How group members appraise collective history: Appraisal dimensions of collective history and
their role in in-group engagement

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Abstract

Group members' appraisals of their in-group's collective history have been found to shape their engagement with the in-group, in terms of identification and willingness to work towards group goals. However, previous research has not examined the complexity and dimensionality of how collective history is appraised by group members, or how different forms of appraisals relate to different forms of in-group engagement. Our paper addresses this shortcoming by (1) outlining four key dimensions – *richness*, *clarity*, *valence* and *subjective importance* – of how an in-group's collective history can be appraised, and (2) examining how these appraisal dimensions relate to group members' engagement with the in-group. Focussing on the African in-group category, we tested these ideas using a qualitative – essay writing – approach. Analysis of responses ($N = 33$) indicated varied use of each of these dimensions of collective history appraisal, and that they relate to in-group engagement in differing ways. Two specific rhetorical strategies were identified: deploying the in-group's history as a contrast; and deploying the in-group's history as an inspiration. When collective history was appraised as rich, complex, negatively-valenced and unimportant, it was characterised as something from which the in-group should break away (i.e., history-as-contrast). Conversely, when collective history was appraised as rich, complex, positively-valenced and important, history was characterised as something to be used as a resource for the in-group (i.e., history-as-inspiration). Our findings build a fuller and more nuanced picture of how collective history shapes in-group engagement in a non-western setting.

Keywords: Collective history appraisals; in-group engagement; African identity; group processes

How group members appraise collective history: Appraisal dimensions of collective history and their role in in-group engagement

The role of perceptions of collective history in shaping how group members engage with their in-group has been widely researched in social psychology. Two major themes are that (1) perceptions of history shape group members' perception of their in-group (e.g., identification with the in-group), and (2) group members' collective behaviours (e.g., collective political action to achieve group goals). However, previous research has tended to examine only how specific, singular appraisal dimensions of collective history (e.g., whether in-group history is appraised as positive or negative *per se*) shape group members' engagement with the in-group. Adopting a qualitative approach in a non-WEIRD (i.e., non- Western, Educated, Industrialised, Rich, and Democratic) sample, we build upon this prior work by examining the complexity of appraisals of collective history, delineating different dimensions of how an in-group's history can be appraised. We then also examine how group members evoke or utilise these different dimensions of appraisal to create impetus for present and future engagement with the in-group.

We first briefly review previous research on the relevance of history to group membership, before outlining four different possible dimensions on which in-group history may be appraised (*richness, clarity, valence and subjective importance*), and how these appraisals may shape in-group engagement in a post-colonial African context.

Collective history and group membership

A group's history can provide narratives regarding the group's origin (where we came from); identity (who we are); and future (where we should be going; de Saint-Laurent & Obradović, 2019; Liu & Hilton, 2005; Reicher & Hopkins, 2001). Collective history can thus provide

group members with a template on how to guide the group's existence, including traditions, symbols, norms, values, and ideologies with which to understand and interact with the world around them (de Saint-Laurent & Obradović, 2019; Liu & Hilton, 2005; Sani et al., 2008). A group's collective history represents a resource that can inform group members' understanding of their group's identity, their conduct in intragroup and intergroup relations, and options for actions to address present challenges (Cinnirella, 1998; Khan et al., 2017; Licata et al., 2018; Liu & Hilton, 2005; Liu & Khan, 2014; Reicher & Hopkins, 2001a).

Accordingly, historical narratives are used by leaders to define 'our' in-group identity in specific ways to mobilise group members to fulfil specific political goals (Jetten & Wohl, 2012; Klein & Licata, 2003; Obradović & Howarth, 2018). For example, Reicher & Hopkins' (2001b) analysis of political rhetoric among Scottish politicians indicates that as 'identity entrepreneurs', they used accounts of Scottish history in divergent ways to define what being 'Scottish' means. This was done to mobilise Scottish people towards varying actions, such as seeking independence or remaining part of the United Kingdom. For instance, politicians who favoured national independence used historical narratives of King Robert the Bruce's victory over England at Bannockburn in 1314 to affirm Scotland's perennial battle with England and to inspire the fight for independence. Conversely, politicians who favoured unionism with Britain used King Robert the Bruce's victory at Bannockburn to affirm Scotland's equality, strength, confidence and success, and to reject notions that Scotland was being treated badly in the union (Reicher & Hopkins, 2001b). Correspondingly, historical narratives can shape behaviours aimed at maintaining a positively distinct social identity for the group (Cinnirella, 1998). For example, Cinnirella (1996, 1997) suggested that British people refused to adopt a European identity because of Britain's former domination of world affairs and massive colonial empire. Rejecting 'European-ness' thus protected British identity from the perceived threat of European integration. Moreover, there is

evidence that the salience of a valued in-group past strengthens behavioural intentions to support the in-group and facilitates self-sacrificial behaviours from in-group members (Wildschut et al., 2014).

Altogether, previous research suggests that appraisals of collective history are important in shaping group members' present and future engagement with the group, but there has not been a systematic examination of the different key dimensions on which history can be appraised. This is important because previous research has only extensively examined the role of appraisals of valence (i.e., the overall positivity or negativity) of the in-group's collective history on how group members engage with the in-group (e.g, Cinnirella, 1998; Licata et al., 2018; Rabinovich & Morton, 2012; Roth et al., 2017). Moreover, findings from such research also reveal inconsistencies in how appraisals of collective history relate to present and future action. On the one hand, group members can mobilise towards collective action based on appraising their group's history as negative. For example, Licata and colleagues (2018) found that Africans who appraised colonialism as exploitative (in comparison to developmental) were more willing to seek reparations for colonial violence. On the other hand, group members' collective action tendencies can be hampered based on appraising their group's history as negative. For example, Rabinovich and Morton (2012) found that when group members appraised their in-group's collective history as negative (in comparison to positive appraisals), collective action intentions were weaker. Correspondingly, previous evidence suggests that the connection between appraisals of collective history and group members' engagement with the in-group may not be straightforward (Makanju et al., 2020). Specifically, Makanju and colleagues found that watching and reflecting on video clips of either positive or negative historical representations of African identity had no significant effect on Africans' identification as African, or on their collective action intentions.

These contradictions suggest a need for a more nuanced understanding of the different ways – over and above valence – in which an in-group's collective history can be appraised, and how these different appraisals of collective history relate to group members' engagement with the in-group. We begin to address this need by delineating different key dimensions on which an in-group's history can be appraised, and examining how these different appraisal dimensions relate to group members' present and future engagement with the in-group.

Appraisal dimensions of collective history

Drawing on previous cross-disciplinary research and theory on the relevance of collective history to group membership, we identify four potential dimensions (further composed of twelve sub-dimensions) of the appraisals of history; namely the *richness*, *clarity*, *valence*, and *subjective importance* of an in-group's collective history.

The *richness* of an in-group's history is the appraisal of the depth and scale of the in-group's history. This dimension conceivably has two sub-dimensions of (a) *depth*; that is, how much there is to learn about the in-group's history and if any noteworthy history of the in-group exists (Bulhan, 2015; Casely-Hayford, 2012; Quinn et al., 2017); and (b) *temporality*; that is, how far back the in-group's history stretches (Kahn et al., 2017; Reicher & Hopkins, 2001a; Sani et al., 2007, 2008).

The *clarity* of an in-group's history is the appraisal of how easy or difficult it is to characterise the in-group's history. Based on previous research, there are at least three possible facets or sub-dimensions to the clarity dimension: (a) *comprehensibility*; that is, how easy or hard it is to understand the in-group's history (Adams et al., 2018; Cheskin, 2012), (b) *contentiousness*; that is, how contested the in-group's history is (Bulhan, 2015; Goldberg, 2013; Goldberg & Ron, 2014; Gries et al., 2009; Liu, 2005; Reicher & Hopkins, 2001b), and (c) *vividness*; that is, how easy it is to visualise or bring to mind historical content of the group (Wildschut et al., 2014).

The *valence* of an in-group's history also has at least three possible appraisal sub-dimensions : (a) *positivity*; that is, how positive the in-group's history is perceived to be (Roth et al., 2017), (b) *pleasantness*; that is, how emotionally pleasant it is to hear about the in-group's history (Cheung et al., 2013; Wildschut et al., 2014; Zhou et al., 2012), and (3) *glory*; that is, the fortune and welfare of the in-group in terms of glory or suffering (Cinnirella, 1998; Liu et al., 2009; Roccas et al., 2006; Schori-Eyal et al., 2017).

The final potential appraisal dimension that we consider is the *subjective importance* of in-group's history. This dimension has four potential sub-dimensions: (a) *importance to present day*; that is, the importance of in-group history in understanding present day circumstances (de Saint-Laurent & Obradović, 2019; Liu & Hilton, 2005), (b) *importance to self*; that is, the importance of the in-group's history to group members' self-concepts (Beach & Tesser, 1995; Liu et al., 1999), (c) *importance to in-group*; that is, the perceived importance of the in-group's history to in-group members more generally (Licata et al., 2018; Liu & Hilton, 2005; Reicher & Hopkins, 2001a), and (d) *importance to the world*; that is, importance of the in-group's history to out-groups and the world at large (Liu, 1999). Figure 1 depicts our theorised appraisal dimensions and sub-dimensions of collective history.

Figure 1. Different possible appraisal dimensions (and sub-dimensions) of collective history

In empirical terms, the present research aimed to examine whether and how people talk about their group's history along these theoretical dimensions, and how such appraisals relate to in-group engagement. We use 'in-group engagement' as an umbrella term for how much people identify with the in-group (e.g., Leach et al., 2008; Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992) and want to act positively towards achieving group goals (e.g., through collective political action; Sweetman et al., 2013; van Zomeren et al., 2004). In-group engagement represents group members' orientations towards the present and future of the in-group as well as how group members might behave to achieve group goals in the form of in-group identification and support for action to further group goals.

Collective history appraisals and in-group engagement in a post-colonial context: The case of "African" identity

Our argument here is that it is not just the reality of collective history that influences in-group engagement, but rather it is the different ways in which collective history can be appraised that shape in-group engagement. We examine these ideas in a largely-unresearched intergroup setting within social psychology: Africa. In the African context, these appraisal processes are likely to be impacted by the history of European colonisation of Africa and its deep legacy on African identity (Bulhan, 2015). One of the key features of the colonial legacy is that colonial hegemony profoundly undermines people's understanding and appreciation of a positive, clear, rich and important collective history that pre-dates the colonial era. In such post-colonial contexts (which, in fact, encompass the majority of the world's population), how do people appraise their collective pasts, and how do their appraisals of their collective past relate to present and future engagement with the in-group?

Previous research that has engaged with appraisals of collective history in colonial contexts has also focused almost exclusively on a colonial perpetrator perspective. For instance, research

on collective guilt has examined how appraisals of historical collective wrongdoing by an in-group affect outcomes such as in-group identification, and the inclination to support collective apologies or reparation (e.g., Doosje et al., 1998; Klein et al., 2011). Much less research has focused on the other side of that shared colonial history – colonial victimhood/survivorship – in terms of how collective history is appraised and relates to in-group engagement. This adds further impetus to our investigation of the dimensions on which collective history is appraised, and their relationship to in-group engagement in post-colonial contexts such as Africa.

The current research

We were particularly interested in how variations in the appraisal of Africa's collective history sit alongside perspectives on what Africa is and what it could be in the future. Therefore, we employed a qualitative – essay writing – approach whereby Africans (i.e., Africans living in African countries and Africans living in the diaspora) wrote essays on questions based on (1) our theorisations of the dimensions of appraisal of history and (2) perceptions of the contemporary issues facing Africa and the future of Africa. The essay-writing design enabled participants to express themselves with relative freedom and to generate examples of historical narratives in their writings without us prompting specific narratives or events, but framed more generally by the potential appraisal dimensions. Our analysis involved a hybrid approach (e.g., Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006) that was informed by our *a priori* theorisations on the appraisal dimensions of collective history (i.e., theoretically-driven themes), but also involved a more bottom-up approach (i.e., data-driven themes) to explore variation in how different appraisals of collective history sat alongside (and gave impetus too) different characterisations of how in-group members should engage with the in-group.

Method

Participants

Participants were 33 adults who identified as African, of whom 45.5% were Africans living in Africa ($N = 15$) and 42.4% were Africans living outside Africa ($N = 14$). A further 12.1% (4) did not specify their residency. Participants were recruited on social media platforms (e.g., Facebook and WhatsApp) initially via interpersonal contacts, then snowballed on to further contacts. Participants were aged between 18 and 68 years ($M = 33.28$, $SD = 13.09$). Twelve identified as female and 17 as male, whilst a further four did not report gender. Participants reported their nationality as: Nigerian (63.6%); Tanzanian (3%); Ghanaian (15.2%); Ugandan (3%); not available (3%); or missing data (12.1%). Table 1 contains demographic information for all participants.

Procedure

This study was conducted online using Qualtrics. Participants were informed that the study was about their opinions on Africa, such as how they see the history of Africa. Moreover, participants were instructed that they could write as much as they wanted on each question, but that it was ideal/more useful to write at least 150 words for each question. Participants were then asked four main questions on how they appraise African history: *'give an account of your awareness of African history'*, *'generally what do you think of African history'*, *'how do you judge the features of African history'* and *'how important is African history'*. These main questions then had three or four pointer questions on how participants might answer them. For example, the awareness questions had four pointer questions: *'how much do you know about African history'*, *'does noteworthy African history exist'*, *'is there a lot or a little to learn about African history'*, and *'how far back in time do the main aspects of African history stretch'*. These pointers provided (1) different sub-dimensions on which individuals might appraise African history, and (2) a probing mechanism (mirroring techniques in face-to-face interviews).

The 'give an account of your awareness of African history' question had the sub-dimensions of the *depth* and *temporality* of African history as pointer questions. The 'generally what do you think of African history' question had the dimensions *positivity*, *glory*, *pleasantness* and *importance to present day* as pointer questions. The 'how do you judge the features of African history' question had the sub-dimensions of *comprehensibility*, *contentiousness* and *vividness* as pointer questions. The 'how important is African history' question had the sub-dimensions of *importance to self*, *importance to in-group* and *importance to world* as pointer questions.

Subsequently, participants were asked (1) to list three key things in African history; (2) about their perceptions of the future for Africans in Africa; and (3) about their thoughts on what the contemporary problems facing Africa are and what they think can be done to solve these problems. Finally, participants completed demographic information and were then thanked and debriefed on the purposes and expected outcomes of the study. The questionnaire used as presented to participants and data can be found on the project OSF site at https://osf.io/ey84t/?view_only=5752f88cb55d49b696f5a428df7c2eee.

Analytic approach

Braun and Clarke's (2006) approach to thematic analysis – which allows for the identification, analysis, and interpretation of a dataset by highlighting common themes and patterns – was employed. Coding of the appraisals of history was initially organised based on our theorisations on the dimensions of the appraisal of collective history. The themes for the appraisals of history were not assumed to be mutually exclusive, and extracts that were relevant to more than one theme were coded as such. This was important because sub-dimensions were clustered on overarching questions (dimensions), meaning that participants' responses to a given question may be indicative of multiple sub-dimensions.

In contrast, coding of participants' responses about the solution to contemporary problems facing Africa and perceptions of the future of Africa as it relates to appraisals of history was driven by the data. In other words, we employed bottom-up coding to explore variation in how participants made sense of collective history to engender (or not) engagement with the in-group. For this part of the analysis, we employed a rhetorical approach (e.g., Livingstone et al., 2009) to examine how participants' appraisals of collective history are used (or not) to create impetus for different forms of in-group (dis)engagement.

Data were coded by the first author. However, all the stages involved in the data analysis were discussed in-depth with the co-authors. A realist approach to the data was utilised as we interpreted participants' responses to be indicative of their actual experiences.

The analysis is presented in two parts: (1) sub-dimensions of the appraisal of collective history, and (2) appraisals of collective history and in-group engagement. Part (1) is organised by theoretically-driven themes and includes illustrations of different ways in which participants characterised in-group history on these dimensions. Part (2) is organised by individual participant narrative across their responses to the different questions rather than by individual theme, to illustrate how history was used to facilitate engagement with the group and variation in the forms that this could take.

Analysis and Discussion

Appraisal dimensions of collective history

Analysis of participants' essay responses revealed variation across all 12 sub-dimensions of the appraisal of collective history. For example, responses relevant to the *positivity* sub-dimension involved a range of *positive* or *negative* appraisals of African history. However, for the *depth* sub-dimension, participants unanimously appraised African history as *deep* (with no responses indicating an appraisal of African history as *limited*). Below, we present example extracts regarding

two of the twelve sub-dimensions. These extracts illustrate the considerable variation that was present on each sub-dimension.

Regarding the *importance to present day* sub-dimension, Participant 18 (P18) appraised African history as *important* to the present day:

I believe that African history is important for not only understanding how things are today but using what made Africa so great in the past as a means to make Africa great again today. (P18, female, Ghanaian).

Conversely, Participant 1 (P1) appraised African history as *unimportant* to the present day:

I know very little, besides the more popular aspects such as slave trade... I do not see any immediate or long-term benefit or value in understanding the history of Africa. (P1, male, Nigerian).

In another example, Participant 20 (P20) appraised African history as having *consensus* over the details of historical events on the *contentiousness* sub-dimension:

Personally, I do not think African history is that convoluted regardless of the different accounts/perspectives of what transpired. I think across board there is more of a consensus than disagreement of events in African history. (P20, female, Nigerian)

Conversely, Participant 5 (P5) appraised African history as being more contentious:

African history... has been twisted immensely to the point that you don't know which to believe. Writers are generally dishonest as they try to paint the picture to suit them. So you get different information from a core African and a Foreigner writing on Africa. (P5, male, Nigerian)

Table 2 contains illustrative extracts of each sub-dimension of the appraisals of collective history.

Collective history appraisals and in-group engagement

The analysis indicated that participants readily drew upon and created narratives about the role of collective history, but also that its connection to engagement with present-day challenges and the future of the group could take several quite different forms. Broadly, the analysis revealed that outlooks on the in-group's future were pessimistic (12.12%), optimistic (60.61%), ambivalent (3.03%), or not addressed at all (24.24%) irrespective of collective history appraisals. While the mapping of appraisals onto claims about the group's future was in many

cases unclear, two participants (P1 and P2) in particular presented opposing combinations of the valence and subjective importance appraisals that coincided with expressions of pessimism or optimism about the in-group's future. Specifically, a negatively-valenced and unimportant appraisal coincided with pessimism and a positively-valenced and important appraisal coincided with optimism. Table 3 contains a summary of collective history appraisals for each participant alongside their outlook on the in-group's future.

Additionally, two participants (P8 and P32) offered a much more explicit connection between collective history and in-group engagement by openly referring to collective history as a reason for what they think should be the ideal form of engagement with the in-group. This in turn took two different forms which have not previously been acknowledged in social psychological research. First, in-group history could be appraised as something against which to *contrast* the present and future; that is, as something from which to escape or leave in the past for the better of the group: history-as-contrast. Second, in-group history could be appraised instead as something upon which to draw and use as an inspiration for the better of the group: history-as-inspiration.

In the following sections, we present individual participants' overall narratives to illustrate the analysis between participants. The first pair of accounts (P1 and P2¹) illustrate the contrasting forms of collective history appraisal that were related either to pessimism or optimism about the in-group's future (see Figure 2). The second pair of accounts (P8 and P32) illustrate the specific history-as-contrast and history-as-inspiration narratives that these participants presented (see Figure 3). These examples illustrate the main patterns developed in the analysis; that is, no other meaningful patterns were discernible following the analysis.

¹ Incidentally, in the two essays used to illustrate this part of the analysis, these participants (P1 & P2) did not interact with the clarity dimension.

Figure 2. Diagram showing opposing collective history appraisal forms that are related either to pessimism or optimism about the in-group's future.

Figure 3. Diagram showing opposing collective history appraisal forms that underline history being employed either as a contrast or an inspiration.

Collective history appraisals and pessimism for the future: Participant 1 (P1). P1's account

involved appraising African history as *rich*, *negatively-valenced* and *unimportant*. In this account, African history is characterised as unbeneficial and worthless to Africa. Moreover, P1 appraised African history as having a justified negative history which, they suggest, is echoed in the lack of progressiveness in some African societies today:

...there will be many elaborate and well documented accounts of African culture, practices, and landscapes... hence, there is probably a huge body of knowledge relating to African culture and history... (P1, male, Nigerian; Q1 response²)

I know very little, besides the more popular aspects such as slave trade..., I do not see any immediate or long-term benefit or value in understanding the history of Africa. (P1, male, Nigerian; Q1 response)

By and large, African history has been cast as negative. This is owing to the fact that Africans have typically been painted as primitive, intellectually inferior and uncivilized... Sometimes, these negative history has been justified because for example, many African cultures still exist whereby people live nomadic lifestyles. In addition, several cultural

² Q1, Q2, Q3 response means response to Question 1, Question 2, Question 3 etc.

practices and marriage rites were backward and are still backward. (P1, male, Nigerian; Q2 response)

Furthermore, P1 articulates Africa's current problems as a collective action problem arising from poor leadership and corruption. Hence, he calls on Africans to embrace education and forsake free-riding to contribute to the advancement of their societies. This articulation of Africa's current problems corresponds to P1 perceiving a pessimistic future for Africa because of a lack of progress:

Poor leadership and corruption are the primary issues upon which all the other problems... are dependent. Also many Africans are unwilling to contribute or be productive for the development of their nations... A few solutions includes: A overhaul of the judicial system in order to ensure they are capable of prosecuting those charged effectively. Standard education which will help give exposure to the general populace... The populace should get more involved in politics in order for political parties to produce more viable and enlightened candidates. (P1, male, Nigerian; Q7 response)

At the moment, the future is bleak, simply because there is very little progress in sight. (P1, male, Nigerian; Q6 response)

P1's pessimism about Africa's ability to face up to big problems facing the in-group happens in the context of his appraisals of African history as being unimportant to the in-group and having a predominantly justified negative history. In other words, appraisals about an unimportant and negatively-valenced African history coincided with pessimism about Africa's inability to deal with contemporary problems in the future.

Collective history appraisals and optimism for the future: Participant 2 (P2). P2's

appraisals involved appraising African history as *rich, positively-valenced* and *important*. P2's appraisal emphasised Africa's contribution to science and technology and African history as a source of a positive self-conception:

The history of Africa can be traced to thousands of years before Christ... Some notable inventions that revolutionized the world could be traced to Africa... (P2, male, Nigerian; Q1 response)

...African history...has a very strong positive one especially attributing it to the civilization era. the history has been that of sweetness, bliss and hospitality until the unfortunate incident of the slave trade upsurge. the history of Africa will ring a positive bell in my heart considering the fact that Africa has contributed immensely to the growth and development of science and technology. (P2, male, Nigerian; Q2 response)

The African history is quite important to me as an individual especially as an in-group member. this is because the African history gives me a sense of selfworth, positive self-image and healthy self-esteem. the history of the world will have some form of vacuum and may take a void shape without the African history complementing it. that is how important the AFRICAN HISTORY IS TO ME. (P2, male, Nigerian; Q4 response)

Similar to P1, P2's articulation of the contemporary problems facing Africa point to poor leadership and corruption but also highlights Africa's battle with self-determination and ongoing need for emancipation (from neo-colonialism). This characterises an 'independent' Africa still fighting for independence. However, P2's articulation of current problems corresponds with an optimistic characterisation of Africa's future, hinging on Africans adopting behaviours that will benefit the common good of Africa and gaining independence from neo-colonialism, and by extension, external interference in its politics:

The contemporary issues facing Africa now are but are not limited to terrorism, agitation for self determination, bad and corrupt leadership, neo-slavery, economic challenges. (P2, male, Nigerian; Q7 response)

The future is bright for Africa and Africans. This, assertion may come to fruition if... 1... the African fathers could come together to pursue a common goal and vision that would make Africa to have a facelift in the world scene. 2... the continent would break free from the neo-colonialism web it has been entangled in. 3... the entire Africans can lay down their individualistic and selfish orientations and pursue a collective goal that will move Africa forward.... (P2, male, Nigerian; Q6 response)

Altogether, P2's optimism about Africa's ability to face up to the big problems facing the in-group happens in the context of his appraisals of African history being important to his self-conception and having a definitively positive history. In other words, appraisals of an important and positively-valenced African history coincide with optimism about Africa's ability to deal with contemporary problems in the future.

History-as-contrast: Participant 8 (P8). P8's appraisals of African history emphasised history as something against which to contrast to build a positive sense of the group. They appraised African history as rich, complex, negatively-valenced and unimportant to the self.

Rich history. P8 characterised the richness of African history by appealing to intangible and transcendent aspects of African life (e.g., culture, food etc.). This appraisal communicates an appreciation of current aspects of African life and not necessarily historical content. P8's appraisal of richness is also one of *vastness* in regards to the number of countries that make up the continent of Africa. Furthermore, P8 appraises African history as *long-lived*, albeit with some unclear detail. This appraisal communicates a rich history that is not well documented:

I do believe that noteworthy African history exists... the riches of Africa, the beauty, culture, food and so much more... There is so much to learn about African history, if we just consider the simple fact that we are talking about a whole continent and not a country then this alone should highlight how much there is to learn... I do feel it goes back thousands of years but I do not feel it is well documented... I feel that the history dating back hundreds of years ago is better documented. (P8, female, Tanzanian; Q1 response)

Complex history. P8 also characterised African history as complex, but in a manner that presents a dilemma in terms of the comprehensibility of African history, and which ultimately communicates difficulty around understanding aspects of African history. P8 also appraises African history as contentious owing to misinformation, and as difficult to visualise. This latter appraisal specifically invoked the difficulty in emotional terms of recollecting a negative past:

...While I do not know much about the history of Africa as a whole, I believe it can be complex in some cases and straightforward in others, I cannot really explain why I feel this way. It is very controversial, many people would disagree about the real history of Africa, many people would find it hard to believe that Africa is actually not as bad as the media portrays it to be. Is it hard to visualize? Yes and No, sometimes it is hard to visualize when I think of the hardships, for example; when I think of slavery, and even the good things are hard to visualize. However, some aspects are easier to visualize than other. (P8, female, Tanzanian; Q3 response)

Negatively-valenced history. While P8's overall appraisal of African history is negative, they do highlight positive aspects of African history. However, these aspects are actually either contemporary or non-specific in terms of historical content. Instead, they are an appeal to positive aspects of African culture rather than aspects of its history. P8's appraisal implies that the more well-known negative history can be contrasted with less well-known positive characteristics of African culture. That is, the ambivalent appraisal communicates more specifically that what Africa can and should be known for should be contrasted with its widely-known negative history:

The African history that is most spoken about is in my opinion generally negative while it should be positive because there is so much beauty and goodness in Africa. Most of the history that is publicized is of suffering, you will hear about war, famine and so on - while there is so much happiness and joy and I feel like that is what may people don't realize about Africa - people are so happy, whilst there are problems do not get me wrong, but people are happy... ..African history... is mostly unpleasant. I feel this is because we only get to see one side of the coin. But if we looked deeper... you realize it is actually not all bad - you realize Africa is so beautiful and pleasant. (P8, female, Tanzanian; Q2 response)

History as unimportant to the self. P8's appraisal of the importance of African history is ambivalent, characterising African history as important to the present day, the world, and other Africans, but not to her self-concept. P8's appraisal of the unimportance of African history to her self-concept makes a distinction between history and culture by asserting that culture is important to how she sees herself, but not history:

In terms of relevance, I believe a lot of the history explains/helps in understanding why things are the way they are. (P8, female, Tanzanian; Q2 response)

African history is very very important to human and world history, I mean Africa is the mother land... Is African history important to how I see myself. Yes and no - Some aspects yes but with some I would say no... I would say some of the culture back home is more important to how I see myself than the history is. African history to other Africans is very important but I feel the importance has faded over the past years - especially in the case of people who have lived outside the continent... (P8, female, Tanzanian; Q4 response)

Contemporary problems facing Africa. P8 asserts that the only problem facing Africa is its preoccupation with its history. This calls on Africa to break away from its past in a bid to utilise the continent's present human and cultural resources through education:

Focusing on the past. Not seeing the beauty in the beautiful things that we have (the minds, creativity and so much more). We need to be educated about our countries and how brilliant and beautiful they are. (P8, female, Tanzanian; Q7 response)

Perception of the future of Africa. P8's characterisation of Africa's future is one of success if the continent can break away from its past and build on Africans' native intelligence and rich indigenous culture:

The future is bright if we stop looking at the past and focus on all the brilliance and beauty of our countries and culture. (P8, female, Tanzanian; Q6 response)

Altogether, P8's account indicates deep ambivalence in which negative historical experiences of the African people are contrasted with positive aspects of African culture. The

broad importance of African history to many people was also contrasted with her distancing from that history. This combination underpins her call for African history to be used as a contrast – something to break away from for the benefit of Africa's future. In this way she builds the rhetorical position: we (i.e., others who place importance on history) need to break free from this negatively-weighted history and focus on more positive cultural aspects to have a better future.

History-as-inspiration: Participant 31 (P31). P31's appraisals of African history in contrast emphasised history as something upon which to build a positive sense of the group, characterising African history as rich, complex, positively-valenced and important.

Rich history. P31's appraisal of the richness of African history involves explicit intergroup comparison whereby African history is characterised as richer and older than that of other continents (arguably providing a claim for positive distinctiveness; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). P31 also characterises African history as well-established and long-lived:

African history is as rich as, if not to say richer than, the history of Europe, Asia and the Americas. I am aware of the input Africa and Africans have made to the high ancient cultures of Europe and the Americas... Then there are various other empires/civilisations across the rest of Africa. All these have some level of records that go back to as early as 4500 BC... Much of the "great civilisations" of the ancient world were actually taught or learned from African civilisation. (P31, male, Nigerian; Q1 response)

Complex history. P31 also appraises African history as complex, but anchored in the politics of history telling. P31 asserts that outgroups have manipulated the history of Africa. This appraisal serves to call Africans to research African history to avoid being misguided or misinformed. P31 also appraises African history as difficult to visualise. This appraisal points out issues of adequate knowledge and understanding of how African history relates to the present, and serves to buttress the action impetus for Africans to engage more with African history:

...there are political positions that mitigate against honest, truthful, and transparent discussion/analysis of African history. This is the political position of the West that had to propagate lies about Africans in order to facilitate its designs to carry out the mass enslavement and dehumanisation of Africans... Thus African history would remain more complex than it should, until Africans begin to take a keen interest in its own history and conduct its own research into this. As regards the ease of visualising African history I

consider this in two ways 1. Being able to picture events in mind: this is largely difficult, non-existent as a lot of Africans have very little information about their history. 2. Being able to understand the flow of actions and actors, the actions-reactions sequences and how they lead to where things are today...I think a lot of Africans find this a bit difficult as they can't see parallels between where things are today to what has caused by viewing the same action-reaction... sequence... (P31, male, Nigerian; Q3 response)

Positively-valenced history. P31's appraisal of the valence of African history involved distinguishing between 'old' and 'contemporary' periods of history. As an example of their positive appraisal of 'old' African history, P31 emphasises the influence of African civilisation on other civilisations. Similar to P8's characterisation, P31 also highlights the perpetuation of negative aspects of African history – 'contemporary' African history – for the gain of outgroups. Overall, P31's appraisal communicates that 'old', authentic African history is positive, even though such histories are not always attributed to Africa:

There are two sets of African history, that which is contemporary and is generally negative and that which is older and generally not identified to be African. As an example of the second set the Egyptian civilisation is hardly ever portrayed as African... Of the former set popular media generally focuses on the negative aspects of the African experience as that plays to the gallery and also helps their personal financial agenda (they are in business to make money). When you apply both of these together you get people you say Africa has added nothing to world history, civilisation and I wonder then what was the Egyptian civilisation and what it added to the Greek and Roman civilisations of the West and Mesopotamia of the East. (P31, male, Nigerian; Q2 response)

History as important. P31 characterises African history as important to the present day, the self, other Africans, and the world. The importance of African history to the present day is that it enlightens people on how the current challenges facing Africa arose; namely, through interference from outgroups (e.g., colonialism the transatlantic slave trade). This appraisal mainly blames Africa's current challenges on external factors. This account functions to appeal to individuals to engage in-depth in African history to fully grasp the current African context:

...there is the analysis of what caused where Africa is today. From analysing the impact of centuries of attacks, incursions from Europe and Asia, the rise of the Sahara, the impact of the trans-Saharan slave trade to the trans-Atlantic slave trade spanning over a thousand years of slave trading in Africans. How any civilisation can survive all these and remain unscathed is what the world does not discuss. Rather it perpetuates the current situation as though this is what has always been, or even what they met on ground when the West started interacting with us. This is not allowed to see the light of day for the generality of people... (P31, male, Nigerian; Q4 response)

Furthermore, P31's appraisal of the importance of African history to the world involves an appeal to universal values of truth and justice, calling on the world to embrace truth and justice in recollecting the history of Africa to improve intergroup relations. This again places an onus on Africans to acquire knowledge of 'real' African history:

African history is the history of the world. If Africa is the cradle of human life and the cradle of human civilisation, then its history IS the history of the world. ...the day the world begins to take actual truthful interest in African history that is the day a higher level of justice being to prevail world over... I see myself as myself first and foremost then as African. However I do desire people around to be better informed about the African experience in order to foster better relations... I think a lot of other Africans are more easily negatively impacted by the negative outlook on the African image. I think this is largely due to a lack of knowledge of real African history and the understanding of how this history has shaped where Africa is today and how it is still shaping it into the future. (P31, male, Nigerian; Q4 response)

Contemporary problems facing Africa. P31's characterisation of the problems facing Africa also emphasises Africans to research their identity and history in order to resolve self-image issues and to aid African polities:

Image/Self-image I think this is probably the area requiring greatest attention. Africans need to take time to understand themselves - who they are, who other Africans are, who Africans in the diaspora are, what our individual and joint histories are, and re-imagine ourselves in a positive light. Then begin to (actually simultaneously) work to address the negative image, information that Africa has with the rest of the World... Political Africans need to understand that the system of politics it has inherited from the West needs to be re-evaluated, keep what is positive and practical for it as well look inward to apply good practices from its own political structures/frameworks that it had before the incursion of the West. (P31, male, Nigerian; Q7 response)

Perception of Africa's future. P31's characterisation of the future of Africa is bleak if Africa does not engage with African history, emphasising African history as an important resource on which to draw for the future:

Continued manipulation and enslavement by the rest of the world, except: 1. It begins to take interest in its own history. Researching such histories itself, teaching this to its next generations and ensuring they continue to take interest and pride in their rich history 2. It begins to debunk the lies that have been perpetrated and are still being perpetrated about it. 3. It begins to learn from its history and past mistakes, errors, etc. (P31, male, Nigerian; Q6 response)

Altogether, P31 draws upon appraisals of a positive and important collective history to create impetus in others to act towards common goals in Africa. This combination underlines his

call for history to be viewed as an inspiration – something to draw on for the benefit of the group's future, building the rhetorical position: we need to embrace and draw inspiration from our positive and prestigious history to have a better future.

In summary, the narratives of P8 and P32 indicate that different appraisals of collective history can be drawn upon explicitly to build impetus to engage with present day challenges and imagine a positive future for the group – but that this can be done in very contrasting ways, characterising history as something from which to break free, or from which to draw inspiration.

Implications for understanding how collective history is appraised and used

Across the analysis, participants' characterisations of Africa's ability to deal with contemporary problems co-occurred with different ways of appraising Africa's history. Pessimism for the future was reported in narratives in which collective history was appraised as being negatively-valenced and unimportant; whereas more optimistic outlooks were reported in narratives in which collective history was appraised as positively-valenced and important. This points to the relevance of collective history appraisals in group members' beliefs about the in-group's ability to address contemporary problems. Indeed, perceptions of group efficacy are pivotal in engendering collective political action among in-groupers to improve the affairs of the in-group (e.g., van Zomeren et al., 2004). More importantly, this finding provides evidence for the *different dimensions* along which collective history is appraised, and that different combinations of these appraisal dimensions 'work' to provide contrasting answers to contemporary challenges.

Our findings extend previous research in social-psychology regarding the relevance of a group's past to in-group engagement in the present and into the future (e.g., Cinnirella, 1998; de Saint-Laurent & Obradović, 2019; Liu & Hilton, 2005; Reicher & Hopkins, 2001; Sani et al., 2008; Wildschut et al., 2014). This previous work has tended to focus on how collective history can be used as a tool to inspire in-group engagement, but focusing primarily on the valence of 'our'

history *per se* (e.g., Rabinovich & Morton, 2012; Roth et al., 2017). Our findings suggest that in addition to an appraisal of a positively-valenced collective history, a clear *history-as-inspiration* narrative also involved appraising collective history as *rich*, *complex*, and *subjectively important* (to the self, present day, in-group – i.e., other Africans and world). This more nuanced analysis suggests that the extent to which collective history can be drawn upon overtly to inspire current and future engagement depends on that history to not only be characterised as positive, but also as rich and subjectively important – neither of which are inherent to an appraisal of positivity *per se*. As a counterfactual, characterising in-group history as positive and glorious, but also as irrelevant, provides less coherent impetus to draw on that history to shape the present and future.

It was also apparent that characterisations of history could be used to urge greater in-group engagement in a very different way: as something from which to break free and contrast with in the present and future. This *history-as-contrast* narrative involved appraising collective history as *rich*, *complex*, *negatively-valenced* and *subjectively unimportant to the self*, and contrasting the group's past with positive aspects of the group's immediate existence (e.g., culture) as a means building in-group engagement. This could conceivably be characterised as a modernist or even futurist conception of in-group identity, in which the in-group's collective future is best achieved by explicitly rejecting its past. Correspondingly, the salience of an in-group's negative past leads to historical discontinuity in a bid to bolster a positive social identity for the in-group (Roth et al., 2017). This is theoretically relevant in two different ways. First, it suggests that emphasising an in-group's negative history can function as a spur to *greater* in-group engagement, rather than leading straightforwardly to disengagement (cf. Rabinovich & Morton, 2012). Second, it emphasises the relevance of examining how collective history is appraised and used in post-colonial contexts in which people's sense of an indigenous, positive collective history has been eroded (Bulhan, 2015, 1985b; Rodney, 2012), and in which a history-as-contrast

perspective may have greater potency than in the 'coloniser' or WEIRD contexts typically studied in social psychology. This is echoed by Licata and colleague's (2018) findings in an African context that showed appraising in-group's history as negative led to greater engagement with the in-group.

Importantly, history-as-contrast involves a *combination* of appraisals, including of collective history being unimportant to an in-group member's self-concept (or identity). This suggests that the sub-dimension of (un)importance to in-group members' self-concepts may take precedence over and above the sub-dimensions of the importance of collective history to the present day, other in-group members, and the world. More broadly, this shows the necessity of differentiating between sub-dimensions of an appraisal dimension to fully understand the specific relevance of collective history to group membership. Indeed, in the last two decades efforts have been made by African scholars in the diaspora to make Africans aware of prestigious precolonial Africa with the release of a plethora of history documentaries (Badawi, 2017; Howitt et al., 2010; Quinn et al., 2017). Ultimately, this underscores why it might be important to take steps to increase people's knowledge and pride of relevant collective history in various spheres of life in post-colonial contexts (Bulhan, 2015; UNESCO, 1979, 2013).

Limitations and future research

One potential limitation of our research was that our methodology did not allow us to probe deeper into the majority of participants' responses whose narratives were ambiguous on the relationship between appraisals of collective history and in-group engagement. Hence, future research could employ a conversational approach (e.g., face-to-face interviews) to clarify and understand the nature of such responses. Moreover, another limitation, potentially related to the former, may be that our materials did not explicitly ask participants questions on the relationship

between collective history and in-group engagement. Therefore, it can be argued that the reason for ambiguity on the relationship between collective history appraisals and in-group engagement for most participants' was due to the lack of explicit questioning. Balanced against this, though, are the benefits of our current approach that did not explicitly ask participants to link collective history appraisals and in-group engagement, and the demand characteristics this may have induced. Hence, future research could employ more direct questioning of the relationship between collective history and in-group engagement to examine if other patterns can be unravelled.

Other priorities for future research should include developing quantitative measures of how people appraise their collective history that take into account the complexity of the relationships between the different appraisal dimensions of history identified in our research. This calls for a multi-dimensional approach in assessing the appraisals of collective history, which will open up research opportunities to test a measure of appraisals of collective history across varied cultures and contexts. Ultimately, such a measure will further aid our understanding of the relevance of collective history to group membership and engagement.

Conclusion

The present findings shed light on the different dimensions on which group members can appraise their collective history, and how these appraisals shape in-group engagement. They are consistent with previous research highlighting the importance of appraisals of history, but suggest in turn that in particular contexts, such as post-colonial Africa, collective history can be relevant in quite differing ways: as an inspiration – something for the in-group to aspire to; or as a contrast – something for the in-group to break away from. While collective historical continuity is important,

our findings build a fuller and more nuanced picture of how collective history shapes in-group engagement in a non-western setting.

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Table 1*Participant demographics*

Participant	Gender	Age	African Nationality	African Ethnicity	Country of Citizenship	Continental Residency (Country)	Country of Permanent Residency
P1	Male	27* ³	Nigerian	Yoruba	N/A	Africa (Nigeria)	Nigeria
P2	Male	31*	Nigerian	Igbo	Nigeria	Africa (Nigeria)	Nigeria
P3	Male	36	Nigerian	Yoruba	Nigeria	Diaspora (United Kingdom)	United Kingdom
P4	Male	35	N/A ⁴	N/A	N/A	Diaspora (North America)	North America
P5	Male	33	Nigerian	Igbo	Nigeria	Diaspora (England)	Nigeria
P6	Male	24	Nigerian	Ika	Nigeria	Diaspora (United Kingdom)	Nigeria
P7	Male	25	Nigerian	Igbo	Nigeria	Diaspora (Denmark)	Nigeria
P8	Female	18	Tanzanian	Chaga & Kisii (this is my Kenyan tribe)	Tanzanian	Diaspora (United Kingdom)	Tanzania
P9	Female	20	Nigerian	Yoruba	Nigeria	Africa (Nigeria)	Nigeria
P10	Male	38	Nigerian	Igbo	N/A	Africa (Nigeria)	Nigeria
P11	Male	20	Ghanaian	Ashanti/Ewe	Britain	Diaspora (England)	England
P12	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
P13	Male	33	Ghanaian	Akan	British	Diaspora (England)	England
P14	Female	32	Nigerian	Yoruba	Nigerian/British	Diaspora (United Kingdom)	United Kingdom

^{3*} P1 and P2 contacted the first author about difficulties with the questionnaire in providing their (right) ages. Hence, they furnished the first author with their (right) ages via email.

⁴ P4 responded to the questions on African nationality, African ethnicity and country of citizenship by saying: "I choose not to answer as I view all of these nationalities as colonial constructs." Also, generally, N/A in this table means not available. In other words, the participant did not respond to the demographic question.

Participant	Gender	Age	African Nationality	African Ethnicity	Country of Citizenship	Continental Residency (Country)	Country of Permanent Residency
P15	Female	21	Ugandan	Luganda	British Canadian	Diaspora (United Kingdom)	United Kingdom
P16	Male	66	Nigerian	Yoruba	Nigeria	Africa (Nigeria)	Nigeria
P17	Female	22	Ghanaian	Ashanti	British	Africa (United Kingdom)	England
P18	Female	21	Ghanaian	Akan	Britain	Diaspora (England)	England
P19	Male	32	Nigerian	Yoruba	Nigeria	Diaspora (United Kingdom)	United Kingdom
P20	Female	30	Nigerian	Igbo	Nigerian	Diaspora (United States)	Nigeria
P21	Female	28	Nigerian	Yoruba	British/Nigerian	Diaspora (United Kingdom)	United Kingdom
P22	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
P23	Male	27	Nigerian	Yoruba	Nigeria	Africa (Nigeria)	Nigeria
P24	Female	21	Nigerian	Yoruba	British/Nigerian	Diaspora (United Kingdom)	United Kingdom
P25	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
P26	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
P27	Female	42	Nigerian	Yoruba	Nigeria	Africa (Nigeria)	Lagos
P28	Male	27	Nigerian	Isoko	Nigeria	Africa (Nigeria)	Nigeria
P29	Female	54	Nigerian	Yoruba	Nigeria	Africa (Nigeria)	Nigeria
P30	Female	50	Nigerian	Yoruba	Nigeria	Diaspora (Canada)	Nigeria
P31	Male	44	Nigerian	Yoruba	Nigerian	Diaspora (Australia)	Australia
P32	Male	68	Nigerian	Yoruba	Nigeria	Africa (Nigeria)	Nigeria
P33	Male	42	Nigerian	Yoruba	Nigerian	Africa (Nigeria)	Nigeria

Table 2

Summary table of illustrative quotes demonstrating the different dimensions and sub-dimensions of the appraisal of history along with the participant's sex and African nationality

Dimensions	Sub-dimensions	Illustrative Quotes	
Richness	Depth	Deep There is so much to learn from the African history. Some of the wonders of the world comes from Africa, e.g The Pyramids in Egypt, the rise and fall of some powerful kings and deities which till date still control how some tribes live their lives. The history of Africa is rich in cultures, traditions and mysteries. A lot of books have been written to this effect. Its one of the races today that still hold unto a lot of their culture and traditions. Not the Africans in diaspora though. (P29, female, Nigerian)	Extremely limited N/A ⁵
		Long-lived Outside of Egypt very little archeological work has been done to uncover Africa history that goes beyond a few thousand years. African history is as long as time itself. (P4, male, Nigerian)	Short-lived To be honest I do not know much about african history but I believe african history emerged during the 1950s and 1960s. There were different civil wars. (P21, female, Nigerian)
Clarity	Comprehensibility	Easy to understand African History is often depicted as complex when in fact I believe it is quite simple. I also believe this largely depends on what era of African History is being focused on. (P14, female, Nigerian)	Hard to understand African history is so complex that the fact we generalise it under the word "African" is not good enough. There are 54 countries in Africa, all with diverse backgrounds and cultures and all with a history to tell on its own. I can only speak clearly of Ghanaian history as that is where I'm from, but I wish other African countries history was more accessible to me and clear in my mind. (P17, female, Ghanaian)
		Consensus Personally, I do not think African history is that convulatuted regardless of the different accounts/perspectives of what	Contested African history like I stated earlier has been twisted immensely to the point that you don't know which to
	Contentiousness		

⁵ No participant appraised African history as extremely limited.

Dimensions	Sub-dimensions	Illustrative Quotes
Valence		transpired. I think across board there is more of a consensus than disagreement of events in African history. (P20, female, Nigerian)
		believe. Writers are generally dishonest as they try to paint the picture to suit them. So you get different information from a core African and a Foreigner writing on Africa. (P5, male, Nigerian)
	Vividness	<div>Vivid</div> <p>It is easy to bring to mind the details of African history because it was something I took interest in when we were taught it in school. However I can only visualise the slave trade, the genocide in South Africa and the ancient Egyptians as this is what I was taught (P24, female, Nigerian)</p> <div>Vague</div> <p>With more films being produced presenting various aspects of African history, i.e. Half a Yellow Sun, it makes it easier to visualise. As someone who grew up in the UK more than "back home" visualisation is difficult. (P15, female, Ugandan)</p>
	Positivity	<div>Positive</div> <p>African history across the ages, has always been very positive - establishment of great civilisations, that touches the whole world today. Negative African history, is only hundreds of years old: it all started from the slave trade era (especially Atlantic Slave Trade, and the partitioning of Africa). (P32, male, Nigerian)</p> <div>Negative</div> <p>What you generally hear of Africa now and in the past is often negative. I believe that colonisation plays a great part in recent African history which is quite sad and it plagues the memories of Africa. The effects of colonisation still affect Africa now. (P24, female, Nigerian)</p>
	Pleasantness	<div>Pleasant</div> <p>In addition, most of its history can be described as tilting toward those of happiness and pleasant, especially when compared to other continents with respect to enduring standards, artifacts, traditions, culture, norms and belief system. The only continent that comes close to leading in this areas will be those of some Asian countries like China and India, among a few others. (P23, male, Nigerian)</p> <div>Unpleasant</div> <p>I do not think the African history is pleasant. Africans went through a lot of suffering and hardship. So much violence and corruption. There is nothing exciting about the history of Africa. (P21, female, Nigerian)</p>
	Glory	<div>Mainly glorious</div> <p>From what I know African history is generally one of happiness because in light of how long Africa has been around, it wouldn't make sense to say that the period of slavery was enough to rid Africa of all its great history. (P18, female, Ghanaian)</p> <div>Mainly suffering</div> <p>Historically, our history has been one of suffering. Many images of Africa are filled with people in abject poverty, labouring hard, plagued with diseases, and generally poor environmental conditions. (P1, male, Nigerian)</p>

Dimensions	Sub-dimensions	Illustrative Quotes
Importance	Importance to present day	<p>Important to present day</p> <p>I believe that African history is important for not only understanding how things are today but using what made Africa so great in the past as a means to make Africa great again today. (P18, female, Ghanaian)</p> <p>Unimportant to present day</p> <p>I know very little, besides the more popular aspects such as slave trade and the fact that civilization began in Africa. Although, this is not as a result of the lack of information about African history, it is largely due to insufficient interest in following or tracing African history. Also, I do not see any immediate or long-term benefit or value in understanding the history of Africa. (P1, male, Nigerian)</p>
	Importance to self	<p>Important to self</p> <p>It's very important. There's no history that should be ignored. I think for me personally it's important for my to have a connection with family who live back home. It helps to also have an understanding of what people before me struggled with, and what led to the running of my country being the way that it is now. I love hearing stories from my parents about their youth/childhood and that's part of history. I know that our countries history helped to shape them and as a result me - so yes it's very important. (P15, female, Ugandan)</p> <p>Unimportant to self</p> <p>I do not relate my identity to African history in any way. My education, upbringing and pretty much the society at large has done little to help me grow a sense of belonging to Africa, to an extent where it can influence my identity or the way I see myself. I personally, and frankly, many people I know, relate more along ethno-religious lines, as opposed to an African identity. (P1, male, Nigerian)</p>
	Importance to group	<p>Important to group</p> <p>Africans need to stress the history to their younger generation wherever they may be in the world. It will help lessen the identity crises being faced right now by Africans all around the world. (P29, female, Nigerian)</p> <p>Unimportant to group</p> <p>Probably unimportant as the western history and ideologies shape Africans conception (P19, male, Nigerian)</p>
	Importance to world	<p>Important to world</p> <p>African history is very important to human and world history. This is where civilization started. This is where the world has just suddenly realised how important natural herbs are in curing a lot of ailments. Its history is important to also teaching a lot of people to respect the African man and not see them as morons or sub humans. (P29, female, Nigerian)</p> <p>Unimportant to world</p> <p>I don't think it's African history is important to human and world history. A lot of it wasn't even documented correctly or at all. (P26, N/A)</p>

Table 3

Summary of collective history appraisals for each participant alongside their outlook on the in-group's future.

Participant	Collective history appraisal dimension				Outlook on in-group's future
	Richness	Clarity	Valence	Subjective importance	
P1	Rich	N/A ⁶	Negatively-valenced	Unimportant	Pessimistic
P2	Rich	N/A	Positively-valenced	Important	Optimistic
P3	Rich	Complex	Positively-valenced	Important	Pessimistic
P4	Rich	Ambivalent ⁷	Rejection of valence dimension ⁸	Important	Ambivalent
P5	Rich	Complex	Negatively-valenced	Important	N/A
P6	N/A	N/A	Ambivalent	Important	Optimistic
P7	Rich	Complex	Negatively-valenced	Important	Optimistic
P8	Rich	Complex	Negatively-valenced	Unimportant to self	Optimistic
P9	N/A	Complex	N/A	Important	Optimistic
P10	Rich	Clear	Ambivalent	Important	Optimistic
P11	Rich	Complex	Positively-valenced	Important	Optimistic
P12	Rich	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
P13	Rich	Complex	Negatively-valenced	Important	Optimistic
P14	Rich	Complex	Negatively-valenced	Important	Pessimistic
P15	Rich	Complex	Ambivalent	Important	N/A
P16	Rich	Clear	Negatively-valenced	Important	Optimistic
P17	Rich	Complex	Negatively-valenced	Important	Optimistic
P18	Rich	Clear	Positively-valenced	Important	Optimistic
P19	Rich	Complex	Positively-valenced	Unimportant	Optimistic
P20	Rich	Clear	Negatively-valenced	Important	Optimistic

⁶ N/A in this table means participants either did not answer questions or that their responses did not address the collective history appraisal dimension or the in-group's future.

⁷ Ambivalent in this table means that participants' responses to a dimension/question had a mix of the expected outcomes. For example, for the dimension of clarity, this will mean that a participant expressed that African history was (generally) both clear and complex concurrently.

⁸ P4 rejected the notion of positive or negative history and pleasant or unpleasant history.

Participant	Collective history appraisal dimension				Outlook on in-group's future
	Richness	Clarity	Valence	Subjective importance	
P21	Rich	Clear	Negatively-valenced	Important	N/A
P22	Rich	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
P23	Rich	Complex	Ambivalent	Important	Optimistic
P24	Rich	Complex	Negatively-valenced	Important	Optimistic
P25	Rich	N/A	Negatively-valenced	N/A	N/A
P26	Rich	Complex	Negatively-valenced	Important to self	N/A
P27	Rich	Complex	Ambivalent	Important	Optimistic
P28	Rich	Complex	Negatively-valenced	Important	Optimistic
P29	Rich	Complex	Positively-valenced	Important	Optimistic
P30	N/A	Clear	Negatively-valenced	Important	N/A
P31	Rich	Complex	Positively-valenced	Important	Pessimistic
P32	Rich	Complex	Positively-valenced	Important	Optimistic
P33	N/A	Complex	N/A	Important	Optimistic