

# **Say It Loud: An Action Research Project Examining the Afrivisual and Africology, Looking for Alternative African American Community College Teaching Strategies**

by

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## **Abstract**

For this study, the researcher sought to implement a visual arts-based Afrivisual to help inspire, motivate and empower African American students in gaining a culturally relevant education in Euro-American-centered schools. Using the Afrivisual in this work as an action-oriented tool the researcher sought to expose African American students to an African historical context. This research project utilized three African-centered theoretical frameworks: (1) Afrocentricity, (2) Africana Philosophy, and (3) Africana Critical Theory. The problem this work addresses is found in four areas, (1) American history is Eurocentric, (2) African history has been distorted, (3) Africa's contribution to world civilization has been ignored, and (4) African American students have suffered from identity issues. The primary purpose of the study was to show how African American students may react to culturally relevant exposure to African history and to investigate if exposure to African history is culturally relevant for them. The researcher also hoped to present an effective strategy for Black students from an African-centered point of view. The central questions of this study were, "How do native-born African American community college students respond to a culturally relevant visual tool? What experiences have they had with history? How has their exposure to history affected them?" Both quantitative and qualitative phases of this study were based on data and interviews with African American community college students. Descriptive statistics, including frequency percentages shown in tables were used to present the questionnaire data.

Qualitative coding techniques were used to present the focus group data. The qualitative phase of the study highlighted the introduction of the Afrivisual, a visual arts-based and culturally relevant educational tool. There were similarities between the survey sample and the interview sample. The quantitative and qualitative data combined to show the strong desire African American students have to study African history, African civilizations, and to learn about their African ancestors. The triangulation of the data revealed that African American students who were found to be proud to be Black, vowed to be vigilant in future history classes about what they're being taught, and to present questions about African history. The students also expressed a tremendous need to share what they've learned about African history with other African Americans. The significance of this study is that the Afrivisual can be a potentially effective teaching strategy. Also additional researchers may be able to build upon the findings of this inquiry by using another media form of the Afrivisual. Lastly, it exposed weaknesses in the self-hatred thesis as it applies to African American adults, and called for the groundbreaking theoretical framework to be revisited.

## **Dedication**

This dissertation is dedicated to my African ancestors dating back to the early Nile Valley inhabitants, whose contributions to world civilization have been left out of the annals of recorded history. These African people laid the foundation for world sciences, cosmological viewpoints, philosophical traditions, religious doctrines, political structures, and social order. They left a map of great revelations for their descendants to uncover that would reveal ages of glory and historical truth.

Dear ancestors, may your story come unto the most illumined light that it may be told....

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## Introduction

This work is a report of an action research study of native-born African Americans' response to a culturally relevant (Ladson-Billings, 1992, 1995a, 1995b, 2009) African history tool, called an *Afrivisual*. The study was based primarily upon a questionnaire and focus group of African American community college students. The first section presents an outline of the education of African Americans historically in the United States. It specifies the problem of the study, its purpose, and significance. It also presents an overview of the African-centered theoretical framework, and methodology used. The section concludes by providing an account of the limitations and delimitations of the study as well as defining some key terms used.

The study of history has usually been a reflection of the point of view and story of victors who have conquered others. Thus, the historical perspectives of victors have been enforced upon the groups they have conquered. These perspectives of dominant groups, whether accurate or truthful, as well as inaccurate or untruthful (Benjamin, 1994) have remained in place. Postmodern historical research and writings have been a reexamination of their foundations since the 1800s (Iggers, 2005). Such a historical revisionist approach is needed in the study of African American history. Since African Americans arrived in the English colonies of America, they have endured either no education at all, or European-centered history curricula and other related academic disciplines (Du Bois, 1935/1998; Woodson, 1933/2008).

Many scholars and researchers, since the pioneering works of W.E.B. Du Bois (1903/1989), *The Souls of Black Folk*, and Carter G. Woodson's (1933/2008), *The Mis-Education of the Negro*, sought to address the educational needs of African Americans (Akbar, 2006; Carruthers, 1999; Hilliard, 1999; Karenga, 2002; Watkins, 2001). The dominant Euro-American teaching strategy in history classrooms, criticized by Du Bois (1903/1989) and Woodson (1933/2008), has been ingrained in the African American psyche. Such Euro-centric historical teaching in U.S. curricula has caused African American students to develop feelings of inferiority (Allen, 2001; Bailey, 2005).

The teaching of history approach within school curricula throughout America should include a truthful account of the African recorded past. These forms of teaching strategies are not common in the pedagogies applied by many instructors (Asante, 1991; Bailey, 2005). The Greek word pedagogy denotes teaching practices focusing on children as learners (Weingand, 1996). Andragogy, also a Greek term (Weingand, 1996), address shortcomings in the use of the word pedagogy and has a set of 'assumptions' to distinguish the teaching of adults from the teaching of children (Hiemstra & Sisco, 1990). The term andragogy was conceptualized by Malcolm Knowles (1968) nearly five decades ago.

Andragogical and pedagogical methods in African historiography help to empower African American students who have suffered a damaged psyche (Asante, 1991; Bailey, 2005). First, a definition of the term “historiography” is needed to begin such a discourse in looking at how African American students have been affected by biased Euro-American paradigms (Asante, 1991). Jules R. Benjamin (1994) revealed that historians are obligated to put forth a genuine effort when analyzing and interpreting past matters concerning persons, places, and things. In the study of history there is a certain quest for knowledge and truth, by looking at populations of extant eras. It is from the experience of preceding peoples that a proper historical context for self can emanate. Also it is from this same understanding that individuals can make a relevant connection today in the world based upon the history of their ancestors. Benjamin (1994) acknowledged that the modern age should serve as a learning ground especially in the “social arrangements” of diverse cultures. It is from this ancestral connection that ethnic groups are able to construct their cultural values.

Melville Herskovits (1941) argued that American Blacks were deeply rooted in African cultural influences. Herskovits (1941) rebuffed the idea that African Americans lost their African cultural past during the slave period in the United States. Herskovits (1948, 1973) was pivotal in defining “cultural relativism” as an awakened response to Western ethnocentrism and hegemonic domination over other cultural groups. As a theoretical construct “cultural relativism” allowed African-descended Americans to view and assess their African traditional “values.” In the work, *The Influence of Culture on Visual Perception*, Herskovits teamed with other social scientists, Marshall Segall and Donald Campbell. Segall, Campbell, and Herskovits (1966) combined a triangulated approach of cultural and social psychology with the anthropological construct of “cultural relativism” to study “perception” as an aspect of human behavior and its influences across cultures.

The cultural aspect of history regarding an ethnic group favors a social historiography. The advent of social historiography came during the sixties, especially for African Americans and other people of color. It was through this social awareness of history and how it was taught that Black scholars believed African American students would be best educated by an effort to “rewrite a resented past” (Clifford, 1976, p. 211). The quest for a social historiography supplanted by a cultural history produces an ethno- history that investigates a certain culture and/or a cross-cultural analysis (Benjamin, 1994). The significance of the modern social historiography frame of African Americans can be drawn against the slavery era in which learning to read and write was forbidden.

## **Antebellum Anti-Education of African Americans**

During the mid 1800s, enslaved African Americans were not allowed to read and write, let alone, to become educated. Southern slave owners sought to keep their slaves ignorant, especially since they feared an organized slave revolt. Few African American slaves were allowed to learn to read and write by their owners. The slaveholders in the South who advocated an education for their human chattel usually did so for economic gain (Woodson, 1919). As free African Americans in the North wanted economic opportunities and uplift through higher education, many academic institutions even in the North refused them entry.

This dilemma for African Americans who desired to be educated would help bring about the arrival of historically Black colleges and universities (Woodson, 1919). Many Whites in the North favored free African Americans being taught “domestic science,” such as “sewing, cooking, cleaning houses, small trade and crafts, morality, and the simple rudiments of reading, ‘riting, and ‘rithmetic” (Lovett, 1990, p. 29).

## **Reconstruction Era Development of Public School System for African Americans**

After the Civil War a public school system was designed in the South during the Reconstruction era. It was during this period of time that former slaves gained educational opportunities under the auspices of the Union government and benevolent societies (Bullock, 1967). The federal government and northern benevolence societies were mostly responsible for the advancement of public education. For African Americans these agencies before and during Reconstruction served as a catalyst of African American engagement in the racial uplift of their people (Du Bois, 1935/1998). Thus, the public school system for African Americans began with African American involvement as Du Bois (1935/1998) stated, that the freedmen greatly desired to receive an education. The freedmen were able to receive learning instruction and new found knowledge under the guiding hand of the Freedmen’s Bureau and the “Northern schoolmarm,” a White female teacher from the North. Both of these entities helped to create the public school for African Americans in the South (Du Bois, 1935/1998). Du Bois (1935/1998) conceded that “common school” education in the Southern states began by the Freedmen’s Bureau and missionary societies, but maintained that African Americans who were part of the Reconstruction governments were largely responsible for the formation of the public school system.

The vast publicly funded school system implemented by the federal government throughout the former slave states was created to make literate the emancipated bondsmen. The government supported schools, that opened in the South, benefitted not only African Americans, but poor White children as well (Bullock, 1967). Even though the Freedmen’s Bureau constructed many schools in which Black children enrolled, there were issues of taxation in the Southern states that arose regarding the funding of the public school system.

Most Southern Whites did not want to see their taxes wasted on African American schools and crafted ways in which to make sure that they were reimbursed. They devised ways in which African Americans would have to be accountable for all money spent on any form of Black public education. Thus ways were contrived by Southerners to collect repayment of their taxes for Black education (Du Bois, 1935/1998). A struggle for African American public education in the rebel states continued to escalate as the era of Reconstruction started to wane and Southern Whites began to regain control of their geographical region (Anderson, 1988).

### **Legalized Racial Segregation and “Negro Education”**

The infamous Compromise of 1877, a result of the presidential election of 1876, helped set the stage for Southern domination of all of its institutions during the post-bellum period. This deal struck between Republicans in the North and Democrats in the South led to Southern states passing strict racial segregation laws that covered every sector of their society including education. When Northern carpetbaggers who helped run Southern local and state governments, and educators left the South after the Compromise of 1877, the aristocratic former plantation owners now controlled “Negro education” (Anderson, 1988).

The Southerners sought to create a so-called “separate but equal” society for Whites and Blacks centering on every social sector, including the public school system in the 1870s and 1880s (Moore, 2003). With the invalidation of the Fourteenth Amendment as a protector of African American civil liberties, the U.S. Supreme Court set the stage for a series of court rulings that would help to keep “Negroes” as a subjugated caste (Bullock, 1967). By 1896, advocates for “Negro education” in the South were legally inept to seek any type of court restitution due to segregated and unequal school facilities. The reason why “Negro education” suffered the continuance of enforced segregation within the Jim Crow Southern society was the landmark Supreme Court decision, *Plessy v. Ferguson*. The Court ruled the government did not have the authority to enforce “social equality” (Moore, 2003).

It was the state legislatures throughout the South which determined the “separate but equal” school facilities. Moore (2003) noted that the system of Jim Crow had a negative effect on African Americans’ pursuit of education. Black schools on average received “one-third” of the allotments that their White counterparts were given. In addition, African American schools lacked many necessities to properly function, not to mention overfilled classrooms to be taught in dilapidated buildings. African Americans greatly suffered under the system of Jim Crow education that was established in the Southern region, and caused a leading scholar to reflect upon their “mis-education” (Woodson, 1933/2008). Carter G. Woodson (1933/2008) wrote, *The Mis-Education of The Negro* in 1933, which provided insight into the self-degradation “educated” African Americans had been subjected to. This type of humiliating educational experience led African Americans to encounter feelings of inferiority. Woodson (1933/2008) could not understand how the “educated Negro” would accept the degradation of a Jim Crow society under any circumstances.



## **The Philosophies of Accommodationism and the Talented Tenth**

Two differing philosophical ideals arose that addressed the pedagogical and andragogical needs of African Americans in the Jim Crow era. Both of these philosophies sought to “uplift” the “race.” The thoughts of Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. Du Bois competed against each other. As African American leaders during the late nineteenth century, they called for Southern Blacks who were not far removed from bondage to be educated (Moore, 2003).

Washington (1901/2001) had an “accommodationist” viewpoint, which called for African Americans to engage in a socially subservient and non-threatening co-existence with Whites from the South. He thought this educational practice was sufficient for African Americans in the land of Jim Crow to attain an education. Through the “philosophy of accommodationism,” Washington (1901/2001) was convinced African Americans should pursue a vocational college education, and he believed such an education would make them of more economic service to the South. He called for Blacks to be non-threatening in social and political matters in Southern states, and to the segregated society they lived within. He encouraged them not to pursue a liberal arts education because such a foolish venture would be contrary to the desires of White Southerners (Washington 1901/2001).

Whereas Washington (1901/2001) believed in the pursuit of a menial service oriented type of education, Du Bois (1903/1989) had a different academic agenda for African Americans. He encouraged African Americans to strive for higher education, not to settle for one which was vocationally based (Du Bois, 1903/1989). The education goals advocated by Du Bois (1903/1989) were found within a liberal arts pursuit. He reasoned that higher education would best serve African Americans needs to succeed in American society. Also, Du Bois (1903/1989) argued that a “talented tenth” or “the top 10 percent,” of African Americans should bear the responsibility of helping to enlighten their former enslaved brethren through the process of education. The philosophy of the “talented tenth” as espoused by him, would propel the Black “race” out of a poor and ignorant existence while they continued to battle White supremacy.

## **The Early Philanthropic Design of African American Education**

Within the Southern system of racial segregation Northern leaders with economic interests at stake, took on the task of determining an education plan for the freedmen and their descendants, a source of cheap labor (Watkins, 2001). The education plan they adopted was the vocational “accommodationist” approach of Washington. These White philanthropists would lay the political and ideological foundations of African American educational training throughout the United States over many decades (Watkins, 2001). It was at the First Mohonk Conference in 1890, that Northern philanthropists, who favored vocational training along with some educators, debated the best approach to educating African Americans.

By 1899, the second Conference for Education in the South occurred (Bullock, 1967). The Capon Springs Conference, as it was called, solidified Northern philanthropic support and involvement in the public education of African Americans in the South founded upon the Hampton model of vocational training (Watkins, 2001).

There were some Northerners who did not agree with the philanthropists who wanted a manual arts education for African Americans. At the First Mohonk Conference, William T. Harris, United States Commissioner of Education, a proponent for African American higher education, who would later address Black students at Atlanta University in 1895:

As our civilization is largely derived from the Greeks and Romans, and as Negroes of America are to share it with Anglo-Saxons, it is very important that the bright minds among them would get acquainted with it, as others have done, through the study of Latin and Greek. This is the more necessary, since, with the advance of civilization and the development of machinery, the proportion of manual laborers in every community is steadily diminishing, while the proportion of the directors of labor and other brain workers is correspondingly increasing (Bullock, 1967, p. 78).

Even though Harris was in opposition to the Northern philanthropic call for the vocational training of African Americans, his remarks nonetheless were somewhat arrogant. His viewpoint about higher education for African Americans still reflected a historically White dominant mindset as revealed by Bullock (1967) “that nothing is more ‘practical’ than getting an insight into [a Eurocentric perspective of] Western Civilization”(p. 78).

### **Schooling v. Education**

The Euro-American social order promulgated by Northern philanthropy efforts during the late nineteenth century, has placed more of an emphasis on African Americans participating in schooling than education (Bond, 1934/1966; Watkins, 2001). The educational institutions in the United States have operated historically to facilitate the schooling of people of African descent (Shujuaa, 1994). Shujuaa (1994) believed, “schooling” has been designed to continue the hegemony of Euro-American societal dominance that determined the boundaries within institutional education settings.

Whereas “education,” Shujuaa (1994) revealed, involves the processing and transmission of generational experiences and information that can help to ground a people in their “cultural orientation.”

The early educational foundation of African Americans resulted from the emergence of the public school system in the South during the Reconstruction era. In addition to African Americans receiving help this public school system also benefitted Southern White children. Although White Northern philanthropy provided new educational opportunities for African Americans in public schools, from the start there never was a serious emphasis on liberal arts study for them (Du Bois, 1935/1998). As the twentieth century began, African Americans across the country attended public learning facilities and were schooled according to the curricula set forth by Euro-American academic institutions (Durden, 2007). This schooling of African American students led to what would be called their “mis-education” (Woodson, 1933/2008).

The acclaimed work, *The Mis-Education of the Negro*, revealed that there were harmful effects of American schooling on African Americans (Woodson, 1933/2008). Woodson (1933/2008) argued that African Americans in the U.S. public school systems suffered from feelings of inferiority due to the way they were being taught by the dominant Euro-American culture compared to the seemingly lowly Black culture. He advocated for African Americans to educate themselves and not to be misled and misguided by an oppressive American educational system (Woodson, 1933/2008).

### **Statement of the Problem**

Loewen (1995) declared that students of different ethnic backgrounds across America view history classes with a great disinterest. He also stated, it is because of a dominant Euro-American-centered curricula that African American students were not interested in history classes. He emphasized that history is the least favorite subject of study for African Americans. One of the glaring weaknesses is that such a curricula does not present African Americans in U.S. history in a positive light over the past nearly four hundred years (Asante, 1991; Loewen, 1995).

History textbooks have long presented America’s founders as heroes despite their involvement in perpetuating the institution of slavery. Perhaps the greatest hero venerated in American history is George Washington, “the Father of Our Country” (Loewen, 1995). American historical figures like Washington are celebrated in textbooks and taught in classrooms as individuals without almost any faults, especially when it comes to the issue of slavery (Loewen, 1995). Loewen (1995) reasoned that African American students learn selected details about George Washington as a slave owner.

Slavery as a subject within a Euro-American-centered history framework is paradoxical for them because their ancestors were enslaved. These contradictory feelings experienced by African Americans further perpetuate their inferiority within the dominant Euro-American-centered curricula (Akbar, 2006; Allen, 2001; Bailey, 2005; Du Bois, 1903/1989; Woodson, 1933/2008).

History textbook controversies have arisen in the United States over the decades. In New York during the 1940s, African American leaders complained to city school officials that “racist,” untruthful, and deceitful lies continued to be told about Blacks in history textbooks (Zuckerman, 2004). During the 1960s, African Americans used the social psychology discourse emanating from the Brown ruling. They argued that American textbooks damaged Black self-concept, Black self-identification, and also Black self-esteem (Zuckerman, 2004). More recently in 1990, there was the California history textbook adoption controversy, where issues were raised about inclusion of diverse ethnic perspectives and representations in public schools (J.E. King, 1992, J.E. King, 2005). African Americans, including members of the Black Caucus of the California state legislature were concerned about the marginalization of Black students by Euro-American dominated history texts that devalue their heritage and culture (J.E. King, 1992).

### **American History is Eurocentric**

According to recent scholars, American history is predominantly Eurocentric. To define the term, “Eurocentric,” as Bailey (2005) has noted, began with the focus of European standards at the center of any examination that involves European civilization. African American students experience Eurocentric hegemony in an educational environment and are not able to relate culturally to this dominant and oppressive structure. A significant reason why African American learners feel detached from American history classes is because of their focus on Eurocentric ideals. This academic setting lacks African and African American contributions to world history (Bailey, 2005; Harris, 2003).

Most school instructors in America have not taught African American students about Africa’s glorious past (Asante, 2005; Woodson, 1933/2008). Africa’s world historical context is for the most part ignored by many educators. Therefore, African American students remain largely uninformed and “mis-educated” about significant African achievements in world history (Akbar, 2004; Woodson, 1933/2008). Gordon (2002) noted that modern scholars during the age of colonialism first began the campaign of falsification about African history. He also observed that colonial historians in their writings suggested that Africa did not have a past worth studying. This type of modern age scholarship is referred to by Carruthers (1999) as the “New Orthodoxy tradition,” where negative portrayals, falsifications, and ignoring of African history have been perpetrated by these biased scholars.

### **African History Has Been Distorted**

The distortion of African history in classrooms across the United States began with the ancient Greeks (Woodson, 1933/2008). The Greeks are credited with being the founders of Western Civilization. Thus, European history evolved during the Classical period which was ushered into existence by Greek societies (Levack, Muir, Maas, & Veldman, 2007). The problem is European history lies at the center of world history and has ignored the fact that the Greeks venerated the Egyptians and Ethiopians (Diop, 1974; Hansberry, 1981; James 1954/2001).

The Greeks revealed how their own gods came from the land of Africa and how they paid homage to African kingdoms (Bernal, 1994; Du Bois, 1946/1996; James, 1954/2001). The Greeks represent what Carruthers (1999) called the “ancient tradition.” It is the embodiment of Greek veneration of the marvelous African past that clearly contradicts the “New Orthodoxy tradition” which has dehumanized African history. Du Bois (1946/1996) wrote about mighty African kingdoms and noted that Greek writers mentioned Memnon, King of Ethiopia, as an army commander who conquered Troy.

Even the great Greek historian Herodotus, considered the “father of history of Western Civilization,” who took a pilgrimage to Egypt and Ethiopia around 450 BCE., described its inhabitants as having an African phenotype (Diop, 1974). Herodotus reported, the “Egyptians, and Ethiopians have thick lips, broad noses, woolly hair, and they are of burnt-skin” (ben-Jochannan, 1988, p. 67). Despite Herodotus’s eyewitness account regarding the physiognomy of the Egyptians and Ethiopians, Western historians have long ignored his claims and presented those great African civilizations as a “paleo- Mediterranean [W]hite race” (Diop, 1974).

### **Africa’s Contribution to World Civilization Has Been Ignored**

These important revelations about the African influence upon the Greeks are not being taught to African American students in American history classes (Woodson, 1933/2008). Such African contributions to world history unfortunately are not made known in most schools across America. A positive reflection on African history related to African Americans does not appear in the dominant Euro-American academic setting (Asante, 1991; Winters, 2002).

Winters (2002) emphasized that a prejudiced disposition among historians has existed to ignore African history prior to the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade. He also stated that in classrooms there has been an emphasis on plantation slavery in the so called “New World.” This type of teaching in American history gives a false impression that African Americans were naturally inclined to slave status since they descended from ancestors who had a predisposition to being enslaved. He further revealed that African American students have been influenced by such narrow-minded teaching about their ancestors. Thus, these students have believed slavery has always been the historical condition of Africans in the modern era.

### **African American Students Have Suffered From Identity Issues.**

When they learn about their heritage through American history, African American students often experience shame, inferiority, and even self-hatred (Bailey, 2005). The African American self-hatred thesis, which surfaced in the 1950s in the work of Kenneth and Mamie Clark, would lead to a call for much needed identity research (Cross, 1991; Murrell, 2009). The effects of history curricula in the United States, which teach the dehumanizing African slave experience in antebellum America along with the modern

negative images of Africa, make African American students quick to point out that they do not wish to be called African (Allen, 2001; Bailey 2005; Cross, 1991).

African American students do not know their African ancestral history because there is a lack of exposure to such potentially self-enlightening information (Asante, 1991; Bailey, 2005; Du Bois, 1903/1989). Such knowledge according to Allen (2001) would teach them that European culture arose from the more ancient culture of Africa. The Afrocentric scholar John Henrik Clarke (1970), revealed that the importance and gist of African ancestral history have been removed from world history since European dominance began during the fifteenth century.

As a result of not knowing the history of their ancestors, many African American students suffer from a lack of “self-knowledge.” This type of “self-knowledge” is not promoted or made available to African American learners in academic institutions (Akbar, 2004; Asante, 1991, 2005b; Bailey, 2005). When African American students lack “self-knowledge,” they continue to be “mis-educated” by the American education system (Akbar, 2004; Woodson, 1933/2008). African American students in history classes have been inundated by a Euro-American perspective (Loewen, 1995). Such a viewpoint caused African American learners to not regard themselves or their ancestors in high esteem (Bailey, 2005). This Eurocentric dominant point of view about Africans’ lack of contribution to world history does not promote “self-knowledge” (Akbar, 2004). Instead it resulted in a negative view of self for African Americans within Euro-American classrooms (Asante, 1991, 2005b; Bailey, 2005).

African American students in classrooms across the country for some time have developed feelings of inferiority (Bailey, 2005). Consequently, African American students having seen themselves and African history from a Eurocentric frame of reference. These African American students in seeing themselves from this deficient model have experienced, what Du Bois (1903/1989) called “two-ness of the soul” and “double consciousness.” Because of their experiences in American history classes, African Americans developed identity issues (Bailey, 2005). They look at themselves and the origins of their African ethnic culture as inferior (Bailey, 2005; Du Bois, 1903/1989; Woodson, 1933/2008). Such negative experiences felt by Blacks have resulted in identity issues (Allen, 2001; Bailey, 2005). It was widely reported in the 1950s that African American students suffered from low self-esteem (Cross, 1991; Murrell, 2009). African American students have been taught history from teachers steeped in a European cultural perspective, which has affected their self-esteem (Bailey, 2005).

### **Purpose of the Study**

The primary purpose of this work is to show how African American learners may react to culturally relevant (Ladson-Billings, 1992, 1995a, 1995b, 2009) exposure to African history. The researcher hoped to investigate if their exposure to African history is culturally relevant (Ladson-Billings, 1992, 1995a, 1995b, 2009), and also if they have ever been exposed to it before. This work also highlighted African American learners and their interest levels in the subject.

This study was designed to shed insight into some Eurocentric classroom experiences of African American students. It was hoped that it may reveal significant results that have hurt them and caused a lack of interest in history taught in U.S. schools. Also the researcher sought to challenge the truthfulness and veracity of European-centered history concerning African history.

In history classroom settings there is a lack of narratives about the origin of African Americans' ancestors (Asante, 1991; Loewen, 1995). Just as other cultural groups especially those with European origins are taught in American history classes, so should discussion about the most recent ancestors of most African Americans coming from West Africa (Asante, 1995; Clarke, 1998). In addition even further emphasis should be made about the ancestors of nearly all African Americans from West Africa having roots in the Nile Valley civilization, which included ancient Ethiopia and Egypt. These ancestors of African Americans can be traced back culturally, historically, and linguistically to the aforementioned civilization along the Nile River in Northeast Africa (Asante, 1980/2003, 1991, 1992, 1995, 1998, 2000, 2006a, 2006b; Diop, 1974).

It should be understood that due to warfare and invasion over thousands of years, peoples from the Nile Valley began a westward migration into the region known as West Africa, establishing three great kingdoms: Ghana, Mali, and Songhai (Gadalla, 1999; R. Walker, 2011). It was the people who emanated from these three kingdoms and surrounding areas in West Africa that would become the enslaved ancestors of African Americans (Asante;1995; Clarke, 1998). Such aforementioned information being included in the historical origins of African Americans could have major implications for course design content in history classes.

It was important to also show, through use of the Afrivisual, some of the early African influences upon world civilizations. The influences include showing images and discussion about a little woman found within the Great Rift region of Africa giving birth to humankind, known as "Mitochondrial Eve" (Olson, 2003). It was also crucial to present information about the Anu/Twa/Pygmy people [the latter name is a derogatory term still used by Western scholars] (Churchward, 1910/2007). These diminutive Africans migrated out of the Nile Valley region of Africa taking their signs and symbols throughout the world as the progenitors of numerous astonishing civilizations in world history (Churchward, 1910/2007). The researcher, in addition to showing the "Blackness" of the ancient Egyptians and their kinship to other Africans, sought to show their contributions as founders of known civilization (Diop, 1974). These remote ancestors of African Americans were the first world civilization to invent writing, language, science, religion, theology, astronomy, kingship, social societal structure, and a legal system (Diop, 1974).

As an action research project this study served as a call for social justice and a culturally relevant education (Ladson-Billings, 1992, 1995a, 1995b, 2009) for African American learners. The researcher sought to present an effective teaching strategy for Black students from an African-centered point of view.

It was a further aim of the researcher that the African-centered historical approach utilized in this study would help African Americans better cope with the negative effects of Eurocentric teaching. Thus such an African-centered orientation would help to motivate and inspire African American students to have more positive experiences in U.S. history classes.

### **Research Questions**

The central questions of this study were, “How do native-born African American community college students respond to a culturally relevant visual tool? What experiences have they had with history? How has their exposure to history affected them?”

### **Significance of the Study**

The study exposed the self-hatred thesis espoused in areas of Black identity. The self-hatred thesis arose from the infamous “doll tests” (Clark & Clark, 1947) during the mid-twentieth century, where African-American preschool children were determined to lack self-esteem and suffer from major identity issues (Cross, 1991). Over the decades since the “doll tests” (Clark & Clark, 1947), researchers have mis-appropriately applied the results of this monumental study to African Americans in general (Cross, 1991). This errantly constructed hypothesis may indeed need to be revisited when studying adult African American populations. This study presents a differing perspective of adult African American learners and identity that suggest high levels of Black pride found in Eurocentric classroom settings.

This study introduced the Afrivisual as a potentially effective teaching strategy. If implemented in Euro-American history curricula, it may provide instructors with an educational tool to provide African American students with pertinent knowledge about African cultural history. Additional researchers may be able to build upon the findings of this inquiry by using different media forms of the Afrivisual, as illustrated in section three. (see Figures 3.3 and 3.4). The implementation of the Afrivisual in the future may help foster studies in the area of curricula and instruction for African American students. The Afrivisual might become an effective interdisciplinary action-oriented tool cutting across academic disciplines.

Nelson (2005) regarding a needed paradigm structure in the field of Africology, stated, “[it] must combine self-knowledge and self-realization with social action” (p. 61). The Afrivisual was implemented to provide “self-knowledge” and “self-realization” for African-descended learners in the academic area of Africology and/or other similar Black Studies disciplines. As a visual arts-based tool for African American students in U.S. history classes, it may help to expose a higher level of awareness and understanding about their most remote and more recent ancestors from Africa. Thus the Afrivisual could possibly help to liberate and emancipate African Americans from cultural alienation in classrooms. The Afrivisual may help them to better cope with negative experiences in Euro-American-centered classrooms.



The Afrivisual was created as a transdisciplinary visual arts-based action research tool that has the potential to have praxis with paradigms such as Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1976; Rotter, 1954), Sociology of Education models (Freire, 1970; Wexler, 1987), and College Impact Theories (Astin, 1970a, 1970b, 1984; Spady, 1971). The Afrivisual has also helped to ground the emerging African-centered, visual arts-based, and action research influenced theoretical framework of Afrivisuality, which had its genesis because of this work. As a transdisciplinary theoretical approach, Afrivisuality and its action-oriented educational tool, the Afrivisual, will operate together to present culturally relevant (Ladson-Billings, 1992, 1995a, 1995b, 2009) teaching strategies for African American students.

Therefore, this study was designed to see whether the Afrivisual might provide African American students with better classroom access and teacher instruction in culturally relevant (Ladson-Billings, 1992, 1995a, 1995b, 2009) materials. Also, the researcher hoped that the Afrivisual would help African American learners to have more positive experiences in academic settings. Lastly, the Afrivisual may help African American students not only to become self-empowered, but also to be active in community building.

### **Overview of Theoretical Framework**

Different theoretical approaches have been developed by African American and other researchers to identify problematic areas in educating Black students. The African-centered theoretical frameworks needed to advance the educational experience of African American learners, include Asante's (1980/2003, 1991, 1992, 1995, 1998, 2000, 2006a, 2006b) Afrocentricity; and Africana philosophy (Gordon, 2008; Outlaw, 1996, 1997, 2004); and Rabaka's (2006a, 2006b, 2009) Africana critical theory. The aforementioned theoretical viewpoints are important in this study because they help to provide similar praxis in Black liberation action-oriented research strategies that date back to the 1960s (Edmonson-Bell, 2006). These three theoretical constructs will be further elaborated upon in section two.

### **Overview of Methodology**

This study utilized a mixed-methods approach which integrated quantitative and qualitative strategies so that the researcher could collect and analyze data that were related to the outcomes that have been found. The researcher has implemented a visual arts-based tool, an Afrivisual, to help inspire, motivate and empower African American students in gaining a culturally relevant education (Ladson-Billings, 1992, 1995a, 1995b, 2009) in Euro-American centered schools. The use of the Afrivisual will be discussed in section three of this work as an action-oriented tool that is designed to help African American students locate themselves within an African historical context.

## **Limitations and Delimitations**

A limitation:

The Afrivisual as an action research tool was introduced in the qualitative part of this study. It has never been used in any previous inquiry because of its recent creation as a potential action-research tool. Issues could arise since the Afrivisual had never been previously field tested for any potential problem. Thus, an untested Afrivisual could possibly affect the researcher's conclusions about the reliability of it as an action-research tool, since the Afrivisual is now subject to scholarly criticism.

The Afrivisual used for the study in the media form of a narrated PowerPoint lecture was somewhat of a limitation, even though the students were immensely engaged in it. Other types of multimedia may have been more effective to even further engage the participants in the focus groups for the purposes of this study. For example, a film documentary could have been shown that included expert interviews and discussion about the same topics shown in the PowerPoint.

Self-reporting of grades by the respondents to a survey question did occur. The students during the quantitative phase of the study responded to a question that sought to determine if they had always received good grades in prior history classes. This was a limitation because there was no way to verify the actual grades the students received in their history classes from K-college.

There are some other explanations to explain the high levels of Black pride garnered in classroom environments as expressed by the respondents in the quantitative part of the study. They include community groups, cultural centers, churches, and family as factors in which African American students can gain racial pride.

Another limitation focuses upon self-image and self-esteem identity issues being a factor in non-interest and low performance of African American students in history classrooms as suggested within the first three sections. More discussion could have been provided about the voluntary/involuntary education (Ogbu & Simons, 1998) status affecting African Americans that could account for their disinterest in history classes. Therefore the aforementioned theoretical concept was not discussed as a possible cause for classroom disinterest of African Americans in history classrooms.

By using the voluntary/involuntary thesis (Ogbu & Simons, 1998) in this study, it could have even shed more light upon distinctions between current African American preschoolers and "Negro" preschoolers of the Clark's (1947) doll study that helped to create the errant self-hatred thesis still applied by researchers to adult African Americans.

There were data, i.e., survey/questionnaires during the quantitative part of the study that had to be eliminated from the data collection process by the researcher. The removal of data was due to non-native-born African American subjects who sought to participate in the study.

Another limitation is that the research method of data collection that utilized a focus group in this study presented a possible problem. This weakness was highlighted by the focus group discussions in some cases being dominated by only one, two or a few participants (Teddie & Tashakkori, 2009). The lack of participants in the focus group discussion could have an effect on the researcher's conclusions when the results are investigated by those in academia.

A delimitation:

This study focused on a population pool of less than 100 African American students at three community colleges. Each of these participants was over the age of 18 years old, while there is no underage representation reflected in the work. Another delimitation is that there was no data collected on African American middle school and high school students who are required to learn Euro-American history. Also, there were Black retention program students from Africa and from the "African Diaspora" who were excluded from the study since it focused only on native-born African Americans.

### **Operational Terms**

African Americans:

African Americans are rooted as an African ethnic group whose representatives are among the most heterogeneous American people. The term African American was uniformly used by Black leaders in 1988, and thus became the standard in identifying native-born Black Americans (Asante, 2005a; Bankole, 2005).

African-centered Education:

A pedagogical and andragogical approach to education by people of African descent. Within the African-centered perspective curricula that favors an African worldview orientation there are learning institutions (Murrell, 2002) and Black studies programs in higher education (Lomotey & Aboh, 2009). This type of Afrocentric educational process has praxis in liberation and emancipation themes that seek to enlighten, inspire, and motivate African-descended people (Shujaa, 2005).

Black (Americans):

The term *Black* was a product of the Black Power Movement in the 1960s through which U.S. born descendants of Africa began to call themselves to dispel the docile connotations associated with the terms *Negro* and *Colored* (Bankole, 2005).

### Culturally Relevant Education:

The understanding of “cultural relevance” in education comes from the use of effective teaching strategies designed by instructors. Thus culturally relevant teaching incorporates students’ ethnic history into curricula and textbooks, where “dominant culture” has generally held hegemonic viewpoints (Ladson-Billings, 1992, 1995a, 1995b, 2009).

### Euro-American-centered Curricula:

The Euro-American-centered curricula historically has centered on the “power of ideas.” These are ideas that have promoted a European-centered curricula. Such an ontological and epistemological viewpoint in American classrooms has contributed to the marginalization, and been detrimental to Black students (Watkins, 2001).

### Maat:

A “conceptual ideal” introduced by the ancient Egyptians and practiced throughout Nile Valley civilizations. It emphasized living in moral character, balance of truth, order, and righteousness associated with living life at the highest ethical level (Karenga, 2006).

### Negro:

Negro is originally a term from the fifteenth century rooted in the Spanish, Portuguese, and Latin languages that meant the color “black.” By the eighteenth century the word “Negro” was used by Europeans to denote people of African descent as being the lowliest racial group among humans (Bankole, 2005). The term was accepted by Americans of African descent during the post-bellum period since it was used as a “social connective” to defy the commonly used N-word by Southern Whites (Bankole, 2005).

By the 1950s African-descended Americans began to usurp the term “Negro” with Colored, Black, and Afro-American. The term “Negro” is now commonly used as a “research indicator” for locating information about people of African descent prior to the sixties (Bankole, 2005).

### U.S. History:

The study of history in the United States has been grounded in a European historical perspective in what Wilson (1993) called, “Historiography and Oppression: Its Function and Outcome.” Such a historiography or writing of history has promoted White supremacy, while excluding the contributions of other ethnic groups, i.e., African Americans. Therefore Euro-American educators have presented biased history that venerated their heroes and has purposely ignored people of color (Loewen, 1995).

## Review of the Literature

In addition to the African-centered approach, there are two other areas that provided more contextual support for this work. These significant areas that were examined are African American Identity, and Culturally Relevant Teaching (Ladson- Billings, 1992, 1995a, 1995b, 2009). Three theoretical frameworks mentioned in the previous section supported the three aforementioned constructs that this work utilized. Again these frameworks were Afrocentricity (Asante, 1980/2003, 1991, 1992, 1995, 1998, 2000, 2006a, 2006b); Africana philosophy (Gordon, 2008; Outlaw, 1996, 1997, 2004); and Africana critical theory (Rabaka, 2006a, 2006b, 2009) all of which are aligned with the African-centered approach. Each of these African-centered theoretical perspectives addressed the educational needs of African American students in Identity- formation, and culturally relevant teaching (Ladson-Billings, 1992, 1995a, 1995b, 2009).

### African-centered Approach

The genesis of African-centered thought began during the late eighteenth century as expressed in the works of Olaudah Equiano, Absalom Jones, Richard Allen and Prince Hall. By the nineteenth century, David Walker and Martin Delaney helped to develop the African-thought tradition (Carruthers, 2007). All of the aforementioned African-descended thinkers, Equiano (1789/1969); Jones and Allen (1793/1951); Hall (1797); D. Walker (1829/1993); and Delaney (1879/1991) utilized metaphorical references for Egypt (Kemet) and Ethiopia (Kush) which symbolized a hoped for freedom of African-descended peoples from slavery and oppression. Egypt and Ethiopia were viewed as powerful ancient Black civilizations that were used as biblical prophetic models to predict the rise of Black peoples again on a worldwide stage (Delaney, 1879/1991; Equiano, 1789/1969; Hall, 1797; Jones & Allen, 1793/1951); Psalm 68: 31, King James Version; D. Walker, 1829/1993). The Haitian Revolution is an example of this type of biblical prophesying about world African ascendancy as a metaphoric restoration of the greatness of ancient Egypt (Kemet) and Ethiopia (Kush) (Carruthers, 2007). The African-descended thinkers drew hope and inspiration from the success of the Haitian Revolution against the European power, France (Delaney, 1879/1991; Equiano, 1789/1969; Hall, 1797; Jones & Allen, 1793/1951; D. Walker, 1829/1993). Jones and Allen (1793/1951) alluded to Psalm 68:31 and reported, “The dreadful insurrections they [Black Haitians] have made are enough to convince a reasonable man—princes shall come forth from Egypt and Ethiopia shall stretch out her hand unto God” (pp. 37-38).

African-descended thinkers during the early twentieth century continued their metaphorical association with Black freedom as related to the biblical reference of Egypt (Kemet) and Ethiopia (Kush) (Carruthers, 2007; Psalm 68: 31, King James Version). These African-descended thinkers included J.E. Casley Hayford (1911/1969), author of *Ethiopia Unbound*, Marcus Garvey (1923/1969, 1925/1969) Black nationalist leader, and William Leo Hansberry (1974) called the father of African Studies in the United States.

Other significant African-descended thinkers, J.C. deGraft –Johnson (1954/1966), author of *African Glory: The Story of Vanished Negro Civilizations*, George G.M. James (1954/2001), writer of *Stolen Legacy*, and Cheikh Anta Diop (1954/1979), who wrote *Nations Negres et Culture*, emerged during the middle twentieth century. Each of the three aforementioned scholars' works cited were published in 1954, the same year of the *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling, as they advanced contributions of the Black Nile Valley civilizations of Egypt (Kemet) and Ethiopia (Kush) to world civilization (Carruthers, 2007).

The current African-centered school of thought era evolved during the Black liberation movement. It was a part of the Pan-African consciousness exhibited by many African-descended students. The Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and other African American students exemplified the ideas of Black activists who called for political sovereignty of Africans in African nations as well as African descendants throughout the Diaspora (Poe, 2006). African American students at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and Predominantly White Colleges (PWCs) demanded curricula to reflect a focus on Africa within academic disciplines. The first institution of higher learning to form a Black Studies Program was a PWC, San Francisco State University (SFSU). Other PWCs and HBCUs began to follow the model of SFSU in establishing a program specifically for Blacks that advanced an African cultural perspective those students could relate to (Poe, 2006).

In 1968, the African Heritage Studies Association (AHSA) was founded by a group of African American scholars and students, that promoted African-centered education (Carruthers, 2007). These Black scholar and student activists founded AHSA as a tribute to the esteemed early twentieth century pioneer of African Studies in America, William Leo Hansberry (Alford, 2007). The first president of AHSA was the esteemed Black scholar John Henrik Clarke (Carruthers, 2007). During this era, African- descended scholars such as Chancellor Williams (1974), author of *The Destruction of Black Civilization*, Yosef ben Jochannan (1972/1989) the writer of *Black Man on the Nile and His Family*, John G. Jackson (1970), who wrote *Introduction to African Civilization*, helped pave the way for the more controversial African-centered scholarship of Asante (1980/2003) and Carruthers (1980).

The African-centered approach includes culturally relevant pedagogy, (Ladson- Billings, 1992, 1995a, 1995b, 2009) a theoretical framework as it relates to the instruction of Black students. Ladson-Billings (1992) in her article, *Liberatory Consequences of Literacy: A Case of Culturally Relevant Instruction for African American Students* advocated the actuality of an “African connection” and “consciousness.” She posited that such a liberating framework is needed for African American learners. In this work, the literacy initiative of culturally relevant-minded teachers intersected with their efforts to help liberate African American students (Ladson- Billings, 1992).

Karenga (2006) postulated that the African-centered approach calls for classical African civilization to be linked within an African historical context. This ontological perspective of African history promotes a new look at the stratification of ancient African geography and culture. A central aim of the African-centered approach ties ancient Egypt with other African lands. It also exposed the inaccurate historical portrayals and falsifications by Western scholars reflecting upon African societies, i.e., ancient Egypt.

Therefore, African-centered scholars have continued to emerge who have challenged the veracity of the African historical accounts made by Eurocentric academicians. These African-centered intellectuals have still continued to make a fundamental effort in sync with their predecessors to present the true cultural similarities that ancient Egypt shared with the rest of Africa (Karenga, 2006). The African-centered approach in public schools has promoted “cultural competence.” This idea of “cultural competence” measures the academic progress of African American students in these culture-oriented institutions (Ladson-Billings, 1995a, 1995b, 2009). African American academic authorities like Asante (1991), Hilliard (1992), Lee (1994), Murrell (1993), Ratterray (1994) and other scholars promote African-centered pedagogy. Their works shows that African American students who receive this kind of culturally specific education develop in “cultural competence” and thus do well academically (Ladson-Billings, 1995a, 1995b, 2009). This kind of culturally specific education that presents an African-centered historical perspective is espoused by Maulana Karenga (2006), author of *Maat: The Moral Ideal in Ancient Egypt*. He viewed the principles of Maat as a conceptual framework in African-centered learning settings.

According to Karenga (2006), Maat promoted moral character, balance of truth, order, and righteousness associated with living life to the fullest. This concept of life was espoused by the Nile Valley civilizations. The story of Maat originated in ancient Egypt. The values of Maat stressed the need to be in divine order with the world. The principles of Maat as espoused by Asante (1992), help to fundamentally ground African culture within the sphere of cosmic spiritual awareness. This type of grounding by Maat is essential to someone possessing harmonic balance while living in a humanistic society.

In addition to African descendants adhering to the concepts of Maat, Asante (1998) believed Nommo is another intrinsic harmonious frame of reference to be practiced. Nommo promoted the genesis of a knowledgeable education process (Reviere, 2006). According to Reviere (2006), Nommo denoted “the productive word” and supports five criteria that express the “lived experiences” for all of humanity. These African standards are referred to as (1) ukweli, (2) kujitoa, (3) utulivu, (4) ujamaa, and (5) uhaki. The principles of Nommo have accompanied African Americans throughout their American historical experience. African Americans have utilized characteristics of Nommo in the spoken word as a cultural tool. Nommo, like Maatian virtues helped African Americans to attain a conceptualized knowledge of self (Asante, 1998).

Ashby (2005) contended that Maat philosophy promoted a view of self-alignment at the center of all action-oriented processes with the Supreme spiritual force of the universe. This philosophical approach is advanced on a humanistic level by “selfless service.” It is through this Maat approach of “selfless service” that one realizes his/her place and role within the cosmos (Ashby, 2005). Maat represented that which is “straight” and was symbolized by an ostrich feather and the pedestal that the almighty God stood upon. Maat was the daughter of Ra, the Creator. In the form of Maati she personified Upper and Lower Egypt which was symbolic of the Higher and Lower Self. In ancient Egyptian eschatology Maat became scales as the soul had to come before her to be judged. In the judgment hall of Maat the heart or unconscious mind of the individual was measured and judged according to Maatian virtues (Ashby, 2005). This ethical Maat form of living is also viewed by Carol Lee (1994) as an African-centered pedagogical approach in classroom settings.

Lee (1994) related the concept of Maat to modern African American culture in *African-centered Pedagogy: Complexities and Possibilities* in a work edited by Mwalimu Shujaa, entitled, *Too Much Schooling, Too Little Education: A Paradox of Black Life in White Societies*. She related the concept of Maat to modern African American culture. In her view, Maat served as a historically-based foundation centrally located within the African American experience. She also stated that Maat as a historical paradigm within African centered-pedagogy has relevant praxis in liberation frameworks. She was quick to point out the shortcomings of the curricula of inner-city schools about African American history. However, Lee also identified instruction models in classroom settings as the main catalyst to African American academic achievement.

The African-centered pedagogical approach promotes self-reliance in classroom settings with African-descended peoples. This type of self-reliant perspective of Blacks is rooted in African cultural and ideological belief systems (Akoto, 1994). According to Akoto (1994) these belief systems should be reflected in the educational systems where people of African descent are being taught in classrooms. African-centered pedagogy is dependent upon the instructor as a “cultural representative.” The instructor or “mwalimu,” a Kiswahili term, functions as an African personality emancipated from the historical and cultural inaccuracies and biases perpetrated by Western scholars. The “mwalimu” appears as a “cultural representative” of African historical culture before the classroom students or “wanafunzi” (Akoto, 1994). Akoto (1994) reasoned that the effectiveness of the “mwalimu” is also dependent upon involvement with culturally, politically and economically motivated activities on behalf of the interests of the Black community.

In advancing an African-centered approach Hilliard (1999) advocated that people of African descent undergo the process of SBA, an ancient Egyptian term which means to reawaken cultural values through their African mindset. In his work, *SBA: The Reawakening of the African Mind*, Hilliard (1999) posited that along with cultural principles, education, linked with it, allows African mental liberation and advancement to occur.



The term SBA originated in Kemet (Egypt) during the Old Kingdom dynastic period. SBA was a result of cultural and historical learnedness by “deep thought.” This type of “deep thought” promulgated by SBA is co-joined with the ancient Egyptian study of MDW NTR which signified divine speech of the cosmic Creator. This “deep thought” type of “reawakening” within the process of SBA is a call for Blacks to return to their African past (Hilliard, 1999). A central component of SBA is SANKOFA, a West African Akan word that beckons African-descended people to go back to the historical African ancestral source of knowledge. The concept of SANKOFA allows African Americans to introspectively find and locate themselves within their African heritage (Hilliard, 1999).

Murrell (2002) presented ways for African American students to learn about their African ancestral culture. In *African-centered Pedagogy: Developing Schools of Achievement for African American Children*, Murrell (2002), analyzed several educational frameworks within the African-centered Approach that addressed the needs of African American students. He also incorporated other pedagogical frameworks, such as communities of learning, communities of caring, culturally synchronous teaching, culturally relevant teaching, culturally responsive teaching, teaching for understanding, constructivist teaching, and situated learning. His work served as a guide to teachers interested in developing an African-centered pedagogy. He promoted the integration of historical, cultural, political, and developmental areas of the African American experience into a practical means of teaching. Murrell (2002) suggested the African-centered pedagogical approach has a two phase structure that leads to success in teaching and learning for African American students. Phase one focused on fostering a responsive learning environment for the learners through culturally stimulating instruction. Phase two is the continued process of developing relevant socio-historical research that presents the optimal classroom learning setting.

African-centered pedagogy is designed to promote an effective classroom learning environment (Lee, 1994). Lee (1994) presented seven effective approaches in African-centered teaching. She believed an African-centered pedagogy (1) sanctions an African knowledge foundation, (2) decisively promotes effective community-based cultural awareness, (3) expands upon spoken language affiliations, (4) strengthens community involvement and encourages cooperation in altruistic activities, (5) encourages dealings with others positively on a social basis, (6) gives a world viewpoint that exalts positivity, self-sufficiency toward one’s people and futuristic concerns for their personal development, and (7) aids cultural interrelationships while promoting critically conscious ideas.

The African-centered approach distinguishes between schooling verses education processes designed to teach African American students. Shujaa (1994) argued that when people of African descent are educated there is a cultural significance associated with such a process. Within an African-centered pedagogical context Black people are able to understand the significance of the African past, thus being educated.

Whereas Euro American-centered schools have not embraced an African-centered approach, thus these institutions have not supported curricula that could culturally impact the education of African Americans. According to Shujaa (1994) the public education system has schooling designs for African Americans that perpetuate hegemonic control factors that cause Black people to maintain a subordinate status within the social order of American society.

The dissertation, *Touching the Spirit as a Motivating Factor for African American Students to Achieve Academic Excellence*, advanced an African-centered pedagogy (Gibson, 2007). Gibson (2007) explored the innate African spirit of African American students and looked at how cultural themes in public school curricula may promote higher academic achievement. The participants created movies to show successful learning experiences, and they also gave feedback to improve instruction strategies. In this participatory research study Gibson (2007) found that African American students expressed a need to be encouraged by their teachers. Gibson (2007) also disclosed that the participants expressed a desire for positive representations of African Americans to be included in classroom curricula.

Lomotey (1992) reasoned that an African-centered curricula entitles African American students an educational experience that promotes Africa as the central hub. Within this pedagogical and andragogical teaching strategy educators stress African-centered ideas. Effective educators, using the African-centered Approach, support, understand, and encourage a learning environment of cultural significance encompassing the curricula. Instructors who teach an African-centered curricula insist that African American students be viewed positively as heirs of African philosophical and intellectual greatness (Lomotey, 1992).

Karenga (2002) articulated the Nguzo Saba (The Seven Principles) as a structure of communal African mores that have been undertaken within the African-centered approach. These set of principles highlight the African cultural practices of (1) Umoja (Unity), (2) Kujichagulia (Self-Determination), (3) Ujima (Collective Work and Responsibility), (4) Ujamaa (Cooperative Economics), (5) Nia (Purpose), (6) Kuumba (Creativity), and (7) Imani (Faith). The Nguza Saba since 1965, has served as pedagogical and andragogical educational tools, as well as a community resource for African Americans. It also represents the doctrine of Kawaida both socially and culturally (Karenga, 2002).

The philosophy of Kawaida was developed by Karenga (2002), the esteemed Afrocentric scholar, who also introduced the concept of Kwaanza. Kawaida is highlighted by ancient and contemporary African works as a means in discourse of its cultural significance (Karenga, 2008). Within a Kawaida point of view, Afrocentricity is a methodological oriented “thought and practice,” centered in the culturally perceived humanistic advancement of people of African descent (Karenga, 2002). Karenga’s (2002) definition of Kawaida, promoted a theoretical perspective that embraced culturally and socially stimulated modifications. It designated cultural centeredness in a broad way that parallels it with the activities of persons’ of a certain societal community.

Kawaida provides for these people a social lens to adduce the Black cultural ideology it represents. Just as Kawaida is represented as a “Black frame of reference” (Karenga, 2002), to advance the study of African culture, so too, does Afrocentricity as a framework within the African-centered Approach represent a similar location and definition for African Americans.

## **Afrocentricity**

The philosophical ideology of Afrocentricity as an African-centered approach first appeared in the latter part of the 1970s. It was among the most culturally relevant (Ladson-Billings, 1992, 1995a, 1995b, 2009) conceptual frameworks to appear in the Black Studies movement (Karenga, 2002). Afrocentricity as an “intellectual category” was introduced by the scholar Molefi Asante with the publishing of *Afrocentricity: The Theory of Social Change*, in 1980. This work by Asante (1980/2003) ushered in a broad impacting discourse, which had tremendous effects academically and socially. In addition to Asante (1980/2003), other Afrocentric scholars such as Karenga (2002) and Carruthers (1999) have helped to intellectualize Afrocentricity amidst critics who challenged its ideological principles. Davies (1999) contended that academic discourse within Afrocentricity has been attacked by Eurocentrics who are aligned with the hegemonic social policies and practices that have long ignored Africa.

Other African-descended academicians have challenged White supremacy and sought to restore Africa to her past glory by way of the Afrocentric intellectual movement. Rabaka (2005) in the *Encyclopedia of Black Studies*, provided a list of scholars identified as key contributors within the ranks of Afrocentricity. He names Molefi Kete Asante, Maulana Karenga, Ama Mazama, Marimba Ani, Tony Martin, Leonard Jeffries, Linda James Myers, Theophile Obenga, Oba T’Shaka, Wade Nobles, Chinweizu, Ngugu wa Thiong’o, Danjuma Modupe, Runoko Rashidi, Clenora Hudson- Weems, Bobby Wright, Amos Wilson, Na’im Akbar, and Kobi Kambon.

Rabaka (2005) also cited the works of deceased scholars and community activists who helped to pave the way in the Afrocentric movement for present scholars. They are W.E.B. Du Bois, Cheikh Anta Diop, Frantz Fanon, Anna Julia Cooper, Edward Wilmot Blyden, Martin Delaney, Ida B. Wells, Mary Church Terrell, Marcus and Amy Jacques Garvey, Carter G. Woodson, Mary McLeod Bethune, Leopold Sedar Senghor, Aime Cesaire, Ella Baker, Malcolm X, Fannie Lou Hamer, Kwame Ture (Stokely Carmichael), and Walter Rodney. All of the aforementioned named individuals influenced the Afrocentric movement by their call for the social uplift of Black people (Rabaka, 2005). Asante (2003) wrote a revised and expanded version of *Afrocentricity: The Theory of Social Change*. He called for African-descended peoples to seize and embrace their African cultural heritage. The need for a new historiography approach centered in Afrocentricity is advanced in this work. Another early work, introduced by Asante (1992), was *The Afrocentric Idea, and Kemet, Afrocentricity and Knowledge*, which helped to ground Afrocentricity as a theoretical framework.

Asante (1992) formalized the theoretical basis for Afrocentricity as a methodological construct. Afrocentricity emerged as a means, and way, for African-descended peoples to determine their own ontological “reality,” from their own point of view. This fundamental design of Afrocentricity addressed the need for the development of “new curricula” for African American students that dispute Eurocentric hegemony in various academic disciplines (Reviere, 2006).

An unbalanced European cultural dominance in classrooms has caused African American students to be dislocated from African historical experiences (Asante, 1991). Afrocentricity was designed to motivate African Americans toward the achievement of “freedom and literacy” (Harris, 2003). Those aspirations of African Americans for “freedom and literacy” were further elaborated by Harris (2003). He stated, “freedom” conceptualizes human intercourse that is prolonged with someone’s ethnic historical background. Thus “literacy” is the employment of historical enlightenment as the convergence among character and circumstantial precepts. Before the concept of Afrocentricity existed to confront Eurocentric traditions and African exclusions in academia, the “Afrocentric idea” in the area of education was evident in Woodson’s, *The Mis-Education of the Negro* (Asante, 1991). Woodson (1933/2008) advocated for African American education about the history of Africa and African cultural traditions. He sought to inform African Americans about African historical life, and to venerate it, despite the comprehensive bombardment of Eurocentric culture and traditions within their educational upbringing (Asante, 1991). Like Woodson, there were other Black intellectuals of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries calling for what could be perceived as an Afrocentric approach to the education of African Americans. Such African American figures included W.E.B. Du Bois and Anna Julia Cooper (Karenga, 2002). Woodson (1933/2008) argued, if African Americans were to have a significant and worthwhile education within Euro American academic settings that it needed to reflect history centered on Africa, as well as the African experience in America.

It was out of an African historical foundation that Afrocentricity was born (Asante, 1980/2003, 1991, 1992, 1995, 1998, 2000, 2006a, 2006b). Asante (1998) referred to himself as an Afrocentric “Diopian” scholar. Thus, he advanced the historiography approach of Cheikh Anta Diop, also known as the “Pharaoh of African Studies,” who advocated the investigation of ancient African culture tenets. Diop (1974) cited Africa as the progenitor of the earliest civilizations of humankind. His work located African history as an ancient period preceding European thought and traditions. An important aspect of Diop’s scholarship for Afrocentricity, is it sheds light upon the false notion that African history began with the age of European “discovery” (Mazama, 2003). Including Diop, Mazama (2003) stated, Asante was committed to four influential foundations of Afrocentricity, all with an African-centered orientation. The other three Afrocentric pillars are found in the philosophical expressions of Marcus Garvey, the Negritude movement, and the philosophy of Kwaiaida.

Asante (1998) asserted, Afrocentricity began as a critical position which placed African ideology as a central structure for the analyzing of African cultural and behavioral practices. He further reiterated that the practices of African peoples are located within a cultural context of “centeredness.” Karenga (2002), proffered that Afrocentricity provides a “groundedness” in an African ontological viewpoint. It is within this grounded experience of African-descended peoples, that they can begin to construct their African cultural heritage. Similarly, Modupe (2003) outlined the Afrocentric framework as the “pyramid elements.” They included (1) groundedness, (2) orientation, and (3) perspective. Each of the “pyramidal elements” help to bring about a rise in African conscious thought for Black people. Afrocentricity is contextualized as a theoretical framework or methodological approach that is corrective to the way Africans have been portrayed within the context of Western history. To accomplish such a distinction the Afrocentric orientation, as noted by Karenga (2002), presented past Africans and modern day African descendants as “active subjects” in historical inquiry instead of “passive victims” as the Eurocentric record has portrayed them .

Afrocentricity is further distinguished from Eurocentrism by two categorical contexts from which it is commonly referred. Those two categories are known as Afrocentricity and Afrocentrism. Karenga ‘s (2003) preference was Afrocentricity because it has no similarities to the term Eurocentrism as does the –ism in connotation to Afrocentrism. Asante (1998) shared a similar position with Karenga (2003), as he insisted, “Labeling it ‘Afrocentrism’ rather than ‘Afrocentricity,’ conservative critics have claimed that its purpose is to bring disharmony to American society by raising the self-esteem of African American youth” (p. ix). Detractors of Afrocentricity continue to refer to it contextually as Afrocentrism, thus causing some scholars to misunderstand and misinterpret its legitimacy as a theoretical framework (Teasley & Tyson, 2007).

Mazama (2003) provided an Afrocentric response to the subfield of European Linguistics also called “language planning” that has misunderstood African idioms. In the 1960s, “language planning” emerged as a way to address “language problems” in former colonized places in the world such as Africa. Mazama (2003) cited three concerns about “language planning” processes within an Afrocentric perspective. She revealed, (1) it is filled with Eurocentric interpretations that seek to dominate its subjects, the presumption that documented transcribed words would supersede the oral tradition, and (3) is centered in the spread and proliferation of Western ideology. The central argument here is that where African cultural tenets are concerned, the planning structures that support Eurocentric language do not work within the Afrocentric paradigm. The Eurocentric frameworks do not provide the needed “Location Theory” in the ontological, epistemological, and axiological study of African peoples (Mazama, 2003).

Afrocentricity emerged as a means, and way for African descended people to determine their own ontological perspective. This fundamental design of Afrocentricity addressed the need for the development of “new curricula” for African American students, which dispute Eurocentric hegemony in various academic disciplines (Reviere, 2006). Asante (1998) reasoned that Afrocentricity is not rooted in “European modernism and postmodernism” therefore it is viewed in academia as “suspect” theoretical consideration. The problem for some scholars is that Afrocentricity is not founded upon, nor associated with the contextual guidelines and theoretical frameworks, espoused by the Frankfurt and Vienna schools of thought. One of the reasons Afrocentric researchers have no association with the esteemed aforementioned European academic intellectual centers is because they as African-descended scholars have not received any invitations (Asante, 1998).

Euro-American historians and scholars in other academic disciplines have continued to misrepresent Afrocentricity as “reverse racism, fabrication, and romancing the past” (Teasley & Tyson, 2007, p. 391). A form of this type of biased scholarship toward Afrocentricity is exemplified in the thought of Arthur Schlesinger (1991). Carruthers (1999) wrote in *Intellectual Warfare* that Schlesinger so openly and strongly opposed Afrocentricity that he proposed a multicultural curricula as an alternative.

Afrocentricity is not centered or located in a way that denigrates or lessens the value of other cultures. Rather it is a theoretical framework that promotes a multiculturally diverse orientation (Teasley & Tyson, 2007). Teasley and Tyson (2007) disclosed that Afrocentrists look at cultural diversity as a key component of humanness and important to comprehending the characteristics and benefits of the multicultural viewpoint. They saw people as being mutual and incorporeal entities. One of the benefits of Afrocentricity to the “multicultural project,” as indicated by Karenga (2002), is its intrinsic characteristic that reaches out to other ethno-cultural perspectives recognizing mutually beneficial progress within the cosmos.

Unlike the Eurocentric position, Afrocentricity is not reflected as one dimensional, or encompassed as a culturally dominant viewpoint (Asante, 1991; Azama, 2003, Karenga, 2002). Verharen (2002) pointed out the symbol of Afrocentricity as being its inclusive nature despite an exclusive cultural approach to the “centrism” in Afrocentricity that denotes a grounded position in an individual’s ancestral history. In seeking to explain the Afrocentric view of Eurocentric thought, Azama (2003) explained, these African-descended scholars view the European “voice” as not superior or exclusive to others but on an even par with many diverse cultures throughout the world. Thus, in American society, Afrocentricity is a means for all people to look at the national and worldview of the descendants of Africans. Through such an examination into African cultural thought one can gain better understanding of the Afrocentric position (Asante, 1991, 2005b).

Asante (1998) believed Afrocentricity as a theoretical framework, has its own methodological basis of liberatory and emancipatory realities, not just for African Americans, but for all Americans. Asante (1998) further explained, that Afrocentricity serves as a pathway where strong-willed “[W]hite privilege” of Whites and calls for “African equality” by Blacks intersects at opportunities for meaningful discourse to occur. Afrocentricity provides a channel for Whites to understand the African historical legacy and contributions to world civilization. Such dialogue between Whites and Blacks on Afrocentricity and its aims, can help to dispel stereotypical notions about Africa as a backward civilization that never made any impact upon the advancements of humankind. Therefore discussions about Afrocentricity would help to change the negative inferiority stigma that Whites have held against Blacks. These needed aforementioned interactions involving Whites and Blacks may help to further African American advancement and to create a more egalitarian U.S. society (Asante, 1998).

A major challenge for Afrocentric academicians, as revealed by Asante (2006a), debunked universalistic “particularist positions,” held by Eurocentric scholarship. These Western “particularist positions” which promote the “European experience” over other cultures is centered in thoughts from the classical and middle ages. The Afrocentric perspective aims to continue to examine the “particularist position.” Asante (2006a) stated that, European cultural thoughts do not represent the basis for African or the rest of the world’s civilization. Shujaa (2005) pointed out that African cultural insight through educational processes helps to lessen the effects of Western European cultural imperialism upon African American students.

Sofola (1973) articulated various characteristics of Afrocentric education: (1) the familial structure at the core of African sociable reality, allowing each family member a means of identifying himself or herself, (2) a supportive network of loving, caring, responsive accountability, and fairness toward other family members as well as the community in general, (3) healthy humanistic action within the community that allows one to be actively involved in helping to advance community uplift, (4) owning land and provisional access to land for the entire community, (5) living in peace with diverse ethnicities, (6) honoring of elders and the aged within the community, (7) being generous and hospitable toward other people including foreigners or those who may be viewed as being different, and (8) a positive approach to one’s pursuit in life. Shujaa (2005) believed Afrocentric educational settings that espouse African cultural perspectives help in assisting scholars to deconstruct Eurocentric hegemony and to reconstruct African values.

Reviere (2006) emphasized that African-centered scholars oriented toward Afrocentric theoretical frameworks must seek additional methods in acquiring and using “data,” especially since the “pertinent literature,” is almost nonexistent, regarding African-descended thought. Unfortunately, what is considered “pertinent literature,” is too often an exclusive collective practice of only European scholars (Reviere, 2006). The expansion of the Afrocentric “knowledge base,” helps with the challenging task of deconstructing Eurocentric epistemologies that misrepresent the truth about the classical and contemporary history of African peoples ( Karenga, 2003).

In an exploratory Afrocentric study, Mutisya and Ross (2006) sought to create composite variables that measured components of “Afrocentricity.” Participants in the quantitative study of 508 students attend two historically Black schools in the southeastern region of the U.S., one institution was a college, while the other was a university. The researchers used an instrument (questionnaire) developed from suppositions formed within the construct of Afrocentric theory. They found a correlation between the composite variables Afrocentricity and racial socialization. Within this interrelated relationship between the Afrocentric and racial socialization scales the researchers noted that if parents engage their children in social processes about race, they are also being socialized about Afrocentric perspectives (Mutisya & Ross, 2006).

The future of Afrocentricity should continue to look at ancient African ontological realities as a basis for its epistemological knowledge foundation (Asante, 1992, 1998; Karenga, 2003). Diop (1974) placed ancient Egypt as the central paradigm, to begin historical inquiry into African civilization. He argued that ancient Egypt was a necessary model to formulate a needed cultural outlook for African descendants. Asante (1998) contended it is inconceivable to “write” a sound sociological and psychological analysis of the experiences of African Americans unless African Americans are viewed in the context of African history. The aim of the Afrocentric initiative in America has continued to seek to empower Black people to learn about their African cultural roots.

Afrocentricity truly serves as a tool for the liberation and emancipation of African Americans against oppressive Eurocentric education foundations. Thus, philosophically, Afrocentricity as a paradigm needs to interconnect with an effective process to fulfill its liberatory and emancipatory mission, by historically and culturally educating African-descended peoples (Asante, 1991, 2005b, 2006a; Karenga, 2002, 2003).

The philosophies of African-descended peoples and Africans is needed to further the Africana experience as articulated in the article, entitled, “Black to the Future: A Philosophy for a Global Village” (Verharen, 2002). This Africana “global village,” calls on the philosophical works of Cheikh Anta Diop, W.E.B. Du Bois, Frantz Fanon, and Molefi K. Asante, among others (Verharen, 2002). Verharen (2002) elaborated that Africana philosophy, as advanced by the aforementioned scholars, has its praxis in an Afrocentric theoretical framework.

Another Afrocentric scholar who fits within the “global village” (Verharen, 2002), is a native African and protégé of Diop, Theophile Obenga. Obenga (2004) connected ancient African history with African philosophy. His research postulated that African Philosophy has its roots in the Nile Valley, i.e., Kemet or ancient Egypt. His work countered Hegel’s philosophy within Western historiography by citing the Cairo Symposium (1974) in which Diop and he presented a concise argument linking ancient Egypt with Black Africa.



Their sound scholarship helped to ground African historiography and philosophy which would support the efforts of future African-centered scholars. Obenga (2004) disclosed that African philosophy began in the Old Kingdom (2686-2181 BCE) of ancient Egypt. The earliest African thinkers he named were Imhotep, Hor-Djed-Ef, Kagemni, and Ptah-Hotep. The aforementioned were the Old Kingdom philosophers who created the earliest known philosophical thoughts (Obenga, 2004).

### **Africana Philosophy**

More than five decades ago, European scholars proposed that some form of African thought may indeed be considered “philosophy.” This call for an African-centered approach to “philosophy” within academia became an impassioned topic of discussion (Outlaw, 1996, 1997). Africana philosophy, a term coined by Outlaw (1996), has seriously emerged over the past twenty years, as a reflection in praxis for continental and diasporan African thought and consciousness. Lewis Gordon (2008) in *An Introduction to Africana Philosophy* offered the first comprehensive perspective of Africana philosophy. According to Gordon (2008) the present historical moment of Africana philosophy can trace its roots back to the Middle Ages during the explorations of Christopher Columbus and the subsequent Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade. The activity of Africans as human cargo brought to the so-called “New World,” to be enslaved, and their subsequent lived experiences, spawned the first diasporan African philosophical discourse (Gordon, 2008).

Another important contributor to Africana philosophy is Lucius Outlaw (2004). His essay, *Africana Philosophy: Origins and Prospects* is found in the edited work, *A Companion to African Philosophy*. Outlaw (2004) stated that Africana philosophy is a heuristic orientation for philosophically based actions carried out by academic philosophers and other scholars committed to the interests of Africans globally. He continued, “‘Africana philosophy,’ then is meant to facilitate the organizing of past, present, and future ‘philosophical’ articulations and practices by and in the interests of African-descended peoples” (p. 90). An example of Africana scholars seeking to organize the past philosophical thoughts of Africans is found in the work, *The Egyptian Philosophers: Ancient African Voices From Imhotep To Akhenaten* by Asante (2000). Another example of classical African philosophy is found in the earliest extant book, *The Teachings of Ptahotep: The Oldest Book in the World* (Hilliard, Williams, & Damali, 1987/2012).

According to Outlaw (1996, 1997), effort in “gathering” African thoughts, like Asante’s (2000), stretch back to the ancient Nile Valley civilizations. Africana philosophy functions as a “gathering” concept, that expounds upon thoughts, and traditional aspects of those thoughts, related to continental and diasporan Africans which were viewed as “instances of philosophizing.”

Within this “gathering” concept, he further noted, the “philosophizing efforts” of non-African descent, can constitute contributory factors in further grounding Africana philosophy (Outlaw, 1996, 1997). The “gathering” process essential to Africana philosophy, as mentioned by Outlaw (1996, 1997), is centered in locating written and spoken expressions of global African descendants. These written and spoken expressions of African thought, “and traditions... of Africans and peoples of African descent collectively, as well as the sub-discipline—or field-forming, tradition-defining, tradition-organizing reconstructive efforts which are regarded (to be) regarded as philosophy,” (267), which constitute Africana philosophy. In seeking a connection with traditional continental and diasporan African thought Africana philosophy investigates what emanates from a query into, “In reality who and what am I?” This “question” in diaspora and continental African thought has its beginning in the enslaved lived experience, and those who were treated with contempt as people beneath humanity in the Western world (Gordon, 2008, p. 35).

Gordon (2008) revealed that Africana philosophy is an aspect of “Africana thought,” which involves a critically based theoretical inquiry into “questions” central to diverse pan-African cultural ideals. This type of “questions” of “Africana thought,” or more specifically the name “Africa,” or any derivative of it, was not a reflection of any type of African etymology, as it was assigned by Europeans around the 1500s. Since the enslavement and colonization of diasporan Africans, these various “questions,” including those relating to “identity” have given the word “Africana” a unique application. Today, Africana philosophers from continental and diaspora Africa, view the liberation impact of African thought, from a lived experience perspective.

Scholarship in Africana philosophy has increased over the past decades. Among those early pioneers who have helped to ground African philosophy, include African American philosophers, William R. Jones, Leonard Harris, and Lucius T. Outlaw (Gordon, 2008). Jones (1969) introduced African American phenomenology to the American academic ranks as a type of existential phenomenology in the latter part of the sixties. He sought to develop a theory of oppression with liberatory practice.

Harris (1983) distinguished himself in the area of pragmatism as related to the thoughts of Alaine Locke’s, theory of cultural pluralism, by elucidating a theory of social identities. He edited, *Philosophy Born of Struggle: Anthology of Afro-American Philosophy from 1917*, which is still the largest published historic writing by African American philosophers. Outlaw (1996, 2005) supported the traditions associated with the nineteenth and twentieth centuries European continental philosophy. Outlaw (1996, 2005) also called for engaging practices within the Frankfurt Schools’ framework of critical theory. Such European scholarly influence, as embraced by the aforementioned scholar, has raised some concerns in Africana philosophy (Gordon, 2008).

African philosophy has praxis in Africana philosophy (Gordon, 2008), but preceded it in its historical dimension about continental African discussion. African philosophy encompasses all of the main branches within the academic discipline of philosophy. These areas include logic, epistemology, metaphysics, aesthetics, ethics, religion, and politics (Wiredu, 2004).

Danquah (1944/1969) was among the earliest African thinkers to present African philosophy within a scholarly setting. In 1944, his work, *The Akan Doctrine of God: A Fragment of Gold Coast Ethics* was published, but was not widely recognized. Neither were other African thinkers or African philosophy recognized in philosophy departments across the globe (Wiredu, 2004). Wiredu (2004) admitted that African philosophy is indebted to non-African scholars like Evans- Pritchard, Forde, Herskovits, Rattray, and Smith, who paved the way for discourse in African Philosophy.

One of the problems in Africana philosophy revolves around the Western training of Africana philosophers. Due to a “logocentric” and “Eurocentric” background, Africana professional philosophers have been challenged by a type of cultural anemia in other fields such as African and Africana studies, history, sociology, and psychology, among others. These Africana scholars in philosophy suffer from gaps in “sociological conditions” and “ideological differences” among other disciplines (Outlaw, 2004).

Another problematic area in Africana philosophy, as contended by Gordon (2008), is related to the “historical circumstance[s]” of continental and diasporan Africans. Such events from the past for Africans globally deal with the problematic link between the categorizations of, being “Black,” or being “African,” and “reason.” Outlaw (1997) referred to complications in the “philosophizings” or collective seeking of “unities” of continental and diasporan Africans, plus them being descended from “racialized domination.” Such a quest for continental and diasporan Africans presents the possibility that African “philosophizings” can become a politicized venture, instead of furthering academic progress (Outlaw, 1997).

Africana philosophy when centered in an ethno-historical culturally based approach to the study of African descendants can benefit the academy (Outlaw, 2004). Such a manner of inquiry is consistent with Herskovits (1941), the noted twentieth century anthropologist, who made methodological suggestions for studying people of African descent . Outlaw (2004) clarified, that this type of input by Herskovits provided Africana philosophy with contributory scholarship in comparative, critical, hermeneutical studies of the multi-ethnic peoples of Africa and African descent. In addition, Herskovits (1966) utilized a skilled method of managing various types of ethnographic data. This ethnographic data proved to be a structure relative to the extremity of the conversion of a component of culture over an extended period that provided Africana philosophy further academic grounding (Outlaw, 2004).

Africana philosophy since its inception has been an agent of renewal, in particular to address the “racially” inspired untruths purported throughout the ages by Western thought. Thus, Africana philosophy is a regenerative tool in critically reviewing the dominant forms of European philosophical thought since the age of Enlightenment (Outlaw, 1997). The study of Africana philosophy helps African descendants to uncover Western perceived truths as untruths relevant to the historical reality of continental and diasporan Africans, a global approach is needed (Rabaka, 2006a, 2006b, 2009).

## Africana Critical Theory

The African-centered approach of Africana critical theory (Rabaka, 2006a, 2006b, 2009) is rooted in the present eighth historical moment (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). This eighth moment in qualitative inquiry began in 2005 and it reflects an “evidence-based social movement” directed by its scholarly proponents. It critically engages in discourse about issues of race, democracy, class, gender, freedom, and community in the social sciences (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Rabaka (2006a, 2009) argued that Africana critical theory forms a basis for modern Africana Studies and for Africana philosophy in particular. Africana critical theory employs the writings of Africana intellectually gifted scholars as “critical theory paradigms” and starting points for discourse as revealed by Rabaka (2006a). Africana critical theory is not readily explained unless there is a comprehensive and critical understanding of Africana intellectual history. It is an historical analysis of Africana philosophy, as well as an Africana interpretation of anti- Eurocentric social and political scholarship (Rabaka, 2006a, 2006b, 2009).

However Bassey (2007) argued that Africana philosophy and Africana critical theory were divergent in theoretical conceptualization. Whereas, Africana critical theory’s purpose was to look at how global Africans have been dominated and discriminated against in their lives. Bassey (2007), insisted that Africana critical theory and Black existential philosophy are indeed one and the same since they both focus on “Black subjugation” and “dehumanization.” Whatever the philosophical construct may be as it applies to people of African descent, this intersection of Africana critical theory and an Africana philosophical theoretical link, as a praxis, should continue to be further researched.

With the further grounding of Africana critical theory, Rabaka (2006a; 2009) made the present argument that theoretically it forms a basis for modern Africana Studies and for Africana philosophy. In his important work, *Africana critical theory: Reconstructing the Black Radical Tradition, from W.E.B. Du Bois and C.L.R. James to Frantz Fanon and Amilcar Cabral*, published in 2009, Rabaka, the founder of Africana critical theory, emphasized a working synthesis between Africana Critical Theory and Africana philosophy. He stated, Africana critical theory is inexplicable if there is not a historical analysis of Africana philosophy (Rabaka, 2009).

Historically, Africana critical theory and its practice can be traced back to the late nineteenth and twentieth century with social thinker, W.E.B. Du Bois (Rabaka, 2006b). Du Bois used a vast array of “academic theory” and “grassroots political praxis,” which would form the basis of his critical social theoretical approach to inquiry. Du Boisian ideas represented a critical look at many of the “-isms” that encompass the social and political spheres. This critical analysis by Du Bois included issues of Black nationalism, Black separatism, pan-Africanism, African communalism, Marxism, Leninism, Maoism, British socialism, American pragmatism, Third Worldism, German romanticism, multiculturalism, and feminism or womanism, including other ideological traditions (Rabaka, (2006b).

The political and social grounded scholarship of Du Bois, helped to create the field of American sociology, more so, where the issue of race was concerned. His transdisciplinary “social” and “community” inquiry into the lives of Black people and culture, produced Africana Studies (Rabaka, 2009). Du Bois’s multidisciplinary works provided a framework for Africana Studies, as emphasized by Rabaka (2009), including, *The Suppression of the African Slave Trade to the United States of America, 1638-1870*, *The Conversation of Races*, *Careers Open to College-Bred Negroes*, *The Philadelphia Negro: A Social Study*, The Atlanta University publications edited by him, *The Souls of Black Folk*, *The Talented Tenth*, and his early research on “social” and “community studies” published in 1978 some fifteen years after his death in *W.E.B. Du Bois on Sociology and the Black Community*, and also his writings published in 2004, *The Social Theory of W.E.B. Du Bois*, not overlooking many other works by him.

It was the autobiographical literature of Du Bois, not long after he published, *The Philadelphia Negro: A Social Study* in 1899, that he “lost faith” in socially scientific- based answers within academia to African social and political issues throughout the continent and the diaspora. After his experiences of “lost faith,” Du Bois began a severe critical analysis of the academy, as well as academic disciplines (Rabaka, 2006b). According to Rabaka (2006b), it was this critical look at the academy where Du Bois was able to study racism and White supremacy. At this point, he understood racism to be a devastating force of oppression. Thus, Du Bois realized not just Black people were greatly affected by the evils of racism, but so was humankind.

Du Bois’s (1899) critical analysis on political and social issues already centered on race matters before critical theory was even conceived. Rabaka (2009) stated that the same year Du Bois graduated with his doctorate degree from Harvard in 1895, Max Horkheimer, the earliest initiate of the Frankfurt School of critical theory, was born. In other words, Du Bois was already engaged in transdisciplinary critical social theory not just prior to the establishment of the Frankfurt school, but long before any of its founding future theorists were born. Or at best, some of them may have been barely past infant stage (Rabaka, 2009).

Rabaka (2009) asserted Du Bois’s *Black Reconstruction*, and another Black scholar from Trinidad, C.L.R. James’s, *The Black Jacobins*, both illustrated the fact that Africans throughout the diaspora during their slavery experience had formed “critical antiracist thought” conventions as they sought ways to overturn the oppressive systems of “White supremacy,” capitalism, and colonial dominance. This “critical antiracist thought” was developed by the descendants of Africans before the Frankfurt School’s concept of critical theory emerged. According to Rabaka (2009), critical theory is rooted in the dominant culture’s “monodisciplinary social theory” within its “multidisciplinary methodology,” which is structured to implement a theory of domination and liberation which addressed specific societal necessities.

There were a group of liberation-minded civil rights attorneys in the 1980s, who studied the impact of White supremacy in society and its effects upon persons and also institutions (Rabaka, 2009). According to Rabaka (2009) the anti-racist theoretical approach and praxis of these lawyers studying White dominant culture ushered in the framework of critical race theory. The critical race theory discourse which developed, was a part of the critical legal studies movement that started when the “racial neutrality” within legal jurisprudence was challenged. Critical race theory does not just comprise of radicalized politics and a social theoretical basis, it also represents critiques in culture and historically based theory, (Rabaka, 2009). Critical race theory calls for radical reinterpretation and revision of history where issues of race and racism are concerned. It is engaged in the “testing and teasing-out tensions” amid the incidents and the culturally, politically, economically, scientifically, aesthetically, religiously and institutional elements within its era (Rabaka, 2009).

Rabaka (2009) stated that Africana critical theory developed as a “revolutionary theory” from the merging of critical social theory and Africana Studies. Just as critical race theory calls for a radical reinterpretation and revision of history concerning conceptualizations of race, Africana critical theory, has the same praxis. The word “theory” in the description of Africana critical theory, is still being formulated for interdisciplinary practical aims. This is true, since weak “theory” claims have been made by Africana Studies detractors (Rabaka, 2009). Africana critical theory as a “theory” is theoretically critical of “domination” and “discrimination” in ancient and modern, global African ontology. In addition to critically analyzing “domination” and “discrimination,” Africana critical theory is deeply rooted to unalterable liberation and socially transforming practices (Rabaka, 2006a).

Bassey (2007) elaborated that the main characteristics of Africana critical theory as being group consciousness, hopelessness, helplessness, oppression, which all affect continental and diaspora people of African descent. Like other areas of critical theory, Africana critical theory is centered on exhaustively analyzing present-day society, while seeking to improve overall conditions for people (Rabaka, 2006a). Rabaka (2006a) defined Africana critical theory as theoretical linkage to progressively motivated political tradition that features Africana “radicals” and “revolutionaries.” These Africana insurgents sought solutions to pertinent query in defiance to a dominant and discriminatory history of oppressors who have reified racist, sexist, capitalist, and colonialist propaganda that had continued to manifest in modern society (Rabaka, 2006a).

To further explain Africana critical theory, Rabaka (2006a) postulated it has no connection with “traditional social theory,” but it promotes a radical redistribution of social wealth and political power. Africana critical theory advances a critically based conceptual framework that purports emancipatory engagement of multiple social theoretical epistemologies involving “continental” and “diasporan” Africans. The conceptual framework of Africana critical theory is grounded in and continues to grow in Africana studies, which includes dialogue of Africana philosophy, Africana socially and politically-based theory, and Africana intellectually-based history (Rabaka, 2009).

As already expressed by Rabaka (2009) the point of departure in Africana critical theory and its intellectual theoretical basis begins with W.E.B. Du Bois. Du Bois's work (1898, 1899/1996a, 1903/1989, 1930a, 1930b, 1939, 1945, 1946/1996b, 1958, 1960, 1961a, 1961b, 1968, 1972a, 1972b, 1986, 1996c, 2004) grounds Africana critical theory (Rabaka, 2009) with its epistemological and ontological foundation. With Du Bois (1898, 1899/1996a, 1903/1989, 1930a, 1930b, 1939, 1945, 1946/1996b, 1958, 1960, 1961a, 1961b, 1968, 1972a, 1972b, 1986, 1996c, 2004) revolutionary thought began a synthesizing effect of politically motivated moralistic and radical actions. Du Bois helped to pave the way for other Black traditionalists to further ground Africana critical theory (Rabaka, 2009). Du Bois and other twentieth century Pan-African radicals like C.L.R. James, Frantz Fanon, Aime Cesaire, Leopold Senghor, and Amilcar Cabral, through their works, helped to contextualize a framework for discourse in Africana critical theory (Rabaka, 2009).

Rabaka (2009) asserted that the styles of W.E.B. Du Bois and C.L.R. James and their theoretical concepts can be viewed as an "instrument" within the framework of Africana critical theory. Frantz Fanon and Amilcar Cabral would have a "weapon," as part of their theoretical arsenal used to attack certain targets of domination and discrimination. These approaches to conceive theory by Black radical traditionalists as suggested by Rabaka (2009), whether as an instrument or as a weapon, has allowed Africana critical theorists to engage a large number of epistemological, ontological, and axiological discourses concerning continental and diasporan Africans. These discourses relating to Africans globally include Africana "thought traditions," like African, African American, African Caribbean, Afro-Asian, Afro-European, Afro-Latino, Afro-Native American, as well as Africana philosophy and theory; Negritude; revolutionary Pan- Africanism; prophetic pragmatism; Africana womanism; Black feminism; Black postmodernism; Black existentialism; Black radicalism; Black Marxism; revolutionary Black nationalism; Black liberation theology; critical race theory; philosophy of race; sociology of race, psychology of race; anthropology of race; history of race; and geography of race. The aforementioned discourses help to strengthen and broaden Africana Critical Theory in praxis (Rabaka, 2009).

Du Bois's (1898, 1899/1996a, 1903/1989, 1930a, 1930b, 1939, 1945, 1946/1996b, 1958, 1960, 1961a, 1961b, 1968, 1972a, 1972b, 1986, 1996c, 2004) inquiry into these social and political theoretical discourses exposed shortcomings within the framework of critical theory, since it focused on capitalism, and was not inclusive of race constructs within the modern world. He used a transdisciplinary approach to study these issues. The transdisciplinary theoretical approach used by Du Bois has been criticized by some scholars. These anti-interdisciplinary critics of Du Bois claim his writings are "dense" because he engaged with too many academic disciplines (Rabaka, 2006b). It has been noted that these scholars, even though they consider Du Bois "the architect of Africana Studies," have not designed the types of critical studies, systemic analyses, and discipline-oriented comprehensive conversations of his works and its similarities to Africana studies that would give credence to their assertions. If Africana critical theory is to be successful, then Africana Studies scholars and critical theorists need to employ Du Bois's corpus for its significant impact upon academia (Rabaka, 2006b).

These contemporary scholars as Rababka (2006b) suggested, must engage in consciousness raising, radical politics, theoretical revolutions, world historical, national, and international, real-life, social and political revolutions, movements for freedom, justice, and egalitarian alternatives. Another important task for Africana critical theorists to fulfill, is centered on reworking classical philosophical traditions. The synthesis between the frameworks of Africana critical theory and classical African philosophy will not only benefit Africana Studies as a discipline, but it will help peoples within various societies, including African American students to understand the African historical context (Rabaka, 2009).

### **African American Identity**

African American students have suffered from identity crises. In the late 1930's and early 1940's, Drs. Kenneth and Mamie Clark studied racial identification in African American preschool children. Their work revealed major identity issues in African Americans, which resulted in self-hatred research. Thus, the Clarks' scholarship helped to usher in the era of identity research (Allen, 2001; Cross, 1991). The Clarks' research was influenced by Columbia University scholar, Ruth Horowitz. In "Racial Aspects of Self-Identification in Nursery School Children," Horowitz (1939) examined the early stages of race consciousness and ego-development in children. Her study consisted of White and Black children as participants. The data revealed that group consciousness and group identification were relative components of ego-development and played a significant part in grown-ups' attitudinal behavior and personality.

The Clarks' research, "The Development of Consciousness of Self and the Emergence of Racial Identification in Negro Preschool Children," was similar to Horowitz's (1939) aforementioned work. Their study focused exclusively on African-American children. It was designed to investigate early areas of growth in consciousness of self in these preschoolers and their emergence in race consciousness. The Clarks' findings suggested that for Black children the most significant degree of development in self-consciousness and racial identification occurred somewhere between the three and four year-old stage (Clark & Clark, 1939). In actuality the theoretical foundation of "Negro" and Black Identity research was the result of the work of Horowitz and her husband, Eugene, during the mid to late 1930s. The influence of the Horowitzs' studies upon the Clarks' landmark work in "Negro" and Black Identity would be greatly evident in the 1940s. The Clarks' published five articles from 1939-1950 that was a result of two studies. It was during this era that the Clarks' introduced the Negro self-hatred thesis as a psychological construct (Cross, 1991).

The Clarks' corpus was titled, "Racial Identification and Preference in Negro Children" (Cross, 1991). This work focused on racial identification, ego development, self-consciousness in "Negro" children and included the infamous "doll tests."



Two hundred and fifty-three “Negro” children from the South and North regions of the U.S. with no racially integrated schooling past were the participants in the study. The participants were given four dolls, two had brown skin with black hair, while the other two dolls had White skin and yellow hair. The “Negro” children overwhelmingly showed a preference for the White dolls over the brown dolls. Light skin “Negro” children favored the White dolls more than their darker skin counterparts (Clark & Clark, 1947). Nevertheless the Clarks’ experiment introduced the issue to academic discussion of the Black self-hatred thesis. The Clarks’ concluded that segregation in the South was psychologically harmful for “Negro” children. This conclusion by the Clarks’ was a central factor in the decision of the U.S. Supreme Court striking down segregation in education (Cross, 1991).

Some African American scholars of identity research held opposing views from the Clarks’ pioneering studies in the 1940s and 1950s. One such psychologist is William Cross, Jr. (Allen, 2001). In his book, *Shades of Black: Diversity in African-American Identity*, Cross (1991) challenged the Black self-hatred thesis which emerged from the Clarks’ findings. He pointed out errors that scholars made in interpreting the self-hatred thesis attributed to the Clarks.’ Cross’s (1991) argument highlighted the fact that the Clarks’ only tested African American preschool children. Thus the problem is that scholars have errantly assumed the Clarks’ self-hatred hypothesis related to adult African Americans. He thought African Americans experience “Nigresence,” a process that helps them find their Blackness /Black identity as they seek to locate their self-concept.

The study of Nigresence originated during the Black Social Movement especially as the ideology of Black Power became popular amongst African Americans (Cross, 1991). Cross (1991) believed Black identity research both theoretically and methodically is framed by the multiple aspects of Nigresence. As a graduate student at Princeton University, Cross (1971) constructed a model on “The Negro-to-Black Conversion Experience,” in psychological Nigresence. He outlined five stages that created the transformation from Negro to Black. These stages are (1) Pre-encounter (2) Encounter Immersion-Emersion (4) Internalization, and (5) Internalization-Commitment. When each of these stages had been achieved by African Americans formerly called “Negroes” according to Cross (1971) then there could be the development of a Black psychology as espoused by Professor Joseph White, an African American psychologist. Cross (1971) further elaborated that such an African-centered model should be rooted in a “psychology of [B]lack liberation.”

The field of Black psychology emerged as a counterpart to confront the tenets and foundations of “orthodox” or “western psychology.” Black psychology at the core is African. It has an African cosmological viewpoint in its orientation within the universe. The development of African (Black) psychology has helped people of African descent understand the basic principles of inherent human characteristics (Nobles, 1986). Nobles (1986) in his work, *African Psychology: Toward Its Reclamation, Reascension and Revitalization*, urged African Americans to reclaim their African ancestral connections.

In the process of the reclamation of their African heritage African Americans can begin to change detrimental behaviors and attitudes about themselves. These steps toward liberation need to be taken by African Americans in order to reconstruct their cultural and individual identity (Nobles, 1986).

Na'im Akbar (2006), the noted African American psychologist, in his book, *Breaking the Chains of Psychological Slavery*, looks at the contemporary condition of Black people. African Americans suffer from the effects of mental slavery even today.

To be liberated from such a mentally debilitating malady African Americans must function according to "self-consciousness." Akbar (2006) contended African Americans' lack of "conscious building processes" has led to "self-destructive" behavior. If African Americans are to free themselves from the shackles of mental slavery, they must restore their "African consciousness." The attainment of mental liberation for African Americans through independent action-oriented processes trace back to Africa (Akbar, 2006).

The title of Akbar's (2004) work, *Know Thyself*, reflects the ancient maxim expressed by the Nile Valley Civilization of classical Egypt. According to Akbar (2004) it is the possession of ancient African knowledge that helps African Americans to achieve the right frame of consciousness. When African Americans begin to transform their ancestral knowledge base into an awakened consciousness then they begin the most needed education process. This process is operationalized by "self-knowledge." The "self-knowledge" that African Americans attain in their lives enhances their identity, and as a result of this lack of knowledge, those African Americans who do not connect with their ancestral roots cannot possibly know their true identity (Akbar, 2004).

Akbar (2004) made it clear that identity is born out of processes of education. Education must therefore present needed, culturally accurate, historical portrayals of Africa. Akbar (2004) stressed that the educational system of the ancient Africans was centered on moral instruction. The translated works like *The Husia* by Maulana Karenga as well as *The Teachings of Ptahhotep: The Oldest Book in the World* edited by Hilliard, Williams, and Damali represented ancient Egyptian (Kemetian) education principles. These Kemetian works along with the *Book of Kheti* conceptualized Nile Valley knowledge foundations. Such depictions are needed for African Americans to build "self-knowledge" and to construct a healthy spiritual and mental existence (Akbar, 2004).

Parham, White and Ajamu (1999), called for African Americans to mentally liberate themselves from the oppressive strictures they have faced both socially and environmentally. In their work, *The Psychology of Blacks: An African Centered Perspective*, Parham, White and Ajamu (1999) encourage African Americans to seek ties with their ancestral history. Parham, White and Ajamu (1999) also exhorted Black people to look at themselves by acknowledging the oppression brought forth by White supremacy. They suggested African Americans need to be part of a "rehabilitation" and "recovery" process.

These scholars believed African Americans through cognitive awareness and action can begin to critically place themselves in a productive mode of “self-determination” that leads to successful outcomes in identity. Cross and Vandiver (2001) recently revised the nigresence model to broaden the scope of complexities of personal identity and reference group orientation. Nigresence Theory has evolved since its inception to include the expounding of eight examples of Black identity, including six that now serve as measuring instruments of Black racial identity. The six levels of Nigresence Theory are (1) Nigresence and the Structure of the (Black) Self-Concept (2) Nigresence and the Universe of Black Identity Types (3) Nigresence Theory and Traditional Socialization (4) Nigresence as Resocialization or Conversion Experience (5) Nigresence and Recycling, and (6) Nigresence and Identity Functions. The *Cross Racial Identity Scale* (CRIS) was introduced by Cross and Vandiver in *Handbook of Multicultural Counseling* by Ponterotto, Casas, Suzuki, and Alexander, published in 2001. The CRIS consists of forty items in which thirty items account for six subscales. They include (1) Pre-Encounter Assimilation (2) Pre-Encounter Miseducation (3) Pre-Encounter Self-Hatred (4) Immersion-Emersion Anti-White (5) Internalization Afrocentric, and (6) Internalization Multiculturalist Inclusive. This multidimensional scale is in use by scholars interested in research of Black identity related to the “expanded” Nigresence Theory (Hilliard, 2008).

Black identity research has also benefitted from the framework of the Multidimensional Model of Black Identity (MMBI). It was designed to better understand the racial identity of African American college students. The MMBI was introduced by Sellers, Rowley, Chavous, Shelton, and Smith (1997) as a combined groundwork of the complications in the overall interpretation of race to African Americans. It also incorporates extant models of identity. The MMBI encompasses four dimensions of racial identity: (1) salience (2) centrality (3) regard, and (4) ideology (Sellers, Rowley, Chavous, Shelton, & Smith, 1997). A recent dissertation by Patricia Hilliard (2008) utilized the MMBI that focused on the *centrality* and *ideology* scales that were part of the instrument known as Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (MIBI). She examined the importance of racial identity and classroom learning environment relative to the academic advancement of African American college students. Hilliard (2008) in , *An Examination of Racial Identity, Classroom Learning Environment, and Academic Achievement Among African American College Students*, found similarities in the correlational and regression analyses. Both results revealed that racial identity and classroom learning environments did not contribute to any substantial change in academic achievement.

### **Culturally Relevant Teaching**

Although Ladson-Billings (1992) coined the term “culturally relevant teaching” in 1990, a pedagogy focused on student academic achievement had already been introduced a decade earlier (Sampson, 2008). Au’s (1980) significant work on culturally relevant instruction is titled, “Participation Structures in a Reading Lesson with Hawaiian Children: Analysis of a Culturally Appropriate Instructional Event.”

This research project revealed that “minority” students can succeed in the classroom when an appropriate context for learning exists. Au (1980) examined the reading achievement of school children in their reading lessons. A sample reading lesson was assigned to resemble “talk story” commonly known in Hawaiian culture. The lesson contained nine forms of “participation structures” with some of them found in standard classrooms.

Some of the “participation structures” were similar to “talk story,” which is a significant happening within the Hawaiian cultural context (Au, 1980).

The importance of Au’s (1980) study set the stage for the advent of culturally appropriate learning in the classroom. Within 15 years of Au’s (1980) contributions, other scholars sought to implement culturally congruent teaching methods in classroom learning environments (Sampson, 2008). In particular, for African American students there was a great need for culturally relevant teaching strategies in academic surroundings (Ladson-Billings, 1992, 1995a, 1995b, 2009).

Ladson-Billings (1992, 1995a, 1995b, 2009) also addressed the necessity for effective cultural instruction. In *Crossing Over to Canaan: The Journey of New Teachers in Diverse Classrooms*, Ladson-Billings proposed three relevant strategies in culturally responsive teaching: (1) being involved in student classroom success, (2) being culturally competent; (3) and advocating sociopolitical thought (Ladson-Billings, 2001). She provided a discussion about an “innovative teacher education program” called Teach for Diversity (TFD). Ladson-Billings (1990) helped to design TFD as a fifteen month elementary certification program that focused on teacher preparation of racially, ethnically, and socio-economically diverse student populations. The TFD teachers were trained to be culturally responsive to the needs of their diverse students.

Ladson-Billings (1995b) described the “cultural competence” African American students seek to negotiate in academic settings. African Americans demonstrate this attribute so their teachers would not negatively associate them with other Black learners generally. In locating a culturally relevant pedagogy for African American students, teachers have a responsibility to make sure their “cultural integrity” is maintained in learning environments. Within the structure of a culturally relevant pedagogical strategy teachers display three “exemplary” skills. Those competencies include (1) conceptions of self and others (2) social relations, and (3) conceptions of knowledge. Culturally relevant pedagogy depicted by Giddings (2001) as being inclusive of the following criteria (1) it should aid students in developing the needed intellectual, moral, and emotional skills that will help them to achieve a constructive life experience; (2) it should render educational guidance that tears down traditional hegemony; and (3) it should help African-descended students to maintain a positive self-concept, while seeking to promote community uplift. The fundamental aspects of culturally relevant pedagogy are found in the work of Callins (2006). These nine elements of culturally relevant pedagogy present the type of competent instructors needed in dealing with African American students.

The elements are (1) convey goals for African American students; (2) utilize interactive instruction designs; (3) create a learning atmosphere; (4) possess favorable views of family members of diverse students especially culture and language differences; (5) show cultural temperance; (6) redesign the curricula; (7) advance a culturally mediated teaching style; (8) encourage student discussions; and (9) accommodate small group learning environments for African American students.

Similarly, Geneva Gay's (2000, 2002) research was significant in establishing guidelines for culturally responsive teaching. She identified five areas that call for instructors (1) to develop culturally diverse knowledge; (2) to create culturally relevant curricula; (3) to foster cultural attentiveness towards students; (4) the building of effective ways to communicate with and engage students from different cultural backgrounds; and (5) to build amicable harmony within the classroom. Gay (2002) hinted that White teachers are often not aware of the framework of cultural relevant pedagogy. These instructors are not able to fully understand the social and cultural backgrounds of students of color.

Ukpokodu (2003) designed curricula for pre-service teachers at the University of Missouri-Kansas City. She began the courses by making the teachers aware of their unfounded points of view and feelings about students of color. Then Ukpokodu helped the teachers to understand their own cultural past styles, and those related potential effects upon the formation of their pedagogical style. Her findings suggested that pre-service teachers have been indoctrinated in the belief that students of color are subordinate mentally and academically to Whites. Often instructors do not welcome such an introspective look at their attitudes toward people of color (Ukpokodu, 2003).

Ukpokodu (2003) was influenced by the work of Banks and Banks (1995) in a procedure known as "transformative knowledge." Transformative knowledge is the step teachers take to become culturally well-informed and sensible, as well as to conceptualize other generalizations within their pedagogy. Ukpokodu (2003) commented that teachers who utilize such critical frameworks have met challenges from students and colleagues. She speculated that instructors of color teaching culturally-based pedagogy are targeted by ethnically diverse students who negatively evaluate them, and make unwarranted complaints to administrators about their curricula. This type of culturally insensitive student behavior can disrupt African Americans and other students' potential for success in academic environments.

The disproportionate underachievement of African American students in classroom settings has been examined by Tyrone Howard (2001). This study entitled, *Powerful Pedagogy for African American Students: A Case of Four Teachers*, revealed that classroom instructors in using a culturally relevant pedagogy may help to improve academic achievement among African American students. Their effective teaching strategies may also help with the social and emotional development of these learners.

The researcher also noted that teachers should not solely expect “ethnic content” to increase academic achievement; teachers’ pedagogical approach to African American students should also include “high expectations” and the creation of “attainable goals and objectives” (Howard, 2001).

In espousing culturally relevant pedagogy other institutions in higher learning have encouraged the study of White instructors’ attitudes about teaching in culturally diverse classroom settings before they have been exposed to any field observations or classroom interactions. In this study administered by Dalhouse and Dalhouse (2006), a total of 92 pre-service teachers completed a questionnaire that revealed their attitudes about cognizance of diverse cultures, cultural exchange, and teaching in varied surroundings. Unfortunately, many of the instructors lacked sensitivity to the process that reflected non-positive views about culturally diverse children and their families. Some 64 % of the participants expressed a preference to work in White suburban schools. Many of them conveyed uneasy feelings toward African American children and families. There were those pre-service teachers who expressed distress about dealing with poor English skills (Dalhouse & Dalhouse, 2006).

Dalhouse and Dalhouse (2006) revealed that a single course in culturally responsive pedagogy was inadequate in giving instructors the tools they needed. It was when two or more culturally diverse classes were assigned to pre-service teachers that they were able to critically discuss culturally relevant pedagogy. It has been suggested by research specialists that universities require student completion of four or more classes, and also engage themselves in various cross-cultural encounters (Dalhouse & Dalhouse, 2006; Ukpokodu, 2003).

Gail Thompson (2007) author of *Up Where We Belong: Helping African American and Latino Students Rise in School and in Life*, believed “effective teaching” is based upon instructors’ “mindset” about the students they teach. Teachers have a responsibility to include culturally relevant curricula for the course period. In designing such a teaching method, teachers should use a “big ideas” strategy. A “big ideas” teaching strategy reflects the contributory role of different ethnic groups in a teacher’s curricula for the entire “academic year.” This type of pedagogy embraced by instructors teaching African American students can help to empower them in academic institutions. Thompson (2007) conducted a study of high school students in which a student questionnaire about cultural relevancy of the school curricula was examined. It revealed that 60% of all students, Black, Latino, and White were interested in learning more about their cultural heritage. However, the ethnic group breakdown showed a desire for cultural knowledge in 75% of the Black students, 60% of Latinos, and just 36% of White students. This work presented a multi-ethnic perspective on the cultural relevancy of curricula.

Another work that utilized a multi-ethnic perspective that examined culturally relevant curricula for Black students is found in a study titled, *Cultural Vibrancy: Exploring the Preferences of African American Students Toward Culturally Relevant and Non Culturally Relevant Curriculum* (Sampson, 2008). Sampson (2008) utilized a mixed method research design within a high school American history class that was diverse in both grade level and ethnicity. The study found that student evaluations of culturally relevant curricula can potentially produce significant data about the academic preferences and academic motivating factors of African American students.

## **Summary**

This section presented literature relating to (1) the African-centered approach, and three related theoretical areas of Afrocentricity (Asante, 1980/2003, 1991, 1992, 1995, 1998, 2000, 2006a, 2006b); Africana philosophy (Gordon, 2008; Outlaw, 1996, 1997, 2004); and Africana critical theory (Rabaka, 2006a, 2006b, 2009); (2) African American Identity; and (3) Culturally Relevant Teaching (Ladson-Billings, 1992, 1995a, 1995b, 2009). The theoretical frameworks Afrocentricity, Africana philosophy, and Africana critical theory, as components within the African-centered approach are designed to impact the pedagogical and andragogical necessities of African American students in identity, and culturally relevant teaching (Ladson-Billings, 1992, 1995a, 1995b, 2009).

The Identity research revealed a call for African Americans to reconnect with their African cultural and individual identity. The “culturally relevant” (Ladson-Billings, 1992, 1995a, 1995b, 2009) literature like racial identity, seeks to uplift African Americans within their cultural orientation.

The African-centered approach instills cultural values via an African consciousness (Hilliard, 1999) and juxtaposes the Afrocentric promotion of the building of cultural identity (Asante, 1980/2003, 1991, 1992, 1995, 1998, 2000, 2006a, 2006b). Through educational practices rich in African historical significance that Afrocentric scholars seek to help Blacks in developing a cultural insight. Africana Philosophy as an aspect of the African-centered approach allows Black people to investigate their ancestral past, their current condition and plight, as well as their future course of actions to implement (Gordon, 2008; Outlaw, 1996, 1997, 2004). Africana Philosophy is rooted in Black liberation ideology (Gordon, 2008; Outlaw, 1996, 1997, 2004). The African-centered framework of Africana critical theory (Rabaka, 2006a, 2006b, 2009) has praxis in African philosophical traditions as well as Africana Philosophy (Gordon, 2008; Outlaw, 1996, 1997, 2004). Africana critical theory (Rabaka, 2006a, 2006b, 2009) emerged from critical social theory and Africana studies. The work of W.E.B. Du Bois is the point of departure for Africana critical theory, as it is grounded epistemologically and ontologically within an interdisciplinary approach (Rabaka, 2009).

Overall this section presents pedagogical and andragogical teaching strategies that utilize Afrocentricity (Asante, 1980/2003, 1991, 1992, 1995, 1998, 2000, 2006a, 2006b); Africana philosophy (Gordon, 2008; Outlaw, 1996, 1997, 2004); and Africana critical theory (Rabaka, 2006a, 2006b, 2009) to serve as a catalyst to effectively help African American learners in achieving academic success.

## **Methodology**

This section explains the methods used in carrying out the study, giving special emphasis to the analysis of data. It should be noted at the outset, that the methodology to a certain extent was an evolving one, which took definite shape as the study progressed.

### **The General Perspective**

For this study, the researcher employed a mixed-methods approach which integrated quantitative and qualitative approaches. The mixed methods procedure was developed by Campbell and Fiske (1959), in which they combined both strategies to strengthen their findings in the study of psychological traits. This conceptual application gave rise to methods of viewing data, which included field observations and interviews synthesized with traditional surveys, in collecting quantitative statistics (Sieber, 1973).

This work is guided by a predominant descriptive qualitative study. A descriptive qualitative study describes “situations” and “events” as reflected in the research design (Babbie, 2008). Quantitative research relied upon descriptive statistics in which data are displayed in various ways (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). This mixed-methods inquiry allowed for the utilization of a proper lens to view this work.

The mixed methods research procedure for this study utilized the “concurrent transformative strategy.” This approach is guided by an inquirer’s use of a theoretical viewpoint (Creswell, 2003). This study’s “driving force” (Creswell, 2003) is located within the African-centered frameworks of Afrocentricity (Asante 1980/2003, 1991, 1992, 1995, 1998, 2000, 2006a, 2006b) and Africana Critical Theory (Rabaka, 2006a, 2006b, 2009). The Afrocentric “driving force” (Creswell, 2003) operates as a liberation and emancipation design to educate African American learners within an African historical consciousness centered in an awareness of classical African civilizations (Asante 1980/2003, 1991, 1992, 1995, 1998, 2000, 2003, 2006a, 2006b). Africana Critical Theory’s (Rabaka, 2006a, 2006b, 2009) “driving force” (Creswell, 2003) enhances the premise or theory in which African Americans seek liberation from the institutional effects of Eurocentrism.



This theoretical viewpoint is grounded in the radical tradition of W.E.B. Du Bois, who critically examined the race problem in America and its detriment to African Americans. Du Bois (1898, 1899/1996a, 1903/1989, 1930a, 1930b, 1939, 1945, 1946/1996b, 1958, 1960, 1961a, 1961b, 1968, 1972a, 1972b, 1986, 1996c, 2004) was not only a pioneering social theorist, but appears to be the first action researcher to emerge in de facto as evidenced in his strikingly similar critical social theorist thought before it even formed as a racial theory (Rabaka, 2009).

### **Action Research Tradition**

Du Bois was already formulating social and racial theoretical perspectives several decades before the formation of the Frankfurt School (Rabaka, 2009). The Frankfurt School was founded upon Victorian positivist discourse as well as theoretical foundations from the works of Engels, Kautsky, Stalin, and other Marxist thinkers (Giroux, 2001). The Frankfurt School of critical theory inspired a tradition of action research-oriented scholarship such as the Norwegian Tavistock Institute of Human Relations. From its inception, the Tavistock Institute focused not only on an action research-oriented platform, but rather, “work and organization” needs after World War II (Gustavsen, 2008). The action-oriented critical social and racial thought of Du Bois laid the foundation for the development of the Africana tradition, whereby Africana critical theory has praxis (Rabaka, 2009).

The origins of action research can be traced back to Kurt Lewin, who taught at Cornell and MIT in the 1940s (Greenwood & Levin, 1998). He is often called “the grandfather of action research,” who believed that all social scenarios are found in “quasi,” equilibrium a condition of fluctuating among actions of opposite strength. (Schmuck, 2006, p. 10). Richard Sagor (2005), believed action research may have first been practiced, by an unaware Christopher Columbus in the planning and execution of his explorations of the Americas. Lewin (1946/1948) introduced the paradigm of action research in his work titled “Action Research and Minority Problems.” Lewin (1946/1948) articulated that research required for “social practice” is better analyzed within a social management or social engineering context. It represented a form of action-oriented research that is inquiry generated by “social action” which leads to more “social action.” The beginnings of action research were developed upon a positivistic framework, but also influenced by “Dewey pragmatism” (Johansson & Lindhult, 2008). It was the philosophical tradition of John Dewey (1929, 1946) which linked practice and theory to early twentieth century education and social reform.

An early pioneer in action research, referred to as “the Clinic” was the Tavistock Institute (Greenwood & Levin, 1998). It would affect action inquiry among a new generation of scholars in the 1970s (Johansson & Lindhult, 2008). Critical thinkers such as Paulo Freire (1970/2000) explored Lewin’s (1946/1948) conjectural ideas about “social change.” Friere’s (1970/2000) praxis is influenced by Lewin’s (1946/1948) earlier call for an enclosure of “planning” and “action,” as well as “fact-finding” that is relative to the aftereffects of “action.”

## **Action Research in Education/Trans-disciplinary Tenets**

Action research in education has emerged as a tool that supports bona fide “social change” (Mc Niff & Whitehead, 2006). Practitioners in educational action research do not only reflect on their own thoughts and “feelings,” to effect “social change” but they look for ways to improve their behavior. Also, at the same time these action researchers attempt to improve their behavior as well as the “lives” of their students (Mc Niff & Whitehead, 2006). Mc Niff and Whitehead (2006), illuminated that action research in education should include other types of research that encourages intellectual discourse within different disciplines. In addition to the academic discipline of education, action research engages scholarly practices from trans-disciplinary fields such as anthropology, development studies, engineering, gender studies, human services, psychology, social work, sociology, planning, and civil engineering (Greenwood & Levin, 1998). Other academic areas where action research is practiced include community development, organization and business, healthcare and medicine (Reason & Bradbury, 2006).

There are more disciplines and also numerous types of “nonacademic practice[s]” associated with action research (Greenwood & Levin, 1998). Within the various academic disciplines, action research, according to Sagor (2005), involved contrived, continual, and standardized methods for enlightenment in “alternative practices” that enhance results. Such a praxis in action research, which makes learning situations better, is reflective in the “participative” and “empowering” effect upon students.

Calls for an action-oriented empowerment strategy for African Americans were designed in the late 1960s during the Black liberation movement (Edmonson-Bell, 2006). According to Edmonson-Bell (2006), Black liberation researchers in the late 1960s engaged as “scholars and social activist[s]” in seeking to solve economic, political, and social issues of African Americans. The aim of these action-oriented scholars was to accomplish the goal of “social justice” for the Black community. With a desire to build better conditions for African Americans, these scholars collaborated with Black community members in order to reach their objectives. The approach to Black liberation centered on social justice and racial equality models, and action research tenets (Edmonson-Bell, 2006). The use of an Afrivisual in this study frames Richard Sagor’s “Four-Step” analysis of action research (Sagor, 1993). Sagor’s (1993) work, *How to Conduct Collaborative Action Research*, published by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, looked at the benefits of collaborative efforts in action research by educators. In his more comprehensive book, *The Action Research Guidebook: A Four-Step Process for Educators and School Teams*, Sagor (2005) provided a clear path for using action inquiry. Listed below is the “Four-Step Process” to be implemented as an Afrivisual action research tool. (see Table 3.1).

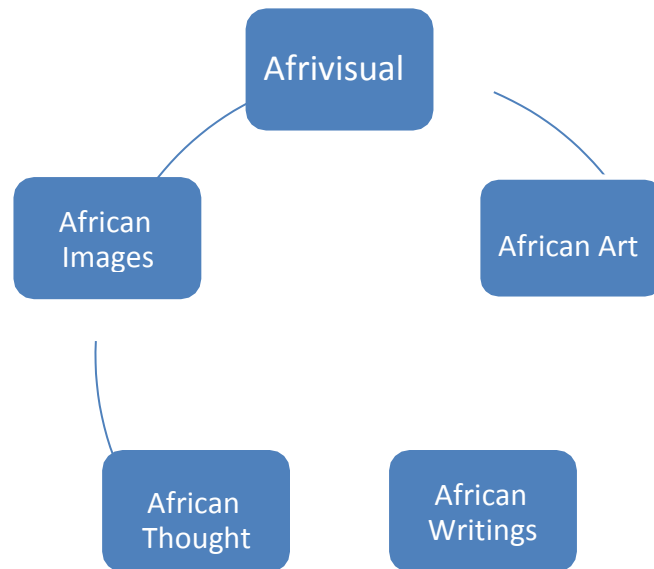
**Table: 3.1**

*Sagor's "Four-Step Process" and the Afrivisual Action Research Project*

<b>Sagor's "Four-Step Process"</b>	<b>Afrivisual Action Research Project</b>
<p><b>Stage 1:</b> Clarifying Vision and Targets Central Question: What do I want to accomplish?</p>	<p>As an instructor, the researcher seeks to help empower African American students to be aware of African and African American contributions to history, so they can succeed in future history classes.</p>
<p><b>Stage 2:</b> Articulating Theory Central Question: What do I believe is the approach with the greatest potential for achieving my goal(s)?</p>	<p>The researcher believes Afrocentricity, Africana Philosophy, and Africana Critical Theory, as theoretical frameworks are centered in the praxis of action orientation to conduct the study most effectively.</p>
<p><b>Stage 3:</b> Implementing Action and Collecting Data Central Question: What data will I need to collect to understand the efficacy and workings of my theory of action?</p>	<p>The researcher will collect data from community college students. These data will be based upon the students' assessment of the action research tool, an Afrivisual.</p>
<p><b>Stage 4:</b> Reflecting on the Data and Planning Informed Action Central Question: Based on these data, how should I adjust my future actions (teachings)?</p>	<p>The researcher will analyze the data. After such analysis the researcher will continue practicing action research orientations. Then the researcher will implement an effective plan for future action research projects.</p>

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**Figure 3.1 The Afrivisual is Rooted within an Afrocentric Context**



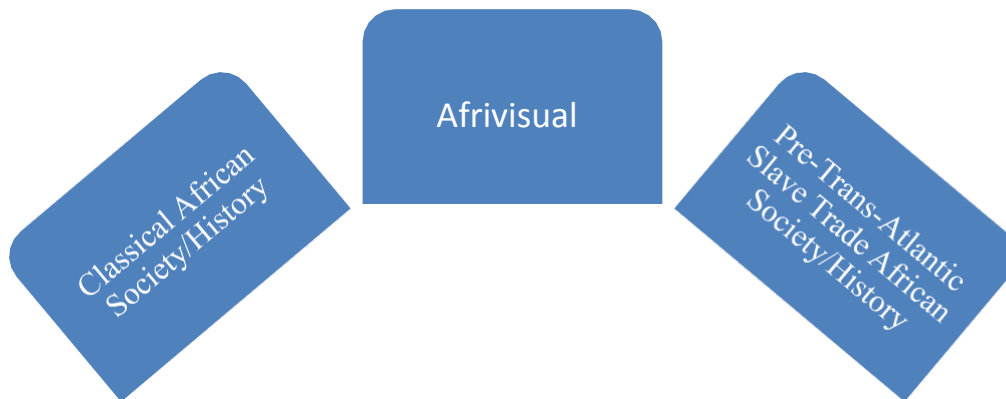
### **Implementation of the Afrivisual**

The researcher introduced the Afrivisual as an action research problem-solving tool. An Afrivisual is rooted in an Afrocentric context where African images, art, writings, and expressed thoughts are observed. (See Figure 3.1). An Afrivisual fundamentally serves as a liberation and emancipation measure to educate, enlighten, inspire, motivate, and move to academic action. It was also designed to empower African American students. The Afrivisual as an action research tool may help African American students acquire the academic change they need, so that they may effectively engage themselves in American history classrooms with confidence (Asante, 1991, 2005b; Bailey 2005).

It is hoped the Afrivisual that was introduced by the researcher will provide a lens for different cultural groups to view and experience ancient African history, including the earliest civilizations of the Nile Valley. The researcher hopes that the Afrivisual will provide a visual and analysis of those classical African societies, in every possible context, before the start of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade. (See Figure 3.2). The researcher postulates that the Afrivisual can be found in all forms of media (Brener, 2007; Britannica Online; Johnson, 2011; Schultz, 2005; Thurlow, Lenge, & Tomic, 2004; Tibbetts & Walsh, 2002) centered in African ontological, epistemological, and axiological representations.

He further believes that the Afrivisual reflects the social, political, and philosophical histories of ancient indigenous Africans until the fifteenth century, which marked European contact and the start of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade. Thus the Afrivisual has been developed to portray a truthful and accurate history of Africa's past. Therefore the Afrivisual is rooted in the visual arts based-tradition which helped to inspire social and cultural consciousness (Fowler, 1996).

**Figure 3.2 The Afrivisual Conceptualizes Classical and Pre-Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade African Societys' History**



### **Visual Arts-Based Inquiry Tradition**

Arts-based research has developed as a methodology and theory-based strategy within the more recent area of qualitative inquiry (Finley, 2005). It is located within the developing field of participatory critical action research established in social science. Inquirers engaged in this process seek to empower communities. This type of research has a role within the postmodern moment that develops relationships between artists and social researchers (Finley, 2005). The intersection of activist social science and narrative art forms was discussed by Elliot Eisner (Finley, 2005). Eisner (1981) articulated a different approach to qualitative research by using scientifically and artistically inspired methods, which gave rise to arts-based educational research. Eisner's significant contribution centered on his belief in the empowering effects of various types of art forms, including film, to advance the current social science model.

The arts promote social involvement with community, which is not so common in other academic subject areas. According to Fowler (1996) the arts helped to consolidate community goals and objectives while advancing education. He further stated that this relationship between the arts and community helps educators to design effective curricula in classrooms.

Among the most ardent benefactors of arts curricula over the past two decades has been The Getty Center for Education in the Arts on behalf of the J. Paul Getty Trust. The Getty officials pushed an initiative known as discipline—based—art — education, (DBAE). The DBAE's first work, called *Beyond Creating: The Place for Art in American schools*, suggested art education should be seen as an academic discipline linked to school curricula (Wakeford, 2004).

The influence of art within modern American society depends on a “visual culture” context. The educational relevance of the “visual culture” is found in its use as a form of free information, that is important in imparting knowledge to viewers (Freedman, 2003). The teaching of visual arts, as revealed by Freedman (2003), promotes a wide body of cultural learning. Freedman (2003) also listed a detailed conceptual foundation which represents various “visual culture” models that can be incorporated within educational settings. These models include (1) *Production Contexts* or that illustrate images of historically, culturally, politically, socially, economically, and religiously motivated experiences within one's background; (2) *Exploration Contexts* that reflect the studied cultural effects on “appreciation” in political, educational, institutional, and familial settings; (3) *Functional Meaning* which provides the study of cultural symbols and metaphors within “appreciation” settings; and (4) *Structural Support* as a means for “appreciation” in the creation and analysis of visual-arts based culture. It is hoped that such an instruction in visual culture as above outlined by Freedman (2003), will benefit African American students. The type of visual culture method used in this work to help provide a “culturally relevant” (Ladson-Billings, 1992, 1995a, 1995b, 2009) education for African American students is the previously mentioned Afrivisual. The Afrivisual was designed to help inspire and motivate African American learners to cope and excel in Euro-American academic environments where African cultural history is not promoted.

## **Visual Arts Culture of the Afrivisual**

The Afrivisual was designed for use in classrooms, campuses, and communities so that African American students may benefit by: (1) cultural affirmation through learning history, philosophy and stories about their African ancestors, (2) promoting positive experiences of African American students with culturally engaging instructors. Increase in self-worth by building self-concept, identity and self-esteem, (3) involvement in classrooms/curricula, (4) the effective use of confidence as empowerment in classroom and education process, (5) gaining higher comfort-levels in reading, writing, and critical thinking, (6) graduating from academic institutions, (7) espousing historical and philosophical truth about Africa, (8), motivating other students via personal success stories, and (9) becoming an action oriented agent of change.

The Afrivisual was designed to provide such a “self-knowledge” and “self-realization” for African-descended learners. The researcher believes that a positive cultural inclusion of African American students situated in U.S. history classes, will provide much needed self - esteem. Thus, the Afrivisual was created for the liberation and emancipation of African Americans from the cultural alienation they experience in different Euro- American classroom settings. It was intended to uplift them with self and community building empowerment.

## **The Afrivisual: An Interactive Visual Arts-Based Tool**

The Afrivisual has praxis in the visual arts-based tradition. The “visual culture” (Freedman, 2003) context of the Afrivisual has an African-centered orientation. The Afrivisual is strongly represented by cultural-visual images of ancient African history and philosophy via popular media forms. (see Figure 3.3).

**Figure 3.3 Popular Media Forms of The Afrivisual**

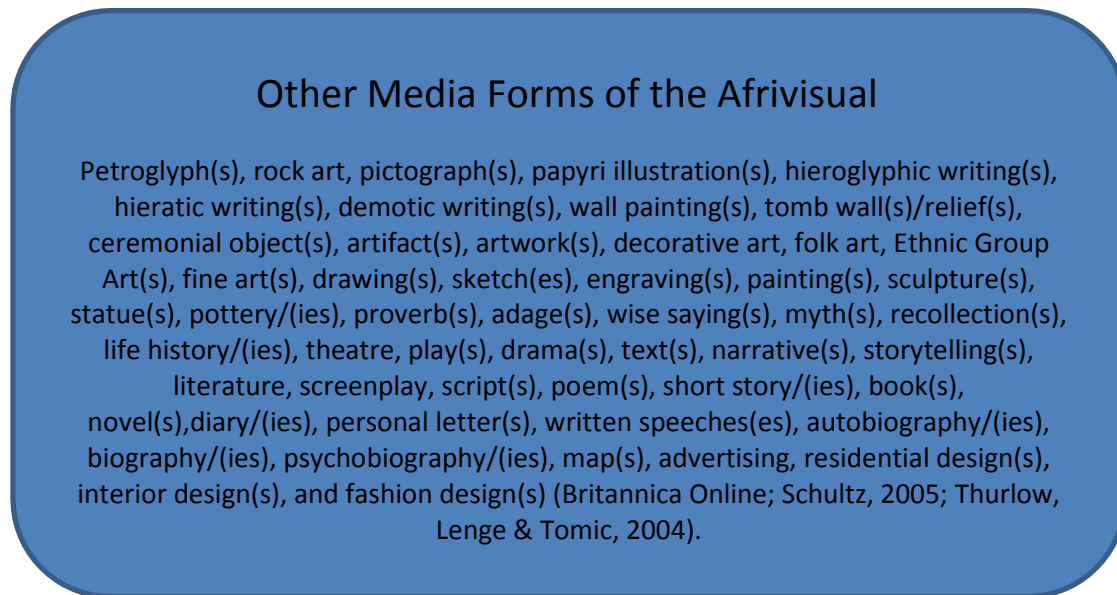
### Popular Media Forms of the Afrivisual

Photograph(s), television, motion picture(s), feature film(s), short film(s), documentary(ies), video(s), CD(s), DVD(s), MP3, iPod, digital audio, digital storytelling, computer-based images, computer graphics, computer mediated communication(s), book tablets, iPad, two and three dimensional art, interactive multimedia, video blog, podcasting, PowerPoint, WebCT, Course Studio, Blackboard, Prezi, Animoto, collaborative whiteboards, e-Pals, Glogster, Google Docs, Google Earth, Google Forms, image editing and enhancement, live internet video streaming, message boards, Mind Mapping, Ning, YouTube, SchoolTube, screen recording, Second Life, SlideShare, Spore Creature Creator, Timeline Creators, TodaysMeet, Twitter, Video Conferencing, Voice Thread, Website Creators, Wikis, Word Clouds, Zoho, ASLPro.com, Delicious, Digital Booktalk, Diigo, Edmodo, Flickr, Geocaching, Google Wave, Moodle, Morse Code Translator, OpenOffice, Posterous, Story Bird, VoxSwap, Wallwisher, World of Warcraft, and Xtranormal (Ballantine & Hammack, 2012; Brener, 2007; Britannica Online; Johnson, 2011; Tibbetts & Walsh, 2002).

The researcher believes that the Afrivisual serves as an effective tool to aid in educating African American students. The following list of other types of media also operate within an Afrivisual design, while exhibiting, revealing and describing different types of ancient African historical and philosophical images. (see Figure 3.4).



**Figure 3.4 Other Media Forms of the Afrivisual**



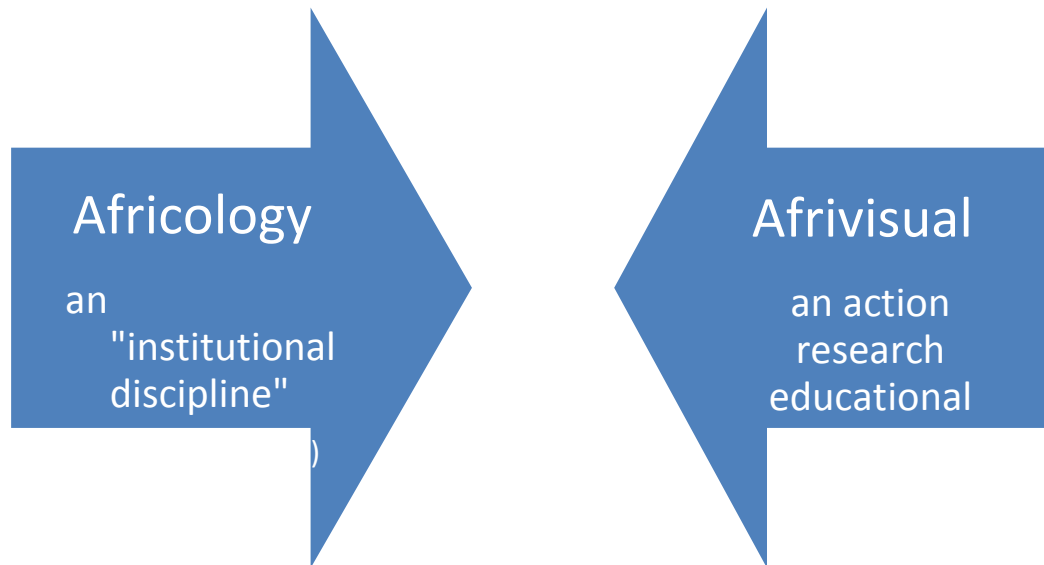
The aforementioned visual and textual media provide a context within which the Afrivisual can be presented in academic settings, so that African American students can have an effective means to experience “culturally relevant”(Ladson-Billings, 1992, 1995a, 1995b, 2009) teaching strategies.

### **The Afrivisual: An Interdisciplinary Approach**

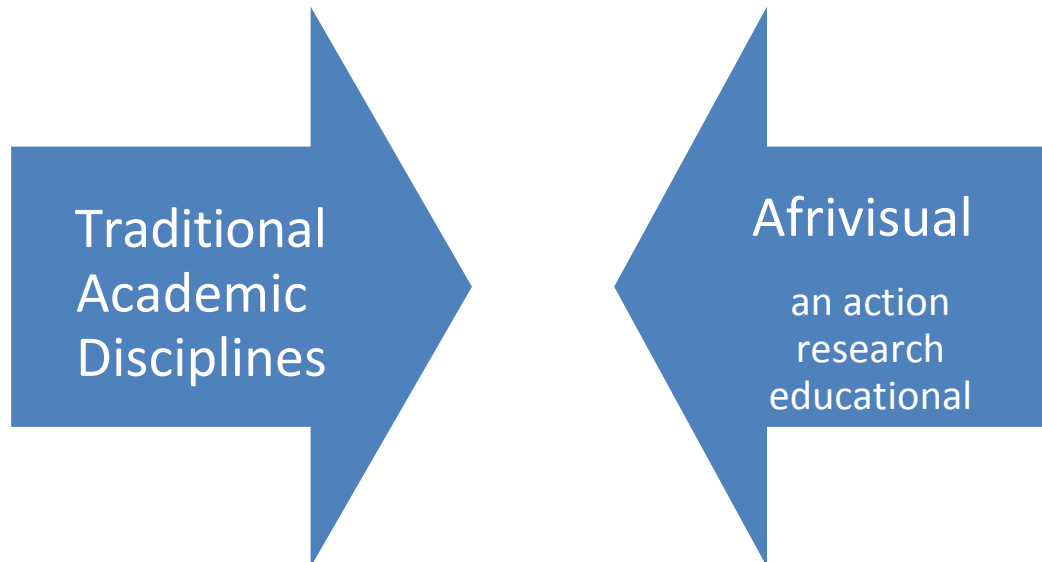
Within the academic discipline of Africology, a term coined by Winston Van Horne (2007), the Afrivisual is operationalized. The Afrivisual, an action research tool has praxis in Africology, an “institutional discipline” that welcomes “open discourse” about the study of Africa (Van Horne, 2007). (See Figure 3.5). The Afrivisual embodies the central components of African reality, knowledge, and values within the ontological, epistemological and axiological tenets of the philosophy of Afrocentricity (Asante, 1980/2003, 1998, 2001). However, the Afrivisual is an educational action research tool that does not conceptualize with Afrocentric ideology which “ignores the definitions and constructions” (Asante, 2006c, p. 373) about African and African-descended peoples advanced by White scholars simply because they are “White,” or by other non-Black academicians. The Afrivisual operates as an interdisciplinary action research educational tool that has praxis with traditional academic disciplines (See Figure 3.6), just as Africology is able to interact within various fields of study (Van Horne, 2007).

Van Horne (2007) provided a definition for Africology as he stated, “through its conceptual organization, Africology calls out behavior and practices of varying social and cultural usefulness in relation to the promotion and advancement of the interests of Africans and their global descendants” (p. 111). Van Horne (2007) acknowledged that the “paradigm” of Afrocentricity has “corrective, restorative, and prescriptive value” within the discipline of Africology, but he also asserted that the two of them are not “coterminable”(p. 116). Hence, the Afrivisual is grounded in Africology (Van Horne, 2007), a name Asante (1980/2003, 1998, 2001) stated was synonymous with his earlier term, Afrology.

**Figure 3.5 The Afrivisual, an action research educational tool has praxis in Africology, an “institutional discipline.”**



**Figure 3.6 The Afrivisual, an interdisciplinary action research educational tool has praxis in traditional academic disciplines.”**



The Afrocentric scholar Asante (1980/2003, 1998, 2001), supported the name Africology to replace his term Afrology as the appropriate name for the discipline of Black Studies. Africology as an “institutional discipline” developed out of Black Studies (Van Horne, 2007). Therefore, Africology has praxis with Black Studies, Africana Studies, Pan-African Studies and African American Studies discourses (Conyers, 2004). Conceptually, Africology is able to make an intersection with customary academic disciplines to engage in the study of many types of “social scientific” areas. This intersection between Africology and other “fields of work” within the academy helps to provide Black students with preparatory skills and awareness as they encounter courses that overlap in similar subject matter (Van Horne, 2007 ).

### **The Afrivisual: Africology Student Benefits**

An Afrivisual is a multi-use educational tool. It was designed for “culturally relevant” (Ladson-Billings, 1992, 1995a, 1995b, 2009) teaching strategies, self-esteem, curricula interest, and personal development as it employs cultural knowledge in pedagogical and andragogical applications. The discipline of Africology for African American students is a means to attain much needed liberation, emancipation and cultural affirmation (Asante, 1980/2003, 1998, 2001, 2006b; Van Horne, 2007).

This attainment of cultural affirmation by African American students that the Afrivisual represents is rooted in ancient African historical and philosophical tenets. Such cultural rootedness is needed for African American students exposed to Euro-American history curricula that do not include “culturally relevant” (Ladson-Billings, 1992, 1995a, 1995b, 2009) teaching methods.

The implementation and usage of the Afrivisual as a cultural resource serves as a tool to help further ground Africology (Asante, 1980/2003, 1998, 2001, 2006b; Van Horne, 2007) as an academic discipline. It also functions as a knowledge base for students to locate African cultural history. The Afrivisual, while oriented in the historical and philosophical centeredness of Afrocentricity (Asante, 1980/2003, 1991, 1992, 1995, 1998, 2000, 2003, 2006a, 2006b), often for the first time introduces students to pre- classical and classical African history and philosophy.

An Afrivisual is a means to satisfy the quest for a culturally relevant education (Ladson-Billings, 1992, 1995a, 1995b, 2009) for African-descended students in America by promoting ancient African views of philosophy. Lee (1994) contended that the social and philosophical tenets of Maat, as discussed in the previous section are needed to enhance a cultural based education for African Americans. The African-centered perspective defining and grounding the principles of Maat are succinctly outlined by Karenga (2006) as mentioned in the previous section that are centered in ancient Kemetian (Egyptian) religious thought, ethics, ideals, and values. The Afrivisual indeed serves as a conduit for the concept of Maat to transmit relevant cultural information about areas of wisdom in Africa’s past. Therefore, an Afrivisual is located in the discipline of Africology (Asante, 1980/2003, 1998, 2001, 2006b; Van Horne, 2007) and functions pedagogically and andragogically to transform the educational lives of African American students. The transforming of these students brought about by the Afrivisual seeks to include increased self-esteem, motivation, and academic achievement in Euro-American academic settings. This transformation process of African American learners can serve to influence them in broader aspects of quality living that come from having self-esteem, (Allen, 2001; Bailey, 2005) and possessing a self-concept (Allen, 2001). It may inspire them to take on the role of action-oriented activists and participants.

## **The Research Context**

The study took place at three community colleges in southern California. The research activities covered a span of three weeks, from April 7, 2011, to April 27, 2011. For purposes of confidentiality, each of the schools will be referred to with the fictitious names of Community College #1, Community College #2, and Community College #3. Community College # 1 has a remarkably high transfer rate to four year universities; as a result it is highly ranked among top schools within the California Community College system (California Community Colleges). Community College # 1 has a student enrollment in excess of 30,000 students (California Community Colleges).

This two year college is predominantly Hispanic serving at 37 percent, while Whites account for 18 percent, Asians, 26 percent, others 14 percent, and African Americans represent 5 percent of the students (California Community Colleges). (See Table 3.2).

**Table 3.2**

*Community College # 1 Ethnicity Percentage*

<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Hispanic	36.60
White	18.25
Asian	25.75
Other	13.96
African American	5.44
<hr/>	
Total	100.0

At Community College #1 the quantitative part of the study was conducted in a classroom where the African American retention group members (program name excluded) of a “learning pathway” were gathered. Learning pathways are designed to increase the educational experience of students with successful outcomes (Clement, 2000). The students met for their “club day,” which is a weekly meeting where all of student group members gather for discussions. The following week the qualitative aspect of the study was carried out in a different classroom location at Community College #1.

Community College # 2 has more than 27,000 enrolled students. This institution is known for its athletic programs, some of which have garnered national attention. Hispanics at 37 percent, are the largest student population at community college # 2, while Whites make up 24 percent, Asians, 11 percent, others 12 percent, and African Americans, 16 percent (California Community Colleges). (see Table 3.3).

**Table 3.3**

***Community College # 2 Ethnicity Percentage***

<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Hispanic	36.62
White	24.27
Asian	10.90
Other	12.35
African American	15.86

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Total	100.0
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At Community College #2 both the quantitative and qualitative sections of the study were conducted upon African American retention group members (program name excluded) in a special events room. The program serving the students was also a learning pathway (Clement, 2000).

Community College # 3 has over 25,000 students. This institution offers more than 40 programs in technical and occupational areas. Hispanics reflect 48 percent of the students, Whites, 22 percent, Asians, 4 percent, others, 7 percent, and African Americans, 19 percent (California Community Colleges). (See Table 3.4).

**Table 3.4**

***Community College # 3 Ethnicity Percentage***

<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Hispanic	47.90
White	21.61
Asian	4.44
Other	6.75
African American	19.30

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Total	100.0
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The quantitative study for Community College #3 took place in the meeting room where African American retention group members (program name excluded) of a learning pathway (Clement, 2000) gather weekly. The qualitative part of the study at Community College #3 occurred the following week in the same room.

### **Procedures Used**

In carrying out the research design, several specific procedures were used. As previously stated this mixed-methods study utilized the “concurrent transformative strategy” (Creswell, 2003). A letter seeking permission for the researcher to conduct research on human participants at each institution was mailed to each community college. The researcher also sent a recruitment letter to Black retention program representatives at each community college to assist in recruiting African American participants for the inquiry. Also, the researcher sent flyers to African American retention program representatives to distribute to any potential native-born African American student participants.

At each community college, an official responded to the researcher’s request to conduct the study. Each of the community colleges in a letter granted permission for the researcher to conduct the study at their perspective institutions [for Community College #1, Community College #2, and Community College #3]. After the community colleges’ letters granting permission for the researcher to conduct research had been received by the Claremont Graduate University (CGU) Institutional Review Board (IRB), the IRB approved the researcher’s application for the proposed study. An “Informed Consent Form” was obtained from all participants at each community college, and each of the subjects and participants received a copy.

### **The Research Participants**

There were a total of 89 subjects and participants who took part in both phases, quantitative and qualitative of the mixed-methods study. There were originally 54 subjects who participated in the quantitative part of the study at all three community colleges. The actual number of subjects who participated in the survey was 51. It was discovered by the researcher that a few of the students identified themselves as non- native-born African Americans. So subsequently their surveys were not used as part of the study, since it focused on the population of native–born African Americans. Of the 51 subjects who completed the quantitative section of the study, 30 were males and 21 were females. There were a total of 38 participants who took part in the qualitative section of the mixed methods study. Of these 38 students who participated in the focus group, 21 were males and 17 were females. (see Table 3.5).

**Table 3.5*****Combined Community Colleges Subjects/Participants***

<b>N = 51</b>	<b>Combined Community Colleges Subjects/Participants</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>
Quantitative Survey	51	30	21
Qualitative Focus Group	38	21	17
<hr/>			
Total	89	51	38

At Community College #1, there were a total of 36 subjects/participants. The quantitative part of the study originally consisted of 21 subjects, but was refigured to 20 subjects. All of the subjects except for one male identified themselves as native-born African Americans. They ranged in age from 18 years old to over 21 years of age. There were 12 males and 8 females. For the qualitative section of the study at Community College #1, there were a total of 16 participants in the two focus groups. The first focus group was composed of 9 students, 5 males and 4 females. The second focus group included 7 students, 4 females and 3 males. (see Table 3.6).

**Table 3.6*****Community College # 1 Subjects/Participants***

<b>N = 51</b>	<b>Community College # 1 Subjects/Participants</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>
Quantitative Survey	20	12	8
Qualitative Focus Group # 1	9	5	4
Qualitative Focus Group # 2	7	3	4
<hr/>			
Total	36	20	16



At Community College #2, there were a total of 32 subjects/participants. The quantitative part of the study originally consisted of 18 subjects, but was refigured to 17 subjects. All of the subjects except for a male identified themselves as native-born African Americans. They ranged in age from 18 years old to 21 years of age. There were 11 males and 6 females. For the qualitative section of the study at Community College #2, there was a total of 15 participants who made up two focus groups. The first focus group consisted of 7 students, 4 males and 3 females. The second focus group included 8 students, 6 males and 2 females. (see Table 3.7).

**Table 3.7**

*Community College # 2 Subjects/Participants*

<b>N = 51</b>	<b>Community College # 2 Subjects/Participants</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>
Quantitative Survey	17	11	6
Qualitative Focus Group # 1	7	4	3
Qualitative Focus Group # 2	8	6	2
<hr/>			
Total	32	21	11

Lastly, at Community College #3, there were a total of 21 subjects/participants.

The quantitative section of the study originally consisted of 15 subjects, but was refigured to 14 subjects. All of the subjects except for a female identified themselves as native-born African Americans. They ranged in age from 18 years old to 21 years of age. There were 7 males and 7 females. For the qualitative section of the study at Community College #3, there were 7 participants in the focus group. The focus group consisted of 7 students, 4 females and 3 males. (see Table 3.8).

**Table 3.8**

***Community College # 3 Subjects/Participants***

<b>N = 51</b>	<b>Community College # 3 Subjects/Participants</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>
Quantitative Survey	14	7	7
Qualitative Focus Group	7	3	4
<hr/>			
Total	21	10	11

**Sampling**

A form of nonprobability sampling that relies on available subjects was used for this study. This reliance of available subjects is also known as convenience sampling (Babbie, 2011). A coordinator of an African American retention program at the three community colleges helped to find available students as possible participants for the study. Each of these program coordinators encouraged his/her students to participate in the study. The three coordinators of the African American retention programs chose the campus location where the study would take place. Both quantitative and qualitative phase locations for the study were chosen by the program coordinator at each institution. Although convenience sampling can have several shortcomings, it can be useful for questionnaire pretest designs (Babbie, 2011).

Convenience sampling permits a particular and profound connection with participants who are able to provide the optimum response to the research questions. This sampling method also makes allowances for the acquisition of crucial and key data specifically relative to the study (Patton, 2002). It was crucial for the researcher to illustrate how African American learners may react to culturally relevant (Ladson- Billings, 1992, 1995a, 1995b, 2009) exposure to African history, and if their exposure to African history is culturally relevant (Ladson-Billings, 1992, 1995a, 1995b, 2009). In addition, the researcher wanted to show if African American students had ever been exposed to African history before, and lastly his aim was to look at their interest levels in the subject. Therefore, a convenience sample ensured that study participants were native- born African Americans, both male and female, and over the age of 18 years old.

Thus, the researcher had a distinct gathering of students who were acquainted with the subject material. This is necessary for the purposes of answering the research questions: “How do native-born African American community college students respond to a culturally relevant visual tool? What experiences have they had with history? How has their exposure to history affected them?”

In carefully approaching this study, through use of convenience sampling, it was essential that during both quantitative and qualitative phases and questions were asked either by the questionnaire or interview with the researcher present, and the communication of accurate responses of the participants was effected. There are strengths and weaknesses found in any type of study sampling method; nevertheless, the utilization of convenience sampling allows for such considerations as (1) low costs, (2) a higher number of participants, (3) easily administered, and (4) the generalizability with others who are similar (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006).

### **Instruments Used in Data Collection**

Three instruments and recording methods were used in the data collection process of the study at each community college. First, the quantitative phase consisted of a 10- item questionnaire/survey instrument. Second, the Afrivisual instrument was utilized during the qualitative phase. Third, a 4-item post screening focus group instrument was administered during the qualitative phase. In the first phase of the inquiry responses to 10 survey questions were analyzed from subjects at each of the community colleges according to the quantitative design of the study. The closed-ended questionnaire was measured by use of a traditional five-point Likert scale (Teddie & Tashakkori, 2009). These questions were designed to reflect the experiences of native-born African American students in Euro-American history classrooms, so that certain outcomes might be found. It took approximately 10- 15 minutes for the participants at each community college to complete the survey questions.

### **Survey Research**

Surveys are among the most common forms of quantitative research. In survey research, the researcher chooses a sample of respondents from a population and administers a standardized questionnaire to them (Creswell, 2003). Babbie (2011) emphasized that questionnaires (1) should reflect explicit and accurate entries; (2) the entries should implore a single entity with no “double-barreled” questions; (3) subjects need to be competently able to respond to the entry; (4) subjects need to freely respond to the entry; (5) questions must be pertinent to the subject; (6) entries should be relatively brief; (7) words of negativity should not be used; and (8) entries need to be carefully expressed to detract biased feedback. The quantitative part of this study used a questionnaire construction format that was self-administered by the subjects at the three community college locations.

## **The Questionnaire/Survey Instrument**

The questionnaire/survey instrument was designed for use in the first phase of the study to gather responses to 10 questions that were analyzed according to the quantitative design of the study. This questionnaire/survey was close-ended. The closed-ended questionnaire was measured by use of a traditional five-point Likert scale (Teddie & Tashakkori, 2009). These questions were created by the researcher to reflect the experiences of native-born African American students in Euro-American history classrooms, so that certain outcomes might be found. In addition to the 10 questions, the questionnaire/survey listed 3 demographic questions highlighting a computation of age, gender, and birth region. Four categories were used in the age profile of 18, 19, 20, and 21 and over. The gender profile included two categories of male and female. Also the birth region included four categories of the United States: north, south, east and west.

## **The Afrivisual Instrument**

The Afrivisual instrument for the qualitative part of the study, reflective of visually stimulating aesthetics of African history and philosophy was presented as a 35- minute narrated graphic PowerPoint lecture. It consisted of 272 slides (including a graphic sources list) of pictures and text highlighted by images of the Anu people, the early founders of Nile Valley civilization (Chandler, 2006; Diop, 1974; R.D. King, 2005).

It also featured Nile Valley civilization, i.e., ancient Ethiopian and Egyptian contributions to world civilization (Bernal, 1994; Diop, 1974; Du Bois, 1946/1996b; Hansberry, 1981; James, 2001). The contributory role of the Nile Valley upon humankind is important in locating African Americans' early ancestors in a world context. Also, Nile Valley migrants to West Africa, and its peopling (Gadalla, 1999) is discussed. This topic was pertinent to African Americans since their modern ancestors were enslaved from the west coast of Africa during the trans-Atlantic slave trade (Clarke, 1998). A look at these African peoples could help African Americans learn more about the history of their ancestors. This particular Afrivisual was created by the researcher to hopefully inspire and motivate African American students to engage themselves in Euro- American history classrooms. More importantly, it was hoped that the Afrivisual would help in grounding African Americans in every aspect of their lives, to adhere to ancient Egyptian wisdom that each of them might be able to "know thyself" (Akbar, 2004) through their African ancestral history. After showing the participants at each community college a 35-minute Afrivisual PowerPoint presentation, the researcher then gathered qualitative data from a semi- structured interview in a focus group setting. The researcher asked the participants at the three combined community colleges in a total of five groups of 7—9 to answer four post- screening questions about the Afrivisual they viewed. This second phase of the study for all five combined focus groups at the three community colleges ranged from 17-29 minutes after the participants viewed the Afrivisual.

## Focus Groups

Kamberelis and Dimitriadis (2005) described focus groups as “collective conversations” and “group interviews.” These groups usually consist of a few or many people, while led by a facilitator or no leader at all. Although it is best to have a facilitator who can set the rules, and clearly state to participants what is expected of them (Gubrium & Holstein, 2003). Focus groups in pedagogical and ragological settings are resourceful in building “effective histories” within qualitative research. Researchers have used focus groups to examine social oriented issues which are not conducive to one on one interviews or observations (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2005).

Focus groups are used as vital components to develop new types of “interactional dynamics,” and serve as a passageway for the acquisition of more knowledge and data. Another function of focus groups is that they embody the “collective memories” and mutual “knowledge.” When group members share these encounters they are engaged in “double practices,” where they seek to understand their life experiences. Focus group research involves “problem solving” pedagogical strategies that benefit community interests (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2005).

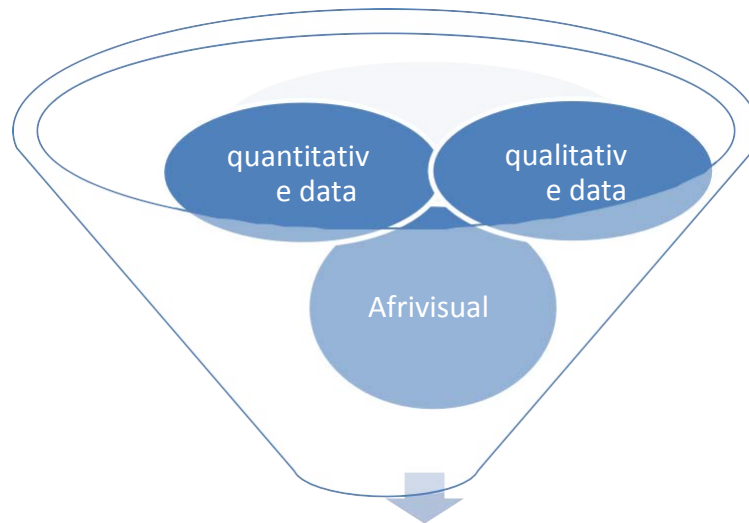
There are several advantages associated with conducting focus groups. One strength focus groups can produce is dynamic exchanges between group members providing more in-depth information regarding a topic. Another strength in using focus groups is that its members can also be used for individual interviews. Some weaknesses are also found in focus groups (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2005). The instruction of a moderator/researcher may have an effect on the way the focus group responds to questions. A focus group member may also not reveal his/her true feelings regarding a topic. It could be that some group members are influenced by other group members’ responses because it may be a popular thought or feeling, as well they could feel oppositely but are too afraid to detract from the consensus (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2005).

Again there were five focus groups from the three community colleges that were a part of this study, with the researcher serving as a directive interviewer in a formal setting. There were nine and seven participants in the two back to back focus groups conducted at Community College #1. The two focus groups at Community College #1 took approximately 40 minutes. While at Community College #2 there were seven and eight students who participated in the two focus groups that were facilitated by the researcher. The two focus groups at Community College #2 took approximately a combined total of 58 minutes for the researcher to facilitate. While at Community College #3 there were seven students who were participants in the focus group that took approximately 27 minutes to complete. Each of these group interviews were exploratory in their purpose, with a structured pre-determined question format.

## Triangulation

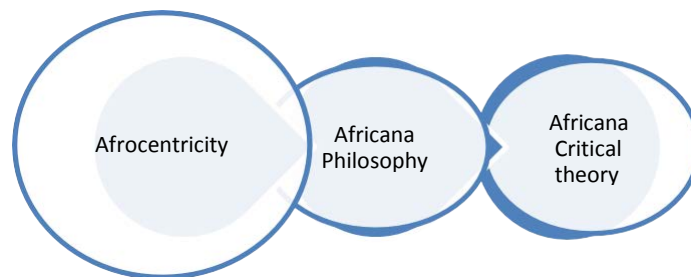
Triangulation includes the combination of multiple research methods and data collection and analysis procedures (Teddie & Tashakkori, 2009). Thus a vigorous study involves mixing various methods and data to answer the research question. For this study, the researcher utilized multiple methods of triangulation to understand the responses of native-born African American community college students after viewing a culturally relevant (Ladson-Billings, 1992, 1995a, 1995b, 2009) learning tool. The study also revealed what experiences they have had with history and how their exposure to history has affected them.

**Figure 3.7 Shows the triangulated data gathering tools that provide multiple types of data for this study.**



Quantitative and qualitative data were collected and analyzed simultaneously. Each data source supported the other through the use of several research methods. The multiple procedures of quantitative, qualitative, and use of the Afrivisual helped the researcher to confirm and interpret all of the data sources. Figure 3.7 depicts the aforementioned three procedures utilized in this study. These data supported the qualitative questions that were explored in the focus group and viewing of the Afrivisual. Thus this study design emphasized more of a qualitative approach than a quantitative perspective. The combination of quantitative and qualitative data provided a richer and more complex look at the way in which native-born African American community college students respond to a culturally relevant (Ladson-Billings, 1992, 1995a, 1995b, 2009) visual tool. In addition this mixed-methods strategy better reflected the experiences of these students with history and its affects upon them.

**Figure 3.8 Shows the link between the three theoretical constructs utilized for this study.**



Theoretical triangulation also supported this inquiry. These theoretical frameworks were Afrocentricity (Asante, 1980/2003, 1991, 1992, 1995, 1998, 2000, 2006a, 2006b), Africana philosophy (Gordon, 2008; Outlaw, 1996, 1997, 2004), and Africana critical theory (Rabaka, 2006a, 2006b, 2009). See Figure 3.8 that links each of these three theoretical constructs. They were important to help the researcher understand the reactions and experiences of culturally relevant issues relative to African American learners.

### **Data Analysis**

The data were analyzed using several strategies. First, the quantitative data were reduced by the use of descriptive statistics, referred to by (Teddie & Tashakkori, 2009) as “quasi-statistics” to analyze the data. These types of statistical components are able to help the researcher “quantitize” the overall analyses of studies by using frequencies and percentages (Teddie & Tashakkori, 2009). Data were entered by the researcher into an IBM SPSS statistical software program in which a spreadsheet reported results that were reported in frequency tables using percentages. After the data were entered into a spreadsheet, they were then double-checked for accuracy, and missing values. An analysis by the researcher using three profiles was done in this work by a computation of age, gender, and birth region. Most of the African Americans who took part in this study identified themselves as 21 years and over, followed by 18 years, then 20 years, and lastly 19 years. As descriptively indicated in Table 3.9 the majority of African American respondents, 43 percent were 21 years and over. There were five more African American males than females who took part in this study. As descriptively indicated in Table 3.10 the majority of African American respondents, 55 percent, were male.

**Table 3.10**

*What is your gender?*  
N = 51

	African American Respondents	Percent
Male	28	54.9
Female	23	45.1

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Total	51	100.0
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Most of the African Americans who took part in this study indicated they were born in the West region of the U.S., followed by those born in the North region, then the South region, and lastly the East region. As descriptively indicated in Table 3.11 the majority of African American respondents, 82 percent, identified their region of birth as the West region of the United States.

**Table 3.11**

*In what region of the U.S. were you born?*

N = 51

		African American Respondents	Percent
North	5		9.8
South	3		1.8
East	1		5.9
West	42		82.4

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Total	51		100.0
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The qualitative data were reduced by four post-screening questions from the focus groups' standard, open-ended interviews (Teddie & Tashakkori, 2009) that were transcribed from a voice-recorder and then analyzed by the researcher. The transcripts were read to tentatively identify categories. Next the tentative categories were tested by classifying the responses. Then categories were used by the researcher to code all responses. Lastly, the coded responses were tallied and the data results of the focus-group interview were then summarized by the researcher.

### **Summary of the Methodology**

This section has provided an explanation of the methods used in this mixed- methods study. It has reflected descriptions of participants, instruments, procedures, and data analysis. Multiple data collection strategies both quantitative and qualitative were used as data collection methods complementary to the research question. Again the central questions in this study are, "How do native-born African American community college students respond to a culturally relevant visual tool?" "What experiences have they had with history?" "How has their exposure to history affected them?" As previously stated, the primary purpose of the study was to show how African American learners may react to culturally relevant (Ladson-Billings, 1992, 1995a, 1995b, 2009) exposure to African history. In particular, their exposure to culturally relevant (Ladson- Billings, 1992, 1995a, 1995b, 2009) African history was reflected in the Afrivisual that they viewed. The researcher sought to discover if African American students' exposure to African history is culturally relevant to them, and also if the subjects who took the survey and participants who were part of the focus groups had ever been exposed to it before. The researcher also looked at the subjects' and participants' interest levels in African history. As previously stated, the study included subjects who were a part of the quantitative phase of the study, and participants in the qualitative phase of the study.

Both the subjects and participants were African American students attending three community colleges in southern California. The next section presents the results obtained with the aforementioned methods.

### **Limitations**

The sample size for this study was small mainly because just three out of eight community college African American Retention Program directors responded to the researcher's request to conduct the study. These three directors agreed to provide support in finding subjects and participants for the study. Even though the researcher had originally sought to conduct the study at eight community colleges in the greater Los Angeles area, there were only the aforementioned three that were part of the study.

The researcher had hoped that contact would be made at each of the eight prospective institutions which all had significant African American student populations, however that was not the case. Despite attempts of the researcher by phone calls and e-mails to reach representatives of African American Retention Programs at each of these community colleges those other five potential community colleges were not an option as part of the study.

Also, convenience sampling as a form of nonprobability sampling does not randomize as does the method of probability sampling. Such a reality in utilizing convenience sampling strategies runs the risk of potential problems when generalizing of data is incorporated by researchers (Babbie, 2011). Therefore, the information ascertained from this study cannot be generalized further than the study population. These data are important in understanding native-born African American students' reactions to culturally relevant exposure to African history, if their exposure to African history is culturally relevant, and also if they have ever been exposed to it before. The data must be given meticulous evaluation and analysis due to the sampling method and direct population to control for bias.

## **Results**

As stated in the first section, this study reflects in detail the problem with Eurocentric American history. Eurocentrism has led to a distortion of African history and hence has ignored Africa's contribution to world civilization. As a result of Eurocentric dominance in classroom settings African American students have suffered from identity issues.

This section is organized in terms of the research questions posed in the first section, "How do native-born African American community college students respond to a culturally relevant visual tool?" "What experiences have they had with history?" "How has their exposure to history affected them?" This section is organized by the multiple research methods utilized in this study. This mixed-methods procedure was grouped into survey results and interview results.

### **Survey Results**

The survey result represented data gathered from the three combined community colleges where a total of 51 respondents answered a questionnaire that revealed their previous exposure to Black history/African history. The questionnaire queries how these African American students reacted to culturally relevant African history. As already revealed in the previous section there were ten survey questions based upon a five point Likert Scale. All tables for each of the survey questions were generated using SPSS. Each survey question is listed. Each table provides descriptive information listing frequencies and percentage.

### History as a Favorite Subject

Some 41percent of African Americans in this study have identified history as a favored area of interest throughout their learning in schools. As descriptively indicated in Table 4.1, most of the African American respondents revealed that history has been one of their favorite subjects from Kindergarten (K) through college. There were 41 percent of the respondents who agreed or strongly agreed, whereas a close 33 percent of the respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed.

**Table 4.1**

*History Has Always Been One of My Favorite Subjects From K through College*

<b>N = 51</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Strongly disagree	5	9.8
Disagree	12	23.5
Neither disagree nor agree	13	25.5
Agree	15	29.4
Strongly agree	6	11.8
<hr/>		
Total	51	100.0

### Good Grades in Previous History Classes

Most of the African Americans in this study were somewhat evenly divided in agreement that they had received good grades in previous history classrooms. As descriptively indicated in Table 4.2, African American students responded if they earned good grades in history classes from K through college. There were 51 percent of the respondents who agreed or strongly agreed, whereas only 18 percent of the respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed.

**Table 4.2**

*I have always earned good grades in my K through college history classes*

<b>N = 51</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Strongly disagree	5	9.8
Disagree	4	7.8
Neither disagree nor agree	16	31.4
Agree	16	31.4
Strongly agree	10	19.6
<hr/>		
Total	51	100.0

**History as a Favorite Subject / Good Grades in Previous History Classes**

A cross-tabulation of frequencies as described in Table 4.3 shows the relationship between how the students in the study viewed their experiences in history classrooms and the good grades they had previously earned. Of the 21 students who said history was a favorite course, 13 (62%) got good grades. Of the 17 students who disagreed that history was a favorite only 29% reported good grades. The reverse relationship is not as strong. Of the students reporting good grades, 50% liked history and 19% did not.

**Table 4.3 Crosstabulation/frequencies of *History has always been one of my favorite subjects from K through college; and I have always earned good grades in my K through college history classes***

		History has always been one of my favorite subjects from K through college			Total	
		Strongly disagree/Disagree	Neither disagree or agree	Agree/Strongly agree		
I have always earned good grades in my K through college history classes	Strongly disagree/Disagree	6	1	2	9	
	Neither disagree or agree	6	4	6	16	
	Agree/Strongly Agree	5	8	13	26	
Total			17	13	21	51

### **Contributions of African Americans to History Discussed by Teachers/Instructors**

African Americans in this study did not believe their teachers and instructors throughout their educational years have adequately talked about any African American contributors to American or world history. As descriptively indicated in Table 4.3, African American students, 62 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed that most of their teachers and instructors from K through college had discussed the contributions that African Americans have made to U.S. history/world history. Whereas there were 25 percent of the respondents who agreed or strongly agreed with the statement.

**Table 4.4**

*Most of my history teachers and instructors from K through college have talked about the contributions African Americans have made to U.S. history/world history*

<b>N = 51</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Strongly disagree	13	25.5
Disagree	19	37.3
Neither disagree nor agree	6	11.8
Agree	11	21.6
Strongly agree	2	3.9
<hr/>		
Total	51	100.0

**Proud to be a Black Person from Learned Information in History Classes**

African Americans in this study revealed that they were proud to be a Black person based upon their learning experiences in prior history classrooms. As descriptively indicated in Table 4.4, African American students mainly responded that in most of their history classes from K through college they learned information that made them proud to be a Black person. Almost half, 47 percent of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed, although there was a significant number at 35 percent who disagreed or strongly disagreed.

**Table 4.5**

*In most of my history classes from K through college that I've taken, I've learned information that has made me proud to be a Black person*

<b>N =51</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Strongly disagree	8	15.7
Disagree	10	19.6
Neither disagree nor agree	9	17.6
Agree	18	35.3
Strongly agree	6	11.8
<hr/>		
Total	51	100.0

**Proud to be a Black Person from Learned Information in History Textbooks**

African Americans in this study did not definitively suggest that any pride in their Blackness came from reading any U.S. history textbooks. As descriptively indicated in Table 4.5, there were 37 percent of African American respondents who disagreed or strongly disagreed that in most of the history textbooks they've been required to read from K through college, they learned information that made them proud to be a Black person. Whereas 35 percent of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed.

**Table 4.6**

*In most of the history textbooks I've been required to read from K through college I've learned information that has made me proud to be a Black person*

<b>N =51</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Strongly disagree	8	15.7
Disagree	11	21.6
Neither disagree nor agree	14	27.5
Agree	13	25.5
Strongly agree	5	9.8
<hr/>		
Total	51	100.0

**Important as a Black Person to Study the History of African Civilization**

African Americans in this study overwhelmingly believed in the value of learning about historical ancient Africa. As descriptively indicated in Table 4.6, the majority of African American respondents, 96 percent agreed and strongly agreed that as a Black person, they felt it is important to study the history of African civilizations. There were no respondents who disagreed or strongly disagreed.



**Table 4.7**

*As a Black person, I think it is important to study the history of African civilizations*

	<b>N =51</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Strongly Disagree		0	0
Disagree		0	0
Neither disagree nor agree		2	3.9
Agree		11	21.6
Strongly Agree		38	74.5
<hr/>			
Total		51	100.0

**Important as a Black Person to Study the History of African Ancestors**

African Americans in this study almost unanimously believed it is necessary for them to learn about their African ancestors. As descriptively indicated in Table 4.7, the majority of African American respondents, 98 percent, agreed or strongly agreed that as a Black person, they felt it is important to study about their African ancestors. There were no respondents who disagreed or strongly disagreed.

**Table 4.8**

*As a Black person, I think it is important to study about my African ancestors*

<b>N = 51</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Strongly disagree	0	0
Disagree	0	0
Neither disagree nor agree	1	2.0
Agree	13	25.5
Strongly agree	37	72.5
<hr/>		
Total	51	100.0

### **Important as a Black Person to Study African History**

African Americans in this study overwhelmingly expressed that they must learn about African history. As descriptively indicated in Table 4.8 and graphically illustrated in Figure 4.8, the majority of African American respondents, 96 percent agreed or strongly agreed that as a Black person, they felt it is important to study African history. There were no respondents who disagreed or strongly disagreed.

**Table 4.9**

*As a Black person, I think it is important to study African history*

<b>N = 51</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Strongly disagree	0	0
Disagree	0	0
Neither disagree nor agree	2	3.9
Agree	9	17.6
Strongly agree	40	78.4
<hr/>		
Total	51	100.0

**Proud to be African Descendant from Visual Images Seen About Africa**

African Americans in this study were evenly split over visual depictions reflecting Africa that elicited any Black pride which they were previously exposed to. As descriptively indicated in Table 4.9, there were 31 percent of African American respondents, who agreed or strongly agreed, and equally disagreed or strongly disagreed, that most of the visual images they've seen about Africa in previous classrooms and U.S. society have made them proud to be a descendant of Africans.

**Table 4.10**

*Most of the visual images I've seen about Africa in classrooms and U.S. society have made me proud to be a descendant of Africans*

<b>N =51</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Strongly disagree	6	11.8
Disagree	10	19.6
Neither disagree nor agree	19	37.3
Agree	8	15.7
Strongly agree	8	15.7
<hr/>		
Total	51	100.0

**Empowerment as an African American from Visual Images Seen About Africa**

African Americans in this study were slightly more in agreement than in disagreement that any visual impression of Africa has even positively/negatively impacted self-esteem as a member of their racial group. As descriptively indicated in Table 4.10. There were 35 percent of the African American respondents who agreed or strongly agreed, while 31 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed that most of the visual images they've seen about Africa in previous classrooms and U.S. society have empowered them as an African American.

**Table 4.11**

*Most of the visual images I've seen about Africa in classrooms and U.S. society have empowered me as an African American*

<b>N = 51</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Strongly disagree	8	15.7
Disagree	8	15.7
Neither disagree nor agree	17	33.3
Agree	11	21.6
Strongly agree	7	13.7
<hr/>		
Total	51	100.0

The survey results addressed African American students' exposure to Black history/African history and whether that history is culturally relevant (Ladson-Billings, 1992, 1995a, 1995b, 2009). This mixed-methods study is triangulated in cultural relevancy (Ladson-Billings, 1992, 1995a, 1995b, 2009).

### **Focus Group Results**

The focus groups at each of the community colleges reflected the same four questions to gather data. After viewing the transcribed focus group data for all three combined institutions, the researcher used a qualitative coding process supported by Atlas.ti. Atlas.ti is an effective software, and an advanced tool for the qualitative analysis of extensive amounts of textual, graphical, audio, and video data (Atlas.ti). Four themes emerged from the focus group data after participants viewed the Afrivisual and were then asked four questions. There were 38 African American participants in the study who were a part of the focus groups at each of the three community colleges. Some of these students did not comment. At the same time there were other students who made more than one comment during the focus groups.

With all of the hype surrounding alternative pedagogical and andragogical approaches, the Afrivisual in the form of a narrated PowerPoint lecture and designed as a standard presentation was able to effectively engage the five focus groups. The narrated PowerPoint Afrivisual as a culturally relevant (Ladson-Billings, 1992, 1995a, 1995b, 2009) data gathering tool elicited energetic emotional responses, stirred an intellectual hunger, created excitement, prompted questions, and moved to tears many of the African American participants. The themes that emerged and engaged the participants were (1): Lack of exposure; (2): Want More; (3): Ask questions; and (4): Learn more.

### **Lack of Exposure**

Question One: “Before I viewed this PowerPoint presentation my previous exposure to Black history/African history in my educational experience already made a difference for me that...”

Theme one was formulated by answers of the participants to the post screening focus group first question that was asked of them. As previously mentioned there were some instances where a participant may have commented more than one time. A total of 29 comments by participants revealed they had no exposure to Black history/African history of any significance. There were comments by 27 participants that overwhelmingly stated that they didn’t learn much from instructors, if anything, about African history, therefore it didn’t make a difference from their previous educational experiences. A male participant stated, “When I went to school it was almost like Black people didn’t exist...The only reason I knew about Black people is because I was Black.” A female participant said, “Before we didn’t learn anything about African history. We barely learned about Black history, or African American history.” While another female participant expressed, “I feel like I been bamboozled. And I’ve been taught lies.”

Some participants sheepishly admitted that they didn’t know that much about African American history or African history. A male participant revealed, “In high school and middle school I never really knew anything about it...all I knew was slaves came from Africa and that’s it.” Another male participant commented, “I really didn’t know about my African American history. We were taught in American history...it’s not really full into detail.” A female participant emphasized, “I really didn’t have an education on Black history.”

Most of the focus in U.S. history classrooms on African Americans has been on slavery. As a result, African American students can only imagine themselves as descendants of slaves, given this type of limited history. A total of 26 comments by the students expressed disdain that the slave era was the main area of focus in history they were taught about Africa or African Americans. A male participant stated, “... in high school and middle school I never really knew anything about it... all I knew was slaves came from Africa and that's it.”

Another male participant said,

Well, I think that it's kind of really hard to answer that question for a lot of people, just because of the fact that a lot of us didn't, we went through history classes or just school, period, and we didn't really get taught the educational background of Black history or African history. We was [sic]taught history all the way up until the point of slavery. We were brought here on boats, and that's where it stops for most of us.

While another male participant resounded, "It didn't make a difference for me from what I've learned in school. When you were in school the history that you began with began to learn about African Americans by slavery. Slavery is the first thing that you were taught."

Another male participant revealed, "It really didn't make a difference for me from what I've learned in school. When you were in school, the history that you began to learn about African Americans by slavery. Slavery is the first thing that you were taught." Yet another male participant recounted, "Honestly, my previous exposure, I would say it hasn't really made a big difference....based off what I've learned...it's just been a repetition of the slave movement and civil rights and stuff like that..." A female participant said, "My previous experience before I watched the film was very minimal. It began at slavery. The school I went to really didn't focus on African-American history that much...as far as the educational point there really wasn't one."

Another female participant explained,

When they put us into slavery and into bondage, that is where they begin our history because that's all they know, you know? They tried to erase our history that we had before...They just wanted to strip us of everything including our heritage, which they pretty much succeeded at doing.

Several students searching for answers to what they had been previously taught said sarcastically that all they remember being taught in schools about African American history was about Martin Luther King, Rosa Parks, and Harriett Tubman. An African American male participant said, "I would say that it really didn't make a difference for me before 'cause, you know, they really didn't teach you history. All you knew that every February is Black History Month and you didn't know why. They're like Martin Luther King, Rosa Parks and that was it." Another African American male participant reiterated, "We just learned about Martin Luther King." While a female participant added, "And Rosa Parks. And Harriett Tubman."

## Want More

Question Two: “Whether or not I’ve had previous exposure to Black history/African history, the visual images I saw from the PowerPoint presentation make a difference for me personally that...”

Theme two was generated by answers of the participants to the post screening focus group second question that was asked of them. Some participants made more than one comment. With theme two, comments by 22 participants indicated that they wanted more after the PowerPoint presentation caused them to realize that they had never been previously exposed to African history in any significant way. The participants answered question two by expressing feelings of receiving enlightenment about Africa’s true history after viewing the Afrivisual. In addition, they revealed that they felt more of a connection with Africa and its history, which they previously knew very little about. A male participant stated,

The PowerPoint presentation showed me how little I knew about the history of, about African history, and obviously there was a lot. It went back to the first human culture, the first humans, and that's, I'm gonna have to say, at least maybe seven, eight millennia? That's a long history that wasn't, that I really didn't know about.

Another male participant said, “It allowed me to love myself more knowing that, you know, our people are, what they've contributed I feel more empowered to go out there and do something and allow myself more than what we've been taught prior.” This newfound connection with Africa mentioned by the participants filled them with “questions.” A female participant recounted, “I feel like the images opened my mind and I agree with [name omitted] and it just like just makes me question what’s really real and what’s fake.” Another female participant explained,

For me, it kind of brings out a whole ‘nother world of questioning, like the presentation basically, with all the images, it makes you think back to everything that you’ve learned, like how much of it is really true. And I don’t know, it’s almost confusing. It was so much information, and it was really interesting, and the images of the pictures and everything like that, it makes you question, I don’t know, just everything, the whole research of it. I don’t know. I got to get my words together.



A male participant remarked,

It makes me want to like look into stuff more, like, okay, well, I had no clue about that, and to see the images and to hear about it makes you question a lot of things, like a lot of things that are going on today with from the educational point to the science and creativity part. It just makes you think like if we created these things, why are we so far behind in certain things? That's my questioning. Where did it break off? Where did it stop to a point where we no longer are not, we're no longer in that higher part.

Another male participant added further commentary to the aforementioned quoted male participant, "Like what [name omitted] was saying, I kind of like agree, like asking all these questions...."

In addition to participants having "questions" that arose in question two after watching the Afrivisual, they expressed feelings of "hunger" to know more about African history. A male participant recounted,

I guess it made me feel hungry as well as other people. A lot of things I didn't know because my exposure to, before, it wasn't that great. So this opened my eyes to things that I didn't know that I think I should know at this point in time. I should care more about my history.

A female participant seeking to explain her need to find out more about ancient Africa's untold contribution to world civilization revealed that she desired, "more hunger for knowledge about who my people were and what they really did do for society."

There were comments by 23 participants expressed disdain that African history has been ignored in schools and kept away from African Americans. They felt "angry" and "upset" about their lack of exposure to Africa's ancient historical account. A male participant stated,

I don't know, to me it does confirm our history and also lets me know what's been kept from our children, what's been kept out of our history. That's what it confirms for me. Makes me upset we're not being taught about that in school like they teach us about them, you know. That's what it confirmed to me. 'Cause I knew this, like I said, whether or not you have previous exposure. You should be exposed.

A different male participant also said,

Me personally, it makes me angry that we're in a system that knows what we've done but chooses to keep us low, keep us down. The reason why we all didn't know about this stuff in middle school, elementary, or high school, I think, was purposely done. It was done purposely to keep us away from that, keep us caught up in whatever the stuff we want to, drugs, bad, playing ball, or rapping or whatnot, keeps us limited.

Yet another male participant expressed, "It kind of makes me angry to know that you've been robbed so long...just devastating. So it kind of makes you pissed."

Also within theme two, a topic surfaced due to 21 comments by participants were excitedly interested in talking about an African mother of humanity called "Mitochondrial Eve." The discussion about a genetic African mother of humankind supplanting the biblical story of Adam and Eve as White progenitors of humanity caused a wide-eyed prolonged conversation to emerge. A female participant said,

Some of the images made me smile a little bit just like some of the things that they portray. Like some of the people as being White like...Adam and Eve, stuff like that. It was comforting to actually see those images as Black people for once.

Another female participant commented,

The picture when Adam and Eve [Image of Mitochondrial Eve and Africoid male figure]...I never seen any like portrait of that, to be honest with you, because growing up, you only seen, no offense, you only seen Caucasian portraits of portraying Adam and Eve. And so when I saw like the African American woman and the man, it's like, wow, we really do have pictures of us, of color, not just of Caucasian, because I never, to be honest with you, rarely see any pictures like that.

A male participant revealed, "Challenged my beliefs. The pictures of Adam and Eve. Now I'm starting to question was anything in the Bible actually real?" Lastly, there were 11 comments by students who questioned their biblical foundational beliefs after viewing the Afrivisual.

## Ask Questions

Question Three: “The visual images I saw from the PowerPoint presentation about African history had an impact on my view of history that...”

The participants answered the post screening focus group third question that was asked of them. Again there were some occurrences where a participant may have commented more than once. The need of the participants to ask questions emerged as theme three. Theme three was the development of immediate “questions” as commented by 22 participants after viewing the PowerPoint. In answering question three, the participants questioned their previous history classes that did not present any type of African history playing a contributory role in world history. One of the female participants commented, “It [The PowerPoint] made me question my previous history classes that I've taken and why this...” then she sincerely asked, “why did we have to start at slavery?” In a more passionate tone the same student continued with more soul-searching questions, “Why can't they teach this [Like PowerPoint]? Why can't we learn about this [Like PowerPoint]?” She finally concluded by stating, “Like it began in Africa. Everything was shifted over here...after seeing all these images, that's what impacted me is like why didn't we begin there?” Another female participant asked, “why we didn't go over this [Like PowerPoint] 'cause it has such a great impact?” Yet another female participant recounted,

Yeah, that's what I was gonna say. Something like it's gonna make me question my professors more and just, it's gonna make me think more. Not 'cause, when you have a professor you think the professor knows everything, like, everything that you're being taught is real, 'cause they've been through every kind of whatever, got a degree and all that stuff. But that doesn't make it, that doesn't make them information, doesn't make kind of whatever, got a degree and all that stuff. But that doesn't make it, that doesn't make them information, doesn't make information all true. So it's gonna make me question everything and always ask more questions and figure out the real roots of African-American.

The students continued their questioning of their previous history classes lack of inclusion of African history. A male participant said,

It made me question my previous history classes that I've taken and why this, why we didn't go over this 'cause it has such a great impact and, you know, it started with Black folks and trickled down so, you know, I was wondering why they left it out, it's such an important part.

A male participant also addressed the questions raised by other participants and succinctly remarked, “We need to write our own history books.” Another male participant stated, “I see that history has been manipulated in a sense where it hasn't been taught to uplift African American people, more so to make them, put them down and isolate them and oppress them. That's the history that we've been taught.”

Some participants felt “cheated” and “deprived” of an African historical experience by the absence of African history in previous classes. One of the female participants revealed, “It definitely makes you feel cheated but in a sense it makes you feel like there's a fear out there, like there's someone who's fearful that as a people we'll recognize our own greatness.” Another female participant expressed,

It kind of makes me feel like I've been deprived of learning a lot and just the norm of all the people that I've learned in the Black history and African American culture just kind of feels like I don't, I just feel like I've been deprived of part of my history, of who I come from.

Also a disappointed female participant exclaimed,

It just makes me upset that these things have been kept from so many of our people and its gonna continue to be hidden from so many generations to come because there is nothing up and coming that is gonna require this to be taught to our children in school. So for the people and different races that don't have the urge to want to seek African American history, they're just gonna be blind to what we really are...They've [Euro-American society] just taken everything from us and they continue to take, you know, things from our children by the lack of knowledge they're teaching them, as far as their own personal history. And it's just disgusting.

Last but not least, a male participant also voiced his frustration and disappointment as he remarked,

This is all a hoax... 'Cause it's ridiculous. It [The PowerPoint] taught me how, it had an impact that we're constantly oppressed and there's some things that we do not control that we oppress ourselves with but there's some things, there's some external factors there too. And that this is all a hoax. That there's forces out there, the powers that be, that are trying to keep their necks on the power of the Black man. So, that's what it, how it had an impact on me and my history. It's jaded now.

The participants also commented that they need to be vigilant about what's being taught to them, and they expressed a need to learn about African history. One of the female participants explained, "I won't be fooled any more. You just can't throw something in my face and say, "This is what history was. This is what the truth is. You can't, I won't be, they won't be able to fool me basically." Another female participant said, "I just kind of felt like I had a small mind before. I saw the presentation, because I didn't know like half of the stuff so now I feel like my mind is open and I'm exposed to what's real." A female participant also expressed,

I think it just made me realize that we really need to learn more about ourselves and I think the importance of knowing yourself and knowing about your history, your family's history. Just, I think it made me more aware that we just need to educate ourselves a lot more.

Then a male participant concluded question two by discussing the need to be watchful about the type of history being taught to African Americans, as he commented,

That our history isn't bad, 'cause when I was in high school or even like in kindergarten or middle school, whatever, I really didn't like history. It was like one of my worst subjects, 'cause like I already said, like if you can't get nowhere without knowing your history, but we always was taught the same things over and over and over. So it became like it was just a routine. So like now seeing this PowerPoint today just basically opened our eyes into seeing that there is more than just what we was taught in our school.

## **Learn More**

Question Four: "The visual images I saw from the PowerPoint presentation about African history will have an impact on my educational experience that..."

The desire of the participants to learn more about African history surfaced as theme four. There were some multiple comments made by an individual participant. The participants answered the post screening focus group fourth question.

Theme four, developed by comments of 32 participants, stated that the PowerPoint will have an impact on their educational experience that will prompt further interest in African history. A male participant said,

Makes me want to learn more about, like most of them kept saying, about my history and stuff. Because some of that stuff I saw I didn't even know some of our history could be related back to the Bible and stuff and be traced back to Bible days. And so knowing that our history goes back so far, it makes me want to learn more about how much more there is out there.

Another male participant remarked,

It's even further than the Bible. After the presentation, in future classes I take or I guess the lessons that I'll be learning, I'll definitely think about why they're teaching this part and what parts are not being taught. And, yeah, questioning what I'm learning.

A male participant also commented,

I mean for me, it just kind of inspired me seeing the struggles and the hardship of our history...our experience. And it's inspired me to look towards the future. Kind of learn more about African American history in more depth and just kind of a broader sense of the African history.

A female participant stated,

It'll kind of make you question everything that you're being taught as far as, especially as far as history, even English and, heck, even math. A lot of things that we're gonna be taught, like from now on, and what we were taught previously, it'll put a question in your mind about how true that it is and how we really take it in. For me personally, it'll make a difference, because I'll question a lot more as far as the evidence goes.

The participants would like to use the culturally relevant history received from the PowerPoint, to self-educate themselves about African history. A male participant said, "...I'll just self-educate myself more, read more books and learn it for myself and not be fed the information, and just study it for myself." A male participant added, "It makes me want to learn more about it and possibly go study in Africa to learn the history from that people. And they would know better than anyone in America, I believe." Another male participant expressed,

I'm gonna make it my personal mission to seek more, even though it's not offered in a classroom setting there's all these books I can read. There's now the world wide web informational gateway that can serve me lots of information. So now that, once you know something, I believe you're accountable for what you do from that point on. So I'm gonna take the safe road and educate myself and know my true self and go from that point on.

A female participant said, "...If I learn something, I'm gonna just go and learn above and beyond, kind of related to, I guess, African history." Another female participant commented,

I guess in agreeance with what [name omitted] said, just make me study. If I study something and I know it to be true and accurate, then I pass on information to not only people I know but also to my children when I have 'em in the future. So whatever I know to be true then I pass on that information. So, yeah, just to educate myself.

Finally, the participants after watching the PowerPoint and answering question four, expressed an interest that they want to help others to learn about African history. A female participant revealed, "It will help me with my personal growth and you can't unknow what you know. And now that I know it's up to me to tell other people about it." Another female participant stated,

...not just learning more for myself but trying to help others where I feel like if you know something that's really important you should always pass it around and, you know, help others learn what you know. And also maybe it's not part of my career choice, but probably take more classes where I can learn more than what I was shown in the PowerPoint.

A female participant also said,

It kind of feels like a duty to me now, like you opened up a Pandora's box and it's like now we know this information and that some of the stuff we've learned is crap. And like a lot of our teachers have told us that they've had to like, while they're in school there are people that are just ignorant. They don't know things and they've had to put them, like, while they're in school there are people that are just ignorant. They don't know things and they've had to put them, like, set them straight. And I feel like in a way, yeah, it's a Pandora's box and I have to, as a young Black woman I have to tell people.

A male participant stated that he would seek "...to give back to the younger generation..." Another male participant remarked,

I think the most important answer I could give...to it is...teach one, 'cause like I could take those images and the picture and the information, go to my niece, well, she's a little bit older now...talk to her about it and show her those things...Like look at this picture now...

The results presented above indicate evidence regarding African American reactions to exposure to Black history/African history. The African American students in this study had numerous questions as to why African history has been largely ignored in Euro-American schools. A more detailed summary and a discussion of the findings are presented in the next section.

## **Summary and Discussion**

In this final section, the researcher restates the research problem and reviews the major methods used in the study. The major sections of this section include a summary of the results of the quantitative and qualitative data and discuss their implications. Finally, recommendations will be proposed for future research, as well as suggestions given for educators in implementing culturally relevant (Ladson-Billings, 1992, 1995a, 1995b, 2009) curricula and teaching strategies in history classrooms.

### **Restatement of the Problem**

African American students have suffered in classroom settings because (1) American history is Eurocentric, (2) African history has been distorted, (3) Africa's contribution to world civilization has been ignored, and (4) African American students have suffered from identity issues.

### **Review of the Methodology**

As explained in section three, the study reported here was a mixed-methods study of the exposure of native-born African American students to a culturally relevant (Ladson-Billings, 1992, 1995a, 1995b, 2009) visual instrument in African history. In addition, the researcher looked at the reaction of African American students to Black history/African history. This mixed-methods study primarily used a qualitative perspective that would allow the researcher to discern the meaning of the behavioral affects of ancient African images upon the participants.



The qualitative phase of the study highlighted the introduction of the Afrivisual, a culturally relevant (Ladson-Billings, 1992, 1995a, 1995b, 2009) action research tool. The 35-minute narrated Afrivisual PowerPoint showed images and depictions of African history prior to the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade. The Afrivisual focused on the classical African, i.e., Nile Valley civilizations that predominantly depicted ancient Egypt (Kemet) and Ethiopia (Kush). The qualitative part of the mixed-methods study relied chiefly upon five focus groups held at three community colleges in southern California. The participants viewed the Afrivisual and after viewing, they were asked to discuss four open-ended questions. The quantitative phase of the mixed-methods study consisted of a 10-item self-administered questionnaire. These survey questions were designed to determine the experiences of native-born African Americans in Euro-American history classrooms.

### **Summary of the Results**

First, the survey results of the quantitative part of the study were based upon questions that would reveal the respondents' previous exposure to African history. The questionnaire that the respondents answered was also designed to indicate how they would react to its content. The respondents revealed that their previous exposure to history has been a favorite area of interest throughout their classroom experiences, which was in contrast to what the researcher expected. Despite African American students expressing history as having been a favorite subject in the survey responses, those participants in the focus groups complained and expressed anger about their American history classroom experiences.

The survey respondents agreed that they received good grades in K through college history classes. The respondents were equally divided that they had received good grades in K through college history classes. The respondents stated that they were proud to be Black based upon their learning experiences in prior K through college history classes.

The respondents did not believe the teachers throughout their years of study had provided them with pertinent information about the contributions African Americans have made to U.S. history/world history. This aforementioned belief of the respondents seems to contradict their conviction that previous exposure to history has always been a favorite area of interest throughout their classroom experiences. The respondents expressed ambivalence in relating that they experienced any pride in being Black which was caused by reading any U.S. history textbooks. The respondents believed it is important that they study the history of African civilizations, learn about their African ancestors, and to study African history. The respondents were equally divided that visual images they've seen about Africa in classrooms and U.S. society have made them feel proud to be a descendant of Africans. The respondents were ambivalent that visual images they have seen regarding Africa in classrooms and U.S. society never empowered them as African Americans.

Next, the interview results of the qualitative part of the study were conducted to look at how African American learners would react to the Afrivisual. The interviews of the African American students were conducted by focus groups. The participants revealed that history classes taught them about African American slavery, and that their ancestors were an enslaved people. They emphasized that they were taught their ancestral history began during the slave era. The participants stated that the PowerPoint caused a desire to learn more about African history. They identified an awakened kinship with Africa. They also expressed their displeasure in that African history was not previously taught to them. The participants were enthralled by discussion of an African mother of civilization they viewed from the PowerPoint that shed new light for them about the origins of humanity juxtaposed against their perception of the White biblical characters, Adam and Eve. The participants questioned their previous history classes' silence about African history. The participants expressed a need to carefully watch what is being taught to them in any future history courses. The participants believe the PowerPoint had an impact on their educational experience that will inspire them to learn about African history, and to share what they've learned with others.

## **Discussion of the Results**

The findings of this study show that African American students prefer culturally relevant (Ladson-Billings, 1992, 1995a, 1995b, 2009) history about Africa, as it relates to them being connected with their ancestors. Overall, nearly all of the African American learners in both the quantitative and qualitative phases of the inquiry emphasized the importance of culturally relevant (Ladson-Billings, 1992, 1995a, 1995b, 2009) history about their ancestors. The quantitative and qualitative data revealed conclusive results that parallel with the research tied to culturally relevant curricula and their advantages (Gay, 2000, 2002; Howard, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1992, 1995a, 1995b, 2009; Murrell, 2002; Thompson, 2007). The researcher's findings from the triangulated quantitative and qualitative data within this mixed-methods study provided a robust analysis of African American student's preferences for culturally relevant (Ladson-Billings, 1992, 1995a, 1995b, 2009) history. The study also revealed some important experiences and perceptions of African American students in U.S. history classes.

## **Key Findings and Interpretation of the Quantitative Data**

The results of the quantitative data revealed that many of the respondents had mixed experiences from K through college with their U.S. History/world history classes. Examples of these mixed experiences of African American students in history classrooms as presented in this study are, (1) if history had been a favorite subject in classes previously taken; (2) if they had received good grades; (3) if contributions of African Americans had been discussed by their instructors; (4) if they felt Black racial pride from learned information in history classrooms; and (5) if they felt Black racial pride from learned information in history textbooks.

Surprisingly, 41% of the African American students revealed that their prior exposure to history had been a favorite area of interest throughout their classroom experiences. This unexpected finding, although still not a majority, contradicts Loewen (1995) who suggested history is the least favorite subject of African American students. The respondents stated that history was a favorite subject, but just as surprising they revealed that they had received good grades throughout their years of study. Some 51% of the respondents indicated that they had earned good grades in previous history classes, yet 63% of the respondents suggested that contributions of African Americans to history had not been discussed by their previous instructors.

Despite the apparent contradiction, the African American students appeared to admit that by earning good grades that they have maintained an interest level in history classes despite a lack of culturally relevant (Ladson-Billings, 1992, 1995a, 1995b, 2009) discussion by their instructors of African American contributions to history. While discussing if they felt racial pride in being Black from learned information in history classes, there were 47% of the respondents who believed this to be true, there were 35% of them who disagreed and strongly disagreed. Otherwise, some 35% of the respondents thought that they were proud to be Black from learned information in history textbooks, while there were 37% of the respondents in opposition. These findings help to shed some light about African American students ability to maintain a pride-filled identity, despite being exposed to non-culturally relevant (Ladson-Billings, 1992, 1995a, 1995b, 2009) history classes and textbooks. The feelings of Black pride exhibited by African American students in U.S./world history courses is somewhat at odds with the Black identity literature (Allen, 2001; Bailey, 2005). Perhaps the Clarks' (1939, 1947) "Negro" self-hatred thesis needs to be revisited, especially since these researchers only tested African American preschool children (Cross, 1991). The researcher in this study focused on African American adults, not African American preschool children. Scholars have mistakenly attributed the Clarks' (1939, 1947) self-hatred hypothesis to African American adults (Cross, 1991). Similarly, academics have previously cited identity and self-esteem issues that negatively affect an unspecified age range of African American students in history classrooms (Allen, 2001; Bailey, 2005; Cross, 1991).

In addition, for these respondents, there was no indication that they suffered from any low level of attainment of racial self-love. Examples of the racial self-love of the respondents were drawn from their discussion (1) if it was important as a Black person to study the history of African civilization; (2) if it was important as a Black person to study the history of their African ancestors; (3) if it was important as a Black person to study African history; (4) if he/she was proud to be an African descendant from visual images seen about Africa; and (5) if he/she felt empowered as an African American from visual images seen about Africa. Some 96% of the respondents believed it was important as a Black person to study the history of African civilization, which shows that African American students desire culturally relevant instruction (Ladson-Billings, 1992, 1995a, 1995b, 2009).

The importance as a Black person of studying African ancestors was almost unanimous, as 98% of the respondents expressed their desire to do so, which also revealed their interest in culturally relevant (Ladson-Billings, 1992, 1995a, 1995b, 2009) materials. Some 96% of the respondents expressed that it was important as a Black person to study African history. This finding also indicated the African American students interest in the attainment of a culturally relevant education (Ladson-Billings, 1992, 1995a, 1995b, 2009). When the students were asked if they were proud to be an African descendant from visual images they've seen about Africa, there were both 31% who agreed and strongly agreed, as well as 31% who disagreed and strongly disagreed. This deficiency in Black pride and racial self-love from the absence of positive visual images experienced by the respondents revealed a lack of exposure to culturally relevant (Ladson-Billings, 1992, 1995a, 1995b, 2009) visual images about Africa. The Afrivisual was created by the researcher to address this need of African American students having exposure to culturally relevant (Ladson-Billings, 1992, 1995a, 1995b, 2009) visual images.

Finally, the data revealed that only 35% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed, while 31% disagreed or strongly disagreed that they had been empowered as an African American from visual images they had seen about Africa prior to viewing the Afrivisual. This dichotomy of African American students at 35% and 31% closely divided over any impactful self-empowerment they've felt from viewing visual images of Africa showed a need for more exposure to African visual images such as the Afrivisual represented, a culturally relevant (Ladson-Billings, 1992, 1995a, 1995b, 2009) tool. This study found that the respondents expressed racial self-love, and Black pride to ascertain knowledge about their African ancestors and African history. Such a viewpoint of African American students has relevance in the pedagogical and andragogical aims of the African-centeredness approach (Akoto, 1994; Asante, 1991; Hilliard, 1992; Karenga, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 1992, 1995; Lee, 1994; Lomotey, 1992; Poe, 2006; Ratteray, 1994; Shujaa, 1994).

Some of the findings from this study were different than the researcher's expectations and previous research. These inconsistent findings include the African American students prior exposure to U.S. history and world history being a favorite area of interest in the classroom, as expressed by 41% of the respondents, even though this is not a majority. The researcher did not expect nearly half of the African American students to indicate that Eurocentric history would be of interest to them. The viewpoint of the researcher that African American students lacked an interest in Euro-American- centered history was further supported by scholars (Bailey, 2005; Loewen, 1995) who held a similar belief. Neither did the researcher expect to find that 51% of the respondents would say that they had always earned good grades in history classes. A possible explanation why 51% of the respondents, a little more than half, expressed they earned good grades in Euro-American history could somewhat reflect their lack of exposure to African history and Black history.

There were 62% of the respondents who indicated that contributions of African Americans in history classes had not been discussed by their instructors. Another explanation for the aforementioned findings could shed further light upon the “double consciousness” (Du Bois, 1903/1989) and the “mis- education” (Woodson, 1933/2008) of African Americans, which some scholars believe continues to exist (Akbar, 2004; 2006; Allen, 2001; Asante, 1991; Bailey, 2005; Parham, White & Ajamu, 1999, Wilson, 1993). Neither did the researcher expect to find that 47% of the African American respondents felt racial pride in being Black while attending Euro-American history classes, especially where there was a lack of inclusion of culturally relevant (Ladson-Billings, 1992, 1995a, 1995b, 2009) teaching strategies. The researcher had also expected to find a significant lack of interest of the respondents in their African ancestors, which would indicate low self-esteem and self-hatred issues as reported in the scholarly literature (Allen, 2001; Bailey, 2005; Cross, 1991; Murrell, 2009). To the contrary, the researcher found 98% of the respondents revealed that it was important for them to study the history of their African ancestors, while 96 % and 96 % of the respondents believed their study of African civilization and African history respectively was of importance. These findings are consistent with Nobles (1986), Parham, White, and Ajamu (1999) who suggested that African Americans seek ties with their African ancestry to help them recover their African historical heritage.

Overall, these findings were complimentary to the “concurrent transformative strategy” (Creswell, 2003) utilized in this mixed-methods inquiry. It has praxis in the theoretical frameworks or “driving force” (Creswell, 2003) within this study that combines the African-centered viewpoint of Afrocentricity (Asante 1980/2003,1991, 1992, 1995, 1998, 2000, 2006a, 2006b) and Africana critical theory (Rabaka, 2006a, 2006b, 2009). These two theoretical perspectives were supported by the survey responses that intersected and were similar to the interview responses. It was the “driving force” (Creswell, 2003) triangulation of the quantitative data with the qualitative data that allowed for more significant inferences to be drawn.

### **Key Findings and Interpretation of Qualitative Data**

The key findings from the qualitative data were derived from four post-screening questions asked in focus groups. The qualitative data provided spirited African American student responses with overlapping themes. Students described andragogical as well as curricula desires within each theme. These themes surfaced from the student responses during the focus groups in the qualitative phase of the study. The four themes were (1): Lack of exposure; (2): Want more; (3): Ask questions; and (4): Learn more. In the first theme, the participants revealed that there was no exposure to Black history/African history which previously made a difference for them. In the second theme, the participants realized that they had lacked exposure to African history and they stated that exposure to it is needed. In the third theme, the participants had questions to be asked now and in the future about African history not being taught since it should be learned. While with the fourth theme, the participants expressed learning more about African history, sharing this knowledge with others, and questioning more of what has previously been taught to them.

There were a total of 38 African American participants in the study who viewed the Afrivisual and reacted to the four focus group questions by revealing the four aforementioned themes. However some of the 38 students provided multiple comments to each of the four focus group questions. With the first theme, 29 comments by the students greatly expressed that they had a lack of exposure to Black history/African history in previous classes that ever made a significant difference for them. This first theme found in the qualitative data differs from the quantitative data in which 41% of the African American respondents stated that their previous exposure to history had been a favorite course to study in their overall classroom experiences. In the first theme found within the qualitative data, the African American participants complained about their previous history classes exclusion of culturally relevant (Ladson-Billings, 1992, 1995a, 1995b, 2009) curricula. There were 27 comments by the students who believed that their lack of exposure to Black history/African history in Euro-American classrooms was no oversight by their instructors. They also expressed a concern that there was a purposeful design within the Euro-American educational system to ignore Black history/African history. Scholars have revealed an intent by Euro-American learning institutions to “mis- educate” (Woodson, 1933/2008) African Americans, and engage them in “schooling” rather than “education” (Shujuaa, 1994) teaching strategies. These African American participants alluded to a possible strategic effort by oppressive educational policies to keep them ignorant of Black history/African history. Their thoughts about oppressive educational policies that have been put in place to control information and knowledge they are taught within the overall American schooling system is supported by scholars (Bond, 1934/1966; Watkins, 2001). After all, Bond (1934/1966) and Watkins (2001) disclosed that the foundations of African American educational training within the American “social order” were rooted in structured White “philanthropic” political ideology.

Other than a memory regarding history lessons being taught about Martin Luther King, Jr., Rosa Parks, and Harriett Tubman, 26 comments by the students made it clear that these classroom experiences were centered on discussions about their ancestors being enslaved. They reiterated that the majority of what was taught to them about African Americans was a concentrated focus upon the slave era. Winters (2002) emphasized that African American students have been influenced by biased teaching about their enslaved ancestors. To learn about their ancestors only as slaves caused these African American students to suffer painful experiences in U.S. history classrooms as supported in the works of Akbar (2006), Allen (2001), Asante (1991), Bailey (2005), Du Bois (1903/1989), and Woodson (1933/2008). This finding relates to the researcher’s overall purpose for conducting the study. It revealed that African American students experienced painful feelings in U.S. history classrooms, and that they were interested in learning culturally relevant (Ladson-Billings, 1992, 1995a, 1995b, 2009) history about their ancestors other than lessons about slavery. Therefore, the African American participants in expressing a desire to learn about the cultural history of their ancient African ancestors believed such knowledge could boost the realization of “self” potential within their own lives (Akbar, 2004).

Theme two of the focus group revealed the impact the Afrivisual had upon the African American participants after they viewed it. There were 22 comments by the students which expressed that they wanted more insight about Black history/African history in their history classes. Some 18 comments by the participants indicated that knowledge about African history by African American students is needed, and 23 comments by the participants expressed displeasure that African history has been ignored in U.S. schools and society. These students asked open questions of “why...?” and “how come...?” they have not previously learned African history as represented in the Afrivisual they viewed? The participants excitedly expressed that they were inspired and now had a “hunger” to learn more about African history. There were 21 comments by the participants about the visual images they saw and learned about what appears to be an African mother of humankind, dubbed as “Mitochondrial Eve” by geneticists, generated excitement. These African American students were puzzled but yet enthusiastically enamored of, this seemingly unconceivable idea of this African woman that they are genetically tied to. There were 11 comments by the students that showed they proudly wanted to continue to engage in an African “Eve” discussion, while juxtaposing their conflicting biblical beliefs that the portrayal of Adam and Eve was always as white progenitors of human beings.

Just as with theme two, theme three, ask questions, emerged as a continuation for the most part as 22 comments by African American participants continued to reflect upon questions with a puzzled somewhat blank stare, of “why...?” “how come...?” they had not been taught about any “truth” about African history? The soul-searching questions generated by these students were filled with disbelief and frustration that African history had not been a part of the curricula in history courses they were required to attend. The significance of this finding is that it revealed that the rich ancient historical traditions of Africa, and its contributions to world civilization has indeed long been distorted and ignored in Euro-American classrooms (Asante, 1991; ben-Jochannan, 1988; Bernal, 1994; Carruthers, 1999; Diop, 1974; Du Bois, 1946/1996; Hansberry, 1981; James, 1954/2001; Winters, 2002; Woodson, 1933/2008). Theme four, learn more, as also evident in theme two, was identified in the focus groups that reflected 32 comments by African American students. The students expressed a desire and inspiration after viewing the Afrivisual to learn as much as possible about African history, and to tell others what they’ve learned about African history. The quantitative data as shown by the respondents also triangulated with the qualitative findings in themes two, three, and four.

Therefore, the quantitative and qualitative data combined to show the strong desire African American students have to study African history, African civilizations, and to learn about their African ancestors. In addition, the triangulation of the data showed that African American students who were found to be proud to be Black, vowed to be vigilant in future history courses, and to present questions about African history. Finally, the students revealed a tremendous need to share what they’ve learned about African history with other African Americans.

## **Relationship of the Current Study to Prior Research**

Previous works have focused on African American cultural themes in curricula, academic achievement, and also racial identity Gibson (2007), Hilliard (2008), and Sampson (2008). This present study yielded findings that can build upon the knowledge base of the aforementioned studies. Gibson (2007) looked at African American student cultural themes in public school curricula that may promote higher academic achievement. Her study utilized a visual-based strategy in creating movies that would show successful learning experiences of African American students. The researcher's study has praxis with the aims of Gibson's (2007) work and use of a visual instrument that looked at the reaction of African American students to a culturally relevant tool. Gibson (2007) found that the African American participants' movies that they created, helped to prompt a desire in them for the positive representation of African American figures to be included in classroom curricula. The findings in this current work that show African American students desire for inclusion of positive African American images in classroom curricula helped to further support Gibson's (2007) research.

Sampson (2008) found that culturally relevant curricula in an American history class can help to produce significant data about academic preferences and motivating factors that concern African American students. The researcher's study helped extend Sampson's (2008) research by focusing on the experiences of African American students in U.S. history classes. This current work builds upon Sampson's (2008) belief that exposure to culturally relevant African history can reveal academic preferences and motivating factors of African American students. The present study revealed that African American students preferred to learn about African history, and that they were motivated and inspired to learn the "truth" about African history, as well as share this newfound ancestral knowledge with others.

Hilliard's (2008) study suggested that racial identity and classroom learning environments did not contribute to any significant differences in academic achievement for African American students. The current study showed that African American students indicated high levels of Black racial pride in classroom learning environments. These students expressed Black racial pride after watching the Afrivisual during the focus group interview. They indicated in the survey questionnaire that Black racial pride was also a part of their Euro-American history classroom experience. Unlike Hilliard's (2008) work, that measured academic achievement of African American students, the researcher's study did not include such a specific focus. However, the African American students in the present study stated they had received good grades in previous history classes, while at the same time they described themselves as proud to be a Black person in those Euro-American learning environments.



## **Explanation of Unanticipated Findings**

The fact that African American students during the quantitative phase of the study indicated in the survey that their previous exposure to history has been a favorite area of interest throughout their classroom experiences needs to be addressed. On the other hand, during the qualitative phase of the study the African American students revealed their dissatisfaction with their previous history classes that mainly focused on their African ancestors as an enslaved people. These focus group participants acknowledged that the only other history they recall learning about African Americans was when class discussion included Martin Luther King, Jr., Rosa Parks, and Harriet Tubman.

An explanation is needed for the finding that African American students' prior exposure to history in classrooms was a favorite subject in their learning experience. An examination of the curricula discussion that involved Martin Luther King, Jr., Rosa Parks, and Harriet Tubman is needed. It was clear that during the focus group interview the participants were visibly upset and vocally expressive that so much of their learning experience in history classes had revolved around African-descended people as slaves. It was at this moment that the participants (while thinking to remember their previous relevant history that made a difference for them) emphasized learning about Martin Luther King, Jr., Rosa Parks, and Harriet Tubman. Therefore, the African American respondents answering the close-ended survey may very well have given an overwhelming positive response based upon recollections in U.S. history classes of King, Parks, and Tubman and/or similar iconic heroic individuals especially emphasized during Black History Month. The researcher is not suggesting that the recollection of Black History Month caused this unexpected finding in the study. However, it should be noted that Black History Month instruction in Euro-American classrooms has presented a cultural misperception that focuses only upon Dr. King, Rosa Parks, Harriet Tubman, and perhaps the only other popularly studied Black person, Frederick Douglass. This type of cultural misperception whether intentionally or unintentionally ignore the contributions of other African American heroes in U.S. history and world history (Loewen, 1995; Winters, 2002). This type of limited pedagogic and andragogic focus by educators must be regarded as an area of concern that needs to be addressed when designing culturally relevant (Ladson-Billings, 1992, 1995a, 1995b, 2009) curricula of African Americans in U.S. history and world history.

## **Recommendations for Educators**

Instructors must be properly trained and supported in order to become proficient in designing culturally relevant teaching (Ladson-Billings, 1992, 1995a, 1995b, 2009) strategies. These educators should not feel guilty or burdened by any self-perceived lack of cultural understanding. The way for teachers to become effective in Black culturally relevant instruction (Ladson-Billings, 1992, 1995a, 1995b, 2009) requires a humble and open approach to dealing with new cultural information and cultural differences about African Americans, whether ethnically and/or socio-economically.

This type of approach to reaching African Americans on a cultural level is important because teachers must be quick to not judge cultural things not understood on a gut visceral reaction. Pedagogists and andragogists must be able to understand how to successfully communicate, connect, and transmit African cultural and historical knowledge to African-descended learners (Asante, 1991; Diop, 2000; Hilliard, 1999; Howard, 2001; Karenga, 2006; Ladson- Billings, 1992, 1995a, 1995b, 2009; Murrell, 2009). Educators must begin to understand the desire and “hunger” of these students to receive true history about their African ancestors. Thus these educators now seek ways to satisfy African American students’ needs in learning about the history of Africa (Parham, White, & Ajamu, 1999; Winters, 2002).

Seven suggestions for educators to effectively instruct African American students in culturally relevant teaching (Ladson-Billings, 1992, 1995a, 1995b, 2009) strategies are (1) Instructors should have proper training and support in learning about culturally relevant pedagogy, andragogy, and curricula in order to not only better understand, but to teach true African and African American history; (2) Teachers should specifically design and implement storytelling techniques about positive African and African American non- slavery experiences as part of their history curricula. The aim of this type of story-based instruction should be to produce effective, informative, and inspirational methods of communication with African American students in learning about the cultural history of their ancestors; (3) Teachers must utilize and place high significance on the use of culturally relevant (Ladson-Billings,1992, 1995a, 1995b, 2009) visual tools, i.e., the Afrivisual, which promotes the effective classroom instructional strategies associated with visual learning; (4) The recruitment of culturally competent entities such as African American colleagues, outside instructors, and consultants, who can serve as mentors; (5) Instructors should seek African American student feedback about culturally relevant (Ladson-Billings, 1992, 1995a, 1995b, 2009) material introduced into the curricula. This type of feedback gives instructors insight into what teaching strategies are effective and those that are non-effective; (6) Instructors need to be familiar with multi-cultural paradigms to gain more awareness about the often non-focus on African and African American contributions to U.S. and world history, compared to much focus of other racial groups; and (7) It is necessary for teachers to look inwardly at themselves, when biases, prejudices, or resistance to new ideas and cultural materials begin to surface. It is the instructor’s responsibility to check herself/himself and make sure that the best educational interests of the students are most important and supersedes any personal feelings, dislikes, and stereotypes about Africans and/or African Americans in a historical and/or current context. The main goal of the teacher should be to always be aware of the need to connect with the students and make every possible genuine effort to do so.

Remember to effectively instruct African American students and to gain their cultural trust, while seeking to exhibit cultural sensitivity in satisfying their cultural “hunger” at stake. A parting comment to the educator desiring to be culturally competent in the instruction of African American learners is seek to understand them, continue to understand them, and never cease to not understand them. In other words the culturally- relevant-minded (Ladson-Billings, 1992, 1995a, 1995b, 2009) teachers must seek to give African American students their true ancestral history that begins in Africa (Akbar, 2004; Akoto, 1994; Asante, 1991; Bailey, 2005; Hilliard, 1999; Karenga, 2006; Lee, 1994; Lomotey, 1992; Nobles, 1986; Shujaa, 2005; Winters, 2002).

### **Suggestions for Additional Research**

Additional research is required in understanding the educational needs of African American students. The following ten suggestions would help in the implementations for future inquiry to satisfy the aforementioned specification. They are (1) as the purpose of this study was to identify the reaction of African American students to a culturally relevant (Ladson-Billings, 1992, 1995a, 1995b, 2009) visual tool in African history, as well as to look at their previous exposure to it, the future research should focus on what type of particular history that African American students identified as a favorite subject in Euro-American classrooms; (2) it would help to include discussion about what type of letter/percentage grade scores African American students received in prior history classes throughout their educational learning experience; (3) there is a need to revisit the “Black identity/self-esteem” thesis (Allen, 2001; Bailey, 2005, Clark & Clark, 1937, 1947) as it relates to the Euro-American history classroom experiences of African American students; (4) African American figures commonly taught in U.S. history classes, i.e., Martin Luther King, Jr., Rosa Parks, Harriet Tubman, and Frederick Douglass should be excluded in research designs. The exclusion of these individuals should be done so African American students can seek to recall without confusion of any other African history or African American history that was taught to them; (5) The presentation of the Afrivisual in different media forms (Brenner, 2007; Britannica Online; Johnson, 2011; Schultz, 2005; Thurlow, Lenge, & Tomic, 2004; Tibbetts & Walsh, 2002) as listed in this work, other than a narrated PowerPoint graphic lecture; (6) further testing in pilot studies of the implementation of the Afrivisual in different media forms (Brenner, 2007; Britannica Online; Johnson, 2011; Schultz, 2005; Thurlow, Lenge, & Tomic, 2004; Tibbetts & Walsh, 2002) as listed in this work; (7) since this study was a triangulated mixed-methods approach with a primary focus on the qualitative focus group participants, further inquiry should include larger quantitative sample sizes; (8) there should be inclusion in research designs of other African-descended students from the African diaspora and continental Africa, who have attended U.S. schools. These non-native-born African American learners can provide a broad perspective regarding Black students reaction and previous exposure to culturally relevant African history or African American history; (9) since the “driving force” (Creswell, 2003) of this study was grounded in African-centered theoretical perspectives, future research should explore the emerging academic discipline of Africology (Van Horne, 2007).

Within the field of Africology (Van Horne, 2007) researchers should look to design and suggest implementation of culturally relevant (Ladson-Billings, 1992, 1995a, 1995b, 2009) African-centered curricula; and (10) Lastly, revisionist history teams engaged in designs that include collaboration between African American and Euro-American-centered academicians. These researchers should seek to facilitate the use of the Afrivisual as part of curricula in multicultural classroom settings.

To strengthen future studies, researchers should look into six more important areas: (1) to increase participation which should include diverse ethno-cultural groups to view the Afrivisual, (2) by improving the research question that guided the study by focusing on previous visual images within African history the respondents have been exposed to, (3) to further explore self-image and self-esteem issues by looking at voluntary and involuntary education models (Ogbu, & Simons, 1998), (4) to examine the Nigrescence model as relative to African American adult students finding their “Blackness” (Cross, 1991), (5) to look for additional qualitative research gathering methods like the use of one on one/personal interviewing, instead of sole reliance upon focus groups, and (6) to further expand the relationship between something the students say they love such as history and how they are engaged in it and perform overall. The latter research suggestion builds upon the finding in this study where 41% of the respondents, who reported history as a favorite subject in previous classes is significant but again as previously stated does not reflect a majority. As well, the researchers should investigate the aforementioned correlation with history as a favorite subject with the grades the respondents reported to have received. Just as indicated in this study that slightly over half of the respondents, at 51% self-reported they had always received good grades in history classes. Therefore researchers should look at other cultural, community group, church-related, and family influences upon African American students that may have contributed to the intersection between history as a favorite subject and it being a catalyst for good grades.

Overall this study adds to the ways culturally relevant (Ladson-Billings, 1992, 1995a, 1995b, 2009) teaching strategies can be designed by instructors to teach African American students. These new pedagogical and andragogical approaches in African history, to expose African American students to their ancestral roots, are supported by the Afrivisual, a culturally relevant (Ladson-Billings, 1992, 1995a, 1995b, 2009) action research tool. As indicated by the above recommendations, the Afrivisual in its multifaceted media forms (Brener, 2007; Britannica Online; Johnson, 2011; Schultz, 2005; Thurlow, Lenge, & Tomic, 2004; Tibbetts & Walsh, 2002) will allow educators a means to effectively engage African American students in classroom environments.

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