Exploring Colonial Legacy Among Liberians in The Diaspora: Clash of Two Cultures

by

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ABTRACT

This thesis investigates colonialism's legacy on contemporary Liberia's language practices and self-understandings. Liberia was colonized by freed American slaves under the auspices of the American Colonization Society, established in 1816, which sought to establish a Christian colony in Africa as part of its plan to save the black race. The freed slaves who realized this dream imposed their master's language and religion upon the indigenous people they encountered while establishing the Liberian nation-state. This thesis delineates and explores three distinct data sets in order to identify contemporary vestiges and legacies of these colonial strategies, including interview data from Liberian immigrants, memoir written by Liberians, and social media posts by Liberian immigrants. The study uses discourse analysis to analyze how Liberian immigrants represent themselves and their cultural practices drawing upon both colonial and indigenous identities. Findings revealed people with light skinned color (referred to as white) were viewed as beautiful and dark skinned people (referred to Africans) were considered as ugly. The study also revealed that speaking local languages is equated with illiteracy while the ability to speak English was seen as a sign of literacy. However, there was also a contradictory imperative that demonstrated resistance against the colonizing narrative. Liberia immigrants who experienced American culture fantasized about what they called true African identity and culture, revalorizing what previously had been negated.

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my parents, Mrs. Beatrice Tally and Mr. Joseph

Tally, for instilling the value of education in me. To the man who stood by me through it

all, Eric Johnson; Judy Lynn for not only granting me financial support through Ed &

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Liberia, unlike other African countries, has a unique foundational narrative – that of freed slaves establishing a national homeland. Like the American story, this narrative erases or marginalizes the fact that there were people on the land before the arrival of the freed slaves. The emigration of the free slave brought with it a form of cultural and political domination influenced by the institutionalization of English as the national language and Christianity as its people's route toward religious salvation. The institutionalization of English marginalized and extinguished the languages and narratives of indigenous populations. The idea of repatriating freed slaves to Africa was formed by a group of white Americans who founded the American Colonization Society (ACS) in December 1816. One of the aims of the ACS was to create an American colony that would practice the cultures, values, language (civilization), and Christian religion of America, at least that of Southern America. In its first memorial address to Congress, the ACS argued that colonists would build a "glorious edifice of well-ordered and polished society that will be based on the deep and sure foundations of the United States" (Mills, 2001, p. 65). Accordingly, editorials and traditional journals were dedicated to the promotion of the so-called noble cause of saving the black race and Africa, which they claimed would benefit the world more than any "holy alliances of emperors and kings" (p. 65).

As implied in the name, colonization was fundamentally the goal of American Colonization Society. While colonization is often disguised as an attempt to spread civilization, Christianity and the rule of law to other parts of the world, according to

Aime Cesaire (2000), the opposite is true. Cesaire views colonization is an instrument used to dehumanize the colonized to inferior beings making it easy for the colonizer to treat him/her like an animal. He argues that colonization is used instead to de-civilize and brutalize the colonizer, to awaken him/her to covetousness, violence, race hatred and moral relativism (Cesaire, 2000). The irony of course, in the case of Liberia, is that the colonized slaves were to become the colonizers, the disseminators of the language, identities, and worldviews of their oppressors. This thesis proposes to address the colonization effects of the freed slaves by focusing on the construction of language, identity, and worldviews. There is an interlink between language, religion, and identity according to Edwards (2009). Historically, one cannot study language without considering the other two. Language is used to express the symbolism of a person's or groups' identity (p. 65). Sociolinguistic and communication researchers have long acknowledged that language operated as a colonial tool by imposing the colonists' frameworks of thought and values upon colonized peoples:

> One of the most durable legacies of colonialism has been language: Years after the attainment of political independence, the majority of African independent states have continued to practice linguistic policies inherited at the time of independence, where, on the whole, foreign colonial languages are more favoured than the languages indigenous to the African continent. (Ammon, 2006, p. 1965)

However, when one looks at language imperialism evoked by colonialism and its effect on the African people, the focus is often on the dichotomized relationship between the super-colonial powers such as British, French and Portuguese, and their African colonies. Historians vastly overlook the form of colonialism practiced by freed slaves of Liberia on

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the indigenous people. The Americo-Liberians, when settled in Liberia, had the outlook and orientation of America (Akpan, 1973). The formation of the government, constitution, language, and religion were modeled after those found in the southern part of the United States with no consideration for the indigenous people.

The freed slaves, who were mostly from the American South, inadvertently exercised linguistic and religious colonialism when they established Liberia in 1847. They also implemented tiered political and economic systems that led to the marginalization and exploitation of indigenous people, which included members of tribes in the coastal areas that had existed in the locality for a millennium. While the presence and influence of the settlers were predominantly felt in coastal and surrounding sectors such as Montserrado, Grand Cape Mount, Grand Bassa, Maryland (a county named after Maryland in the U.S.A), etc., those indigenous people in the hinterland still felt the impact of the colonizing free slaves.

I experienced the legacy of these forms of colonialism as a native person born in the hinterland of Liberia. I was born and raised in Grand Gedeh County, the South-Eastern part of Liberia, a county occupied by indigenous people who spoke mainly Krahn and Grebo. Growing up as a child in the late 1980s, before the 1990 civil war, I remembered teachers (both indigenous and white) would chastise us for speaking local languages in school. While I spoke my native language (Krahn) with my grandparents at home, I spoke only broken English, referred to as "Coloqua", with my parents, siblings and friends. Out of the classrooms, we would speak Coloqua among ourselves as students, but in the classrooms we were not only deterred from speaking local languages, Coloqua was also prohibited. Thus, there was a constant struggle, for native Liberians,

between these three forms of languages (native language, Coloqua, and standard English). However, Coloqua has always been the go-to language for native Liberians from different ethnic backgrounds who struggle with their local language and standard English.

Ironically, the missionaries who went to the hinterland would learn the local languages and write Bible stories and translate the Bible into the indigenous languages. They would also convert Christian-English movies in local languages to include the native population who did not understand English to use in their ministrations. Thus, English language and Christian religion were the primary tools use to control the natives in the hinterland.

This thesis is interested in discovering identity through the discourse of language, religion and cultural practices. It addresses the ways in which language and religion regularized colonialism, forming narratives of national identity that denigrated indigenous identity and elevated westernized culture. Linguistic and religious identification plays an integral part in a person's overall identification. This thesis explores how the institutionalization of English and the imperialism of a foreign religion erased the languages and religions of the indigenous, hence creating a renegotiation of identity for its people.

To understand how language and religion are used as tools to create identity and institutionalized colonial power relations in Liberia, I pose three research questions: R1: How was Liberia's national culture, language, and religion shaped by the freed American slaves who established the nation in 1847?

R2: How does former Liberians' language use and recounted experiences about identity reflect colonial legacies instituted with the establishment of Liberia as a country for freed slaves?

R3: What are the implications of these colonial legacies inscribed in language and identity for Liberia and Liberian refugees in America?

This introduction begins by summarizing key findings in sociolinguistic, communication and colonial theory about the relationship between language, identity, and colonialism before turning to outline the particular methodology and the organization of this thesis.

Language, Identity, and Colonialism

Language choice and usage helps define a group of people in relation to others; thus it shapes the perception of what is considered moral, immoral and possible, but also imbues values. We learn from John Edwards' Language and Identity (2009) that while historically religion has been the foundation of identity, it is often accompanied by language. Critics argue that there were no distinctions between the spread of religion and western social values by missionaries. Edwards (2009), citing Makoni and Meinhof's 2004 work states that: "native people around the world have acquired Christianity in a package with literacy" (p. 119). This gesture was, of course, part of the Western civilization scheme.

The language also carves out an identity in ways that describes favorably persons belonging to an in-group vs. persons belonging to an out-group. To speak to the effect of language and identity, I will draw on Stuart Hall's "The Spectacle of the Other" to examine extensively how language structure creates unequal identities in cultural representation. Hall (2001) uses examples of visual representation to show how

stereotyping in popular media images categorizes people belonging to a different race as sub-human, bad or ugly. Drawing on multiple theoretical frameworks, he argues that "Representation is a complex business, and especially when dealing with 'difference,' it engages feelings, attitudes, and emotions, and it mobilizes fears and anxieties in viewer…" (p. 226). He argues that difference is ambivalent: it can be positive or negative; it is necessary for meaning making and formation of language, but it is also threatening. The one who holds the dominant position in language, of course, has the upper hand in whose appropriation of the "other" has an effect.

Equally important to the analysis of this thesis is Wa-Thiong'o's argument in *Decolonization of the Mind* (1994). He speaks to the effect of language being one of the primary tools used during the colonization era to control the minds of the colonized. Accordingly, he wrote: The domination of people's language by the languages of the colonizing nations was crucial to the domination of the mental universe of the colonized" (p. 16). He described the disconcerting effect for an African child to be robbed of his language to make room for a foreign language that has made him or her disoriented. The child is made to see his local language as inferior to that of the white man's language.

Other scholars in the linguistic field write about the tyranny of the English language, which is slowly turning the world into a monolingual village. In modern day globalization, English has taken up the role of linguistic imperialism. According to Phillipson (2009), "Linguistic imperialism [is] manifestly a feature of the way nation-states privileged one language and often sought actively to eradicate the other, forcing their speakers to shift to the dominant language" (p. 1). He also writes that in Africa, people see English as the language of global linguistic capitalism that creates and

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maintains social and economic division and serves the interest of the foreign entities and those of the African bourgeoisie (Phillipson, 2009). In Africa and elsewhere, dominant neocolonial powers and their oligarchy ruling class see English as the language of unification, especially for a continent immersed in diverse languages. They argue that multilingualism of that magnitude promotes separatism. Global Education, as in the basic universal education, supported by the United Nation Millennium development goal for developing countries, makes no room for local languages (see UN Millennium Development Goals, 2015). In West Africa, and many parts of Africa, despite all the economic talk about development, linguistic empowerment is still overlooked. An educational policy deprived of cultural and linguistic relevance is an incomplete plan.

One of the most extreme rhetorical, a move used to justify English as linguistically preferable, is the claim that English is the language of science, sophistication and globalization compared to local languages (Ammon, 2001; Phillipson 2009). The western world, as well as local bourgeoisie, see local languages as primitive and lacking complexity and thus should be extinguished. But studies show that there is no justification for such claim (see Ammon, 2006; Phillipson, 2009). The degradation of many local languages and enforcement of dominant European languages such as English, French, and Portuguese, especially in Africa, creates a spiraling effect of what is mistakenly seen as illiteracy or incompetence among its people. What is alarming is that many local individuals who are being affected by this misconception buy into the narrative as well.

Methodology

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This project studies colonial vestiges in Liberian immigrants' communication. It draws upon (1.) an analysis of memoirs written respectively by two Liberian immigrants in the United States growing up in Liberia; (2.) interview data collected from a previous project and (3.) social media analysis to understand the social constitution of identity and language. The significance of the memoirs is that they give a firsthand experience of an Americo-Liberia experience growing up in pre-war (specifically before 1980) Liberia vs. a native Liberian's in the same era.

From 1847-1979, Liberia was predominantly ruled by the Americo-Liberians who treated native Africans with prejudice, disdain and a kind of racial discrimination despite both communities being black (Huband, 2013). In 1980, Samuel K. Doe, a native Liberian, belonging to the Krahn tribe, overthrew the long-standing Americo-Liberian regime through coup d'état. He ordered the mass execution of the Americo-Liberians political leaders. This execution forced many Americo-Liberians to flee Liberia, some of whom escaped to the United States. Subsequently, another war broke out in 1989 when Charles Taylor, a half native Liberian (mother from the Gola tribe) and half Americo-Liberians (from the father side), led the fight, which became tribalistic in nature, against the corrupt Doe regime. The war was politicized to be between people belong to Doe's tribe or any sympathizers of Doe's tribe and those against Doe's tribe. This tribalistic war lasted for over 15 years and left many Liberians (both native and Americo-Liberians) scattered around the world some of whom ended up in the United States.

In 2014 the researcher interviewed Liberian immigrants about their acculturation in the US. Data were initially collected for an undergraduate honor's thesis project that sought to understand general acculturation experience among Liberian refugees in the

United States. Interview data collected from that study will be re-analyzed for this project and will be supplemented with new information. The research questions for that study included:

- How does the acculturation process shape the identities of Liberians living in the USA?

- How do Liberian immigrants perceive discrimination and how do they react to it?

Participants were recruited through local Liberian churches. All participants were formerly Liberian refugees who were resettled in Arizona or migrated to Arizona from other states. The majority of the interviewees had lived in the United States for over ten years. Interview data was collected using one-on-one, face-to-face interviews with 15 participants and one focus group consisting of 3 persons. The interviews lasted between 25 to 30 minutes per person and 1 hour 30 minutes for the focus group. A total of 18 participants (7 males and 11 females) were interviewed. They ranged in age between 19 and 65 years old. The interview was conducted in a semi-structured manner, creating a conversational tone mostly in Liberian English (Coloqua). The interviews were then transcribed and analyzed using a grounded theory approach. Transcribed interviews accounted for 270 pages of single-spaced typed content. These transcriptions will serve as primary source of data for this study.

The data and conclusions of the undergraduate thesis indicated that Liberians in the diaspora developed a new identity as non-English speakers. Most of them strongly identified with a more generalized African identity instead of the Liberian or American identities. Many claimed not to have experienced discrimination because they stay out of trouble (Wento, n.d.). However, the data raised interesting questions that were outside the

scope of the first project, prompting this thesis' further investigation of the transcribed interview data. One of the most unexpected findings was the frustration experienced by native Liberians who grew up speaking what was perceived as American English but discovered upon immigration to the U.S that they were not regarded as English-competent by US speakers. This study takes up this issue of perceived English language competence regarding Liberia's colonial historical narrative, a story of freed U.S. slaves who imposed their adopted language upon the indigenous people in the land they nationalized as Liberia. To understand language's colonial legacy, this thesis must then return to the interview data and draw upon other cultural sources to accurately identify and understand colonial traces in Liberian's culture and English language adaptations.

Second, a variety of other sources of data will supplement the interviews in helping identify and understand these colonial vestiges. Additional data will be accessed through social media sites to ascertain linkages of colonial remnants in Liberian and Liberian immigrants and their implications. The data will be collected by searching keywords on Google, YouTube and by monitoring and analyzing discussion posts on popular Liberian-run pages on social media like Facebook.

The data generated from these three primary sourcing strategies will be analyzed using discourse analysis to address this thesis's research questions:

- Research Question 1 seeks to understand how Liberia's national culture, language, and religion were shaped by the freed American slaves who established the nation in 1847.

- Research Question 2 seeks to understand how former Liberians' language use and recounted experiences about identity reflect colonial legacies instituted with the establishment of Liberia as a country for freed slaves?

- Research Question 3 explores the implications of these colonial legacies inscribed in language and identity for Liberia and Liberian refugees in America?

Data analyses will adopt theoretical and methodological insights in the representation of race and identity developed by postcolonial theorists. Understanding of these representational practices and patterns of signification will also be informed by historical accounts of indigenous people's experiences in Liberia and by historical accounts of colonialism by European and US powers in the region, particularly because of the wealth found in neighboring countries.

The analysis will focus first on identifying references to internalization of an inferiority complex around cultural identifications and language. The emergence of internalizing inferiority complex is evidence through othering and the negative connotations connected to Africa identities and black identities. The analysis will also look at dualistic and/or stereotyped constructions of identity in language that are constructed hierarchically, such as Black/White or White/ Other; the elevation and fetishization of white languages and white cultural values or identities expressed in language over indigenous African ones. References to cultural identity will be analyzed to identify representational practices mainly addressing the discussion of religion. These various concepts will guide an understanding of how identities were constructed in Liberia as representations of difference.

Chapters Organization

Chapter Two gives a brief historical background of Liberia and the colonial legacy. The first part of this chapter provides a general understanding of colonization in Africa and a short history of Liberia concerning the return of freed slaves and the development of colonialism. The second part of the chapter looks at the discourse of post-colonialism using Frantz Fanon's analysis followed by Edward Said, Homi Bhabha and Stuart Hall. It also provides theoretical analysis of key concepts such as Internalization of inferiority complex around cultural identifications and language. The chapter offers an understanding on internalization evidence by othering and negative connotations connected to Africa identities and/or black identities. It further provides an understanding on the dualistic and/or stereotyped constructions of identity in language that are constructed hierarchically, such as Black/White or White/ Other; the elevation and/or fetishization of white languages and cultural values/identities expressed in language over indigenous African ones and Ambivalence.

Chapter Three provides an analysis of data collected from previous interviews, autobiographic books written by two Liberians respectively, as well as data gathered from the internet/social media sites. The imposition of a foreign language on indigenous people can lead to conflicting linguistic identities. For example, findings from the undergraduate thesis indicated frustration experienced by Liberians who grew up speaking what was perceived as American English but discovered upon immigrating to the U.S that they were not regarded as English-competent by U.S speakers.

Chapter Four discusses the results of the analyses, and includes implications and recommendations from findings of the study. It describes the theoretical implications of colonization and the re-emergence of linguistic identity and its renegotiations among

Liberian immigrants. This analysis implies a look at linguistic inequality which subsequently leads to economic inequality for many Liberians in the diaspora. Another facet to consider among Liberians and many African communities in the diaspora is that there is a distinct class divide between those who find themselves linguistically outspoken vs. those who lack those abilities. Linguistically outspoken means being able to speak standard American English. Fanon draws our attention to black identity and the phenomenon of language and assimilation caused by an inferiority complex imposed with colonial rule, which creates a metaphorical whiteness in a black person (2008). These types of changes create an illusion of superiority in those who believe themselves to have mastery over the English language over those who struggle with the language. Liberians, and Africans in general, who believe themselves to have command over the English language, express a sense of shame for those who cannot express themselves fluently. This feeling of shame is expressed in varied forms: either by referring to the less fluent English speaker as poor illiterates or people with low self-esteem.

CHAPTER 2

A man who possesses a language possesses as an indirect consequence the world expressed and implied by this language.

– Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 2004, p. 2

Colonialism

Thiong'o (1994), in his book *Decolonizing the Mind*, draws our attention to the role language plays in transmitting culture. It is through language that complex ideas, culture, and values are conveyed. He begins by telling us how in his local community when he was growing up, they told stories in Gikuyu, his local language. He writes about the importance of speaking one local language. His effort is to define what makes a good story-teller. According to Thiong'o, a good story teller is one that can use language to make a story stimulating and interesting to others.

Hence, the invasion of colonization on local communities removes the ability of natives to express themselves adequately due to the introduction of a foreign language. In Thiong'o's case, the English language invaded Gikuyu. Thus, everything he knew about his life was stifled and replaced. English then became the dominant language to learn, and anyone who spoke Gikuyu in school was punished. He also explains that a good grade in English was a ticket to higher education and a better future. But the irony was that there was a disconnect between the language spoken in school and that spoken at home. Thiong'o understands that the imposition of a foreign language such as English through textbooks, teaching, and the media renders one's local language and culture inferior. Therefore, Thiong'o argues that Africans must reject the colonizer's language if

they wish to free themselves from the stronghold of the colonizer. He pleads that indigenous people must embrace their languages by not only speaking it but writing books and literature in them. Formalizing local languages is the only way Africa can decolonize itself from the controls western powers.

Colonialism, just like imperialism, is a practice of political and economic domination that involves the subjugation of one group of people for the strategic benefit of another (Kohn, 2006). Though the terms colonialism and imperialism can be distinguished by the origin of the words, both expressions can be used interchangeably. Imperialism stems from the root word *imperium,* meaning to command (Kohn, 2006). As described in postcolonial writings, imperialism explains how powerful countries control less powerful countries to think and do things often in the interest of the powerful countries. Ideologically, people in these less powerful territories are made to think more highly and favorably of the imperialists than themselves. Colonialism, on the other hand, comes from the root word *colonus,* which means farmers (Kohn, 2006). Colonus describes the process in which large migrations of people leave their land to settle and claim lands belonging to the indigenous as their own while retaining allegiance to their homeland (Kohn, 2006). Consequently, colonialism and imperialism go hand and hand as tools use by Western powers to subjugate non-western worlds.

Colonialism certainly is not a new concept, according to Kohn (2006); it started well before the 16th century when the ancient Greek and Roman were conquering (and ruling over) territories. The phenomena only intensified during the 16th century and onwards due to the improvement in navigational technology, making it possible to

connect remote parts of the world. Thus, just like other regions of the world, Africa began to feel its share of colonialism from powerful Western countries.

Colonialism in Africa

For Africa, colonialism became a common phenomenon after the abolition of the slave trade. The reference to this period in history is referred to as the Scramble for Africa. The Scramble for Africa occurred after the 1884 Berlin Conference held by European powers to divided Africa into arbitrary boundaries to serve the exploitative purposes of a political and socioeconomic benefit of the west (Iweriebor, n.d.). An expert on the history of colonialization, Iweriebor's contribution to colonialism gives us a broad understanding of colonialism in Africa. He has published several books, book chapters and scholarly articles on African history giving him an authority in the field. Iweriebor explains that colonialism in Africa during the 19th century was predominantly carried out by Britain, France, Germany, Belgium, Italy, Portugal, and Spain for economic, political and social reasons (n.d.).

Elucidating the economic, political and social reasons separately, Iweriebor (n.d.), explains the economic reasons to be motivated by the decline in the profitability caused by the suppression and abolition of the slave trade, coupled with the increase in the quest to sustain the capitalist industrial revolution. According to Iweriebor (n.d.), this decrease in slave trade and quest for industrial profits led Europeans to search for other avenues of guaranteed labor and raw materials to propel their capitalist ventures.

The second reason for colonization, continues Iweriebor, has to do with the struggle for political dominance among European states. Consequently, the European imperial powers came to a consensus during the Berlin Conference of 1884 – 1885 to

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divide up the remaining of Africa according to each European country, hence, the Scramble for Africa, which led to creating arbitrary boundaries for territorial ownership (2002). The third reason came from the rise of social problems caused by industrialization, which led to mass urban migrations creating unemployment, poverty, and homelessness (Iweriebor, n.d.). This last reason for colonization, according to Iweriebor, allowed for Europe's surplus population to leave their continent to reside and preside over territories in Africa such as Algeria, South Africa, Angola, Zimbabwe, etc., while exerting direct rules over the indigenous and exploiting raw materials for Europe (n.d).

The treatments of the African indigenous were as similar as they were varied. Similar conditions experienced by all colonial African states include: "Forced labor, low wages, massive taxation, land expropriation, social segregation, racial discrimination in employment and services, racist colonial education and the diminution of the traditional political leaders and institutions" (Iweriebor, 2002, p. 6). However, there were distinctions in how the colonial powers ruled over their African territories. Among these were the direct rules and the indirect rules applied by the imperialist powers.

The primary distinction lies between how the French and British applied their rules. According to Iweriebor (n.d.), the French exerted more direct centralized rules in the territories they occupied, while the British used indirect rules. Taking advantages of the preexisting political system in the colonized areas, the British established a system of central, provincial and regional levels of offices headed strategically by pro-British local and foreign members who reported to the governor (Iweriebor, n.d.). The governor then reported directly to the colonial office in Britain. This form of indirect rule was practiced

in countries like Nigeria, Kenya, Ghana, and Uganda. Iweriebor breaks down how the system functioned by enumerating the three major institutions associated with it:

> The "native authority," made up of the local ruler, colonial official, and the administrative staff; the "native treasury," which collected revenues to pay for the local administrative staff and services; and the "native courts," which purportedly administered native law and custom, the supposedly traditional legal system of the colonized that was used by the courts to adjudicate cases. (n.d.)

Iweriebor makes us understand that indirect rules worked best in territories that already had established centralized systems such as chiefdoms, kingdoms, or empires, with functional administrative and judicial systems. However, in decentralized areas that lacked such established systems, the British appointed licensed leaders referred to as warrant chiefs.

Meanwhile, under the auspices of the French colonial system, while somewhat similar to the British rule, more direct rules were applied. The biggest difference between the British and French rule is that the French were on an assimilation mission. As will be discussed later in this chapter, similar rule was practiced in Liberia. The ideology behind the French rule was to make civilized the so-called uncivilized natives. The colonization strategy was to make the indigenous people into proper French citizens only if they met the requirements of speaking fluent French, serving the French meritoriously, and winning awards (Iweriebor, n.d.). However, this imperialist ideology was often unattainable because there were not enough educational institutions set up to support this ideology. Just like the British, the French also received rules and laws from their mother

country. But, unlike the British who took advantage of the establish ruling systems in their territories, the French often created a system of association where local governments were run with African rulers whom the French organized at three levels: provincial chief, district leaders, and village chief (Iweriebor, n.d.). In areas where there were no established systems, the French also created quasi-chiefs and kings to serve their purposes. The French imperialist power was found in areas like Tunisia, Senegal, Algeria, Guinea, Sudan and Cote D'Ivoire.

Britain, France, and other imperialist European powers all used various administrative controls for social, political and economic exploitation of Africa and its indigenous people. However, what is frequently left out of the general colonial discourse on Africa is the role the American Colonization Society (ACS), and the function repatriated freed slaves played in the colonization of Liberia. Liberia is often referred to as the only country in Africa, besides Ethiopia, to have not been colonized. As usual, these colonial narratives leave out the colonial domination the United States perpetrated in Liberia through the ruling hands of the freed slaves. The governing system put in place by the ACS, and implemented by the freed slaves, in my opinion, mirrors the direct rule of the French in which indigenous needed to assimilate in order to be accepted. The American Colonization Society helped to establish the colony by intentionally excluding the indigenous from its administration. The natives were allowed into the system only if they became "civilized, " i.e., spoke English and became Christianized. Thus the goal of the remainder of chapter is to provide a colonial history of Liberia – the cultural, political and economic schisms between Americo-Liberians and the indigenous populations – a unique experience often overlooked by colonial scholars. The chapter will then detail the

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theoretical background of colonial legacies focusing on specific postcolonial concepts such as identity, language, religion and the synthesis of how these theoretical ideas inform the research questions.

History of Liberia

Just like the French colonists who believed they could assimilate the indigenous Africans into the French culture once they spoke the French language, so did the freed slaves believe they were on a civilizing mission to educate and Christianize native Africans (see Beyan 1991 and Huffman, 2010). There was widely shared consensus among the proponents of the American Colonization Society that there was no way that free blacks could live freely, having equal rights to whites in the United Sates. To understand the history of Liberia, it is imperative first to know the background of the agency that brought it into being. The American Colonization Society, though composed of some northerners, were mostly southerners such as clergymen and slaveholders, who believed during the abolition period that free blacks posed a threat to the status quo of the social and economic system (Beyan 1991; Huffman, 2010). Hence, after the 1810 slave revolt in Louisiana, in 1816, members from the colonization society decided to emigrate freed slaves back to Africa (Huffman, 2010). In 1820, the Liberian colony was created on the coast of West Africa for the repatriation of the freed slaves. According to Huffman, Great Britain had already established its colony, Sierra Leone, along the coast of West Africa 30 years earlier than the American colony.

The coast of West Africa was chosen by the colonies primarily because it was predominately the area where approximately 60 million slaves were captured in 1503 alone, a large number of whom ended up in the United States (Huffman, 2010). Before

the establishment of the colony, that coastal territory which became Liberia was occupied by indigenous people such as the Manes, Vai and Kru, who were initially involved in a legitimate trade of African products with the Dutch for European products (Beyan, 1991). These coastal tribes were also seen as middlemen between the tribes in the interior and the European for trading purposes. However, the demand for humans became high for the European market, and the coastal tribes began to fill that need by capturing other indigenous people from around the coastal and interior areas in exchange for European goods such as a guns, gun powder, rum, clothing, etc. (Beyan, 1991; Huffman 2010). Historians have also documented that tribes would intentionally go to war just to capture prisoners for the slave trade. Thus, returning freed slaves to an area where the slave trade was secretly going on during the abolition era was a setup for adversity.

Furthermore, the manner in which the first land was acquired for the freed slaves was also devious. According to Beyan (1991), for fear that Americans were bringing war and stopping human trade, the indigenous king refused to sell land to the Americans for the settlement of freed slaves. The Americans then used armed force to take the land from the king and his people (1991). Hence, the tension between the indigenous people and the freed slaves was already in place before the settlement began.

Worth noting is the backdrop upon which the colonization society was founded; it was in itself contradictory. The proponents and leaders of the colonization society believed that free blacks were a vicious and dangerous set of people lacking a moral compass who should not be allowed to live in the United States lest they contaminate the slaves and the whites (Beyan, 1991). However, the so-called dangerous people were good enough to be sent back to Africa as missionaries with the "holy credential" to

Christianize and make civilized the native Africans (Beyan, 1991). The political system in Liberia was then set up in a way that voting rights were given only to freed slaves, and that only blacks could become citizens. Yet, whites were the ones that held political positions from 1822 until 1842 when a freed black was appointed the governor (Huffman, 2010). After the freed slaves took over political power, they continued with the exclusionary measures put in place by the leaders of the ACS. However, indigenous people who assimilated into the Americo-Liberian Americanized hegemonic culture by being able to speak English, dress in a western-like style and become Christianized were accepted as part of the civilized few. However, the freed slaves, relying on the ideologies and systems they knew, also ruled over the indigenous by making them domestic servants and laborer for the social and economic benefits of the freed slaves (Akpan, 1973; Beyan, 1991; Huffman, 2010). The freed slaves believed that living in the western world, albeit as slaves, made them superior to the indigenous community. Most disheartening is that the natives were made to view their identity (cultures, languages, religion, ways of dressing) as degrading.

With this in mind, critics of colonialism believe that not only was colonialism dangerous during its time, there are lingering effects of colonialization that affect both the colonized and colonizer. Some of these critics are known as post-colonial theorists and discuss concepts such as identity, language, identity and representation.

Some post-colonial critics who focus on Africa write from what is termed neocolonial perspective. Though colonialism is seen as a thing of the past, African postcolonial critics believe that neocolonialism is still alive and well in Africa and that Africa needs to decolonize itself from its embrace. Neocolonialism, according to Kwame

Nkrumah (1965), is when a country, in theory, is considered a sovereign and independent state outwardly, but inwardly it is being controlled direct and indirectly by external forces. Nkrumah is referring to the use of political, economic and cultural pressure to make less powerful countries do things that are beneficial to powerful states. Thus, in this section, I will discuss two critics who focused on the sociopolitical, economic and linguistic problems of colonial legacy in Africa. I will first begin with George Kieh and Santosh Saha and his Afrocentric perspective on indigenous Liberian contribution to the development of Liberia.

Kieh (2014) writes from a political point of view about the unbalanced relationship between the Western world and the non-western world, specifically the United States and Liberia. His concern is the retrogressive relationship that has formed since the return of freed slaves from American soil to what is now known as Liberia. For Kieh, the asymmetrical relationship can best be described as the epitome of neocolonialism. Kieh argues that the Western world, specifically the United States, does not build relationships or provide economic aid for a charitable purpose. This relationship is a ploy for manipulation and favorable trade conditions that only actually benefits the West. He claims, "the development of the United States and the underdevelopment of Liberia are the two sides of the same coin" (p. 241). He refers to this condition as a dialectical tension.

The relationship between the two nations operates in such a way that the United States provides Liberia with economic aid and military security, while Liberia allows the United States to exploit its natural resources such as rubber, iron ore, diamonds, gold and timber for American multinational corporations such as Firestone (Kieh, 2014). Kieh

reminds us of how the United States initially abandoned Liberia after the repatriation of freed slaves and the establishment of its political system. The abandonment was because the United States felt there was nothing to gain by the nation. It was only in 1926 that America returned its attention to Liberia because of the benefit it posed for the American firm Firestone. These favorable trade conditions for America or the western world are not found only in Liberia but other parts of the world, especially in Africa. This type of neocolonialism helps propel the degradations of less powerful countries through depleting their natural resources in exchange for goods with less economic value.

Saha's *Culture in Liberia* (1998), written from an Afrocentric perspective, discusses the significant contributory roles indigenous Liberians played vis-à-vis the Americo-Liberians in the reevaluation and creation of the socio-cultural values of post-colonial Liberia. Quoting Asante, Saha writes that the Afrocentric perspective states that African cultures should be seen in an African and not a European context (Saha, 1998). Saha brings to the forefront the disconcerting effect of minimizing indigenous existence to the elevation of Americo-Liberian existence. He disputes claims made by some authors who argued that to be a Liberian meant to be an immigrant. Saha traces the existence of natives who comprised 16 different languages prior to the arrival of the English speaking Americo-Liberians. He claims it is those opposing societies that helped to create the national society of Liberia. Saha's focus is directed at the dualistic interchange between the European-educated indigenous Liberians and the Americo-Liberians and how the two groups helped structure Liberia socioeconomically and politically.

He asserts that Liberian society, as we know it today, has gone through various stages of transformation to enable the two cultures to reach a consensus. The native

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Liberians, who were once viewed as subjects and non-citizens of the land, are becoming an integral part of Americo-Liberian society. While the process of having a fusion of two cultures was challenging, Saha lists several factors that made the process possible. First, some indigenous youth who were brought up in Americo-Liberians homes as house helps took back with them to their communities Americo-Liberian values and way of life. Next, it was not until the 1930s when the 18th president of Liberia became sympathetic to the plight of native Liberians and decided to include them as citizens in the nation. Finally, it was not until the "era for the scramble for Africa," and colonial expansion by the two colonial powers (Britain and France) that posed a threat to the security of Liberia that educated native Liberians decided to pursue a unified nationhood to help defend Liberia against hostile colonial expansion.

Saha also discusses the disadvantages of an educational system that was geared towards the indigenous population. He writes that Booker Washington Institute (BWI) was established in Liberia to train native Liberians in vocational trade. The school was also used as an avenue to change the religious affiliations of native Liberians. He explains that the proponents of the school saw BWI as s fertile ground for the indoctrination of Christian ideals. Saha states that the natives were not satisfied with the mechanical education of the school, which was plagued with chores and manual labor. Instead, the natives wanted liberal education as described by Du Bois. The situation didn't improve when the institution became a recruitment for laborers for Firestone, the American rubber plantation in Liberia. One of the problems with the institution was a disconnect between the native students and the administrators and staff who were both white Americans and Americo-Liberians.

Throughout his work, Saha tries to throw light on the idea that native Liberians, especially the educated ones, played a significant role in helping make Liberia an inclusive nation that consists of both Americo-Liberian western values and indigenous African values. While, Saha attempts to provide a unifying front between the Americo-Liberians and the educated native Liberians, his analysis does not explain the colonizing effect of the Americo-Liberian rules on the uneducated native Liberians

Post-Colonial Theory

In this section, I will briefly discuss post-colonial theorists who have made pioneering contributions to understanding colonial legacies in identity and representational practices. Thus, I will begin with Frantz Fanon, followed by Edward Said, Bhabha and Stuart Hall focusing on those aspects of their theoretical frameworks that can be deployed in a textual analysis that will be developed in Chapter Three.

Frantz Fanon. Fanon (2008), in *Black Skin White Mask* brings to light the complexity of identity between the colonized and colonizer. He is concerned about the dynamic of the inferiority complex that is produced in a black person due to colonial experience. Using psychoanalysis, Fanon explains how colonization creates the internalization of an inferiority complex in the colonized. His central thesis concerns what he calls the inferiority complex of the black man and the superiority complex of the white man indoctrinated through the mechanism of racism, which makes a black person want to change his identity to that of a white person.

Fanon first introduces us to the concept of binary representation. He argues that a black person is often juxtaposed against a white person in a way that devalues the black identity. A black man is not allowed to be only a black man, but must be a black man in

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relation to an elevated white man. In this identification, whiteness, according to Fanon, has become a symbol of purity, justice, truth and virginity. It defines what it means to be civilized, modern and human. Fanon continues that blackness, on the other hand, represents the diametrical opposite; it stands for ugliness, sin, darkness, and immorality. Internalization happens when the black man or woman believes that his or her identity is inferior to that of a white person.

Equally important in Fanon's argument is how this diametrical representation extends to language and culture. Fanon (2008) believes that language is one of the primary means by which a person identifies him or herself. Therefore, "To speak means being able to use a certain syntax and processing the morphology of a language, but it means above all assuming a culture and bearing the weight of civilization" (p.1). Hence, when a person is assimilated into the culture of a dominant group, it is not only the language that changes him, but he is also changed by the knowledge he receives of their respective ideologies and philosophies. In this sense when the black man speaks a European language, he is not just assimilating the language, but also the civilization of the white man. Thereupon, the black person becomes metaphorically whiter in direct relation to his mastery of the European language. So, almost immediately, the black man rejects his blackness, "escapes the bush" and civilized he becomes. But, what is more, disconcerting is that they borrow a language that is devoid of any external connection and intrinsic qualities that leaves them disconnected with their immediate environment. Fanon gives the example of the Antilles where the creole is popularly spoken, however, with the official language being French, students are often scolded by the local Antilles authorities for speaking creole in school.

This kind of behavior, Fanon argues, is caused by a culturally induced inferiority complex, which is evident among educated black persons. To elaborate his point, Fanon writes:

> The feeling of inferiority by Blacks is especially evident in the educated black man who is constantly trying to overcome it. They naively wear European clothing, whether rags or most up-to-date style, using European furniture and forms of social intercourse, adorning the native language with European expressions, using bombastic phrase in speaking or writing a European language; all these contribute to a feeling of equality with the European and his achievements. (p. 9)

Fanon doesn't agree that such practices will give the black person the sense of importance he or she seeks. He also disapprovingly talks about the dialectic relationship between the blacks from the Martinique and those from Africa. Fanon expresses how those from Martinique revile the blacks from Senegal or Congo and would feel insulted if they (Martinicans) were mistaken for Africans. According to Fanon, the Martinican believes he is more evolved than the African because he is closer to the white man and the African is father removed from the white man. Thus, the African is considered more savage. Moreover, Fanon's rage is not only towards the black man or woman who wants to turn their race white. He is also frustrated with whites for their degenerate treatment of blacks. He draws attention to the paternalistic behavior of whites towards blacks no matter the black person's age. The black person is often spoken to in a childlike manner. Consequently, he is infuriated by how a black person is often talked down to in "gobbledygook" as if he or she has no civilization or historical past. This behavior, Fanon

insists classifies and imprisons the black person at an uncivilized and primitive level, which he finds insulting.

Edward Said. Said, taking a slightly different tack, introduces what he calls Orientalism to describe the power relation between the western world and the non-western world, specifically between West (Europe-America) and the East (Asia and the Arab world). The central tendency of Said's argument is to explain how stereotypes are formed and perpetuated about a group of people by knowing them only superficially or without actually knowing them. He explains how Europe essentially created myths about people of the East that are inconsequential to their reality, a myth that became known as fact. Said argues that the way we come to acquire knowledge is neither innocent nor objective. He believes that the knowledge of the Orient as an idea, imagery, art or way of life can best be described within the constraints of the power relations between the West and the East. He asserts that the idea of Orientalism rests on the premise of exteriority. This exteriority shows that the orientalist is usually outside of the Orient, the authority figure who is an expert on the ways, experience, and voice of the Orient. These western authorities bring forth or speak on behalf of the Orients on different topics ranging from their culture, sexuality, religion, art and their entire existence in a way that the Orient can't reciprocate. The Occident, as Said refers to Westerners, went to the East with the intention of using the Orient as a case-study, a problem to be solved. They were seen as degenerate, uncivilized and backward to the eyes of the people of the West.

Said also explains the role written language construction plays in cultural representation. Said claims that written language structure is the western technique of representation that is used to create an opposing view of "The Other" that is a complete

opposite of themselves. These representations rely upon institutions, traditions, conventions, and agreed-upon codes of understanding best understood by the West. Said documents different ways in which the term Orientalism is used. He begins by explaining how Orientalism is used in particular academic fields, such as history, anthropology, and philology as a value-free representation of the people of the East. However, Said claims that these views are not value free. In his argument, he explains how Orientalism came to be defined historically and materially, beginning roughly sometime in the eighteen century when Europe first encounter the East and came with their academics to study the ways of the people to subdue them, hence creating a body of work called orientalism. He identifies Orientalism as a practice that help define Europe by establishing a fixed portrayal of its Other (the Orient). This becomes way of characterizing Europe by drawing a different image or idea, based on a series of binary oppositions, which constantly keep Europe in the positive and the Orient in the negative.

Said allows us to see that discourse in itself is a form of power. Influenced by Foucault's notion of power and discourse, Said believes that all those historical bodies of works on the Orient which passed as a discourse on Orientalism have taken away power from the people in the East to speak for themselves. He states that in Western documentation, the "Oriental were rarely seen or looked at; they were seen through, analyzed not as citizens or even people, but as a problem to be solved or confined" (p. 35). Most importantly, Said allows us to see that the creation of Orientalism is a Western way of dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Other.

For his methodology, Said looks at the organized form of documentation such as historical books, novels, artworks, etc. that were created by Western authorities to

describe what they claimed were the Orients. In this methodology, Said studies the positions of authors by looking at the politics of their composition, i.e., style of writing, figures of speech, settings, narrative devices, and historical and social circumstances. He then locates the consistency and iteration with which these narratives of the Orients are told from one writing or artwork to the next as if time has stood still for the Orients. The problem Said notices with such documentations is that there is a fixity in the ways in which the Orient operates in a manner that is different from the changeability of the Occident. It is a distortion that shows the binary superiority of the West and inferiority for the East.

Homi Bhabha. Equally important is Homi Bhabha's theory on *The Other Question*. Taking a slightly different approach to representation and stereotype, Bhabha tries to move away from what he calls the "Western representationalist discourse" of a binary logic, which has theoretically marginalized forms of racial/cultural/historical otherness. The binary logic of representation dwells on social and cultural signs that are often arbitrary, nationalist and intentional. He likens Western colonial discourse structurally to Realism, which he says, employs its own regime of truth. Bhabha is not concerned about whether the stereotype is good or bad, for he believes that any stereotype is a colonial assertion whose objective is to interpret the colonized as a population of degenerates to justify their conquest. Consequently, Bhabha contends that stereotypes can be understood through the framework of *ambivalence,* a paradoxical strategy, which is the recognition and disavowal of difference. Ambivalence is an uncertainty of creating the 'other' who is at the same time an object of desire and disdain. However, to understand Bhabha's theory of ambivalence and fetishism, we must first

acknowledge the methodology he uses. Unlike Said's political approach, Bhabha uses multiple methodologies such as discursive analysis, semiotics and psychoanalysis to explain the complexity of stereotyping and othering.

Bhabha contends that there is a structural and functional justification for reading the colonial discourse of stereotyping regarding fetishism. To establish the structural link, Bhabha explains the way the colonial discourse of stereotype sought to construct a paradigm of difference between the self and other through the fixation and the repetition of such difference. These differences are created in ways that repeat racial /cultural superiority for the colonizers and reflect the colonized as subordinates and savages. However, most relevant is the functional link between the fixation of the fetishism and the stereotype – the simultaneous play between masking absence and difference. This concept is explained in the psychoanalytic dimension of Freud's theory of fetishism.

Bhabha likens the moment when the colonizer recognizes the difference between himself and the other, and the anxiety associated with the difference, to when a little boy realizes the sexual difference between him and his mother and fears castration. Thus, once the sexual difference is recognized and the fear of castration sets in for the little boy, he disavows his mother and fetishes a new object to replace his mother's lack of penis. This disavowal is similar to how the colonizer who recognizes the difference between himself or herself and the colonized develops a fear of this difference and fetishize on a new object – skin color. Bhabha believes skin color replaces the difference and becomes the object for the stereotype. This racial stereotype becomes the principal point of subjectification. Thus, a black person remains a black person, and his or her race becomes the sign of negative difference.

Stuart Hall. Differing from Bhabha's and Said's approach to representation and identity, Stuart Hall looks at identity from a cinematic point of view. Referencing the emerging cinema known as third cinema – a visual representation of the Afro-Caribbean subjects of the West – Hall makes a case for identity as an ever changing fact. He sees it as that which is never complete, always in process and always constituted within the representation. What Hall means to tell us is that identity is complicated and not as transparent as black or white, us vs. them.

Hall presents two ways in which we can consider cultural identity. One way is to look at identity traditionally, as a "shared culture, a sense of collective one true self hiding inside the many other artificially imposed selves" (p. 111). He states that the search and rediscovery of this type of identity played a significant role in post-colonial struggles, such as the Negritude movement, which Frantz Fanon refers to as the *passionate search*. This form of identity, according to Hall, is the one true identity that must be sought by Caribbeans or blacks in the diaspora and be represented in cinematic productions. This search helps to unearth and re-tell the past that was suppressed by colonial experience. He talks about such past by echoing Said's and Foucault's sentiments about the dominant regime of colonial influence. The colonial representation had the power not only to construct blacks in a negative fashion as the *Other*, but also subject them to that knowledge by imposed will and domination.

Nevertheless, it is the second point that Hall develops on the play of *difference* within identity using Derrida's theory. Hall makes explicit the meaning of difference by relocating Caribbean cultural identities concerning three presences. He refers to them as *Presence Africanne, Presence Europeenne, and Presence Americaine*. These references

are meant to speak to the effect of the complex hybridity of Caribbean identity. He refers to Presence Africanne as a site of repressed, the secret code within which Western texts are understood, the signified that could not be represented directly. He sees Africa as the unspeakable presence in the Caribbean culture. Hall finds a subtle difference between Africa and Europe, Africa is the unspoken while Europe is that which is endlessly speaking. It was only in the 1970's, according to Hall, that Afro-Caribbean identity became historically available to Jamaican people. It was during this time they discovered that they were black and descendants of slaves. But, the original Africa is no longer there; thus, he pleads for the restoration of Africa in all its fundamental values by the Caribbean.

Hall views Presence Europeenne as exclusionary, an imposition and expropriation of power that is considered external to the displaced Caribbean. They have to face the dominating power of European presence. Hall makes us see that the negotiation of power and resistance against Presence Europeenne is almost as complex as the dialogue with Africa. Just like Africa, Europe is nowhere to be found in its pristine state. According to Hall (1997), the European culture has already been creolized by popular culture. This implies that the Caribbeans have appropriated the European cultures and languages and made it mainstream through art.

Subsequently, Hall refers to Presence Americaine as the New World, a place where strangers from every part of the world collide, but most importantly, a primal scene where the fatal encounter was staged between Africa and the West. It is a place of continuous displacement, silence and suppressions – signifier for migration, an endless way in which Caribbean people have been destined to migrate. Hall describes the New

World as the beginning of diaspora, diversity, hybridity and difference. He, therefore, explains that the Diaspora are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew through transformation and differences. Hall then brings our attention to the inevitable fact that the identity of the Caribbean is the mixes of colors, pigmentation and also the blends of tastes that is diverse.

To conclude, Hall brings us full circle to the cinematic production of the Caribbean and black British representation. He reminds us that just like identity is found within representation so should cinema be used to show us as new kind of people, but not used as a second-order mirror to reflect that which already existed. It must endeavor to counteract colonialism's attempt to falsify and harm. Hence, the modern black cinema, must reflect and recognize the different parts of histories to construct a new cultural identity.

Key Concepts

The previous postcolonial theory provides a fundamental construct through which the data collected can be analyzed. Hence, as we move forward to Chapter Three to discuss the analytic framework and methodology used, it is imperative to list and explain briefly these key constructs that will use in the analysis of my data.

Internalization of inferiority complex. Fanon introduces the concept of the internalization of an inferiority complex around language and cultural identifications. The internalization of inferiority complex expresses the willingness of the victim, in this case, a black person, to accept the dominant colonial discourse that a white person is superior based solely on race. This discourse is evident by *Othering* and negative connotations associated with the African and black identities.

Dualistic/Stereotypical construct of identity. Dualistic and/or stereotypical construct of identity is the creation of identity through language that are structured hierarchically, such as black identity vs. white identity. Hall talks about the representation of identity in the diasporic Caribbean, in which he reminds us of the dominant colonial discourse that denigrates the African identity to the extent that blacks in the Caribbean refuse to identify as Africans or descendants of Africa. He thus sees Africa as the unspeakable presence in the Caribbean culture while Europe is the ever speaking presence in this dualistic identity construct.

Elevation/Fetishization of white culture. Fanon and Bhabha both described the concept of elevation and fetishization of white cultural values or identities as expressed in language. In colonial discourse, white is portrayed as pure, good, clean and desirable. The black person is then made to hate his or her race and seeks to escape his or her blackness to be white by adopting the dominant language and culture.

Ambivalence. Ambivalence is a paradoxical concept which created the *Other* as an object of desire and derision. Bhabha argues that the dominant ideology constructs the marginalized in a conflicting image as a person who body is desired and treated with contempt. The marginalized person is then discriminated against based on superficialities such as skin color or cultural identity.

Thus, using the interdisciplinary framework of Critical Discourse Analysis, this thesis looks at how each of these concepts explore data collected to answer the research questions.

CHAPTER 3

This chapter is broadly organized in three parts: the methodology, methods for

data collection and the data analysis. To understand the colonial legacy of the English

language on Liberian immigrants and Liberians as a people, this researcher uses

discourse analysis in its approach. This analytic approach allows for in-depth

understanding of complex data collection processes. Discourse analysis underscores the

role of language in the creation of social reality (Grbich, 2012). This method attempts to

recognize cultural norms and values in participants' accounts, instead of taking the

individual as a principal unit of analysis (Talja, 1999). Hence, discourse analysis allows

for the questioning of ways of speaking, writing and thinking to discover the rules, molds

and conventions of the society by looking at language and communication (Grbich,

2012).

Methodology

Discourse analysis will be applied to data collected from the three different

sources for this thesis: interview data from my undergraduate thesis, memoirs written by

Liberian immigrants in the United States, and social media resources to identify and

understand colonial traces in Liberia's English language adaptations as well as the social

and cultural identities formed by this language usage. The data generated from these three

primary resources will be analyzed to address these research questions:

- How was Liberia's national culture, language, and religion shaped by the

    freed American slaves who established the nation in 1847?

- How does former Liberians' language use and recounted experiences about identity reflect colonial legacies instituted with the establishment of Liberia as a country for freed slaves?

- What are the implications of these colonial legacies inscribed in language and identity for Liberia and Liberian refugees in America?

Data analysis will adopt insights of representational practices of race and identity expressed by Stuart Hall, Frantz Fanon, Edward Said, and Homi Bhabha. The analysis will focus first on identifying references to personal and cultural identities primarily, but also addressing discussions on religion, differences in cultural experiences in Liberia as compared to the US, and beliefs about English language competence. References to cultural identity will be analyzed to identify representational practices, particularly those that create or reflect cultural stereotypes rooted in historical colonial relationships. The analysis will draw upon the key concepts identified in Chapter Two, which include but are not limited to: *dualistic/stereotypical constructs of identity linked to colonial legacies*; *elevation/fetishization of white culture in language practices* and *internalization of inferiority complex illustrated through talk about identity*. The analysis will also draw upon stereotypical representations located in what Stuart Hall refers to as "the spectacle of the Other." According to Hall (2004), othering is a stereotypical mode of marking difference towards people who are racially and ethnically different from the dominant population. This difference can either be positive or negative.

Method for data collection

As noted above, data were collected from a variety of sources, beginning with 18 interviews that were conducted in Phoenix, Arizona, with Liberian refugees during the

summer of 2014. These interviews were part of an honor's thesis project that was exploring the acculturation process of Liberian immigrants in Phoenix. The project was aimed at understanding how these immigrants identified themselves and experienced cross-cultural communications. The questions on identity were general and open-ended. The sample consisted of 7 males and 11 females between the ages of 19 to 65 years old. The interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. All ethical procedures to protect the participants – such as obtaining informed consent, assuring volunteerism and confidentiality for their participation – were followed. Additionally, all procedures were made optional, ensuring participants could skip any question or stop the interview at any time if they felt uncomfortable. Furthermore, to ensure anonymity, a numbering system was used to identify the participants. Participants were asked not to reveal their names in any of the recordings (Wento, 2015). Interview data were revisited to answer questions that were beyond the scope of the previous study.

Data collected in the fall of 2014 revealed very complicated conceptions of Liberian identity expressed by the interviewees. The 1979 and 1990 civil unrest in Liberia had created more consciousness and sensitivity about ethnic identities. As explained in Chapter Two, historically, the natives were seen as "bush/country," degenerates or non-English speaking uncivilized idolaters by the Americo-Liberians. Prior to the 1979 coup d'état, which gave indigenous Liberians political power, many indigenous Liberians kowtowed to Americo-Liberian identity for fear of being seen as "bush or country". Similarly, during the 1990 civil war, led by Charles Taylor, many indigenous Liberians were forced into denouncing their ethnic affiliation for fear of being seen as a sympathizer of the wrong ethnic group. While the 1979 coup d'état and the

1990 civil war were disguised as liberation for the people, both civil unrests were mainly about power and greed (see Huband, 2013). However, these wars took tribalistic forms where one is killed due to their ethnic affiliation. According to Helene Cooper (2008), during the 1979 political unrest, many Americo-Liberians claimed native affiliation for fear of being killed.

Comparatively, during the 1990 civil war, people were claiming the Americo-Liberian identity to stay neutral. This is because, people belonging to or sympathizing with the ruling Doe's tribe were seen as enemies to the State by Charles Taylor and his sympathizers and vice versa. These civil unrests dispersed many Liberians, (both indigenous and Americo-Liberians) around the world as refugees, some of whom came to the United States.

The second source of data was drawn from a survey of memoirs written by Liberians immigrants in the United States of their experiences of living and growing up in Liberia. Two memoirs describing the same time-frame in Liberia were selected for analysis. Both books focused on the period prior to 1980. This period was chosen because it marks a historic, yet radical transition in power from the freed American slaves who had ruled Liberia from the mid-1800s up to 1979. The bloody coup d'état, headed by a native Liberian, led to the killing of many Americo-Liberians and the imprisonment of some educated natives. The selection of these memoirs, referring to the same time frame, gives a fair point of reference for the analysis of an Americo-Liberian's experience vs. an indigenous Liberian experience growing up in Liberia.

The first memoir is Helene Cooper's *The House at Sugar Beach: In Search of a Lost African Childhood* (2008), which describes her life growing up in Liberia as an

Americo-Liberian. This book was found on Amazon using the keywords, "memoir of Liberians" in the search engine. The speaks to the social construction and structure of the dominant ideology of Liberia. The second book is James Kpou's *Lost at Home* (2015), which chronicles his life growing up as native Liberian. The book was discovered on Facebook through the author's self-promotion. Kpou advertised his book as the story and history of Liberia from a one-man perspective. Revealing his native Liberian identity, I wanted to know if his story fitted within the category this study is undertaking. I then went on Amazon, search the title, read the excerpt which led me to buy the book. Even though, his book was self-published, unlike Cooper's that is published by Simon & Schuster, Kpou memoir is of importance to this thesis because it gives a different perspective on the experiences of the same culture, norms, and identity, within the same time frame, of the ideology of Liberia from an indigenous standpoint.

The third and final set of data was collected from the Internet and social media, specifically YouTube and Facebook. Keywords such as "English language identity among Liberians," "Liberian English," "English Language in Africa" and "Liberian Identity" where typed in the search engine of some of the popular Liberia public forums on Facebook and Google. I also searched posts on some prominent West African media Facebook pages that discussed language and identity. I Googled key phrases like "does Liberian speak English," "Former Language in Liberia," and "Liberia English." Data gathered include text and videos that will be analyzed using discourse analysis.

Data Analysis

Conflicted conceptions of indigenous, national, and ethnic identity were echoed in the interview data. During the interviews with Liberian immigrants, some interviewees

described moments when they felt their skin color, accent and African features were reasons they were discriminated against in the US by mostly African Americans, perpetuating the sense of otherness that they had encountered in Liberia as indigenous *others*. One of the females said that she was discriminated against by African Americans because she was from Africa. She felt the only way she could resist such discrimination was to claim an identity that she believed wasn't African. She said: "At that time in my life I felt ashamed of my identity, and I didn't want to be an African, I wanted to be something else. I told people I was from Jamaica because I have light skin color" (female #1). Assuming a different identity is a reductionist representation that implies one has to be darker skinned to be African while lighter skinned is non-African. While many Africans may have darker skinned complexion, this stereotype only reduces the people to the shade of their skin color to create a binary between what is African and non-African while neglecting every other diverse characteristic.

The remaining of the Chapter Three is broken down according to the key concepts postulated by the postcolonial theories in Chapter Two. Under these key concepts, data collected from our three sources will appear in no particular order, they will be analyzed according to how they fit within the concepts.

Dualistic Identities Based on Discursive Binaries

Post-colonial discourse analysis conducted by Frantz Fanon, Stuart Hall, and others has disclosed how identities can be constructed in binary terms to elevate what is considered white identity over non-white identity. Specifically, as noted in Chapter Two, Fanon (2008) spoke of the effect of the arbitrariness of skin color as a form of binarism in representational discourse. In the same fashion, Hall (2001) talks about the connection

between representation, difference, and power. He states that stereotyping, in the broader

cultural or symbolic sense, comprises the ability to represent someone or something in a

certain way with a certain regime of representation. According to Hall (2001), it is a

signifying practice that reduces and oversimplifies people to a few essential

characteristics, which are represented as fixed. Hall (2001) cautions that power goes

beyond force and coercion, "it seduces, solicits, induces, wins consent" (p. 261).

Within Liberian society, the Americo-Liberians are historically considered the

dominant class with the power and ability to create a representational practice through the

use of their newly acquired colonial power from the American Colonization Society.

Thus, binarism, which is rooted in skin color, religious difference, and cultural practices

becomes a symbol of representational discourses. The one obvious distinction between

free slaves and the native Liberian, according to representational discourse in Liberia, is

in the different shades of their skin color. Even though different shades of blackness can

be seen as arbitrary, the lighter shade is usually considered white (which is said to be

beautiful), and the darker shade is seen as indigenous African (which is deemed to be

ugly). Many Americo-Liberians are said to have lighter-skinned complexion than the

native Liberian, and the lighter-skinned complexion has been attributed to the sexual

relationships between the white male slave-masters and the black female slaves (see

Beyan 1991). The lighter-skinned freed slaves, accordingly, were given priorities for

political and economic powers over the darker-skinned freed slave during the transition

of power from the leaders of the American Colonization Society to the freed blacks

(Beyan, 1991). Consequently, it is believed that the lighter skin Liberians are not only

attractive but, also should have more economic power than their darker skin counterparts.

Furthermore, it is believed within dominant discursive representation that because of the Americo-Liberians exposure to the colonial American culture and religious practice, they are of a more civilized culture and are morally more upright than the natives. Drawing upon the data collected, this section on *Dualistic Identity* will first look at skin color as a discursive practice to understand what is considered symbolically attractive vs. unattractive among Liberians; then, it will turn to representational practices of using institutions to name what is considered savage vs. civilized; and lastly, it will examine religious practices as a marker of good vs. evil.

Difference based on skin tone. The shade of skin tone among the black communities is an important subject. In Liberia, skin color has been historically a marker of beauty and status due to the influence of the freed slaves who have been exposed to white supremacy. The lighter skinned complexion was seeing as a symbolic representation of the freed slaves, while the darker skin was a representation of native Africans. The darker skinned tone was seen as unattractive and ground for discrimination. Below, the data explores how skin tone is viewed and talked about by Liberian immigrants.

Data from interviews. The devaluation of indigenous African identities was re-inscribed in Liberian immigrants' encounters with African Americans in the US, the latter of which who ridiculed Africans in general for their origins and English-language use, which came as a surprise to Liberian immigrants who spoke the English institutionalized in Liberia by the freed slaves. One of the interviewees spoke of her encounter with African Americans in high school and how African Americans made her aware that they did not like Africans. She said:

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I have been discriminated against before. It goes back to high school. I have been

discriminated against by African Americans. They make fun of me and laugh at

my accent, and I can never seem to be friends with them no matter how hard I try.

The whites are curious to know more about me and where I am from than the

African Americans. They feel they are better than me because I am African. They

tell me to stay away from them because I smell like fish (female #2).

Analysis of the interview data focused on the discursive construction of identities

that point to the political arbitrariness of cultural binaries. The interview data revealed

that there is a shared belief that indigenous identities and cultures were devalued in

comparison to an Americanized identity. In Liberia, the national culture, consisting of

American-English, Christianity, and the culture imported with the freed American slaves

are viewed as more important. The devaluation of indigenous cultures was reflected in

the de-valuation of "Bush" culture and its fundamental otherness from the "civilized"

national culture.

***Data from the memoir*.** In Helene Cooper's memoir, *The House at Sugar,* she

makes reference to the shade of skin color as a representation of freedom, during the

emancipation era, as a binary between lighter skinned and darker skinned. She writes:

Since you could only go back to Africa if you were freed, the majority of people

who got on those ships were light-skinned. That's light skinned by African

standards, not American ones…Many white people don't notice the difference.

The don't see the difference between Will Smith and Djimon Hounsou. But 150

years ago that difference was as distinct as black and white. So on that freezing

February 6, 1820, when Elijah Johnson boarded the ship Elizabeth in New York

Harbor, it might as well been a white man boarding that ship bound for Africa (p.

31).

While there may have been many darker-skinned free slaves that had been repatriated to

Africa during that time, the reference to lighter-skinned blacks as a representation of

freedom signifies that lighter skin equates with freedom, while darker skin is linked with

the absence of freedom. Also, Cooper's effort to construe a light skin freed slaves for a

white person signifies the important role skin color plays in Liberia. To be seen as white

gives one a certain kind of dominance over their darker skinned counterparts. The excerpt

from Cooper's memoir helps establish the meaning of some of the binaries between

indigenous Liberians and Americo-Liberians as a social discourse. The reference to Will

Smith, a light-skinned African American and Djimon Hounsou, a dark-skinned native

African, further illustrates the myth between the two groups of blacks. But, what is

essential to the establishment of binaries between Americo-Liberians and indigenous

Liberians based on skin color is that these binaries point to underlying myths that link

whiteness with civilization, freedom, beauty or anything good and blackness with

savagery, ugliness or anything evil.

The myth found in the distinctions between light skin and dark skin in Liberia

helps us understand what is considered attractive and unattractive. For example, Cooper

gives us a glimpse of what is seen as symbolically beautiful in the Liberian society

through her description below:

She [Cooper's mother] was tall and thin and light-skinned, and the ultimate

symbol of beauty in Liberia: long, silky, soft, white people's hair I was darker

than Mommee and Daddy but still light-skinned by Liberia standard…Marlene

was a chubby, white, green-eyed, silky soft hair, Chinese-looking Buddha-

baby…Marlene could easily be taken for a white if it wasn't for her African

features. She had big wide African nose… (pp 13-16)

The description used for those features revered as symbolic Liberian beauty are those

used in dominant western discourse to describe Eurocentric beauty. This fixation on

European looks and features is what Fanon (2008) describes as the internalization of the

inferiority complex. This concept will be discussed in broader detail in the next section.

However, the thesis must further examine skin color as a representational discourse

between of what is considered white and what is seen as African. Helene's description of

her mother's "light-skinned/almost white; silky, soft, white people's hair… [and]

Marlene's green eye" (pp. 13-14) can be interpreted as physical qualities one has to

possess to be considered beautiful. Thus, to be seen in any other way is considered

unfortunate and unattractive. For example, Cooper's description of Marlene's nose as the

only African features that spoiled her almost white looks can be construed as the disdain

with which African features are held among the freed slave.

The study now moves on to the social media data to see how skin color is viewed

and talked about within the Liberian communities.

Social media data. The data used here come from two separate YouTube

channels. These videos demonstrate an interaction and reaction between those who

considered themselves indigenous Africans, Americo-Liberians, and African-Americans.

The diverse topics address cultures, shades of skin color and the challenges between these

cultures. The researcher first starts with a video in which the Liberian president, Ellen

Johnson Sirleaf, discusses the historical tension between indigenous Liberians and the

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freed slaves (International Reporting Project, 2011). Then, we will move on to the music

video, which lyrics is about light skin color. In the first video, published by the

International Reporting (2011), Ellen Johnson Sirleaf was interviewed about her view on

historic schism between the freed slaves and the indigenous Liberians that led to the basis

of the civil unrest in Liberia. She spoke to the effect of the exclusionary culture of the

Americo-Liberian that left the native out of any historical significance. The video

generated comments from Liberians descendants of both natives and freed slaves, African

Americans and other Africans. One of the commenters who identified as half native/half

Americo-Liberian wrote this:

> I'm both indigenous and Americo-Liberian. But when my father was growing up
>
> him being Americo-Liberian didn't do anything to make his life better [sic]. Back
>
> then they had children they called "wards" who lived with another family to get a
>
> better education. Really they were glorified slaves and my dad was a ward. I
>
> suspect it was because although he was americo-lib [sic] he was very dark and
>
> seemed more native. My mom is lighter but she's Grebo, like completely native
>
> Grebo (female #1).

This commenter brings to the researcher's attention one important factors – while

heritage is of importance in Liberian, skin color supersedes the actual heritage of the

person. The comment above is a reminder of the power structured in Liberia. A light-

skinned freed slave ranks higher than a dark skinned freed slave who then ranks higher

than the indigenous person. This is because the white leaders of the American

Colonization Society (ACS), at that time, looked favorably on the lighter-skinned freed

slaved as compared the dark-skinned freed slaves. During the period of power transition,

the whites ACS leaders felt comfortable turning over power only to light skinned freed slaves compared to the dark-skinned freed slaves (see Beyan, 1991). According to Cooper (2008), this can be attributed to the paternalistic instinct the whites felt towards the light skinned freed slaves. Hence, the continues tradition of elevating light skin over dark skin complexion in Liberia.

However, other commenters who identified as African American were not happy with president Johnson-Sirleaf's comment about problems between the native Liberians and Americo-Liberians. They share the same sentiments with the freed slaves who believed they were better than the indigenous Africans. Some of the commenters had this to say:

I bet they were not against getting their debt forgiven by America only because of the African American connections. Can we stop giving out vistas [sic] to them since their [sic] are no more Africans American in Liberia too. fuck them. (unspecified gender #1)

Dont blame the downfall of your country on the African Americans! Your country, your continent was destined for destruction! African Americans are the chosen ones. Now u say AAs Destroyed Liberia, who is destroying the rest of Africa? (unspecified gender #2)

Nevertheless, some commenters who identified as indigenous Africans express their unhappiness about freed slave influence in Africa. Some of them expressed their view by posting:

Nobody asked you ebonical turds [sic] to come to Africa! you weren't invited so don't stay! Ivory coast had nothing to do with you ebonicals [sic] so what the hell

are you talking about? You toxic waste were just dumped in Africa., We

welcomed you,and you shat [sic] on us.......NEVER AGAIN! (unidentified gender

#3)

Well said! The same shit they did in Liberia and Sierra Leon, is the same thing

they are trying to do in Ghana! When black Americans are in America,they call

themselves African, when they come to Africa, they regard themselves as

Americans, and want to lord themselves over Africans. Our forefathers were too

trusting, we Africans now need to make a stand, afterall [sic] they brought

nothing to Africa!..PEACE! (unidentified gender #4)

At the same time, there were those who took a different position. These commenters

believed the whites slave masters were the ones to be blamed for the problems between

the freed slaves and the native Liberians. They claimed the two cultures were pitted

against each other:

As for the Americo-Liberians, I can say this: they were taught by savage southern

whites to look at natives and primitive and uncivilized because they (American

slaves) were viewed by whites as the same. So they took that horrid western

image of Africans with them to Liberia thus resulting in the dark times you

complain about. I can apologize, but I had nothing to do with that and I think they

were totally wrong. (unidentified gender #5)

LET'S GET ONE THING STRAIGHT! Former American slaves had been

BRAINWASHED- they were told that the only way they could become anything

worthy in life was if they acted like those who enslaved them, and ostracized

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those who acted unlike their slave masters. They were taught to feel worthless

because of their skin color. (female #2)

These comments above help this study understand the schism not only between freed

slaves and indigenous Liberian but how it is interpreted by African Americans and native

Africans and how others are able to trace it back to the white influence. Furthermore, the

data reinforces the role of skin color plays in the Liberia's cultural discourse.

Moving on, the researcher examines the message from a Liberian music video,

(entitled Complexion Thing) on YouTube, that seems glorify light-skinned color. The

researcher also examines comments that were garners from the video. To give a brief

description of the music video, the video featured a skinny, light-skinned female with

long dark weave-on over her natural hair. She sang about her love for a light skinned boy.

Similarly, her male counterpart, who happened to have a darker-skinned complexion,

repeated the same lines about his love for a light-skinned girl. Just like the male singer,

everyone else who featured in the video had darker skinned complexion. Towards the end

of the video, two dark-skinned guys began to fight over the only light-skinned girl. The

camera then showed a dark-skinned girl attempting to confront one of the guys for

neglecting her for the light-skinned girl.

Comments found below the music video were of mixed reaction. Some of the

commenters spoke about the negative impact of using such medium to glorify light-

skinned in a time of proliferated skin bleaching among Africans. Below are some of the

comments:

I am a big supporter of Liberian music. With that being said, this song is complete

garbage. I won't even touch on the sound and melody. I'll leave that to the music

professionals. The message of this song is so wrong. Given the epidemic of skin bleaching/lightening/toning in Africa, it behooves me that someone would create a song glorifying light skin. I'm not saying we should dislike lighter skin. We should however, promote natural black beauty and show that brown skin is beautiful as well. Until we learn to love yhe [sic] skin that we are in, we will forever be seen as inferior. (female #1)

Another person made a comment to the effect of the colonial mentality on skin color that still persists in Liberia. she wrote: "Smh, colorist mentality is still alive and well in Liberia I see." (female #2)

However, some commenters took a different approach by defending the music video and its message. They thought it was unfair that people would readily say negative things about a music that praised light-skinned complexion. Below are some of the comments:

well if this song was called dark skinned none of your asses will be moaning plain and simple. the funny thing i dont evan [sic] like this song nothing to do with what its about its just not my thing but i new [sic] people wouldnt be moaning anyway i am a mixed race liberian british [sic] my mother is a beautiful brown skin liberian [sic] woman and my father is a white british [sic] man im proud of who i am and yes i love my light skin im proud of who i am and i dont [sis] care if anyone is offended everyone should be proud of who they are. (female #3)

Adding to the sympathizers of the music video, another commenter, who identified as a dark-skinned girl, asks that viewers enjoy the music and make it their own.

All y'all [sis] need to relax gosh man if she would have said dark skin then y'all

asses would have like the song , and yes im a dark skin girl talking . I love this

song I even made my own remix to it , which is ... I'm your dark skin girl and

you're my bark skin boy. The only way u want [sis] like this music only if you're

against your own skin tone , y'all need to relax it's not her fult [sis] that y'all hate

y'all own skin tone as for me I like my dark skin so y [sis] hate this song , and it's

the same way she love her light skin tone all good things doesn't have to be about

us dark skin so y'all dark skin need to relax . The song is a really great

song and I love it. (Female #4)

The message in this music video speaks to the narrative that lighter-skinned complexion

signifies beauty in the Liberian society. The subtle message towards the end of the music

video tells us that dark-skinned complexion is not attractive enough to be fought over.

The overall myth about the aesthetic difference between light-skinned and darker-skinned

complexion is the iteration of the dominant anti-black racial discourse postulated by the

white supremacist, which claims that white is beautiful and black is ugly.

However, the comments generated from the video were mutually contradictory.

There were commenters who were generally appalled by the message the video depicted.

They believed that the message was either promoting Liberia's colonial mentality that

light skin was the standard of beauty or that it was encouraging skin bleaching among

many dark-skinned Africans who believe that lighter skin is more beautiful. Others, on

the other hand, saw no problem with the message the video portrayed. They believed that

the video was innocent and did not warrant the negative comments it was getting

Difference based on creating an alternative representation. The second point on binarism and representational practice addresses the ways in which the dominant group creates an alternative identity for a marginalized group by othering. Said (2009) speaks of the role written language plays in creating binarism based on identity. He claims that written language construction is one of the techniques of representation that is used by the dominant power to create an opposing view of the marginalized that is a completely opposite of themselves (2009). These representations rely upon institutions, traditions, conventions, agreed-upon codes of understanding best understood by the dominant power (Said, 2009).

Similarly, within Liberian society, there is a sense of a superiority complex felt by the Americo-Liberians, because of their ability to speak and write the white man's language. The discourse used in the national constitution, songs, fables and history lessons elevates the Americo-Liberian adopted way of life, which is a direct imitation of the southern white American way of life. The language used to describe indigenous Liberians is often a regurgitation of the white man's stereotype of a black man. Hence, one of the ways the Americo-Liberian believes he or she can make an indigenous person civilized is by first giving him or her an English name. To begin the analysis, the researcher looks at the data from memoirs, followed by the interviews and social media to understand how representational discourse creates a binarism between America-Liberian identity and an indigenous Liberian identity.

Data from memoir. In his book, James Kpou explains how for the first time in middle school he learns of his identity as a savage and non-citizen in a land he calls his

own. He writes that he found from the spoken words of his teachers and written languages within the constitution. He wrote:

> I remember our history class hearing the teacher recite and then write the constitution which began: "we the people of the republic of Liberia were originally the inhabitants of the Unite States of America." Then the teacher would recite: "Liberia was founded in 1822 by freed slaves. Before we came, the area was inhabited by savages. There was no government." (p. 34)

The language written in the Liberian constitution as explained by Kpou, can be seen as an intentional creation of an identity for the natives, that reduces them to the status of savagery not deserving of an equal right to citizenship. Said (2009) argues that the language used to represent the colonized is never innocent or objective. It is filled with stereotypes fostering political purposes that can become mythologized and taken for granted. Comparatively, Hall (2001) talks about representational discourse as a structure of binary opposites in which there is a power position between these binary opposites. For example, the colonial representational discourse on identity, presented by white imperialist, portrayed white identity in a positive light while dehumanizing black identity (Hall, 2001). In a similar manner, the freed slaves justified their colonizing practice and exclusionary act by reducing the identity of the indigenous African to savagery.

In this way, the free slaves who consider themselves American immigrants in Africa perceive their identity in the same racial fashion as do their white ex-masters. The Americo-Liberians also believed that because of their exposure to the white man's culture they are more honorable than the native person who is far removed from the white man's

culture. In the example that follows, Cooper gives us a clear instance in which the Americo-Liberians felt imperialistic towards the natives. She wrote:

> In Liberia, we care far more about we looked outside than about who we were inside. It was crucial to be Honorable. Being an "Honorable" – mostly Congo People, though a smattering of Country People were sometimes pronounced educated enough to get the title – meant you were deemed eligible to hold important government post. You could have a PH. D from Harvard but if you were a Country man with a tribal affiliation you were still outranked in Liberian society by an Honorable with a two-bit degree from some community college in Memphis, Tennessee. (p. 11)

Another way dominant power uses representational practices to suppress the true identity or create an alternative identity for the marginalized is by implementing a name changing system. James Kpou spoke of the use of educational institution as one of the ways in which an indigenous child loses his or her identity. For example, the majority of the characters both in Kpou's and Cooper's memoirs had either an Americanized or Christianized name. In the except below, Kpou speaks of his personal experience about his loss of identity based on his name change:

> I was born with the names Tapatau, which means light the torch ...My second name Bazon means father of the new day…My third name Sawi, which means talkative…My last name Kpou…, which means born during the corn harvest. When my father registered me for school, he changed my name to James so I would fit in. It was on that day that I lost an important part of my identity (p. 11)

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Similarly, post-colonial writings tell us that the dominant power usually claims the moral high ground while using racialized discourse to refer to what is indigenous as primitive (Hall, 2011). For instance, the white colonial masters during the emancipation era had already established a representation of the difference between the freed slave and the indigenous by telling the freed slaves that they were missionaries going into the dark continent to convert the heathen Africans. They referred to African religious practices as evil and ungodly. Subsequently, the Americo-Liberians used their newly acquired imperialist power to declare Liberia a Christian nation. The data below shows how these dominant representational practices are embraced and rejected.

Social media data. There was a post on social media from 2015 concerning the rectification of the Liberian constitution to change the representational narrative of Liberia from a Christian to a secular nation. The majority of the responses to the post were using languages that showed disapproval of the amendment and wanted Liberia to go back to the old colonial era. Some of the respondents had this to say:

> Any way, we Christians want [sic] let you all to know that in as much that [sis] you are aware that country was founded as a christian [sis] state since 1847, and was changed out of ignorance and demonic gain, we have come in the name of Jesus Christ to get back what has been stolen from us (male #1)

> soul winning is the business we know to do best, make no mistake. what we are saying in simple terms is for us to go back to the covenant our founding fathers enter into with their God; the Lord Jesus Christ (male #2)

Hall (1996), discusses the influence of colonial representation and the power it has not only to construct blacks in a negative fashion but also subject blacks to that knowledge by imposed will and domination. The majority of the comments coming from Liberians on the social media post did not appreciate the constitutional change to make Liberia a secular nation. They had accepted the imposed identity even if it does suppress indigenous religious identities.

Equally important on the subject of binarism is Fanon's argument on how diametrical representation extends to language usage. He believes that the use of language is one of the primary means by which a person's identity is created. This description leads to next concept – the fetishization of white culture – which speaks to the ways marginalized societies assumes the language and customs of a dominant society over their own. They do so by relegating the indigenous language/culture and elevating the foreign language/culture.

Fetishization and internalization of inferiority Complex

Stuart Hall states that fetishism takes us into the realm where fantasy intervenes in representation in that what is seen through representation can only be understood by what cannot be seen (Hall, 2006). To add to that, Fanon brings to light the complexity of identity between the colonized and colonizer (2008). He talks about the dynamic of an inferiority complex that is produced in a black person due to colonial experience. When a black person's attitude is to prove to the white and his fellow blacks that he is of importance through the fetishization of white culture, he is exhibiting signs of inferiority complex. Fanon describes inferiority complex as the black man assuming the culture of the white man's as his own. This definition is also echoed in what post-colonial theories

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refer to as the elevation and fetishization of white cultural values and identities. Fanon (2008) uses the process of language acquisition to explain how colonization produces an internalization of an inferiority complex in the colonized. He states that to speak means to be able to use a particular syntax and processing of a language, which also means assuming the culture and bearing the weight of that society's civilization. This behavior, according to Fanon, is usually found within the so-called educated class of black people who treat their local language with contempt and elevate the white man's language.

Within Liberian society, just like other African societies that went through colonization, European languages have become the dominant languages and their cultures became fetishized. Even though in Liberia, there are several local languages which could be adopted as the standard language, the English language has become the only language of literacy. In what follows, the researcher uses both social media data and data from memoirs to examine how the English language and western culture are viewed.

Social media data. A popular radio station from Ghana posted a public video on Facebook about the importance of literacy (Joy FM, 2016). Even though this video was produced in Ghana, it represents and addresses similar practices in Liberia where one's ability to speak English is equivalent to one's intelligence. The logic applied here is that to speak only the indigenous language is illiterate. In the video used for analysis, a man riding on a motorcycle, with a hidden camera, approaches some local vendors selling by the road side. He asks, in English, to the young boy holding a squirrel, "What is that?" "Rat," the boy answers. Then the man asks "What are you going to use that for? The young boy looks around with confusion, seemingly looking for help from one of the other vendors. An older boy runs towards them and says "200,000." The man says "that is a

parasite, a rodent, what am I going to use that for?" The older boy, not quite understanding what the man is saying, laughs sheepishly and repeats the amount. The video goes on for about 5 minutes with some older women attempting to help, but still unable to understand or translate the man's questions. Some of the female vendors, feeling embarrassed, start to tell the young boys, in a local language (Twi), why it was important to go to school and learn the English language.

The video seems to ridicule the local vendors for their inability to speak English. The man on the bike represents the dominant elitist educated class within African society who must showcase his sense of importance by elevating the English language and thereby dishonoring the local language. This practice is what Fanon refers to as an inferiority complex felt by the black man who uses foreign language devoid of any connection with his immediate environment.

The video elicited many reactions from commenters who felt it was elitist. However, other commenters thought the video wasn't meant to be condescending but spoke to the broader issue about young children not seeking education. The researcher first examines comments that disagree with the objectives of the video before examining those that defended the video. Some of the commenters that abhorred the video wrote:

> This is the same thing the white man did. He went into an area speaking a language not spoken by the people of that area. He is calling them uneducated when he didn't even speak their language. The person recoding is the true uneducated idiot. (male #1)

> The guy himself needs to be educated. You take video of people and share km social media without their approval he never showed his face... How would he

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feel if this is done to his mother. [sis] Anyway knowledge of English language is

not education. (male #2)

Does Education means [sis] Speaking English?! Then 90% of Chinese are

uneducated. Is not funny. (male #3).

Only in Africa that English language is use as yard stick to measure education.

This retard here is the one who needs education. How dare you film people's ass

without their consent and upload in Internet? & u expect us to applaud you? (male

#4)

This isn't funny at all, at least there was a reason every tribe on earth was ascribed

to a particular language. Speaking English doesn't make you educated and

civilized. The more reason Africans ain't [sis] getting anywhere. (male #5).

Other commenters believed the video was made specifically to ridicule the local venders,

adding that the man in the video needed education as well. One commenter wrote:

I strongly believe that this poster understands the language of this villagers but he

chose to use English language to make a mockery of them...even the poster isn't

educated, he couldn't even make a good sentence, besides he is the most foolish

person on earth for making this nonsense he called video, speaking of English

language doesn't really necessary makes you educated. I know countless of people

who are great men but can't really make a sentence in English. (male #6).

However, there were others that believed that the wasn't meant to be condescending but

spoke to the broader issue of young people not seeking education. Some of them had this

to say:

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People are here insulting but they are not worried about the young ones who are in a school but can't understand basic English. And these will be our future leaders one day. People are saying does education means speaking English. What was the language of communication when u were even thought in school. Is it not the same education that made you type your comments here. Let us be realistic small [sic]. It's about our future and our children. well done bros. Some of us know the good work you are doing for mother Ghana [sis]. Keep it up man. (male #6)

Most of you guys are missing the point here. There's a bit of humour in this whole recording but at the same time, the guy's advice was that most people in Gh especially in our rural areas need basic education i.e basic reading and writing. Why are you guys going over board with this whole thing. How can we be a part of a global world with our local languages? Will you be able to trade internationally? Let's face the reality, we are in a changing world, a global world and it's no longer a one country affair. Therefore the future of our kids is in question here. Be it whether you find yourself. (female #1)

Interestingly, the man who made the video also commented as to why he made the video. His wrote:

Hello I did this video social experiment and the purpose was achieved; We need FORMAL EDUCATION for our folks. I have supported schools across Ghana and keep supporting with similar videos like this. My tone used in this video was deliberate and I even confused viewers hanging me here. I do social experiments of this nature daily and through this I bring to light what needs to be done for our

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people. I decided to use words like parasite and rodent for a purpose. First ask yourself why did you go to school? How did you manage to type these words in English? Has formal Education made you a better Person? Why is everyone not typing their comments in their local languages. The point people missed here is that this is a Social experiment. I made the video and I keep supporting schools across the country. Have many schools [sis] have those typing against the video built or supported? The whole idea of this video is to see how much needs to be put into formal education here and that will be my next step of supporting this community with educational supplies like I do in other communities. The purpose of this video is not to make fun of anyone but rather to make a statement that we need to invest in formal education. For all who brought in insults thank God you can type in English; thanks to FORMAL EDUCATION. I was expecting people to ask where the community is located so that they could invest in FORMAL EDUCATION there (presenter).

The irony of the presenter's comments is that, structurally and grammatically, he struggles with the English language as well. But, he states that he intentionally used language the people couldn't understand for the sake of encouraging formal education. Once again, he is perpetuating the myth spread by their colonial masters that ability to speak English equals education. He and many other so-called educated leaders believe that a local language cannot be taught formally.

Elsewhere on YouTube, in different video entitled *My accent is beautiful, won't change it for the world* (2015) Liberian immigrant spoke about the pressured she gets from people, specifically other Liberians, who tell her to eliminate her accent and speak

standard English. She expressed pride for not succumbing to pressure from others to change her accent or speak standard English. Having loss her ability to speak her local language, she says Coloqua has become her only language.

Coloqua is a variation of the English language spoken only by Liberian just like the Krio in Sierra Leon and Pidgin in Ghana and Nigeria. This is example of what happens to the English language when it is forced on an indigenous population. Firstly, the indigenous adopt the English language by creating a different form of it, and secondly, that language replaces the local languages of the indigenous people.

Data from memoir. The study continues to learn about the elevation of English language and the fetishization of Western cultures in Liberia from Kpou and Cooper's experiences growing up within that society. In his memoir, Kpou spoke of English language as a thing that both separates him from his family and connects him to the rest of world. He wrote:

> At this school, I learned English, and this was the first thing that separated me from my family. I had the ability to speak a language that connected me to the other world…The first major change in the Kpou family was the fact that dad could read and write English. It was something to celebrate. Grandpa and my peasant Mom never had a chance. But for the rest of us, dad had broken new ground. Today I am busy trying to learn my mother's native tongue. (p. 12)

Kpou is showing ambivalence toward the English language. In that, he is happy on the one hand that he has acquired the language that connects him to the other world, but sad that he is not able to speak his native language fluently. This explanation of the English language speaks to the elevation of a western language lacking any connection to his

immediate environment. Another element of postcolonial discourse that help structure the analysis of the data is fetishization.

Fetishization involves the disavowal of difference (Bhabha, 1996; Hall, 2001). According to Hall (2006), disavowal is the strategy by which a powerful fascination or desire is both indulged and at the same time denied. In the excerpts that follows, fetishization is display when Cooper writes about her privilege position, yet fanaticizes about being an American or British girl, but without the racial stereotype suffered by those girls. Cooper wrote:

> When presented the choice between America and Africa, they [freed slaves] chose Africa. Because of that choice, I would not grow up 150 years later, as an American black girl, weighed down by racial stereotypes…none of that post–civil rights movement baggage to bog me down with any inferiority complex about whether I am good as white people. No European garbage to have me wondering whether some British colonial master was somehow better than me. (p. 29)

Cooper looks condescendingly at what it means to be black American or black European, but at the same time fantasizes about it. Helene fantasizes about being seen as American or British.

> In my fantasy, I looked fresh and hip and American or British as I swept off the plane after a year living in the States or London…. I would speak with an American accent, just like Janice spoke with a British accent whenever she came home from boarding school. (p. 16)

Cooper also talks about vacation homes and properties her family and the descendants of other freed slaves bought in Europe and America when they live in a

country where a huge portion of the population that did not belong to the Americo-Liberian class struggled economically. Their fixation on being seen as civilized people equal to the whites led to such exorbitant investments. Cooper also writes about the freed slaves fascination with Europe and America being so great that they paid huge sum of money to send their children to privately run American schools in Liberia or European boarding schools. Cooper then, writes about her family's fascination about American identity when she states: "We were civilized Congo People with American roots, so nobody was sending Mommee off to the Grebo bush" (p.15). When Cooper finally immigrated to the United States, she expressed her frustration about the American public school and how awkward it was for her having come from an esteemed private school in Liberia. She also writes about the ability to speak American English so clearly that it was hard for people to tell she was African.

   Data from the interview. Data from the interview, on the other hand, offers a different view than Cooper's memoir. The participants reminisced about the African culture and fantasized about it. They also accepted that they are not English speakers, recognizing what they spoke back in Liberia as broken English. Having experienced the American culture, they believe the African culture instilled more disciplinary values in the children and felt that Christianity is more authentic within the African churches than the American churches. Some of the participants had this to say about the English language:

   It was hard adjusting and learning English when I came to the US because even

   though we did speak English back home, it was broken English I did not feel

   comfortable because kids in the neighbor would make fun of our language so I

only felt comfortable speaking my language in the comfort of my home. (male #1).

First year of college was a little rough because of my accent which was very strong. The teachers spoke fast so I used to record them and listen to them over and over to understand what they were saying. As always there are students who would make fun and laugh at my accent. I did not make friends it was hard to do so with people laughing at my accent. I always sat in the in the back of the class by myself and if I have to say something to the instructor I always wrote a note. I did not feel comfortable speaking because people could not understand me. I was a little scared. (male #2)

The majority of the participants elevated the African culture and the African identity. They have also "Africanized" Christianity to incorporate what they believe is the right way to worship and serve God. They have embraced the Christian religion and made it their own to the extent that they view the American version as strange. Some of those that elevate the African identity and fantasize about the African ways of doing things had this to said:

I used to be ashamed of who I was, I quickly adapted to the worse American lifestyle, talking back at my mom because I saw my American friends do it and I thought that would make me American. I did not want to be associated with African. But now I know who I am, because my mom told me if you don't know where you come from you wouldn't know where you are going. Now all my friends call me bush, because I eat African food for breakfast, lunch and dinner, and I eat with my hands. I am proud to be bush. (female #1)

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I am US citizen now, so I consider myself African American. But I want move

back to Africa someday and raise my kids according to the African culture. I like

the African culture and the way they train children. (female #3).

And those that prefer African churches and their forms of worship had this to say:

I don't go to American church; their way of worship is different. The audience

become spectators and watch the pastor do all the praying. I love African church

because we all get involved when it comes to praying. (male #3).

I expected the American church that I went to welcome and help me but the

people in the church did not care. It was an African American church but they did

not help me and I feel it has destroyed my faith in God at that time, but I am

having faith again thanks to my African church (male #4).

I go American churches sometimes but I love my African rhythm and culture. I do

believe that God is also in the American churches but I don't feel him there (male

#2).

The experiences that the participants from the interview spoke about are in vast contrast

to Cooper's experience as an immigrant in the United States. While Cooper, an Americo-

Liberian, experienced her own cultural shock, having come from the dominant culture in

Liberia, she did not struggle with the English language. In fact, her skin color and her

ability to speak English like an American safe her from any discrimination a typical

Liberian would experience. The difference between Cooper and the Liberian immigrants,

from the interview, who did not have the same privilege position back in Liberia is that

these Liberian immigrants struggle with English and were made fun off because of their

accents. Because of that experience, they view themselves as non-English speakers while Cooper views herself as an English speak.

Not to mention, the Americo-Liberians fetishization about the western culture, which led to the stereotypical believe that the western culture is better than the African culture have been echoed throughout Cooper's memoir. This fetishization has led to the elevation of the said culture, which according to Fanon (2008) is due to an internalization of inferiority complex. However, we find Liberians immigrants who participated in the interview wishing they could go back and enjoy what they believed is indigenously African.

To summarize, this chapter attempted to analyze complex data gathered from three different sources to answer questions raised about colonialism has affected Liberia's culture, language and religion. The chapter also examined former Liberians' language use and recounted experiences about identity reflect colonial legacies, as well as the implications of these colonial legacies inscribed in language and identity. The next chapter will delve into the discussions of the data analyzed and apply its meanings to the post-colonial identity of Liberian immigrants in the diaspora.

CHAPTER 4

Discussion

Many Africans who immigrate from post-colonial, English-speaking countries to dominant western English-speaking countries, such as the United States, have struggled not only with the cultural differences but also with the burden of re-learning the English language. An undergraduate thesis project that I conducted over the summer of 2014 revealed that Liberians in Phoenix saw themselves as non-English speakers despite having grown up believing they were speaking American-English in Liberia (Wento, 2015). The finding propelled the researcher to collect data from other sources, such as social media and memoirs written by Liberians, to understand this shift in self-perception of English language competence. Combined with a secondary analysis of the interview data, the social media posts and memoirs enabled broader insight into the historical legacy of colonialism in Liberia enacted by freed American slaves, who imposed their former masters' language and religion upon indigenous peoples. This thesis aimed to identify and understand the role of colonial vestiges in shaping self-perceptions on culture, religion and language practices among Liberians, particularly those who have been confronted with otherness when immigrating to the US.

Hence, after gathering data and analyzing them, this chapter helps us understand what these data mean regarding our research questions:

- How was Liberia's national culture, language, and religion shaped by the freed American slaves who established the nation in 1847?

- How does former Liberians' language use and recounted experiences about identity reflect colonial legacies instituted with the establishment of Liberia as a country for freed slaves?

- What are the implications of these colonial legacies inscribed in language and identity for Liberia and Liberian refugees in America?

In the data collected, discourse analysis was used as a methodology looking closely at the collected texts by means of theoretical concepts derived from the postcolonial literature including *Dualistic Identities Based on Discursive Binaries,* and *Fetishization/ Internalization of Inferiority Complex*. These two concepts, upon analysis, help us understand some of the complexity of othering within the Liberian society when it comes to identity, language used, skin tone, religion and the elevation of western cultures

Addressing research questions

The researcher will begin to answer the questions by discussing the data analyzed within these key concepts. To answer the questions, we must look to summarize the data analyzed under the concepts of *Dualistic Identities Based on Discursive Binaries* and *Fetishization/ Internalization of Inferiority Complex* to reveal the intricacy of colonial vestiges and their implications.

Under the dualistic identities on discursive binaries, two sub-concepts emerged – *difference based on skin tone* and *othering based on alternative stereotypical representation*. The shade of skin complexions as a discursive binary assumes that there was a significant difference between lighter-skinned Americo-Liberians and darker-

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skinned indigenous Liberians. The dominant Americo-Liberians also used formal structures of English language to denigrate and alter the identity of indigenous Liberians through oral and written documentation. Beginning with data from the interview, the data revealed that Liberian immigrants who moved to the United States experienced tension with African Americans, the latter of which tried to establish binaries between themselves and the Liberians based on the Liberians' African roots, features, and accent or inability to speak English. The creation of otherness by African Americans reestablishes the sense of otherness that was created between the Americo-Liberians and the indigenous people during the colonial period. This stereotypical binary between the Americo-Liberians and the native Liberians is echoed in both memoirs. Kpou spoke of the constitution which referred to indigenous as savages, uncivilized as compared to the civilized freed slaves.

Kpou went on to talked about what I will refer to as the "Americo-Liberianization" of the indigenous children. "Americo-Liberianization" entails changing the identity of indigenous children through a name changing system to adopt different identities. These new representations create a false sense of identity, which robs the indigenous children of their actual sense of identity. Cooper helped the study understand the foundation of the discursive binaries based on skin color between the Americo-Liberians and the native Liberians. The difference explained that lighter-skinned freed slaves were considered white, versus the darker-skinned indigenous, who were considered blacks. The Americo-Liberians were not only considered beautiful due to their light-skinned complexion; they were also viewed as more honorable than the indigenous Liberians. Their honorable status is acquired by exposure to the southern American

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culture and religion. The data from Cooper's memoir also revealed that even though indigenous Liberians tried to prove worthy of quality, e.g., by earning PhDs from western universities, they never attained equality in the eyes of the freed slaves who saw the indigenous people as dishonorable savages.

Social media data also reflects the assertion that light-skinned complexion is the standard of beauty in Liberia. As was shown in the data analysis, an entire music video was dedicated to elevating light skinned color. Some of the viewers who commented on the music video thought it was harmless. These commenters believed that people who spoke against the music video were too sensitive. They claimed that light-skinned color also existed and needed equal representation. But what these comments failed to realize is the insidious anti-black message that accompanied the video. The message that light skin is more attractive than dark skin.

However, other commenters thought the message was harmful because it did not represent an actual African standard of beauty. Some of them thought the music video was dangerous because it indirectly encouraged skin bleaching. Skin bleaching is a harmful practice carried out by darker-skinned people to give them an "attractive" light skin. This phenomenon has become common in Liberia and other African communities. The skin bleaching pandemic has caused some comments to frown on the music video stating the video was socially irresponsible. Moreover, others comments pointed to the colonial mentality as the reason for Liberians making music about light skin complexion.

Some data exposed other discursive practices that altered the religious identity of the indigenous population. A social media post brought to light a discussion on sections of the colonial constitution that was written specifically to obliterate indigenous religion

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identity and make Liberia into a Christian nation. The data showed that these discursive practices that upheld the Americo-Liberian identity, culture, and religious practices are still alive among Liberians. While these discursive practices may be detrimental to the indigenous identity, a significant portion of Liberians who responded to the post about amending the constitution to make Liberia a secular nation believed that Liberia should remain a Christian nation as the forefathers (freed slaves) intended it. Need it be said that, statistically and historically, the indigenous population in Liberia is more than the Americo-Liberian's. The social media data revealing negative responses to the post about amending the constitution to make Liberia a secular nation were more than those for it. Hence, having majority of the respondents to social media post calling to revert the constitution by making Liberian a Christian nation means that the many indigenous Liberians have bought into the hegemonic "Christianity is a better religion" mentality.

Another video from social media that reflects binarism between Americo-Liberian's and the indigenous Liberian's identities is a video that featured the current Liberian president talking about the colonial narratives that skewed the history of Liberia in favor of the Americo-Liberians. The history showed Americo-Liberians as the founders and citizens of Liberia while relegating the existence of the native Liberians and downplaying their contributions (Saha, 1998). The comments that followed the video showed evidence of tension between the Americo-Liberians and indigenous and by extension the African American and native African. The data showed that African Americans believed they are superior to the native African, echoing the sentiments of Americo-Liberians toward the indigenous Liberians.

The data revealed that African American were in solidarity with the freed slaves who they saw as an extension of themselves. They claimed that the native Africans did not appreciate African Americans for the help they brought to Africa. There was evidence of an "Us. vs. Them" mentality. The African Americans as well as those who identified as indigenous Africans saw the tension between the indigenous Liberians and the freed slaves as a tension between African Americans and native Africans. Those who identified as indigenous Africans thought African American were imperialistic and condescending towards Africans. Nevertheless, other commenters who tried to ease the tension between the two groups blamed the problem on the white slave masters who created a false representation of the superiority of the freed slave over the indigenous African. Cooper made similar assertion in her memoir when she wrote about the white man informing the freed slave that he or she belong to the civilized race and was going back to Africa as missionaries to redeem the savage heathen.

To further understand the colonial legacies concerning English language communication and its implication on Liberian immigrants, the study looks to what post-colonial scholars call the fetishization of white culture. Fanon (2008), in his essay *Black Skin White Mask*, tells us that the false sense of superiority complex felt by the freed blacks is due to their exposure to the what man's culture, language, and religion. Fanon said that the black man is more concern about being seeing as equal to the white man that after perfecting the white's man language, he then looks down on his fellow black men who cannot speak the language. Fanon said in an actual sense; this black person is suffering a form of a deep-seated inferiority complex. The data that were analyzed disclosed that Americo-Liberians felt superior to the indigenous African because of their

ability to speak English and practice the white man's culture. There is significant difference between how an Americo-Liberian Immigrant speaks about English and how a native Liberian immigrant speaks about English. The Americo-Liberian is proud of his/her ability to speak English like an American while the native Liberian speaks of speaks of his/ her struggle to speak English. However, they are proud to speak their local language, be it "Coloqua" (a form of English only spoken in Liberia) or an indigenous language.

An important data from the social media reveal how the practice of elevating the white man's language over the indigenous language is not unique to Liberia but is practiced in other West African countries. The social media data showed the magnitude at which, western colonialism affected not only indigenous languages but also the minds of the indigenous people. A social media video that garnered many responses showed a man who claimed to represent the so-called educated class asking questions in English that were arguably condescending to local vendors who couldn't understand the language he was speaking. The man then rode off on his bike, without purchasing anything, leaving the local vendors to believe they were uneducated for their inability to understand and speak English.

The majority of the commenters that followed the video expressed their unhappiness about anti-indigenous language sentiments conveyed in the video. These commenters echoed the views of Ngugi Wa-Thiong'o, a prominent advocate for the formalization of local African languages for educational purposes, that the inability to speak English does not equate illiteracy. The commenters did not believe in the assumption that English language competence was the epitome of educational

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acquisition. Some of the comments also expressed criticism of the logic that the ability to speak English equals formal education. Additionally, some of them claimed if that logic was correct, then people with non-English speaking countries, such as China, who cannot speak English must be considered uneducated.

Conversely, other commenters thought the video was in the right direction because of the reduced interest in primary education in the country. Furthermore, they believed that if a country is classified as an English-speaking country, it is only appropriate that the people of that country live up to that expectation by speaking English. Comparatively, they talked about the adverse effect of separatism that indigenous multilingualism causes. They worried that Africans who do not speak the dominant western languages will not function well both within and beyond the African borders.

Similarly, data from Kpou's memoir showed how his acquisition of the English language connected him to the outside world. When Kpou spoke of the outside world, it is applied a world removed from his immediate indigenous world. He is an indigenous Liberian who spoke his native dialect with his parent, by attaining education and acquiring the English language, he has attained his ability to communicate with Americo-Liberians and other natives Liberians from different tribes. While Kpou implied that this is a good thing, he also expressed his sadness about losing his ability to speak his local language fluently. Comparatively, the man that created the video felt compelled to justify his elevation of the English language over a local language. He claimed that he only made the video in response to the debilitating effect of the education system in the country and sought to encourage children in the communities to pursue formal education.

By this statement, the creator of the video is only trying to preserve the colonial myth that local languages lack any sophistication to be considered language for formal education. The implication is that people that speak the only local language should be ashamed of their inability to speak the white man's language. The overall message here is that indigenous Africans should abandon their local languages for the English language even if it is devoid of any to connection to their identity and their immediate environment. This discovery revealed the similar approach freed slaves by looking down on local languages and forcing the indigenous to accept a foreign language that lacked any connection to their actual identity.

The data gathered from Cooper's memoir showed how freed slaves tried fervently to show themselves equal to the white man through their fetishization of the white man's culture. Beyond language, we saw other ways in which western cultures are fetishized. Fetishization is when one fantasizes what his or she disavowals (Hall, 2006). The data from Cooper's memoir gave us a sample of how much the freed slaves fetishized the Americans and the Europeans cultures. The freed slaves had a fantasy for being identified as American, but at the same time, they did not want to be associated with the struggle of being a black American. For example, Cooper wrote that she wanted to be seen an American girl but not want to go through the racial struggles black American girls go through. She did not want to be weighed down by a racial stereotype. One can make the assumption here that the freed slaves fantasized about being white. Having gone through slavery and oppression by the whites, the freed slaves fetishized about taking on the identity of what they feared. As a substitution, freed slaves send their children to

American and European schools, buy large vacation homes in Europe just to prove equal to the white man.

Of course, it has been established that the freed slaves want to be white, but the irony of this is that the interview data with Liberians immigrants in Phoenix gave us the reverse of this fetishization of the white culture. Having lived in the United States, Liberian immigrants who have experienced American culture fantasized about what they called true African identity and culture. They promoted a culture that was once denigrated during the colonial times. Thus, they believed by wearing African outfits to functions or schools, they are showcasing their culture and identity. One of the participants fantasized about going back to Africa just to raise her kids. She believed raising her children in Africa would instill African values in the children. Furthermore, the participants in the interview referred to themselves as non-English speakers, while some of them affectionately referred to themselves as "bush" – a degenerate identity that was ridiculed during the Liberian colonial era.

It must be noted here that the majority of the participants are assumed to be indigenous Liberia. During the interview, the participants explained that they spoke local languages with families at home and other Liberians in the communities. Americo-Liberians rarely speak local languages.

Summary

Colonization in Liberia has created a degenerate representation for the indigenous identity. Due to the influence of white imperialism, the freed slaves are led to believe that the local languages, indigenous religious practices and skinned color were grounds for separation between the freed slaves and the native African. Thus, the freed slaves, using

their ability to speak and write the English language, constructed a fixed identity for the indigenous, which they used to as discursive binaries to berate the indigenous identity and uphold their acquired Western identity. The freed slaves through their narratives have constructed light skin as the standard of beauty in Liberian, English language as the official language and Christianity as the official religion. Hence, Liberians in the diaspora and back home see having light skinned color as attractive over darker skinned color and Christianity as their religion. However, the indigenous Liberians have also created a different form of English as their language due to their inability to speak standard American English.

Lesson learned from this study is that, Liberians have long gone through identity crisis due to the binaries created between what is viewed as the civilized Americo - Liberian identity and the savaged indigenous identity. These discursive binaries that have led to the marginalization of the indigenous identity were also experienced by Liberian immigrants from African American. As a result, some of the Liberians who have found their ways in the United States do not identify with the African American identity, they refer to themselves as Africans. For example, Cooper, the Americo-Liberian girl, who once referred to herself as a civilized girl with an American root, realized that upon arrival to the United States she is only seen as an African even with her ability to speak standard American English. Nevertheless, within the Liberian communities in the diaspora, there is a difference between the so-called educated Liberians who are proud to be standard English speakers and those who suffer from the inability to speak English. Some of these Liberian immigrants who struggle with speaking standard English have

also loss their ability to speak their indigenous languages so they turn to broken English (Coloqua) as their language.

Consequently, these data, collectively, gave a rich understanding of the colonial vestiges about identity, language and religion, how they are talked about and their implications on Liberian immigrants. Liberians are cognizant of the dualistic identity that exist due to the colonizing process. They are aware that Liberia is officially an English speaking country, yet they are also conscious of the fact that the English language does not define who they are. While adopting the English language have separated the native children from their indigenous languages, they have created another version of the English language as their language. The comments on the social media video that talked about English being the language of formal education showed the indigenous Africans are using social media as a space to challenge the dominant narrative of colonial discourse that berates indigenous African languages and identities. Similarly, the responses revealed by the interview data also challenge the colonial representation that all Liberians are English speakers. They explained that they struggle with the English language and some of them are comfortable speaking their local languages in the comfort of their home.

However, implications of these colonial traces are that some indigenous Liberians cannot speak English confidently and have lost the ability to speak their indigenous languages fluently as a result. But, there is a resistance to the hegemonic believe that English is the language of literacy. Native Liberians and other indigenous Africans are making their voices heard through social media such as Facebook and YouTube about their pride for their identity, language and cultures. Nevertheless, Liberians have held

strongly to their Christian believes that any other religious practice in Liberia will be an abomination against the will of their forefather (the freed slaves). Majority of Liberians view Christianity to be more virtuous than other religions, but ironically, they prefer Liberian or African churches over white or African American churches.

Limitations and future research

While this study has revealed some of the colonial vestiges in Liberia's culture, language and identity, as well as the implications on Liberian immigrant, there are some limitations with this study. The first obstacle is that most historical literatures on Liberia failed to recognized Liberia as a colonized State. The few researches done on Liberia immigrants in the United States only look at Liberian as a sample in the broader spectrum of refugee problems. Thus, the lack of research to first establishes Liberia as a colonized state and then investigates the colonial vestiges is non-existing. Also, a lack of available data to address my research questions was a significant obstacle to finding trends and meaningful relationships. While these three source of data created a preliminary understanding of the issue, the sample size is not big enough to generalize my findings. Another limitation to this study is the measure used for collecting data. The method limited my ability to ask follow up questions.

This study is important for two reasons: firstly, it helps examines light and identifies cultural and linguistic resistance to the dominant colonial discourse about language, culture, religion and identity among Liberia immigrants. Secondly, modern literature on Liberia has to reflect experiences of both indigenous and Americo-Liberians to rectify some of the colonial histories. Hence, studies like these will not only add to the academic knowledge, it will help Liberians understand themselves from such works. It

may also help non-Liberians who may want to visit or take businesses to the country understand the people and their cultures better. Thus, for future studies, I recommend that the researchers broaden their enquiry by including samples from Liberians back home. They should increase the sample size by including more interview data from people who identify as native Liberians and Americo-Liberians. I also recommend that future researchers conduct follow-up questions for authors whose memoirs they would include in the data collection. Social media is a great source for data collection. Because of the anonymity it creates, people will be more open to speak about their experiences. Thus, a more structure social media data collection process where the researcher has control over questions will be helpful. These steps will help researchers gather a more representational data in understanding the colonial legacies of Liberians.

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