DESIGNING THE PART: DRAMA AND CULTURAL IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT
AMONG GHANAIAN TEENAGERS

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ABSTRACT

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As arts educators seek to defend their programs, and scholars explore human development in a rapidly globalizing world this paper explores how involvement in the dramatic-arts may influence the development of identity among a group of teenage students in the country of Ghana. The literature reviewed for this study includes analyses of native, colonial and post-colonial cultures in the country as well as the educational environment that surrounds the participants. Since contemporary Ghanaian culture melds tribal and colonial practices in both education and the arts, this literature helps illuminate the initial research findings. Observations of rehearsals and interviews with twenty students contributed to the data in this qualitative case study that seeks to explain ways that students construct identity within an extra-curricular theatre group in modern Ghana. Ultimately, the data suggest that a high school drama club may help students develop their cultural identities by offering a space for students to experience and affirm long-standing traditions, discuss diversity with fellow actors and audiences, and construct a new culture through diverse performances.
DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my grandparents--Lois, Newell, Robert and Zoe--who told me that once I got to know the world, I would get to know myself; to my parents--Bruce and Rebekka--who not only wished me safe journeys but taught me how to respect other cultures and keep myself safe; to my brothers--Matt and Simon--who remind me to play and laugh on every trip; and to the love of my life Kristina, who makes any place that we’re together feel like home.
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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Dedicated arts educators must frequently defend their programs and their jobs as valuable to an education system that seeks higher test scores and lower costs. It is often difficult to explain how arts classes benefit the wider society and, as a result, it becomes easier to cut back or eliminate these programs altogether. Rather than fixating on what an arts program can do for a community, this research offers a glimpse into what an arts program can do for the individuals who participate in it. Instead of viewing exposure to the arts as a goal, it examines how involvement in one artistic endeavor (a youth theatre program) encourages young people to engage with the culture that surrounds them. In a globalizing society where minority expressions of culture are often overshadowed by the Western world, this study of an arts program in Ghana shows how participation in the arts helps young artists affirm, explore and contest their culture.

Purpose of the Study

This study explores the relationship between youth participation in an extra-curricular theatre group and the development of cultural identity within a developing nation. In pursuing this study, I examine the stories that students read, write and perform, the various ways students participate in productions, and how students describe their experiences through personal interviews. Each of these elements illuminates tools that may guide or demonstrate identity development within theatre groups.

Background for the Study

The critical foundation for this research developed through the work of scholars in the divergent fields of post-colonial education practices and traditional Ghanaian art. The efforts of Flolu (2000) and Osei (2007, 2009) have led to comprehensive analyses of education under colonial and national rule. Additionally, Yarrow’s (2008) reflections on the often-contentious
relationship between “traditional” and “modern” forms of knowledge demonstrate a divide between the past and present in Ghanaian culture. The findings of these scholars demand that researchers consider how contemporary education might espouse features of cultural identity within the country. Additionally, by building on critical analyses of Ghana's native performing arts (Cole, 1996, 1997, 2001), data compiled from interactions with young artists can help scholars understand the roles students play in confirming and revising performative traditions. Merging concrete educational field research and subjective artistic reflections will hopefully provide new insights into the fields of arts education, and education in the post-colonial world. Seeking common ground between these two disciplines will offer a new arena for educational researchers in the fields of identity development and arts education.

Significance of the Study

By seeking insights into the relationship between drama and identity development, this research provides benefits to advocates, artists, teachers, scholars and students in a wide variety of ways. First, this research can contribute to policy discussions about the inclusion of arts education in local or national curricula. While many arts educators argue passionately for their subject, few make arguments based on observable data. Most of the empirical research into the relationship between arts education and identity (Lee & DeFinney, 2004; Holloway & LeCompte, 2001; Chapman, 2000) has been limited to the experiences of young girls in industrialized nations. Little has been done to explore the possibility of this relationship in developing countries. By expanding the study of this field beyond industrialized nations we may be able to explore common values throughout the world, and in so doing, provide a valid rationale for advocating arts education in local and national curricula.
Secondly, as student populations become increasingly multicultural in our global society, this research may also benefit educators who seek to adjust their pedagogies to accommodate a more diverse student population. By offering students in a developing nation the opportunity to explain how their experience with drama has influenced their lives, educators can become more aware of other practices that may provide more meaningful educations to students from different backgrounds. Teachers with diverse students can carefully consider how to structure their own classrooms more effectively in an effort to achieve results that help students appreciate art and their own personal development.

Finally, we must remember the ways that this research can benefit students. Beyond advocating for bigger arts curricula budgets on a national level and refining teaching practices at a local level, this research will hopefully serve to demonstrate the abilities of imaginative young minds at work. By exploring the creative process of a teenage drama group, this research will provide a stage for the student-participants to demonstrate their talents before an audience of teachers and scholars. With full freedom to invent, discuss and create, students can influence the art they produce and the schools they attend. Their words and actions will guide this research, and articulate an opinion worthy of attention. It therefore falls to us--the scholars, officials and teachers who read their words--to appreciate their unique talents and honor their efforts.

**Definition of Key Terms**

Before exploring this research in greater depth it is instructive to review working definitions of key terms that will be crucial to understanding the research process and its findings.
Cultural Identity

As children mature, they must develop identities that reflect their unique personalities including: sexual identity, gender identity, racial identity and religious identity. Along with these elements, an individual’s cultural identity can play a significant role in forming their personal behaviors, beliefs and self-conceptions. For Matsumoto and Juang (2007), cultural identity is an individual’s psychological membership in a distinct culture. As a result, cultural identity can reveal itself in the degree to which a person identifies with a widely accepted mode of behavior and beliefs.

Most often, these identities exist within the world that surrounds and supports the individual. For example, as someone who was born and raised in Montana, by parents who had adopted the mannerisms and attitudes of others in our community and along with brothers and peers from similar backgrounds, I would identify myself as a Montanan. However, individuals can affiliate themselves with a multiplicity of cultural identities that exist as subsets of a larger culture or deviate from cultural norms. In my case, being a Montanan highlights an identity within the larger “American” culture. However, further classifying myself as part of a “socially-liberal” culture may distinguish me from what others see as the norm in “Montanan” culture.

These complexities of cultural identity must be carefully considered before embarking on this study. While I will frequently identify ways that students fixate upon their “Ghanaian” cultural identity, there are many different cultures within Ghana, ranging from tribal to political to generational affiliations. These identities frequently overlap, compete and depend on the context that surrounds an individual. Though these variegated identities are worth acknowledging, most--if not all--interviews paid careful attention to generally agreed-upon definitions of Ghanaian culture, held in common throughout the country.
Globalization

In addition to the various cultures native to the country, it is important to note that, like most countries in the world, Ghana has been widely exposed to the expansive reach of globalization. Suarez-Orozco & Qin-Hilliard describe this shift in international exchange as “a set of processes that de-territorialize important economic, social and cultural practices from traditional boundaries in nation-states” (cited in Kubow & Fossum, 2007, p.283).

As technologies and travel become more widespread, the rapid exchange of ideas between people throughout the world has become the norm. Some express concern that these actions may minimize the “traditional” cultures of areas throughout the world by replacing long-standing cultural norms with alien practices. Others may view this cultural exchange as simply one part of a long process towards greater understanding and unity between people. Regardless of how one evaluates the effects of globalization, the fact that individuals throughout the world now exchange ideas and opinions regardless of borders and distinctions is undeniable. Globalization, as a force in identity development, will appear in the words and actions of those who participate in this study.

Pan-Africanism

Pan-Africanism refers to a belief of many post-colonial leaders in Africa that the citizens of every country in Africa should unite for the betterment of the entire continent. This philosophy owes a great deal to the work of W.E.B. DuBois, who “advocated African unity as a political response to racial oppression and colonial domination” (Francis, 2006, p. 16) as well as economic exploitation. When DuBois expatriated himself from the United States, he chose to live primarily in Ghana where the nation’s first president, Kwame Nkrumah, encouraged continental collaboration. Nkrumah devoted himself to Pan-Africanism, arguing: “we are
Africans first and last and as Africans our best interest can only be served by uniting within an African community” (Francis, 2006, p. 17). For both of these Pan-African philosophers, unity and camaraderie accentuate the cultural similarities of diverse nations and tribes rather than the differences. Because of their country’s association with the historical icons of this ideology, Ghanaians remain dedicated to the Pan-African ideal. Through this perspective, participant references to being “African” do not reflect an ignorant cultural myopia; but rather suggest an inclusive idealization of one Pan-African identity.

**The Spirit of Akwaaba**

One belief and habit particular to Ghanaian culture is the so-called “Spirit of Akwaaba.” This sentiment derives largely from a word in the Asante-Twi dialect that means: “Welcome” and refers in its national sense to a form of hospitality extended to strangers and guests. Ghanaians frequently take a measure of personal pride in expressing their welcoming attitudes as a symbol of personal status. Many go to great lengths to serve others before themselves by offering food, shelter and transportation to those they do not know. Performing these actions is often seen as a defining characteristic of Ghanaian national culture.

**Organization of the Thesis**

The rest of this study is divided into four chapters. Chapter II provides a context for the research within current and historical scholarship in relevant fields of study. Chapter III explains the methods used to conduct the research. Chapter IV presents the findings of the research and provides a discussion of this data in relation to the research questions and theoretical framework. Finally, Chapter V summarizes the findings of the study, addresses potential implications for the resulting themes, and suggests future areas of research.
CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

In pursuing this study, research into a variety of literatures proved useful to exploring the full tableau of life, education, arts and culture among teenagers in contemporary Ghana. This chapter analyzes two areas of literature that are vital to the study of cultural identity among Ghanaian teenagers. First, I explore existing literature about cultural identity in Ghana through the thematic lenses of ways in which cultural identity has been shaped in Ghana, and the predominant features of “Ghanaian culture.” I then explore these texts through a theoretical framework of post-colonial and socio-cultural historical theories.

Ways in Which Cultural Identity has been Shaped in Ghana

As Franz Fanon has said, “the knowledge of people depends on the discovery… ‘of a much more fundamental substance which is itself continually being renewed’” (quoted in Bhabha, 1994, p. 152). Whether one learns by discovering a fundamental element of cultural life through personal exploration, or through a structured concrete prescription of behavioral rights and wrongs, what an individual knows depends largely on how he or she discovers that knowledge. In establishing an understanding of cultural identity development in Ghana, it is instructive to consider the ways identity has been shaped and instilled in the young during the nation’s pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial eras.

The Pre-Colonial Era

While there is little formal evidence to specify how cultural identity was shaped in pre-colonial Ghana, research into three elements of culture suggest some of the tools used to teach young people prior to the arrival of British colonial authorities. These educational tools could provide suggestions for traits and behaviors that have long been associated with cultural identity in Ghana. Though describing this “pre-colonial” era is an inexact science, the constructed
concept of this era and its culture is a collaborative effort of the Ghanaian people, which lends a measure of consensus to the term. Moreover, though this era and its culture is based largely on imagination and oral histories, its pervasiveness as an idea among Ghanaians makes it just as authentic as any precisely documented catalogue of events or traits in western libraries.

Recent attempts to make “indigenous knowledge” a viable alternative to formal schooling models that have been common in Ghana since the colonial era offer some sense of traditional education. In Ghana, “indigenous knowledge” is frequently applied to “the kinds of political systems and beliefs that accompany the various forms of chieftaincy existing within the country” (Yarrow, 2008, p. 225). From this concept of “indigenous knowledge” we can see that power in Ghana has a long-standing association with wisdom. This perception of local authority as a primary factor in knowledge construction will reappear throughout the various historical shifts in Ghanaian education.

This affection for authority and older generations also displays itself in long standing cultural symbols. Of particular note to this research is the Sankofa bird, an emblem that provides the inspiration for a major theatrical competition among high schools. As described by the nationally approved high school social studies textbook, *Practical Social Studies* (Adu-Yeboah & Obiri-Yeboah, 2008), the Sankofa is “the head of a bird turned backwards.... This is a symbol of wisdom, knowledge and heritage. This reflects the Akan belief that the past serves as a guide for planning the future” (p. 430). In the same way that local cultural leaders and elders were esteemed in the pre-colonial period, the Sankofa symbol provides an indication of the vital role that the legacy of forefathers plays in developing the next generation of citizens. Consideration of the past, and those who came before, matters deeply in Ghana.
Another general element of pre-colonial cultural identification lies in teaching through the powerful tool of Ghanaian proverbs. In a venerable compendium of proverbs from the widely spoken Twi language, scholar C. A. Akrofi (1958) writes, “[Proverbs] adorn the speech and make it rich and flavoursome [sic]. They point up the crux of an idea with vivid clarity. Indeed, in Akan society, skill in the use of proverbs is a hallmark of good breeding” (v). During the pre-colonial era, a well-raised child in Ghana would have understood proverbs and established a deep association with the language of his or her culture. Rearing a child with frequent exposure to proverbs, in accordance with long-standing cultural habits of speech, thus became a crucial method of developing identity.

Similarly, Ansah-Koi’s (2006) study of oral literature among the Larteh people in rural Ghana analyzes the sociopolitical uses of traditional oral literature in one Ghanaian community. Because the community is smaller and more isolated than dominant local cultures (such as the Asante or Ewe) the Larteh people provide a rich source of evidence for the way culture may have been instilled prior to colonialism. The Larteh rely upon literature and language to develop a localized identity:

In all, traditional oral literature.... serves as a device for the subtle impartation of societal norms and values to succeeding generations of Larteh denizens. Traditional oral literature, then, is in all, a very significant means of education.... Traditional oral literature as well constitutes a powerful agent of socialization into Larteh’s cultural heritage. Cognitive, affective and evaluative cultural axioms are transmitted across generations partly through the medium of traditional oral literature.... and the social matrix of their performance ensure that such socialization, though subtle, nonetheless takes place. (92-93)

The similarities between the Larteh community and other tribes allow us to cautiously assume that the socializing and educational elements of verbal communication exist throughout the state of Ghana.
The Colonial Era

The arrival of western Europeans in what was a well-established West African culture has led to wide-ranging and complex changes to the region. But within the arena of cultural identity development, the changes largely reflect British colonial efforts to do what they felt was right for natives, regardless of local traditions. Ultimately, after initial difficulty, colonial rule effectively reshaped Ghanaian culture through the formal education system.

Since the 15th century European entanglements with what has become the state of Ghana, foreigners have sought the material wealth of the land. However, missionary groups who followed these expeditions focused on “civilizing” the native people. According to Kimble (1963), “the earliest teachers met with either indifference or active opposition, for the advantages of reading and writing, especially in a foreign language, were not so immediately apparent as those of trade, and they were considerably less relevant to the needs of traditional African society” (p. 61-62).

After Great Britain formally gained control of the region in 1843, it became clear that the increasingly powerful foreigners preferred to deal with natives who had a modicum of Western education. Thus a demand for European knowledge as a commodity increased and attitudes towards educators--and foreigners in general--changed. “Missionaries of different denominations were soon doggedly establishing schools wherever possible in the face of great difficulties” (Kimble, 1963, p.63). Despite hostility from some more traditional local inhabitants and the health risks inherent in the tropical climate, missionary educators became the dominant force in the colonial drive for schooling. By the early 20th century, according to Oliver and Atmore (1994), missionary schools across Africa had “emerged as a clear avenue for advancement, along
which the ambitious could escape from the narrow discipline of village life into a wider world of well-paid urban employment” (p. 147).

The opportunities for social mobility offered by missionary schools show that, though such institutions claimed autonomy from the government, educational opportunities in the Gold Coast remained, largely dedicated to the interests of the colonial empire. In the early part of the 20th century, “[Britain] took a more active role by entering into partnership with the Christian missions of all denominations and by subsidising the mission schools on condition that they conformed to the proper standards of efficiency” (Oliver & Atmore, 1994, p. 157). This relationship demonstrates itself most clearly in the history of “Empire Day”, a school holiday that encouraged students and faculty members to celebrate the joys of being “British”. To this end, students participated in traditional British “concerts” singing, dancing and generally playing the part of a grateful subject to the crown (Cole, 2001, p. 24; Kimble, 1963, p. 118). Through Empire Day, schools throughout the colony promoted British interests both economically and culturally by encouraging students to behave in a more “British” manner.

**The Post-Colonial Era**

Following World War II, the increasingly ambitious students who emerged from the British educational system began to question colonial rule and led the way towards independence in 1957. Though education may have significantly assisted the revolution, policy makers in the new nation of Ghana struggled to reform the legacy of cultural proscription in schools.

Flolu (2000) writes that “at independence Ghanaians inherited an educational system that paid little attention to the social and cultural environment of Ghana and imposed on us an alien and abstract form of education” (p. 25). Osei (2009) complains that in most of the rural schools “the quality of instruction offered was of low calibre and dependent on additional financial
support from the local communities” (p. 33). But perhaps the sharpest critique comes from a UNESCO report on Cultural Policy in Ghana (1976), which states that the greatest setback for African cultural values came from “the missionary societies who pioneered English education in Ghana [and] felt that the customs and traditions there were barbaric” (p. 15).

Given the host of challenges embedded in the long-standing school-system, it is not surprising that the country’s first educational policy was a rejection of the European system it replaced. According to Osei (2009): “architects of the first Ghanaian education system sought to create institutions that were anti-elitist, anti-discriminatory and anti-capitalist. To promote national cohesion, a single model of schooling was to be provided to all citizens, regardless of wealth or status” (p. 34). In establishing “national cohesion”, some scholars claim that Ghanaian leaders relied on a strong centralized state that dictated a unified policy dedicated to the values of those in power; a system similar to the centralized colonial model these founding fathers sought to replace. Osei suggests that attempts to create a radically different educational policy were undermined when the nation’s first president, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah “assumed the role of the father of development and cast government employees as his obedient children” (p. 39).

Though Ghana adopted a more decentralized educational policy at the start of the 21st century, curricular standards continue to ensure the importance of national policies (Flolu, 2000; Osei, 2007, 2009). The government has largely followed the UNESCO (1976) suggestion of including more Ghanaian culture in the classroom. To assist this endeavor, primary school educators have relied on a subject called “culture studies”, a weekly course aimed at helping students to understand Ghanaian arts, religious traditions and social behaviors, and thus encourage students to “be in tune with a culture which is Ghanaian and can stand the test of time” (Flolu, 2000, p. 26).
Those who teach older students in the Social Studies classroom can provide similar cultural instruction through regularly scheduled units about Ghanaian heritage and traditions. The textbook used for this class, *Practical Social Studies* (Adu-Yeboah & Obiri-Yeboah, 2008), includes definitions and examples of cultural traditions, as well as explicit statements about “cultural practices that inhibit development” (pp. 62-70), “how to spend your money wisely” (p. 114), “responsibilities of wives” (p. 142), “importance of good work behavior” (p. 376), and “rights and responsibilities of the youth” (p. 519). Students throughout Ghana develop an intimate familiarity with the lessons in this textbook prior to their matriculation. The structure of *Practical Social Studies* doubles as a four-year curriculum for students in all regions.

In addition to the Social Studies curriculum, Senior high school students may pursue a vocational curriculum dedicated to traditional Ghanaian cultural products. Developed as part of educational reform policy in 1987, the vocational courses have encouraged young people to learn skills relevant to both modern and traditional life through subjects such as “metal work,” “pottery,” “wood work” and “crafts” (Osei, 2007, p. 77). Osei further notes that these classes have been well received and offer a valuable alternative to more formalized learning curricula.

**Predominant Features of “Ghanaian Culture”**

Though any absolutist definition of “Ghanaian Culture” is fraught with the perils of stereotype and simplification, for the purposes of this research it is instructive to reflect on the beliefs and values expressed through cultural products in Ghana. As arts-education scholar Minette E. Mans (2000) writes, “in Africa arts are seen as expressions of the whole cultural wellspring from which they arise” (p. 9). Based on this assertion I examine how artistic cultural artifacts including dance, textiles and oral literature reflect the pre-colonial cultural foundations
of a respect for heritage, national unity, and the values of oral expression before concluding with
the acknowledgement of a shift in cultural expressions within Ghana today.

**Dance and Textiles**

Much of the literature about teaching cultural art forms in Ghana has focused on the
teaching of traditional dance methods. In a reflective case study, Adinku (2004) explains the
impetus for his enrollment in the Ghana’s first National Dance Company:

> At a little over eighteen years old, I was full of enthusiasm to be part of a cultural
program being promulgated by Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, the first president of Ghana,
dubbed ‘African Personality Consciousness.’ It encouraged an awareness that extolled
the positive values of African society. (p. 50)

Adinku’s experience with the National Dance Company inspired him to argue for the importance
of dance in Ghana’s cultural landscape. Adinku (1994) asserts, “it reflects the social mores and
attitudes of the people; it also expresses their artistic and aesthetic principles. It has played a
major role in the life of the people as religious ritual or secular activity” (p. 50). Adinku’s
writing depicts a deep respect for the heritage of Ghanaian dance traditions, as well as a
particularly “African” cultural identity.

A similar fondness for tradition extends to the work done in vocational education
classrooms described above. One of the “crafts” created in vocational classrooms is the symbolic
kente cloth. This fabric first became popular among members of the Asante royalty, and has
since been appropriated as a major cultural symbol. In Carol Magee’s (2005) analysis: “kente, as
clothing...is an immediate and appropriatable marker of identity [and] is used by those promoting
an Afro-centric world-view” (p. 594-595). From this perspective, the creation and wearing of
kente cloth implies both an acceptance of a unified African identity, and a firm link to traditions
among African nobility.
Dance and textiles also reflect cultural values through the silent, symbolic language of each art form. Adinku (1994) notes the meaning of the dance in terms of a conversation: “the organization of movements follows a certain structure with meanings intentionally fused into them...these movements operate within certain accepted cultural norms” (p. 13). The meanings and messages suggested through the nonverbal art form of dance also exist in kente cloth, which “can send a specific message to an audience through the weft designs or the alignment of colours in the warp threads” (Magee, 2005, p. 593). Turning the act of dance and the symbol of fabric into an arena for cultural conversations helps to demonstrate the tremendous value of language in Ghanaian culture.

**Oral Literature & Performances**

Naturally the importance of language demonstrates itself in oral literature traditions, however, the importance of heritage and a unified cultural identity also assert themselves through the process. By and large, Ghanaian literature forgoes the simplicity of inscribing letters onto paper and asking others to read it. Though some authors may seek publication, traditional literature depends on oral expression first and foremost. During the centuries of history in which even the most revered leaders and artists received no formal schooling, poets and authors in Ghana rarely wrote down works of literature, instead they modeled their artistry for others through public recitations. Compositions were not meant to be catalogued and filed away, but to be performed and experienced by the entire community. As Ansah-Koi (2006) writes “traditional oral literature exists only through performance” (p. 86).

Within this oral literature tradition, novels, poetry, proverbs and essays, though distinct in their stylistic features, share a common structure of expression that appreciates communal needs and encourages individual intelligence. For the Ewe people in Eastern Ghana, “when two
villages quarrel, they compose abusive songs against each other, usually directed against the offending elder of the opposing village. Some of these are very elaborate and can last, without repetition for as long as half an hour” (Finnegan, 1976, p. 276). A similar exercise is described by Yarrow (2008) who notes that, for some tribes “pronouncements of chiefs are publicly rendered by the [court linguist] who embellishes speech and proverbs that display his own linguistic skill, while rendering chiefly pronouncements” (p. 236). In both of these instances, the verbal talents of one member of the tribal group serve to benefit the interests of the community as a whole.

While the community can derive satisfaction from the artistic efforts of one individual, the person performing has a tremendous degree of authority over their creative expression. The importance of personal invention in crafting these pieces of oral literature for performance is affirmed by Ansah-Koi (2006), who claims, “the individual performer has room for creativity in presentation” (p. 86). Given the creativity inherent in oral literature, it is not surprising that overtly performative literature also makes use of improvisation and the creativity of performers. In her detailed and descriptive work Ghana’s Concert Party Theatre, Cole (2001) emphasizes that the most popular form of native drama shares striking similarities with oral tradition:

Akan notions of performance are not bounded by proscenium staging or particular venues labeled as ‘theatre....[P]erformances within Akan culture are as likely to be impromptu, constituted in the everyday interactions of social life, as they are to be planned and circumscribed by temporal and spatial markers framing the event as extraordinary (105).

Thus, Ghanaian theatrical traditions make assiduous use of familiar cultural elements, especially the inventive nature of language construction. And this is done in direct opposition to values of the area’s erstwhile colonizers, whose affection for “Empire Day” subverted the cultural values and improvisational performance styles of their student population:
In colonial schools, dramatic texts were used as a means of control, a way of curbing the alarming propensity of students to embroider and elaborate on the platform, for such flourishes were seen by instructors as aesthetically undesirable. Ironically, it is precisely this tendency to improvise and extend ideas that is highly valued among the Akan (Cole, 2001, p. 116).

Freed from the strictures of colonial education practices, contemporary artists have returned to an emphasis on individual expression through a wealth of linguistic forms.

**Ghanaian Culture among Youths in Contemporary Society**

Among the youth of Ghana today, the cultures of the past still hold some influence, but there are increasing freedoms for students to create a new culture in order to address current issues. Rather than adhering to an anti-colonial model, young Ghanaians of the 21st century have demonstrated an interest in establishing a new hybridized culture through language and new media. While Finnegans (1976) and Yarrow (2008) describe how ethnic groups developed a communal identity through verbal expression, contemporary Ghanaians have recently found a greater degree of commonality in their languages, their interests, and their forms of expression.

In comparing a variety of ethnicities in a university setting, Edu-Buandoh (2007) found that “individuals need to speak their ethnic languages as a prerequisite for claiming membership of an ethnic group” (p. 92). Distinguishing one’s ethnic group along linguistic lines has occasionally deepened the divide between groups as “negative attitudes expressed about both languages (Ewe and Akan) influenced each other” (Gyasi-Obeng, 2000, p. 302) and perpetuated cultural tensions. However, while such linguistic/ethnic distinctions separate groups, all tribes seem concerned with their ability to communicate between tribal cultures. Edu-Buandoh (2007) also noted that “even when [participants] spoke with their colleagues who share the same ethnic group with them, the focal participants found English and Twi more appropriate than their native languages” (p. 93). Similarly, a particularly intense argument analyzed by Gyasi-Obeng (2000)
focused on how “graffiti authors express concern about [other graffiti authors’] ‘poor English’ or ‘bad English’” (p. 307) rather than defending their tribal tongues.

Other studies affirm the complex relationship between tribal and national languages among young Ghanaians today. In Afful’s (2006) work with terms of address among college students, students use culturally alien names and terms from fields of study to create nicknames, such as the use of “Plato” as a nickname for a philosophy student (p. 82). Afful also notes that students use mottos or catch phrases commonly associated with specific groups or clubs as a means of identifying or acknowledging one another. According to Afful, “These mottos or catch phrases are as much a feature of identification as they are a way of drawing a group’s attention to a cherished belief, value or norm” (p. 88). Thus, the nicknames applied to friends can synthesize a great deal of information about personal interests, hobbies and social groupings, whether they occur in commonly accessible languages or private dialects.

In modern Ghanaian society, use of the Internet has radically altered the way that young people communicate with one other. In the study conducted by Fair, et. al (2009) the authors suggest that young Ghanaians who spend much of their time in internet cafes have largely turned away from the traditional methods of conversation and the traditional partners in dialogue that have been common throughout Ghanaian history. “By connecting online, young Ghanaians consume the values, norms and mores of Internet sites; they form new social identities in the process of rejecting, reconciling and incorporating global images and ideas into their everyday lives” (Fair, et. al, 2009, p. 40). The shift in using more internationally accessible language suggests that tech savvy Ghanaian youths may be developing a more global identity.
Analysis through Theoretical Framework

Prior to discussing the research I conducted and the analysis that develops from that data, it is instructive to understand the societal factors that surrounded the research participants. To accomplish this, I will apply the same theoretical framework to both the literature reviewed and the data gathered. This theoretical framework depends largely on elements of post-colonial and socio-historical cultural theory. After beginning with an overview of each theory, both theories will be applied to the literature described above.

Post-Colonialism

Following the end of World War II, a number of countries declared their independence from Western European colonial interests. A common element of postcolonial analysis has been to study nations and their people as a reaction to colonial rule. In the most direct definition of postcolonial analysis, leading theorist Homi Bhabha suggests: “postcolonial criticism bears witness to the unequal and uneven forces of cultural representation involved in the contest for political and social authority within the modern world order” (p. 171). Working with this definition, I will engage with postcolonial theory to examine the lingering effects of colonialism on Ghanaian culture and society, as well as to understand modern Ghana in a globalizing world.

Socio-Historical Cultural Theory

As a complement to post-colonial theory, Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky’s socio-historical cultural theory allows for an examination of national issues within Ghana as well as identity development on a personal level. In the words of Rogoff (2003), Vygotsky’s theory stresses that “individual development must be understood in, and cannot be separated from, its social and cultural-historical context” (p. 50). With this perception of identity development the research can more reasonably emphasize the time and place in which a child is raised and
nurtured, making the study of Ghana’s history crucial to our purpose. Additionally, Vygotsky’s work on the effect of language on development will be instructive toward understanding the role that the language of artistic traditions in Ghana play in promoting particular identities.

**Tools for Shaping Cultural Identity within the Theoretical Framework**

Consider the long-standing traditions and cultural heritage that influences a great deal of Ghanaian cultural identity. As the evidence from Akrofi (1958), Ansah-Koi (2006), Yarrow (2008) and Adu-Yeboah & Obiri-Yeboah (2008) suggest, Ghana’s variegated cultural legacy offers a rich resource for individuals to draw from when they develop their cultural identity. Beyond these cultural influences, an individual’s social atmosphere plays a crucial role in developing personal identity. The work of performance scholar Soyini Madison reflects this hallmark of Vygotsky’s theory. After several years studying and working with Ghanaian non-governmental organizations [NGOs] Madison (2010) writes that many cultural traditions are “less a matter of inherent transmission or critical evaluation and more a matter of habitual enactments through generations believed to be the proper order of the world because they are always already being done” (p. 42). By relying on fundamental elements of local society (language, proverbs, symbols and generational authority), traditional cultural identities develop out of habit and frequent usage rather than overt instruction in an absolute “Ghanaian” culture.

However, this paradigm of personal, habitual engagement with culture shifts when British colonial authorities arrive and begin the process of “formal” schooling. Through the use of differentiation and singularization, both colonial and post-colonial authorities have attempted to establish one, absolute Ghanaian culture.

During the Colonial era (1843-1957), according to Oliver and Atmore (1994), formal education became a crucial method to ascend the colonial social structure that valued European
schooling. Native Ghanaians benefited financially by applying the lessons and language learned in a missionary school, just as British colonial authorities experienced a financial gain by creating a new pool of laborers and customers to support the empire’s economy. By incentivizing relationships with missionary educators, colonial forces effectively created a schism within local cultures that had previously acquired cultural identity through communal experiences. This striation is in keeping with post-colonial scholar Homi Bhabha’s (1994) view of colonial authority. “The exercise of colonialist authority...requires the production of differentiations, individuations, identity effects through which discriminatory practices can map out subject populations that are tarred with the visible and transparent mark of power” (p. 111). Giving preference to those who fell in line allowed colonial forces to quickly identify those who had obtained western educations. After branding some as worthy of power and spurning those who were not, British officials could establish a new hierarchy that would benefit their interests and the interests of their culture. These cultural interests appeared through both the tacit actions among the newly educated and, as time went on, through the overt behaviors of those who did the teaching.

In the post-colonial era the same tactic of differentiation exists. Despite the recent attempts to encourage “indigenous knowledge” as described by Yarrow (2008), the primary educational means of shaping culture still depends on a centralized state authority. As such, the social-studies textbook written by Adu-Yeboah & Obiri-Yeboah (2008), offers barely concealed judgments of those who help in the development of Ghana and those who hinder it. By proscribing the proper behavior for children, wives and workers, and evaluating a variety of cultural practices for their ability to “promote” and “inhibit” development, the formal school system clearly differentiates between those who work for Ghana, and those who work against it.
In addition to the implied tool of differentiation, educators in both colonial, and post-colonial Ghana attempt to “singularize” Ghanaian culture into one particular definition. This almost biological classification of culture develops from the analysis of Nicholas Thomas (1994). Thomas likens colonial treatment of new cultures to the way scientists treat a new species. In this sense, “the animal [or culture] is not treated as a collection, but reduced to a singular standard specimen.... The singularization of the species permits an account that is remarkably fresh and vivid” (pp. 82-83).

During the colonial era educators used singularization to shift Ghanaian culture towards a more British expression of African-ness. In studying the colonial era, the practices of “Empire Day” offers an example of this tactic. As the children played loyal, smiling subjects to the British sovereign, missionaries, teachers, colonial administrators, parents and children witnessed the affirmation of Britain’s might by making a complex society adhere to a simplified, obedient interpretation of the colonial rule. Rather than considering the many native Ghanaians who were not taking part in the festivities, concentrating on the relative few who were in attendance provided a symbol of deference to British rule that both justified the colonizer and those who benefited from colonial rule. The focus on loyal Ghanaians effectively defined Ghanaian culture as a singularized identity marked by contented subservience. To those in power, the Empire Day narrative suggested that all natives were glad to be part of the Empire. To those Indigenous people who had lately joined the colonial system, the Empire Day narrative suggested that many others, including their own children and other parents, enjoyed collaborating with Europeans. Thus, the singularization of Ghanaian culture to one obedient collective on Empire Day may have reshaped the cultural view of many towards a more westernized form of traditional life.
In post-colonial Ghana, and especially under the reign of Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, the government’s cultural perceptions often take precedence when attempting to educate young people about local culture. The personal example offered by Adinku (2004) demonstrates how “African Personality Consciousness”--a state program for unified identity--was overtly instituted through the National Dance Company. Osei (2009) offers a similar suggestion in describing the importance of “national cohesion” and Nkrumah’s role as the national father figure. In both of these instances it appears that the independent state of Ghana also singularized cultural identity, albeit in a more traditionally “African” way.

Recent vocational innovations in cultural education, including classes in crafts construction, rely less on the dictums of an individual authority like Dr. Nkrumah, and more on a generally agreed upon set of communal beliefs. However, as George J. Sefa Dei (2005) writes, “in emphasizing the goal of national integration, post-independence, ‘postcolonial’ education in Ghana continues to deny heterogeneity in local populations, as if difference itself was a problem” (pp. 268-269). Sefa Dei perceives the same danger in teaching one collaborative definition of Ghanaian identity, as in teaching one proscribed culture dictated by leaders like Dr. Nkrumah. Ignoring the culture of those who defy a particular definition of Ghanaian culture could marginalize a host of people. Regardless of how many scholars agree upon the cultural crafts that should be taught in a vocational education, teaching the crafts of one tribe as equivalent to those of another simplifies Ghanaian culture to a limited definition.

Ultimately while methods of discovering culture have changed throughout the past centuries, the role of those transmitting the culture have remained consistent, especially since colonial systems of education surpassed traditional ways of teaching cultural identity. For post-colonial scholars, the similarities between the colonial reverence described by Oliver & Atmore
(1994), and the overly paternal, ideologically prescriptive role played by Kwame Nkrumah (Osei, 2009; Adinku, 2004) reflects a startling peculiarity of anti-colonialism. “Paradoxically, anti-colonialist movements often expressed themselves in the appropriation and subversion of forms borrowed from the institutions of the colonizer and turned back on them” (Ashcroft, Griffin & Tiffins, 2007, p. 12). In this sense, various leaders of independent Ghana have used the British colonial policy of inculcating identity in schools to promote a “Ghanaian” identity that frequently opposes British identity (Flolu, 2000, p. 26; Adinku, 2004, p. 50), and also promotes the government’s perception of what would help the national cause (Osei, 2009; Sefa Dei, 2005).

This conceptualization of perpetual conflict between the colonized and the colonizer corresponds to Vygotsky’s theory that, in the words of Rogoff (2003), stresses that “individual development must be understood in, and cannot be separated from, its social and cultural-historical context” (p. 50). Because Ghanaian identity is completely dependent on a social, cultural and historical environment complicated by the legacy of colonialism, all identities will bear the marks of colonial history and post-colonial policies.

**Predominant Features of Ghanaian Culture within the Theoretical Framework**

In analyzing oral literature and the importance of verbal expression within Ghanaian culture, Vygotsky’s writing on the use of language can be particularly instructive to understand how identities develop from cultural art forms. For Vygotsky, “the initial function of speech is the communicative function. Speech is first and foremost a means of social interaction, a means of pronouncement and understanding” (Wertsch, 1985, p. 94). If the purpose of speech is to engage with others, the constantly performative and conversational elements of Ghana’s artistic culture (in dance, textiles and oral literature) can be more easily explained. Since many of the country’s local art forms use language (even through latent means) and seek to convey a
meaning to an audience both verbally and nonverbally, all Ghanaian art forms appear to be communicative in nature.

Furthermore, discourse through art forms seems to communicate issues of cultural identity in post-colonial society with the other members of the larger community. As Bame (1985) writes about Concert Party drama performances:

Audiences are presented with echoes of their own bitter or happy human relationships and experience [sic]...and they get the opportunity to purge themselves of [the] grief which their sad experience caused them or to relieve their happy experiences as the case may be (p. 80).

Thus, one can claim that the language used in artistic expressions serves as a means to discuss or even subvert the cultural hegemony practiced by the British colonial forces, and perhaps, by Ghanaian governmental programs. It is this potential for subversion that I will examine next.

Both Cole (2001) and Kimble (1963) explore the reverence for British culture commonly practiced in Ghanaian school concerts prior to independence, a reverence that Cole (2001) links to the encouragement of blackface minstrel shows in order to honor the empire (p. 24-25). The fact that one of the nation’s most popular forms of drama evolves out of this insensitive practice confirms the sense of cultural subversion against the colonial state. In a similar case, Nigerian Nobel Laureate Wole Soyinka has defended his own culture’s dramatic works as a tool of cultural survival and colonial resistance. “He sees the ‘survival strategies’ of theatre mixing traditional, folk and ritual forms with more westernized practices” (Fortier, 2002, p. 200). This mixing of art forms that proved so helpful to Soyinka and other Nigerian artists to retain their cultural identity also seems to have allowed some oral literature traditions to survive in Ghana while simultaneously creating new forms, such as the Concert Party.
From a Vygotskian perspective, this anti-colonial appropriation and subversion of the colonial hegemony directly relates to an abandonment of enforced identity mediation. While many British schools sought to “civilize” native Ghanaian children, one result of their efforts--resilient and rebellious art forms--suggests that the natives refused to engage with such mediated practices. “On the socio-cultural level, the lack of mediation is often associated with the rejection or breakdown of the system of cultural transmission” (Kozulin, 1998, p. 75). Denying the transmission of British culture has allowed Ghanaian artists to speak for themselves and confirm their own identities.

Within contemporary Ghana, young people continue to confirm their own identities, new identities: hybridized identities. This seems to be in keeping with the theories of Ghanaian philosopher Kwame Gekye (1997), who writes that previous generations do not:

Transmit their cultural creations as such; what they do rather is to place them at the disposal of subsequent generations of people. But the subsequent generations may on normative or other rational grounds either accept, refine or preserve them or spurn, deprecate them, abandon them. The desire or intention of a subsequent generation to preserve or abandon inherited cultural products often results from some kind of evaluation for those cultural products and the tradition they lead to. Such critical evaluations are essential for the growth and revitalization of cultural tradition (p. 226).

As Gekye suggests, young people in a post-colonial society like Ghana do not have to blindly accept the traditions suggested by previous generations, but rather can actively create their own sense of culture through their own means. This concept is supported by the shifting linguistic values demonstrated in a variety of recent studies (Gyasi-Obeng, 2000; Edu-Boandoh, 2007; Fair, et. al, 2009) that highlight a new socio-cultural environment: a globalizing socio-cultural environment. The fact that many young Ghanaians split their dialogues between tribal languages to mark their ethnicity, and English to engage with the wider world may undermine the
mediation of a Ghanaian identity which “can stand the test of time” (Flolu, 2000, p. 26) and reaffirm individualized identity construction.

**Studying Cultural Identity Development through Youth Theatre**

This research explores a gap in the available literature. While many scholars have broadly considered the educational system (Flolu, 2000; Osei, 2007; Osei, 2009; Yarrow, 2008), general artistic traditions (Finnegan, 1976; Bame, 1985; Adinku, 1994; Cole, 2001; Adinku, 2004; Ansah-Koi, 2006), or daily communications among Ghanaian youth (Gyasi-Obeng, 2000; Edu-Boandoh, 2007; and Fair, et. al, 2009), there have been no studies that examine a specific group of students exploring a particular art form and the distinctive ways that students communicate culture through the powerful medium of performance. As such, this research will allow us to explore a site for the expression of culture that has been overlooked: a school theatre group.

While scholars have frequently suggested that the performing arts are a valuable means of expressing cultural identity, this has not yet been widely explored through in-depth educational research. One limited study by Singh (2004) explores the pedagogical potential of drama through theatrical workshops in the post-colonial state of India. During this process, Singh noticed that:

…most children ask: ‘Do we share tales from the textbook?’ or ‘you want us to share home stories?’…Narrating familiar texts provided a new identity within environments where only printed texts were the centre of debate and exchange…. The stories also brought out the active agency of children in narrating, analysing and defending the texts learnt as members of a cultural community, albeit with stylistic variations in narration or the use of region-specific terms (p. 68).

Singh found that, when students are given the freedom to perform their own brand of theatre, they naturally gravitated towards culturally significant stories. Students who developed performances thus found a method to express cultural values and beliefs.
This study relates to the urgings of theorists like Virginia Lea and Erma Jean Sims (2008) who suggest that, “through literature, music, and art, we can access narratives that play a significant role in helping us to develop inspired states of mind and an enhanced sense of meaning and identity in our lives” (p. 18). Similarly, in her writing about arts education in Africa, Minette E. Mans (2000) writes that: “policies in Africa tend to emphasize culture, heritage, and national pride, from which flow the arts that embody particular cultural practices” (p. 9). The fluid relationship between cultural beliefs and the performing arts makes arts in the schools a valuable site to study. If, as Mans suggests, culture influences art which influences culture, the role that arts play in the cycle of created culture is well worth exploring. Finally, drummer Babatunde Lea (2008) reminds us of the individual agency a child can exercise within their chosen art form. “The artistic mediums that we choose and the ways in which we express ourselves through these mediums indicate what is culturally relevant to us, and where our passions and identities lie” (100). This quotation clearly links to the individual artistry and personal identity expressed through oral literatures and performance as suggested by Finnegan (1976) and Yarrow (2008). Based on these suggestions it is clear that the artistic expression diminishes the importance of unadulterated cultural transmission or mediation, and emphasizes the voices and opinions of young artists.

The collapse of “pure” cultural transmission or indoctrination is a subject intimately related to both socio-cultural theory and post-colonial theory. As Vygotsky scholar Kozulin (1998) writes about this breakdown in mediation “the child is left to confront the world on a ‘here-and-now’ basis” (p. 75). Among young Ghanaian artists, confronting the “here-and-now” means confronting Indigenous knowledge, the shadow of colonialism, the dominance of a
nationally proscribed culture in the schools, and the specter of globalism simultaneously within the new socio-cultural environment.

Fortunately, the “here-and-now” also complements Ghanaian improvisation and inventiveness with language. Given the repeated references to linguistic creativity in Ghanaian cultures (Finnegan, 1976; Cole, 2001; Magee, 2005; Ansah-Koi, 2006) it appears that Ghanaian artists value invention from moment to moment, responding to stimuli and notions as they arise. As the Kozulin (1998) writes: “Spontaneous concepts emerge from...reflections on immediate, everyday experiences; they are rich but unsystematic and highly contextual” (p. 48). Thus it seems that the steady flow and invention of speech patterns in Ghanaian art forms complement the fluidity of thoughts that occur while creating art. As a result, a Vygotskian sense of “spontaneous” speech correlates with Ghanaian improvisation and the interaction with the “here-and-now” of local life, a here-and-now embedded in a post-colonial context.

As contemporary students engage with the “here-and-now” of their daily life, with all the variegated cultural remnants of colonialism, anti-colonialism, globalism and Indigenous knowledge, the culture that emerges from their performances will merit careful consideration. When students confront their cultural heritage they may, as Gekye suggests, “accept, refine...preserve...spurn, deprecate [or] abandon them” (p. 226). Rather than expecting an absolute reflection of one culture or the rejection of another, the newest generation of cultural actors should be allowed to mix cultures into a hybrid they appreciate. As Bhabha writes, “terms of cultural engagement whether antagonistic or affiliative, are produced performatively....The social articulation of difference...is a complex, on-going negotiation that seeks to authorize cultural hybridities that emerge in moments of historical transformation” (p. 2). In the modern, quickly changing Ghanaian society, a hybrid of cultures--neither colonial, nor pre-colonial nor post-
colonial, but simply the culture of the performers--can be reflected in and refined through what we see on stage.
CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

This study explores how involvement in drama productions may influence the development of cultural identity among high school students in Ghana. In the post-colonial climate of Ghana’s history since independence, there is an uneasy relationship between local, tribal cultures; national, patriotic or Pan-African cultures; and globalizing, neo-colonial cultures. As each of these forces exerts its influence on forms of artistic expression and the country’s youth, studying the ways that children express themselves artistically can provide insight into the ways that students learn about their past and construct their futures. Moreover, exploring these issues within a school setting can help show the degree to which formal cultural agents shape or dictate identity development.

Research Questions and Typology

The main research question of this study is “How might cultural identity develop among drama students at a suburban public high school near Accra, Ghana?” This overarching question is advanced through three major sub-questions:

Sub-question 1: “What role, if any, do the texts one reads, studies, or performs in theatrical groups play in guiding cultural identity development?”

Sub-question 2: “How might different student roles in theatre production relate to the development of cultural identity?”

Sub-question 3: “How does experience in performing or producing drama influence how individuals describe their identities in an interview setting?”

With respect to sub-question one, the explicit and implicit moralizing of many dramatic texts means that the content of what students perform can play a significant role in guiding the cultural values a student has. As many literary scholars (Eby, 2007; Wilmer, 2000; O’Dair,
1993; Stevens, 2003) suggest, the works of playwrights from Albee to Walcott have reflected and formed the cultural values and identities of their countrymen. Since Ghana has a strong independent literary tradition, as well as a colonial heritage founded on the attitudes and mores of Britain's literary legacy, the commingling influences of local and foreign texts presents an intriguing arena to evaluate the distinctions made by students between traditional and foreign identities.

In regards to the second sub-question, within a theatre group many striations distinguish participants in any given production (directors, stars, bit players, costumers, set builders, etc.). Though such traditional Western roles were not as entrenched in this drama club as in some others, other distinctions between participants remained. This question, therefore, provided an avenue to explore the differences in identity development between club members according to factors such as age, gender, seniority within the club or school, ethnic group and (to some extent) primary role within the club (executive, technician, writer or actor).

In crafting the final sub-question, I sought to examine the ways in which students described their experiences. By unpacking the mannerisms and common terms that characterize each student’s answers, I analyze the degree to which students expressed themselves according to local customs. Through this process, further evidence of the identity development process emerged.

After considering these questions and consulting with research advisors, I chose to pursue the answers to these questions through a qualitative study. Since cultural identity is a complex, multi-faceted topic, richly detailed interviews offered the best opportunity to obtain data germane to the study. Additionally, exploring the interweaving of cultural variables required specific personal experiences and opinions that emerge fully through in-depth responses
generated by dialogue, rather than paper questionnaires or surveys. Finally, in selecting this methodology I aimed to accentuate the special attributes of the participant pool. As actors, writers and producers of theatre, individuals who gave interviews were used to expressing themselves in public and provided a bounty of rich data during the conversations.

To further enhance the research, the project uses a Case Study method, incorporating both interviews and observations made during the course of the research in an attempt to explore an average club within Ghana. According to Creswell (2007), case study research “involves the study of an issue explored through one or more cases within a bounded system” (p. 73), and requires in-depth data collection from multiple sources within the case. This study includes references to interview transcripts as well as pictures and videos of performances, personal observations, and student textbooks. Each piece of data comes directly from the school, which served as the bounded system.

Statement of Researcher Perspective

As the sole researcher in this endeavor, I want to acknowledge what led me to embark on this study. I am a White American male from an insulated area of the Western United States. Though I had personally participated in drama productions as a child, over time I became more interested in the diverse cultures and characters that appeared in my English classes than in the pieces of popular American theatre that comprised my school’s Drama season.

My passion for literature from and about diverse people and places led me to study Ghanaian literary and performative traditions at the University of Ghana in Legon during my undergraduate education, and ultimately led to a Bachelor’s Degree in English Literature from St. Olaf College (2005). Following graduation I became a licensed English teacher. After
working briefly in Minnesota, I joined the staff of an international boarding school in India where I was asked to teach English and direct dramas.

In both English and Drama classrooms, my students complained that the curricular focus on “Western” (especially British) texts made reading an onerous chore. I wondered how the cultural values espoused by these texts might affect how students define their culture in a globalizing society. My personal interest in this field led me to pursue further research into the issues of identity development among young artists. I conducted this case study as part of the degree requirements in the Masters of Arts in Cross-Cultural and International Education (MACIE) program at Bowling Green State University.

My previous experience in Ghana increased my familiarity with and understanding of local culture prior to arrival at the research site. It also allowed me to integrate into the school environment more easily. At the research site, I also served as a visiting advisor to the school by assisting professors in the English department with their classes and observing student behavior in the classroom. In the formal classroom setting I supported the teachers in their lesson plans and provided the students a different perspective on literature and grammar. I carefully separated my work as a researcher from my work as a classroom assistant and my presence as a guest of the school. As a result, students respected my privacy while I conducted interviews or made notes, but happily sought my tutelage during lessons.

During this time I also acted as visiting advisor to the drama club overseeing rehearsals in collaboration with the club’s “patron” (a faculty advisor) to ensure student safety and occasionally offering aesthetic advice to the club. When asked for guidance by the club I provided training exercises to improve projection, blocking and subtle expressions of emotion. Though the club pointedly asked me to help the club become more “international”, at no point
did I pass an artistic or cultural judgment, and I remained especially careful to avoid culturally specific statements about how things “should” be done in a Western drama club. Ultimately I established a strong enough relationship with the club that our continued artistic exchanges will help the ACHS drama club to share their talents with individuals throughout the world.

As a result of frequent engagement, both in the club and the classroom, I became a participant observer within the case study. By defining a role within the school environment, I established a strong relationship with study participants as well as other students. This rapport led to frequent conversations outside of rehearsal and class time about a range of issues including higher education, film, travel, food, politics and sports. At the end of the research period, members of the drama club asked to pose for photos and presented me with two pieces of framed artwork as a demonstration of gratitude and friendship.

The Case

The case to be studied in this research will be referred to by the pseudonym: African Coastal High School (ACHS). The public high school stands next to a bustling roadway where goods and people flow into and out of Accra, the capital city. A wide range of shops and services line the road and offer movies, music, clothing, car repairs and food to passers-by throughout the day. Behind the school gates, ACHS sprawls on a large expanse of ground, with tall grass, twisting trees, bulky dusk-red anthills and school buildings dotting the landscape.

The normal school day at ACHS begins at 8:00 AM with assemblies on Monday and Friday, a religious worship service on Wednesdays and normal class schedules on Tuesday and Thursday. However, the difficulty of consistent transportation to the school means that a large portion of students arrive well after classes have started. During the research the student body included three “forms” or years of students, depending on the amount of time each student has
attended ACHS (age is not an accurate predictor of form). First form students have just begun their high school experience, while third form students are quite familiar with daily procedures. Within their forms students select a course of study that interests them, the five course options include General Arts, Science, Business, Visual Arts or Agriculture. Regardless of form or course, the typical student has four to five classes per day, and each class lasts approximately 80 minutes, until school ends at 3:00 PM. However, attendance at these classes is minimally regulated. Students often miss classes to eat lunch, answer the call to prayer or socialize. Faculty members have similar issues and often begin classes late or leave them early. As a result, the social environment of ACHS is as important an educational tool as the textbooks and chalkboards.

The ACHS drama club offers an extra-curricular social venue for students. A well-established part of the school community, the club frequently provides entertainment during school assemblies and receives recognition from school administrators for participation in local competitions. The club met on a daily basis throughout the first three weeks of the research and

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<td>Classroom Rehearsal Space</td>
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sporadically thereafter as students prepared for their final exams. Rehearsals occurred following the conclusion of the school day in two primary sites: a classroom, and the school’s assembly hall where major gatherings were held (see Figures 1 and 2). Generally however, I merely observed the proceedings and noted participant behaviors allowing the club members to run their own meetings, with the most experienced and senior members exhibiting the greatest potential to exert authority in the rehearsal process.

I spent 34 days in Ghana, arriving June 5, 2010 and leaving July 8th. During this time period I followed the school schedule closely, arriving before the first bell at 8:00 AM and departing after drama rehearsals had finished around 5:30 PM. Occasionally, school activities and national holidays complicated the work and interview schedule as when students were granted a two day holiday surrounding the July 1st (Republic Day). It is worth noting that during the research period the FIFA 2010 World Cup was held in South Africa. As the Ghanaian team participated and advanced in the competition, many citizens expressed fervent patriotism with flags, jerseys and songs dedicated to the national team. This enthusiasm was on display both in the streets and within the research site itself throughout the research period.

The ACHS environment, and the participants encountered within it, offers an experience similar to many other schools throughout Ghana. The location and relatively palatable expense of ACHS made it a magnet for children from around the area. The federally funded public school remains a major source of education for young Ghanaians whose families often cannot afford the higher tuition fees at private schools. The accessibility of ACHS allowed a diverse mix of students to attend. Students shuttled in to the campus from the surrounding community, the nearby metropolis and, according to an assistant principal, a few made a daily trek of more than 50 kilometers, one-way. As a result, this school includes students from a variety of ethnic and
religious backgrounds. It is more than a neighborhood institution; its multicultural student body offers a more complete reflection of national culture.

**Site and Participant Selection**

Through conversations with a fellow student in my graduate education program at Bowling Green State University I came into contact with teachers at African Costal High School. After ascertaining the traits that make ACHS a typical site, including diversity and size of student population and government approved curriculum—as well as the presence of a drama club to study—the researcher began to pursue permission to work with the school. After several weeks of communication with a variety of teachers and administrators, the headmistress granted permission for the research. In return for access to the site, I volunteered as a supplementary teacher in the literature and grammar classrooms. Additionally, I served as a visiting advisor for the school’s drama club during designated “extra-curricular” periods after the end of classes.

The case study is an in-site study and developed out of a convenience sampling of drama club members who were willing to participate. This sampling method was the most logical method given time constraints. Moreover, given ACHS and its role as a “typical” Ghanaian High School, students who volunteered for the study could be described as “typical” participants in theatre—particularly given the range in their age, and experience with theatre (Creswell, 2008). However, no attempt was made to select any particular kind or variation of student. All interested participants were accepted.

Ultimately the study draws from 20 students involved in the school’s extra-curricular drama club. At a full club meeting shortly after my arrival, I explained this study and the potential for all club members to participate in the study. All who expressed an interest were given a parental consent form (Appendix A) and once the form was returned students joined the
ranks of participants. The roster of participants includes 11 male (see Table I) and 9 female (see Table II) students ranging in age from 15-21 years. In the interests of confidentiality, all names used in this report are pseudonyms. Before any recruitment began, approval of both selection and collection procedures was obtained from Bowling Green State University’s Human Subjects Review Board (HSRB). In accordance with HSRB approval, all students interested in participating were required to return a parental consent form before interviews were scheduled. Additional observational data comes from other students at the research site, however no specific statements made by non-participants have been included with the data.

Table I:

*Male Participant Information*¹

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Form</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Involvement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kofi</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1st Year</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>&lt; 1/2 Year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Max</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1st Year</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>&lt; 1/2 Year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simon</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1st Year</td>
<td>Visual Arts</td>
<td>&lt; 1/2 Year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrew</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>3rd Year</td>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>&lt; 1/2 Year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jack</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1st Year</td>
<td>General Arts</td>
<td>1/2-1 Year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>1/2-1 Year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daniel</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2nd Year</td>
<td>Visual Arts</td>
<td>1-2 Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1st Year</td>
<td>General Arts</td>
<td>2-3 Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>3rd Year</td>
<td>General Arts</td>
<td>2-3 Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>3rd Year</td>
<td>General Arts</td>
<td>2-3 Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3rd Year</td>
<td>General Arts</td>
<td>3+ Years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹ As part of the HSRB approval, the names of all participants (male and female) have been replaced with pseudonyms. These pseudonyms reflect the cultural heritage originally assigned by each student’s parents.
Data Collection Process

In an effort to avoid conflicts with the school calendar, and in accordance with the HSRB proposal, interviews were scheduled during non-class hours (mostly recesses and after school had ended) and conducted in an open-air setting within view of faculty members. During these interviews students were introduced to a personal assent form (see Appendix B) and offered the opportunity to ask further questions and to withdraw from the study at any time and for any reason. All interviews were audio recorded and lasted an average of 27 minutes. At the start of each interview, students were asked questions regarding age and years of involvement in dramatic activities. In an effort to facilitate the discussion, open-ended questions were used to draw out personal reflections about the theme of cultural identity.

Table II:

Female Participant Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Form</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Involvement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jennifer</td>
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<td>1st Year</td>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>&lt; 1/2 Year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elizabeth</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1st Year</td>
<td>Visual Arts</td>
<td>1/2-1 Year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portia</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1st Year</td>
<td>Visual Arts</td>
<td>1/2-1 Year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rose</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1st Year</td>
<td>Visual Arts</td>
<td>1/2-1 Year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linda</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>1-2 Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allison</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2nd Year</td>
<td>General Arts</td>
<td>1-2 Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kate</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3rd Year</td>
<td>General Arts</td>
<td>2-3 Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faith</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>2nd Year</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>3+ Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patricia</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>3rd Year</td>
<td>General Arts</td>
<td>3+ Years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I transcribed the interviews within a day or two and took care to reproduce the participants’ statements verbatim, including pauses, laughter, stammers and grammatical mistakes. Students were then provided with a transcript and invited to review and correct any mistakes or misinterpretations. Following a brief meeting with the researcher, students were advised to read over their interview transcripts and to redact and amend their statements where they felt it necessary so that all answers accurately reflected their intended meaning. Prior to leaving the country 65% (n=13) of the member checks had been returned. Of the member-checked transcripts, 85% (n=11) included minor changes (such as grammatical corrections and the removal of vocal stutters and stammers), while the remaining transcripts (n=2) included more substantive changes (such as appended remarks to offer greater depth of commentary while not reversing the primary meaning of any particular answer). I made all desired changes. Those who had not returned member checks were invited to mail them to me in America at my own expense, but have not arrived prior to this writing. For consistency, I have corrected grammatical mistakes and vocal stammers similar to student suggestions on non-member checked interviews.

Additional data were collected via observations of classes, daily activities and drama rehearsals. Each of these activities was recorded in the researcher’s personal journal, with time markings to denote the flow of action during any given event. To further facilitate reflection, video footage was captured and used as a reference point to compliment observation practices. Documents relating to the drama club and photographs of other artifacts including costumes, props, design sketches and textbooks were taken for later reference.

**Data Analysis**

The analysis process began with a coding of transcripts by hand. This process allowed me to become intimately familiar with the words of the participants and to develop a preliminary set
of in vivo codes founded on the words and phrases used by the students themselves. Transcripts and observational notes were then given a second coding check to ensure accuracy in analysis by labeling all transcripts through the Text Analysis Markup System (TAMS, version 4.01b2h for Macintosh computers). The TAMS system allowed for the compilation of a research database providing easier access to commonly occurring codes throughout the data.

Other forms of data, including audio-visual materials and documents acquired within the case site, were analyzed and labeled with codes developed from the transcript coding process. Generally, these data sources were used to complement conclusions gleaned from transcripts, rather than to serve as the foundation for separate conclusions about the case. Ultimately, a number of specific themes emerged. This study will organize these themes in relationship to three primary themes that describe the role of the ACHS drama club as a site for cultural exploration. Specifically, the study will examine the drama club as a forum for discussing diversity, a crucible for constructing new culture and a laboratory to experience and affirm long-standing traditions.

**Validity**

Maxwell (2005) identifies a host of specific threats to validity, several of which were carefully considered in the development of this thesis. Researcher influence on the setting or individuals studied, a phenomenon generally known as “reactivity” (Maxwell, 2005, p. 108), was a major concern in conducting the research. As a volunteer teacher, I stood in a position of some authority over the participants and might, therefore, imply a tacit expectation for one particular answer during the course of the interview. Additionally, I conducted my work as a man in a patriarchal society, a European-American in a post-colonial society and a publicly acknowledged guest in a cultural community that prides itself on hospitality. As a result of these differences
participants might well have been expected to say what they thought was expected, rather than what they genuinely felt.

However, my rapport and familiarity with the participants allowed for an easier exchange of opinions and a wider-range of responses. Through frequent engagement inside the classroom and outside of it, I strived to become a more approachable figure who was interested in maintaining a dialogue with students rather than creating a respectful distance. This rapport mirrored the relationship between drama club members and the club’s faculty advisor, yet stood in contrast to most ACHS teachers, who remained authoritarian or aloof. Ultimately, my the impact on the data is difficult to gauge, in part because any researcher would have some impact on responses and because no interviews were conducted without me. Nevertheless, I took several precautions to minimize the influence on participant responses by establishing a specific space, time and protocol for interviews. The separation of activities on school grounds helped to delineate between my role as an authority figure and my role as a visiting researcher.

Another primary concern for validity is language. While English is the official language of Ghana, and all students are required to study and speak the language at ACHS, many students struggled to express their thoughts in English and asked for clarification in the wording of questions. Though they expressed little difficulty with comprehending and writing in English, they were less comfortable with conversational skills.

In response to these challenges, I simplified and reframed questions to reflect the participants’ comfort with English (see Appendix C) and offered frequent encouragement and validation of student responses. Grammatical mistakes in participants verbal English were ignored during the interview. As a result, the interviews proceeded in the style of a conversation rather than didactically. In addition, participants performed their own member checks (see
above). This activity harnessed student confidence in written English, and allowed them to repair linguistic foibles more completely on paper than they could in verbal conversation.

**Limitations**

The primary limitation in this study lies in the absence of a control group for comparison. The brief tenure of the research period and immersion in the drama club forced me to concentrate on data drawn from interviews with club members. Conducting similar interviews with students who were not part of the drama club and incorporating more observations of the general school day into the data set could have provided a population to compare with club members.

Due to these conditions, I have cast this research as an examination of how participation in a typical drama club can guide identity development in Ghana, rather than examination of identity development in Ghana generally. The majority of the data refer to experiences within the club, rehearsal practices, memories of performances and the like. As a result this report serves as a valuable first step in considering how involvement in theatre influences one group of typical young Ghanaians. If the results prove significant it may also guide research into how theatre influences young adults throughout the world and refocus debates about arts in education.

Finally, the use of a convenience sample may also limit this study’s efficacy. Because of this sampling technique, Creswell (2008) notes, “the researcher cannot say with confidence that the individuals are representative of the population” (p. 155). However, given the demographics of participants as shown in Tables I and II, I would argue that the convenience sample did elicit a wide range of ages and experience levels, as well as a close balance in terms of gender. Since this report does not intend to address issues of young Ghanaians comprehensively, it is adequate to say that this diverse sampling represents the research’s target population: the ACHS Drama Club.
CHAPTER IV: DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

Analysis of the various data compiled through research suggests three ways that student participation in drama may influence cultural identity. To explain these possible influences I analyze the ACHS drama club, as a typical case study, with reference to both participant responses and literature related to this research. Ultimately, this research concludes that participation in drama among Ghanaian teenagers may influence cultural identity by providing young people with a laboratory to experience and affirm long-standing traditions, a forum for discussing diversity, and a crucible for constructing a new culture.

Laboratory to Experience and Affirm Long-Standing Traditions

The ACHS Drama Club guides participant cultural identity development by allowing students to experience and affirm long-standing traditions in Ghanaian culture. Throughout the interviews and observations that comprise this research, participants consistently voiced a desire to uphold Ghanaian cultural practices. For many students, the drama club represents an opportunity to participate in a traditional culture often ignored by modern society. Club members participate and engage with local traditions through three general club activities: the incorporation of traditional customs and costumes into performances, thematic devotion to Ghanaian ideologies (including “the Spirit of Akwaaba” and “Pan-Africanism”), and the fundamental communication skills of speech and gestures.

Incorporation of Traditional Customs and Costumes

In a modern, globalizing society, Ghanaian culture is changing rapidly; too rapidly for an older generation of Ghanaians and even some members of the younger generation. As Ghana becomes more modern and deeply engaged with the wider world, many members of society long for the way things were in the past, and to this end, the drama club offers the opportunity to
envelop one’s self in the familiar features of traditional customs. This engagement with aspects of local heritage also furthers the analysis of how “roles” within the club relate to the development of identity.

One of the most affecting descriptions of this alienating change of the modern world comes from John, a member of the club with more than three years of experience, who is interested in engaging with the wider world, but is more interested in preserving traditions he hopes to become a part of:

Personally, I haven’t had contact with my own people, I’ve never been to my home town, seriously.... I’m in Accra here [laughs], [my hometown is] just somewhere near[by], but my parents wouldn’t even send me there, or maybe go and see other things. So with that...space within me and my culture [tsk] I sometimes feel a bit sorry for my own self. Ohh, when will I also go to my hometown’s festival and see how they do stuff like that. I’ve never seen some--the only thing is my relatives who go and come and then they’ll tell me: ‘oh, this year’s festival was very very brilliant’ and all that. And any time they come and tell me I was like: ‘Oh! So, when will I also have the chance to go and look at it myself and see that ‘oh yeah, this is my home town and this is the way they are celebrating their festival’.

In need of a connection to his traditional culture, John found participation in the drama club--regardless of his responsibilities in any one production--to be a wonderful way of filling a gap in his experiences. John’s words confirm Sefa Dei’s (2005) analysis of post-independence Ghana as an environment that denies heterogeneity in favor of an amalgamated whole. It also suggests that the singularization of culture as described by Thomas (1994) may be most common in Accra with its fusion of cultures. In this homogenized metropolis it seems that a community has coalesced around shared identity. However, emphasizing a shared identity may unintentionally diminish individual cultural traits to the detriment of minority cultures. Yet, rather than adopt a cosmopolitan Ghanaian culture built on the histories of many rather than a specific personal heritage, John hoped to connect with familial customs through the performances of a local festival. Once he established a connection with his culture, John hoped to share that culture with
others like him through theatre. He expressed the power of theatre to promote culture by saying, “seriously, you get to educate the people about what is in the society, what you have as a people.... So it’s a way of even advertising, yeah, is that the word, advertising the culture.”

Similarly Robert, another club member with three years of experience, considers drama to be a crucial element of his cultural life. While he acknowledged the appeal of foreign cultures, he felt that it was important to be Ghanaian first and foremost: “Culture is.... what I’m concerned of.... African [plays] normally put me as an elder at a palace. And I’m always defending the culture of Africa. That’s what I’m proud of. But even though I can play any role at all, my best role is a traditional and a cultural subject, that is where I want to be.” Robert’s experiences connect to Minette Mans’ (2000) theory that “policies in Africa tend to emphasize culture, heritage and national pride, from which flow the arts that embody particular cultural practices” (p. 9). Robert’s pride in his culture allowed him to create art that showcased a strident defense of that culture through his role as one of the club’s top actors. The more practice he had playing a cultural defender, the more passionate he became. Even though the world kept changing, Robert maintained that “we [Ghanaians] love our culture. [I]t is part of us. Even though we may copy other peoples, we have to value what we have first.”

While Robert and John both addressed the broad issues of defending traditional customs in productions generally, one specific element of productions that elicited rich data is the costuming and fabric. This often-overlooked element of school plays was identified as an important representation of cultural heritage. A significant majority of participants referenced fabric and clothing when describing elements of Ghanaian cultural identity. While participants acknowledged that a variety of clothes from the different ethnic groups in Ghana have cultural significance, kente cloth was frequently identified as an exemplar of Ghanaian culture and a
contribution to world art forms. “Ranging from ten to twelve feet in length and five to six feet in width, [kente] cloths are wrapped around men’s bodies,” while women wear smaller variations of the same material as skirts or shawls (Magee, 2005, p. 593). The use of this fabric as part of costuming was vital to the ACHS Drama Club since most of their plays evolved from local culture, and all club members wanted to produce high caliber theatre.

Patricia, a student with more than two years experience, noted that, “unless we get the exact costume written in the play...it will make the play very low.” All club members, from actors and writers to technicians and designers knew the importance of the kente cloth; they appreciated the meaningful designs and precise message of the fabric. As a result, failure to present an appropriate costume, or accurate piece of fabric would have been a disservice to the local culture and detracted from the production’s quality. At the same time, students were careful to respect the diverse range of ethnic groups in Ghana and tried to procure costumes that reflected each group’s heritage.

Clearly for these participants, obtaining culturally appropriate costumes (like kente cloth) was not just a production necessity, but also a matter of personal cultural pride, especially for the students who volunteered to help the technical side of production. The club’s policy for an individual’s role in productions is different from traditional extra-curricular clubs in the United States. While many American high schools cast one set of students to act and ask another to perform technical functions, within the ACHS club all students prepare to perform all roles. Students collaborate on the writing of scripts, accepting the input of veteran and novice members alike. During rehearsals, a few long-time performers lead the instruction of blocking, but newer performers can raise opinions. Should an actor miss rehearsal, any club member can be called on to perform the part.
The same holds for technicians, but while many members contribute to the technical elements of a production; one student made it a major focus of his interview. Daniel, a Visual Arts student with two years of experience, proudly announced: “I do all the dresses they’ve been wearing. I’ve been doing them, all the items they’re wearing I do them....I draw them--the chief, fetish priest everything, all the designs they do. I just go home, sit down, watch the old movies and get something to draw. Sit down, and see what I can do.”

As a Visual Arts student, Daniel’s experience with textiles like kente and others is invaluable. He not only designs all elements of the costumes (see Figure 3), but uses his own resources to create a variety of props (see Figure 4). By participating in a vocational course, he develops his skills as a costume designer and creator, and occasionally uses his school day to benefit the club. But Daniel was not alone in this regard. Several other club members participated in the Visual Arts course and aspired to improve productions in the same way Daniel does. For instance, Rose, a student in her first year with the club, admitted during her interview that she hoped to become a costume designer for the club. Taking great pride in a potential combination of her preferred pastimes, she said, “I think, if I’m involved and I have my own job as a fashion designer...I can supply dresses and other stuff, and at the same time I’ll be in it, so I

Figure 3
Costume Designs by Daniel

Figure 4
Leather Props Created by Daniel
can design my own dress and use it to act at the same time.” For Rose, the drama club provided an opportunity to combine two passions, and thereby present her creative and cultural identity twice over: as an actress and a designer.

The opportunity to demonstrate cultural pride through the clothes that club members wear and see may translate into modes of dress in daily life. While many demonstrate this pride through kente cloth or patterns, it is important to note that Ghana’s various ethnic groups have their own unique clothes as well. For Faith, who has more than three years experience in drama, the cultural reverence for each tribe shown through the dress of various faculty members offers inspiration for the students to express their own local culture:

On Fridays most of the teachers wear their tribe[‘s] dress or something like their local dress. Something like, the Akan women here put on the sole cloth and it is kaba and sleeve, with one full yard of cloth. And the Northerners in the school put on batakali. And the Gas in the school, some of the women also put on jumpa. Every Friday, all the workers dress local.... You dress where you come from, that’s how you dress.... I like that very much.

In this case, the clothes worn by faculty members make a two-fold statement. First, the tribal variations in clothes, from kente to batakali, differentiate contemporary cultural identity from what Thomas (1994) called a “singularized” identity. Second, because the teachers wore their own clothes and respected the dress of others, they also avoided ascribing a “visible and transparent mark of power” (p.116) that Bhabha identified as a colonial exercise in discrimination. Through this, the local or ethnic culture differs from a broader national culture; but exists in harmony within a pluralistic sense of “Ghanaian” dress. As the teachers enjoyed special occasion attire that reflected their heritage, the students did the same. Each Friday, and during special school celebrations, students at ACHS wore “informal” uniforms, abandoning the starched white shirts and khaki shorts for a vibrantly designed pink shirt or dress with the school
crest dotting the material. This fabric, unlike the starched clothing of the colonizers, incorporated a more traditional “Ghanaian” design that students wore and maintained with immense pride.

The special or ceremonial clothing means a great deal, both on stage and in public, which may explain why the students take it so seriously. They appreciate the opportunity to enjoy the moment and reassert the traditional over the westernized. This expands on Magee’s (2005) suggestion of kente cloth as a symbol of cultural identity, by offering a wide array of traditionally styled clothes as an expression of identity. As Robert stated, “even though we wear the white’s suit and other things [o]n some occasions, you see us putting on our beautiful and colorful kente cloth. Yes, so that shows how we love our culture.” This analysis shows that students in the drama club can explore their cultural identities through production roles as both actors and technicians by designing and wearing traditional clothing.

**Thematic Devotion: The Spirit of Akwaaba & Pan-Africanism**

In demonstrating appreciation of their society, students looked beyond the material elements of clothes to the ideas that have defined Ghana for centuries. They acknowledged, respected, and adhered to two fundamental beliefs in Ghanaian culture: the “Spirit of Akwaaba” and Pan-Africanism, frequently using these beliefs to guide the development of their productions and critical engagement with the texts they perform.

The term “Spirit of Akwaaba” derives from the Asante-Twi word for “Welcome” and has come to refer generally to a sense of hospitality that Ghanaians demonstrate to all strangers. As a popular Ghanaian proverb puts it: “however big a stranger’s eyes, he cannot see enough with them” (Akrofi, 1958, p. 83). As a result, Ghanaians frequently guide and assist those who are unfamiliar with their surroundings. Participants readily acknowledged how these beliefs reflect their own cultural identities and almost laughingly referred to the extreme ways that this attitude
can present itself. For Simon, who has less than one year experience, this meant that:

“Ghanaians, we are hospitality. Yeah. We treat outsiders more than we treat ourselves.”

According to Jennifer, a student with less than one year of experience, “a Ghanaian can waste his or her whole time just to show someone a direction to a place. That is a typical Ghanaian behavior. We are hospitable.” And even though there may have been a slight hint of exasperation in her voice, Jennifer went on to admit that she demonstrated the same Akwaaba spirit because “I just feel like helping people in need, that’s all.”

In averring the importance of the Spirit of Akwaaba to Ghanaian identity, Rose provided a small anecdote to illustrate the danger of shunning those who otherwise welcome you. As she explained it, a friend of hers had expressed general disdain for people who greeted her as she went to school:

When she [saw] them she [did] not greet them and she [felt that] what she wants to do is what she will do. So, she goes and come[s] back. And there was a day that, she was coming from school and [pause] she was hurt. She...fell down and she was hurt. And since she’s not cooperating with the environment...no one, go near to her and say, “oh what happened?” [sic] They were all surrounding and looking at her, instead of helping her.

This story indicates that once the kindness of strangers is abandoned, all kindness is forfeited.

Or, as the traditional proverb would put it: “if the stranger despises his hosts, they also despise him” (Akrofi, 1958, p. 82).

During the observation portions of the research process, evidence of the spirit of Akwaaba appeared in actions of the students, faculty, administrators and club members. Several teachers and students offered to translate for me whenever necessary. Students carried bowls of soup into the staff dining room, without prompting and despite my attempts to be self-sufficient. Guest speakers at assemblies and special occasions frequently complimented the hospitality of
ACHS faculty, staff and students. While some might see a connection between these displays of politesse and the deferential performances of Empire Day highlighted by Oliver and Atmore (1994), it is worth noting that--unlike the colonial distinctions between rulers and ruled--the spirit of Akwaaba at ACHS assumes reciprocation. In this manner, the guest expresses gratitude to their host and promises to provide the same consideration when their host visits them. While colonial authorities easily abused this custom without offering kindness in return, in contemporary society government officials and foreign guests frequently express gratitude and promise to repay the hospitality in kind.

The daily habits of the drama club further demonstrated the importance of hospitality in keeping with the proverb: “good fellowship is sharing good things with your friends” (Akrofi, 1958, p. 65). During one rehearsal observation, two young women asked to join the club and were accepted on the spot. The new members’ fellowship with the club was confirmed by a blessing shared by the club advisor, who announced: “in drama club we are all the same...you are welcome.” Similarly, in a story representative of many others, Faith gave the following example:

One day, after [school] I heard them performing. Somewhere, the leader was saying, “freeze!”...I wanted to know what was it...I decided to go and watch what they were doing. And when I got there I was very impressed. I talked to one of the executives, and he told me that, if I feel like joining, I can come and join, since it is a club. So I got the forms.... I filled the forms in full, and that was it.

The ease with which individuals joined the drama club appears to be an asset for the group. By remaining open and hospitable to prospective members, audiences and visiting researchers like myself, they enhance the profile and reputation of the club, thereby encouraging others to join, watch or admire their work. Moreover, by demonstrating the hospitality and kindness of “the Spirit of Akwaaba” suggested by proverbs and modeled by teachers, students can showcase the development of their Ghanaian identities.
The club even appeared to refer to the spirit of Akwaaba obliquely in a short skit prepared for the Student Fanfare, a combination talent show and dance specially organized for the students on a Saturday. In one of the three scenarios performed by the drama club, a young man attempts to trick his girlfriend into physical displays of affection by nearly pouncing on her as soon as she enters his home, then using deception in an effort to achieve his ends. With no greeting, no consideration, no offer of hospitality, and despite his best efforts at trickery, the boy ends up getting a sharp slap in the face. Though the subject matter is broadly comic, the subtle moral of hospitality and consideration for others is present and tangible. Through this text, created and performed by the club, students can develop a cultural identity that reflects the cultural belief in the Spirit of Akwaaba.

In addition to the Spirit of Akwaaba, participants also made similar references to a long-standing Ghanaian aspiration: Pan-Africanism, an ideal popularized by Ghana’s first president, Kwame Nkrumah. As David Francis (2006) notes, “before Nkrumah’s prominence, Pan-Africanism had been developed into a coherent ideological perspective under the intellectual guidance of [W.E.B.] DuBois and [George] Padmore who advocated African unity as a political response to racial oppression and colonial domination” (p. 16). Nkrumah’s election to lead Sub-Saharan Africa’s first independent state made Ghana a focal point of spreading Pan-Africanism throughout the entire continent. And while the diverse interests and challenges of Africa’s many states have forced contemporary leaders to abandon formal political unification, the ideology of Pan-Africanism still exists in a spirit of camaraderie and brotherhood among African people.

To this end, participants often used “Ghanaian” and “African” interchangeably. Students evinced pride while saying both “I am a Ghanaian” and “I am an African.” Reflecting on their identities through these terms students showed their positive associations with both terms.
Students often beamed with pride in portraying Ghana as a model for other African nations, and a state that will happily use the Spirit of Akwaaba to welcome those from throughout the continent. In a statement similar to others, Daniel stated, “Ghana is also one of the--one of the countries every African country want[s] to come to. Because we are very good at embracing all African countries.” This sense of fellowship seemed more palpable throughout the country within the context of the World Cup, an event that caused many citizens to cheer passionately for every continental representative’s team.

The participants’ perception of unity between people throughout Africa seems closely related to the fervency of their religious beliefs. Though most participants profess to live in accordance with Christian teaching, male students alluded to the relevance of specific religious teachings to their African cultural identity, while female students, did not. Several of the lessons described by participants referenced the importance of unity among people throughout Africa and the world: “We, those that [are] in Ghana, and those that [are] in Africa, we see ourselves as all people created by God, all creatures created by God” (Robert); “The Bible says that we’re all the same, because our almighty God created us the same as he is, and we are all the same” (Jack, less than one year experience); “In churches they teach more about coming together, becoming one” (Kofi, less than one year experience).

This ardent religiosity, offers an interesting example of how a once alien cultural expression has become deeply ingrained in cultural identities. As noted in Chapter II, the prevalence of missionary schools in the early 20th century led to more educated native Ghanaians who could advance in colonial society (Oliver & Atmore, 1994). While some missionary-educated Ghanaians incited the movement for independence, it seems that even more passed down the religious teachings they had encountered at the school. As a result, the Christian
faith has become such an entrenched part of contemporary society, that several participants used religious teachings to justify this aspect of their Ghanaian cultural identity.

Given the frequent references to unity in general and Pan-Africanism in particular, it is unsurprising that the club advocates for social cohesion in their performances. In addition to instructive plays performed for competitions (described in greater detail below), students also have a legacy of referring to historical precedent to further the Pan-African principles of early Ghana. To this end, Jennifer offered a hypothetical play for production:

If we are having a play about the princess who suffered for the independence of this country. Then [the audience will] see the way they were treated, and some of them died. I think [the audience] will feel the pain, and then help develop [the country]. They will now bring back what [others have] tried building up.

From this it seems that students wished to use the texts they perform to reflect the traditions that contribute to their cultural identity.

In dealing with both Pan-Africanism and the Spirit of Akwaaba, the ACHS Drama Club appears to confirm members’ long held cultural beliefs and offers an avenue for spreading the ideas throughout the Ghanaian populace. As Simon said, “in Ghana, we live together as one, yeah. [Pause]...an example is, a broom. When a broom is together it cannot be easily broken, but when you take one [straw], you can easily break it. So...Ghanaians, when we live together as one, we can achieve much success.” As this section indicates, club members can develop their cultural identity through drama by experimenting with local ideologies and using those same ideologies to craft texts for performances.

Speech and Gestures: On Stage and During Interviews

Simon’s broom metaphor offers a fine example of the value that language has within Ghanaian culture. The importance of linguistic fluency throughout the country demonstrates
itself in the kinds of scripts that participants enjoy performing, the reason many cite for joining and the ways that they corrected their own transcripts. Additionally, we should consider the ways students use gestures and movement on stage to complement oral language. Through these elements we can also establish a better understanding of how texts may guide identity development and how participation in drama influences the description of identity during interviews.

During interviews, most students demonstrated a pronounced preference for scripts that directly address African issues (either through African playwrights or settings). However, the affection students feel for these texts goes beyond the basic plot features of the script, and directly address the ways in which the script is created. A vast majority of students found the texts written through the club to be more desirable than previously scripted plays. These texts developed from collaborative brainstorming sessions and careful revision that accepts input from all club members. While they are often called scripts, they also encourage improvisation by those who act in the scenarios.

The appreciation of these texts affirms a long-standing cultural belief in the importance of linguistic creativity, a belief that clearly assists in the development of cultural identity. While students periodically displayed this creativity in interviews (by inventing metaphors and quoting proverbs), they frequently discussed how club-created texts help to develop such imaginative skills with language. This is a sentiment shared by a wide range of students. Allison, who has slightly less than two years of experience, said, “the improvised [script] gives you the potential to talk or to act well or to put in more words that will make it unique. Also, here you become more creative in order to put ideas together.” The veteran male actor David, with almost three years of experience, supported this, saying, “When it’s [already] script[ed] it for you, [the writers
and directors] are always threatening you to do this. But when you are free to be doing things out of your creativity you feel comfortable to do it, and it also makes it much easier.”

Given the opportunity to express their own opinions and experiences with culture to other Ghanaians through their performances, students at ACHS not only rose to the occasion, but thrived as evidenced by the club’s success at competitions. According to John, the club’s most experienced performer and writer, other benefits of club-texts emerged as well. “The one we compose ourselves helps us to be creative. You see, it helps you to create your own words and then say whatever you like at your own...will. So that’s what I like...improvising and then bringing out more words. It helps your vocabulary.” As John suggested, creating scripts together may enable students to improve other aspects of their education as well, offering skills in composition, creativity and vocabulary that can be applied to classroom discussions or essays.

Beyond the educational benefits, the creation of scripts clearly relates to an individual’s cultural identity development. As documented by a number of scholars including Cole (2001), Ansah-Koi (2006) and Yarrow (2008), an individual’s ability to produce witty or poetic speech has long been an admired trait among Ghanaians. The importance of court poets and oral story telling to the country’s cultural traditions demonstrates how much speaking skills matter in Ghana. By identifying the writing of texts and the joy of improvisation in theatre, participants in this research clearly showed that they hope to adopt this long-standing cultural value as their own. This analysis of linguistic creativity among club members, as well as the importance of authenticity in costuming plays and the incorporation of ideological themes (like Pan-Africanism and the Spirit of Akwaaba) indicates that the texts students create and perform in their theatrical group enhance cultural identity development by providing a practical opportunity to exhibit elements of their culture with the same freedom and creativity that their forbearers enjoyed.
Now that the importance of texts has been clearly established, we should also consider the ways that participation in drama helps participants to describe their identities. First, the combination of freeform practice with language through improvisation and public success led to greater confidence for students, many of whom expressed a personal need for it. Of all participants, 75% (n=15) identified shyness and/or fear as primary character traits prior to their involvement of drama. This figure includes several third form students who have participated in the drama club since their arrival at ACHS and now serve as role models to younger students. Of particular note is Kate, who has slightly more than two years of experience and who described her experience as follows:

I was a shy person. I [couldn’t] sit here and talk to you like I’m talking now. But since I came to drama--drama is about expressing yourself through acting. And [in] acting you have to talk and--you have to talk to people, so that changed me from being a shy person to someone who...can express herself, so it has really helped me...I can make people happy and at the same time I can make you cry, through my action[s] and other things. It has really changed me because I was a shy person, I couldn’t talk in public, but now I can stand in front of the whole school and talk.

During the research period, Kate and other individuals who identified themselves as initially shy received awards for their acting, had letters to the editor published in prominent newspapers, and eagerly performed in front of their peers during the Student Fanfare, both as part of the drama club and independently from it. The common refrain among participants on this subject suggests that the drama club’s methods offer a viable method to overcoming timidity and building confidence among teenagers.

Furthermore, consider how the corrections made by students on their interview transcripts suggest awareness of linguistic fluency and intent to express one’s self clearly. As noted in the methodology section, students avoided making large-scale changes to their commentary, but took great care to remove stutters, stammers and grammatical flaws. Several students spoke to
the researcher directly, inquiring why such vocal pauses were included in the transcripts. Each of these students specifically asked for their verbal mannerisms to be eliminated. The personal sentiment expressed by participants suggests that they believe clarity of expression to be extremely important and demonstrates how thoroughly this feature of cultural identity has been ingrained into these young performers. Their practice with the drama club may have led them to not only value such expressions, but to revise their interview transcripts into a more fluent, confident dialogue.

Finally, nonverbal expressions observed in participants also demonstrate the continued importance of traditional values that reflect identity development. Throughout rehearsal observations, the researcher documented the movements of actors. Student-directors and the club advisor frequently designed these movements to give a sense of symmetry to the proceedings. During scenes of conflict, the stage would often be asymmetrical, with bunches of students in conflict on one side, or the other. The reasoning for this stylistic habit remained unclear until the club advisor halted a scene to complain that: “the calabash will turn over.”

In explaining his meaning he pointed out that any student who had used a traditional serving vessel (calabash) knows that the rounded bowl will spill its contents if too much weight rests on one side of it. In the same way, having too many actors on one side of the stage would create a sense of imbalance. This asymmetry, though appropriate for scenes of intense conflict, contradicted the tone of scenes where order reigned. This metaphor was easily grasped by performers and clearly implemented by veteran performers on a regular basis. In doing so, club leaders made the rehearsal process easier for new participants and used language that was culturally significant, thereby increasing exposure to local traditions and furthering the development of cultural identity.
In a similar case, during the interview process students frequently used their hands to separate concepts and behaviors that were either beneficial or harmful to society. When doing so, students gestured with their right hand or arm to emphasize what they perceived as culturally beneficial, and their left hand or arm to emphasize the harmful elements of culture. Additionally, participants frequently stopped their left hand mid-gesture and made the same point again with their right. These behaviors affirm a long-standing cultural belief that the right hand should be kept clean, while the left is used for unclean tasks. Giving prominence to the right hand and minimizing the left shows how students remained culturally committed to their long-standing traditions. These features of a cultural identity have become so habitual that students demonstrated them even during conversations with a foreign researcher.

This sub-section’s analysis indicates that participation in drama can have a variety of effects on the way an individual describes their identity, but does not provide one absolute effect. It is difficult to know precisely which elements of the identity description developed out of participation in the drama club and which arose from long-standing cultural traditions. However, the precision with which students emphasized accuracy in expression (as evidenced by member checks that sought to eradicate grammatical errors and stammers) and strove to use culturally appropriate hand gestures suggests that participation in drama might serve to encourage a description of identity that is itself a demonstration of cultural identity. Ultimately, it seems that drama influences the way students report their cultural identity by helping to develop confidence among club members. Despite frequent reports of past shyness, the majority of club members volunteered to participate in interviews. Many club members gained a confidence from performance that had not developed from other cultural outlets, and this confidence shows in the clarity and honesty of their answers to questions of cultural identity.
Thus far we have seen how cultural identity develops within the “laboratory” of the drama club. Through the dedicated incorporation of traditional customs, costumes and ideologies into performances students establish a method of experiencing culture through the art they make. Moreover, as students improve their confidence and fluency in speech and gestures, they reify a culturally familiar method of self-expression that is deeply embedded within Ghanaian identity. As artists in their laboratory, students develop their cultural identity by experiencing and affirming long-standing cultural traditions.

**Forum for Discussing Diversity**

In addition to allowing individuals the freedom to experiment and affirm cultural traditions, the drama club further guides participant cultural identity development by offering a forum to discuss Ghanaian cultural diversity with peers. In examining this forum, this section focuses on three aspects of education that influence the discussion: the cultural dialogue of the official classroom, the practical learning of cultures in rehearsal, and the teaching opportunities of theatrical competitions.

**Cultural Dialogue of the Official Classroom**

While the drama club offers a specific site for identity development, it also works in a close relationship with the official, government-sanctioned classroom. However, the differences between these settings require a detailed examination of the official classroom in order to clarify the different functions performed by formal education and drama in developing cultural identity.

As a public high school, ACHS draws significant funding from the national and regional government offices to pay for teachers, equipment and textbooks. This external source of funding minimizes the school fees and makes ACHS a magnet for students from throughout the Greater Accra region. Though not all ACHS students are drama club members, all club members
participate in the required ACHS core classes including English Language, Mathematics and Social Studies. During the course of interviews, students frequently identified the Social Studies classroom as a setting of cultural identity development. Like their peers across the country, students receive the same government sanctioned textbook and follow the contents of that book throughout their high school education. This manner of learning culture relates clearly to the goal of “national cohesion” in identity described by Osei (2009), thereby enhancing a cohesive “Ghanaian” identity to unite diverse citizens, just as President Kwame Nkrumah hoped.

After describing what they believed to be the distinctive features of Ghanaian culture and national identity, participants were asked: “What experiences have led you to this belief?” During their responses, seven students pointed directly to their educational careers as a foundation for their understanding of what it meant to be Ghanaian, with specific attention paid to their Social Studies curriculum, compared with only three who immediately identified drama as a basis for their cultural awareness. Throughout their responses students regularly referenced lessons from the Social Studies course and the textbook *Practical Social Studies* by Adu-Yeboah and Obiri-Yeboah (2008).

In his interview, Andrew, who had just started with the club, notes: “I remember in JSS--junior high school--we were taught these culture, cultural stuffs. Yeah, the ethnic groups in Ghana and the elements of their culture their festivals and that stuff.” This assessment of cultural instruction in the Social Studies classroom is confirmed by Kate, “Social studies...teaches us about culture. [W]hat our forefathers practiced and what actually came out of it, and what bad effects and the good effects also. And it helps you to know which culture is good and which culture is not good.” After distinguishing the two kinds of culture, she enumerated a number of
cultural aspects addressed in the government’s Social Studies curriculum including naming rituals, language, food and clothing.

But as Kate suggested, the course curriculum specifically identifies which elements of cultural traditions are beneficial to Ghana, and which ought to be ceased for the benefit of the nation in the future. The chapter, entitled “Socio-Cultural Practices”, summarizes some of these traditions:

Culture is dynamic, that is, it changes over time to suit new challenges in the lives of people. There is the need to do away with outmoded customs such as those discussed--Female Genital Mutilation, virgin cults, widowhood rites, ritual murder, etc. These cultural practices do not help in the development of a nation (Adu-Yeboah & Obiri-Yeboah, p.69, 2008).

The lesson regarding passé elements of culture has been well learned by students. Periodically, during interviews, students specifically mentioned negative practices that they wished to see curbed within their country. Asked if there are particular beliefs or customs that are common among Ghanaians, James, a student with almost one year of experience, said:

“Ghanaians...are too superstitious. There are some things that when they happen, they are natural and are bound to happen but we Ghanaians sometimes, when we see those things we think other people did it, or it was by magic or other things. It’s not very good.” Meanwhile, Faith described a specific belief that bothered her:

It’s not everything that you should keep. Something like a superstitious belief that if you are birthing and you talk your mother will die. I can’t keep that. No. Science explains it as: so that the soap...will not get into your mouth. But the elderly people tell you that if you are birthing and you are talking and singing your mother will die, just to frighten you from talking whilst birthing. Yeah, something like that I can’t keep it. I would just tell you, if you are birthing, this does this, so you’ll not do it.

When asked about commonly held Ghanaian beliefs, both Faith and James highlighted problematic beliefs that are not in the textbook, but are perceived as antiquated customs that may stigmatize Ghana in the eyes of others. The embarrassment expressed in these answers suggests
that each student seems to have internalized the discussion of the positive and the negative elements of cultural heritage. Participants also used their understanding to define what culture is and what it ought to be in Ghana.

It is through these statements that we can see the results of the “culture studies” courses described by Flolu (2000). Since most of the participants in this study have attended Ghanaian schools since the beginning of the 21st century, each of them has come into contact with some form of the courses that help students “be in tune with a culture which is Ghanaian and can stand the test of time” (p. 26) at some point in their schooling. The formalized instruction found in a high school or junior high school Social Studies class offers a structured, academic arena for the lessons on cultural festivals and rites of passage. That these lessons were the first traditional cultural experiences identified by several participants suggest that the “cultural studies” courses have been successful in promoting the government’s view of Ghanaian culture. Moreover, it further suggests that students may develop a cultural identity that conforms to the lessons espoused by the national textbook.

The development of an identity that adheres to curricular definitions reappears throughout student answers to the question of “What does it mean to be a Ghanaian?” This open-ended question was designed to elicit not only student opinion, but also, to ascertain which experiences might influence answers. In several instances, students framed their response to this question through the legal definitions of citizenship, gleaned from their Social Studies course.

For example, Allison noted the importance of official identification: “I’m a citizen of the country because, I have the nationality of being a Ghanaian. Firstly, I have, this thing, the national identity card which prove[s] that I’m a Ghanaian. And also, as the age of 18, I have a the voter’s ID card which prove[s] that I’m a Ghanaian.” While official forms of identification
bearing governmental seals matters to Allison, other students concentrated specifically on the importance of family and local birth. Elizabeth, who has less than one year in the club, expresses this sentiment as “it’s only if you’re nationalized here and then your--mum or dad gives birth to you in this country before you become a Ghanaian.”

The specific use of governmental definitions of identity encapsulates the distinction participants observed between the classroom and the club as sites for cultural identity development. Within the strict educational environment of teacher, blackboard and textbook, students are provided with a few particular forms of culture as described by the government that employs the teachers, provides the materials, and distributes the textbooks. These forms of culture encourage an identity that is accepted, memorized and repeated to teachers and officials alike. In contrast to the formalized classroom that gives priority to rote recitations of textbook definitions of culture, the drama club enables students to ingest cultural traditions through the act of developing a performance for others as demonstrated in their rehearsal and performances. By providing an open, engaging and practical space for students to enact their understandings of culture and further the internalization of their cultural beliefs, the drama club helps develop cultural identity in a way that other disciplines cannot.

**Practical Learning of Cultures in Rehearsal**

As a social, extra-curricular activity, the ACHS drama club emphasizes conversation rather than isolation, and creation rather than memorization. Thus, the forum for discussion available in a drama club offers a far different method of developing cultural identity than a formal classroom does. In exploring this forum fully, we will also examine how student roles within the theatre group relate to the production of cultural identity.
Recall Andrew’s statement about cultural education in the classroom: “I remember in JSS--junior high school--we were taught these culture, cultural stuffs. Yeah, the ethnic groups in Ghana and the elements of their culture their festivals and that stuff.” The vagary that concludes his statement, “and that stuff”, suggests that while Andrew had a familiarity with the culture described in the classroom, he did not yet have a way the means to see culture practically. Later in his interview, Andrew noted the powerful relationship between participating in theatre and understanding culture more fully. “If you’re not in drama, you can know that, ‘oh they do this and that’ and it will be kept by only yourself but in drama you bring it out. And in a play form you act that: ‘Oh! This is what we do, this is what it does’ and yeah--it will help you be more conversant with your culture and the culture of your country.” It is this ability to become “more conversant with your culture and the culture of your country” that makes the drama club such a special learning environment. Andrew’s description of the drama club as an environment to “bring [culture] out” of the theoretical classroom and into the realm of practical engagement was a frequent subject in interviews with other participants and exemplifies how club members can create their own cultural identity.

Like Andrew, other novice performers pointed to the valuable information about culture gleaned from participating in the club. Elizabeth admitted: “I don’t know much about the Homowa festival but as I went for that program [and performed in a play about the festival] I got some experiences and then I knew, yeah if that question was to be given to us, I’ll be able to, I mean answer it.” Similarly, Jennifer’s fondness for national history and Ghana’s founding fathers has found a meaningful outlet in the club because, “we sometimes act a play on them, acting like Kwame Nkrumah and those people. Yes, we cover them; we sometimes put ourselves in their shoes. How, if we were really there, how we would act like.”
Tellingly, each of these club members (Andrew, Elizabeth and Jennifer) carefully connected their experience in drama to their experiences in the classroom. By comparing their time on stage to their time at a desk, they showed the divergent methods of club and class in contributing to identity development. Given their brief exposure to life as a performer (one, ten and six months, respectively), it is understandable that students framed this new activity by comparing it to more familiar classroom activities. Because each participant had been a student for many years and an actor for only a few months, contrasting traditional and novel forms of learning seems like a logical reaction during this time of changing roles.

However, veteran performers who have had more frequent exposure to both theatre and the classroom also suggested that participation in theatre leads to an improved understanding of cultural heritage. For Robert, drama had become a way to complete the cultural learning process. As he explained, “if you take somebody’s culture we may learn and learn, but there are certain things that we must not know. So [Ghanaian culture] is our own, it is known to us, so we [pause] Ghanaian actors who practice culture, we want to show others the beauty of our culture.” For Robert, no matter how much an individual tries to “learn and learn” some things will remain missing from the knowledge. But through acting one not only understands but also instructs others about Ghanaian culture.

Similarly, Patricia, a club member with more than three years experience, observed that understanding culture depends on the actors and other club members to “bring out the African culture. I mean...bring it out for people to know what we have and what we do...through dramatizing and maybe singing.” As in Robert’s case, Patricia (who had performed since primary school) emphasized the function of performance in the development of understanding cultural identity. The more an individual brings their culture out through drama and music, as
these more experienced members of the club do, the more their audience and the veteran club members themselves come to know “what we have and what we do.”

Finally, John, who had also performed in dramas since primary school, provided a specific example to illuminate the point. After identifying how life in Accra separated him from regional ethnic groups, John made specific reference to learning about culture and remaining sensitive to the specific elements of each culture within Ghana. In drama club, said John, “you get to know about the food we eat, you get to know about how the various tribes dress.... Maybe we have an Ashanti king, in the play....[W]e have to dress him as an Ashanti king, so that it depicts that culture. Okay, so that is a way of bringing out the various culture in the society.” In preparing plays, John and all of his colleagues, from the practiced Patricia to the novice Andrew, took the opportunity to apply their understanding of culture to practical situations. Through the practical experience offered by drama club rehearsals and productions, the content of culture becomes meaningful, and it becomes more likely that students will understand their cultural environment and develop a richer cultural identity than it would be if they merely recited the facts “and that stuff” gleaned in the classroom.

Moreover, this method of learning cultural identity through collaboration with others shows a pedagogical style more similar to pre-colonial education models compared to the colonial system introduced by the British and largely maintained in independent Ghana. The tremendous teaching potential of oral literature and performance, as identified by Ansah-Koi (2006), reasserts itself here. As students work together to become performers and authors of stories as well as transmitters of culture, they learn from the examples provided by more experienced students, much as local audiences learned from story tellers in traditional communities. Through the dialogue and training, students come to know their own culture and
the cultures of others in order to be more sensitive and accurate in their performances, thereby expanding the role of local bard into a caretaker of national cultural identity.

In addition to the various notations regarding the development of cultural identity in the drama club, the above analysis also indicates how student roles in a club help to develop cultural identity. Through collaboration and dialogue, club members have abandoned striated roles or functions common among other theatrical groups. In other words, there is no separation in the ACHS club between actors, technicians and writers. All students collaborate in these activities in an effort to improve the overall performance. This builds on the discussion of costumes above, where students expressed the same desire for culturally accurate clothing whether they would be designing it or wearing it, because students were expected to perform both tasks.

The primary difference between club members lies in the degree of their experience. Those with the most experience (such as Robert, Patricia and John) expressed more confidence in their cultural identity after engaging with culture through years of dramatic activities regardless of their overall age. Conversely, those with less experience (including Andrew, Elizabeth and Jennifer) showed less certainty in their cultural identities and had less practice with culturally guided club activities. Many culturally uncertain club members were significantly older than experienced club members; for example Rose, age 21, expressed less certainty than the more experienced John, age 17. Ultimately, this research concludes that the roles a student performs in a drama club theatre production do not relate to the development of cultural identity because the responsibilities of each role are shared among club members.

**Teaching Opportunities at Theatrical Competitions**

In addition to the various methods of learning about culture through production development, club members also identified a number of opportunities to teach what they have
learned to others. Developing an understanding and appreciation of culture through the educational opportunities of a rehearsal, served as the prelude to performances where the acquired knowledge was put on display for the benefit of others. Just as the rehearsal process served the development of cultural identity, so too does the performance in competitions.

After describing his learning within the club, John went on to explain what theatre could do, to improve awareness of cultural identities, not just for himself, but for the audience as well:

You see, most people won’t have the time to be roaming about or moving about the country to find out what’s going on here. What are the culture[s] of these people? What is going on here? What do they do? What do they eat? How do they live? What is their language, and all that. So putting it on stage and then people watching will send the information, in fact that will be the fastest way to bring everything out without you having to roam about in the country, going here and there. Finding out--it would be a long distance. The best avenue to put it all out is the drama and then everything is out, moving everywhere and even outside the country people get to know about you.

In this comment, John addressed the educational power of oral performance within a national community. While the club’s rehearsal process encourages learning about local culture, performances throughout the country can expand cultural education through artistic expression to an almost national scale. This larger scale of performance-based cultural education builds on the work of national companies (Adinku, 2004) and traveling theatre groups (Bame, 1985; Cole, 2001) that addressed national cultural issues through tours throughout the country.

As discussed above, artistic traditions in Ghana communicate with audiences primarily through performance. In the past oral bards showcased their talents through the recitation of various works, elevating their own tribe and sharing news between villages (Finnegan, 1976). Throughout the twentieth century, popular theatre companies derived their income primarily from touring the countryside, entertaining audiences in the far-flung towns and villages. While doing so, they also disseminated information from the capital to individuals who had no other
means of obtaining the knowledge (Bame 1985; Cole, 2001). Though the Ghanaian drama club exists in a far different historical context than traditional Ghanaian bards and recent Ghanaian touring companies, John’s comment about educating those who cannot travel establishes a clear link between the present and the past. This analysis of the pedagogy of performance connects the cultural identities formed by young actors today, with the cultural roles played by performers in the past. As John suggested, performers today are educators in much the same way that performers in the past educated their own audiences.

The biggest distinction between contemporary youth clubs and traditional adult artists lies in the form of performance that is most common in the club. Rather than developing long-form productions for public consumption, the ACHS drama club focuses on competitions against other schools. Primarily, this requires club members to craft short works that respond to prompts from competition organizers. A majority of participants (n=14), including all but one female participant, identified some element of competitions as a valuable experience in their history with the club.

For many, competitions offered an opportunity to socialize with groups of students from other parts of Ghana. Allison said “we get [an] opportunity to talk with others from different schools in order to gain a relationship to make us good.” Similarly, Portia, a form one student with less than one year experience, focused on the celebrations and socializing that occurred within the club. “We danced the whole day there, and we reached home something like nine in the evening.” Both of these examples highlight the role that interaction with peers can play in creating satisfaction among participants. Competition gatherings offered participants a special opportunity to converse with one another while simultaneously immersing themselves in a culturally significant experience. In the same way that dialogue and collaboration benefitted the
development of cultural identity during rehearsals, conversing and sharing arts with peers around the country can assist in cultural identity development for all young artists. Through these concentrated periods of cultural engagement, students may establish a greater sense of national cultural identity through associations with others. These young Ghanaians can come to understand that they are similar to their fellow young performers by teaching and learning about their culture through performances and casual socialization at competitions.

Others described the competitions as an opportunity for more intimate personal growth, rather than open socializing. For James, the competitions offered a significant opportunity to overcome his shyness: “there will be people there, a lot of people there, who listen to us. So.... that will make you.... not fear.” Meanwhile, Michael, who has participated in drama for over two years, noted that the competitions allow him to display his talents more proudly. As he said, “at my former school, I was not able to visit more places. To show to the world what I can do, but when I came here I [went to] the National Arts Center and then other schools to perform, which gives me the delight to express myself.” For James, Michael and others, the social elements of the competition may not have had the same personal importance as individual experiences. Still, these young participants found value in the competitions by establishing positive associations between the expression of culture and personal triumphs. Young actors can present the cultural identity they have developed through rehearsal and collaboration with their fellow club members to a new audience, and, in so doing, accomplish a personal goal by asserting more confidence or earning the admiration of a larger audience. The link between cultural expression and personal growth provides another way to develop cultural identity through participation in drama.

Whatever the individual derives from their personal engagement with the competition, the awareness of the audience and fellow students at the site provides the group with a powerful
opportunity to teach others about Ghanaian culture. As Andrew stated: “if you don’t exhibit what you have no one can know what you possess.” Thus it seems, learning from textbooks and accruing knowledge in the traditional classroom style is no longer enough for these young performers. Like traditional artists described by Finnegan (1976), Adinku (2004), Ansah-Koi (2006), Cole (2001) and Bame (1985). students present their culture and their identities through artistic performance, thereby teaching their audience through example and story rather than textbooks and lectures. Such practices are, in fact, more traditional than any state sanctioned curriculum could be.

The competition or festival environment is ideal for students to show what they know about local culture. Those who organize these gatherings, frequently ask students to reflect on cultural traditions and the contemporary society. One group has even named their gathering “The Sankofa Festival,” referring to the cultural symbol that Adu-Yeboah and Obiri-Yeboah (2008) claim, “reflects the Akan belief that the past serves as a guide to the future” (p. 430). These thematic competitions allow students who explore culture during club meetings to continue their explorations with a tangible goal in mind. As Elizabeth reported above, “I don’t know much about the Homowa festival but as I went for that program [and performed in a play about the festival] I got some experiences and then I knew, yeah if that question was to be given to us, I’ll be able to, I mean answer it.” Because the organizers of a regional competition asked students to present a play about the Homowa festival’s conflict with contemporary society—a conflict I will describe in greater detail while analyzing student performances in the following section—Elizabeth learned more about the festival. However, the learning was not done in isolation or for the simple purpose of memorization. As Simon said about the same competition:
[Drama] helps solve problems within the community. With an example like conflict, for instance, when we show that play somewhere they can learn from our play and solve their problems.... I recently went for this thing, the competition, at Ga East, yeah. And that competition was about [the Homowa festival]. So we staged a play that went exactly like that. So I think they learnt from that, and did something good about it.

The goal of success in the competition may have spurred student learning, but winning the competition was not the sole goal of the experience. As this sub-section shows, socialization, individual accomplishments, the opportunity to teach and learn from others in a culturally sensitive setting combine to make the competition a meaningful experience in the development of cultural identity.

Ultimately, Rose identified the crucial feature of these drama festivals and how the educational facets of competition performances benefit everyone in attendances: “culture brings people together, make[s] new friends, and settle[s] disputes, and show[s] how appreciation to friends [sic], shows how important the festival is.”

In summarizing this section we can see how cultural identity develops within the “forum” of the drama club. While the formalized classroom setting encourages students to establish cultural identities through isolated reflection on government approved textbook descriptions, the drama club allows for a more collaborative method of developing cultural identity through collaboration with peers and independent conceptions of culture. Whether these young artists are crafting costumes, writing scripts, or rehearsing lines daily club practices allow them to work together to learn about local cultures. Moreover, during theatrical competitions students teach and learn about their culture through socialization with peers and private victories. As artists in a forum students develop their cultural identity by discussing a diverse range of cultural habits through rehearsal and performance.
Crucible for Constructing a New Culture

While club members used their creative expressions to affirm long-standing cultural traditions and discuss diversity, their participation in drama also allowed them to construct new cultural identities that reflect their contemporary society. As actors, directors, technicians and writers, club members could present and transmit culture. In looking forward to a 21st Century Ghana, students demonstrated three traits relevant to changing the cultural paradigm for themselves and future generations: a desire to refute outmoded habits, an eagerness to explore the wider world, and an interest in globalizing culture.

Desire to Refute Outmoded Habits

Research participants, like many other teenagers around the world, could easily identify habits of older generations that they hoped to abandon. In doing so, they often demonstrated how their cultural identities would break from the traditional definition of “Ghanaian-ness”

Frequently, students described undesirable elements of traditional culture as hindrances that undermine the future of the country, in keeping with language acquired from the school’s social studies textbook (Adu-Yeboah & Obiri-Yeboah, 2008). While superstitions, chieftaincy disputes, misuse of resources, government corruption, and brain drain earned student admonishment, the students’ primary rebuke was directed against discrimination and separation between cultural groups within the country. Interestingly, discrimination had served as a common theme in the club’s two most recent performances. Each performance advocated for a contemporary cultural identity built on tolerance.

A few weeks prior to the researcher’s arrival in the country, the drama club attended a competition within the Ga East district of Ghana. This was the location for the performance of what I will refer to as the “Homowa” script. This scene, based on true events, begins with the
local chief declaring a month of silence in honor of a tribal tradition. However, local Christian
groups ignore the chief’s ruling and, as is customary in Ghana, continue to drum and make music
as part of their worship. The chief’s counselors take umbrage to the Christians’ actions and
pressure their leader to impose stiff punishments on those who break the silence. When the
Christians continue to make noise, violence erupts as both traditionalists and Christians defend
their beliefs. Ultimately, the pastor of the church agrees to honor the ban on noise making
throughout the thirty-day festival, provided the chief attends a grand celebration/worship service
at the end of the festival. The play ends without a definitive answer about what the chief will do.

As the above comments of both Elizabeth and Simon suggest, this particular text was
meaningful to students because it offered an opportunity to engage deeply with a specific
element of their cultural heritage. The play also became a crucible to explore a contemporary
conflict between discordant cultural groups and to propose an amenable solution to all. Rather
than maintaining a stark separation between those who demonstrate fealty to long standing local
practices and those who have embraced the comparatively recent introduction of Christian
doctrines, the members of the ACHS drama club accentuated the compromises within this script
as a way to emphasize the commonality that unites Ghanaians and present a new generation’s
cultural identity.

Rose mentioned that the play was beneficial because “I learned some from them: How we
should understand each other [and] come together.” Meanwhile Elizabeth, who knew little of the
background to the conflict prior to performance, developed a personal desire for a peaceful
reconciliation to the conflict and hoped to remind those who ignore local traditions that “after
their festival...you can do what ever you want to do.” Finally, Michael summarized the
importance of the play thusly: “we perform it to show society what it means to be peaceful.”
Though participants evinced great pride in and appreciation of traditional customs, in the “Homowa” text they do break from a societal tradition of strict separation between cultural groups. While Ghana has gained a well-earned reputation as a peaceful country without divisive tribal disputes, some individuals still adhere to traditional ethnic distinctions through the language they use (Gyasi-Obeng, 2000), or by encouraging a singular traditional “Ghanaian” identity that opposes alternative cultural expressions (Flolu, 2000; Adinku, 2004; Sefa Dei, 2005; Osei, 2009) and essentializes a heterogeneous society into an easily definable whole (Thomas, 1994). However, the participants contradicted this absolutist mentality by producing plays that agitate for tolerance and acceptance of diverse practices. Though Christianity’s colonial legacy may chafe against some citizens’ definitions of traditional “Ghanaian-ness” (just as traditional Ghanaian customs controvert some Christian dogmas) students did not feel obliged to sacrifice one cultural identity to another, but instead established a method for practicing an overlapping, or hybridized culture that is sensitive to all and derogatory to none.

A similarly peaceful, constructive attitude became apparent during discussions of another text prepared by the club. Performed for the HIV/Humanitarian Project the same day that the researcher arrived in Ghana, this script told the story of a well-loved community benefactor who was summarily shunned after he contracted HIV. It is worth noting that, while the “Homowa Festival” text was deemed meaningful by students of both genders and all age and experience levels, the “HIV” text was a topic raised exclusively by male participants. Still, the young men who addressed the text described the importance of the play as a way to overcome stigmatization and discrimination that detracted from Ghana as a whole culture.

For younger students, the lessons were direct and easily connected to their cultural identities. Jack, age 16, was deeply affected by a parallel drawn between the main character’s
struggle with HIV, and a peripheral character who was shunned by his fiancée’s family because he came from a rural part of the country, and lacked the wealth of others. “The girl was...angry with her sister and ask[ed] ‘why is she bringing home a very wretched-looking man, and other things, a man who is not having anything?’ That was the beginning of the whole story. Which was about stigmatization--the whole scenario.” Seeing the connection between different forms of discrimination gave Jack new insights into stigmatization and provided an impetus for being more inclusive of those who are different than you. Fifteen-year-old Kofi put it more directly: “if someone has AIDS we shouldn’t discriminate [against] the person, sack the person. If we do that it would not bring peaceful [sic], it would not make this country a peaceful country.”

But while Jack and Kofi focused on peace and unity as a valuable lesson for Ghanaians, older club members like James and Daniel emphasized the public health education that was overtly instilled through the same play. At 17 and 18 respectively, these participants may have focused on the health issue because their own sexual maturation required an identity with an increased awareness of the dangers posed by HIV. Through the preparation and performance of this text, club members used drama as a forum to discuss diversity by attempting to increase awareness about the disease’s effects and decrease the fear of those infected amongst themselves and their audiences. In his final statement of the interview, Daniel offered a thorough explanation of the value that drama generally and HIV texts specifically can have for audiences throughout the nation:

To act, to tell the world that this is what is going on around you. This is what you need to do. You saw us act about the AIDS program...See, [many people] don’t know about AIDS, it’s like; if you touch somebody you get AIDS. NO!...It’s a blood transfusion, something. It’s through...sex, you get AIDS. It’s not by touching the person that you get AIDS. So, we need to go around [to] those who don’t know about it, to go around and tell them. And we need to do this by acting it to them. See, you need to do it by either acting, or singing, or just do a little sketch, to tell them that: ‘hey! this is what is going on, this is
how you must relate to the person’. That person will feel at ease and the rest. Because, in other parts of our country, they don’t have electricity so we need to be traveling to those places, to act to them, and tell them.”

This comment demonstrates again the educational value that theatre can have for performers and attendees. Moreover, it shows a distinct break from a long-standing tradition of fear and misinformation regarding HIV and AIDS. While Ghana--a nation Daniel proudly belongs to--has previously shunned infected individuals and avoided discussions of the disease, the young artists of the ACHS drama club advocate for inclusivity and open dialogues on the topic. Though they admired their cultural heritage, when they wished to affect society they contributed to the cause of eradicating discrimination and facilitating inclusive understanding.

As the students of ACHS experimented successfully with addressing the deleterious effects of tribal and religious discrimination, as well as the harmful stigmatization of persons living with HIV/AIDS, they also found a voice in the process of improving their own society. Both of these examples enabled students to develop cultural identities that reacted to contemporary Ghanaian society in a manner similar to the “here-and-now” context described by socio-historical cultural theorist Alex Kozulin (1998). By developing productions based on issues within contemporary Ghanaian society, ACHS students seem to confirm Kozulin’s suggestion that cultural conceptions result from “reflections on immediate, every day experiences” (p. 48). No matter how much admiration participants have for cultural traditions in Ghana, they live in contemporary Ghana where adherence to traditions may not benefit themselves or their society. Club members can determine for themselves which elements of traditional cultural identity they will individually maintain, and which elements they will try to change.
Eagerness to Explore World

In addition to the cultural habits students hoped to change through their participation in theatre, many also expressed an eagerness to establish personal connections with other cultures in the world and become worldlier themselves. In doing so, participants highlighted the complexity of how texts influence the development of cultural identity.

Participants’ eagerness to explore the wider world became evident within the first day of rehearsal observations. As noted in the Methodology chapter, members of the club eagerly sought the opportunity to interact with artistic minds from overseas. Through our collaboration during the research period the students and their advisor established an opportunity for cultural exchanges. As a result, their participation in drama has led to the chance to share performances, raise club funds and, potentially, establish personal friendships with peers in a foreign country. For those who desired a connection to distant lands and diverse people, participation in the drama club clearly provided a means of interaction and engagement that could impact their identity development.

For some students, the wider world represented an opportunity to improve their standing in society. The prospect of studying or working in a foreign country was enticing to many students. Robert opined, “I don’t want to do my works here. Maybe, I may, just do my national service and then work in Ghana for maybe two or a number of years and then I’ll further it outside.” Similarly, Portia recalled, “when I was a kid, like a young girl. I used to say, ‘when will I go there, when will I become white, and stop suffering’ and this/that [sic]. But, it’s gone and I don’t—I don’t even—but if I get to go, I’d like to go.” In both of these cases the appeal of advancing from a Ghanaian education system to a position within a Western society is appealing, in much the same way that students in the colonial era aspired to positions with British
companies (Oliver & Atmore, 1994). Moreover, these comments further suggest a new form of Thomas’ (1994) singularization within the post-colonial community. Whereas, in the past, colonial powers singularized their distant subjects, now former subjects singularize erstwhile colonial states as places of wealth and prosperity. From these statements it seems that the old dichotomy between haves and have-nots, Westerners and Africans still exists in the new Ghana.

However, interest in and romanticization of Western nations does not signify an abandonment of Ghanaian cultural identity. Though a gap between cultures remains present, many participants have chosen to remain dedicated to their native traditions. Portia, like most students, deeply appreciated the Ghanaian way of life, and rather than wanting to abandon her culture, she relished the opportunity to address the issues facing her country. As she said, “being a Ghanaian is very very nice and challenging. You have to face some things as a black [person], not a white [person].... We the blacks, we face it.” As the subsection above demonstrates, students do not shy away from addressing conflicts within their society, and as the other sections of this chapter suggest, participants felt a sincere loyalty to their nation. Nevertheless, Portia and other members of the club expressed a belief that they can and should learn from other cultures as they come to define their cultural identities.

This desire to learn from others demonstrated itself primarily in individual attitudes towards the texts that the club read and performed. While a majority of students interviewed expressed a preference for traditional African texts, a significant minority admitted an interest in performing foreign texts more frequently than they currently do. Both Jennifer and Andrew believed that familiarity with international texts would benefit a future acting career, but voiced that opinion in slightly different ways. Jennifer, with less than six months experience, was eager to show her talents through any part she could get, saying: “Any script I’m given.... Any one, any
one that comes my way. I’m ready to do it.” Andrew, with only one month of experience, matched her enthusiasm and explained his decision thusly:

“I want to be conversant with both the European and African culture. When it’s the case, they will bring a script which is about this European group, European lifestyle or European stories and stuff...[if] I tell someone or a producer...“no” [tsk] how he will stare at me.[sic] The impression he would have would be...it wouldn’t be admirable at all. So I want to be conversant with both European and traditional.

Though both Jennifer and Andrew may have been wishful in their imagining of a successful life in acting, they also appreciated that cultures other than their own offer opportunities for career advancement. Though stardom is by no means a certainty, they acknowledged that developing flexibility through diverse texts now would serve them well in the future. Both participants suggested that their cultural identities could shift freely if their professional goals required it.

More experienced students had different reasons for their interest in texts from international sources. In the case of Rose, approaching her one year anniversary with the club, plays and scripts from around the world presented the opportunity “to know more places, and the environment and how the environment is and to make new friends. Knowing people, how people behave, how life is. Because if you stay at one place, you won’t get to know what’s going on in life.” For Rose, it seems, theatre offered a window to the world. Through her participation in theatre and engagement with diverse texts she could develop a better understanding of how her culture related to others and how the world as a whole was living beyond the ACHS grounds. Through these connections between cultures, Rose could establish a cultural identity that reflected both her traditions and the beliefs of others.

A similar desire to deepen personal understanding of diverse cultures drove at least one member to join the club in the first place. Over two years before the interviews, while struggling
to grasp the cultural intricacies of a Nigerian play in his literature classroom, David joined the drama club as a way to further his understanding of the play and another culture:

I wanted to get involved so that it could make it...easier [to] understand the book..... I wanted it to be, at least, the practical form. It was always: theory, theory. [And the play’s author] was not from the country, but from Nigeria.... I got to understand the book. [Drama] made it much more easier [sic] for me [to] understand it.... There were some words that during examination they quoted [and because I participated in Drama] I was able to continue and get them right.

David’s example reminds us that the desire to explore other African countries and cultures is an important part of engagement with the wider world. Moreover, it also affirms the role of the drama club as an institution where diversity can be discussed in depth and provide a meaningful learning experience for students engaged in cultural studies.

David also addressed another reason for wanting to explore texts from a wider-range of cultures. Along with two other veteran male performers in the club (John and Daniel), David identified performing diverse texts as an opportunity to enhance and hone his performing skills, saying “I would like to do any [culture’s texts], in the sense that it also helps in your acting. Get to know much about other people’s tradition or culture than sticking to your own. So it will be enjoyable to be doing plays from different countries, different places.” In the same way, John expressed his desire to do plays from different cultures as a means to improve his personal practice. “I’d like to try other things, but I’m more conversant with the traditional African drama. I would like to try other things and see how other plays would work with me...so I think it would be a privilege, yeah, to be exposed to new stuff, European/international.”

From both of these students we can see a desire to develop a wider range of acting skills through the exploration of diverse cultures, their methods and texts. Unlike Jennifer and Andrew who couched their exploration of such cultures within the context of preparing for a career in the
theatre, the more experienced members of the club saw this exploration as an end in and of itself. It seems, therefore, that more experienced club members have established an identity predicated on being club members rather than being professionals. While professionals must concern themselves with developing skills that will appeal to an employer (including a willingness to play a range of parts that diverge significantly from your personal culture), club members only need to consider exploring skills that will satisfy their personal goals as a performer and, perhaps, benefit the club. After several years of work in the club, both of these young men had firmly established skills in the Ghanaian performance tradition and developed a cultural identity within that context. As seasoned performers, they sought new texts and traditions as a way to improve their abilities, internationalize the club and diversify their cultural identity.

Ultimately, whether students perceived the exploration and engagement with other cultures as an avenue to a more fulfilling career, or simply an opportunity to learn, the presence of external cultures within the drama club environment is abundantly apparent. Through this analysis we can offer an addendum to our examination of how texts influence identity development. While student preference for traditional Ghanaian texts generated by the club enhanced cultural identity development by providing a practical opportunity to exhibit their culture with the same freedom and creativity that their forbearers enjoyed, the desire of some students to explore texts from diverse cultures may allow beliefs and behaviors from other societies to influence the development of cultural identity.

**Interest in Globalizing Culture**

Though international cultures were present within the ACHS drama club, the extent to which these cultures influenced cultural identity development is not yet clear. Just because a few students expressed interest in performing more foreign texts does not mean that students have
come wholly under the spell of western society. Students, like Portia, examined their lives from a Ghanaian perspective rather than an American or British one (as the club’s focus on local cultural traditions suggests). However, one intriguing theme that developed over the course of the research process is the potential for a globalized hybrid of Ghanaian and Western cultures and how that new culture may serve the country in the future.

It should be noted that globalization does not uniformly result in a blending of cultures. As Kubow & Fossum (2007) suggest, globalization can also lead “people [to maintain] familiar cultural habits and outlooks even as they must seek to understand and accommodate cultural norms and practices that are new” (p. 292). While the data analyzed in this section specifically suggests a shift to a more hybridized culture, we should not forget that the bulk of data suggests ways that students sought to maintain cultural traditions in spite of international influence. Through the creation of hybridized identities students will confront complex forces advocating for divergent cultural attitudes. These new identities will develop in reaction to the conflicting forces that surround each Ghanaian. While some forces in the community will push individuals to serve as “caretakers” of traditional cultural identity, other forces will pull individuals to adopt more and more traits common to our globalizing society. The tensions between these groups may seem to conflict so fully that only one can survive in local customs. However, these same forces have contributed to the gradual development of contemporary Ghanaian culture throughout the colonial and post-colonial eras. Naturally, these forces will play a role in the cultural identity shifts among the next generation as well. Ultimately, participant statements about globalizing culture do not represent a sweeping shift towards a new culture, but simply present a multifaceted view of culture that remains in dialogue with traditional Ghanaian practices.
Like David and John, Daniel believed that his practice as an actor could benefit from encounters with diverse people and texts. But he goes a step further in describing that the benefit depended, at least partly, on the globalization of Ghanaian society. “It’s good to be acting from European movies, because we are moving--we are in a global world now, so we need to move on, get more experience, get more skills so that we can make something out of the movies.”

Acknowledging the presence of globalization, in the form of readily available videos of foreign films, Daniel placed himself on the cusp of a new wave of Ghanaian culture. Ghana has changed, is changing and will continue to change, ergo, he reasoned, we should accept the world as it merges with our own culture and develop the resulting culture even further.

This sentiment was echoed by David, who stopped short of explicitly describing globalization, but also acknowledged imminent changes to Ghanaian culture. “As the saying goes ‘culture is dynamic.’ It can change at any time. I cannot give a right statement and say this is what it takes to be a Ghanaian, since culture is dynamic. As we live, development and everything is going high, you’re able to adopt new styles--new styles of living, which makes living easier.” David and Daniel’s responses to this question bring to mind the shifts in culture among Ghanaian youths in contemporary society. While traditional cultural distinctions like language lose their prominence in defining cultural identity (Edu-Boandoh, 2007), new ways of living through the internet provide citizens the opportunity to craft cultural identities that are accessible to all (Fair, et. al, 2009). The broader globalizing of culture in contemporary Ghanaian society will offer expansive alternatives to traditional methods of cultural identity development.

While Daniel and David were the only two voices who identified radical cultural shifts in the society that surrounds them, the globalization of Ghana does have an impact on the other students enrolled in ACHS. Throughout the research period, the unquestioned number one song
in the country belonged to K’naan, a Canadian artist whose anthem “Wavin’ Flag” was adopted by a Coca-Cola advertising campaign during the World Cup. The mammoth ratings for World Cup matches and the frequency of the Coke advertisements, made it only natural that “Wavin’ Flag” became the most pervasive song in the country, blaring from radios, cell phones, personal music devices and with zealous fervor from citizens themselves (including teachers and students in harmony). Throughout the tournament, as patriotic pride blossomed with each win by the national team, the song of a Canadian artist, used to sell an American soft drink, became a method of showing love and support for fellow Ghanaians.

But ACHS was more involved in globalizing local culture than one popular song might suggest. This became apparent during the student “Fanfare”, a performance festival held in the middle of the research period. While the drama club presented three short skits for the audience’s amusement, the primary performers were volunteer dance troupes (including many club members) who gamely trotted to the stage and exhibited their talents for the rest of the student body and assembled guests.

Many of these dances were performed to songs from American artists, primarily from Hip-Hop and R&B genres. Later, the female students, who dominated the dance troupes, acknowledged in personal conversations that the dances themselves owed as much to the American club scene and hip-hop videos popular within the country as they did to traditional Ghanaian dancing. Moreover, in the process of encouraging peers and friends, students relied on popular American phrases including: “shake what yo’ mamma gave ya’!”, “shake yo’ booty!”, and “shake yo’ ass!”. While the young women of ACHS demonstrated the globalizing of culture through dance, the young men demonstrated the same influences through the musical art form of Kasahare, a local style of rapid rhymed lyricism that fuses traditional oral poetry forms with
modern American rap. Students screamed with delight when two men began Kasahare battles, and several students informed me that this was the most popular form of music in the school.

In addition to the musical globalization of Ghana, film and television have undergone a similar transformation. From black market DVDs offering 21 American blockbusters on a single disk to ubiquitous satellites offering fresh foreign culture daily, western film and television is omnipresent. This is particularly relevant to members of the drama club, who based their perceptions of performance on popular dramatic entertainments exported through the mass media rather than classical theatrical traditions.

Though all of these cultural artifacts, from “Waving Flag” and “shake what yo momma gave ya” to hip-hop and Hollywood, come from somewhere other than Ghana does not make them any less indicative of Ghanaian cultural identity. By consuming these elements of culture and reconstituting them in a more “Ghanaian” style the young citizens of ACHS have found a way to express their personal identity through a cultural expression that fuses global style with local flair. In short, the western-world has become part of the socio-historical cultural context of students in modern Ghana. The identities of students must now develop within this complex context and cultural expressions from alien countries will influence this identity development.

In an addendum to his previous comment about the benefits of performing in ways commensurate with western films, Daniel offered this anecdote to demonstrate the shift in cultural values that he and his classmates have accepted, despite the resistance of older generations:

Our old women in Ghana, let me say in Africa, they don’t love [affection in movies] because, they know that it’s not good for a young guy to be kissing a girl. Even though, we the actors intend to tell them that, it’s not real; it’s just, software that we use to--. They don’t believe [us] because, how [could] we sim it? It’s real. I was in a movie, and I was kissing someone, [my mother saw it and] was like, “hey!” when I came [home] she
was scandalized, and I said “no mom I didn’t do anything to her,” like “it was just
[laughs] it’s just the [laughs] the graphic designer who did everything.” She was like
“ennnh”. I was telling her “I didn’t do anything to her!” I was talking with her yes, but I
didn’t kiss her. You see it must be—it makes the movie nice. When we [are doing] it
and...a romance scene comes, you must kiss the person. But our tradition [laugh] and our
old women, right now, don’t understand. They just seem to be, like, why should you be
doing that? Because in our tradition, if you’re not married you should not be doing that.

Daniel’s story provides, perhaps, the most complete explanation of the theatre club as a crucible
for constructing new culture. Ghana’s youthful generation, as embodied by ACHS club
members, are tempted to break away from traditions they no longer understand; they want to
experience a wider world full of opportunities to learn, improve and succeed; and they want to
benefit from a globalizing culture that permits them the freedom to live a life in touch with their
international aspirations. Through participation in the “crucible” of a drama club, they can create
a culture as they wish it to be. By developing scenes that demonstrate how to improve outmoded
traditions, encountering new cultures through diverse texts and exploring globalizing culture
through dramatic and musical performances, club members can craft a new culture according to
their own desires.

**Discussion Synthesis**

Throughout this chapter I have endeavored to provide answers to my research question
and the various sub-questions posed. In regards to the sub-questions the research has produced
varied results. First, the texts one reads, studies or performs in theatrical groups guides cultural
identity development by providing students with both traditional texts, which allow them to
exhibit their culture in a practical setting with the same freedom and creativity as their
forbearers, as well as texts from diverse cultures, which allow beliefs and behaviors from other
societies to influence the development of cultural identity. Secondly, while the texts of
productions have a tremendous influence on students, the roles that an individual performs as
part of a drama club do not relate to the development of cultural identity because the responsibilities of each role are shared among club members. Lastly, experience performing and producing drama influences how individuals describe their identities during interviews by providing club members with the confidence to participate in interviews.

Most importantly, this chapter has examined the various ways that participation in a drama club guides the development of cultural identity. The drama club can serve as a laboratory to experience and affirm long-standing traditions through the use of traditional customs and costumes in performance, thematic devotion to Ghanaian principles, and the development of fluency in speech and gestures. Participation in drama can give students a forum for discussing diversity by building off of the school’s cultural dialogue, learning about local cultures in rehearsal, and teaching others through theatrical competitions. Finally, the drama club can act as a crucible for constructing a new culture by enabling the desire to refute outmoded habits, and facilitating the exploration of the wider world through texts and a globalizing culture.
CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION

After exploring the trove of data and arriving at the answers described above, this research must look toward the steps necessary to probe this subject further. In this chapter, I provide a summary of my analysis tied to my initial research questions, and then offer a range of potential implications for this research and suggested areas for future study.

Summary of Analysis

This research has found that the texts a young artist reads, studies or performs in theatrical groups guides cultural identity development. Just as artists in previous generations expressed and refined their culture through creative oral performances grounded in local traditions, the young artists of ACHS create texts to perform in many of the same ways. However, students also encounter texts from diverse cultures. These encounters often influence the development of cultural identity by beginning a dialogue between traditional beliefs and the habits of other societies. Through the creation of texts that are sensitive to tradition and influenced by the wider world, students are able to participate in performances that are uniquely their own and still reflect the modern society that surrounds them.

Unlike the various texts participants encounter, the roles a student may perform in a Ghanaian drama club do not have a strong influence on the development of cultural identity. Since club members share the responsibilities of each role amongst themselves, they encounter culture in the same ways. No student is deprived of a chance to act, design, write or suggest directions, and each student can use these activities to explore their identity in greater depth.

Additionally, because of their experiences performing and producing drama, participants gained the confidence to describe their identities during interviews. Participants could more fully
express themselves and their individuality as a result of their participation in a collaborative environment that not only encouraged, but also expected contributions from all members.

Finally, it is clear that participation in a drama club helps guide the development of cultural identity. Through frequent encounters with traditional expressions of culture like customs, costumes, creative speech and ideological principles, the drama club becomes a laboratory to experience and affirm long-standing traditions. By expanding on classroom practices, learning culture through rehearsal and developing plays that teach their audiences, participants engage their performances and create a forum for discussing diversity. Lastly, the conversation between old traditions and new ones emerges as participants use frequent encounters with foreign texts and artistic elements of a globalizing culture to propose changes to outmoded habits, thereby making the drama club a crucible for constructing a new culture.

**Research Implications**

While much of this research is tied to one specific cultural setting, there are a few key implications that should be considered by cultural identity scholars and drama educators around the world.

First, as we continue to study ways that identity develops in our globalizing society, we must consider the complex impact that the media and arts can have on cultures and individuals. The expansive reach of film, television and the Internet amplifies the voice of an already powerful Western culture, which may eventually detract from distinctive cultures in other parts of the world. Studying the shifting artistic sensibilities of young writers and actors can provide a reflection of globalization as it happens. At the same time, many societies in the world have already encountered cultural hegemony through the legacy of colonialism. The detrimental effects of colonialism may account for many cultures turning away from the globalizing of local
societies to encourage a greater reliance on native cultures, as some educational policies in Ghana suggest. Ultimately, this research acknowledges that students do not feel obliged to choose one cultural identity or another; rather, students explore ways of adopting traditional beliefs, merging cultures, and constructing cultural identities that reflect their own interests. The complexity of cultural exchanges will require scholars to be mindful not to ascribe too much authority to any one culture, but instead to remain open to the cultural identities that result from increased communication between people.

Moreover, researchers and scholars who concern themselves with cultural identity would be well served to consider the ways that we acknowledge cultural identity in young people. Instead of subjecting children to a battery of questions or asking them to identify crucial elements of their culture, we may be better served to observe the ways in which they exhibit their cultural identities on a daily basis. Through this we can see both the culture as it has been understood by previous generations and the modifications suggested by the next generation of leaders within a society. Realizing that young people actively engage with cultural identity, rather than merely consuming and regurgitating it, can help scholars to explore new vistas of research.

For drama educators charged with edifying a diverse range of students, this research provides a variety of culturally sensitive and meaningful pedagogical practices. To begin with, offer students the opportunity to select or create texts on their own. This may mean allowing students to explore issues that are vital to their current life as teenagers, or avoiding texts that are uncomfortably foreign (even Shakespeare). This practice will establish sensitivity to the performer’s culture. Teachers can certainly suggest how texts connect to student cultures, but those who willfully ignore the interests of young performers risk creating a production that is
more about the lone adult in the room than the dozens of children who hope to learn from the experience. Ultimately, the data gleaned from students who feel the power of drama in their lives urges teachers to remember that: the more cultural ownership that students have of a text in performance, the more valuable the creation of that performance will be to the students.

Additionally, the evidence gathered from ACHS students suggests that drama educators should consider assigning a range of responsibilities to students interested in drama. While many drama programs may rely on one or two favorites to play lead roles and veteran stage hands to run the technical aspects of a production, encouraging all students to experiment with acting, technical design, playwriting and directing will give them a more complete experience in the world of the theatre. Moreover, as students learn to rely on one another as mentors and collaborators in each of these fields, drama educators can break down the troublesome schisms and cliques that frequently develop between young artists. The sense of unity and collaboration expressed by participants in this research demonstrates how veterans and novices, actors and authors, technicians and directors perceive one another as partners, colleagues and friends.

**Areas for Further Study**

In pursuing further study, this research would be well served through an expansion of latitude in sites and cases. Rather than remaining confined solely to the students of ACHS, triangulation through other sites in Ghana may prove beneficial to understanding the issues of local student-actors. For example, the inclusion of students in rural or private schools, younger students or students who do not participate in drama would enrich to the existing research. The opportunity to expand this study beyond Ghanaian borders is equally exciting. Issues of interest to African artistry and identity could be explored throughout West Africa, or former British colonies on the continent.
In the broadest scope, a global study exploring the development of cultural identity among former colonies around the world could provide insight into post-colonial societies generally. The importance placed upon the empire under British-colonial education suggests that the challenges faced by Ghanaian educators, policy-makers and artists are not unique to their shores. The same issues may well exist in Eastern Africa, West Asia, South Asia, the South Pacific, South America, the Caribbean and Canada. Since, for a period of time, the sun never set on the British Empire, one could argue that, during that era, the sun never set on British artistic sensibilities either. Exploring the complex relationship between the people of the world and how they create their art forms in a post-colonial world could provide startling connections between people throughout the world.

While we in the modern era have frequently fixated on the challenges of globalization and the world becoming smaller (as it did under British rule), this research suggests that there is more involved in a child’s cultural identity development than the refutation of colonial mindsets, the repetition of post-colonial attitudes, or the creeping influence of globalized interests. This research suggests that students can take an active role in refining culture to reflect their experiences and dreams for the future. The culture of these participants is neither wholly traditional nor fully globalized, but is a creature of their own creation.

Through this creation the students at ACHS move beyond mere exposure to the arts, and use an active hand to create the kind of art that best expresses their identities and experiences. By affirming, exploring and contesting their culture, these young actors establish a new sense of what it means to be Ghanaian. As custodians of tradition and innovators of new practices, these teenage performers do not simply “play” the part of typical Ghanaians they design what they personally want that part to be.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Dear Parent/Guardian:

Your son/daughter has been invited to be in a research study on Drama and childhood in Ghana. As part of my work on my Masters degree in the Cross-Cultural and International Education Program at Bowling Green State University in Bowling Green, Ohio, I will be spending this month working with the drama tutor, Mr. Sebastian Adama, to help student rehearsals in the Drama club. During this time I will also conduct a study of Drama students in Adenta, Ghana.

This study is being conducted for a thesis project with the help of my advisor Dr. Bruce Collet, Assistant Professor in the department of Education and Human Development at Bowling Green State University. The purpose of this study is to understand how performing Drama helps students relate to their country. I would like to speak with students in the Drama club about their experiences with art, and how they see Ghana.

There are no direct benefits to you or your child with participation in this study. If your child participates in the study, they will add to research about Ghanaian culture, the teaching of Drama, and education in general. Your child will help explain the importance of art in the lives of students. This work may be used to improve Drama education both in Ghana and America. It may also spread information about Ghanaian Drama to new audiences.

If you allow your child to participate, your child will be reminded of the purpose of this study and assured of their privacy. Only students who have parental and personal approval will be interviewed. This study involves one or two interviews. I estimate that your child’s participation will take approximately half-an-hour to an hour. Your child’s participation will involve answering questions about Dramas they have performed and about being Ghanaian. If I request a second interview it will involve questions that to explain previous answers. This interview will take no more than half-an-hour. All interviews will take place in a public location of your approval. I would like to record the interview with your permission. If you would like, a Ghanaian staff member from the school can be present during the interview.

Taking part in this study is your child’s choice. Your child may stop the interview at any time. Your child may choose not to answer questions. If your child decides not to take part this will not influence your future relationship with Bowling Green State University, or child’s teachers or your child’s school.

Your child’s identity will be protected. The information used in this study will not be linked to your child’s name. All transcripts of recordings will: use an interview number, not a name; use a pseudonym (false name) to protect your child’s identity; change any other information that might identify your child. All recordings and transcripts will be kept under lock and key. Only I will be able to access these files. Once the study is completed, all recordings and transcripts will be destroyed.

If you have any questions or concerns please feel free to contact me at the school or via e-mail: mackenb@bgsu.edu. You may also contact my advisor, Dr. Bruce Collet, by phone (419) 372-7354, or via e-mail: colleba@bgsu.edu. You may also contact the Chair of Bowling Green State University’s Human Subjects Review Board at (419) 372-7716 (hsrb@bgsu.edu), if any problems or concerns arise during the study. Attached is a copy of the assent document for you to keep in your records.

By signing below you indicate that you have read the information in this agreement and have been able to ask any questions you have about the study. Your signature also indicates that your son/daughter will be able to participate in the study. If you sign now, but change your mind later, you may withdraw your consent and stop your child’s participation immediately. Your child cannot participate without your consent.
By signing this agreement you are not giving up any of your or your child’s legal rights.

This document must be returned to me by June 23rd for students to be eligible for interviews.

Thank you for your consideration.

Ben MacKenzie

I, ______________________________ agree to let my son/daughter

Parent/guardian’s name

___________________________ participate in the research study conducted by Mr. Ben MacKenzie,

Child’s name

under the guidance of his advisor, Dr. Bruce Collet.

Signature of the parent/guardian: ______________________________

Date: ______________________

Printed name of the parent/guardian: ____________________________________________

Printed name of child:

________________________________________

Contact information:

Primary Investigator

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Advisor to Investigator

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APPENDIX B: STUDENT ASSENT FORM

Thank you for your interest in participating in this study. Below is a brief outline of information you need to know about the study and interview process.

Purpose of the Study & Benefits

You are being asked to participate in a study carried out by Mr. Ben MacKenzie. The purpose of this study is to learn how Drama students in Ghana learn about being Ghanaian.

There are no direct benefits to you by participating in this study. By engaging in this interview, you will be contributing to research concerning cultural identity, the teaching of drama, and education in general. Additionally, you will contribute to valuable research about how art may influence lives around the world. This work may be used to improve drama education both in Ghana and America. It may also spread understanding about Ghanaian art forms to new audiences.

Description of the Study

The study is being carried out by Mr. Ben MacKenzie, a Graduate Student in the Cross-Cultural and International Education program at Bowling Green State University in Bowling Green, Ohio. Mr. MacKenzie is operating under the advisor of his advisor Dr. Bruce Collet, Assistant professor in the College of Education and Human Development at Bowling Green State University in Bowling Green Ohio. He would like to speak with drama students about their experiences with art. If your parent or guardian returns the consent form, you will be asked to participate in an interview that will last approximately half-an-hour to an hour. Mr. MacKenzie would like to audio record the interview with your permission.

A third-party staff member from your school may be present during the interview.

Voluntary participation

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may withdraw from the interview at any time, and you may choose not to answer any questions. Your participation will not influence your future relations with Mr. MacKenzie, Bowling Green State University, or the cooperating agencies. Participation or withdrawal will not affect any rights to which you are entitled.

Confidentiality

The information you provide in this interview will not be linked to your name. All transcripts of audio recordings made during the interview will:

- Use an interview number as opposed to a name for classification purposes
- Use a pseudonym (a false name) to protect your identity.
- Alter any additional information that might reveal your identity.

The audio recordings and transcripts from this interview will be kept under lock and key, with computer files under password protection. No one except Mr. MacKenzie will be able to access these files. Once the study is completed, the audio recordings of the interviews will be destroyed.

Risks or discomforts
• If at any time during the interview you want to stop, just let Mr. MacKenzie know and he will stop the interview.

• If you start to feel uncomfortable, just ask Mr. MacKenzie to stop the interview.

You must complete and return the participant assent form and one of your parents or guardians must complete and return the parent consent form before the interviews can take place.

Questions

If you have questions or concerns you can contact Mr. Ben MacKenzie at the school (or via e-mail: mackenb@bgsu.edu) or Dr. Bruce Collet by phone (419) 372-7354, or via e-mail: colleba@bgsu.edu. You may also contact the Chair of Bowling Green State University’s Human Subjects Review Board at (419) 372-7716 (hsrb@bgsu.edu), if any problems or concerns arise during the study.

Agreement

• Your signature below indicates that you have read the information in this agreement and you have had a chance to ask any questions you have about the study.

• Your signature also indicates that you agree to be in the study and have been told that you can change your mind and withdraw your assent to participate at any time.

• You have been told that by signing this agreement you are not giving up any of your legal rights.

• Permission has been obtained from a parent or guardian for your participation in this study.

• You have been given a copy of this agreement.

Signature of interviewee: __________________________ Date: ______________

Printed name of interviewee: ________________________________________________

Researcher: __________________________________________________________________ Date: ______________

Contact information:

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APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

1. Introduction
   a. About myself and this research
   b. Review the “informed assent” letter
   c. Obtain preliminary information
   d. Remind about the purpose of recording
   e. Open for questions prior to beginning

2. Begin Recording
   a. History with Drama
      i. How long have you been involved in Drama productions?
      ii. How did you first get involved in drama?
      iii. Why have you remained involved in drama?
   b. Influential experiences
      i. Could you tell me about a specific experience with drama that has influenced the way you see
         yourself or your culture?
      ii. Probes/Clarifications as necessary
   c. Texts
      i. Are there certain kinds of plays or texts that appeal to you?
      ii. Why or why not?
   d. “Ghanaian” Cultural Identity
      i. What do you think it means to be Ghanaian?
      ii. What has led you to that belief?

3. Opportunity for final comments
June 2, 2010

TO: Ben MacKenzie
MACIE Program

FROM: Hillary Harms, Ph.D.
HSRB Administrator

RE: HSRB Project No.: H10T269GE7

TITLE: Playing the Part: Drama and Cultural Identity in Ghanaian Teenagers

You have met the conditions for approval for your project involving human subjects. As of June 1, 2010, your project has been granted final approval by the Human Subjects Review Board (HSRB). This approval expires on April 6, 2011. You may proceed with subject recruitment and data collection.

The final approved version of the consent document(s) is attached. Consistent with federal OHRP guidance to IRBs, the consent document(s) bearing the HSRB approval/expiration date stamp is the only valid version and you must use copies of the date-stamped document(s) in obtaining consent from research subjects.

You are responsible to conduct the study as approved by the HSRB and to use only approved forms. If you seek to make any changes in your project activities or procedures (including increases in the number of participants), please send a request for modifications immediately to the HSRB via this office. Please notify me, in writing (fax: 372-6916 or email: hsr@bgsu.edu) upon completion of your project.

Good luck with your work. Let me know if this office or the HSRB can be of assistance as your project proceeds.

Comments/ Modifications:

c: Dr. Bruce Collet

Research Category: EXPEDITED #7