiopians in the United States provide a major role for traditions and customs. Traditions and customs appear to serve as faith, guidance, stability, and familiarity of all things Ethiopia while residing in the United States. Participants of this study’s interviews suggest that traditions and customs are valuable to the continuation of the culture.

The interview data illustrated that each of the participants in the study understands the importance of culture. However, the depth of whose responsibility it is to continue the culture away from the home country seems daunting. Nevertheless, Bethel expressed a self-imposed obligation to ensure that Ethiopians in the community understood the culture. Bethel states:

It is my duty as a mother, a woman, an Ethiopian to continue the legacy of my beloved country. I see the generations of Ethiopians in restaurants and stores, and want so desperately to say to children that the ways of our people are prideful. Respect is critical. Obedience is necessary. God guides us. We must take responsibility to train our children in the ways of our Ethiopian people. Duty requires it.

Bethel recognizes the full scope of tradition and customs. Having grown up in Ethiopia and raised a daughter in the United States, the loss of or inability to fully immerse in the culture concerned her greatly.

However, Aida illustrated some resistance to another culture. Perhaps the uprooting of her residence during adolescence contributed to hostility towards acculturation. Aida speaks of a closed-mindedness during years of development in the United States. Aida expressed:

When I first came to America [United States] I was somewhat angry that we came here to live without my father, and that I had to leave my friends. I thought the way they acted was disrespectful, especially when I saw how children acted in the store with their parents. To behave in such a manner was awful. My mom would shake her head, grab my hand, and start speaking in our native tongue. I thought the people were strange for a long time. The way they did things did not make sense to me, so I was happy to follow our traditions and custom. When I got older, the way children acted towards their parents made me further cling to how we did things in Ethiopia.

For Aida, culture continues to be a staple or center of life for her. As a result, the restaurant in which she owns embodies the essence of traditional Ethiopian customs. Aida maintains those traditions and customs, as well as provide other Ethiopians in the United States with opportunities to experience them daily.

Diborah, Markeda, and Mela views on traditions and customs support a pro-Ethiopian position. However, each of these participants reached self-actualization of this fact entering in adulthood. Interview data suggests that growing up in the United States created a duality of culture that diluted their Ethiopian traditions and customs. The appreciation of the Ethiopian heritage

emanated during the time when the freedom to choose culture seemed imminent.

Markeda commented:

I was in such a rush to leave home after high school. Even though I still live at home, I remember my dad giving me a speech about what it is like to be an Ethiopian. I never fully understood his talk until I started to take college classes. Studying and being in classes with privileged people made me question who I am. I remember the day there was a debate in class about Africans. It was the day that I distinctly remember being proud, and standing up for that pride. I realized that I had a lot to say about what we do, how we do it, and why we do it. That's the day I started talking differently to my sister about Ethiopia.

Naturally, pride of culture appears to be associated with childhood socialization.

However, acceptance proves to be embedded in the choice to take ownership of such rearing.

Mela recollection of childhood lends to a silent affinity for American traditions. As the youngest child in the family, Mela explains that she was quiet and non-talkative. In theory, this suggests that parents refrained from considering anything contrary towards Ethiopian beliefs and customs. In the secondary years of school, Mela experienced unconcealed racism. Mela examines that the experience propelled her towards a heightened awareness of the Ethiopian traditions and customs. Mela articulated:

Life can be cruel. In high school, a group of classmates thought it was okay to make references towards Africa as barbaric or uncivilized. I remember them saying that I had to receive free lunch because I was African, and that I was fortunate to not live in a hut because I was now living in America [United States]. I told my parents about what they said, and my dad brought me a history book on Ethiopia. That next Saturday, my mom taught me how to make Ethiopian coffee. Now, I wear my culture like a badge of honor, and correct people when they are ignorant.

Mela embraces Ethiopia from afar, but understands the dialogue of acculturation that is pervasive in her American rearing. There is a heightened awareness of dualism contrasting regularly, Ethiopian identity developing and growing in the American culture.

However, Markeda embraces the Ethiopian traditions and culture throughout child development. Full acceptance transpired during the separation from family and friends when she matriculated to college. The seemingly loss of cultural connections generated the need to recreate the Ethiopian connection in college. Markeda sought to immerse in the local Ethiopian community to fill the void of missing home. Connecting with Ethiopian students, participating and enjoying activities in the community provided semblance to family life. Markeda verbalizes:

When I got to college, I was severely homesick. I remembered all the things that we did as a family. I found myself calling home to family and friends, but then I started to get out and meet other Ethiopians. We started going to various Ethiopian restaurants, church, and events. It made being here much tolerable. At first, I thought that I would be so happy to be away from home. I am, but I missed the food and hanging out with friends and family. Now, my college friends are my extended family. I even talk to my dad more about Ethiopia. I used to think that he was obsessed. Now, I understand, its home.

### **THEME THREE: Struggle of Independence as a Woman versus Family- Interdependence as a Woman**

According to Goldblatt and Rosenbaum (2007), the Ethiopian family structure expects children to respect parents and adults. Based on authority, children show obedience and are disciplined by adults. In the United States, children exhibit more freedoms in the family unit. This dichotomy for Ethiopians

attack the fabric of traditions. Women and girls placing value in the family has been secondary to males. Four out of five participants mentioned the need to make personalized choices free from parents and family approval. Each participant expressed the desire for a transition that allows control over their own decisions, free from family inspection.

Ethiopians are in an insolated community or ethnic enclave in the United States. They build their social structures interdependently upon fellow Ethiopians. Aida, a business owner, experience daily challenges as woman. Currently, Aida have male family members as employees working alongside her mother. This dynamic is not traditional. However, Aida speaks about the daily issues encountered when operating the business, and her being able to make decisions concerning her life as a woman. Aida stated:

Many times I come to the restaurant and have to present that I am the owner. Some customers are shocked that I was allowed to own the business, and not work the business. The business is now growing. Customers who use to find it strange that I was the owner, now come back and talk to me more. My mom gets in the way more. She thinks she can tell me how to run the business and my life. At times, I want to be in the business alone and hire people I don't know, but family is important. Now I am honest about needing time to appreciate me, and time to deal with family.

Diborah, Markeda, and Mela experienced the need for independence during matriculation to college. Diborah struggles during the holiday breaks when she has to return home. Diborah expressed:

When I am off at college, it makes me aware that I can make my own decisions. I have a sense of freedom to go and do as I please. That freedom of choice makes it extremely difficult when I return home, because my dad wants to know everything. Where are you going, when are you coming back, who is going to be there, are they Ethiopian, and do

I know their people? At college, I don't have to worry so much about these questions since I attend school 5-7 hours away from my family.

However, Markeda and Mela currently live at home, and they must consistently broker moments of independence. Mela stated:

My dad doesn't want us to do anything. At least it feels that way. I get in trouble sometimes because I will rebel and not ask. I want to be trusted to do the right thing. It's beginning to feel like I am child trying to be an adult. I understand the importance of family but times are changing. We should be given some freedoms to be adults. Hopefully when I move out soon, things will be different.

Markeda seemed eager to receive her independence. She appeared to be silently angry concerning living at home, but obedience to her parents led her to comply.

Markeda expressed:

I love my parents, but sometimes it feels as though they allow my sister to do things because I am there. I had to wait to be able to do half of the things she gets to do because I am the oldest. Now I am supposed to get my own apartment, and my sister is supposed to be living with me. I don't mind, but I do mind. I want to be able to take a moment to myself. I don't want the responsibility of having to watch her.

Based on the interviews, the fight for independence or the freedom to be financially free and make decisions as a woman appears to be a tangible need for the participants. The family structure prevents them from overtly stating these claims, as this is not traditional to how females behave in the Ethiopian family.

#### **THEME FOUR: Identifying as Ethiopian and Black versus African-American**

The phenomenon of race in the United States continues to dominate various discussions. As a result, Ethiopians must navigate similar paradigms as

other Black Americans. Therefore, the history of the construct of race for Blacks in the United States proves complex. However, the United States attempts to make ethnicity simple by referring to Blacks as African-American. The dilemma with the phrase African-American is not the origin of a culture, but the purpose for the name. Ethiopians mitigation in the United States illustrates a clear isolation from socio-political issues. Understanding that the name African-American is synonymous with oppression generates a silent demand to create a name unattached from turmoil.

Therefore, when each of the participants were asked how do they see themselves, each of the responses were inclusive of Ethiopian and Black. Further query referencing being called African-American illustrated that the belief that this identity marker is associated with Black Americans born in the United States, and delineation from Blacks born in the United States appears to be a major source for how each participant views themselves. Nevertheless, Ethiopian, cultural pride proved evident in the interviews.

Aida – I am an Ethiopian woman. I love who I am, and where I have been in life. In America [the United States] they see a Black woman, but I see strength in who my people are and what we have overcome. We are the only African country to have not been colonized, and I am proud of that fact.

Markeda – I am a Black, Ethiopian woman. Born in America [the United States] but proudly live as an Ethiopian. I am strong, shy, quiet, and fun. My people have never been colonized and we are proud of that. We have overcome a lot on the motherland, but we have banded together to keep our traditions and customs. That's who I am.

Diborah – I considered myself Black American and Ethiopian American. My parents see themselves this way. My family also. I wouldn't wish for anything less. They [family] may bother me, but there is a pride that we feel during the family celebrations and holidays. I love my heritage. It is rich and strong. We withstood being colonized. Ask any Ethiopian what is their proudest fact about home, and they will say this [not being colonized]. Without a doubt.

Mela – For years I identified as a Black American. As I get older, that shifts to Ethiopian American. I understand that my skin is Black, but all things about me are Ethiopian. I am always participating in cultural events. I am fun-loving, funny, attitudinal, and possessive about my culture. We, Ethiopians, love our country and are proud to boast not being colonized.

Bethel – I received my citizenship to be an American, but I am Ethiopian. Now, I am Ethiopian American. We have come a long way as a people in the United States. I am a matriarch for my family here [in the United States]. I am strong, prideful, and will persevere until I die. When I do, I hope to be buried in my beloved Ethiopia.

#### **THEME FIVE: School Impacts Culture When Isolated**

The vitality of culture extension proves important for school roles in acculturation and assimilation. The cultural framework of values continue through the use of school. African customs for enculturation largely happened orally. Schools can mitigate a breach in cultural disintegration and reshifting. Academic and emotional support modifies the traditional approach, and replaced by "...new set of values, codes of behavior, and cognitive and emotional maps" (p. 56). As a result, schools can lead to, according to Berhanu (2004),

...the breakdown in generational chains [that] have not only affected the emotional, affective meaningful bonds children have to their cultural background, but even more seriously such breaks will in the near future deprive children of a shared "cultural capital" and the meanings, frames, values, and ideals that are contained in the typical stories and dramas that are transmitted from one generation to the next. (p. 56).

For Ethiopians in the United States, this study acknowledges the important role school provides in promoting cultural inclusivity. The lack thereof contributes to a form of devaluation that disconnects students from identity and culture. Ethiopian participants expressed the role school played during their transition in the United States.

Aida discusses the contrasting role of school in Ethiopia versus in the United States. School in Ethiopia supported native children and immigrant children. Largely, the classrooms were mono-cultural, where most students identified as Ethiopian. For Aida, school in the United States comprised of diverse students following Americanized paradigms for teaching and learning. Having gone through English as a Second Language program, the courses comprised of primarily Hispanic students. The absence of African students in similar academic conditions contributed to a form of isolation. Aida recalls:

When I was in middle school, I lived in the D. C. [District of Columbia] area. There was a large Ethiopian population. When we moved [to the southeastern region] I was one of the only Ethiopians in my class. School was tough. Students would say mean things to me. I felt so alone. One day, I got into a [physical] fight with a student who had been talking about Africa. She would try to bully me every day. It was overwhelming to go to school every day and deal with these things. She pushed me in math class and the kids began laughing. So, I pushed her back. We started fighting, and the [ESL] teacher tried to speak on my behalf afterwards. I really hated that school. Everyday I felt so alone, but I eventually got through it.

Aida reflects on the fact that school evoke emotions of isolation in the United States. However, similar actions in Ethiopia would have been addressed differently. As a result, Aida exhibited continuous frustration making behavioral

reparations with the acceptable behaviors in the United States that were considered normal in Ethiopia. Aida discussed how physical fighting was a normal method of conflict resolution in Ethiopia. This method was immediate and had finality when concluded. Aida states:

When I lived in Ethiopia, we had a respect for our teachers. Teachers had permission to spank us in Ethiopia. So, we did not misbehave often in class. If there was an issue with a student, we would handle it directly after school. I was very vocal back then. I would fight if I had to. When I got to America [the United States] I was in shocked to see students talking back and being disrespectful to teachers. School was always an extension of our family. The teacher may be your neighbor or live in the same community.

Diborah, Markeda, and Mela academic experiences were similar to Aida during elementary years, and during college. Each of these participants were in the ESL program during elementary. However, each felt isolated in school during critical moments of matriculation. Diborah speaks of isolation in the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade.

She states:

ESL felt like a holding place when I was younger. We would spend so much time in there learning to speak English. I was confused because I already spoke very good English. My cousin was in the class with me, so things were not that bad. I did not like how we were embarrassed by pulling us out of class. Students would think that we have learning problems. They tried to make fun of us until they were told that I was one of the smartest students in the school.

For many of the participants, the ESL program appeared to be a form of punishment, and not support. Markeda expressed:

I remember hating my ESL class growing up. The teacher would have all these words on the wall, the desk, all over. She would try to get us to say things in English. I was really shy back then. No one in the class was of African descent. We spent a lot of time in the class and away from the other students. I always wondered what I had done wrong to be there. My mom would say that it was going to help me get ahead. I never saw how. It

was so hard to make friends for a few years when I was able to be in classes with the other students' all day.

The English as a Second Language program intended to provide support for students to compete and become successful academically. Mela was not in a pull-out class for ESL during her years of schooling. Services were provided in the classroom by the general education teacher. Mela remembers being embarrassed as an Ethiopian by the open provision of services that were given. The school was predominantly comprised of white students. Therefore, students understood differences among each other. Mela states that being different made her feel as though she were the only one having to deal with the transition and language barrier. Mela expressed:

I had a heavy Ethiopian accent, because I stayed home until I began kindergarten. We could not afford to send me to daycare, so my mom stayed home and provided for me. So, by the time I got to the 5<sup>th</sup> grade my ESL services were in the classroom. The students would give me a funny look when the teacher gave me different assignments. I remember feeling so ashamed. Many times I tried to hide from my heritage when we had substitute teachers. It would allow me to feel apart of the group, even if it were only for a short time.

Social support in school plays an important role in cultural inclusion. For immigrant adolescents to receive the necessary support as they broker new interpersonal relationships, in academic structures. According to Rosenblum, Goldblatt, and Moin (2008), family and social support helps to decrease Ethiopian students' dropout rates. Each participant interviews suggest that separation from the group, unconsciously, promotes isolation that prove harmful to culture.

### **THEME SIX: Afrocentrism Standard of Beauty**

Dominant beauty standards in the United States coincide with popular images of women in mainstream media (Poran, 2002). According to Poran (2002), “Black women, however, have been found less likely to hold uniform notions of beauty, and far more likely to describe beauty in terms of personality traits rather than physical ones” (p. 65). Participants in this study viewed beauty from an Afrocentric lens. However, whiteness is the normative base in which others are held accountable. Images reflect a more white perspective, as opposed to an Afrocentric perception of beauty. Four of the five participants rejected the ideology of standardized beauty being the traditional blonde hair, blue eyes, and replaced it with an array of Afro-centric ideals, whereas the oldest of the participant exhibited thoughts of westernized/Eurocentric constructs of beauty.

For this study, Afrocentric perception of beauty denotes that the participants provided their definition of the construct from a pro-black perspective or pro-African perspective. Nevertheless, participants were asked to define their perception of beauty after looking at a series of photographs, with intentionality being placed on analysis of understanding a personalized view of beauty, and determine a root of development. In this study, the younger participants had an Afrocentric perspective, whereas the oldest participant, at least two generations removed, had a Eurocentric perspective. Bethel, the elder of the participants, revealed, “the lighter the skin or closer you are to white, the woman is considered beautiful.” Bethel states that this perspective was considered a common fact growing up in Ethiopia. Bethel recalls:

Ethiopian girls and women that had hair closer to whites were treated better. Those women were given better opportunities than darker Ethiopians. It is interesting that we are all one, but there were some things that divided us. I happened to be a fair skinned Ethiopian and understood that I would sometimes be treated better. So, when I looked at my first choice for choosing certain women, I felt ashamed. All of them are beautiful in their own way.

However, Aida, Markeda, Diborah, and Mela held contrasting views on beauty. In addition to, these participants were acutely aware of regional physical features and constructs of beauty for geographical locations around the world.

Aida discussed during the interview:

In America [the United States], people are shocked that I am Ethiopian until I speak. My dark skin is not seen as traditional Ethiopian. In Ethiopia, my family was popular, so there was no issue for me. When I got here [the United States] people assumed that I was a Black American. When they found out I was African, they assumed Ghana, Nigerian, Liberian. Of course they were Americans [shrugs and pause]. I have always loved who I am. I look like my father and he made sure that I felt good about being me. So, when I saw all those beautiful dark-skinned women on the photos, of course they were my top picks.

Aida acknowledges that her standard of beauty derived from the reflection of self.

However, Diborah, Markeda, and Mela derived to the Afrocentric construct of beauty from being in direct conflict with racism in the United States. Parents, family, and friends influenced the lens of how to maneuver through the layered – isms. Mela recalled:

These photos are interesting. They all look very different and come from various parts of the world. I can't pick which who I think is the most beautiful from my personal standards, but I definitely can pick who society would think is more beautiful and least Such a shame. [pause] I can honestly say, growing up in America [the United States] has made me re-evaluate many teachings and how we are being indoctrinated to believe Black is ugly. Students used to make fun of our [Ethiopian] accent, and constantly reference my being a lighter African. One even said the British

slept with my mother. I was angry. I corrected him and provided him with some African history. We come in all shades of color. Ethiopian pride all the way! African pride!

Diborah shares similar experiences of racism. True to form, the familial circle insulated Diborah from the brute force. Contrary to Mela, Diborah's white, male classmate asked her out on a date, negating the pleas from a popular white girl.

The cruelty that ensued propelled Diborah to question constructs of beauty.

Through personal interrogation of self, Diborah stated:

This incident made me realize that as a Black, Ethiopian woman, that I am pretty. There will always be someone for you. I spent more time with my family. We had long discussions about how I may be seen by Whites and Blacks in America [the United States]. The texture of my hair, the color of my skin, the way I talk. I was a safe Black choice. My grammar was standardized. My heritage was not a badge of honor until I was provoked by my classmates. The experience made me realize that I understand that America [the United States] wants to make White a dominance. We all have value. Why try to dominate each other, when we could just respect our differences?

However, Markeda understood the dynamics of racism. Consistent immersion in the Ethiopian culture promoted an Afrocentric perspective of beauty. Markeda received instruction from Ethiopian primary schools. The transition to the local public school provides context for developing Afrocentric views. The initial public school was Montessori, and predominantly comprised of Black Americans. The exploratory style of learning provided the academic platform to understand constructs, such as beauty. Markeda stated:

My teacher at the Montessori School was African. She questioned my everything during the early years of developing. I appreciate it more now, than back then. We had stations in our classroom to explore life. I remember being in the social section and picking up the Black dolls to play with. She asked me what was interesting about that doll. I told her

that I liked her skin was dark like my favorite aunt, and her body was shaped like my mommy. I can't remember ever choosing the White doll on the shelf except to play school. When I got older, I understood my black is beautiful [laughs]. That's a commercial, and I believe it 100%. That doesn't mean I don't consider others beautiful. I think that some of those on the picture are beautiful too. I just feel that we all should view beauty from the perspective of our lineage. From those things that look like us, and there's nothing wrong with that.

### Summary

This study investigates and describes the impact acculturation/assimilation impacted first generation, and/or second-generation Ethiopian women self-identity, academic achievement, and perception of beauty. The data analysis was organized into six themes and supporting research questions: (1) Family Center Social Structure, (2) Maintaining Ethiopian Traditions/Customs in America Matters, (3) Struggle of Independence as a Woman versus Family-Interdependence as a Woman, (4) Identifying as Ethiopian and Black versus African-American, (5) School Impacts Culture When Isolated, and (6) Afrocentrism Standard of Beauty. The next chapter includes a discussion of the themes, implications regarding the findings, and recommendations for policy and future research.

## CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

### Discussion of Thematic Findings

This study commenced with the background history of Ethiopia in order to provide the contextual framework for understanding the culture, traditions, and customs. Considering the phenomenon transpiring with Blacks economically, socially, and academically, concern for Ethiopian women as data sub-categories in United States statistics generated the interest in this study. Inquiry further led to the understanding that African cultures, such as Ethiopians, representation in the United States are grouped with Black Americans. The absence of an Ethiopian voice in the dominant societal mainstream generated concern for the potential harm the lack of representation causes.

Consequently, chapter 1 establishes an inspection of policies that preceeded various civil wars in Ethiopia. As a result, contextual framing provided perspective for this study. Chapter 2 examined relevant literature on the transition of Ethiopian women in host countries, inclusive of the United States, and analyzed through cross analysis the potential for impact on self-identity, academic achievement, and perception of beauty. Moreover, Chapter 3 outlines the research method and theoretical framework, and exploration of Ethiopian women experiences provide context for the research question.

In chapter 4, I describe the impact acculturation/assimilation influenced first generation, and/or second-generation Ethiopian women self-identity, academic achievement, and perception of beauty. The data analysis was organized into six themes and supporting research questions: (1) Family Center Social

Structure, (2) Maintaining Ethiopian Traditions/Customs in America Matters, (3) Struggle of Independence as a Woman versus Family-Interdependence as a Woman, (4) Identifying as Ethiopian and Black versus African-American, (5) School Impacts Culture When Isolated, and (6) Afrocentrism Standard of Beauty (See Table 2). In chapter 5, I discuss the findings through the lens of critical race feminism, critical pedagogy, and/or Afrocentricity. Table 2 below lists the themes and the corresponding sub-themes which emerged from the data analysis.

Table 2. Emergent Themes and Sub-Themes

Theme 1: Family Centered Social Structure	Sub-theme 1: Paternal Dominance  Sub-theme 2: Family Expectations and Preconceived Notions
Theme: 2: Maintaining Ethiopian Traditions/Customs in America Matters	
Theme 3: Struggle of Independence as a Woman vs. Family-Interdependence as a Woman	
Theme 4: Identifying as Ethiopian and Black vs. African-American	
Theme 5: School Impacts Culture when Isolated	
Theme 6: Afrocentrism Standard of Beauty	

Critical race feminism, originally coined by Robert Delgado, emphasizes the rights of women of color around the world. The theory strive to identify and theorize the issue of disproportionality women of color experience economically, socially, and politically. According to King, as edited by Murji and Solomos (2015), “critical race feminism is a race intervention with respect to feminsim and uses its perspective to the unique and varied experiences of women of color as distinct from White women or men of color” (p. 165). In essence, critical race feminism attempts to address the marginalization of women of color throughout all systemic structures.

Critical pedagogy enables continuous criticism of hegemonic practices in schools as implicated through race and gender injustices. However, critical pedagogy challenges assumptions forging to new questions and answers. Critical pedagogy is transformative, generative, and transmissive (Wink, 2005). In essence, critical pedagogy propels towards advocacy and activism for the most vulnerable students in the classroom and society. Therefore, a major role of “critical pedagogy has been to disclose and challenge the role that schools play in our political and cultural life” (McLaren, 2015, p. 123).

Afrocentricity main tenet provides centrality to the African experience for Africans. Asante (2011) explains that “Afrocentricity assist us in understanding how people come to create material realities, whethere those realities are based in class or race conditions” (p. 6). Therefore, the crux of Afrocentricity is to provide inclusivity to citizenship, cultural centeredness, and cultural affirmation, where the point of reference must shift to that of the ancient African civilization of

Kemet and the Nile Valley for an African perspective. Expansion of human history becomes tantamount for forging a path towards establishing and maintaining an Afrocentric self-identity and perceptions of beauty.

#### Theme One: Family Centered Social Structure

Relationships within the family structure merit upon authority and respect towards parents and adults (Bodovsky & Avni, 1989). The family structure models a “natural growth” pattern for raising children. Lareau (2003) theorizes that natural growth requires children obedience through discipline. The expectation lends to the imitation and observation of adults to pattern behaviors. However, safety and discipline derivatively establishes as the primary focus for the natural growth parenting style, where parents provide the solutions, barring questions. Additionally, Lareau (2003) argues that children bonds are typically strong, as a result of the family schedules being linked and free from continuous separation.

Each participant indicated that family gatherings, connections, and celebrations are essential in the Ethiopian culture. The data analysis illustrates representation of a natural growth parenting style within the Ethiopian culture, thereby lending the data to show a family centered social structure. Bethel expressed that Ethiopian families are insulated from outside entities in a host country, but within the home country Ethiopians exhibit these familial patterns openly. Bethel commented, “When I grew up in Ethiopia we made rugs and different kinds of crafts, where the elders [older women] from the family

organized and planned things. In America [the United States] we keep true to our traditions through our community.”

Goldblatt and Rosenbaum (2007) states that Ethiopian families bonds weaken outside of the home country for varying reasons, with language typically being the root cause. Reason being, children become the mediator for the adults navigation through the host culture. Language barriers prevents inclusivity and establishes social and cultural barriers in the host country. However, the participants in this study had parents who have command of Amharic and English. Therefore, the Ethiopian culture and traditions remained intact within their family structure.

The Ethiopian family structure consists of patriarchy and male leadership. The narrative for each participant demonstrates the custom. However, the second generation Ethiopians living in the United States display the need to re-norm the traditions and customs. Mela vocalized the following:

I appreciate my Ethiopian culture, but some things I would like to establish in our family. It would be nice to have family trips without all of the family wanting to come with us. I understand the value of family, but it would be great to have a voice in what we do and who is allowed to come.

Four of the five participants echo the sentiments of Mela. The presents of their father making family decisions grounded and dictates the direction in which family navigates throughout the United States. Additionally, the growing under current for family to shift practices broker paying close attention, although, the father continues to maintain head of the household, and provide the leadership direction.

According to Goldblatt and Rosenbaum (2007), maintaining family norms and values in Ethiopia are more difficult to challenge, as opposed to in the a host country. Research indicates that changes in the Ethiopian family occur when parental support is unstable and unsupportive (Berry, 2004; Gibson, 2001, Goldblatt & Rosenbaum 2007). However, the presence of a strong ethnic community and parental support protects the children from the impact of discrimination and social pressures (Berry, 2004; Gibson, 2001, Goldblatt & Rosenbaum 2007).

The family structure for the Ethiopia community in the United States forged patterns of protection against discrimination and social pressures. Therefore, the patriarch in each of the participants families generated directional goals for achievement. The overarching goal appears to be educational achievement, financial stability, and cultural participation and maintenance. Patriarchs failure to overtly provide the end goal unintentionally or intentionally promoted reticent behavior that led participants to feel as though there were preconceived notions and expectations concerning their life choices and direction. Diborah highly vocalized her concerns that the family questioned her as though she were to be on a path fullfilling a life pre-establishehd benchmark. Diborah stated:

At celebrations and family gatherings, the older men would question us about our major in college, the plan after college, and have we found a respectable Ethiopian community to engage in, and the look, the stare sometimes makes you uncomfortable because I am thinking that there must be a right answer, but what if I gave a wrong answer.

Moreover, Mela referenced her father being mad at her when she declared her major to become an artist. She recalls the tension presented over the choice until she placated her father, and majored in, both, mechanical engineering and art.

Research illustrates concerning Ethiopians that experiences in the host country are fashioned from the ideal memories from Ethiopia (Berry, 2004; Gibson, 2001, Goldblatt & Rosenbaum 2007). As a result, future constructions base narrative focus on family and education. Therefore, the narrative analysis of each participant illustrates that the plight for the Ethiopian family is to maintain the structural purpose of Ethiopian traditions and customs that manifests as the central focus in this study.

#### Theme Two: Maintaining Ethiopian Traditions/Customs in America Matters

Culture in this study refers to coherent set of attributes that characterizes a social group. Cultural customs continued from generation to generation provides the framework definition of traditions. Participants in the study revealed that culture maintenance was important in the Ethiopian community. Mela expressed the honor and pride of being Ethiopian, stating:

At times my dad seems like he is driving us mad when he preach [lecture] to us about the Ethiopian way. It wasn't until I was in college that I fully understood and appreciated my Ethiopian heritage. There were many times in my life that being Ethiopian gave me the fortitude to denounce racism directed towards me.

The benefit of culture, therefore, provides an anchor to self-identity. According to Marsela (2005), culture provides power for constructing realities, and argues that

humans are reluctant to shift culture from a heightened sense of uncertainty. The uncertainty attached to identity development induces a vulnerability to formulating an understanding of self. Consequently, Decuir-Gunby (2009) expressed that “identity formation is a multifaceted negotiation process that asks questions regarding one’s present, past, and future” (p. 104). Culture provides the structural foundation in which to answer questions of the present, past, and future.

From a critical race feminist perspective, Stevens (1997) theorizes that gender and race layers the complexity of identity development. Cultural biases and the application of gender and race leads to the misconstruction of flawed identity constructs (Decuir-Gunby 2009; Marsela, 2005, Stevens, 1997). However, the impact of gender and race on identity development provides coherent areas of cultural integrity. Meaning, a healthy social and policy environment can promote equity and respect of cultures and the characteristics of those participating in it. Additionally, cultural integrity offers inclusionary practices that promotes understanding of the culture, thereby lending context to the impact on self-identity (Decuir-Gunby 2009; Marsela, 2005, Stevens, 1997).

The narrative analysis illustrated that each participant attributes self-identity to the Ethiopian culture. Through the lens of critical race feminism (CRF), the findings shows that participants’ sense of identity included a sense of uniqueness and affiliation. When asked how would you describe yourself, each of the participants descriptions began with, “I am Ethiopian.” Erez and Earley (1993) states:

People everywhere are likely to develop an understanding of themselves as physically distinct and separate from others. Beyond a physical self, individuals have a private self, which conveys the awareness of internal thoughts and feelings that are private to the extent that they cannot be known by others. Yet these thoughts and feelings are shaped to a great extent by the shared understanding within a particular culture of what is to be human. The enduring attachments and commitments to the social environment help define who we are. The self is a composite view of oneself that is formed through direct experience and evaluations adopted by others.

Participants further provide narratives of being “Black.” The term and association with being Black appeared to be offered as a substitute for African-American. Distinctions are attributed to culture and disassociation with the crux of other races of color.

Therefore, the findings indicate that a cultural response to the phenomenon of combining ethnic groups into same classifications. Aida asserts:

In America [the United States] people treat you based on race. I am more than my skin tone, and when they find out you are from a place in Africa, it is immediately assumed that the things that they have seen on tv are facts. No! They have no clue about our history, our customs, or our traditions.

Similar statements are given by Diborah, Mela, and Markeda concerning the assumption of African ethnicity being automatically compartmentalized to whole group stereotypes.

Whole group comparison for Ethiopians appear to suggest a fear of systemic, cultural erosion. Meaning, Ethiopians, consciously or unconsciously, place strong emphasis on the retention of culture in the United States, in order to

maintain cultural identity and inclusion outside of the homeland (Decuir-Gunby 2009; Erez & Earley, 1993; Stevens, 1997). Maintaining culture in the United States, host country, serves as a preservation mechanism utilized to offer support for those living outside of Ethiopia, and a safeguard to providing generations of Ethiopians with the understanding of the traditions and customs that make Ethiopians uniquely African.

### Theme Three: Struggle of Independence as a Woman vs. Family-Interdependence as a Woman

The status of women in Ethiopian families and society shift-shaped over the course of time. Traditional families extol women as secondary citizens. Ethiopian migration has required matriarchs to govern the family daily routines, which is not typical in the traditional Ethiopian family. However, geographic separation of parents and other external forces have require transitory changes in the family structure. As a result, the dichotomy of traditional roles for women and the transitional role for women produces a unique dyanmic. Austin (1995) precluded the phenomenon in her research, stating:

The intellectual product of the minority feminist scholar should incorporate in a formal fashion the ethical and moral consciousness of minority women, their aspirations, and their quest for liberation...Because her scholarship is to be grounded in the material and ideological realities of minority women and in their cultural and political responses...as the lives of minority women change, so too should the analysis. (p. 426)

From a CRF perspective, Austin (1995) strongly suggests that women of color collectively challenge encounters that marginalize their agency.

The participants in this study struggled to operate as independent women, free to make decisions concerning their lives free from family and parental input.

Four of the five participants expressed the duality of conflict exhibited to engage family for guidance and support or make an informed choice. Aida captures the inner dialogue when she commented:

My dad lives in Ethiopia. So, my mom and I adjust when he comes to visit. I get frustrated trying to operate the business. My mom thinks that I need to operate in one way, but that is not proper to running a business. She makes requests and thinks that I am obligated to honor them. It frustrates me, but she insists on working at the restaurant, and when my dad comes they both think I am a little child that need to listen to their every command.

Aida's response could be viewed as a typical child to parent interaction. However, the role of men in Ethiopian culture is distinct.

The United Nations Project for Women identified that women and girls in Ethiopia are at a disadvantage. Gender equality remain an item for improvement. However, the delivery of public school provides support to gender parity as the enrollment of primary school increases. Programs such as *Leave No Women Behind* helps to garnish equity for women and girls in Ethiopia. The project states that "traditional attitudes, beliefs and practices that reinforce harmful gender roles contribute to constrain women's participation in social development" (UN Women Ethiopia Online).

The gender roles in Ethiopia appears to shift in the United States. The establishment of women liberations garner a role in the shift. Echols (1989) argues that "radical feminists placed great importance on developing counter-institutions as alternatives to institutions working within the system..." (p. 16). Echols identify that parts of the women liberation movement focused on building new structures and processes for gender equality. Therefore, Ethiopian women

benefit from the foundational framework of the women liberation movement, thereby allowing Ethiopian women the opportunity to partake of freedoms within the United States, not traditionally given in Ethiopia. The onset of cultural contradiction appears to be responsible for creating the internal struggle for independence or family interdependence among the majority of the participants.

Narrative analysis illustrate participants juxtaposition between maintaining Ethiopian customs and traditions versus the Westernized standards of women independence. Markeda commented,

I am grown, but still living with my parents. They try to regulate every aspect of my life, but I feel it is time for me to live on my own. They disagree. I don't want to dishonor them by leaving on my own, but it can be too much for me at times.

Markeda statement shows her fight for independence, and regard for cultural obligation. The sentiment of Markeda resounds that of all participants, with the exception of Bethel. As a result, the findings illuminates the research of Davidman (2002) where he explains, "by placing individual experience with larger contexts, and by tracing the linkages between self and society, biography and history, sociology offers a broad perspective in which to understand individuals' lives and the factors that shape us" (p. 507).

#### Theme Four: Identifying as Ethiopian and Black vs. African-American

According to Smedley and Smedley (2005), "in many multiracial nations such as the United States, there are profound and stubbornly persistent racial and ethnic differences in socioeconomic status, educational and occupational status,

wealth, political power, and the like” (p. 16). These differences are latent to the psychological development of identity. Paying attention to culture and mental maturity, social researchers identify that adolescence proves to be a critical gateway period to identity development (Decuir-Gunby, 2009; Erikson, 1950).

Cultural connotation refers to the symbolism and meaning culture impacts identity development. However, social roles denotes the maneuvering through labels and contextual function. From a CRF perspective, tace is an example of both cultural connotation and social roles (Decuir-Gunby, 2009; Erikson, 1950).

Decuir-Gunby (2009) theorizes that the social conflict and interest of race influences identity development. Tannebaum (2008) illustrates phenomenon where Ethiopian immigrant children found connections to Africa, “stressing the notion of black only or of identifying with the history of their brothers” (p. 195).

The tumultuous history of Black Americans in the United States explains the differentiation between Black and African-American. The delineation away from African-American signals a shift away from the turmoil and struggle that makes Ethiopian immigrants or Ethiopian descent demark the distinction. The epistemological ideology is rooted in the social conflict of race. Smedley and Smedley (2005) states that, “race therefore can be seen as an ideology or worldview, and its components have often been spelled out explicitly in social policy...[and] can be analytically derived from ethnographic reality” (p. 20). Therefore, characteristic use of race in systems embed stratifying meaning.

Through CRF, the narrative analysis of Bethel exemplify the effects of race. Bethel commented:

I grew up in the beauty of Ethiopia. When I was older and moved to the capital city, we understood the meanings of the world and how colonization brought so much ugliness. Many of us, my age prefer to associate with White than African-American. We heard so many bad things before we got here about African-Americans.

This narrative provide credence to the worldview of racial characteristics

(Smedley & Smedley, 2005). Smedley and Smedley (2005) outline six tenets of the social characteristics of race:

(1) Race-based societies perceive designated racial groups as biologically discrete and exclusive groups, and certain physical characteristics become markers of race status. (2) They hold that races are naturally unequal and therefore must be ranked hierarchically. (3) They assume that each race has distinctive cultural behaviors linked to their biology. (4) They assume that both physical features and behavior are innate and inherited. (5) They assume that the differences among races are therefore profound and unalterable. (6) They have racial classifications stipulated in the legal and social system. (p. 20)

In the United States, race ideology follows all of these tenets dating back to the seventeenth century (Smedley & Smedley, 2005). Therefore, the systemic structure of race within the United States propel immigrants to adopt and navigate in the same vein.

Consequently, in the United States, physical features such as skin color is a prominent marker of racial identity. Through CRF, each of the participants in this study refers to colorism when identifying their definition of self as “Ethiopian and/or Black.” However, Aida complexity with race transcended into culture. According to Aida, her “skin tone is darker than the average Ethiopian. Many times people think don’t know that I am Ethiopian until I begin to speak in my native language.” The categorization of participants is evident that race is a connotation in identity.

Race becomes a critical tool utilized to oppress in the United States. According to Smedley and Smedley (2005), “race essentializes and stereotypes people, their social statuses, their social behaviors, and their social ranking” (p. 21). Immigrants and descendants largely want access to social, political, and economic freedom. Therefore, identifying with African-Americans would immediately align Ethiopians with the history of oppression, social ranking, economic and political disadvantages.

The findings corroborate reluctance to identify as African-American stems from a delineation or shift from the negative stereotypes, history, and systemic barriers participants have experienced or seen people of color go through in the United States. Mela expressed that she “has no issue with the African-Americans, but I am Ethiopian, black. To be African-American suggests that I must set aside my background. I refuse to do that.” The need to preserve culture reinforces the focus on ethnicity as identity and race as a secondary support, as race is deemed important in the structure of American society.

#### Theme Five: School Impacts Culture when Isolated

Research shows that immigrants experience conflict with culture and school in a host country. Inclusivity becomes critical to providing support for language, access to the hidden curriculum, and cultural capital (Berhanu, 2001; Bourne, Bridges, & Searle, 1994; Brady, Manni, & Winnikur, 1983; Gilborn, 1990, Losen & Orfield, 2002). For many immigrants, cultural pluralism becomes a social reality. Cultural pluralism refers to, in this study, Ethiopians maintaining the cultural identity, customs and traditions, provided they follow those of the

larger society. Cultural pluralism impact immigrants when school structures require shifting towards the values of the dominant societal group.

Delpit frames the shifting towards the dominant structures as the culture of power (Delpit, 2006). Delpit (2006) argues that there are five aspects of power.

They are as follows:

(1) Issues of power are enacted in the classroom. (2) There are codes or rules to participating in power. (3) The rules of culture of power are a reflection of the rules of the culture of those that have power. (4) If you are not already a participant in the culture of power, being told explicitly the rules of that culture makes acquiring power easier. (5) Those in power are least aware of – or willing to acknowledge – its existence. Those with less power are often most aware of it (p. 282).

In essence, schools can function to replicate the ideologies of oppression.

Therefore, through CRF, immigrants such as Ethiopians benefit from schools deconstructing systems of hegemony and reconstructing inclusive ones.

Aida recalls attending school in the United States and attending the English as a Second Language (ESL) program. The program structure provided instruction in a separate setting from the general courses. Dborah was given similar instruction growing up as well. Moreover, all of the participants except Bethel received some type of educational support. The narrative analysis identify understanding the benefit instructional support provides. However, isolation from classmates suggested varying meaning of negativity to each participant.

Aida found that the support from the ESL teacher allowed her to balance home culture and school school. Issues surrounding the command of language, context and meaning presented barriers for her. Aida expressed conflict with being Ethiopian in the school setting. The isolation from physical students

presented some difficulties, but allowed a space of reflection to learn the language and honor her culture. Acknowledging and cultivating the changes aid in the educational transition of culture. Berhanu (2001) explains that when “the new sources of emotional and spiritual succour have not been cultivated or used effectively due to language and linguistic factors that hinder effective and meaningful adjustment” (p.56). This study extends this argument to that of schools and inclusive practices for immigrants.

The other participants educated in the United States, Diborah, Markeda, and Mela, had full command of the English language while growing up. For them, language barriers and understanding contextual meaning did not present an issue in school settings. Being Ethiopian or of African descent caused school and cultural conflict. The narrative of isolation formulated as a result of maltreatment from students in the school, and the lack of cultural inclusion and sensitivity by the school. Each of the participants received negative verbage throughout their matriculation. Primitive notions and depictions of African were discourse the analysis uncovered. However, the benefit of being in the ESL program and interaction with minorities provided the necessary support to extol cultural pride at school.

Consequently, Delpit (2006) argues that schooling can serve to maintain the status quo and reinforce the culture of power. Ladson-Billings (1994) and Kunjufu (2006) recognizes the importance of including students' cultural references in all aspects of learning. Shared identity and/or experiences among teacher-student or student-student interaction provides a commonality for support.

The researchers argue that commonality promotes cultural inclusion and increases academic achievement (Delpit, 2006; Kozol, 2005; Kunjufu 2006; Ladson-Billings, 1994).

#### Theme Six: Afrocentrism Standard of Beauty

Azzarito (2010) writes, “contemporary media narratives about femininity play a powerful role in producing girls’ understandings of themselves and construction of their bodies...The media reconstruct, present and commodify women’s bodies through images that celebrate power, opportunities, desire, self-determination and success in Western society” (p. 261). The use of media narratives contribute to the standardization of beauty in society, constructing and regulating the symbolism, context, displays, and meaning of who is considered beautiful. Therefore, in this study, particular attention is given to the attributes of beauty as outlined through the following definition: the combination of physical characteristics such as shape, skin tone/color, hair texture, and physical features (Azzarito, 2010; Townsend, Thomas, Neilands, & Jackson, 2010).

The historical epistemology of beauty in the United States derives from the legacy of slavery (Azzarito, 2010; Townsend, Thomas, Neilands, & Jackson, 2010). The objectification of women of color, primarily Black women, set systemic patterns of dehumanization and victimization. Advertisement propelled depictions that were utilized to establish spectrums, generating internalized messages of “good” or “bad.” The stratification of skin color or colorism and hair texture were promotions of stereotypical images as an allocation for privileges in the United States (Asante, 1998; Azzarito, 2010; Townsend, Thomas, Neilands, & Jackson, 2010). Townsend, et al. (2010) stated:

Societal messages and media images that emphasize the appearance of women and girls across ethnicities are thought to foster self-objectification. According to objectification theory, adolescent girls become aware that their bodies are examined and evaluated by others and consequently internalize the observers' perspective to evaluate their own bodies. This pattern could lead girls to believe that their value and self-worth are a function of their appearance and sex appeal. (p. 274)

Studies indicate that strong ethnic identities serves as a buffer against negative racial stereotypes (Chavous, Bernat, Schmeelk-Cone, Kohn-Wood, & Zimmerman, 2003; Townsend, Thomas, Neilands, & Jackson, 2010).

Four of the five participants expressed Afrocentric narratives for the construct of beauty. Afrocentric narrative being outlined as providing agency and action to which African ideals, culture, physical characteristics, attributes, traditions, etc. are central to the analysis of a narrative. Accordingly, Diborah experiences made her acutely aware of the negative projections that she was not considered beautiful to the dominant culture during her childhood. When discussing her idea of beauty, she stated, "All shades of color are beautiful to me. I have grown up with family members that exhibit many different features. I can see through the experience of her [a White girl attending the same school] rejection that she found it baffling that a White boy would want me over her." Diborah expressed affirmation that she and others that share similar characteristics are beautiful, however, sharing sentiment and exposure of the repudiation that the dominant culture considered it unfathomable to be secondary to such standards.

Moreover, each participant spoke of colorism as identifying markers society utilizes to project standards of beauty. Aida, who had non-traditional Ethiopian features, expressed further Afrocentricism towards the hair texture. Hair texture closely aligned to

that of Whites, stereotypically receives connotations of good, whereas hair textures that exhibit a coil pattern is considered bad. Aida explained,

I am often vexed when people use the terms good and bad hair. There is no such thing as good and bad hair. Hair is a part of the regions of our lineage. Whites hair is straight because of the ancestral need to absorb heat from the sun based on the geography of their lineage. We Africans have a tight [coil] curl pattern to protect our scalp from the sun, based on where we are. It is such a shame that people use things like this to try and oppress others. The same can be said about skin color also.

The findings in this study support that the involvement in culture provide a form of insulation and strength of identity necessary to reject negative standardizations of beauty not inclusive of their features. Consequently, Akbar (1984) argues, that “the uncritical acceptance of the assumptions of Western science by African people is to participate in our own domination and oppression” (p. 395). Findings suggest Ethiopians in the United States have formulated structural supports inter-ethnically to safeguard the culture of Ethiopians, and Afrocentric views.

### **Implications**

This study’s findings have implications for researchers, policy makers, community activist, and educators who are committed to improving the awareness of academic, social, and personal needs of Ethiopian women living in the United States. The goal of this study was to understand phenomenon that may be silently transpiring in the Ethiopian community and perhaps the wider African immigrant community, and provide awareness.

Existing literature on Ethiopian in other countries, such as Israel illustrate a pervasive shift in the culture and academic environment (Azzarito, 2010; Berhanu, 2001, Chavous, et al., 2003; Decuir-Gunby, 2009; Townsend, et al., 2010). Findings in the

existing literature indicate varying systemic shifts within Ethiopian families. Paternal dominance forcibly shifts, due to language barriers. Adolescents become mediators between parents and school, and family rules transition from the decline in parental hierarchy (Azzarito, 2010; Berhanu, 2001, Chavous, et al., 2003; Decuir-Gunby, 2009; Townsend, et al., 2010). Consequently, Ethiopians have experienced high levels of students' dropping out of school in host countries that are not fully prepared to support their needs (Berhanu, 2001).

In the United States, hegemonic structures are inter-woven throughout dominant systems. Historical oppression, centered upon race allows issues such as colorism to continuously stratify society (Asante, 2011; Azzarito, 2010; Townsend, et al., 2010). Literature express that for Black females, the impact on identity development has allowed a susceptibility to other phenomenon such as low self-esteem, internalized self-hatred, and community detachment. Given the current illustrations of literature, particular concern has transitioned towards those of African descent, particularly Ethiopians, as they share similar physical features as that of Blacks in the United States (Asante, 2011; Azzarito, 2010; Townsend, et al., 2010).

In essence, researchers, policy makers, community activist, and educators must pay close attention not to “other” Ethiopians in academic and social experiences. By “othering” the community, detriment ensures that Ethiopian girls may grow up with a poor concept of self, which directly impacts academic achievement and ultimately a pro-Afrocentric perspective on beauty (Asante, 2011; Azzarito, 2010; Townsend, et al., 2010). Findings illustrate that for

Ethiopians, a strong sense of culture promotes a strong identity development, leading to increased academic achievement and the ability to generate Afrocentric views of constructs that impact identity development, such as beauty.

### **Limitations**

This research presented several limitations. The limitations identified in this study are geographic location, sample size, and role of the researcher/cultural breach. The study appears to be the first study to examine the impact of acculturation/assimilation on Ethiopian self-identity, academic achievement, and perception of beauty. Consequently, qualitative research method, specifically case study design, allowed for an extraction of interpretive information. The purposive criterion sampling consisted of three criterion; (1) first or second generation Ethiopian living in the United States, (2) female, and (3) over the age of eighteen.

Participants in the study lived most of their lives in the Southeastern area of the United States. There is a larger Ethiopian populations in areas outside the study region. In different regions of the United States, various cultural norms transition due to elements, such as weather, community establishments, and cultural support. Some Ethiopian communities may make adaptations that support living in warmer climates, as opposed to those that may live in colder climates. Additionally, Ethiopian communities well-established may provide and support cultural services that aid in living in the host country; the United States. Urban areas such as Washington, D.C., Atlanta, and Minneapolis have large Ethiopian communities. However, this study was conducted outside of the geographic

location of areas with large Ethiopian populations. Therefore, the experiences of the participants may be different from those in other areas.

Additionally, the sample size of the study was small. Small sample sizes make the data difficult to generalize (which is not a feature of qualitative research) towards the group in which the study is directed. The small sample size may indicate phenomenon significant to the region, but can compromise the conclusions drawn from the study. Consequently, small sample sizes make it difficult to find significant relationships from the data. However, in order to prevent such an occurrence, this study performed multiple interviews on participants to follow up on narrative rich data.

Lastly, this study limitation is the role of the researcher. The role of the researcher in this study as a primary data collector presented risk of bias. To safeguard the potential for bias, triangulation, member checks, and data review were utilized. However, the researcher encountered limitations of cultural breach. Meaning, the researcher had difficulty securing participants due to cultural differences. Many Ethiopians were reluctant to be interviewed. Those that were interested were skeptical of an American-born researcher being interested in the Ethiopian culture. Therefore, time constraints made it difficult to build the necessary relationships that would garner the researcher as having a vested interest in the culture, and honoring the culture through the research.

## **Recommendations**

Findings from this study reveal the need for policy makers, educators, and community activist to examine the impact of acculturation and assimilation in curriculum, pedagogy, and legislative policy. Additionally, the findings illustrate a need to evaluate the influence of race and gender prior to, during, and after emergent of policy and policy agendas. This study was conducted to examine the needs of Ethiopian women to identify and fill the gap of cultural awareness on every level of education: federal, state, and local.

### **Recommendations for policy makers**

Freire (1970) theorizes behaviors of the oppressor reduce the critical analysis of the oppressed from developing. Policy makers have a fiduciary responsibility to create equitable legislation. The growth of immigrants in the United States require that policy makers consider the diverse makeup of the country when emergent policies are being constructed. Policy makers should consider the impact of linear regulated policies that target the dominant group. Considering inclusive policies that minimizes the impact for cultural isolation should be best practices for implementation. I recommend that policy makers receive training on cultural sensitivity awareness and inclusionary practices in education. Policies can, therefore, be written that derives the best inclusive curriculum and pedagogy.

### **Recommendations for educators**

Traore and Lukens (2006) present tenets of Afrocentric theory in application to discuss and empower students with knowledge or truth regarding their history, as well as to dispel stereotypes or misconceptions regarding the misrepresented mal-positions the

Africans and Blacks played in each other's history. The authors argue pro the importance of multicultural inferences in American pedagogy to support the reconstruction of relationships rifted by miseducated curriculum. Therefore, educators must be aware that their role is impactful. Freire (1970) description of educators depicts a "banking," metaphor, where he conceptualizes that teachers "deposit" what is deemed important knowledge to students, with a withdrawal of students' regurgitation of information.

The participants in this study benefited from educators in the ESL program understanding cultural distinctions. Educators, therefore, have an influence in bridging the gap of communications amongst diverse populations. Educators can utilize culturally responsive teaching practices in the classroom. Building culturally responsive teaching practices provides opportunities to layer Afrocentric perspectives in pedagogy, hence the student backgrounds are used to empower students. The research in study states that Afrocentric views among people of African descent promotes a strong identity, whereas the impact for academic achievement and self-awareness increases.

#### Recommendations for community activist

The findings of this study suggest that community activist should do more to bring about cultural awareness in various communities such as the Ethiopian community. Community activist can promote and highlight the needs of the Ethiopian community that typically are silent to those in the United States. I recommend that community activist participate in federal, state, and local issues in education that bridge the gap of equity and diversity in schools, funding, and awareness.

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**APPENDIX: A**

College of Education

Office of Middle, Secondary, K-12 Education

9201 University City Boulevard, Charlotte, NC 28223-0001

Phone: 704-687- 8875 Fax: 704-687-6430

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**Interview Protocol**

1. What is your name?
2. Is this an American given name or Ethiopian name?
3. How old are you?
4. Did you attend elementary, middle, high school, and/or college in Ethiopia?
5. What were some experiences in elementary, middle, high, and/or college? (**Ask follow-up questions about experiences**)
6. Did you attend elementary, middle, high school, and/or college in America?
7. What was school like in American? (**Ask follow-up questions about experiences**)
8. Do you have family back in Ethiopia?
9. Have they ever come to visit you in America?
10. What were some of their thoughts on coming to America?
11. How do you feel about their thoughts? (Explore if necessary)
12. What are some traditions in Ethiopian culture?

13. Have the Ethiopian traditions changed in America? **(If so, have them explain how so)**
14. Describe what life is like in Ethiopia.
15. How is life in America?
16. Describe your experiences around race in Ethiopia. America. **(Follow up when necessary)**
17. Explain how you view yourself?
18. Explain how your view of yourself has changed over time?
19. Explain/Describe your idea of beauty.
20. Where do you think your idea of beauty has come from? **(Follow up when necessary)**
21. Describe features of a beautiful person.
22. In the photo line-up, what person would you consider the most beautiful?
23. What is it that makes this person the most beautiful? **Explain.**
24. How do you see yourself compared to the most beautiful?
25. In the photo line-up, what person would you consider the least beautiful?
26. What is it that makes this person the least beautiful? **Explain.**
27. How do you see yourself compared to the least beautiful?
28. If you attended school in Ethiopia, how would you compare U.S.' schools to Ethiopia's schools?
29. What are some of your experiences in American schools and Ethiopian schools? **Explain.**

30. What level of courses have you completed in the U.S. (standard, honors, advanced placement, etc.)?
31. How was it being in these courses? **Did you try to move up or down, like from standard to honors? Why or why not?**
32. How were your experiences with U.S. teachers? (**Follow up here**)
33. What are some of your experiences being a minority student in U.S. schools?
34. How do you relate to African American students who are also minorities?