Article

African Christian diaspora religion and/or spirituality: A concept analysis and reinterpretation

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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to analyze how the concept of African Christian diaspora religion and/or spirituality, as a missionary-based model, is currently being used and defined within African transnational research and diaspora religion. I conducted a review using a citation search strategy to retrieve peer-reviewed articles that explore the extent to which the seminal paper of Steven Vertovec on "Diaspora Religion" has informed the conceptualization and analysis of the concept of African Christian diaspora religion and/or spirituality (ACDRS). The search generated empirical articles which met the inclusion criteria and were included for concept analysis. This concept analysis identified five emerging attributes of ACDRS as (a) a network of support, (b) a transnational dynamic, (c) a platform for civic engagement and activism, (d) the basis for developing place bonds and diaspora identity, and (e) as an experiential religion. These defining attributes position ACDRS as a multidimensional concept encompassing noninstitutionalized religious expressions and activities, albeit with limited empirical data. I also discussed some study limitations and conceptual issues related to the attributes, antecedents, consequences, and cases of ACDRS.

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Background

Over the past few decades, there has been an increasing amount of literature exploring the idea of "diaspora" as an important subject in the study of religion. The term diaspora has to do with "decolonisation, increased immigration, global communication and transport—a whole range of phenomena that encourage multi-locale attachments, dwelling, and travelling within and across nations" (Cohen, 1999: 3). The study of religion in relation to the diaspora often tells a story of cultural exportation, religious decolonization, and transnationalism wherein the concept of religion is presented as a cultural system examining the links between micro-level interactions and macro-level structures, as reflected through the transnationality of religion among citizens of dispersed communities (Geertz, 1993; Schuler, 2008). The experiences of the African religious diaspora are also conceptualized in the context of decolonization, migration, and transnationality.

I extrapolated studies related to decolonization and African diaspora religion based on the repatriation of indigenous African life and belief systems. As an ongoing discourse, the conversation around decolonization within African religious studies has evolved into two historical strands: colonial and postcolonial perspectives (Diakite and Hucks, 2013). Interests in aspects of African diaspora religion as a colonized construct offer significant challenges for history in general, as it focuses on a deeply influenced "European" self-understanding of religion, as well as a "return" to precolonial African indigenous religious practices. Diakite and Hucks (59) note that this strand of diaspora religion, though still studied within the rubric of "African South American, African Caribbean, and African Central American religious cultures," has largely been ignored while contemporary studies privilege the postcolonial Christian experience. This is partly due to the shift in religious studies literature for the past two decades, with the majority of recent empirical studies in this area exploring migration-related and transnational attributes of African diaspora Christianity. Another example is Matory's (2005) *Black Atlantic Religion*, which sets a new standard for the scholarly study of African diaspora religion in terms of its colonial paradigm, highlighting the intersection of African traditional religion and its Atlantic Brazilian trails. Although scholars such as Lovejoy (1997) has critiqued colonial approaches for their fossilization and anachronism, partly due to the overgeneralization in dealing with transatlantic issues and artifacts related to Africanizing South American and Caribbean religions, Diakite and Hucks (2013) contend that scholarship on the colonial aspects still constitute an important component of African religious transnationalism.

On the other hand, postcolonial studies on African diaspora religion (e.g. Adogame, 2008; Knibbe, 2009, 2011; Okyerefo, 2014; Sabar, 2004, 2008) claim to understand Africa's history as influenced by "entangled histories," resulting from interactions between Africans and their Christian colonizers, thus producing many hybrid cultural and Judeo-Christian religious systems which now inform and shape modern African thought and belief systems. It appears that research on postcolonial African diaspora religion, as part of the *deposits* of the colonial interaction, seems to be centered on Christianity and conceptualized as a transnational missionary-based enterprise (Adogame, 2013), as will be examined in this article.

While pointing out the dearth of studies on colonial African religious perspective, Diakite and Hucks suggest a new direction for African religious studies in the 21st century. They argue, while referring to Hall (1994), that modern research in African religious studies "must

encourage scholarship that disrupts the quest for an 'original Africa' where Africa and its diaspora exist in stasis and remain uncomplicated by the vicissitudes of time and history" (Diakite and Hucks, 2013: 30). Most needed are postcolonial studies that engage the continental and diasporic diversity and proliferation of peoples of African origin in a global milieu, in what Patterson and Kelley (2000) referred to as "Unfinished Migrations" of peoples of Africa in making of the modern world.

Discussions on postcolonial African diaspora religion involve huge transnational migration movements and a surge in the population of Africans of diverse cultures and religious traditions, which resulted from the processes of decolonization and globalization. Literature about this postcolonial approach to religion has often conceptualized it as "African religious transnationalism" (Adogame, 2013; Okyerefo, 2014). One weakness of the colonial approach is that it does not promote religious transnationalism, since there is no flow of religious interactions between African institutions in Africa and people of African diaspora. Transnationality is a term that is used to refer to the interactions that connect people and institutions across the borders of homelands and, consequently, around the globe (Schiller et al., 1992; Vertovec, 2000). This kind of interconnectedness is synonymous to African migrant groups in postcolonial historical contexts, representing an important wave of diaspora phenomenon, which take the form of religious transnationalism and in most cases are Christian-based experiences. With regards to the current postcolonial approach, it is proposed that religious interactions of many kinds, linking African Christian institutions and people of African diaspora through the effects of globalization and decolonization, and interactions between peoples of Africa and their Christian European colonizers, can also affect the changing face of religion in the African diaspora as a Christian phenomenon. Studies (e.g. Adogame, 2013; Okyerefo, 2014) have referred to this postcolonial paradigm as a missionary-based Christian enterprise, to which I now adopt as the direction for this article in conceptualizing African Christian diaspora religion and/or spirituality (ACDRS).

The notion of ACDRS in a postcolonial context emphasizes a form of religious transnationalism positioned through social relations with missionary-based religious networks and members of the African cultural collective. In recent years, this form of religious transnationalism in the African diaspora has been presented as a force for reorienting the social relevance of peoples of Africa in a world that is new to them, permeated with the scar of marginalization and sociocultural inequities, while aiming at transforming the faith of its affiliates into a life-enhancing reality (Burgess, 2009; Okyerefo, 2014; Sabar, 2008). In contrast, the theory of ACDRS has also been problematized in terms of place marking and geographic politics in conflict with modernity (Knibbe, 2009). With regards to the intersection of religion and the secular, Barber (2011) has equally positioned ACDRS as the consequence of exploring the relationship between particularity and universality within self-conscious (Christian) diaspora communities. The emergence of a globalized African diaspora etches the importance of conceptual clarity and consistency in studying the specific modalities of the state, ethnicity, religion, and migration status of African diaspora communities as key markers of difference in the study of ACDRS (Campbell and Afework, 2015; Higgins, 2012).

Drawing on emerging postcolonial studies in African religious transnationalism in the last decade (see Table 1), it would appear that African religious studies research has focused on highlighting the role of religious transnationalism in the proliferation of African migrant Christian church communities in the West, thus introducing a missionary-based model of

Table 1. Identifying articles related to the concept of ACDRS.

References	Context	Findings	Main ideas
Sabar (2004)	*African Christianity in the Jewish State: Adaptation, Accommodation and Legitimization of Migrant Workers' Churches, 1990–2003*	• African churches in Israel are part of the narrative of African religious identity. • African churches are the main space for the production of a sense of belonging among African migrants.	• ACDRS may be the creation of an Afro-Christian space that fulfills the spiritual, emotional, and practical needs of African migrants in Israel. • ACDRS is not a vehicle for recognition and neither can it be used to gain legitimacy in Israel's public sphere.
Adogame (2004)	*Engaging the Rhetoric of Spiritual Warfare: The Public Face of Aladura in Diaspora*	• There is an insufficient grasp of the ACDRS ritual reenactments • The public image of the ACDRS in the context of Aladura is controversial due to media sensationalism.	• ACDRS as ritual reenactments • ACDRS provides spiritual, social, cultural, and civic benefits for both migrant and the host communities.
Adogame (2008)	*African Religiosity in the former Soviet Bloc*	• African Christian immigrant communities are contributing to the religious diversification of the Eastern European diaspora context.	• ACDRS as new abodes of engagement and promising 'mission fields.' • Belief and ritual system is tied to the appropriate response to existential problems faced by members who are part of the ACDRS phenomenon. • ACDRS as reverse-mission dynamics.
Sabar (2008)	*The Religio-Political Discourse of Rights among African Migrant Labourers and African Asylum Seekers, 1990–2008*	• Africans conceptualized Israel as their safe haven • African diaspora. discourse was closely linked to the language of civil rights.	• ACDRS is linked to identity and rights. • ACDRS involves attachment to the Holy Land. •
Burgess (2009)	*African Pentecostal spirituality and civic engagement in Britain*	• The growth of African Pentecostal spirituality has been stimulated by a conscious missionary agenda. • Mission involves social ministry and political action.	• ACDRS as networks of social and religious support. • A Pentecostal experience influenced by social and civic engagement.
Knibbe (2009)	*Nigerian Pentecostals and the power of maps*	• Nigerian-initiated Pentecostalism aims at creating a 'home away from home' through the politics of geography and mapping.	• 'Producing the local' • ACDRS may be seen as competition between maps. • ACDRS may be a source of empowerment and agency for individuals.

(continued)

Table 1. Continued.

References	Context	Findings	Main ideas
		• African Christianity in diaspora is an institutional power on a mission to create a global religious empire using globalization.	
Knibbe (2011)	*Nigerian missionaries in Europe*	There is encounter between African missionaries and Europeans contexts which might suggest a 'meeting of modernities.'	• ACDRS as reaction to modern capitalism. • ACDRS as 'meeting of modernities.' • Reverse-mission
Okyerefo (2014)	*Transnational Dynamics in African Christianity*	ACDRS presents an opportunity to influence and transform the world through a missionary religion, occurring as a reverse-mission and the mandate to evangelize the world.	• ACDRS as a transnational dynamics. • Reverse-mission.

ACDRS: African Christian diaspora religion and/or spirituality.

ACDRS which evaluates the function and remapping of old Christian religious landmarks in new geographical contexts. At the forefront of this research is Adogame (2013) who has described ACDRS as having two types of organizational structures: First, as a missionary-based transnational enterprise linking African-led churches headquartered in Africa and their "host" countries and involves the establishment of new daughter churches with a mother church based in Africa. Second, Adogame (2008) has also proposed another emerging structure of the ACDRS movement in African migrant communities, which exists as autonomous church communities founded by African migrants in diaspora, from where they facilitate transnational transactions within and back to Africa. These two organizational structures of postcolonial ACDRS will be analyzed in this article since they are mainstream cases of contemporary African diaspora religious experience. The postcolonial aspects of ACDRS research give some insights into the patterns of religious transformation and transnationalism within African diaspora/migrant communities, and how changes within these communities affect the development of homeland religions and Christian religious practices and beliefs (Smart, 1999).

However, despite the increasing use of ACDRS in postcolonial literature, it is a poorly defined and misrepresented concept (Adogame, 2004), and hence an analysis of the concept will help in clarifying the theological ambiguity surrounding the concept as a missionary-based transnational model. This will help to further enhance its application in religious transnational studies and clarify the usage of the concept of ACDRS in a way that distinguishes its multiple and complex applications from each other. By examining the way ACDRS has been used and discussed in recent years among African diaspora/migrant communities, it is hoped that clarification of the concept will enhance the discourse on

African religious transnationalism. In addition, it is expected that a clearly defined concept of ACDRS would be useful for future researchers, enabling them to select appropriate resources and articulate its meaning.

Methods

The purpose of this study is to define and clarify the meaning and characteristics of ACDRS as a missionary-based postcolonial enterprise using the principles of concept analysis proposed by Walker and Avant (2011), with the aim of stimulating discussion and strengthening the consistency in future research. It is anticipated that the methodological framework of concept analysis will enable us to deconstruct, juxtapose, and clarify the various complex meanings of ACDRS in postcolonial and transnational religious studies research. This analytical strategy consists of eight steps: concept selection, determining the aim of the analysis, identifying the different uses of the concept, determining the defining attributes, constructing a model case, identifying additional cases (e.g. borderline, related, contrary, invented, and illegitimate cases), identifying antecedents and consequences, and defining empirical referents.

In order to collect data for this concept analysis, I conducted a citation-search research review to retrieve relevant literature exploring different dynamics of ACDRS. Citation-search strategy is a research review technique which uses an original, seminal paper to identify other relevant peer-reviewed studies on a specific topic, rather than performing a predefined online search of several databases. The original literature used for the citation search is a chapter in an edited volume, Vertovec (2000), which explores the links between diaspora and religion and has been referred to as one of the first contributions to postcolonial, transnational, and contemporary diaspora religion (McLoughlin and Zavos, 2013). Steven Vertovec is a professor of Transnational Anthropology at the University of Oxford, and currently serving as the Director of the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity, Göttingen University, Germany. With thousands of citations attributed to him over the years, Vertovec's work has gained the attention of scholars who are interested in exploring the intersections of religion and diaspora within various cultural contexts, particularly in the area of African religious transnationalism. Vertovec's chapter (2000: 280) is used for this study because of his positions on diaspora religion, which he conceptualized as (a) "the study of diasporas and their modes of adaptation [which] give us insights into general patterns of religious transformation"; (b) the extent to which (African) home-religion has grown in resources and how it directly or indirectly affects religious belief and practice; (c) the phenomenon that makes multiethnicity and multiculturalism commonplace in the modern world. These conceptualizations serve the purpose of this study as it is consistent with Vertovec's understanding of diaspora religion as a postcolonial transnational paradigm that involves the interaction between peoples of the diaspora and their home-religion, and the extent to which this interconnectedness influences religious transformation.

The citation search was primarily done using three online databases: Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar. According to Wright et al. (2014), these three databases are the most effective for online citation searches, since they offer the widest collection of articles that have cited an original article. Using the published work of Vertovec (2000) as the original article has allowed for an extensive literature review from 2000 to 2017, generating several pieces of quality literature that have been included in this study for

concept analysis. These studies were selected based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria outlined below.

Inclusion and exclusion criteria

- Empirical studies focused on citizens of sub-Saharan African diaspora, particularly the Western, Eastern, Central, and Southern Africa regions, due to their cultural and religious similarities.
- Prospective studies cited the chapter by Vertovec (2000) on "Diaspora and Religion."
- Studies were written in English.
- Studies were published after Vertovec's (2000) original article date of publication.
- Selected missionary-based postcolonial studies were limited to empirical studies, excluding theoretical studies and commentaries.
- Included studies were published as peer-reviewed articles in reputable journals, excluding conference proceedings, university theses, books/monographs, and Internet articles.
- Included studies conceptualized the link between the African diaspora and the Christian religion, or highlighted a meaning of ACDRS.

In the initial citation search, which was the first data collection phase, I found more than 213 articles, citing the original work of Vertovec. However, after applying all the inclusion criteria, I selected only three articles that met the above criteria for data analysis (i.e. Burgess, 2009 and Sabar, 2004, 2008). To increase the efficiency of the sample size, I included some additional empirical studies for data analysis: ones published in English between 2000 and 2017. I included these additional studies after I did a further search using keywords such as "African diaspora religion," "African Christian spirituality," "African migrant churches," and "Africa and diaspora spirituality." I also added additional studies that met the inclusion criteria for analysis, even though they did not cite the original work of Vertovec. Ultimately, I included these additional empirical studies to strengthen the sample size and illuminate the concept of ACDRS. I further extracted articles with the referenced keywords in their title and abstract, especially ones containing definitions and characteristics of ACDRS as a postcolonial transnational paradigm.

I found more than twenty studies in the second search, most of which were university theses, books, commentaries, conference papers, and unpublished manuscripts. I excluded these materials based on the inclusion criteria. Among the articles I found were studies conducted on a branch of ACDRS related to traditional African religious practices in South America and the Caribbean, which are not solely Christian/missionary based, even though literature in this area consisted of links to books and commentaries. In addition, none of the excluded articles cited the work of Vertovec, met the inclusion criteria, nor positioned ACDRS as a form of religious transnationalism that involves African migrant/diaspora communities. I only included five articles for data analysis in the second data collection phase since they met some of the inclusion criteria, in particular those relating to empirical studies focusing on the spirituality and religion of African Christian migrant communities outside the continent of Africa and published in peer-reviewed journals (i.e. Adogame, 2004, 2008; Knibbe, 2009, 2011; Okyerefo, 2014). These additional data may serve as complementary studies that could enhance our understanding of ACDRS since they are authored by renowned scholars in the field of African religious transnationalism.

Results

Based on the inclusion criteria and additional adjustment to the sample size, I selected eight articles for the data analysis, using the concept analysis method. I extracted the references, contexts, findings, and main ideas of these studies in relation to ACDRS for data analysis. The contents are summarized in Table 1.

Historical evolution and uses of the concept of ACDRS

In order to explore the ways ACDRS has been formulated and provide a richer understanding of the concept, I have consulted various sources based on the recommendation of Walker and Avant (2011). Another important step in the method of concept analysis (in addition to a review of how the concept is defined) is the examination of the historical evolution of the concept, both past and present. According to Walker and Avant, this historical review should be done in order to incorporate the different uses of the concept being analyzed. I encountered several challenges while identifying the multiple definitions and formulations of the concept of ACDRS. One striking observation was that none of the articles included in this research provided a functional definition of ACDRS, even though the authors discussed the various ways it could be defined and used by others. To address the incongruity surrounding the meaning of ACDRS, the applicability of the concept is explored as a global historical phenomenon—one that unfolds the evolution of ACDRS as a historical paradigm, which takes root as a result of the multiple shifting paradigms that have emerged over the years in "African diaspora" discourse in colonial and postcolonial contexts.

Historically, the term African diaspora refers to people of African descent living outside their continental home. The concept was first used by George Shepperson (1968) during an African history paper presentation at the University of Dar es Salaam in which he described the identity of African populations globally. A similar term used to describe Africa's global populations before the presentation of Shepperson was "Pan-Africanism." This notion of African diaspora has a broader meaning in colonial and postcolonial contexts. The former focuses on people of African descent scattered throughout the world as a result of the movement of African people in historic times around the globe through the transatlantic slave trade, whereas the latter elaborates the changing condition under which people of African diaspora live (Butler, 2007).

There has also been a paradigm shift in the conceptualization of "African diaspora" especially with emphasis on the black identity, which aims to achieve a globalized notion of blackness. While the notion of African diaspora may be reconstructed based on colonialism and postcolonialism, it is often problematized as a concept used to refer to people who share common experiences of marginalization and racism. Selected studies for this paper have shown similar conflicting usage, preoccupied with problematizing the relationship between members of the African diaspora and host states in a way that presents the diaspora as spaces inclined to either condemn or tolerate the transnational mobility of African populations. This notion of African diaspora has also been positioned as some sort of transnational hybridity in which the forced transatlantic movements of people of African descent in the first, colonial, wave and the changing movement of people from Africa to other countries in the second, postcolonial, wave have been lobbed together and discussed as the African diaspora. Butler (2007) has reasoned that the idea of

African diaspora is entangled in fluidity, one which can be simultaneously interpreted as a process of being, a changing condition of African populations in the diaspora, and most importantly, a discourse about people of African descent with roots in other parts of the world in relation to their culture, religion, and lived experiences. In many ways, African diaspora is a state of being and a process of becoming and forming diaspora identities and new transnational enterprises.

The discussion on African diaspora has given rise to an African diasporic theological reflection, which presents the need to conceptualize the religion of the African diaspora in both colonial and postcolonial contexts. Although this concept analysis will be focusing on the postcolonial aspects of African diaspora, which largely emphasizes the dynamics of religious transnationalism among African migrant/diaspora communities, it is worth mentioning that the colonial aspect stresses the importance of transatlantic studies and traditional religion as major branches of African diaspora research (Diakite and Hucks, 2013). Nonetheless, the studies used for this concept analysis highlight a new paradigm shift in African diaspora research, pointing to a postcolonial Christian theological reflection of the concept of ACDRS among African migrant communities in the West.

Indeed, the African diaspora discourse has taken a different turn in the last decade, particularly toward a postcolonial interpretation of ACDRS, as seen in the selected studies, with attention given to the new condition of African mobility, identity, hybridity, Christianity, and consciousness. Pace (2017) has referred to this paradigm as a "charismatic transnational enterprise" serving the need of transplanting African churches to the West and strengthening the link between national, religious, and diaspora identities among African migrant communities. The postcolonial interpretation of ACDRS emphasizes how the Christian religion is central to the identity and culture of the African diaspora, particularly in ways that involve producing a localized religion through transnational dynamics in diaspora (Knibbe, 2009; Okyerefo, 2014). This postcolonial paradigm shift in African diaspora discourse has paved the way for a new way of thinking in migration and religious studies under the banner of African religious transnationalism. This school of thought positions ACDRS as a pivotal component of African diaspora semantics, one taking prominence in recent research on religious studies. However, the population captured in this new conceptualization of African diaspora, as represented in the selected studies, focuses on Christians from sub-Saharan Africa, which includes Western, Eastern, Southern, and Central African regions, excluding Northern Africa. This seems to be the current usage of African religious transnationalism in recent studies which aim at drawing parallels between African diaspora and religious transnationalism.

ACDRS is therefore explored as a postcolonial, transnational, and cultural religion, one which draws on the power of two genres of African transnational movements: "those existing as branches of a mother church headquartered in Africa, and those founded by new African migrants with headquarters in diaspora" (Adogame, 2008: 310) to build an institutional power in the diaspora. ACDRS represents both a cultural dimension and as well as heuristic attributes that demonstrate the experiential aspects of African diasporic theological reflection, as I will discuss in the next section.

Critical defining attributes

According to Walker and Avant (2011), defining the attributes of a concept plays a key role in distinguishing its characteristics from those of similar concepts, and could help in

associating the concept to synonyms that may have been used to describe the concept. While analyzing retrieved studies, I determined the defining attributes of ACDRS by grouping together the different themes I found during the analyses. These attributes are grouped according to five recurring themes, the first of which is as a *network of support*.

In almost all the studies, authors described ACDRS as a network of support that creates an Afro-Christian space which fulfills the spiritual, emotional, and practical needs of African migrants (Adogame, 2004; Sabar, 2004, 2008). The second theme positions ACDRS as a transnational dynamic and an opportunity to influence and transform the world through a missionary religion, occurring as a reverse-mission[1] and a mandate to *evangelize* the world (Adogame, 2008; Knibbe, 2009, 2011; Okyerefo, 2014). The third theme to emerge in the concept analysis is centered on the nature of ACDRS as a platform for activism and civic engagements, with a corresponding diaspora atmosphere and culture serving as a reaction to modern capitalism (Burgess, 2009; Knibbe, 2011; Sabar, 2008). The fourth theme recognized the place bonds and identity developed in the process of becoming the African diaspora through the agency of ACDRS. Adogame (2004) labels this ACDRS attribute as "ritual re-enactments," Knibbe (2009, 2011) describes it as "producing the local" or "meeting of modernities," while Sabar (2008) conceptualizes this as developing an attachment to the Holy Land, Jerusalem.

The final theme that emerged in the works of Sabar (2004, 2008) and Burgess (2009), even though the studies only hinted at it, is the experiential aspect of ACDRS. This dimension deserves to be fully explored as it stresses how the experience of the African diaspora in terms of their proximity to, and struggles with, the sacred, through their religious attachment attributions and representations, can help us to better understand the framework of ACDRS.

The themes identified as the defining and critical attributes of ACDRS in the concept analysis have positioned ACDRS as a multidimensional missionary-based postcolonial construct functioning as (a) a network of support, (b) a transnational dynamic, (c) a platform for civic engagement and activism, (d) the basis for developing bonds with the diaspora, and (e) an experiential religion.

Antecedents

Antecedents are events or experiences that occur prior to the onset of the concept (Walker and Avant, 2011). In the instance of ACDRS, it is reasoned that the concept first occurs after a migration experience. Therefore, the main antecedent to ACDRS is migration since ACDRS is part of the *lived* experience of African migrants who continue to widen the definition and meaning of African diaspora. Second, based on the defining attributes of ACDRS as a network of support and a platform for civic engagement, one which is pioneered by a leader, it was also reasoned that the secondary antecedent of ACDRS is the involvement of a spiritual and visionary leader—one with the charismatic authority and passion to be at the forefront of social and civic engagements facilitating ACDRS processes within African diaspora communities.

Consequences

In concept analysis, consequences are often those events or incidents that occur as a result of the effect of the concept (Walker and Avant, 2011). Some selected studies seem to

problematize the concept of ACDRS as a *ticking bomb* within African diaspora communities. For example, Adogame (2008) argues that the rhetoric of spiritual warfare is affecting the public face of ACDRS, owing to media sensationalism, which positions it as a controversial experience. On a positive note, Adogame (2008) and Burgess (2009) both reason that ACDRS communities are contributing to the religious diversification of the diaspora context and contributing to civic engagement using their social, spiritual, and financial capital. However, this was not the case for Knibbe (2009, 2011) who cautions about the increasingly territorial power of ACDRS in a "meeting of modernities," one which involves what she referred to as "politics of geography" and "mapping" of African Christianity in the diaspora as an institutional power.

Exemplar cases

Developing cases for the concept of ACDRS was very challenging since it is a broad concept that encompasses specific critical attributes. Using the concept analysis method, the following cases, found in the literature, which I present will help clarify the concept of ACDRS for further use. These cases may be value based and may not universally apply to every ACDRS context.

Model case. In concept analysis, a model case is the primary example of the concept that includes all the defining attributes of the concept being analyzed (Walker and Avant, 2011). The defining attributes of ACDRS (as a network of support, a transnational dynamic, a platform for civic engagement and activism, the basis for developing bonds with the diaspora, and an experiential religion) will help us formulate a model case(s) that clarifies inconsistencies and errors in the analysis.

An example of a model case would be a community of people with a shared place of origin from Africa who network and bond together to support each other, partly because they are living far away from their homeland. This network of support can be empowering for negotiating the quality of life in a host country and in adapting to a new culture, while also confronting issues of marginalization and sociocultural inequities that are collectively experienced on a day-to-day basis. This network of support can take the form of providing awareness programs and activities organized for African migrants who want to learn more about the culture of their host countries and how to better integrate into the new environment. This might also include learning how to speak the language of the host country, improving entrepreneurial skills, and equipping each other with new information on how to improve one's life in a foreign land.

This support system is also one that identifies with the spiritual struggles of the migrants in a host country, offering opportunities that are relevant in the process of becoming part of the African diaspora. This can be organized through religious gatherings, cultural meetings, or planting new churches with the aim of encouraging and supporting African migrants who are in need of spiritual empowerment and upliftment, while at the same time contributing to the growth of host communities. The attributes of ACDRS are well articulated in the following statements by different networks of support within African diaspora communities:

> It is our desire by the grace of God that our music brings glory to God and is used by Him to encourage, challenge, provoke and motivate Christians to action; to serve Christ with greater commitment and enthusiasm…We're very involved in our local community, and it is something

I have been pushing all the Redeemed church to do... And getting into the community has really helped the church and helped us in our evangelism, helped us to become more influential. (Burgess, 2009: 260–261)

established a network of support through church planting because so many African Christians coming to Britain experienced a sense of rejection in the mainstream churches, and, more positively....offer[ing] pastoral support to African students in a cultural and religious milieu with which they would be familiar. (Adogame, 2004: 498)

It is our mission to provide a place where the depressed, the frustrated, hurting and the confused can find love, peace, acceptance, help, hope, forgiveness, and encouragement. To share the Good News of our Lord Jesus Christ with over 11 million residents of London...It is our mission to have no [fewer] than 3 churches per city in the UK by 2004. (Adogame, 2004: 500)

The motivation to turn to social action and empower people to serve God with greater commitment, as important contexts for expressing devotion to God in ACDRS, is very much nuanced in the empirical examples. When members of the African diaspora have such networks of support, they can amass resources for civic engagement and create a healthy diasporic atmosphere—one enabling them to have a collective political voice to legitimately advocate for their rights in the public sphere, as well as gain recognition in the host lands through the vehicle of ACDRS. This also means that such networks can produce a mobilizing religious rationale according to which social and civic engagements are carried out. Burgess refers to this as an important aspect of individual and collective worship, emphasized in ACDRS, for encountering the energizing love of God from which the individual and community can grow and flourish.

While falling short of perfect models, it is reasoned that the cases illustrated above are examples that may meet the ACDRS defining criteria because they position ACDRS as a network of support, one with the intention of representing the African diaspora through positive public and civic engagements that are rooted in faith. It is aimed at creating a healthy and positive atmosphere that will enable members of the African diaspora to integrate into a host society as they search for meaning, reconnect with their homelands, and forge identity in a new context.

Borderline case. Walker and Avant (2011) note the need to highlight a borderline case, which resembles the concept which may be mistaken for it. There seems to be an abundance of borderline cases in ACDRS research, most of which represent one or two aspects of ACDRS, substituting the overall critical definitions with one overriding attribute. The following examples are scenarios that may be confused with the concept of ACDRS, since not all defining attributes are represented in the case.

- When ACDRS is only presented as a church planting enterprise, without highlighting the role of such transnational network in contributing to other significant aspects of ACDRS.
- When the concept of ACDRS is only conceptualized in terms of having a "home away from home" or "producing the local" in the diaspora.
- The notion that African missionaries and Christians engage the European contexts with a "hidden" agenda of their own as targets of their missionary agenda, on the basis of a *reverse-mission* paradigm.

These kinds of approaches are limited since they only pay attention to the migratory deficits of ACDRS and not what it does for the individual "African" on a day-to-day basis. The focus on branding African Christian missions in the West as a "reverse-mission" may take our attention away from the actual work done by African missionaries in the diaspora. It is therefore argued that such problematic approach limits the potential of broadening our understanding of ACDRS and dislodges the phenomenological affordances of the concept as a *condition* of being. It also limits how we see the phenomenon of ACDRS as an important reality for negotiating identity and well-being in the diaspora, and an agency for strengthening the transnational ties between Africa and the rest of the world.

Related case. According to Walker and Avant (2011), a related case is an example that is similar to the concept being analyzed. In other words, even though it does not have the critical attributes, it is somehow linked to the main concept. An example of an ACDRS-related case would be a scenario where a religious phenomenon within the African continent is interpreted as a form of ACDRS. When an African church headquartered in Nigeria, for example, decides to plant a church in another African country, such as Ghana or South Africa, such a movement could be linked to the concept of ACDRS even though it is not a perfect example of an African diaspora experience since it is within the same continent. The notion of the African diaspora connotes an idea of people of African populations living outside of their continental homes, and therefore studies that explore ACDRS should be conducted within the confines of this definition. The concept of "diaspora" does not necessarily take any particular form among Africans owing to the complexity of identity in Africa. For example, West Africans in Southern Africa or Southern Africans in other regions of Africa often label themselves as part of the "African diaspora" narrative.

A good reference of a related case in this aspect of ACDRS, based on my illustration, would be Ukah (2016a, 2016b, 2010) who has done extensive empirical studies on what he refers to as mission-migration inside the African continent, as a different paradigm of ACDRS within Africa. Although none of Ukah's work was included in the concept analysis because it did not meet the inclusion criteria, it is reasoned that his studies provide some insights into what a related case of postcolonial ACDRS may look like. It is likely that most of the other research done within the African continent that points to the notion of ACDRS may also be examples of related cases, which only represent a different paradigm of ACDRS in terms of its intra-continental movement.

African-Muslim diaspora practices could also be an example of a related ACDRS case, embodying almost similar defining ACDRS attributes, even though African Muslims in diaspora face enormous challenges in maintaining their Islamic faith and practices. Diouf (1998) has noted the tendency to treat Islam as non-African among researchers, even though Islamic identity is central to the *Africanness* of African Muslims. While the concept analysis may have failed to shade light on the Islamic dimension of the diasporan experience, it is acknowledged that such an aspect can also be regarded as a related case of ACDRS. Further research needs to be done in this area.

Another example of an ACDRS-related case would be that of a colonial context which is related to traditional African religion and animist religious practices in South America and the Caribbean. Diakite and Hucks (2013: 43) stress the need to look beyond "black church studies and Christological imperatives" since ACDRS not only embodies ecclesial formations of faith but also necessarily involves "investigating Africana religions in [other] sacred terrains…and examining Africana mystical technology and theurgical epistemologies as

legitimate locales for generative religious reflection." Stewart (2005: 198) argues that part of the reason why this form of ACDRS has been largely ignored and secluded within the broader African diasporic theological discourse is due to their status as "subterranean traditions," in contrast to African Christian experience. Diakite and Hucks (2013) further argue that this is a marginal treatment of ACDRS theological reflection, thus inviting scholars to engage this related case in their research. Concurring with this viewpoint, I reason that exploring ACDRS within the context of "noneclesial spaces" should be conceptualized as a related case, even though this field has been largely understudied in the last decade. As a related ACDRS case, practices of diaspora religion manifested within "noneclesial" African diaspora spaces would therefore embody either one or all of the five critical attributes of ACDRS.

Contrary case. A contrary or illegitimate ACDRS case does not fall within the guidelines of what constitutes the critical attributes of the concept. An example of a contrary ACDRS case is when every African organization or institution in the diaspora is positioned as an agent of ACDRS. An African diaspora experience that is not related to a transnational dynamic, system of support, diaspora identity, civic engagement, or the experiential connection to the sacred does not represent nor promote the ACDRS paradigm.

Empirical referents

Walker and Avant (2011) propose a final step in their concept analysis method, which involves defining the empirical references for the main attributes of the concept being analyzed. Empirical referents demonstrate how the concept is experienced in real-life situations. Unfortunately, I was not able to reference any particular research dealing with the five dimensions of the concept, even though most of the included studies point to one or two critical attributes. Nevertheless, conceptually, insights can be drawn from all the studies to formulate what an empirical referent in terms of the defining attributes of ACDRS might look like, and perhaps how the key article (i.e., Vertovec, 2000) has been dealt with in relation to the concept of ACDRS.

The most beneficial empirical study on ACDRS is one that reflects the multidimensionality of ACDRS: one in which it is positioned as a network of support for identity formation in diasporic situations. Such an empirical study will, first, have the prime objective of investigating the various cultural milieus in which ACDRS seems to offer support and answers to the predicament of African populations in the diaspora who encounter sociocultural issues and modern processes that affect diasporic movement.

Second, the empirical study will reflect on the transnational nature of ACDRS, emphasizing the importance of linkages between Africa and host lands in the identity formation process of African diaspora. Third, an empirical study that focuses on the civic engagement of the African diaspora and the understanding of religion from the perspective of Africans themselves, as illustrated by Burgess (2009) and Sabar (2004, 2008), could help create additional insights into the public engagements and experiential aspects of ACDRS. Knibbe (2009) and Sabar (2008) noted that ACDRS is an important marker of place identity for people of African diaspora, one which is often the springboard for developing attachment to host countries. None of the selected studies clearly show evidence of experiential aspects of ACDRS, although Sabar (2004) made an attempt to understand this paradigm. However, the closest empirical study in this regard that positions ACDRS as an experiential religion

would be the work of Rijk van Dijk,[2] even though it was not analyzed because it did not meet the inclusion criteria.

In a paper presentation at the 1997 "Pentecostalism at Home and Abroad" conference in Manchester, England, Van Dijk describes how experiential aspects of ACDRS (which may involve acts of prayer, spiritual warfare, and proximity to God) are attributes to which migrants turn for spiritual help and protection in their transnational spiritual *journeys*. Van Dijk's conference paper is a classic example of what ACDRS is all about since it shows how the discourse of *trans-subjectivity* within the Ghanaian Pentecostal diaspora serves as the agency by which ACDRS deals with "strangerhood as shaped by the power of the modern African and Western nation states" (1997: 137). Trans-subjectivity was used by Van Dijk to refer to those elements and processes in the social role and within ACDRS, which are explained as extraneous sources of representation and identity formation in the African diaspora. The trans-subjectivity of ACDRS can be examined by taking a closer look at the defining attributes that form people's experiences within African diaspora communities.

Discussion

As a point of departure, there is no one palette for describing ACDRS. The concept of ACDRS is a multidimensional construct that covers five broadly defining attributes that conceptualize ACDRS as (a) a network of support, (b) a transnational dynamic, (c) a platform for civic engagement and activism, (d) the basis for developing place bonds and diaspora identity, and (e) an experiential religion in the form of a relationship experience with the sacred. This definition of ACDRS is derived from the attributes identified in the concept analysis that help stimulate discussion on the topic. As the proposed understanding of ACDRS is further developed, it is hoped that these defining attributes will be refined over time. These attributes suggest a critical turn in the reinterpretation of ACDRS as a religious coping resource for dealing with the alienated experience of living in diaspora. Several empirical studies (e.g., Bansel et al., 2016; Counted, 2018a; Mapedzahama and Kwansah-Aidoo, 2017) have shown that African diasporas are confronted by a wide range of challenges due to their sociodemographic background (e.g. ethnicity, race, education attainment, immigration status, etc.) which often affect their self-identity, self-confidence, quality of life, and opinions about a host country. In a recent study elsewhere (Counted, 2018a), I conceptualized ACDRS as a religious coping resource among African diasporas in Australia, with empirical data suggesting that it may take the form of positive or negative aspects, involving personal, social, and environmental dimensions. The positive aspects involve using ACDRS as a conservational force during a coping process in which the religious individual searches for significance and meaning in times of diasporic uncertainty either through a network of support within transnational spaces (e.g. local churches) or through seeking a new relationship experience with God individually or collectively. The negative aspects of ACDRS may involve showing spiritual or religious discontent and reappraisal of God's powers in dealing with the difficulties associated with living in the diaspora. The mediating role of ACDRS in the relationship between the contextual diasporic situations (e.g. social, economic, and political, etc.) and health outcomes of Africans living in the diaspora cannot be overemphasized (Counted et al., 2018b). In other words, ACDRS cannot be divorced from the material and existential conditions associated with living in diaspora such as discrimination, sociocultural inequities, feelings of loneliness, forced acculturation, among others. The concept of ACDRS shows how religion is used

as an agency of power and security from which to navigate the "rivers" of uncertainty in foreign lands, one which has significant health benefits for the individual. This is well documented in the circle of place spirituality theory (e.g., Counted, 2018b; Counted et al., 2018a; Counted and Watts, 2017; Counted and Zock, in press), which explores the intersection between religion and foreign lands, in which dispersed people turn for exploration curiosity and attachment-affiliation needs, in hope to find a sense of safe haven and secure base in times of distress.

This concept analysis builds on the work of Vertovec (2000), who sought to examine the conceptual links between "diaspora and religion" in which he draws from the work of Smart (1999) in order to stress the importance of studying diaspora religions. First, he notes that "the study of diasporas and their modes of adaptation can give us insights into general patterns of religious transformation" (Vertovec, 2000: 280). Second, Vertovec reasoned that studying diasporas illuminates the extent to which homeland religion has grown in terms of how external resources, such as wealth, education, and exposure to foreign influences, may have a direct and/or indirect effect on religious belief and practice. Vertovec also contends that diaspora religion stresses the phenomenon of "meeting of modernities" which makes multiethnicity commonplace in the modern world. These three facets of diaspora religion derived from Vertovec's seminal paper will be discussed and juxtaposed in more detail in relation to the critical attributes of ACDRS.

In light of the various perspectives being analyzed thus far, the concept analysis method has allowed us to understand the concept of ACDRS based on five defining attributes. First, the concept analysis provides support for those theorists who conceptualize ACDRS as a network of support (e.g. Adogame, 2004; Burgess, 2009; Knibbe, 2009; Sabar, 2004), providing spiritual, social, and cultural benefits for both African migrants and host communities. The study of ACDRS and its *modus operandi* gives us insights into the transformation and development of religion within African diaspora communities, to include but not be limited to, practicing religion as a *humanitarian* faith which is largely influenced by a corresponding theology, experience, and context. This aspect demonstrates how ACDRS may be a reliable source of empowerment and agency for individuals experiencing diasporic alienation and sociocultural inequities, thus having far-reaching implications on the well-being of African migrants.

Second, this concept analysis also provides support for the understanding of ACDRS as a transnational dynamic, owing to the nature of interaction between African diaspora communities and home countries. This dynamic of transnational interaction has helped in addressing questions and concerns arising as a result of the great incidence of African diaspora in the world today, with particular interest in how they contribute to the multicultural polarization of modern cultures and paradigms. Third, the findings on ACDRS reveal the composition of the concept as a platform for civic engagement, activism, and public theology. This is particularly nuanced in three studies undertaken by Adogame (2004), Sabar (2008), and Burgess (2009). Sabar (2008) demonstrated how ACDRS is used as a platform to invoke claims of human rights in the form of religious rhetoric to plead for the rights of individuals with refugee status within the African diaspora communities (Sabar, 2008). However, Burgess (2009) and Adogame (2004) positioned themselves differently, viewing ACDRS as an ideology that is tied to the religious beliefs and theology of the social actors. This is consistent with the report of Levitt (1998) which shows how migrant church theology directs the everyday lives of migrant believers in a way that informs them about their rights and responsibilities as migrants in a host country (Levitt, 1998). This

theology also adds to the role of the ACDRS experience in "energizing compassion towards others" and encouraging social–political engagements (Burgess, 2009: 257). Wilkinson (2000) refers to this as the sociological meaning of theology, since it is a form of social action that motivates people to participate in organized religion.

Furthermore, the findings of this study highlight ACDRS as a pattern of religious transformation that forms the basis for the development of place bonds, serving as the main space for the creation of diaspora identity and a sense of belonging among African migrants who are far away from their homelands. Knibbe (2009, 2011) refers to this as "producing the local" or "meeting of modernities," whereas Sabar (2008) calls this phenomenon "attachment to...land." This critical attribute points to how "multiethnicity is now commonplace" (Smart, 1999: 421) in the modern world as a result of the increasingly high incidence of ACDRS.

In addition, Vertovec (2000) and Smart (1999) have noted that the study of diaspora and their modes of adaptation can give insights into new paradigms of religious transformation. A new interesting ACDRS paradigm was observed, one which lacks empirical research. This dimension involved the experiential aspects of ACDRS, encompassing noninstitutionalized religious activities. While the analyzed studies conceptualized culture as a mobilizing ACDRS identity, none of them seem to adequately position ACDRS as an experiential religion in terms of the individual relationship and experience with the Divine. This is where an empirical gap was found in ACDRS research, as this attribute of ACDRS points to a paradigm shift in religious transnationalism which mobilizes religion as a psychodynamic perspective connected to subjective experiences and biographics. Such a perspective is consistent with Watts (2017) observation of a change in dynamics of religious experiences in which he sees religious belief moving away from its conservative and cultural aspects to incorporate an experiential, relational, and personal dimension of religious experience. This aspect of ACDRS research would encompass personality patterns which begin in the early years of life, mental processes, emotional-cognitive representations of self, others, and the Divine, among other psychodynamic postulates (Granqvist, 2006).

One limitation of employing concept analysis is that often concepts do not fit neatly into a particular prescribed methodology due to their all-encompassing nature. In attempting to clarify ACDRS, I fear that I might have sunk into the conceptual waters of muddiness. Also, a concept as broad as ACDRS may not feasibly fit into one creative conceptual container. For this reason, as well as following the recommendation of Walker and Avant (2011) to explore all its uses, I have examined all possible usage of ACDRS in relation to Vertovec's article and also positioned the concept as a complex, multifaceted, and dynamic construct. Although I have conducted the present concept analysis systematically, it is possible that I may not have included other important studies in the field of ACDRS due to not meeting the inclusion criteria. Two such important studies are those of Simon (2002) and van Dijk (1997), neither of which cited the work of Vertovec. In addition, van Dijk's work was published as a conference paper and therefore did not meet the selection criteria for this article. Another important study that I did not include for analysis due to it not meeting the inclusion criteria was that of Thompson (1995), while other studies by Ter Haar (2009), Kalu (2008), and Asamoah-Gyadu (2015) simply did not appear in the search on Scopus, Google Scholar, and Web of Science. Though the work of these great scholars was not mentioned, not citing them would still not change the outcome of the concept analysis because their views were also represented in the attributes being promoted.

While those studies I included point to a missionary/Christian-based ACDRS model, I was not able to identify other tributaries of ACDRS research during the search due to the scope of this article. For example, empirical studies exploring the concept of ACDRS in terms of "African-Muslim practices," "African Caribbean religion," or "traditional African religious practices" seem minuscule and inconsistent, compared to studies privileging the Christian diaspora experience. Nonetheless, this limitation may not have affected the outcome of the concept analysis since these other tributaries could be conceptualized as related cases of ACDRS, especially due to the probability that they are embodied within either one, or arguably all, of the discussed attributes.

As I draw the reader's attention to the methodological limitations of this study, I have also highlighted the contributions of excluded studies that did not meet the criteria for inclusion. Although there are many benefits in beginning the sampling with a key seminal article in the field, many readers may interpret this method of data collection as being biased, as some reviewers have reasoned, since the sample is only about research addressing the key article. This is a fair point, but it is also probable to say that the methodological approach adopted has helped in controlling the flow of data, hence allowing for quality empirical studies to emerge in the online citation search. In addition, this study provides some conceptual insights into how ACDRS may have been conceptualized in the last decade, and given the systematic methodological approach employed, it clearly reviews how the key article of Vertovec has been dealt with in relation to the concept of ACDRS and its metamorphosis over the years. I maintain that Vertovec's study is a justifiable starting point for this concept analysis, given that he is a leading scholar in the field, and his chapter has been recommended by McLoughlin and Zavos (2013) as one of the first discussion on contemporary diaspora religion to the late Ninian Smart.

As new paradigms of knowledge emerge, further development of the concept of ACDRS is required in order to expand and contribute to the understanding of ACDRS. Another important area requiring further investigation in ACDRS research is its experiential and psychodynamic aspects. It seems that the shortage of resources exploring this area of ACDRS has come about as a result of the disciplinary backgrounds of scholars who have studied the African diaspora phenomenon over the years as sociologists or anthropologists. Experiential ACDRS would encourage the study of the subjective and psychodynamic religious experiences that influence and strengthen the links between people of African diaspora and their homelands. This aspect of ACDRS studies might come from the intersection of psychology and religion so as to interpret ACDRS in terms of relational processes and representations, and as a whole body event within the context of relationships, autonomy, and individual growth opportunities (Counted, 2016a, 2016b; Counted et al., 2018b; Granqvist and Kirkpatrick, 2016; Shea, 1987; Swanson, 2010; Watts, 2017).

Conclusion

The concept analysis reveals that ACDRS has been positioned and interpreted over the years based on five defining attributes. These themes, associated antecedents, and consequences strengthen the concept of ACDRS as a multidimensional construct, one which still needs more coverage within the study of African religious transnationalism. While it is noted that ACDRS may have been presented in most research as an institutional religion and a form of cultural identity, it is my position that studying ACDRS as an experiential

religion would shed further light on what is already known about ACDRS and contribute toward new research agendas and conceptual frameworks for exploring African religion and spirituality in general. As such, ACDRS can be constructed as a personal experience that complements the institutional and cultural narrative. Unfortunately, although the experiential aspect of religion is an important theme in ACDRS research, there is a lack of empirical evidence. This article invites ACDRS scholars to consider exploring this knowledge paradigm since it warrants further investigation that could illuminate the experiential trajectory of African transnational religion.

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Notes

1. A concept that refers to the trend of describing the phenomenon that "those who used to be conceptualised as the 'targets' of the European missionary enterprise, now conceptualise themselves as missionaries and have plans to re-evangelize Europe" (Knibbe, 2011: 474). Reverse-mission is the deep sense of gratitude shown by missionaries disguised as evangelists, apostles, and pastors from former mission fields, particularly in Third World countries, who now evangelize in Europe, North America, and Australia, with the aim of restoring the diminishing face of Christianity in these regions.
2. Presented as a paper by Rijk Van Dijk titled "Discourses of transubjectivity in the Ghanaian Pentecostal diaspora" at the Pentecostalism at Home and Abroad conference held in Manchester, United Kingdom on 11 April 1997.

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