

# COMMUNICATING AFRICANNESS THROUGH A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF MUSIC, DANCE, VISUAL ARTS AND LITERARY WORKS OF AFRICAN BLACKS IN THE DIASPORA

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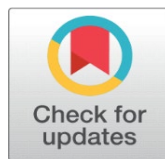
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## ABSTRACT

This study investigates how Black people in the diaspora have retained and adapted their traditional art forms such as music, dance, visual arts, and literary works, as communication tools for expressing and negotiating Africanity within transnational contexts. Anchored in communication studies and African diaspora scholarship, the research adopts a content-analysis design to examine a purposive sample of creative productions, including Afro-beats, hip-hop fusions, diasporic visual arts and performance displays, as well as contemporary African diasporic literature. Through systematic coding and thematic analysis, the study identifies recurring communication patterns, symbols, and narrative motifs that convey identity, belonging, resistance, and cultural memory. The findings reveal that diasporic African artists and performers employ performance, imagery, movement, rhythm, and storytelling as multimodal languages that sustain cultural continuity while challenging Eurocentric representations. These artistic forms reimagine Africa as both a geographic reality and a symbolic homeland, enabling dispersed communities to articulate shared histories and collective aspirations. Furthermore, the creative expressions function as communicative acts of identity construction, allowing individuals and groups to negotiate hybrid cultural spaces while maintaining connections to ancestral traditions. The study concludes that the arts operate as powerful sites of intercultural dialogue, resistance, and solidarity, reaffirming the centrality of communication in preserving diasporic cohesion and transmitting African cultural consciousness across generations. Ultimately, this research contributes to interdisciplinary conversations on cultural communication, transnational identity formation, and the role of artistic expression in shaping global narratives of the African diaspora.

**Keywords:** African Diaspora, Cultural Communication, Identity Formation, Diasporic Literature, Intercultural Dialogue



## 1. INTRODUCTION

Across the African continent, the arts occupy a central position in the construction, expression and preservation of cultural identity. From ritual dances and drum performances to visual iconography and oral literature, African artistic expressions embody the philosophies, histories and lived realities of its people. These art forms are not merely aesthetic endeavours, but serve as communicative tools through which communities transmit values, assert identities, and negotiate their place in a rapidly changing world. Within the context, Africanness, a concept denoting the collective consciousness and cultural distinctiveness of African peoples finds vivid articulation through the creative, performance and communicative arts.

In contemporary scholarship, the intersection between art and identity has been widely discussed, yet the communicative dimension of African arts as a medium for expressing Africanness remains underexplored. In the reviews of previous studies it was discovered that few scholars of note have engaged in this area of scholarship. One of such scholars is [Thompson \(2011\)](#) who had stated that “ever since the beginning of the slave trade black-Africans in the Diaspora have always sought out the company of others like themselves to engage in communication for their cultural identity”. Others scholars that supported Thompson statements are [Rastas and Seye \(2016\)](#) and [Djerrahian \(2018\)](#) who aver that “one of the ways in which ‘black-Africans’ have accomplished the seeking out of their brethren in the diaspora was through the expressions of self by using various art forms, such as music, dance, literature and the creative arts.” These ‘black-Africans’ saw themselves as belonging to a larger group of people dispersed around the world and they also realized the fact that they must have been part of a community that was geographically ambiguous. Much of the existing literature emphasizes historical or stylistic analyses, often overlooking the symbolic and discursive functions of artistic production in shaping cultural narratives. This study therefore seeks to fill this gap by examining how Africans use dance, music, visual arts and literary arts as communicative systems that embody and transmit the essence of Africanness.

The study also focuses on how black-Africans in the Diaspora seek to find a community of racially or culturally similar individuals to interact with, in order to acquire the security they need to communicate their cultural identity. The study also seeks to interrogate how people in the academics effectively sourced for documents on the ways in which black-Africans in the diaspora have been able to use their pristine primordial art forms to communicate their Africanness. There are further interrogations as to how the black-African Diasporas have been able to sustain the cultural heritage they could have lost through slavery and war dispersals and how they have used it as a tool for settling down among foreigners in their new cultural milieu. In order to accomplish this task the current researchers have taken much time to examine academic documents/records they got from myriads of sources to explicate the discourses of earlier scholars who claimed to have studied this area of academic scholarship.

Grounded in a content analysis research design, the study systematically interprets selected artistic works across different media to uncover the recurrent themes, motifs and semiotic patterns that reveal African worldviews and socio-cultural identities. By treating creative expression as a form of communication, the research highlights the arts as living archives of collective memory and as dynamic platforms through which black African communities reaffirm their identity in both traditional and modern contexts. The significance of this study lies in its contribution to the discourse on cultural communication, de-colonial aesthetics, and identity formation in Africa. Understanding how black Africans communicate Africanness through the arts not only deepens appreciation for the continent’s creative diversity, but also reinforces the central role of cultural expression in global conversations about representation, heritage and resilience.

### 1.1. CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION OF TERMS

In order to put this current study in the right perspective and before going deeper into it, the following terms will be conceptually clarified: Diaspora, Globalization, Acculturation and Culture. They will also be defined conceptually in order to avoid any misunderstanding as regards the researchers’ thoughts and meanings based on their comprehension of related literary works.

Diaspora as a concept in this study is focusing on the dispersed black Africans who were displaced from their natural habitat by the foreign slavers for economic advancement of their own territorial base. Noticeably, the concept of diaspora has been a contention for academic discourse for so many decades by scholars such as [Bush \(2006\)](#), [Amin \(2016\)](#), [Rotimi et al. \(2016\)](#), [Palmer \(2018\)](#) and [Sharpe \(2018\)](#), in myriads of their studies.

The etymology of the word *diaspora* has its roots from the Greek language in which it was referred to as “dispersal of homogenous people to other places away from their ancestral lands, which they still often have ties to while also maintaining their current community affiliation” [Wade \(2008\)](#), [Okpewho and Nzegwu \(2009\)](#), [Thompson \(2011\)](#) and [Silverman \(2018\)](#).

However, [Mintz and Price \(1992\)](#) opine that the use of the word *dispersal* derogates the people it is about. They feel that the usage of the word in the context of diaspora was apropos of nothing in describing the process that resulted in the movement of people in Trans-Atlantic slavery. In his own case, [Palmer \(2000\)](#) defines diaspora of African indigenous people as that of unwilling movement of persons who have found themselves scattered across the globe and who have shared a history that is not limited to slavery, white supremacy, racism, colonization, decolonization and ethnicity, among others.

According to [Palmer \(2018\)](#), “people in the diaspora share an emotional attachment to their ancestral home and are aware of their dispersion”. He also states that “such people have a shared ethnic and religious identity that cuts across borders, and these communities have no physical manifestations and are often symbolic.” However, an argument can be generated that the term diaspora is tantamount to an admission that African diaspora is equal to African art, dance, literature and music in value, meaning and effect. It based on this argument that this study seeks to ascertain the messages that the art, dance, literature and music communicate.

Globalization in the context of this study is seen as “a process of information exchange in which events, choices and activities in one part of the world can have extensive and substantial effects on other parts of the globe” [Guttal \(2007\)](#), and [Kim and Ko \(2011\)](#). [Suraj \(2017\)](#) avers that “the globalized economy, technology and the world society has provided enough space for those with hyphenated identities to survive as a connecting link not only with the homeland, but also with other Diasporas nodes with common origin and cultural/ethnic background”

[Liwerant \(2015\)](#) view is that “globalization has led to economic, social, political and cultural changes that upset geographical, territorial and temporary referents without which it would be impossible to think about structures and institutions, economies, social relations and cultural spaces today.” According to him, “a massive and diversified system of migration, transnational networks developed by national borders crossers, and simultaneous social, economic, political and cultural participation in interconnected societies all mark a new era in which territorial spaces are reordered while ascriptions, belongings, and identities are defined.”

Globalization has done a lot in the maintenance and nurturing of ethno-national identities in which migrants show solidarity with their groups and their entire nation, they organize and are active in the cultural, social, economic, and political spheres. Members of such diaspora establish trans-state networks that reflect complex relationships among the Diasporas, their host countries, their homeland, and international actors.”

Turning to the issue of Diasporas within the context of globalization, [Laguerre \(2006\)](#) examples have sufficed to show that globalization has reconfigured the study of diaspora by highlighting the importance of the multinational context bred by the multilateral relations of diaspora sites in various other countries and with the homeland...The homeland, the host land and the diasporas influence each other and in the process turn multitude of community sites into a connected area of social practice.”

Acculturation as a concept has its roots in the 19<sup>th</sup> century anthropological study. However, “it has come to be very important in other fields such as marketing, history, communication and a host of other disciplines in recent times” [Rudmin \(2009\)](#). Acculturation is “a stage of cultural change that occurs when people or groups of people who have diverse cultural experiences come into continued immediate contact with each other, which results in visible changes in the primary cultural patterns of the groups involved” [Berry \(2005\)](#) and [Peñaloza \(1994\)](#) and “it is a process of social and psychological change” [Redfield et al. \(1936\)](#) and [Sam \(2000\)](#). “The process of acculturation has a few features, one of which is that it progresses in a reciprocal and deliberate manner,” [Berry \(2005\)](#) and [Berry \(2008\)](#) conclude.

It is assumed that all the migrant groups present in acculturation process are always cognizant of the behavioral alterations being made and they will be predisposed to change themselves. This presupposes the fact that acculturation does not only culminate in a change to the non-dominant group(s) as an effect of the dominant group’s influence as was once assumed by [Gordon \(1964\)](#). However, [Berry \(1997\)](#) is of the opinion that dominant groups are more influential in the lives of non-dominant groups. Another thing that is worthy of mention is that members of the non-dominant group(s)

are not free to choose the way in which they will acculturate; “it is only when dominant groups are open to cultural diversity and change that acculturation can take place” [Berry \(2008\)](#).

[Berry \(1997\)](#) has counteracted the claims put forward by [Gordon \(1964\)](#), who says that “all non-dominant cultures eventually fall away and yield to the dominant culture”, by proposing four acculturation strategies. The strategies he proposed have been given different names depending on the ethno-cultural group (dominant or non-dominant) being addressed. [Berry \(1997\)](#) strategies have been categorized into four broad groups, namely, Assimilation, Separation, Integration and Marginalization.

*Assimilation* in this scenario presumes that individuals have no interest in preserving their own cultural identity and intend to adopt another identity by seeking out regular contact with individuals from other cultures. *Separation* occurs when individuals see their cultural identity as vital to their sense of self and refuse to relinquish it by restricting interaction with individuals from other cultures. *Integration* is when individuals place worth on their cultural identity and work to preserve it while at the same time being receptive to other cultures. *Marginalization* is when it is not possible for individuals to retain their cultural identity as well as assume another, either due to lack of interest, enforced cultural loss or discrimination, leaving the people essentially ‘cultureless’.

From the viewpoint of the dominant culture, assimilation turns into the melting pot, separation turns into segregation, integration turns into multiculturalism and marginalization becomes exclusion. This is more accurately illustrated in [Table 1](#) below:

**Table 1**

Table 1 Acculturation Strategies		
<b>Assimilation</b>	.Detach from own cultural identity .Adopt new cultural identity	<b>Melting Pot</b>
<b>Separation</b>	.Maintain own cultural identity .Reject new cultural identity	<b>Segregation</b>
<b>Integration</b>	.Preserve own cultural identity .Adopt new cultural identity	<b>Multiculturalism</b>
<b>Marginalization</b>	.Detach from own cultural identity .Reject/Rejected from new cultural identity	<b>Exclusion</b>

Source: Berry, 1997

According to [Ndika \(2013\)](#), “individuals who are acculturating will change their acculturation strategies depending on the situation they find themselves in.” This is because acculturation is a convoluted process, which calls for flexibility. Therefore, it can be said that the variable globalization is the main cause while the variable acculturation is a phase of the effect.

Culture is “an environmental force that crafts its people’s feelings, character and actions” [Steenkamp \(2001\)](#) and [Triandis \(1989\)](#). “Culture and acculturation have always been loosely linked to each other as one can rarely be complexly examined without mentioning the other” [Gbadamosi \(2012\)](#). [Tylor \(1871\)](#) conceptualizes culture as “an umbrella term, which encompasses the social behaviour and norms found in human societies as well as the knowledge, beliefs, arts, laws, customs, capabilities and habits of the individuals in these groups.” It is important to stress the fact culture can be acquired through learning processes of enculturation and socialization that is shown by different forms, types, ideas and beliefs associated with cultures across human societies.

A cultural standard of proper behaviour can be put together in orderly form as acceptable way in society. It serves as rules for human behaviour, the way humans dress, their language and appearance in a given situation that serves as an example for expectations in a social group. It is very dangerous to uphold only a monoculture in a society, why? It apposite to say that monoculture amounts to cultureless. A single culture will definitely wither away in the face of lack of functional responses to environmental diversity. Cultural diversities, on the other hand, are found in expressive forms such as art, music, dance, rituals, religion, technologies and clothing.

Culture can be divided into two: material culture and immaterial culture. The material culture involves physical expressions of culture as we find in technology, architecture and art. In its own case, immaterial culture deals with the principles of social organization, political organization and social institutions; mythology, philosophy, literature and



science that is made up of the intangible cultural heritage of a society. Besides these words that have been clarified and reviewed conceptually it is worth mentioning that the words *Africanism* and *Blackness* will be used interchangeably throughout this research exercise.

## 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Four Theories: *semiotic, cultural communication, cultural adaptation* and the *late arrival superior aggression theories* will be used to underscore the most important points in this study. Semiotic theory is a general philosophical theory of signs and symbols that deals with symbolic and linguistic functions in both artificially constructed and natural languages. These theorists are of the opinion that visual signs, symbols and images are tangible tools to communicate between two or more people. The theory comprises the following areas of study: The syntactic, semantic and pragmatics. Semiotics relates to the meaning or relationship of meaning of a sign or set of signs. It involves observing and interpreting signs; studying the relations of a sign to its referent and to other signs within a system; studying the connotations and ambiguities of words and their function in communication and propaganda; distinguishing between codes and messages, and between denotation and connotation".

Semiotics deals with the "historical and psychological study and the classification of changes in the signification of words or forms viewed as factors in linguistic development and including such occurrences as specialization and expression of meaning, ameliorative and pejorative tendencies, metaphor and adaptation". Semiotics system is exclusively the study of various types of discourse, which make use of language". It is not only sounds or marks on paper that can create meanings, but any distinguishable object can as well be used to create meanings.

The cultural communication theory explores how culture influences the way people communicate, shaping meanings, behaviour, values and interpretations in social interactions. It is based on the idea that communication and culture are deeply interconnected: culture provides the framework through which communication occurs, and communication in turn reinforces and transforms culture. The theory emphasizes that communication styles differ between high-context cultures, where meaning is derived from context and nonverbal cues, and low context cultures, where messages are explicit and direct.

The theorists postulate that cultural values such as individualism versus collectivism, power distance, and uncertainty avoidance affect how people express themselves, interpret messages and manage relationships. It is theorized from this context that when people from different culture interact, misunderstandings may arise due to differing assumptions, language use, or nonverbal cues. Understanding cultural communication theory helps improve cross cultural competence and reduce conflict. The theory emphasizes that effective communication requires awareness of cultural influences and the ability to adapt one's communicative behavior to diverse cultural expectations.

The cultural adaptation theory emphasized the process and time it takes a person to assimilate to a new culture. The theorists have stated that it is always difficult to live in a new culture that is drastically different from yours. The postulators of this theory have used interrogative approach to articulate the theory. They emphasized that it is not an easy task to transit from one environment to another with the following questions: (1) How would one feel if you do not have the ability to read unfamiliar signs in the new abode because they are written in a different language? (2) What would you do if the clothes you owned were considered unacceptable to wear in public because people of your age dress differently there? (3) What if you were always expected to eat with chopsticks because western utensils were not available?

The solution proffered by the theorists is that the 'new arrival' should adjust to the new experiences he/she encountered in a new environment; there should be adjustments to the differences observed in the new environment. The postulators of the theory used four different stages of a well-known model called *U-curve* by Sverre Lysgaard to articulate their theoretical formulations. These four stages are *honeymoon, Culture shock, Recovery* and *Adjustment*. The *honeymoon* stage is mostly filled with excitement and curiosity, in which the 'new arrivals' get acclimatized to the new culture while taking language lessons and trying to adjust to the new cultural norms.

The *culture shock* is the sensation of confusion that is linked to experiencing a new culture. This is the period when the 'new arrivals' will begin to notice extreme differences between their native culture and the new one. The *recovery* stage is a process in which the 'new arrivals' start to return mentally to a normal state after a period of difficulty in

experiencing new culture and value system. This is the stage when the new arrivals start to see gradual cultural recovery in the next few years. They may imbibe a personal policy that may fast track the pace of cultural recovery.

The *adjustment* stage is the time when the 'new arrivals' have a small change that can improve their stay in the new environment or that can make their stay work better. They can then make some slight adjustments to the recipe of the new culture in which they find themselves. It is the stage in which the 'new arrivals' adopt a change that can make it possible for them to do better or work better in their new situation. It comes to their realization that moving from one environment to another requires an adjustment; the 'new arrivals' can at that moment start to use correction or modification mechanisms to reflect actual conditions in which they find themselves.

The Late Arrival Superior Aggression Theory was postulated by Olaoluwa Senayon of the Ibadan School of Diaspora study. This has been theorized within the context of *arrival battles* that take place between two migrant groups: the early migrants and the late migrants. "The theorist emphasized that through human history there has been persistent clash between late arrivals and early arrivals... and that the late arrivals have always thrived through the deployment of superior agency and aggression" Tade (2019). The theory is a broad sweep across evolutionary history and theorizing, it places the concept of diaspora at the very beginning of the emergence of the world, and situating human evolution within the social processes and problems of arrivals, departures, and returns from prehistory to the present. The paradigm of creation story in the Bible suffices for clarity of the above submission. In God's creation, it has been noticed that nature and animals were created before the creation of human beings. The early created stars and planets were made to guide the lives of the later creations that are human beings. God declared nature and animals (early arrivals) as good, but the human beings (late arrivals) were charged with being fruitful and ruling over the nature and animal kingdom. The human beings kill animals and use plants for their domestic needs. For example, the late arrivals have been made to capture animals and put them in a zoological garden for money making venture and as a show of superiority and domination over these early arrivals.

Senayon (2019) criterion for the readers' understanding of *late arrival superior aggression theory* stems from "the need for ground clearing at a stage to see the context in which it is fundamentally implicated in the discourse of power". The reference to the 'subject of power' in this instance presupposes that power should be extremely important in migrants' arrival issues. This is one reason why Senayon (2019) ties a binary between the late arrivals and early arrivals to the question of power that "speaks to the privileges and control of resources that early arrivals previously enjoyed exclusively". In his postulation, Senayon avers that early arrivals are mostly faced with the contingency of loss in their containing the late Diasporas, either by a show of kindness that is linked to their hospitality or their admission of defeat.

Citing Brandner (2013), Senayon sums up that "hospitality is always linked to power, ownership, creation of boundaries and exclusion". This implies that the "power to host and determine the amount of space, control and resources that should be available to the diaspora or stranger in the early years is the exclusive right of the early arrival that places the late arrival at the mercy of the early arrivals" Senayon (2019). The overall postulation in this budding theory can be derived from the conceptual note that *late arrival superior aggression theory* is based on the recognition of constant struggles for power and domination between two groups: late arrivals and early arrivals. It apposite to say here and now that within the context of power struggle between migrating groups; there is no one theory that can adequately explain the issue of migration. This is one reason why Massey et al in Bakewell (2010) assert that "apropos theoretical postulation needs to be picked according to a particular context in which it applied". This present study used the *adaptation of culture theory* and the *late arrival superior aggression theory* to underscore the interrogative question of how Africans in the Diaspora have been using their pristine primordial cultural heritage to communicate Africanisms.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a content analysis research design to systematically examine how the blacks in the diaspora communicate Africanness through dance, music, visual arts and literary arts. Content analysis is an interpretive method that allows researchers to identify, code and analyze patterns, themes and meanings embedded within texts or symbolic materials. This approach was deemed appropriate because it provides both qualitative depth and analytical rigor in exploring the cultural messages and communicative functions inherent in Africans' artistic expressions.

The data were collected through desk research in which manifest content of communication in books, journals, catalogues, archives, literary anthologies, scholarly analyses and the Internet had been described objectively, systematically and qualitatively. The key methodological concepts adopted in the Qualitative Content Analysis of the

manifest materials in books, journals and the Internet are: unit of analysis; content categories; sampling and coding. The units of analysis used in the study are academic discourse in books, journals and the Internet. In the content categories the issues of black diaspora and cultural retention are categorized into: culture, migration, assimilation, separation, integration, marginalization, segregation, multiculturalism and exclusion. In constructing the content categories these researchers have ensured that the categories are pertinent to the objective of this study and that they are functional and manageable.

The sampling involves taking a part of a population that these researchers were interested in studying. Because all the elements cannot be studied some were selected: as it is not possible to study the content of all related materials in books and journals some viable materials were selected for content analysis. In doing this random sampling method was adopted to sample certain period of publication. The purpose for this is to reduce the quantity of books and journals, and academic discourse to be considered to a manageable size. After this, the occurrence of the content to be measured was listed under apropos content categories in a prepared coding sheet and it was ensured that the sampled elements are representative, relevant and manageable.

In the coding exercise there was a surety that all evidences observed in the books, journals and the Internet were well recorded. Content categories from these sources were prepared and a coding sheet that was showing content analysis exercise on black diaspora and cultural retention over a period of time was designed with the following: Titles: books, journals and The Internet; Events: global slave distribution to Europe and the Americas; Type of Brutality: chained, maimed, detained, beating and death occurred; Place of Occurrence: exportation from Africa to Europe and the Americas. The data were later subjected to scrutiny in order to ascertain their veracity and validity. After verifying and validating the genuineness of these materials, they were then synthesized and interpreted using descriptive analysis method.

Furthermore, the study utilizes purposive sampling to select representative artistic works that embody African cultural expression across four major domains: Dance, music, visual arts and literary arts. As indicated earlier, data were drawn from secondary sources such as books, journals, catalogues, archives, literary anthologies, scholarly analyses and the Internet. The selected materials were limited to works produced within certain speculative periods to capture both traditional continuity and contemporary reinterpretations of Africanness.

Each artistic work was reviewed to extract verbal, visual and performative elements that function as communicative symbols. The researchers catalogued recurring motifs, colours, sounds, movements and linguistic expressions that reflect African worldviews, social structures, spirituality and collective memory. Contextual notes were taken to preserve the socio-cultural setting of each piece and to ensure interpretive accuracy. The collected data were analyzed thematically using qualitative content analysis. The process involved three stages: 1) Open coding, where key symbols and communicative features were identified 2) Categorization, where related codes were grouped into broader themes and 3) Interpretation, where the themes were examined to uncover how the selected art forms convey notions of Africanness.

The study relied primarily on publicly available and documented materials, ensuring respect for intellectual property and cultural ownership. Relevant, appropriate citations were provided to acknowledge creators and sources. The researchers also approached all interpretations with cultural sensitivity, avoiding ethnocentric bias or reductive generalizations.

## 4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

It has been established in the process of our content analysis research design that “the study of black African diaspora always begins with a focus on a brief history of Trans-Atlantic slavery in Africa, which is the genesis of the black-African diaspora” [Gilroy \(1993\)](#), [Wade \(2008\)](#), [Thompson \(2011\)](#) and [Palmer \(2018\)](#). It is as a result of this established fact that the historical antecedent of slavery in African continent is presented below before the main subject-matter of our discourse is examined.

### *Africa and Trans-Atlantic Slavery*

“Africa is a continent made up of about 54 countries and it is the world’s oldest populated region...After Asia it is the second largest continent in the world, occupying 30 million square kilometer...it has the world’s youngest population with over half of its populace being 25 years old or below” [Boyce \(2013\)](#). With exception of Ethiopia and Liberia, the

continent had been colonized by foreign powers at one time or the other. The predominant languages spoken are Arabic, English, Swahili, French, Berber, Hausa, Portuguese and Spanish. "Africa is the world's poorest continent with its continental GDP accounting for 2.4% of global GDP...An explanation for this could be traced to the continent's illiteracy level with approximately 40% of the population being uneducated" [Boyce \(2013\)](#).

The era of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade has come to be known as one of the most tragic in all of human history. Between the 15<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries upwards of 11 million black-Africans were violently captured and taken to other continents around the world; sold into slavery and forced to work and live in critically poor conditions. *A global slaves' distribution estimates* had shown that between the years 1501 and 1875 the number of black-Africans that were exported "to Spain/Uruguay is totaling 1,061,524; to Portugal/Brazil is totaling 5,848,266; to Great Britain is totaling 3,259,441; to Netherlands is totaling 554,336; to France is totaling 305,326 and to Denmark/Baltic is totaling 111,040" (Slave Voyages, 2018). The average total number of the above estimate is 11,139,933; excluding those carted away to the United States of America. The breakdown of this estimate showed that "Portugal and Brazil had the highest number of slaves approximately to the tune of 6,000.00 and Denmark and the Baltic were having the lowest number to the approximated tune of 100,000" [Borucki et al. \(2015\)](#) and [Slave-Voyages \(2018\)](#).

However, the above quoted figures and breakdowns by some scholars and the voyage sources are at variance with early estimations by other scholars such as [Boahen \(1964\)](#), [Lugard \(1965\)](#), [Anene and Brown \(1966\)](#) and [Omer-Cooper \(1968\)](#) who have estimated that close to 30,000.00 Negroes were transported to the Americas while Brazil alone has 3,000.00 to 18,000.00. [Elebute \(2016\)](#) has conservatively estimated the above numbers to the tune of 14 and 20 million. [Buah \(1969\)](#), however, has estimated that "West Africa lost nothing less than 35 million of its people to the European slave trade".

It is important to note that these numbers do not include those who perished in the process of capture and transportation to other continents. Then, it is difficult to know where exactly these slaves were brought from as they were often made to travel for hundreds of kilometers across the land before they were forced to board the ships that carried them out of the continent. However, "some historians have claimed that the majority of these slaves that were traded off their shores hailed from the West and Central Africa" [Handler \(2002\)](#), [Schroeder et al. \(2009\)](#) and [Obikili \(2016\)](#).

It is worthy of mention that the European slave traders took advantage of political imbroglio and military conflicts in the African continent to enslave poor Africans through the few privileged Africans. This presupposes the fact that this inhuman slavery was carried out by the European slave traders through the involvement and support of heartless Africans who were aristocrats by birth. The European slave traders relied on the cooperation of African monarchs and African military generals as well as wealthy African traders for the supply of poor and helpless Africans who were captured during military raids. It has been theorized that "if not for the rich African collaborators, the slave business in the coastal and interior regions of Africa would not have been successful" [Borucki et al. \(2015\)](#) and [Lowcountry Digital History Initiative \(2018\)](#).

### ***Black-African Cultural Arts and Heritages as Media of Self-expression***

It is a well-known fact that black-Africans in general have a strong cultural heritage in the form of music, dance, drama and the creative arts. [Nketia \(1974\)](#) in support of this above claim states that "unlike other developed territories that thrive on technological advancements and innovations contemporary black-African nations have mostly focused on their cultural arts and heritages, which they have used as media of self-expression". As this remained the model of self-expression for black-Africans at home, the black-Africans in the diaspora have been replicating the usage of their African cultural/artistic forms as modes of communication. In fact, most black-Africans in the diaspora have been able to influence their host countries culturally through their basic model of self-expression. [Amin \(2016\)](#) has noticed the fact that "the Black-Americans have made tremendous contributions to the cultural life of the Caucasian-Americans by using black music and dance to influence the American Pop Culture". The subsequent sections in this study will be used to explicate the results of our interrogative research and to establish the myriads of ways in which black-Africans in the diaspora have used their cultural arts and techniques to acculturate and to communicate their Africanness in the foreign lands.

### ***African Music as a Tool for Communicating Africanness by the Black Diaspora***

Upon arrival, black-Africans in the diaspora often find it difficult to settle down in their host societies. This is because of the multitude of differences between them and their hosts. There will be differences in food, mode of dressing,



language and religion, but “one aspect of life that transcends cultural boundaries is music” [Gilroy \(1991\)](#) and [Djerrahian \(2018\)](#). The diaspora group used music to preserve their cultural heritage.

The origin of Black-African diaspora music can be traced back to the time that black-Africans were carried away as slaves to work on cotton plantations in southern United States, in the past the word plantation is often associated with the history of slavery in the United States. During the slavery era, it was a norm for black slaves working in the fields to sing work songs. These songs were unique because “they were sung in African languages that served as instruments to lament about their sordid situations and to pray to God for an end to their sufferings”. The slaves mostly used African music as a coping mechanism that can make their horrible conditions bearable.

The black diaspora communities always like to preserve their African music because of its historical and religious significances. Historically, black-Africans have been using music to articulate their cultural heritage and to communicate the considerable/great hardships of life. The black-Africans were in the habit of “using local songs from the time immemorial to communicate the struggles of their ancestors to younger generations” [Zezeza \(2010\)](#), [Zezeza \(2012\)](#), [Rastas and Seye \(2016\)](#). The usage of local songs to communicate to the ancestors had often become habituated to the new homes of Africans in the diaspora. The act of promoting their cultural values elsewhere mostly led black-Africans to the fostering of black communities’ life style in which local African music is played for the enjoyment of their foreign audiences; this cultural aspect of life is common in black immigrant communities. African music from a particular African region also tends to draw the attention of African people with similar cultural background to the music performer, thus bringing the like minds together for the purpose of group communication.

[Rastas and Seye \(2016\)](#) have pointed out that “when Africans first came to live in Finland their music was in high demand in the land because its lyrics were novel, but exciting to the Finnish”. Over the years, the Finnish musicians adopted the musical lyrics of Africa to develop their musical culture. This implies that Africans in the diaspora have the ability to use their music as a vehicle for cross cultural communication. The above example has been espoused by [Djerrahian \(2018\)](#) who cites a case of Idan Raichel a musician of Eastern Europe ancestry that was influenced by the Ethiopian music played by some students at a boarding school where he worked. He was fascinated by the music and started to create music with African lyrics. He subsequently finds fame as “a music performer that combined African, Middle Eastern and Latin American musical styles” [Webster-Kogen \(2016\)](#). “Latin American music was created as a result of the fusion of European musical styles and African rhythms; the creator of this musical genre: Champeta conceived the musical style by listening to West African music” [Wade \(2008\)](#).

Rastafarianism, a religious-musical movement among black Jamaicans that teaches that black people will eventually return to Africa, was established in the 1930s. This movement metamorphosed into “an Afro-centric post-colonial religion that has an interdependent relationship with reggae music” [MacLeod \(2009\)](#). Reggae music has been popularized by the black people in Jamaica and this musical genre has been spurring them to seek equality from the society in which they found themselves. The reggae musical genre is a typical poetry put into songs. It is a derivation of poetic verses that gave rise to *dub poetry*, a type of performance poetry that uses speech recorded in another language. It evolved from *dub music* in Jamaica that is a sub-genre of reggae. “The *dub* is often described as one of the most aggressive voices of the black-African diaspora in the West. Poets like Benjamin Zephaniah used it to call out the injustices that black people face in the British colony” [Bush \(2006\)](#).

“The *hip-hop*, which is a culture associated with rap music was popularized by black African-Americans in the 1980s and it has been ably used to rhythmically communicate the hardship of black persons in the United States” [Djerrahian \(2018\)](#). The black musicians in the United States have widely used this *hip-hop* genre as a tool for communicating the distinctive difficulties they have encountered since the era of slavery. Some scholars opine that the lyrical tone of Bob Marley music is the foundation on which hip-hop and has been built. “The hip-hop was conceived in the South Bronx in the late 1970s and early 1980s by African-Americans and it is characterized by rhythmic-stylized music” [Djerrahian \(2018\)](#). According to [Gilroy \(1993\)](#) and [Amin \(2016\)](#), “hip-hop music is the aftermath of transnational interactions between Africa diaspora groups in the United States of America and the Caribbean”.

A scholar named Bush in the year 2006 argues that “instead of communicating one’s Africanisms and aiding the acculturation process, some black music have had the opposite effects”. [Bush \(2006\)](#) professes that “the use of music to express cultural differences in some cases can serve to reinforce images of others”. Some critics have equally accused black music of promoting practices that lead to social ills. In this vein, the Jamaican dancehall music has been blamed for promoting gun culture, reckless sexual behaviour, homophobia and misogyny. “The former U.K Under Secretary of

State for International Development, Gareth Thomas, once criticized some Jamaican musicians for aiding the spread of HIV/AIDS through their lyrics that supported unsafe sexual practices" [Bush \(2006\)](#). The above arguments have clearly explained the reason why many black Diasporas are now excluded from the right to do certain things in the West. It is, however, worthy of note "that black music from the diaspora has had effects on African music at home; the hip-hop culture has managed to permeate the home music scene not only in the lyrics, but also in dance steps fashion" [Bush \(2006\)](#). It is clear that African musicians at home are having a sort of symbiotic relationship with African musicians in the diaspora, this is an indication that they frequently learn from each other.

### ***African Dance as a Tool for Communicating Africanness by the Black Diaspora***

African diaspora dance is referred to as "any of the distinct and vibrant styles of dance or aesthetic expressive movement techniques peculiar to Africa or its people" [Amin \(2016\)](#). Music and Dance often go hand in hand and "this is more so in African traditions where music and dance play a major part in education, celebrations, prayer, abuse, entertainment, weddings and funerals, among others; especially among the Yoruba tribe of Nigeria" [Ojuade \(2011\)](#). Examining African diaspora dance has proved to be somewhat of a challenge to researchers in the past. Dance in general, especially African dance, falls into numerous categories, far too many to adequately study in an effective and efficient manner. Another reason for the difficulty of studying African dance is the scarcity of literature on the topic. Very little has been empirically studied about it and the little that has been done, has been done by people with little to no ties to Africa [Ojuade \(2011\)](#), [Kerr-Berry \(2012\)](#). Simply put, the little research being carried out on African dance and black diaspora dance is being carried out by people who have very little insight into what it means to be black Africans.

In the past century, African dance has gained a lot of attention internationally. For example, Ayangalu International Dance Troupe, a Nigerian dance troupe led by Alhaji Lamidi Ayankunle that is made up of professional dancers and drummers of which Ayankunle is one, has been involved in dance repertory that travels across the world for dance entertainments. The group initially started performing during local traditional religious festivals in Osun state Nigeria, but eventually made their way to Europe, the Americas and Asia. While touring the world, Ayangalu International Dance Troupe performed at seminars, festivals and workshops. They have used this international travels to teach interested persons in other parts of the world the Yoruba traditional *Bata* dance and music. The Ojuade International Dance Troupe is another black African cultural entity that has gained international recognition. The group's leader is Fatai Oladosu Ojuade. The troupe specializes in *Bata* and *Dundun* dance patterns. Like the Ayangalu International Dance Troupe, "it had a slow start, but eventually it was invited to perform in foreign cities like Seoul, Pusan, Kwangju and Birmingham" [Ojuade \(2011\)](#). As stated earlier, there is very little in the way of African diaspora dance research and this is apparent in the cases provided above; as both dance troupes are manly from Nigeria; in an African continent that has 54 countries.

Historically, using dance to communicate cultural identity on the part of black people has not always led to desirable outcomes for Africans living in the Diaspora. According to [Bush \(2006\)](#), "in the 1950s, the UK witnessed the introduction of 'Colour Bars', because the dance steps of black club goers was seen as too vulgar and a threat to white women in terms of sexual security." Black youth became somewhat ostracized from society and they were not allowed to mix with their white peers. This led to frustration and in turn brought about 'race riots' that the country has witnessed in its history.

The question as to whether or not black Diasporas' dance actually communicates 'Africanism' is an important one. [Ojuade \(2011\)](#) states that: "when they perform for international audience, black dance groups often have to adjust their dance steps to fit into Western sensibilities as opposed to how they perform their original dance patterns." [Amin \(2016\)](#) is of the opinion that this attitude contributed to the multiculturalist view that black Diasporas' dance is similar to others' dance styles and this has been reducing the attributes of the original black art forms. These dancers do this in order not to alienate audiences, who may potentially be unable to follow certain black peoples' narratives. Although an argument for this practice can be made by stating that 'doing so introduces non-black audiences to black dance'. A contrary argument can be made that it 'defeats the purpose of introducing black dance to non-blacks in the first place'.

### ***African Visual Art as a Tool to Communicate 'Africanness by Black Diasporas***

The term Black Diasporas' visual art refers to "any artwork created by people with African ancestry depicting African traditions; these can take the form of sculpture, art installation or performance" [Francis \(2013\)](#). African diaspora artists have a hard time using their craft to communicate their cultural messages, especially at the highest levels. The reason for this is that art audiences are usually some of the most critical in the world. [Francis \(2013\)](#) states that: "the main aim of these audiences in the consumption of art is not to understand it, but rather to critique it or point out fault". This can

create a problem for Artists who wish to show more than their artistic talent as the meaning behind their work is relegated to the background while technique, which is often subjective, is brought to the forefront.

Although art created by Africans in the diaspora is meant to be aesthetically pleasing, as is the case with most art, "it has another function which is not as clear. African diaspora art also serves to communicate the sociopolitical environments that people of African descent have had to, and continue to, navigate as they make lives for themselves outside Africa" [Hall \(1990\)](#). The acculturation process comes with its own specific set of difficulties, and African diaspora art often illustrates the nuances of the unique difficulties faced by Africans all over the world. These hardships sometimes come as a result of racial stereotyping, being physically diverse, language barriers, etc.

African visual art is distinctive in its look, and African diaspora art does not deviate too much from trends popular in typical African art. [Francis \(2013\)](#) illustrates some features that African sculptures usually possess, she says they usually (1) have even and radiant surfaces (2) implement beads, shells and metal and (3) depict faces in ways reminiscent of masks. A reason why African artists in the diaspora have not moved on from these trends is that they are known to be specific to African artistic practices and deviating too much from them would defeat the purpose of calling their work African Diaspora art.

As time has gone on, governments in certain part of the world are now recognizing the importance of the African diaspora and its artists. The establishment of the Museum of the African Diaspora (MoAD) in San Francisco in 2002 is one such example. This museum was one of the first of its kind that had the word 'diaspora' in its title and was set up in order to encourage cultural diversity in the recently transformed cultural area [Francis \(2013\)](#). Since its creation, the MoAD has been able to accomplish what it set out to do which is to exhibit "contemporary genres of historical art, photojournalism, ritual art, and material culture from both local Africans and those in diaspora" [Francis \(2013\)](#). The museum has even managed to book performances from Diasporas' storytellers, dancers and singers.

It rarely happens, but once in a while African music and the arts have been intertwined in such a way that they create a lasting image in the minds of people all over the world. For example, the 'djembe,' which is an African drum that has managed to gain popularity globally, has now become synonymous with the visual of an African man. On this drum, "visuals of Africans have been depicted in art as well as in pop culture" [Burns \(2009\)](#), [Rastas and Seye \(2016\)](#). Although some Africans in the diaspora would like to depart from the constraints of the stereotype that these images propagate, others have found a way to parlay them into professional opportunities; taking up work as djembe teachers.

#### ***Literal Art as a tool to Communicate Africanness by Black Diasporas***

Black Africans living outside the continent have also turned to the literary arts to convey what it is to live in Africa and in the diaspora as an African. Writers such as Wole Soyinka, Derek Walcott and V.S. Naipaul, to name a few have successfully used literature to speak to the African experience in the diaspora. They did such a commendable job of it that "they attracted international attention which culminated in each of them winning the Nobel Prize for literature" [Creque \(2016\)](#). Part of the reason these writers have achieved such international success can be attributed to the explicit nature of the written word; there is little room for ambiguity which allows these writers to explain exactly what they intend to convey, leaving very little to the reader's imagination.

## **5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

The study concludes that the arts function as powerful sites of intercultural dialogue and resistance, reaffirming the centrality of communication in maintaining diasporic solidarity and transmitting African cultural consciousness across generations. In some cases, Africans in the diaspora have gone as far as creating replicas of their native lands in order to communicate their Africanisms. For example, followers of Oba Oseijeman Adefunmi I "have established a Yoruba village called Oyotunji in South Carolina in 1970" [Thompson \(2011\)](#). The reason for this was to ward off American and European influences and to reinforce the Yoruba/Nigerian/African way of life.

In terms of cultural retention, Black Africans both on the continent and in the diaspora have made an effort to make sure that black African heritage is passed on from one generation to the next. Examples of this can be seen in the establishment of the 'World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture' and 'The Festival of Black Arts and Cultures' which were held in 1966 in the Senegalese city of Dakar and Nigerian city of Lagos in 1977. "These two festivals successfully brought together artists, musicians, dancers and other African cultural experts to share their varying experiences" [Thompson \(2011\)](#). Some scholars have argued that as a result of globalization, African traditions and

practices are being erased to give way to global culture which is largely Western, so it is not difficult to see why African organizers of Black African Festivals would feel that gatherings like the ones mentioned above are of the utmost importance in order to preserve the African way of life in the diaspora. This is why similar festivals are becoming more prevalent in countries that have a high concentration of Diaspora Africans.

It is worthy of note that people who make up the black African diaspora have also used somewhat unconventional techniques to communicate their 'Africanisms'. In the times of black slavery in the Americas and Europe it is noted that "black nursemaids often regaled their wards with African legends" Wade (2008). Although these women had been taken away from their homelands and had their liberties taken away from them, they still made the most of their situation by reliving memories of their home through the stories they told their wards. Story telling has always been a big part of black African life. Even in contemporary times, it is not uncommon for village elders to tell children stories around a fire at night; this is what is popularly referred to as Moonlight Story.

The fact that it was their ancestors and not them who left their homelands for whatever reason; many individuals of African descent living outside the continent have come to be entirely removed from their cultural heritage as they have had no immediate contact with Africa. This is the reason that more and more diasporas' Africans have returned to their ancestral homes to broaden their knowledge of their own cultural background. An example of this has been cited by Thompson (2011) who reports that African-American artist Robert Douglas, Jr., travelled to Haiti and stayed there from 1837-1839. For many black artists living in the diaspora, travels like this serve to provide the sojourner with a type of cultural education that they hope will positively influence their lives. Based on the literature review conducted in this article, it is clear to see that Africans in the diaspora do in fact use expressive arts to communicate their 'Africanness', so much so that these expressions have led to the rise of other art forms and international recognition.

The majority of literature available on this scholarly phenomenon is heavily skewed toward the use of music to communicate 'Africanness'; very little relevant information is mentioned about the use of dance and art in relation to music. 59% of the sources reviewed discussed the use of music to communicate 'Africanness' while only 14% focused on the use of dance and 27% accounted for the information provided about the use of art, and what is provided as regards art is presented in such an ambiguous manner which corroborates the assertion put forward by Peffer (2005) who accuses African diaspora art researchers as being far too narrow in their endeavors. As regards future research, based on the information given above, a lot more research needs to be carried out on art, music, literature and dance in this context. It might be worth exploring how art, music, literature and dance are used to communicate 'Africanness' with examples of specific individual cases provided. Above all else, this research contributes to interdisciplinary conversations on cultural communication, transnational identity, and the role of artistic expressions in shaping global African diaspora narratives.

## CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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None.

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