

FAMILY, SCHOOLING AND THE IDENTITIES OF SECOND-GENERATION BLACK
TRINIDADIAN WOMEN

by

STACY KAREN GIBBS

(Under the Direction of Jerome Morris)

ABSTRACT

In the U.S. race relations are often seen dichotomously as a black and white issue, rarely highlighting intra-racial and ethnic dynamics within race. In the case of second-generation black West Indians, their identities—racial, ethnic, and cultural—are varied and complex. Although these individuals are born in the U.S., they oftentimes are socialized within their families as West Indian and within their schools as African-Americans. Although they undergo no physical migration, they are faced with the dilemmas of choosing among a racial, ethnic, and or national identity.

Existing research analyzes the identities of first and second-generation West Indians; however, an overwhelming abundance of the data focuses primarily on individuals of African, Jamaican and Haitian descent (Henke, 2001; Palmer, 1995; Schiller, 1987; Waters, 1999). Therefore, this study will add to the existing body of work on the identities of West Indians, ultimately providing a deeper understanding of this group by focusing exclusively on the experiences of second-generation Trinidadians.

The purpose of this study was to examine the factors that influence the racial and ethnic identity choices second-generation black Trinidadians. Furthermore, this study was particularly interested in both the interaction between their identities and the various contexts and institutions to which they belong and the extent to which these contexts and institutions influence their self-identification label choices. Data were collected through open-ended and semi-structured face-to-face interviews with eight second-generation black Trinidadian women.

The results of this study indicate that although the participants discussed the influence of peers and schooling, they attributed the home as most influential in shaping their ethnic identities. Results also indicate that these women preferred an ethnic identity, in comparison to a broad racial identity. Recommendations for theoretical understandings of immigrant Black Trinidadian identity, future research, and educational implications are discussed. Educational implications specifically highlight the need for educational institutions to consider the unique experiences and identities of the black students they serve—particularly second-generation immigrants. Though born in the United States, these young people have been greatly shaped within their homes by the social and cultural framework their parents brought to the shores of the United States.

INDEX WORDS: Second-Generation, Trinidadians, Women, African-Americans, Identity, Race, Ethnicity, Socialization, Family, Schooling, Intra-racial, Multicultural education

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STACY KAREN GIBBS

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M.Ed., Georgia State University, 2000

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STACY KAREN GIBBS

Major Professor: Jerome Morris

Committee: Derrick Alridge
Thomas Hébert
Judith Preissle
Kecia Thomas

Electronic Version Approved:

Maureen Grasso
Dean of the Graduate School
The University of Georgia
May 2011

DEDICATION

To the women whose blood I carry--my paternal grandmother, Agatha Veronica Campbell (1926-2009) and maternal aunt, Eugenia Ann Huggins (1935-2009). To the women of this study, whose stories I live to tell.

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I am immediately reminded of a portion of II Corinthians 12: 9 that carried me through many, many restless nights. In the midst of my darkest hours, I would hear God say, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.” Lord, thank you for enabling me to make it to the end of this journey. Without your strength, love, grace and mercy, I do not know where or who I would be. Absolutely nothing and no one has made it possible for me to get through the last 10 years except you, and for this I am eternally grateful. This project would have never come to fruition had it not been for the following people whom you placed on my path, so I take this moment to honor them.

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My closest friend and sister, La Shane, we have cried together, laughed together and supported each other through some of our most difficult moments. This has been a long road, but you have always been there to lend your support, wisdom and humorous accounts of your many wild and crazy adventures. I thank you for always encouraging me to see and experience the brighter side of life. Your grace and resiliency are phenomenal, and I am honored to have you in my corner. Thank you for the encouraging texts and allowing me to isolate myself during the last stretch of this work. I love you. The disappearing acts can finally be over, and I cannot wait for us to take that long awaited trip far, far away.

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Finally, I want to honor my parents, Brian and Pinky, my biggest and loudest cheerleaders. No one on earth knows the backstory of my life like the two of you. You have always believed in my capabilities, supported my efforts and encouraged me through prayer and unconditional, unfailing love. You cultivated the many gifts and talents I have beyond my academic abilities and think I am perfect despite my imperfections. I am forever grateful to you. I will always love you and hope I have made you proud.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

As a University of Georgia graduate student in an *Anthropology of Education* course in 2002, I was required to conceptualize and conduct a pilot ethnographic study as part of the final requirements. Using an auto-ethnographic approach (Ellis & Bochner, 2000), I found the assignment an appropriate vehicle through which to describe my family's culture from the perspectives of female members across three generations: my maternal grandmother, my maternal aunt, and myself. My decision to conduct an intergenerational investigation to reveal my family's story was based not only on the fact that each of us represented a different generation of women, but also because we each exemplified unique and distinct cultural life experiences: my maternal grandmother migrated from Trinidad and was acculturated in the United States; my maternal aunt was born in and presently resides in Trinidad; and I was born and raised solely in the United States.

Interestingly, yet not surprising, I found that each of us had differing interpretations of and responses to race and racism in the U.S.--two of the topics I chose to explore during the interview process. However, most salient was my grandmother's obliviousness to what I deemed as overt acts of racism towards her. I was shocked as I listened to her describe her early encounters with race in the U.S. in a casual, almost indifferent manner. Needless to say, conducting the interview with my grandmother was especially difficult, as I found it unimaginable our views could be so opposed to each other.

A year later, still troubled by my grandmother's experiences with racism and my failure to comprehend our contrasting interpretations of her encounters, I decided to respond to my grandmother's interview. So, in the summer of 2003, I wrote the following letter to her:

May 22, 2003

Hi Granny,

I just wanted to touch base with you, as it's been a year since I interviewed you for my project last summer. Since that time, I have used what you shared in one or more papers and even in an academic conference held at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill. Your voice on audiotape captured the audience and so many others as you so candidly shared the intimacies of your life on the topics of marriage, child rearing, gender roles, and racism. You spoke of a poor girl born in 1915 to a father who died too soon, a mother who was too ill to notice, left with seven children to raise on her own. You described how at fourteen you left school in order to work and alleviate your mother's strain of being the sole provider. Who knew, only five years later, you, like your mother would begin your passage into motherhood — to eventually raise seven children of your own, and that your fourth child -- my mother -- would be the one to lead you and so many others to America? Who knew that her child — your first grandchild — me— would be the only American-born? And have you any idea how much grief this has caused me? But, I will tell you more about this later.

Granny, during our interview I asked you to tell me about your experience with racism in Trinidad. You replied immediately, "Oh no, I didn't know anything about racism in Trinidad when I was growing up as a child." Shocked at your response, I listened as you described the poor conditions under which you lived and how this common reality for many of your peers left little room for any of you to focus on your differences. Although you recalled those children who were better off by evidence of their bigger homes, nicer clothes, and shoes they wore to school,

still you could not remember feeling any humiliation or inferiority because of this. All I could think was how foreign and contradictory your former world was to mine. As we continued to talk, I noticed that not only the dreamy manner in which you illustrated Trinidad changed, but also your tone, as you began to tell me about your experience with racism in the U.S.

For the first time in your life, you found yourself a domestic -- cooking, cleaning, and serving in the home of a white family, a family that would not allow you to eat when they ate, but insisted you ate in isolation in a back room of their home, only after they had been served. How were you to know that at that time, in many cases, employment as a domestic was seen as the highest achievement Black women could pursue? More importantly, how could you have known that that family's treatment of you had more to do with your race and less to do with your status or position -- your "clothes" or your "shoes?" I could hear frustration in your voice, yet somehow, I knew our frustrations did not derive from the source. You see -- and I do not mean any disrespect -- you thought they mistreated you because you were the help. But I knew they mistreated you because they saw you as nothing more than a nigger whose job was to make their lives comfortable, as they simultaneously made yours unbearable.

You may wonder why I seem so angry. In fact, you may even think I read far too much into what you shared; however, I can't help but feel the way I do. I am angry for two reasons: because they treated you the way they did, and because you didn't interpret their treatment of you as I did. All my life, I have had to struggle with the problem of racism and rarely have the luxury of considering other possibilities like when I am followed too closely in a department store or read in the newspaper that another brother is harassed for driving while black, riddled with 41 bullets, and shot dead for pulling out his keys. You see, you are unaware that the sacrifice I make to achieve higher education means that it is less likely I will be among people

who look like me, that outside the walls of academia, I am usually met with looks of amazement when I reveal my status as a doctoral student at the University of Georgia. My race is inescapable, following me around like a shadow, lurking, infusing thoughts of self-doubt whenever possible. Yes, I am always aware of my blackness, especially when I sit in my all-white classes and observe my peers exuding a sense of rightful belonging, a right that I must constantly and consciously remind myself that I have as well.

As promised, I told you I would disclose the source of my grief. My existence as the only American-born in our family has been a lonely place. It has meant that no one in our family -- not even mommy or daddy -- could ever truly understand my constant state of conflict. That I am both African-American and West Indian hinders full access into either world. These dual identities often conflict with each other, causing me to feel that one must justify and defend the other. My being both African-American and culturally West Indian, have, at times, made my existence uncomfortable; at the same time, my dual identities compel me to confront racism critically and objectively. Every day is a struggle as I meet head-on my own biases and resistance to identifying as either African-American or West Indian. Even the term African-American is problematic for me. Its use to describe me leaves me feeling incomplete because I feel I am excluding my West Indian background. On the other hand, I feel more American than I do West Indian. Yet, I sense there is a family expectation to be West Indian, as though it would be a betrayal to identify solely as African-American. However, to identify exclusively as West Indian would be, equally, if not more, problematic for me. How can I identify as West Indian when everything I know about Trinidad is second-hand knowledge, when among my own family I feel like an outsider? Ironically, I recall vividly, various family members telling me I am not a "real American." This, I believe, is when my internal conflict began, as I believed being West

Indian was associated with having a certain accent, style of dress, or manner of viewing the world. So, if my accent, style of dress, and view of the world are contrary to that of West Indians, and if I am not a “real” American, then who am I? I have been on a life-quest for the answer to this question. The journey has been long.

I was born in a country where, historically, whites hate Blacks and have created systems of white privilege and supremacy that have made it near impossible to overcome. No longer bound by slave shackles, Blacks have learned to hate themselves, and African-Americans and West Indians have forgotten they come from the same place. In this land of little freedom and home where the brave are assassinated, I recall the words of Malcolm X and what they mean to me as a second-generation Black Trinidadian, born in the United States: “Sitting at the table doesn’t make you a diner. You must be eating some of what’s on that plate. Being here in America doesn’t make you an American. Being born here in America doesn’t make you American.” (pg. 26)

Granny, my wish as I end this letter, is that you do not judge me. Know that I write from a deep place, private and sacred. My intention for writing this letter is to give back to you what you gave to me — honesty. I realize you may never agree or fully understand what I have shared, but this is okay. I have never walked a mile in your shoes, nor you in mine. And, although we are two different people, divided by age, location, and experience, it is our blood and love for each other that ties us together. Thank you for taking time to connect with me. I hope to see you soon.

I never mailed this letter to my grandmother since it became clear to me, immediately after writing it, that it was more important to confront how I felt than it was for her to know what I thought. Given this letter was addressed to my grandmother, and considering the great deal of

respect I have for her, I would have felt awkward and even embarrassed to reveal the feelings I had at the time. More importantly, I did not want my grandmother to feel as though I was attacking her for viewing her experiences as only she could—through the lens of a first-generation Trinidadian immigrant. My conversation with my grandmother generated adverse feelings, questions and reflections on the history of Black people’s experiences in the United States. Did she know about how we became who we are? Was she aware of the untold stories of African people—the people from whom she descended? As her granddaughter, I felt compelled to tell her about the horrific experiences, which prompted my initial anger while writing the letter. African people were brought involuntarily from the shores of Africa, transported to the Caribbean islands, and via continued slave trading, ended up on the shores of North America. Those who made it to North America and the Caribbean were the survivors; millions perished along the way. Strangers on new lands, they were systematically dehumanized and disenfranchised. A century or more later, these African descendants, formerly dispersed to many islands in the Caribbean and states in North America, have taken on new and, at times, conflicting identities (www.inmotionaame.org/migrations/topic.cfm?migration=1&topic=1).

The pilot research project I conducted in the summer of 2002 was the catalyst for this study—which examines the factors that influence the racial and ethnic identity choices of female Black second-generation Trinidadians. Although I have always been aware of myself as a Black American of Trinidadian descent and of my struggles to find my place in this world amongst other Black people, until the pilot study, I had not considered how my inner conflicts, responses to, and experiences with racism, and my efforts to merge my multiple identities, were similar to or different from the challenges of others like me. Did they employ a race-conscious framework in their analysis? Were they cognizant of social-class and gender differences among Black

people? Were they consciously aware of their immigrant status (as the second-generation) and how it may have shaped their views of the world and of African Americans? Moreover, how did my views, as well as my experiences at home and in school, resonate with or diverge from theirs? I had always wrestled with these questions in complete solitude, reluctant to express outwardly my thoughts about both Trinidadians and African-Americans. My need to self-censor stemmed mostly from my uncertainty about the extent to which I belonged in either group or the “right” I had to speak for or against these two seemingly disparate groups.

Today, I know my family and schooling experiences played significant roles in shaping how I view the world and have come to identify both racially and ethnically, which is why I chose to do this study. I wanted to understand how these and other institutions may have influenced the self-identification choices of other second-generation Trinidadians, and the extent to which they have grappled with the same questions I have had all my life. The pilot study, and the ensuing feedback I received from each participant, began to provide evidence of how the present discussion of racial and ethnic identity choices of second-generation individuals is deeply rooted in understanding this group, as well as Black immigrants apart from a framework that considers the saliency of race, as it has both societal and educational implications as well. That West Indians and African-Americans originated from Africa is well-documented and known; however, the extent to which this is reinforced, within both the familial and school institutions, in order to establish and maintain political and familial solidarity between these groups, remains problematic. This is evident in public, private, as well as scholarly discussions about Blackness and exactly who is black (Coates, 2007; Davis, 1991; Malahy, Sedlins, Plaks & Shoda, 2010; Walters, 2007). For example, during my last year of teaching at a predominantly black middle school in Dekalb County, Georgia, I asked one of my African-American male students to take an

item to one of my colleagues, who had just walked by my classroom. Taking his time, I urged my student to catch up with her, but uncertain of whom I was referring, he turned back and asked me to describe the teacher. Slightly irritated, I replied, “The black woman who just walked by our room.” His response to me was, “Oh, she’s not black, she’s Jamaican.” What is clear is the need for a greater understanding of race *and* ethnicity, not for the purpose of creating divisions between West Indians and African-Americans, but for the sole purpose of embracing their common heritage and struggle, despite their differences.

Background of the Present Study

Scholars grapple with the topic of identity across many disciplines (Morris, 2003; Ogbu, 2003; Tatum, 1997; Waters, 1999). Sociologists, psychologists, anthropologists, and educational researchers, just to name a few, have addressed this issue. Not only is there an increased interest in identity, there is also a greater understanding of, and the ways individuals’ multiple identities (e.g. racial identity, ethnic identity, social identity, and such) shape their lives (Aboud & Doyle, 1993; Cross, 1991; Harris, 1995; Helms, 1990; Phinney, 1993; Rotherman & Phinney, 1987; Tatum, 1992; Waters, 1999). In fact, vigorous inquiry into the identities of individuals has led scholars to conclude that among the various variables which impact and construct individual identity are the social contexts and institutions (e.g. schools and families) to which individuals belong, and that these various contexts affect the degree to which individuals develop and maintain healthy identities (Chrobot-Mason & Thomas, 2002; Frankenberg, 1993; Helms, 1984; Phinney & Chavira, 1995; Schofield, 1986; Tatum, 1997; Thompson & Carter, 1997; Waters, 1999). Although scholars may offer varying definitions and interpretations of identity, there is significant consensus among them to conclude that identity is a complex and ever-changing

phenomenon (Chrobot-Mason & Thomas, 2002; Cross, 1991; DuBois, 1995; Helms, 1990; Tatum, 1997).

In the case of second-generation Black Trinidadians, their identities--racial, ethnic, and cultural--are varied and complex. While these individuals are geographically born in the U.S., they often are socialized within a West Indian¹ culture in their homes. Family expectations for these individuals often differ from the expectations of the larger society, rendering the notion of what it means to be both West Indian and American problematic (Henke, 2001; Waters, 1999; Vickerman, 1999). Hence, the multiple identities (racial, ethnic, and cultural) of first and second-generation West Indians often oppose and conflict with each other. While the second-generation West Indian undergoes no physical migration, he or she is faced with the dilemma of choosing an identity that more closely resembles his or her parents, or that of African-Americans, which can create conflict in reconciling the hybridity of existing as West Indian and American, simultaneously (Henke, 2001; Waters, 1999). This is part of what the present study sets out to accomplish. How do second-generation immigrants of Trinidadian descent identify in a U.S. social context? What descriptors do they use to self-identify, and how do school and family (as institutions) influence the ways in which they identify? Furthermore, which identity(ies) are these individuals most likely to embrace: Black, West Indian, Trinidadian, or African-American?

Although questions and debate still exist regarding the suitability of the terms Black and African-American to describe Black people born in the U.S. (McWhorter, 2003; McWhorter, 2010; Newport, 2007), many will agree that either of these terms is a sufficient descriptor for U.S.-born Blacks. However, first and second-generation Black West Indians face a different

¹ According to Census 2000 data, West Indians are individuals who self-identified as Bahamian, Barbadian, Belizean, British West Indian, Dutch West Indian, Haitian, Jamaican, Trinidadian or Tobagonian, U.S. Virgin Islander, West Indian, or Other West Indian. The term West Indian excludes Hispanic groups.

challenge, as U.S. racial categories force them to adopt identifying terms that fail to acknowledge their original homeland. Furthermore, U.S. race relations are often seen dichotomously as a Black and White issue. Hence, U.S. racial categories often do not recognize the diversity among Black people in the Diaspora.

Ironically, while the U.S. Census Bureau lists individuals as foreign-born Black and even reports where these individuals migrated from, the lumping of all Black people into the categories Black or African American (e.g., application forms, etc.) veils the identity of those who may define themselves ethnically, such as Trinidadian or West Indian (Waters, 1999). Furthermore, existing research analyzing the identities of first and second-generation West Indians has disproportionately focused on individuals of African and Jamaican descent (Henke, 2001; Palmer, 1995; Waters, 1999). Hence, Trinidad and its peoples—as well as other West Indian groups—are excluded largely from the discourse surrounding race relations, schooling, and identity. Thus, this study examines how family and schooling experiences influence how Black second-generation Trinidadians identify ethnically and racially. The following research questions guide the investigation:

1. How do second-generation black Trinidadian women come to self-identify racially or ethnically, or nationally?
2. In what ways do the identities (racial, ethnic and or national) of second-generation black Trinidadian women interact with the various contexts and institutions (home and school) to which they belong?
3. To what extent do these contexts and institutions influence the identity choices of individuals within this group?

Significance of the Study

While existing research has investigated the experiences (i.e., racial and ethnic identity) of Black second-generation West Indians (Portes & MacLeod, 1996; Portes & Zhou, 1993; Waters, 1990; Waters, 1994; Waters, 1999), little is known about the unique experiences of second-generation Trinidadians in the U.S. Consequently, this lumping of all Black West Indians is problematic, as it ignores their unique histories and assumes they are a monolithic group.

Moreover, in the year 2000 West Indians made up approximately .7 percent of the total U.S. population (U.S. Census, 2000). The actual number of Trinidadians living in the U.S., however, is slightly more difficult to calculate. For example, when individuals were asked to respond to where they were born, 197,398 respondents identified Trinidad as their place of birth; however, when individuals were asked about their ancestry (self-identification) only 164,778 respondents self-identified as Trinidadian (U.S. Census, 2000). This means that over 32,000 people, although born in Trinidad, did not self-identify as Trinidadian. Individual states revealed the same phenomenon. In Georgia, although 4,299 respondents identified Trinidad as their place of birth, only 3,836 respondents self-identified as Trinidadian. Likewise, 28,788 Floridians identified Trinidad as their place of birth; of this number, 21,881 self-identified as Trinidadian (U.S. Census, 2000). Important to note is that 69% of Trinidadian-born people living in the United States self-identified racially as Black (U.S. Census, 2000). Unknown, however, is how a significant number of the Trinidadian population identifies ethnically.

Therefore, the following questions need to be addressed: What makes one Trinidadian? Does length of time in another context (e.g., U.S.) affect the degree to which one *feels* Trinidadian? If one is born in Trinidad and migrates to the U.S. yet does not identify as

Trinidadian, what options does one have? What option does one choose and why? If this issue of self-identification is so complicated for (even) the first-generation to confront, the implications for the second-generation may be even greater.

Additionally, U.S. Census (2000) data revealed that 43.2% of the Trinidadian-born populations living in the U.S. were between the ages of 25-44, suggesting that many arrived to the U.S. with children and will have children in the future. Hence, the wave of Black immigrants has serious educational implications. With this wave of Black immigration, there is now, and continues to be, an influx of Black children in public schools—the second generation.

Thus, this study is significant, as it will (1) contribute further to the broad, existing research on second-generation West Indians and (2) specifically provide greater depth to our understanding of second-generation (and first-generation) Black Trinidadians by focusing on their family and schooling experiences and the extent to which these institutions may affect their racial and or ethnic self-identification choices.

Definition of Terms

In order to provide an understanding of the various terms used in this study, operational definitions are provided below:

African-American. “Individuals of African descent who have received a significant portion of their socialization in the United States...[T]hey share a heritage and set of shared values which are related to their common historical experiences in this society” (Sellers, Shelton, Cooke, Chavous, Rowley & Smith, 1998). Involuntary immigrants brought forcibly to the U.S. from their African countries and forced into U.S. slavery. Their experiences in the U.S. are characterized by discrimination and racial oppression (Bell-Hill, 2002).

Black. An ambiguous category that may or may not be inclusive of all persons of African descent depending upon the individual's viewpoint (Sellers et al., 1998).

Ethnic Identity. That part of an individual's self-concept that derives from his or her own knowledge of membership in a social group together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership (Tajfel, 1981).

Ethnicity. Objective group membership as determined by parents' ethnic heritage (Singh, 1977).

First-Generation. Foreign-born immigrants; in this case, immigrants from Trinidad.

Identity. The meanings a person attributes to the self as an object in a social situation or social role (Burke, 1980).

Race. A sub-group of peoples possessing a definite combination of which to varying degrees distinguishes the sub-group from other sub-groups of mankind (Casas, 1984). As a concept, race continues to be the defining construct in distinguishing African-Americans from other members of this society. The socially-constructed category of race is an essential feature of African-American's existence in this society. Race must be addressed in the African-American's attempt to define him or herself (Sellers et al., 1998).

Racial Identity. A sense of group or collective identity based on one's perception that he or she shares a common racial heritage with a particular racial group (Helms, 1993). A "sense of Blackness" (Cross, 1991). That part of one's definition of self that is related to being an African-American (Sellers et al., 1998).

Racial Socialization. The responsibility Black parents have of raising physically and emotionally healthy children who are Black in a society in which being Black has negative connotations (Peters, 1985). It can serve to protect against a hostile environment (Stevenson,

1994, 1995). This socialization can be direct or indirect, verbal or nonverbal, overt or covert (Stevenson, 1994; Thornton, Chatters, Taylor & Allen, 1990).

Second-Generation. Native individuals with two foreign-born parents; in this case, first-generation Trinidadians.

Self-Identification. The ethnic or racial label one uses for oneself; it may differ from ethnicity (Singh, 1977).

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter reviews the most relevant literature for undertaking a study that focuses on the racial and ethnic identity of second-generation Black Trinidadians. Given the study's focus, the following will be covered: (1) Historical Portrait of Black Identity in the U.S.; (2) Double Consciousness; (3) Pan-Africanism; (4) Oppositional Collective or Social Identity; (5) Gender and Diasporic Identity; and (3) Issues Studying the Second-Generation.

Historical Portrait of Black Identity

From Chattel to Human

The year was 1863, and The Emancipation Proclamation had freed Blacks in rebel states. Blacks were elated about their new status as free people in the U.S. (Franklin, 1988). Yet, they faced the harsh reality of being amongst Whites who resented their very existence. In fact, Black people now found themselves alongside southern Whites who, just years prior, would have unleashed their wrath toward former slaves who sought such freedom on their own volition. They were free and yet they were not. Thus, one might say Black people took on a new dual identity as “chattelmen.”²

Later, the Reconstruction Era was Congress's response to the aftermath of the Civil War. Reconstruction was an attempt to define how Blacks and whites might coexist in a non-slave society; however, southern whites viewed this master plan both as an unwelcome imposition and

² My use of the term “chattelmen” suggests that while Blacks had earned their “freedom,” they were still bound, in many ways to property status.

blow to their faces.³ The blow, however, did not (and more importantly, could not) compare to the blow Blacks experienced when the Supreme Court sanctioned Jim Crow laws with the ruling of *Plessy vs. Ferguson* in 1896. The Supreme Court's conclusion that "separate but equal" was constitutional undeniably unraveled all gains made previously by Reconstruction.

Meanwhile, Blacks once again found themselves in an unsettling state. Although "free," Blacks were still bound by a system ruled by Whites. The old game from the past was now being played with new and clever rules. No longer could the Whites tell the Blacks when to wake up, work, and eat, but he could now determine *where* Blacks partook of these activities. Needless to say, Blacks existed within a false, distorted state of freedom. Indeed, they were freed people, no longer slaves. But free to do what? Free to be what? What did it mean to be Black in the U.S. during that period and what does it mean now? How did the transition from chattel to human shape the identity of Blacks?⁴ These are some questions that early and contemporary scholars have asked, and continue to ask, in their attempt to demystify the peculiar Black identity phenomenon.

W.E.B. Du Bois (1995/1903), Ralph Ellison (1995), Frantz Fanon (1967) Albert Memmi (1965), Molefi Kete Asante (1988, 1998) Na'im Akbar (1981, 1984, 1996, 1998) Paul Gilroy (1993), John Ogbu (1974, 1978, 1991, 1992, 2000, 2003) and Signithia Fordham (1988) are just a few among scholars who have grappled with the phenomenon of Black identity. While some of these scholars have offered suggestions for how one might exist productively as Black in the U.S., others have simply provided a description of what a black identity is and how it comes to

³ For more information on the Reconstruction, see W. E. B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America*, (New York: The Free Press, 1998) and Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1871*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1988).

⁴ See W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Suppression of the African Slave-Trade to the United States of America. 1638—1870*. (New York: Longmans, Green and Company, 1896. (Reprinted by Schocken Books, New York, 1969).

be. Rather than provide a linear outline of these scholars' thoughts on Black identity, presented are four frameworks from which these scholars have addressed the issue of Black identity: (1) Double consciousness; (2) Afrocentricity; (3) Pan-Africanism; and (4) Oppositional collective or social identity.

The following sections provide a brief description of each of the aforementioned frameworks and then explicate and analyze each scholar's thinking in relation to one another. It is beyond the scope of this review to analyze each scholar's thinking about Black identity (in its entirety) within each of these frames, as some have addressed this issue from one or more of the frames previously mentioned. For instance, Alridge (1999) argues that although Du Bois has been considered a Marxist, capitalist, Afrocentrist, Eurocentrist, revolutionary, conformist, integrationist, and separatist, none of these descriptors fully captures the man or his thinking.

Therefore, the exclusion of a scholar's thinking about black identity in all areas he or she may have theorized from is not an oversight; it simply is not the goal. The overall goals here, however, are to provide a glimpse at how black identity has been studied by various scholars and illustrate how Black identity has been discussed within different frameworks.

Double Consciousness

Du Bois

The idea of double consciousness can be traced back to the nineteenth century in both the areas of psychology (Rampersad, 1976) and literature (Rosenfield, 1967); however, it was Du Bois, in the early twentieth century, who employed the term to describe the state Blacks found themselves in as a result of events such as the Civil War, emergence of the Ku Klux Klan, end of slavery, and the South's adoption of Jim Crow (Dennis, 2003). In his classic work, *The Souls of*

Black Folk, Du Bois (1903/1995) describes the double consciousness of Black people. His following quote exemplifies the state of Black people as he saw them:

...the Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second sight in this American world,--a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness, --an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. (Du Bois, 1903/1995, p. 45)

The above quote suggests Du Bois' position that the double consciousness of Blacks in the United States yields an "irreconcilable nature...of two opposing forces (one African, the other European) locked in an eternal battle the outcome of which cannot yet be known" (Dennis, 2003, p. 15). This notion of double consciousness suggests, too, that there is a psychic split within the individual.

Interestingly, despite the significance and many implications of the term, Du Bois' mention of double consciousness can be found only in his, *Souls of Black Folk*; he fails to use the term in any of his other works. However, in *The Souls* and his earlier work, *The Philadelphia Negro*, implied is that Blacks' social existence, or their position on the social structure, is what ultimately determines their psychological consciousness (Dennis, 2003); thus, a double consciousness, which results from Blacks' overall low hierarchical status. In other words, double consciousness emerges from its social structural foundation and is grounded in the "status and power inequities, contradictions, and ambiguities of the African-American in the

United States” (Dennis, 2003, p. 22). Furthermore, it should be noted that when Du Bois referred to the duality of Blacks, he was referring to *all* Blacks, regardless of their individual social status.

The Souls of Black Folk was written only seven years after the Supreme Court’s decision in the *Plessy vs. Ferguson* case. This work culminated also as a result of Du Bois’ own frustrations with having to reconcile his White socialization while experiencing life’s harsh realities as a Black man. In fact, it has been noted that Du Bois “posits a construct of Black identity that is continually shifting, ambivalent, and, at times, ambiguous” (Walker, 2004, p. 83). Regardless of various interpretations offered, Du Bois’ depiction of the Negro’s dilemma was insightful and at the same time, reflected some of his own inner conflicts.

Paul Gilroy

On the other hand, in *The Black Atlantic*, Paul Gilroy (1993) takes a different position on the notion of double consciousness. First, he introduces the concept of the Black Atlantic, which can be viewed as ones “desire to transcend both the structures of the nation state and the constraints of ethnicity and national particularity” (Gilroy, 1993, p. 19). The black Atlantic, more specifically, can be defined as a fusion of “values, ideas, and positions that are transnational, transcultural, and transracial” (Gilroy, 1993, p. 21), and that this occurs as a result of the travels of Black elites to Europe. Furthermore, Gilroy (1993) argues that contact between Black elites and European elites yield new Black ideologies and philosophies as a result of their merger.

He further posits that the travel of Blacks to Europe is the key link in the development of the Black Atlantic, which precedes a double consciousness. In fact, he contends “the black Atlantic politics of location frames the doorway of double consciousness” (Gilroy, 1993, p. 19).

The following quote further illustrates Gilroy's position on double consciousness and his assertion that it is limited to members of the Black elite:

Du Bois' travel experiences raise in the sharpest possible form a question common to the lives of almost all these figures [Black elites] who begin as African-American or Caribbean people and are then changed into something else which evades those specific labels and with them all fixed notions of nationality and national identity. Whether their experiences of exile is enforced or chosen temporary or permanent, these intellectuals and activists, writers, speakers, poets, and artists repeatedly articulate a desire to escape the restrictive bonds of ethnicity, national identification, and sometimes even 'race' itself... Whether they dissolved their African-American sensibility into an explicitly pan-Africanist discourse or political commitment, their relationship to the land of their birth and their ethnic political constituency was absolutely transformed. (Gilroy, 1993, p. 19)

It is evident from the above quote that Gilroy's stance on where one's double consciousness originates, differs from Du Bois' position. Unlike, Du Bois (1903/1995), who argues that Blacks' "two souls, two thoughts, [and] two unreconciled strivings" (p. 45) originate in the U.S., Gilroy (1993) posits that Blacks do not discover or recognize their double consciousness until they travel to Europe or in white contexts. Therefore, two questions beg to be asked: (1) In what way does occasional travel abroad supersede the double consciousness experienced in American (at home) on a daily basis? (2) Why not view the issue by citing travel to one's country of origin rather than just Europe?

Albert Memmi and Frantz Fanon

A discussion of double consciousness would be incomplete without mentioning the works of Albert Memmi (1965) and Frantz Fanon (1967). Unlike Du Bois and Gilroy who concentrate their ideas on American Blacks, Memmi and Fanon consider the conditions of Black people outside the U.S. Memmi's *The Colonizer and the Colonized* and Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* and *Black Skin, White Masks* are, however, important for understanding the problems faced by Blacks in the U.S., as they were published during the height of the U. S. Civil Rights movement. Both scholars grappled with what occurred to colonized peoples once confronted with colonial rule. More importantly, each provides a provocative account of how colonialism shapes the very thinking and behaviors of those colonized. In this vein, the works of both Memmi (1965) and Fanon (1967) support Du Bois' assertion that Blacks are always confronted with the dilemma of viewing themselves through the lens of their oppressor. Although the scholars were each located within different contexts and had different socializations, their accounts of colonial repercussions were quite similar. The works of Memmi and Fanon provide those interested in Black identity with a true glimpse of the brainwashing effects of racism and colonialism that took place across U.S. borders.

Memmi (1965), in his classic work, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, provides an account of how colonial conquest "occurred through violence, and over-exploitation and oppression" (p. xxiv) and how this worked to create the colonized identity of northern Africans. Memmi (1965) argues that colonized peoples were depersonalized and that their humanity was rejected by the colonizer. Furthermore, the colonized were "never characterized in an individual manner; [instead] he is entitled only to drown in an anonymous collectivity" (Memmi, 1965, p. 85). Undeniably the most atrocious effect of the colonizer's impact on the colonized is his

ability to strip the colonized of his liberty, leaving him with no freedom to choose whether or not to be colonized. And finally in the end, the colonized is hardly a human being, but instead likened unto an object, existing “only as a function of the needs of the colonizer” (Memmi, 1965, p. 86). Memmi contends that the only solutions for the colonized lie within their decision to assimilate—taking on the characteristics of the colonizer, or to revolt against the colonizer.

In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon (1967) is concerned with the mind or consciousness of colonized Black people. He posits, however, that the phenomenon most crippling to the consciousness of Blacks was their fear of Whites, which was an outgrowth of White superiority and the socioeconomic gains Whites had acquired through colonization. Therefore, like Du Bois, Fanon acknowledges the relationship between double consciousness and one’s social position; however, he introduces the element of fear as contributing to Blacks’ consciousness, or their psychic split. In addition, while Du Bois’ notion of double consciousness implies Blacks are “fragmented beyond repair, hence a disintegrating society” (Dennis, 2003, p. 17), Fanon (1967) provides hope for the colonized Black mind. He suggests that ridding themselves of fear is necessary for Blacks’ total liberation. The first step in the process of decolonization, or towards liberation, requires the eradication of colonial values endured by the colonized. Furthermore, Fanon (1967) asserts it is also necessary that Blacks not only learn to accept their Blackness, but also have pride in it. In other words, a healthy, stable Black identity occurs when a Western, colonized identity is replaced with Black pride.

Ralph Ellison

A discussion of Ralph Ellison is included here because his writings suggest he, too, may support the notion of a double consciousness and the Negro as a psychic split (Marr, 1988).

Ellison (as cited in Marr, 1988), in his review of Gunnar Myrdal's *An American Dilemma*, stated the following:

In our society, it is not unusual for a Negro to experience a sensation that he does not exist in the real world at all. He seems rather to exist in the nightmarish fantasy of the white American mind as a phantom that the white mind seeks, unceasingly, by means both crude and subtle, to lay. (p. 199)

In his famous novel, *Invisible Man*, Ellison (1952/1995) provides a portrait of a young, educated Black man's search for identity and visibility in the U.S. It is only after several attempts to gain the approval of Whites (who refuse to see him as a human being) that he realizes he must create his own identity that depends not on the acceptance of Whites, but on his own acceptance of his reality as a Black man.

While Ellison (1952/1995) does not explicitly use the term double consciousness, he implies that Blacks exist in a world created for and by Whites, and that this "nightmarish fantasy" in which the Negro finds himself, ultimately renders him invisible, or non-existent. This notion of invisibility adds new dimension to Du Bois' double consciousness. Du Bois' double consciousness illustrates the Black person as one who is constantly in the process of negotiating his Black existence within a White world. The Black individual is always aware of himself, and more importantly, how others view him. This notion of double consciousness, however, does not necessarily imply invisibility.

Pan-Africanism

Although Pan-Africanism has multiple definitions, Morris (2003) considers it "an international effort to foster a bond of solidarity among people dispersed throughout the world as a consequence of the transatlantic slave trade" (p. 259). In fact, he contends further that Pan-

Africanism not only is “the racial and political unification of people of African ancestry on the African continent and throughout the Diaspora” (Morris, 2003, p. 259), but that it has been the most influential of perspectives for the political mobilization of peoples of African descent. While there are many who can be described as pioneers of Pan-Africanism by way of their writings and teachings, Marcus Garvey is undoubtedly among the earliest.

Marcus Garvey

Like Du Bois, Marcus Garvey had a deep compassion for Black people. He, too, was concerned with their plight, not only in the U.S., but also in the Diaspora. His Garveyite Pan-Africanism sought to mobilize Africans and people of African descent in the Diaspora for reforms as well as for their political, economic and cultural empowerment. He was a staunch separatist and founder of the all-Black Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA). A controversial figure, Garvey was able to gain mass appeal, uniting a vast majority of Black people with his uncompromising separatist views on race (Schraff, 2004), and his commitment to nurturing Black self-help and Pan-Africanism via the UNIA (Hill, 1983).

On the other hand, Du Bois, who too had a Pan-Africanist ideology, was the founder of the racially, integrated National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). His involvement with the NAACP influenced his rationalization to negotiate with European colonial powers for social, economic, and political reforms (Hill, 1983). While Marcus Garvey’s political, “Back to Africa” movement, was unsuccessful, it did much to bring about a racial pride and critical consciousness within and amongst Black people of his time. Certainly, he did much to uplift the race, without the need of putting at the forefront a “talented tenth,” which characterized much of Du Bois’ early agenda. Thus, Garvey’s more extreme separatist views may have had a great impact on enhancing a healthy Black identity. Also, Garvey’s emphasis on

Black pride may have had some influence on the writings of Fanon, who, too, emphasized the necessity of Black pride as leading towards Black liberation.

Molefi Asante, Naim Akbar, Hilliard and Others

Pan-Africanists and Afrocentrists, Molefi Asante and Na'im Akbar, unlike some of the previously mentioned scholars, contend that Black people have an inherent African self-consciousness (Akbar, 1981; Asante, 1988; Asante, 1998), one that is Africentrically based. They reject Cross' (1991) racial identity model, which suggests African-Americans develop their racial identity through various stages, from one that is "oppressor identified" to one that is internalized, or self-actualized (Parham, White, & Ajamu, 1990). Instead, Asante and Akbar, along with Asa Hilliard, argue that mental bondage, not racism, is African-Americans' greatest challenge (Akbar, 1984).

What is interesting about this viewpoint is that Whites, their power, and racism (all external elements), are removed from the center and are replaced with Africans-Americans, armed with agency. Freedom from this mental bondage, however, requires that individuals understand both the complexity of their problems as well as how to break away at their chains, link by link (Akbar, 1996; Akbar, 1998). In this vein, the works of Asante, Akbar, and Hilliard line up with some of Du Bois' thoughts that, according to Alridge (1999), "warned of the impact that hundreds of years of enslavement, oppression, and institutionalized racism could have on the collective and individual psyches of African Americans (p. 188)" and that in order to transcend these evils Blacks would have to "ground themselves in African and Black culture" (Alridge, 1999, p. 188).

One alternative to adopting a Pan-Africanist consciousness is assuming an oppositional identity, although it could be argued the latter is possible to exist in the absence of any desire to unite with other Black people.

Oppositional Collective or Social Identity

Signithia Fordham and John Ogbu

Focusing their studies primarily within the context of schools and with adolescents, John Ogbu and Signithia Fordham posit a theory which suggests that, as a result of substandard schooling (based on what is deemed an appropriate education for Blacks by Whites), White control of education, and the job ceiling set for Blacks despite their educational credentials, Black adolescents respond to these and other factors by creating an oppositional identity (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Ogbu, 1992). This oppositional identity is where, collectively, Black adolescents develop an identity that opposes everything associated with White behavior. Furthermore, this collective identity is always in opposition to the oppression Blacks endure at the hands of white people and the institutions they control (i.e., schools). Collectively, Fordham and Ogbu have come up with this theory to explain why it is some Black students fail in schools.

Independently, John Ogbu (1978, 1991, 2000) claimed that the way in which one arrives to a country will have a great impact on one's success or failure in the host country. His cultural ecological theory on schooling suggests that voluntary minorities--those who move to a society in an effort to better their well-being, and involuntary minorities--those who are brought into a society either by slavery or colonization, will have different experiences in schools. His theory helps one to understand each group's different interpretations of and responses to U.S. race relations and the dominant group.

In a series of international studies surrounding the academic achievement of voluntary and involuntary minority adolescents, Ogbu (1992) found that voluntary minorities' high school success rate is related to their "orientation that strongly endorses academic success as a means of getting ahead in the United States" (p. 5). In addition, these students are encouraged not only to perform as Whites, but also to outperform them in academic pursuits. On the other hand, lower academic achievement among involuntary minorities is related to their skepticism of mainstream beliefs and strategies and distrust in school personnel and the dominant group (Ogbu, 1992).

This theory has some implications for understanding how second-generation Trinidadian students may achieve in schools and in the larger society as well. It is important to note, however, that Ogbu's cultural ecological theory may not apply as neatly for this group as one might expect. As mentioned earlier, I argue there is a correlation between the racial identity of second-generation Trinidadians and the relationships they have with organizations such as families and schools. Therefore, the various ways in which second-generation students can identify themselves (i.e., ethnic, immigrant, or American) will impact greatly the degree to which Ogbu's voluntary or involuntary labels can be assigned.

For example, Morris (2004), in a pilot study of recent African-American high school graduates, found that these students' school success did not interfere with their racial identity and/or that their parents' emphasis on academic achievement contributed to the students' success. His findings, while not conclusive, suggest that context may, too, be a factor in determining the school success of individuals.

Signithia Fordham, in her study of Black student school success, found that the adoption of a raceless identity is what some students utilized in order to succeed in school. These students found it necessary to disassociate with the fictive kinship groups (i.e. Black peers), and instead

chose to ‘act white’ in order to succeed in school (Fordham, 1988). The students’ adoption of a raceless identity suggests they did not believe they could succeed in school if they kept their original Black identity intact.

Common among all the above group of scholars’ views on Black identity is the notion of a very complex and nuanced Black identity. Despite the Black person’s context, she is faced with a dilemma of negotiating for herself what it is or may be to be Black, and yet, on the other hand, she must come to grips with how the outside world views her. What slavery, colonialism, imperialism, and to some extent, migration have in common are their possibilities for forcing one to view oneself, not only through one’s own lens, but through the lens of those looking on.

The early work of Du Bois helps us to make some sense of African-American’s duality, existing as Black and American. At the same time, Du Bois’ notion of a double-consciousness begs the question as to whether more than two “warring” souls can coexist. In other words, is it possible to have a triple consciousness? Consider the case of second-generation Trinidadians—always Black, but never fully Trinidadian, nor American. And when Black is the only option left, what exactly does that mean for this individual? Would it then be more feasible to consider Garvey’s rejection of self and individual identities and settle for one that is completely African? These are some of the dilemmas facing not only African-Americans, but also first and second-generation West Indians. Yet, while all the above scholars poignantly discuss the roles of race and ethnicity, they give little attention to gendered dimensions of their thinking regarding Black people in the Diaspora.

Gender and Black Diasporic Identity

Gender

One dimension of the African Diaspora that, too, may shed some light on the understanding of Trinidadians in the U.S. is the linkage between women in the U.S. and women in Africa. Black/African feminisms address the intersecting oppressions of race, gender, class, and sexuality in Black women's lives and that these oppressions interconnect, to some degree, despite context (Collins, 2000). For example, women living in the U.S., Trinidad, or Africa, all have in common multiple oppressions, which may vary to some degree.

Despite these struggles Steady (1993) and Ham (1993) contend however, that Black women in Africa and throughout the Diaspora also share in their ability to overcome multiple oppressions. Steady argues that European contact, production and reproduction, industrial production, and African feminism are the links between women in Africa and women in the African Diaspora. European contact, production and reproduction, industrial production, particularly, have been key in shaping the world economic system. Steady further argues that although Black women are placed in structurally subordinate groups because of their race and gender, their labor has "...played important roles in the reproduction of structurally dominant social and racial groups..." (p. 176). However, despite their second-class assignment, women, have rebelled, overcoming and resisting oppression to ensure their survival through African feminism, taking ownership of their labor and reproductive rights.

Debra Ham provides an historical account of the settlement of Liberia, highlighting the important role that African American women played in educating African and recaptive⁵ girls. The African American women who migrated to Liberia were composed mainly of freed slaves,

⁵⁵ Recaptives, or liberated Africans, were slaves who had been freed by the British Royal Navy. In most cases, recaptives were taken to Freetown, Sierra Leone to settle there.

granted freedom on the condition that they emigrate. In most cases, these women were fluent in English and capable of doing the work African women participated in, although they shunned these tasks as a means of distinguishing themselves from the natives who African Americans believed were in much need of “enlightenment.” Many of these women were entrepreneurs in their own right, cultivating gardens and farms, raising chickens and other various animals, sewing, nursing, and so forth. Some were laundresses, peddlers, and even missionaries.

However, the most beneficial role played by African American women was that of educator. This was the one role uncommon to Africans, who were taught spelling, math, geography, reading, and writing. While the efforts, strides and commitments made by African American women to educate Africans and re-captives deserve the utmost recognition and praise, it must be noted that their good deeds were done with an air of superiority. Ironically, the breadth of knowledge these African-American missionaries possessed when they migrated to Africa, was a knowledge that, for many, had been denied in America.

Although it is evident that women all over the Diaspora share in their multiple oppressions, as pointed out by Ham (1993), it is also apparent that women can act as the oppressor, using their own privilege to dominate and reign superior over others. As such, more discussion is needed to understand clearly the relationships between African American women, African women and women across the Diaspora. The implications of the particular biases African American women took with them to the homeland is indeed worth investigation. Ham makes several inferences to the haughty attitudes of settler women toward Africans; however, it is unclear how these attitudes may or may not have hindered the process of teaching and learning. The exchange between teacher and pupil is described as one where the teacher was happy to teach and where the pupil was happy to get whatever she could. I cannot help wonder,

however, if there was any resistance, on the part of Africans, to learning from individuals who deemed themselves as more “enlightened.”

What does this mean, then, for African-American teachers of Black Trinidadian students? Given the fact that many West Indians distance themselves from African-Americans, or desire to be viewed as different from African-Americans, one must consider the extent to which this divisiveness finds itself in American society, particularly in organizations such as schools. What views, if any, do African-Americans have of second-generation children? And, do these views change over time?

Diasporic Identity

The term Diaspora, when used by itself, refers to the “scattering abroad of Jews” (Shepperson, 1993, p. 41). When coupled with the adjective, African, however, the term Diaspora takes on new meaning. Between the mid-1950s and the mid-1960s, the term African Diaspora gained popularity by scholars who were “concerned with the status and prospects of persons of African descent around the world as well as at home” (Shepperson, 1993, p. 41). So, like the Jews, Africans were dispersed (voluntarily and involuntarily), or exiled throughout various parts of the world; hence, the term African Diaspora.

Diasporic identity, on the other hand, is what occurred as a result of this worldwide dispersion. In the case of people of African descent, they came to have a Diasporic identity because of their mass dispersion. And while the vast majority of those who were forced into exile found themselves in inferior roles as slaves in their host countries, many did not return to their homeland in Africa, even when the opportunity was present. This, argues Skinner (1993), was because “...the later generation of exiles had adapted to their environment. True, they

continued to be persecuted, and even killed, but they had become members of the societies in which they lived...” (p. 19).

This is not to suggest, however, that dispersed peoples severed links with the homeland (Patton, 1993). In fact, Uya (1993) argues that once in the Diaspora, Africans maintained their languages and cultures alongside European culture and languages. Over time, however, he argues that African languages and cultures mixed with European languages and culture, creating a new African reality, which took on a different form. Furthermore, Levine (1993) contends there is a substantive African continuity not only in the United States, but also to other areas of the Diaspora.

The Diasporic identity is an interesting phenomenon that has implications for understanding the complex experiences and realities of Trinidadians, particularly the first-generation. Their experience of being involuntarily transplanted from Africa to Trinidad and their subsequent voluntary transplant from Trinidad to the U.S. may explain why and how they make the racial and ethnic identity choices they make once they arrive to American shores. As Patricia Hill Collins (2000) pointed out, “African-American women are neither African nor American...” (p. 235); the same holds true of Trinidadians living in the U.S., regardless of length of their residence. Faced with this reality, it is no wonder why many choose to maintain their ethnic identity (e.g., Trinidadian) even when there may be some pressure to identify as American.

One explanation for this, as Waters (1999) explains, are the perceived and realized consequences associated with the ethnic and racial choices West Indians make once in this country. She argues further that there are advantages for West Indians who maintain their ethnic identity. For example, job opportunities may be more available from white employers who may

view the work ethic of West Indians as more superior to their African-American counterparts. Thus, this reward, among others can perpetuate the need West Indians have for distancing themselves from African-Americans.

Issues Studying the Second-Generation

The following highlights some of the scholarly challenges in understanding the experiences of second-generation West Indians. Although a large body of work exists on West Indians in a broad sense, very little is known about the Trinidadian subgroup, and even less is known about the unique experiences of second-generation West Indians.

As the arrival of immigrants to the U.S. increases, every facet of U.S. society is affected: the workplace, communication, race relations, and schools. Since the mid 1960's, the U.S. has experienced an influx of Black immigrants. Census (2000) data indicate that in 2000, 186,000 foreign-born Black people lived in the United States. However, as pointed out by Waters (1994) it is impossible to know the numbers of second-generation Black West Indians, as the Census asks no questions regarding the birthplace of one's parents. Therefore, it is safe to assume there are a growing number of Black second-generation children in the U.S. Unfortunately, the literature surrounding this population is quite scarce. According to Waters (1994) while there is substantial research on the identities and affiliations of Caribbean immigrants, little is known about their U.S-born children.

Interestingly, research exploring the experiences of first and second-generation Black immigrants has been reported disproportionately from an outsider perspective. For example, writings about West Indian immigrants by white and non-Black West Indian scholars, while insightful, leave the reader with a myriad of questions: To what extent does the researcher's "outsider" lens and identity affect the responses of the "insider"? To what extent will those

researched by the outsider be honest about their experiences? In what way does one's ideology shape one's interpretation of data (see Foner, 1985, 1987; Model, 1991; Portes & MacLeod, 1996; Portes & Zhou, 1993, 1994; Rong & Preissle, 1998; Rumbaut, 1994; Waters, 1994, 1999)?

Consequently, the voice of the researcher as insider is conspicuously absent from this body of work. The importance of the insider's voice, however, cannot be overemphasized. Smith (1999) in a study of her own people--the indigenous Maori--validates this point in the following statement: "As indigenous peoples we have our own research needs and priorities. Our questions are important. Research helps us to answer them" (p. 199). As a Black researcher of Trinidadian descent, I was able to conduct this study from an insider's perspective, thus increasing its authenticity, reliability and validity. Additionally, my insider perspective allows me to understand the values, speech, and behaviors of the participants (Krieger, 1987).

Finally, and of paramount importance, studies of the racial, ethnic, and cultural identities of first and second-generation West Indians tend to view them as a monolithic group, rarely distinguishing between the various ethnicities that make up the West Indian population, such as Trinidadians, Jamaican, Haitians, Guyanese, and such. In fact, in his study of "West Indians," Vickerman (1999) interviewed a sample of 106 Jamaican immigrants to represent and analyze the experiences of West Indians. To justify his sample as representative of all West Indians, he stated the following:

I take the attitudes of Jamaican immigrants to be typical of those of other West Indian immigrants. This is not to discount the existence of cultural variations that are peculiar to immigrants from other territories in the region. Rather, it is to argue...that the similarities between West Indian immigrants outweigh their differences....[A]nother reason for viewing Jamaicans as being representative of

other West Indian immigrants is that the former make up the largest segment of that immigrant community. Moreover, from a subjective point of view, Jamaican immigrants tend to see few differences between themselves and other immigrants from the West Indies—especially those from the Anglophone territories. (p. 12)

However, problematic to Vickerman's claim that Jamaicans do not view themselves differently from other West Indian immigrants is his failure to afford other West Indian immigrant groups the opportunity to compare their view of themselves to Jamaicans and other West Indian populations.

Moreover, existing research analyzing the identities of first and second-generation Black West Indians has focused primarily on the experiences of Jamaicans (see Foner, 1985, 1987; Henke, 2001; Vickerman, 1999), and Haitians (see Buchanan, 1979; Schiller, 1987; Stafford, 1987; Zephir, 1996). Hence, Trinidad and its peoples are excluded largely from the discourse surrounding race relations and identity.

In conclusion, this review provides a framework from which this research on second-generation Trinidadians was approached. Specifically, an overview of theoretical perspectives that must be considered in the investigation was included. The following chapter details how the investigation of second-generation Black Trinidadians was carried out by providing a detailed discussion of the research methodology and thinking employed.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to examine the degree to which family socialization and school experiences shaped and/or influenced the racial and ethnic identity choices of second-generation Black Trinidadians. Since participants were asked to share their stories and experiences on such sensitive topics as race, ethnicity and identity, great thought was given to the methodology selected to investigate the phenomenon under study. First, I begin with a brief discussion about my role as the researcher and acknowledge the subjective nature of this inquiry. Second, I describe symbolic interactionism, the operating theoretical framework of the study. Third, I discuss the design of the study and explain the role of grounded theory. Fourth, I describe my methods for data selection, collection and analysis. In the final two sections I provide details about the ways in which I approached matters of ethical issues and trustworthiness.

Subjectivity Statement

My interest in the racial and ethnic identities of second-generation Black, Trinidadians, particularly the phenomena that influence how and why this group makes decisions about their self-identification, stems from my own experience as one who was born and raised in the United States, but whose parents are first-generation Trinidadians. Therefore, I am cognizant that my mere interest in the area of research, by default, renders the inquiry subjective.

I believe my curiosity about racial and ethnic identity began at an early age, when questions about my own identities were met with responses that left me with feelings of doubt

and confusion. I did not understand how, although my skin was black, I was somehow different (and viewed differently) from my African-American peers; nor did I understand why I “felt” more African-American versus Trinidadian, although I was raised in a culturally Trinidadian household; and finally, I resented the fact that I was partially both Trinidadian and Black American, but neither of these fully. As noted earlier in Chapter 1, some of my family members often said, “You’re not a real American; you’re not like them.” I did not, however, perceive this “analysis” as a compliment although it was meant to be one. In all honesty, I am not even certain if these so-called compliments were given in an attempt to bring me into the Trinidadian fold. Instead, I believed they were simply compliments to Trinidadians or West Indians in general, at the expense of African-Americans. At the same time, some of my African-American peers occasionally questioned the extent to which I was Black, like them. Their questions about my parents’ accent, what kinds of food I ate, and curiosity about whether or not I was Jamaican or Haitian often left me feeling like an outsider and as though I had no real space to call my own.⁶ Despite the confusion I experienced and the conflicting messages I received from my family and peers, the issue was further complicated by my ability to weave in and out of these two worlds (Black American and Trinidadian), sometimes undetected.

As a result, I identify greatly with DuBois’ notion of double consciousness. I live in two worlds with two warring identities: as Black American and Trinidadian, simultaneously. These hybrid identities often conflict with each other and have, at times, caused me to believe that one must justify and defend the other. This internal conflict sometimes exists when in the presence of African-Americans or West Indians who are not aware of my dual identity. Consequently, because of this dual identity and my ability to navigate between these worlds, I have often been

⁶ In the early eighties, particularly in Miami, Haitian students were often made fun of by African-Americans and other groups. If someone said you had HBO (patterned after the cable network), it really meant you had Haitian body odor.

privity to the thoughts and opinions (sometimes negative) that African-Americans and West Indians have of each other.

My inner conflicts existed not only within familial and social contexts, but also within the context of school. I can recall how many of my white teachers began to treat me differently from my African-American peers once they realized my parents were from Trinidad. Prior to meeting them, my teachers assumed I was no different (and treated me no differently) from my African-American peers, as I spoke with no accent and dressed in the current fashions. Needless to say, I somehow sensed my teachers had newer and higher expectations of me, as I was no longer “one of them (i.e., African American).” I possessed a different historical and cultural experience from African Americans; I was perceived as an immigrant, which carried a currency (i.e. cultural capital) that was considered of value to mainstream White Americans.

Therefore, it should come as no surprise that my firsthand experience as a second-generation Black Trinidadian, has influenced not only my decision to research this population but will also impact my representation of them. To say that I merely want to understand the ways in which second-generation Trinidadians come to navigate their racial and ethnic identities, and explore the degree to which parental socialization and schooling experiences impact the identity choices of this population, is an understatement. Ultimately, a deeper understanding and knowledge about second-generation Black Trinidadian, along with how they come to identify themselves both racially and ethnically later in life, will assist me as I continue on my journey toward self-awareness as an individual and in a collective sense.

Theoretical Framework

Symbolic interactionism is the theoretical framework that began to inform the design, methods and interpretation of this study; however, it is not as exhaustive as other theoretical

ideas outlined in chapter two and later gleaned from the interviews with the participants later in this study. One focus of symbolic interactionism is to study how individuals view themselves (self-identification), how we view others (interpersonal perceptions) and how we perceive others view us. Symbolic interactionism also seeks to make sense of social reality and society from the perspective of the individuals who interpret their world through and in social interaction. Additionally, symbolic interactionism explains the collection of understandings and symbols that provide meaning to people's interactions (deMarrais & Roulston, 2001).

According to Blumer (1969) symbolic interactionism rests on three assumptions. First, humans respond to things based on the meaning these things have for them. In other words, when individuals interact in this way, the objects and meanings attached to them become fundamentally germane. Second, meaning of particular things is derived from social interactions of one with others (Blumer, 1969). This simply means, that our understanding of objects and how we interact with them is taught largely via our interactions with others. The third assumption of symbolic interactionism is that meanings are realized and modified through an interpretative process used by one in dealing with the things he or she may encounter (Blumer, 1969). Under this assumption the individual not only engages in internal conversations with herself, but also generates and interprets meaning in order to choose an appropriate course of action. According to this framework, the meanings second-generation Trinidadians derived from their home and school experiences were social products, formed in and through defining activities as they interacted with these institutions. Therefore, the intent is to generate new ways of thinking about the limits and possibilities of symbolic interactionism by critically infusing a framework that also considers the significance of race, ethnicity, Diasporic identity, immigrant

status, social class, and gender. The aim of this study is to offer this theoretical and scholarly contribution.

Research Design

Professionals across various disciplines have studied the identities of individuals and groups: sociologists, anthropologists, health professionals, biologists, educational researchers, and such. However, while the rationales for studying identity and the yielded conclusions may differ according to discipline, one thing is certain: identity is very complex. Furthermore, the approaches to understanding the phenomenon of identity are as varied as the individuals who study it. For example, although psychologists take the quantitative approach almost exclusively to examine individual identity (see Aboud, 1987; Aboud & Doyle, 1993; Cross, 1991; Helms, 1993), anthropologists and sociologists commonly use qualitative methods (see Frankenberg, 1993; Ogbu, 1974; Perry, 2002; Waters, 1999).

The identities of second-generation Trinidadians were investigated from a qualitative position. Qualitative researchers interested in people's identities and how individuals negotiate their various identities (i.e., racial, ethnic, social, sexual, and such) have used a variety of designs to study these phenomena. Ethnography (see Alexander, 2003; Renold, 2004; Rhedding-Jones, 2000), participatory action research (see Esposito & Murphy, 2000; Maeve, 1999; McIntyre, 1997), and autoethnography (see Vidal-Ortiz, 2004; Olson, 2004) are examples of research designs used in the extant literature to address the topic of identity. However, the intent here was to generate and conceptualize new ideas through the grounded theory approach to examine the racial and ethnic identity choices of second-generation Trinidadians.

Grounded Theory

Grounded theory, as a methodology, “uses a systematic set of procedures to develop an inductively derived grounded theory about phenomenon” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 24).

According to Creswell (as cited in Dey, 1999, p. 1), the following captures some of the basic tenets of grounded theory:

- The researcher has to set aside theoretical ideas to allow a “substantive” theory to emerge;
- Theory focuses on how individuals interact in relation to the phenomenon under study;
- Theory is derived from data acquired through fieldwork interviews, observations, and documents;
- Data analysis is systematic and begins as soon as data becomes available;
- Data analysis proceeds through identifying categories and connecting them; and
- Further data collection (or sampling) is based on emerging concepts.

Overall, the aim of grounded theory is to generate or discover a theory, rather than rely on preconceived hypotheses or theoretical frameworks (Bernard, 2002; Charmaz, 2002; Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 1995). The resulting theory “provides a new way of understanding the social situations from which the theory was generated” (Hutchinson, 1988, p. 124).

Grounded theory was the appropriate methodology by which to investigate the identity choices of second-generation Trinidadians, given that it allows the researcher to focus on context, ‘lived’ experiences of participants, patterns of experience, and judgments (Hutchinson, 1988), criteria that is essential to qualitative research (Sherman, Webb & Andrews, 1984). Furthermore, Hutchinson (1988) argues that grounded theory initiates new theory, reformulates

theory, refocuses theory, and clarifies existing theory. With this in mind, grounded theory allowed for new understanding of the second-generation Black Trinidadian to emerge.

Despite its benefits, grounded theory may be viewed as limited in regard to replicability. Since grounded theory relies heavily on interaction between the researcher and the data, it is unlikely for two people to generate identical theories. However, the issue of replicability was of little consequence, as the aim of grounded theory in this study was to offer fresh, new perspectives on the phenomenon of second-generation Black Trinidadian identity.

Research Methods

The following section describes the methods of data collection, data selection, and analysis for this investigation of the racial and ethnic identity choices of second-generation Black Trinidadians.

Sample Selection

At the start of the study, an initial goal was to select approximately 15 participants using the simple criterion-based selection method. The interviews were to take place in metropolitan-Atlanta with second-generation Trinidadians, both male and female, who attended high school anywhere in the U.S., resided in Georgia at the time of the interview, and were between the ages of 18 and 35. Fortunately, I had a relationship with a key informant who was able to identify eligible participants. Such informants, according to Bernard (2002) are people to whom the researcher will be able to talk easily, who understand the information the researcher needs, and who will be glad to provide the information. Although key informants may not meet the criteria to participate in the study, they are yet invaluable, as they are “people who know a lot about the rules of a culture, are highly articulate, and are, for whatever reasons of their own, ready and willing to walk you through their culture and show you the ropes” (Bernard, 2002, p. 187).

Accordingly, these individuals are able to suggest participants who meet the criteria to participate in this study. The informant for the present study made known several Trinidadian "hang out" spots in the metropolitan Atlanta areas. These spots included the homes of 2 individuals who were known for throwing parties at their homes, a popular club and a popular restaurant, which doubled as host for a Trinidadian organization's monthly meeting. My invitation and visits to these settings made it possible to meet and build a rapport with potential participants.

Despite repeated visits to these and other Trinidadian social gatherings, attended primarily by first and 1.5 generation Trinidadians, I did not gain immediate access to the targeted group for this study. For example, although I attended several house parties and other social gatherings with people who were close to me in age, I found them to be less than friendly. Both the men and women were standoffish in these settings and made few attempts to welcome me into their group. Furthermore, It was difficult for me not only to understand this dynamic, but also to gauge whether the dynamic was attributed simply to me being new to the group or a perception that I was somehow an outsider or different from its members.

As such, I began attending the monthly meetings of a Trinidadian organization in March, 2006, and after some time, developed relationships with some of its office-holding members. During this time, I talked to various members about my research and my need for participants. In August 2006, I was invited to present preliminary findings from a previous study I conducted entitled, "First-Generation Black Trinidadians: Parent's Perceptions of their U.S. Born Children's Racial Identity." Immediately following my presentation and during subsequent meetings, the president of the organization encouraged members to help me find participants for the present study. As a result, some members, voluntarily, began to share the names and contact

information of people (or the parents of these individuals) they believed were eligible for the study. Also, the president and secretary were gracious enough to post my announcement for participants (see Appendix A) to the organization's listserv. From these efforts, I contacted several potential participants, but I met challenges in either obtaining participants who met all of the eligibility requirements or getting some eligible individuals to participate in the study.

Unforeseen challenges arose in terms of recruiting participants for the research study; consequently, snowball sampling was employed as a technique to obtain participants and meet deadlines for the investigation (Bernard, 2002). Furthermore, eligibility criteria were revised so that participants had to meet the following in order to participate in the study:

1. were born in the United States;
2. had attended high school in the United States;
3. were between the ages of 18 and 40; and
4. had at least one first-generation Trinidadian parent by whom they were raised.

In the end, 6 participants from the metropolitan-Atlanta area were interviewed for the study. Given the small sample size, efforts were made to increase the number of participants by seeking out participants from the South Florida area, which had a sizeable Black West-Indian immigrant population. An additional 5 participants, all from South Florida, were interviewed as part of the study. Although it was intended for both females and males to be included in this investigation, male voices are conspicuously absent from this study. With the exception of one potential male participant, all the individuals who were referred to me, agreed to participate in the study, and subsequently followed through with the interview process, turned out to be females. The one male that was referred to me declined to participate due to his demanding work and school schedules. Participants represented various educational and socioeconomic

backgrounds. Fortunately, I had working relationships with several adult Trinidadian individuals, in the metro-Atlanta area and Dade and Broward counties in Florida, who served as useful informants and were able to identify where sizable populations of Trinidadians resided and socialized.

Contexts for the Study

The contexts for this study took place in Georgia and Florida, specifically in metropolitan-Atlanta and Miami-Dade and Broward Counties. Dekalb County was originally identified as a site because its location was easily accessible; of Georgia's 159 counties, it also had the largest number of Trinidadians who resided there. In fact, Census (2000) data indicated that at least 1,304 individuals living in Dekalb County at that time had been born in Trinidad.⁷ Thus, 34% of all Trinidadians living in the state of Georgia resided in Dekalb County (U. S. Census, 2000). Comparatively, Miami-Dade and Broward Counties were selected as research sites, as the largest number Trinidadian-born individuals resided there. Their populations were 6,487 and 9,803, respectively. In total, 57% of all Trinidadians living in the state of Florida resided in Miami-Dade and Broward Counties (U.S. Census, 2000). Clearly, these statistics rendered Dekalb, Miami-Dade, and Broward Counties sites worthy of examination, as their potential populations of second-generation Trinidadians was significant. Atlanta, Georgia and Miami, Florida are also of significance because of their contrasting roles in the experiences of Black immigrants. Miami, Florida has long served as a site of migration for Black immigrants, whereas Atlanta is increasingly becoming a site of migration for Black immigrants, many of whom relocate from traditional gateways cities such as New York City. Ironically, although 6 women from Georgia (some of whom lived in Dekalb County) were interviewed for the study,

⁷ Of the 1,304 who identified Trinidad as their place of birth, only 1,256 self-identified as Trinidadian.

the only women included in the data analysis lived in Cobb County, which was not originally a site of interest.

Data Collection

Data were collected over a 13-month period, between April 2006 and June 2007. The 8 eligible participants were second-generation Trinidadians between the ages of 18 and 40, were born and attended high school in the United States, and had at least one first-generation Trinidadian parent by whom they were raised. All participants were female, but this was not a requirement. The racial and ethnic identity choices of the participants and the factors that influenced their choices were assessed through face-to-face, semi-structured, open-ended interviews. Participants were asked to discuss how they self-identified, either racially or ethnically, and how the relevant factors that influenced their decisions were realized.

All participants voluntarily participated in one interview but also agreed to any follow-up interviews if it was deemed necessary to confirm or examine further any findings from their initial interviews. Each interview was approximately 45 to 90 minutes in length. Participants were allowed to determine the time and location of their interviews to ensure the reliability, integrity, and validity of their responses.

Each interview began with a review of the interview process and IRB consent form (see Appendix B). After participants agree to proceed with the interview, they were asked to complete all parts of the consent form and participant screening questionnaire (see Appendix C). The screening questionnaire was used to (a) document and determine each participant's eligibility and (b) initiate the interview process. Although an interview protocol (see Appendix D) was used during each interview, in an effort to make the experience a process of constructing

meaning for each participant, interviews were conducted in a face-to-face conversational manner with open-ended questions to derive authentic responses (Spradley, 1979).

Immediately after each interview, and prior to subsequent transcribing, reflection memos were used to capture thoughts about the interviews, how the interview went, questions that should have been asked, and such. Upon completion of the interviews and subsequent transcription of them, qualitative analytic coding was used to identify common themes (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 1995). This aided in beginning the process of data analysis.

Data Analysis

The inductive approach to analysis was used, which lends itself to grounded theory research and helped to make sense of the issue of identity.

Inductive Analysis

Shank (2002, p. 7) asserts that the primary focus of qualitative research is "...an examination and inquiry into meaning." And while qualitative research offers many methods by which to inquire, Coffey and Atkinson (1994, p. 3) suggest, "there are many ways of analyzing qualitative data" as well. While analysis may be considered a separate stage of the research process, Miles and Huberman consider this bad praxis (as cited in Weiss, 1994). Echoing this viewpoint, Coffey and Atkinson (1994) contend the following:

The process of analysis should not be seen as a distinct stage of the research process; rather, it is a reflexive activity that should inform data collection, writing, further data collection, and so forth. Analysis is not, then, the last phase of the research process. It should be seen as part of the research design and the data collection. The research process, of which analysis is one aspect, is a cyclical one. (p. 6)

Viewed in this vein, analysis is, then, an inductive activity (Bernard, 2002; Coffey & Atkinson, 1994; LeCompte & Preissle, 1993), one in which the researcher, “interprets the actions and meanings of the data from the data collected, not from a priori schemas” (Weiss & Lloyd, 2002, p. 6). The illustration of inductive analysis presented here is one in which the researcher attempts to “inquire” into the meaning of the data via careful examination.

Open Coding

Developed initially by Glaser and Strauss (1967), the open code method has been reconceptualized and modified from its original version (Glaser, 1978; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). There are several ways of doing or thinking about open coding. For example, Strauss and Corbin (1990) offer (a) line-by-line analysis, (b) whole sentence or paragraph analysis, and (c) entire document analysis, as three possible means to conduct open coding. On the other hand, Strauss and Corbin refer to open coding as the second stage of grounded theory in their book, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for developing grounded theory* (1998, p. 103). Viewed in this manner, “...data are broken down into discrete parts, closely examined, and compared for similarities and differences...Closely examining data for both differences and similarities allows for fine discrimination and differentiation among categories.” Similar to Strauss and Corbin (1998), Charmaz (2002) considers open coding as a stage of grounded theory; however, from her position, open coding is the first of a two-step process of grounded theory. In this case, open coding “forces the researcher to begin making analytic decisions about the data” (p. 684).

The open-coding approach to data analysis, specifically entire document analysis, although time consuming, was invaluable, as it forced the researcher to develop an intimate relationship with the data. Merriam (2002) critiques open-coding as fracturing the data, but

despite this flaw, it was found to be a very useful method. Initial memos proved to be invaluable also, as writing them enabled the researcher to think critically about what took place in the data. This reflection allowed the researcher to consider the interview questions that needed further development and how participants' responses can sometimes shift and/or have multiple meanings. Given the nature of the study, the researcher listened attentively to how the participants talked about and reflected on issues of race, class, ethnicity, and gender. For example, when participants were asked, "how do you identify?" careful listening was required to capture the responses that spoke to these themes. As chapter four reveals, ethnicity and race were used sometimes synonymously by the participants, and at other times had very different meanings.

Ethical Issues

It would be inept to engage the subject of human research without raising the inevitable issue of ethics. Undoubtedly, qualitative research yields a myriad of issues (foreseen and unforeseen) that force the researcher to become introspective about his or her own stance on matters of ethics. Unfortunately, this is not always the case, as a number of unethical studies have been carried out and documented, such as The Tuskegee Syphilis Study (Gray, 1998). While the vast majority of human subject investigations do not result in the tragedies of the aforementioned study, there is an abundance of less severe cases where the issue of ethics stands at the core, in dire need of attention. This study on the identity choices of second-generation Black Trinidadians was not exempt from the consequences of careless attention to ethical concerns (Bakan, 1996). The following sections outline a set of ethical principles by which this research was guided. Beauchamp, et al. (1982) proposed the following principles for individuals conducting social science research:

- a. Non-maleficence: that researchers should avoid harming participants.
- b. Beneficence: that research on human subjects should produce some positive and identifiable benefit rather than simply be carried out for its own sake.
- c. Autonomy or self-determination: that the values and decisions of research participants should be respected.
- d. Justice: that people who are equal in relevant respects should be treated equally. (p. 18-19)

The principle of non-maleficence was of particular interest because I often wondered how I might proceed with an interview if I believed my participant was uncomfortable with questions surrounding race. Kelman (1982) contends that participants may feel embarrassed about opinions they hold, or because they do not hold opinions they believe the researcher expects them to have. This, argue Murphy and Dingwall (2001), can harm participants. One of the questions I asked my participants is, “How do you feel about African-Americans?” When I posed this question to some of the participants, they responded with subtle apprehension. I observed immediately that participants sometimes changed their body language or laughed, and these gestures were usually coupled with the participants’ need for me to *explain* the question further. Without probing, I simply encouraged the participants to tell me what they thought of when they thought of African-Americans. I eventually received what I believed to be the participants’ honest opinions. But it was sometimes evident the participants were concerned about what I thought of their responses, as they sometimes shared their negative views of African-Americans.

Another ethical issue I predicted I could encounter is what Clifford and Marcus (1986) refer to as the “crisis of representation.” Representation is related to the autonomy/self-

determination principle and questions the ethnographer's right or ability to interpret the experiences of others. I was especially concerned with this because a substantial part of what I relied on during each interview was my interpretation of what each participant shared with me. In fact, Clifford (1986) argues that ethnography is "always caught in the invention, not the representation of cultures" (p. 2). As a result, what may occur is an interpretation that is not shared by the participants. Moreover, Fine (1994) sees this attempt to interpret another's experience as a new form of colonization. Furthermore, the almost inevitable dilemma for researchers to ponder becomes whether they will report their "findings" even if participants disagree with them. This can create a great level of internal conflict for the researcher; however, there are ways in which to resolve this and the issue of embarrassment.

Although researchers may be unable to avoid asking "embarrassing" questions, or questions that may elicit feelings of discomfort, they can protect their participants from future or delayed shame by ensuring confidentiality and deleting identifying information as early in the study as possible (Burgess, 1985; Tunnell, 1998). As a result, I used pseudonyms to protect the identity of each participant during the interview process.

Josselson (1996) argues that "language can never contain a whole person, so every act of writing a person's life is inevitably a violation" (p. 62). Van Loon (2001) reminds us that "...the ethnographer [or researcher] can never become his or her research subject, and that the unfolding event is never the same as its written inscription" (p. 280). Certainly, researchers increase the intensity of this "violation" if their representation of participants is amiss. Therefore, the member check technique was used to provide immediate opportunities for participants to challenge any perceived misinterpretations I may have had (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is concerned with the extent to which researchers can persuade their audiences that the findings of their studies are worthy of attention (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Conventionally, researchers have considered the following tenets to determine whether trustworthiness has been established: truth value; applicability; consistency; and neutrality. I provide a description of the alternate tenets provided by Lincoln and Guba (1985) and illustrate how I applied these to my study.

Earlier, I described how member checks, and such, served to ensure this study's *credibility*, which replaces the truth value tenet. Credibility refers to the degree to which findings are true. Another possible way to ensure credibility is to engage in prolonged observation. Although I did not observe participants in a particular setting, they were asked to describe, in detail, their families, friends, home life and schooling experiences. Their descriptions allowed me to "identify those characteristics and elements...that are most relevant to the ...issue being pursued..." (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 304), in this case the identity choices of second-generation Trinidadians.

Transferability, which replaces applicability, in naturalistic inquiry, is less concerned with generalizing from a sample to a population and more concerned with providing thick descriptions so that someone interested in the study may draw his or her own conclusion as to whether the transfer from the smaller sample can be made to the larger population. Indeed, the naturalistic inquirer realized that factors such as the history of a locale and context impeded the generalizability of this study (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993).

Dependability examines the process by which a study is carried out (i.e., methods and theoretical frameworks) and determines whether the process can be justified and supported by

the data yielded. It also determines the extent to which conclusions are based on the researcher's a priori constructs. In addition, the overall design of the study is critiqued to make a determination of the study's dependability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The dependability of a study is fulfilled by auditing, which Seale (1999) defines as an "exercise in reflexivity, which involves the provision of a methodologically self-critical account of how the research was done" (p. 468). Furthermore, auditing is useful for determining a study's *confirmability*, which replaces the conventional tenet, objectivity. If dependability assesses a study's *process*, confirmability assesses the *product*, or the "data, findings, interpretations, and recommendations" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 318) of the study and to determine if these are grounded in the data, "rather than the inquirer's personal constructions" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 324).

The four criteria proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985) to establish trustworthiness have serious implications for how I conducted my study on the identities choices of second-generation Black Trinidadians. Each criterion required careful introspection about both the processes I used at every stage of my study (i.e., selection and collection) and the product (i.e., findings) I yielded at the end.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Previous chapters merely referenced the participants of the study as subjects under investigation. The following sections present the findings of the study. Section one offers a snapshot of participants and presents them as women with unique lived and shared experiences. The final section presents the major themes that emerged from the study.

The Women of the Study

The study consisted of eight second-generation Black Trinidadian women between the ages of 18 and 40. All of the women shared stories about growing up in a culturally Trinidadian household, attending U.S. schools, and how these socializing institutions may have influenced their choices to identify racially and/or ethnically as adults. Some of the women were single, married, in committed relationships, mothers, and self-identified racially and/or ethnically in a variety of ways. During the interview phase, Diane and Leasha revealed they were actually born in Trinidad and migrated to the U.S. as children. A third woman, Janet, was born in San Francisco, California, moved to Trinidad when she was 7 years old, and did not return to the U.S. until she was 14. For the purpose of this study, Diane and Leasha are considered members of the 1.5 generation⁸, an immigrant population beyond the focus of the present study. Furthermore, Janet's experiences and socialization were shaped significantly by her having lived seven of her formative years in Trinidad. Consequently, these three women's stories are

⁸ Unlike the second-generation, who are the first generation of a family born in a new country, the term 1.5 generation refers to individuals who immigrate to a new country prior to or during their early teens.

excluded from the final analysis, thereby leaving only eight women, whose accounts are detailed throughout this chapter.

Table 1 presents demographic characteristics of each participant. Of most importance is how each woman self-identified both racially and ethnically on the screening questionnaire. Of the eight women selected for the study, seven identified their race as Black; whereas, only one woman identified as Trinidadian-American. There was a greater degree, however, in how the selected women described their ethnicity: two identified as Black, two identified as African-American, one identified as Trinidadian, one identified as Trinidad/American, one identified as being of Trinidadian descent, and one woman identified as Afro-Caribbean.

While the screening questionnaire asked participants to describe their race and ethnicity, they were given no options from which to choose. In some cases, the lack of options prompted participants to seek my advice on how to appropriately respond to each query. Therefore, I encouraged them to base their responses solely on their understandings of the terms race and ethnicity, regardless of how limited those understandings were.

Table 1

Descriptive Demographic Self-Report of Participants

| Name | Age | Birthplace | City of Residence | Relocation as Child | Parents' Birthplace | Race | Ethnicity | Selected For Study |
|---------------|------------|-------------------|------------------------------|--|--|--------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Sugar | 24 | New Jersey | Smyrna, Ga | Trinidad at 1; Returned to NJ at 6 | Trinidad | Trinidadian- American | Black | Yes |
| Nina | 31 | Brooklyn | Smyrna, Ga | Florida at 13 | Mother- Grenada; Father- Trinidad | Black | Black | Yes |
| Nicole | 18 | Florida | Coconut Creek, Fl | None | Trinidad | Black | Trinidadian Descent | Yes |
| Stacy | 28 | Brooklyn | Hollywood, Fl | Florida at 15 | Trinidad | Black | Trinidad/ American | Yes |
| Nubian | 30 | Brooklyn | Smyrna, Ga | Florida at 15 | Trinidad | Black | Afro- Caribbean | Yes |
| TP | 23 | Brooklyn | Miramar, Fl | Florida at 12 | Trinidad | Black | African- American | Yes |
| Leslie | 36 | Miami | Miramar, Fl | None | Trinidad | Black | African- American | Yes |
| Helen | 39 | Brooklyn | Pembroke Pines, Fl | S. Carolina at 16 | Trinidad | Black | Trinidadian | Yes |
| Diane | 27 | Trinidad | Decatur, Ga | Brooklyn at 4 or 5 | Trinidad | African- American | Caribbean/ Trinidadian | No |
| Janet | 29 | San Francisco | Stockbridge, Ga | Trinidad at 7; Returned to U.S. (Florida) at 14 | Mother- Trinidad Father- Jamaica | Black | Trinidadian | No |
| Leasha | 21 | Trinidad | Decatur, Ga | Atlanta at 9 | Trinidad | Black | Trinidadian | No |

Sugar

Sugar was recommended to me by a woman I met while attending a monthly meeting hosted by the Trinidad and Tobago Association of Georgia. The contact provided me Sugar's phone number, and I called her the following day with information regarding my study and need for participants. During our initial phone conversation, Sugar, although quiet, was rather receptive and eager to participate. Since she could not commit immediately to a specific date, we agreed I would follow up with her the next day, when she would share her availability to participate in a face-to-face interview.

It did not take long for me to discern from the caution in her voice that Sugar had some reservations about meeting a stranger, on unfamiliar territory. So, after some negotiating, we agreed to meet at her place of employment. I also assured Sugar the interview would last no longer than ninety minutes and that she could stop the interview at any point in which she might feel uncomfortable. The interview was scheduled for 6:00 p.m., which simultaneously, provided her ample time to eat after work and allowed me time to plow through metro-Atlanta traffic.

Although I was not incredibly familiar with Smyrna, Georgia, I found Sugar's job with relative ease. She met me in the parking lot when I arrived, and after we exchanged greetings, she led me to a conference room, where I conducted the interview. I did not ask Sugar about her occupation, but based on her dress, I concluded she worked in an office environment. Slender and professionally dressed, Sugar seemed somewhat guarded when we first met, but she immediately opened up after I began to engage her in casual conversation.

The room was medium-sized and could hold at least 15 people at its conference table. As I continued to chat with Sugar, I looked for an available outlet to set up my recorder. At the same time, I observed Sugar settled on a seat several chairs away from me. Since her level of

comfort was important to me, I conducted a few audio tests and concluded the distance between us would not interfere with the quality of the recording. As I continued set up, I provided Sugar copies of the consent form and screening questionnaire. I busied myself as she quietly read over the forms and completed them. When it appeared she was finished, I asked Sugar if she was ready to begin the interview, at which time I explained the interview protocol and asked if she had any questions before I proceeded. With no questions to answer, I immediately began the interview.

Sugar was 24 when I interviewed her, and at the time, she resided in Smyrna, She shared that she had never lived with her biological father, but instead grew up with her mom and stepfather, all of whom are from Trinidad. Her stepfather was in the military, and as a result moved the family around frequently. By the time she was 19, Sugar had lived in New Jersey, Trinidad, Georgia, Louisiana, New York and Germany. When she was a year old, her parents sent her to Trinidad to live with her grandparents for about 5 years. Although she considers the five years she spent in Trinidad a significant period in her life, Sugar believed it, coupled with the upbringing from her mother in the U.S., shaped her overall identity.

Nina

I met Nina through her first cousin with whom I attended college. Interestingly, Nina's cousin and I were not friends in college, but a mutual friend introduced us to each other when we all ran into each other at a Barnes & Noble bookstore in Atlanta two years after we had all graduated from our alma mater in Tampa, Florida. As fate would have it, Nina's cousin and I became friends and kept in touch regularly after that first exchange. She had moved to Atlanta before I had. As such, she was familiar with Atlanta's happenings and hot spots. Through her, I was invited to a join a group of women whose goal was to eat together at a different restaurant

each month and share laughs and good conversation. Consequently, it was at one of these monthly dinners I met Nina. Since the attendance at these gatherings fluctuated and changed from month to month, it was customary for those of us present to take turns providing updates on our lives.

One month I shared with the group that I was in the process of interviewing individuals for my study. So, when Nina learned I was interviewing second-generation Trinidadians, with genuine interest she asked questions about my research topic and began to share information about her family. Given the obvious opportunity with which I was presented, I asked Nina if she was willing to participate in an interview to share her story. Needless to say, I was elated when she agreed. We quickly made arrangements for me to come to her home the following week to conduct a face-to-face interview.

I had a morning appointment with Nina, and when I arrived at her home, I noticed how quiet her neighborhood was. She lived in a private community of townhomes that contrasted somewhat to the newer construction I had passed just a few blocks away. As I gathered my things out of my car, Nina came to the door and asked if I needed any assistance. I thanked but declined her offer. Nina invited me inside her home, and upon entering, I observed her appreciation for African art throughout. I felt very comfortable in her space, probably because it reminded me very much of my own. Ironically, I thought she seemed mismatched to the environment she had more than likely created for herself. When I tried to understand why I felt this way, I referred to our conversation at the restaurant and realized that although Nina expressed interest in my research topic, her contribution to the conversation was void of any indicators that suggested she identified with a particular group or culture. I wrestled with this

imagined contradiction for a few moments longer and hoped the responses from Nina's interview would answer some of my unsettling questions.

We sat in Nina's living room, which was located on the first level, near the front door. Nina offered me a seat on the couch, close to a wall outlet. On the other hand, she sat in a chair across from me. As she looked over and filled out the consent form and screening questionnaire, I set up my recorder and prepared myself for the next hour or so. Throughout the interview, I marveled at the ease in which Nina responded to my questions. I admired her poise and imagined she was equally unmoved in other situations. Nina provided straightforward responses although there were obvious moments she thought carefully before she responded. Before long, our exchange felt less like an interview and more like an unscripted conversation.

Nina was 31 at the time of the interview and lived alone in Smyrna, Georgia. As we sat in her living room we discussed her experiences as a Black woman in the U.S. Nina was born in Brooklyn, New York, and lived there until she was thirteen. Her family then relocated to Virginia. She revealed her father was from Trinidad while her mother was from Grenada.

Nicole

I met Nicole in person for the first time when I arrived at her home for our interview. In fact, I traveled to Florida to meet her since she had been referred by one of my mother's childhood friends. Prior to the interview, Nicole and I spoke to each other on the phone to discuss the purpose of the study, whether she would participate and confirm when and where we would meet. My initial conversation with Nicole caused me to question the extent to which I would yield rich data from her since it was apparent she was very young. On the other hand, I considered the relevant ease in which she would be able to recall both her schooling and family

experiences given her recent graduation from high school. Hence, I decided to move forward with the interview.

The day I traveled to Nicole's home in Coconut Creek, Florida, was sunny and warm. The large homes and well-manicured lawns suggested Nicole lived in an affluent neighborhood. It was quiet and serene, and I imagined she probably attended a high school that was diverse not only in its student population but also its economic demographics. Nicole greeted me when I arrived and humbly led me to her living room. She alerted me she had just put her baby to sleep and was confident we would be able to complete the interview with little to no interference. Nicole's son was an infant at the time, but her physical appearance offered no suggestion she had recently given birth. In fact, Nicole also had a naïve quality that, too, made it difficult to imagine she was a mother. But, she was gentle and warm—both of which are qualities most good mothers possess.

I offered Nicole the screening questionnaire and consent form and asked her to read them over as I set up and prepared for the interview. As she read silently, I observed her immaculate home and wondered who was responsible for ensuring everything had its proper place. From the living room, I could see the kitchen and its adjacent eat-in area. These areas were also spotless and carefully arranged. As I admired her home, I found myself wondering about the occupations of her parents and whether their discipline and child-rearing practices had been strict. I also wondered if it was difficult for Nicole to balance being a mother and daughter who was still living under her parents' roof.

After a few momentary glances at Nicole, I found her natural beauty pleasant. At 18, the youngest of my participants, Nicole was tall, slender and had a medium-brown complexion. Her movements were slow and graceful, but the more I looked at her, the more I noticed how tired

her eyes appeared. I concluded she was probably still getting acclimated to the demands of motherhood while balancing her other roles. In addition to being a mother and daughter, Nicole was also a college student and had a very active social life. I learned later she had a close circle of friends and that these relationships were very important to her.

After a few moments, we began the interview. Nicole's responses to my questions, most of which began with, "I don't know," initially, concerned me at times. I was unsure if she responded this way due to a lack of understanding of the question or whether it was a coping strategy. With probing, however, she eventually provided insightful accounts of her experiences as a second-generation Trinidadian.

Stacy

Stacy was also referred to me by my mother's childhood friend. When I first contacted her, she revealed how excited she was to participate in the study. In fact, her excitement increased when I revealed my research focused solely on the experiences of second-generation Trinidadians. After a few moments of casual exchange, Stacy and I agreed on a date and time to conduct the interview. I shared with her that I had other participants to interview in the Miami area and that I would touch base with her when I arrived to Florida.

The afternoon of my interview with Stacy was extremely warm and sunny. I was very familiar with the Hollywood area, which is where she lived. So, I found her duplex with relative ease. On my way, I was overtaken with feelings of nostalgia as I saw familiar landmarks: the park on 56th street where my parents used to exercise; the Dairy Queen on US 441; my old church, Koinonia Worship Center; and makeshift car washes that were probably operating without licenses. I even had a few laugh "out loud moments," as I recalled funny moments from my teenage and early adult experiences. Vivid images of people I had known from the past came

to mind and I found myself wondering what they were now doing, if they were still alive. I had experienced an emotional roller coaster by the time I arrived to Stacy's home, but I was glad to know I had not completely lost those memories.

I knocked on Stacy's door and was startled by her prompt response. She invited me in with an air of warmth and energy that caused me to feel I was there to catch up with an old friend as opposed to conduct business. Stacy was fascinated with my locs⁹ and complimented me several times on how I had them styled. We talked about my flight and my drive to her home. I assured her I experienced no difficulty finding it, since I had grown up in a neighborhood not too far away. I also shared that I would be in Florida a few days and was staying with a close friend.

Stacy and I chatted for a little longer, and although I felt at ease with her, I was eager to get started with the interview. Scantly furnished, her apartment lacked what I would have considered a feminine touch, but it was clean and tidy. Stacy had shared she had a son, yet I saw no signs of his toys around the living room or surrounding rooms. I wondered if her son looked like her. Stacy had a medium brown complexion, was of average weight and height and had a very lively personality. She was quick to offer smiles and laughs and even chose my name, Stacy, as her pseudonym for this study. We chuckled over that for a few minutes before I offered her the interview questionnaire and consent forms to complete.

At the time of the interview, Stacy was 28 years old and had been living in Hollywood, Florida since she was 15. As her story unfolded, I learned she was the oldest of four children and was born in Brooklyn, New York. Both of Stacy's parents were from Trinidad; however, when she was very young, her parents separated, which resulted in her mother raising all four children on her own.

⁹ Locs, a natural hairstyle worn by many Blacks, are matted coils of hair.

Nubian

I was introduced to Nubian through the same friend who had introduced me to the cousin of participant Nina. In fact, I learned that Nubian and I had also attended our alma mater at the same time, but she was a few years younger than I. Nubian was, by far, my most engaging contact. We connected immediately the first time we spoke on the phone and tried to recall whether we knew any of the same people from college. Our failed attempt at this, however, did not end our conversation.

Nubian and I realized we had moved to Atlanta around the same time and had both lived in Dekalb County, GA. We compared stories of our experiences in Atlanta and found we both loved the city very much. We also exchanged stories about how we each knew our mutual friend. Given their history, I was surprised I had never heard of Nubian until now. After more general conversation Nubian and I decided to meet the following weekend in the library of Georgia State University.

I was eager to meet Nubian. She had sparked my interest and I was curious to hear about her life. My drive to Georgia State that Saturday morning brought back many memories of my days on its campus, where I completed my master's program in education. After I parked, I walked to the library and immediately went upstairs to secure an area for us to work without being disturbed. Since I did not know what Nubian looked like, I decided to go back down to the lobby to wait for Nubian. I walked around for a bit and was convinced she had not arrived before me.

Before long, I noticed a young, dark-skinned woman approaching the library from the adjacent courtyard. As she walked through the automated doors, I could see that she was looking for someone. As our eyes locked, Nubian quickly asked, "Are you Stacy?" We both smiled as I

replied, “Yes.” Nubian’s physical appearance matched her big personality. She was full-figured and sported a short, natural hairstyle. Interestingly, Nubian revealed she was certain I was the person she was there to meet as soon as she saw me. When I inquired about her certainty, Nubian shared it was because she could recognize a West Indian anywhere. Because of this ability, she had been able to recognize what she considered to be my West Indian features. Although Nubian failed to be specific, I did not probe further since I had not only heard this before but also believed I shared her same ability.

Nubian and I chatted all the way upstairs. Her personality was consistent with the one I had met on the phone a few days earlier. She was as bubbly and energetic as I had anticipated. My hope was she would bring the same energy to the interview. When we arrived to the conference room, I directed Nubian’s attention to the consent form and questionnaire I had set out for her. She quickly read and signed the forms and indicated she was ready whenever I was.

Throughout the interview, I was impressed with the thoughtfulness, poise and candor with which Nubian answered my questions. She was captivating, and I hoped each of my interviews would have the same level of depth she had provided. Time was no factor as we talked about her experiences around the issues of race and identity.

Nubian was 30 years old at the time of the interview. She was born in Brooklyn and moved to Brandon, Florida with her mother at the age of 15. Although both of her parents were originally from Trinidad, they actually met each other only after they had migrated to New York. In fact, Nubian shared she was the product of the affair her parents were having while her father was married. Therefore, it was Nubian’s Barbadian stepfather who actually raised her and her younger brother.

TP

TP was the second youngest participant, and at 23, she and her husband were the parents of an infant son. My mother's friend suggested I interview TP, and as hoped, she was both eligible and willing to participate in the study. Initial contact with her proved successful and we quickly scheduled a day and time for me to interview her at her home in Miramar, Florida. Our phone conversation, although brief, was casual and friendly. I introduced myself, explained the purpose of the study and asked her a few questions about her background. Enthusiastically, TP responded to my questions and also shared she had been anxiously awaiting my call. When I asked her to explain what she meant, we realized there had been a lapse between the time she learned I was doing a study on "Trinis" and when I actually contacted her. Once we identified the reason for the delay in communication, I assured TP I was looking forward to meeting her, and with no questions from her, I told her I would call her when I arrived in Florida.

As promised, I contacted TP the day I arrived. Coincidentally, she lived only minutes away from Leslie, who too, lived in Miramar. Since TP and her husband worked during the day, we agreed to do her interview later in the evening, which would give them time to coordinate dinner and tend to their baby prior to my arrival. My drive to TP's house was brief, but I noticed how closely her neighborhood resembled Leslie's. The houses were older and did not follow a cookie-cutter pattern which is common to newer constructions. Many of the houses even had barred windows and front doors, indicative of South Florida's persistent, high crime rate. This reality, however, was masked by the surrounding landscape of palm trees, beaches and sunny skies.

I slowed down as I approached TP's address and admired her neat, well-groomed yard. The houses in her neighborhood were small, and although hers was no different, it stood out for

its clean and inviting appearance. As I walked to the front door, I could hear voices and the sound of music coming from inside. It was reggae music, but I did not recognize the artist. Unconsciously, I moved to the music as I rang the doorbell and waited for someone to answer it. After a few moments, TP's husband invited me in and offered me a seat in the living room. He told me TP would be right out and quickly scurried away to a back bedroom. He appeared to be somewhat older than TP, which caused me to wonder about how they met and the length of time they had been married. At 23, TP's life was unlike most young people her age. She was balancing work, motherhood and marriage. Needless to say, I was eager to place my eyes on her.

As I waited, I looked around and settled into the comfortable sofa. There seemed to be more furniture and things than the house was designed to accommodate, but it appeared TP and her husband were doing their best to merge their two lives into one. A stroller in one corner of the living room, toys on the living room table and bottles on the kitchen counter were obvious signs a baby or young child occupied the home. Overall, the house seemed serene and warm yet contrasted significantly from the more streamlined appearance of Stacy's house. I started thinking about the similarities and differences between each of the participants when my thoughts were interrupted by TP entering the room.

She was similar to what I had pictured in my mind: short, average in size, and pecan-complexioned. Her smile was captivating and her eyes quickly gave me the once over. As we engaged in small talk, TP explained she had just put her baby to sleep and that her husband was watching him in their bedroom. When I asked her about her day, she explained the type of work she did and that she was somewhat tired. TP also shared that her husband was very helpful and that she was grateful for his attention to both her and their son.

Because it was almost seven in the evening, I thought it best to begin the interview immediately. So, I offered TP the screening questionnaire and consent form and briefly explained them as she read quietly to herself. I assured her the interview should last no more than 45 minutes, and with that, we began to discuss her life.

Leslie

Unlike the other participants, I had a personal relationship with Leslie. We had known each other since I was in elementary school and she was in middle school. In fact, our families also knew each other. We had attended her father's church for a few years, attended the same schools and maintained our friendship even as adults. When I told her about my study, she agreed to participate without hesitation. Leslie even suggested I stay at her home, since I had to travel to Florida to facilitate several other interviews. She lived in Broward County, which is where most of my other Florida participants resided as well.

We were able to coordinate the events quite easily. It was the summer, and Leslie was spending the majority of it at home with her daughters. She was a teacher; therefore, her schedule was extremely flexible. Hence, there was no need for us to set a specific time or date for her interview. We decided we would simply play it by air once I arrived. Luckily, I was able to arrange all of my Florida interviews within a three-day period, which allowed me to make my stay in Miami brief.

The day I traveled to Florida was beautiful. I flew into the Fort Lauderdale Airport and after I retrieved my luggage, picked up my rental car. In no time, I arrived at Leslie's home. Inside, it was lively with the sounds of her two daughters and their friend playing and running around the house. I marveled at how much her daughters had grown since I last saw them. It

had been several years. Leslie and I remembered this because the last time I had been there her younger daughter had been only two weeks old; she was now five.

I quickly called each of the participants I was scheduled to interview to touch base and let them know I was in town. Once I received confirmation from them, I was able to relax and put my mind at ease. After a few hours of catching up and playing with the children, Leslie and I decided to do her interview the following morning. She arranged for me to sleep in her daughters' bedroom, which was delicately decorated in pink and white. The room was surrounded by stuffed animals, children's books and wall stickers that glowed in the dark. The girls adjusted to rearrangement and were happy to sleep with their mother in the master bedroom. It took me awhile to fall asleep that first night. Although I lived in Florida for the latter half of my formative years and still had many friends who still lived there, I did not return often. While Miami held many fond memories for me, it also held many painful memories as well. Several of my classmates had been killed, casualties of a persistent drug epidemic. As a result, I vowed I would never again live there when I went off to college. To date, I have held true to that promise.

The next morning could not come soon enough for me. I was excited about getting my day started. I woke up to Leslie cooking breakfast in the kitchen. I observed the children playing in the den and observed how Leslie's daughters were beginning to look like her. Like their mother, the girls had long, dark hair and golden bronze complexions. This was reflective of the genes they inherited from Leslie's paternal grandmother, who was from Venezuela. I sat at the dining room table and chatted with Leslie as she put her finishing touch on the eggs, pancakes, and bacon she had cooked for all of us.

As Leslie called the girls to eat, I playfully teased her about her height. Although we were both short and actually very close in height, I was slightly taller and never allowed her to forget it. Once again, the house was filled with pleasant noise, and I was reminded of how feisty Leslie had always been. She was small in stature, but large in will. We all continued to eat and talk around the table. The girls asked me a lot of questions, mainly about how I knew their mother. Leslie's older daughter was still too young to recall all the time I had spent with her from earlier years. So, Leslie and I filled them in on several of our childhood and sometimes wild experiences. They were entertained by our stories but then got distracted by the television.

Leslie and I quickly cleared the table, cleaned the dishes and prepared for the interview. She told the girls we would be busy and to keep the noise to a minimum. We then went to the bedroom where I had slept, and like old, familiar friends sat on one of her daughter's beds with the tape recorder between us. Leslie read over the consent form and questionnaire, and I prepped her briefly on the format of the interview.

Leslie was a 36-year old, divorced mother of two when I interviewed her at her home in Miramar, Florida. Her biological mother was born and raised in Trinidad. On the other hand, her father, although born in Barbados, grew up in Trinidad and considered himself Trinidadian. Of her parents' eight children, Leslie was the only one born in the U.S. In fact, she was born in Miami, which is where her parents settled after migrating from Trinidad. Leslie was only eight when her mother eventually succumbed to breast cancer. Leslie would later describe the turning events of her life when her father remarried an African-American woman three years after her mother's death.

Helen

Like most of my Florida participants, I was able to interview Helen because of the assistance of my mother's friend. Once I received Helen's contact information, I called to verify her eligibility for and interest in participating in the study. Following our introductions, I described my study and asked Helen a few pre-screening questions to determine her eligibility. I then extended an invitation for her to participate and was elated when she accepted it. I explained to Helen that I was planning a trip to Florida and asked her availability for the days I was already scheduled to be there. Again, things worked out perfectly, and we finalized both the day and time we would meet at her home. I expressed my gratefulness to Helen and thought about how fortunate I was to have met such an agreeable individual.

Throughout our phone conversation Helen had expressed a warm, pleasant disposition. She seemed extremely interested in the study and volunteered some information about her present life, particularly her family. Helen was married and had three children. She spoke highly of her husband and children, and it was apparent she was devoted to them. Helen also shared she had had a unique childhood experience, but did not provide any specific details. Needless to say, I was eager to hear her provide its details.

The day had finally arrived for me to meet Helen. She lived in Pembroke Pines, Florida, which is where my parents moved to after I moved away for college. Pembroke Pines is a beautiful suburb of Broward County. It's known for its shopping areas and cleanliness. But, like most U.S. cities, there are discrepancies that are often determined by property taxes. Hence, when I arrived to Helen's neighborhood, I was introduced to an unfamiliar part of Pembroke Pines. It certainly did not represent the affluence to which I had always associated the palm tree-laden city.

I parked my rental car in the lot of Helen's apartment complex. The parking lot was lively with people going in and out and children playing on the street. Helen greeted me at the door with a big smile and invited me in. She immediately introduced me to a family friend who was visiting and sitting in the living room. She also introduced me to her two younger sons who were watching television with the family friend. As I looked around I wondered where we were going to do the interview. The apartment seemed to lack the space and privacy I was expecting us to have. As though she was reading my mind, Helen apologized for the clutter and proceeded to clear the dining room table, which was inconveniently close to the living room. Despite this, I offered to help and was optimistic the interview would go well.

Helen asked the living room occupants to lower the television volume and urged them to keep their voices to a minimum. They had made little noise the entire time I was there, so I was confident they could maintain this. Afterwards, Helen and I sat down at the table, and I gave her the required documents she needed to complete. She readily accepted the paperwork and carefully read them over to herself. I took this opportunity to really observe Helen without her noticing. She was taller than average. In addition, she was neither skinny nor overweight, but she had a solid build. Helen's cocoa complexion was close to mine, but I believe she may have been slightly darker. Overall, I concluded she was attractive in a very African sort of way, with her high cheek bones, full lips and wider nose. As she handed over her paperwork, she checked on her children and reminded them they could not interrupt her once the interview began. With that, Helen and I proceeded with the interview.

Helen was the third Florida participant I interviewed. The oldest of the study's participants, Helen was 39 at the time of our interview. Her parents were originally from Port-of-Spain, Trinidad and had migrated to New York, which is where Helen was born and lived

until she was 16 years old. Unlike the other participants, who had all been raised by their biological parent(s), family members, or both, at age eight, Helen was left with guardians while her mother attended school “to get herself together.” The family was African-American and had befriended Helen’s disabled mother as she struggled alone in a big city. Despite her unique childhood, Helen’s story offered great insight to the issue of identity.

Common Themes

Following rigorous data analysis, several common themes emerged: (1) heterogeneity in ethnic labels, (2) race defined by skin color, (3) justification for identification, (4) context affects identity, (5) African-Americans different from us, (6) differences among island people, (7) negative views of African-Americans, and (8) schooling experiences in the northern and southern parts of the United States. This section discusses the similarities and differences among the women’s experiences regarding these themes, with supporting examples from their own words.

Heterogeneity in Ethnic Labels

As highlighted in Table 1, Nina’s responses to the questionnaire revealed she viewed the terms race and ethnicity as synonymous. On the other hand, Sugar identified her race and ethnicity as Trinidadian-American and black, respectively. This could suggest their understandings and definitions of the terms differ from the other participants, who, exclusively, self-identified their race as black but referred to some context for their ethnic identity choice. For example, Nubian labeled her ethnicity as Afro-Caribbean; Stacy selected the label Trinidadian-American; and TP described her ethnicity as African-American. Problematic to the racial and ethnic labels available to West Indians are the various meanings and connotations these labels can have for both members and nonmembers of a particular group (Huddy &

Virtanen, 1995; Larkey, Hecht, & Martin, 1993). Interestingly, there is some degree of autonomy (Phinney, 1996) and move toward self-determination (Larkey, et al., 1993) in choosing a self-imposed racial or ethnic label. In addition, not only is it possible for one group to have different meanings for different labels, but also possible for the same label to have multiple meaning for different individuals within the group (Buriel, 1987). This phenomenon is illustrated in the participants' use of different labels to describe ethnicity. Seven of the participants shared a common belief that ethnicity is related to a person's familial background. Thus, ethnicity is less easy to discern since it is based on factors less obvious than a person's skin color. Sugar appeared unsure on how to define ethnicity, but she offered the following:

I don't really know the distinction between [race and ethnicity], to me, well the way I use it with my friends it's usually like a look, you know, that has to do with being either, you know, of color or whether you're Asian or Black or whatever. So, I really didn't know how to tie that in with race. I just know it has something to do with background, maybe your background or something.

Nina's definition of ethnicity was brief. She simply stated it was "more where you're from."

Nicole's definition of ethnicity was similar. To her ethnicity is "more of your background, like your parents and further up." On the other hand, Stacy's definition was stated with more conviction and justification:

I think that your ethnicity [is] like your background, where you come from. Also, it just shows a different side. Like I was born in Brooklyn, but my roots, I feel like because my family's Trinidadian my ethnicity would be Trinidadian and I'm considered a Trinidadian even though I wasn't born there.

Nubian also believed in the relationship between ethnicity and an individual's background. She stated that ethnicity is "where your family is from, your descendants." Continuing the notion that ethnicity is based on factors deeper than one's complexion, TP concluded she could determine a person's ethnicity only over time. Hence, she emphasized this belief by stating, "I guess once I get to know a person more, then I can best determine their ethnicity and their family's culture."

Like the other participants, Helen also linked family background to the definition of ethnicity when she stated the following:

I always define that on where the person is from or their parents are from. It's not always technically where a person is raised because they may not have been introduced to the actual culture their parents are from like sort of how I was.

In summary, although the women used different labels to describe their individual ethnicity, their common definitions of ethnicity spawned from their belief that there is a fundamental difference between race, something determined by skin color, and ethnicity, discernable from an examination of one's familial history.

Race Defined by Skin Color

During the interviews, participants were asked to define what the terms race and ethnicity meant to them. The goal was to determine if participants preferred one label over the other based on the meanings they attached to them. Given the general U.S. population defines race using skin color as the main, if not only, criteria, it was anticipated the majority of the women, would define race this way as well. In fact, six of the women stated skin color defines an individual's race. Nevertheless, it was equally important to understand not only which ethnic or racial labels they use to self-identify, but also to establish the relationship, if any, between

their definitions of race and ethnicity and the labels they choose. Although the depth and complexity of each participant's definition varied, essentially, they each agreed that one's race could be determined by visually observing one's skin color. Table 1 highlights seven of the eight participants self-identified their race as black.

The implications for the common response among participants might be explained through the findings of a study on African Americans' self-imposed ethnic identity terms. Larkey, et al., (1993) concluded the use of the term black for many of their respondents, "indicated that the label was considered 'just a name' without a lot of meaning" (p. 306). Participants explained their use of the black label had little to do with any feelings of inferiority but had more to do with the term's relationship to the root word Negro. Consider TP's definition of race:

I'm not that deep, I guess. I look at it as if someone's – if their skin color is black to me, you're a black person. A lot of people are mixed, which I don't really go too deep into it. If you're black, you're black, white, white.

In a similar study, Hecht and Ribeau (1991) found their respondents' selected the label black for one of the following four reasons: black was described as "the right label," a term that is "generally acceptable," their "color in a general sense," and the label that they were taught" to use. Helen's definition of race illustrates the authors' conclusions:

I think growing up when someone always asks you about race, you think about color. And I'm gonna say that's how I would describe it only because it's instilled in you at a very young age either you're black or you're white....So I'm just gonna say that I would say color...It's based on a person's complexion.

Helen's observations highlight the permanence of race in the U.S., argues Philipen (2003) "despite decades of struggles for civil rights and equal opportunities, despite laws that prohibit discrimination based on race, and despite scientific evidence that race has no significant basis in human biology" (p. 190). Consequently, Americans' obsession and fascination with race has rendered it impossible for them to escape the "deeply ingrained racial ideology" (Philipen, 2003, p. 190) in which they have been socialized. After seeming to grapple with the issue for a moment, Nina finally defined race as "probably a mix of a little color and where you're from." When asked to define race, Nicole stated, "Hmmm, pretty much, the color of your skin." On the other hand, Stacy's initial definition of race reflected the deeper historical shift in the way the term black came to identify African-Americans via the Black Power movement of the 1960's (Washington, 1990):

I think race in my perspective is a person's pride. Like your race, who you are, where you come from, defines to me who the person is. Their strength. I think it defines power in a sense, because no matter if you're white, black, whoever you are, it's just your sense of definition in my opinion.

However, when I asked Stacy how she determines the race of someone she does not deem as black, she reverted to a definition that resembled more closely that of the other participants: "[By] The color of their skin." Although Nubian did not elaborate, she also defined race by examining skin color. Finally, many of the women unmistakably embraced U.S. notions of race as a fixed concept, based on physical attributes such as skin complexion as evidenced via their definitions of race. Although there may have been some variation in the participants' definitions, skin color was, by far, the factor that weighed most heavily to them.

Justification for Identification

Initially, few of the participants expressed a preference for identifying by either race or ethnicity. However, as the interviews progressed and the participants began to discuss the labels they were most comfortable using to self-identify, their admissions to and justifications for identifying ethnically became palpable. Interestingly, in several cases it appeared the participants were oblivious to the revelations they made regarding their label preferences. Despite this, they provided specific explanations for why they identified in a particular manner.

Immediately prior to the start of each interview, participants completed a screening questionnaire that solicited their responses to how they identified both racially and ethnically; however, they were given no label options from which to choose. Later, during their interviews, participants were asked to elaborate on their written responses and share how they would have self-identified had they not been asked to respond to the specific categories of race and ethnicity. In at least one instance, one participant blatantly contradicted how she had identified on the screening questionnaire only moments earlier.

Helen's verbal response to how she typically identified is an example of how this response differed from the description she provided in writing. On the questionnaire, Helen identified her race and ethnicity as Black and Trinidadian, respectively. However, when I asked her to discuss how she typically responds to questions of her identity, she readily stated, "I would usually, if someone asks me, Afro-American. That's just my first answer always." To Helen being Afro-American meant that she was, "Just black. That's what that means." Therefore, I asked her why she selected the identifier Afro-American as opposed to Black.

She stated the following:

...I don't know. I can't really say if it's just force of habit. Just something that you always say. I think Afro American came in because you don't want to offend anyone about calling them black. So you're gonna say afro American because it just sounds better.

Referring to her written responses, I asked Helen to expound on what it means to be Black and ethnically Trinidadian, particularly which of the two weigh more heavily for her. Her response was simple:

I'll say this...as I've gotten older, it's been more Trinidadian and maybe because down here [Florida] I'm surrounded around by more of my family who's kind of...everyone is starting to move here or they live in NY. I have more family members. When I was living upstate NY, I didn't have any my family members around. So I'm gonna say right now it weighs more on the Trinidadian side. When I was younger, it was more black because I wasn't aware of the richness of what being Trinidadian is....

Likewise, although Sugar stated she did not prefer a racial identity to an ethnic identity, she acknowledged she would have likely elected to describe herself as Trinidadian-American, an identity that meant she is, "...still very much Trinidadian, I just happen to be born on American soil and so therefore I have to kind of put the American on there. I'm still very much Trinidadian."

Nina described both her race and ethnicity as black, so her explanation of what being black means to her came with little reservation:

Actually, it means I'm privileged to be black. I feel that we have so much culture, whether you're black American or black Caribbean. I think we have so much culture. I

think we're very prideful. I won't say misunderstood, but not appreciated for what we contribute. We're kind of looked over.

Nubian recalled her need to define her identity originated in college, where she experienced an "extreme culture shock." Her specific reasons for identifying ethnically as Afro-Caribbean, however, are as follows:

There are Afro-Caribbeans, historically black, from Africa, in Trinidad. As my father always says, I'm African-Caribbean. There are Hispanic Trinidadians. There are Caucasian Trinidadians. There are even some Asian Trinidadians, so or Coolie people, (self-corrects) Indians also. The self-identifier, Afro-Caribbean, allows me to acknowledge both my African and West Indian roots.

Stacy was an example of someone whose verbal identification contradicted her written response. When I asked her to explain why she preferred to describe herself by ethnicity, she stated, "Because to me, I look up to my ethnicity more than just the color of my skin. It's...it's in me so I feel that's what I am." On the screening questionnaire, Stacy identified as Trinidadian-American, however, she offered the following verbal response:

I put Trinidadian-American to be realistic, but I really consider myself as I said as Trinidadian. I mean yeah, most people would call me American because I was born not in Trinidad. The way I was brought up, everything around me is Trinidadian...culturally, what I eat, everything. So, that's why I consider myself to be Trinidadian. But, just to be technical I'll put Trinidadian-American.

On her screening questionnaire, Leslie assigned Black and African-American to her race and ethnicity, respectively, and offered the following reason for why she typically describes herself as black:

I typically say black. I think throughout the years they've [society] come up with so many different words to describe black people. "Colored," "African American," and I think a lot of it is just a lot of political – you know, to be politically correct. When they say "African American" or "Negro" or mixed, it's all the same. You're black.

Leslie's explanation, although matter-of-fact, was deeply rooted in her observation of black people's struggle with intra-racial dynamics:

To me, to be black in the United States... I think that I've seen a lot of prejudice, not necessarily towards me, but towards other African American or black people. I think that once upon a time, it wasn't something to – um - not to be proud of, but it wasn't something that was a positive thing, to be black in the United States, you know. Because it was stereotyped that white was better, the lighter the skin, the better the person. But I think that as a...as a race, we've come a long way. I think that there is still a lot of prejudice, um, that's towards, geared towards black people, but I think that we have more opportunities than we've ever had before. I think that we have more – it's just more for us now than there was before. And, um, I – dealing with a lot of like – I teach middle school, and I notice that a lot of my students, I have one particular student, and he's dark-skinned, and he's always saying, "I wish I had lighter skin, I wish I was white." And I would hear my kids saying, "If you're lighter, you're better," and it's something that I think the media puts out there. The girls that are light-skinned get more glorified, and

things like that. I just think that it has to do with being educated and loving yourself and loving, you know, what you look like, and you know, the skin that you're in.

The issue of colorism Leslie alludes to is what Harrison, Reynolds-Dobbs, & Thomas (2008) refer to as skin color bias, which “emphasize[s] and reinforce[s] a system in our society that privileges light skin over dark skin” (p. 49). Colorism dates back to the American system of chattel slavery and was used as a means of dividing chores among slaves based on skin color, thereby creating mistrust, animosity and a milieu where revolt was unlikely (Hunter, 2002). Evident from Leslie's observation, and perhaps astounding, is the present-day struggle among blacks to reconcile racial discord not only between themselves and whites, but also among members of their own race.

Although TP stated that how she identified sometimes depended on factors she did not disclose, she seemed confident that identifying as African-American was most appropriate for her:

I probably describe myself more by my ethnicity, because I'm – a lot of the times someone would ask me, 'Where are you from?' I'd say, “Well, I was born in New York, and my family is from Trinidad. My husband is from Turks and Caicos.” I would just explain more. So, I guess I would describe myself more by ethnicity.

Interestingly, as TP explained further what identifying as African-American meant to her, the strong link between her racial and ethnic identities became more apparent:

Um, it [being African-American] means that I'm a black woman in society. I represent black women, so by me saying that I'm African American, I basically have to represent what that is – you know what I mean. Carry myself a certain way, be a certain way,

portray myself a certain way. That would be good, of course, because I am African American and that's who I represent.

Nicole readily stated she prefers to identify as Black but also noted this may be the case since she believes society tends to condition its members to select from pre-imposed options. For example, she stated, "I guess because, I mean that's how it's always been from since you were in elementary school. On the choices they give you, it's 'black,' 'white,' Alaskan. Like, that's what it is." Therefore, based on Nicole's response, I found it necessary to encourage her to speak specifically to how she views herself and why. After some probing, Nicole finally decided Trinidadian was the most appropriate identifier, and offered the following explanation:

It's...what I am. It's what, I mean, I'm only it because my parents are...and just...I don't really know what it means to be Trinidadian. I mean, I didn't live there, so I go by my parents and other family members.

Nicole's final explanation seemed to lack the depth the other participants offered; however, her response certainly begs the questions of whether she has had the experiences that encouraged her to think about race and identity in meaningful ways, given her young age.

Overall, the participants revealed a greater preference for self-identifying with an ethnic label. This was true for six of the eight women. In some cases, probing was necessary for the women to reveal their true preference. In other cases, the women verbally justified an ethnic label that differed from the one they wrote on their screening questionnaire. To complicate matters further, Sugar used the label Trinidadian-American to describe her race on the screening questionnaire. However, the justification she provided for why she preferred this label, undoubtedly revealed her preference to identify ethnically, although she indicated her ethnicity

as black on the screening questionnaire. The following statement illustrates Sugar's preference for an ethnic label:

Oh, well it means that I'm still very much Trinidadian, I just happen to be born on American soil and so therefore, I have to kind of put the American on there. I'm still very much Trinidadian.

Furthermore, the degree to which the women justified their label choices varied from participant to participant. However, their most common defense for choosing an ethnic label centered on a desire or obligation to acknowledge the island from where their parents and extended family originated. In fact, the women of this study expressed no benefit associated to their ethnic label preference, unlike their first-generation counterparts. For example, Waters (1999) argues it is more beneficial for black West Indian immigrants to identify as West Indian or Trinidadian, than it is to identify racially as black. West Indians view identifying as the latter as downward mobility, since it causes them to be seen no differently from black Americans. In fact, in 1990, as many as 17.9% of Trinidadians living in New York reported they were West Indian, as opposed to the 11% who reported they were Afro-American (Waters, 1999).

While the women of this study offered very lucid explanations for the identification labels they selected, the following section explores the obscure role context plays in determining the situations in which the women embraced these labels.

Context Affects Identity

Because of the different connotations associated with ethnic and racial labels, individuals may often use varied labels in different contexts to communicate a particular sense of themselves (Waters, 1990). As noted by Turner, Oakes, Haslam, and McGarty (1994), "Self-categories do not represent fixed, absolute properties of the perceiver but relative, varying, context-dependent

properties” (p.456). In other words, “use of self-labels changes depending on circumstance” (Phinney, 1996, p 920). Ironically, while there is some degree of autonomy (Phinney, 1996) and move toward self-determination (Larkey, et al., 1993) in choosing a self-imposed racial or ethnic label, in addition to the plethora of self-identification choices available to them, individuals’ autonomy is yet subject to the perceptions of others. For example Reid (as cited in Phinney, 1996, p. 921) argues that African Americans are defined by a combination of self and societal labels “somewhere between the notion that whoever identifies as African American is one and the idea that whomever society defines as African American is one” as well.

The interviews revealed that, for six of the participants, context determined how they identified. In other words, the participants’ stories expressed the fluid nature of their identities. In some cases, family members, friends, or both affected the degree of comfort the participants felt in identifying one way or another. For example, although Sugar stated she was more likely to identify as Trinidadian-American, she also stated she sometimes thought of herself as just American:

Okay, sometimes or I want to say when I did think of myself as just American, it was mostly when I reflected on it because I was kind of almost rejected a little from my family as Trinidadian. So, to them I was just American so to me I was just American.

When asked to share an example of the rejection she encountered from her family, Sugar added the following:

Oh, well, you know, they [family members] called you a Yankee all the time and we’re at Carnival or something like that, they’d be like, “Um, excuse me, isn’t your flag red white and blue with stars or something like that?” I think when it fits the situation, they’re like

“Oh, she’s from NJ”. Other times if I say something or act like I’m American they say, “Don’t forget you’re from Trinidad.” So, it’s just like okay make up your mind.

Nicole’s identity also seemed contingent on her surroundings. When I asked if she would ever identify as American or Trinidadian, her response was, “Yeah, ...I would. I mean, I use both. I think depending on who I’m talking to. Yeah.” Nicole went on to share that she tells Trinidadian people she is American but tells American people she is Trinidadian. When probed about why she does this, Nicole responded, “It’s nice to be something different.”

I asked Leslie to discuss her opinion regarding the level of appropriateness when assigning the term African-American to black people who were born and raised outside the United States, but now call it their home. Leslie noted the following:

No. No. I think that African-American is a term that was developed to describe people who were black and born and raised in America. I think that when you say “the African American experience” as opposed to the Jamaican experience or as opposed to the Guyanese experience, it’s different. Even though I think we’re all black, I think that, um, the way that we were raised and the culture is a lot different. I didn’t grow up there, but I identify with the Trinidadian aspect of, you know, the Trinidadian culture, because that was my household. But, outside of my household, I identified with the African-American. You know, all my friends were African American, none – I don’t think I had any Trinidadian friends. Maybe a few outside of cousins and relatives. But I think that the experience is different. When I get around my family, and we talk about different dialects and we talk about – like last night, I was asking if you have ever heard of the

term.... What did I say? Never see come see.¹⁰ That was something that - African Americans won't know what that means. It's something that's a slang that's owned by Trinidadians, and I think like I said, the culture is different, the food is different, everything is just different.

Stacy described her life in New York and the strong tie she felt to her West Indian identity:

...In NY it [West Indian culture] was all around, and I grew up in it and I saw it. So, I knew what I was. When I came to a different atmosphere, it was like I wasn't used to it. I was used to being embraced by my West Indian friends.

She went on to acknowledge why she changed and had to dilute her Trinidadian identity when she moved to Florida:

At first I did [change]. I felt I had to change a little bit who I was just to try and fit in...the way I dress. The way I talk, I was being picked on... Like some things I say, my NY accent would come out and it would depend on who I'm talking to a West Indian accent would come out and it was "what are you saying". And they were picking at how I was talking. I was like they're acting like I was an alien like they had never heard someone from NY or Trinidadian speak before. But I had to kind of conform, just to try and fit in just so I wouldn't get picked on a lot. I was getting tired of repeating myself. It's like everything here is different than NY, so you find yourself having to change to try and get through high school without getting picked on.

¹⁰ "Never see come see" is a commonly used phrase among Trinidadians to refer to people who overreact to things to which they have been recently introduced or have recently acquired. American equivalents of this concept include "acting brand new," or "ain't used to having nothing."

TP, also described the role context played in determining how she responds to questions regarding her identity:

Yeah, it depends on the situation. Say for instance, work – you know what I mean. If they ask me on paper, you know, ‘Your ethnicity?’ I would just say black because at that point, that’s all they really need to know. So, I guess it does depend on the situation. But, if I’m meeting somebody for the first time or I’m getting to know somebody, then I go more into detail.

Unlike the other participants, Nubian’s discussion of context centered on her need to disassociate herself from African-Americans. This was evident in the following statement:

Well, when I’m around other West Indians or Americans, I think, I say Afro-Caribbean more so because I guess an American person or a white person, won’t put me in the same bucket as African-Americans or black in general. Yeah, I’m black on the outside, but I identify with my West Indian heritage more so than anything else.

In all, these participants highlighted the complexity of identity, particularly how identity formation is determined by both internal and external factors such as family and other social contexts.

African-Americans Different from Us

Woven within the women’s experiences were strong narratives of how they viewed themselves, particularly their upbringing as different, and in most cases, superior to the upbringing of African-Americans. In most cases, I asked the participants to describe any differences, if any, between their lives and African Americans. Helen had this to say:

I do, I do [see differences]. I really do. And I’ll use personal experience as an example. West Indian men, will work 50 jobs if they have to from what I see to take care of their

family. Most American men, they're not gonna do that. In their mind they're thinking one job should be enough, if I have to work two jobs, I may do it, but I'm not really gonna like it. I just see most West Indian men in my life—I'm not talking about people I've dated, I'm talking about people I know—do what it takes. And I just don't see Afro-American men like that.

Nina, on the other hand, spoke of differences related to domestication, particularly when she was in college:

Probably simple things of...cooking, cleaning, how things tend to be... more of the order, this is what you need to do on this particular day. For instance, Saturday. Everything we had to do – it doesn't matter how old you were, you had to learn to wash your own clothes, cook, take care of yourself basically. Even my grandmother who lived with us wanted us to wash everything by hand versus using the washing machine. Probably just in how the whole kids should be seen and not heard kind of being brought up. If kids are around, when adults come around, you leave the room type of thing. Probably the biggest thing--how you speak to people. Certain words you don't use, tone of voice.

Nina then went on to discuss her current views on what the differences are between her and African-Americans:

Probably now, just little differences. Probably mindset. And that could just be based on my personality, also. From not just how, but also where I was raised. There's little differences. I tend to feel that I have a little more culture, a little more exposure to certain things, or understand certain things a little better – or just differently, I should say-- not better than others. When your parents are from different countries,

[indiscernible] you tend to see how people are raised and live differently. You kind of appreciate what you have a lot more and understand the differences.

Sugar described the differences between her household and African-Americans' as having a great deal to do with chores and child-rearing:

To me it was mostly because my mom's from Trinidad and she was typically from the old school. So, she didn't care about labels—what was Nike, what was hot, what was not. [If]She's buying it-- put it on and shut up. And just different things. I had curfews. Because she believed, she was raised that it didn't look nice for girls to be outside when it was dark. So, you come in early or get in trouble. Just all these...I had plenty of chores and I didn't understand why I had so much chores. Do other little kids clean as much? A certain way that she always wanted it done. She also wanted me to come and watch her cook, learn to cook. And I'm thinking I'm too young to cook. You know my American friends aren't cooking or trying to learn how to cook because we're so young. But, she was raised when you're 7 or 8 you need to learn how to cook. And all these other different things. So, I thought that was different.

Stacy, too, spoke of rearing differences but also added that her family structure contributed to some of these differences:

They [African-American friends] had their mom and dad, and I just had my mom. But that didn't really bother me because my mom was strong. I never saw her cry in front of me. As I got older she would tell me all the stories, but I never saw that growing up. She always portrayed to be strong and she always instilled in me as the oldest to take care of my younger sisters. I had a lot of responsibility growing up. It taught me a lot now. So, that was the only difference. They had their mom and dad, and I just had my mom.

Stacy acknowledged some cultural differences but then seemed to downplay them in the following response:

Not really [cultural differences]. I guess how we got scolded if we did anything wrong. A lot of West Indian parents can be very strict. But, I wouldn't say anything majorly different just because we were Trinidadian. The food we ate maybe. That was it.

Mirroring many of the other participants' responses, Nicole had the following to share regarding the differences she observed between the rules of her household versus those of her African-American peers:

Yeah, uh, I would say some of the rules. You know, it's not typical, like a black American, I think they have more leeway in some things than a West Indian household would. [For example] I know when I was younger I wasn't allowed to like sleep over people's house. My parents had to know them for a while. But I noticed that a lot of my American friends, their parents were like, "Oh yeah, it's fine." You know, but that wasn't the case here.... Also staying out late is different. Different time--we'd have to come in earlier. Just a lot of like simple rules, but they're different.

TP's account of the differences she observed between West Indians and African-Americans was significant:

I think, that they [African-Americans] probably take – not all of them, but a good amount of them, take a lot of things for granted, you know what I mean? For instance, I feel like West Indians are harder workers than African Americans. I feel that a lot of the times, they – how can I say? Their priorities are different. And I feel like that is a big difference between African American culture and West Indians. I guess, too, because of where they came from, the West Indians. I don't know, but from what I hear, they have

to go through working a little bit harder. They have to go and walk to get water and do all this different stuff. So, I guess that's why they're a little bit more harder workers or more endeavorous[sp] in what they want to do, they strive to do what they want to do and get it.

The notion of the “hard working” West Indian is a familiar topic in both private and public discourse. In fact, Jamaicans are often the brunt of many jokes by Black comedians, American and West Indian alike, who tease them for having “multiple, concurrent” jobs. In academic circles, however, this phenomenon is explained through examination of West Indians’ classification as voluntary immigrants (Brown, 2000; Model, 1991; Model, 2008a; Ogbu & Simons, 1998; Waters, 1999). Ogbu and Simons (1998) defines voluntary immigrants as minorities who, by their own desire and volition, move to the United States in hopes of improved employment opportunities and political and religious freedoms. Because of their tendency to deem the opportunities in the U.S. as substantially greater than what is available in their home countries, West Indians are able to “develop a positive comparative framework for interpreting their conditions in their host country” (Brown, 2000, pp. 416-417). In addition, Brown (2000) contends that because voluntary immigrants bring with them a native culture that is shaped in the absence of American discrimination, they view their experiences with U.S. economic, political, and social barriers as temporary obstacles that can be overcome with time and hard work.

On the other hand, African Americans, or involuntary minorities, have a clouded history in the U.S. involving institutionalized slavery, discrimination (Brown, 2000), and limited access to educational and employment opportunities. Also, their involuntary status, coupled with having no native homeland to which they can refer, generates a negative comparative framework for interpreting their conditions in the U.S., particularly since their conditions fare far less than

the dominant group. Within this context, African Americans “perceive themselves as victims of institutionalized discrimination perpetuated against them by dominant group members” (Brown, 2000, p. 417). Subsequently, this perpetuates the distrust African Americans have for members of the dominant group and the institutions they control (Brown, 2000).

Juxtaposed with involuntary minorities, voluntary immigrants appear to be the poster children of Blacks in the U.S. with newspaper reports of their successes, despite racism and other disadvantages (Model, 2008). On the contrary, Ogbu and Simons (1998) argue that involuntary minorities, because of their social and economic condition compared to that of their white counterparts, believe little in the meritocracy of the United States. Consequently, “because discrimination against them has existed for many generations, involuntary minorities tend to believe that it appears to be a permanent feature of U.S. society” (Ogbu & Simons, 1998, p. 171). Finally, African-Americans are less likely than West Indians to perceive or believe in the correlation between hard work and increased opportunities (Ogbu & Simons, 1998).

During the interview, Nubian answered most questions with little hesitation; however, when I asked her to provide examples of what she believed were the differences between her and African-Americans, a considerable pause followed. Finally, she offered the seemingly guarded response:

I don't know, I guess just the way you're raised, just from, I mean no because I guess that can transcend into anything. I guess [pause] I don't know how to explain that, [long pause]. I don't know. You know, I never really thought about that. I mean the only thing that I could think is back when I was in, um, high school it would be a way for people to understand that I'm not southern. And um, there's a reason why we celebrate holidays differently, or we eat foods differently, or why I like to eat curry. You know,

just, you know, I guess that's a way of letting people know this is why we [Trinidadians] do certain things. Not necessarily to say that there is a difference between me, being from a West Indian culture, and an American black person. I can't really, I don't know. I don't really know how to answer that, cause I mean, I know there are differences, but I'm not really sure how to pinpoint those differences. Cause I've never really looked at the differences or examined them to see, 'Ok yeah, well we do that differently.' You know? I've never really, uh-uh.

Differences among Island People

A few women discussed, in varying details, the differences they believed existed between black people from different islands. The discussions, although limited in their analysis of specific groups of island people, suggested participants viewed Trinidadians as a unique, distinct group. Overall, I asked participants to respond to whether or not they viewed people from various islands to be alike or different from each other. Stacy's evaluation centered around physical, tangible differences when she shared the following:

No, I think there's definitely a difference. When you see a Jamaican person, you know a Jamaican person without even seeing them speak, the way they dress, or the way they carry themselves. Not being racial or anything, but you know the difference, at least I do. With the Trinidadian, we sometimes get mistaken for Guyanese people. But, I can say you wouldn't really know a Trinidadian unless you hear them speak. That's my difference. I feel that there's a difference between a Jamaican and a Trinidadian... We're all island people, but I think attitude-wise there's a difference.

TP also spoke about differences among island people, but from a slightly different point-of-view:

I definitely do believe that there's something unique about every group. When you see – I think Trinidadians are very, I would say diverse, you see a white person, and because once you hear that accent, you're like, "Oh, you're from Trinidad," and you would see them and you wouldn't think that until you hear the way they speak. I feel like I can identify when a person is from Trinidad, opposed to a person being from Jamaica or Guyana or Virgin Islands.

Helen, too, agreed there were differences and described them in this way:

Yeah, only because of my personal experience with them, not from stereotypes that other people have of them. But, I have Jamaican friends who pretty much act the same way. And I have Trinidadian friends; they pretty much act...it's interesting how people's personalities—even though they have different personalities because of the type of person they are, but then they have... collectively exactly because of where they're from or where their parents are from.

Although Nicole offered no explanation, when asked whether she believed there was a difference between people from different islands, she replied, "Yes, I do. Definitely."

Sugar, on the other hand, offered a more detailed reflection on ways in which people of various islands differ from each other:

To be honest with you, it really bothers me when people automatically assume that all black people with accents are from Jamaica. We [Trinidadians] don't look like them, act like them, dress like them, or talk like them. I think Jamaicans are very arrogant, and a lot of other islanders think that way of them as well. At the same time, I think we

[Trinidadians] are different from other groups as well. So yeah, we're all different. We have some things in common, just from being island people. You know, like customs, things like that. But, each group is different.

It should be noted that while participants acknowledged there are differences between Trinidadians and other West Indian groups, the majority of the participants made references to Jamaicans. In some cases, participants referred to Jamaicans as a means of calling attention to what they viewed as specific physical, social and cultural differences between the two groups. In addition to this, Sugar expressed her disdain for the general assumption that any Black person with an accent is Jamaican. Hence, Sugar's observation highlights her concern with the larger population's tendency to overlook the uniqueness of various West Indian groups and simultaneously associate them with everything Jamaican.

That Jamaicans make up the largest migrant (Bonnett, 2007) and West Indian populations in the U.S. may explain why all West Indians are associated with this group. In fact, Jamaicans boasted a total population of 736,513, in the U.S. according to Census (2000) data. Meanwhile, with a total population of only 164,778, Trinidadians' representation in the U.S. paled considerably. Despite these quantitative facts, however, the women of this study remind us that West Indian groups, although similar, have differences, both actual and perceived. Above all, the women dispute Vickerman's (1999) claim that Jamaicans, because they are the majority, can speak on behalf of Trinidadians.

In summary, these women acknowledged not only the similarities and differences between black people from different islands, but also the subtle and obvious nature of some of these differences. To some degree, the women also suggested that behaviors of groups of people

might be attributed to where they come from. Thus, the women's accounts shed light on the potential danger of examining the lives of people through one lens.

Negative Views of African-Americans

Waters (1999) argues that children of immigrants face the dilemma of "...[growing] up exposed both to the negative opinions voiced by their parents about American blacks and to the apparently more favorable responses of whites to foreign-born blacks" (p. 285). This was the case for four of the nine participants who described their recollections regarding negative views their family members had of African-Americans. When asked to share what, if any, their family members said about African-Americans, the other five participants expressed they had no memory of such discussions or their family members never talked about African-Americans. During the interviews, it was obvious some of the participants struggled to separate their family's views of African-Americans from their own, since, although in some cases, the participants identified with the very group their families criticized. Leslie's account exemplified this struggle:

Well, I guess, you know, because I identify or consider myself black or slash African American, I hear – and it's weird, because I never understood this – but I would hear a lot of people from the islands, and I think we're all black, just different backgrounds, different cultures. But I would hear them say things like, "Oh, black Americans are lazy," or "Black Americans, they don't want anything out of life or they don't want to work." And I would hear them talk about black Americans as if we're completely different. In a sense, I think that we are, because I think that when you were raised in the islands, it's different. I think that you're, um, the morals that's instilled in you are different. I think that, um, I think that – I just think that it's different. I think that the

education is different, I think that – it’s like for example, I was telling ... I teach severely emotionally-disturbed students, which is another world – I think that most of my kids that are in my class, they don’t have an emotional problem. I think that a lot of them are just spoiled brats, and they just get whatever they want. I said in the islands, they don’t have special ed. They don’t have labels. You went to school, you did what you were supposed to do; you behaved. You know, and I think that I guess the difference between people that were raised in the islands and people that were raised in the United States, and again, I identify myself as black, African American but I think a lot of times, we get pacified too much. Like we always make excuses as to why this happened, or “I couldn’t do this because the white man kept me down, and I couldn’t do that....” And then I look at people from, I look at people who live in Liberty City¹¹ and was born and raised here, and I see them under the tree ten years ago, and ten years later I come back, and they’re still there. But then I see other people that have come from the islands, including Cubans, and they come here into this country, and within five years they have something. I know when my parents moved here, we didn’t have anything. My parents had seven children, seven, and my mom didn’t work. My dad didn’t have a college degree, and within I’ll say three years of moving here, my father bought a house. He had a brand new car. He didn’t make much money, but he was paying all the bills and taking care of his whole family, off of what he was making. I guess when I hear islanders talk about black people, or black Americans, they – not all black Americans are the same, but because they see, you know, what I see, that a lot of them are on welfare, or they’re not doing

¹¹ Liberty City is a predominantly African American and black West Indian neighborhood in Miami, Florida, and known for its low-income housing and high crime rate.

anything productive with their lives, and they put this label in their head, “Well, black Americans are this,” or “Black Americans are that.”

TP also recalled the negative comments her family members made about African Americans. Like Leslie, she also self-identified as African-American. In addition, her response to my question regarding her family’s attitudes towards African Americans was infused with her own beliefs:

I have. Some negative [comments about African-Americans]. I think, too, because it would be compared – say, for instance, in a job situation. And that’s probably the reason why I say I feel that West Indians work harder than African Americans. I would hear my family reference the fact that - oh, you know, African Americans or black Americans don’t work as hard, or don’t take advantage of opportunities that they have, because of the way they were raised or because they’re African American. And yes, I have heard that before. Not that I use that to put them down. Like I said, I feel that not all of them are like that. I feel that there’s a lot of African Americans that have been really successful, that I would model and want to be like. But, yes, I have heard that.

According to Waters’ (1999) study on second-generation West Indians, American respondents¹² typically identify with other black Americans and downplay their ethnic identity (i.e. Jamaican or Trinidadian), as they see few benefits to it. Furthermore, they tend also to reject their parents’ negative views of American blacks. Unlike their parents, American respondents embrace many aspects of American culture (i.e. music, style of dress, etc.). While some of

¹² Waters argues second-generation West Indians fall in one of three categories: Americans, ethnic Americans and immigrants. Based on Waters’ definitions of these categories, both Leslie and TP would be considered American respondents; however, for the current study, I argue that Leslie and TP are actually ethnic respondents since they both self-identified as African-American.

Waters' conclusions apply to both Leslie and TP, it is evident these two women have internalized some of the same negative views their family members have of African Americans.

Nubian laughed uncomfortably when I asked her to share what she heard her family say about African-Americans. She readily acknowledged that her family held negative views and also shared how their views eventually became her own:

Um, yeah ...yeah. There was a big thing, you know, as West Indians tend to see African-Americans as lazy and unmotivated, and as I've gotten older I realize that can be anybody. But that was just something that was kind of ingrained in me, and I held onto that even going to school and to college because I remember the reason why I didn't join the Black Student Union is because during freshman year, during first semester when I was going visiting the different meetings to see what organizations I wanted to become a member of, I remember the president of the BSU having negative things to say about the members of Caribbean Culture Exchange. Because they felt as if because we are all black, and white people all see us black, that we all need to be in one club. There shouldn't be a separation, and I was really offended by that, really and truly offended by that. And I think the reason why I was offended is because a lot, to me it seemed like African Americans, black African Americans, I mean, same difference; African Americans didn't really have a quote on quote...culture. And when I was in school, they were on some, "We're going back to Africa "going there to find out where our roots were." Where as a child, I always knew on my mom's side, she was born in Trinidad, my grandfather was born in St. Vincent, his parents were Portuguese, their parents were Irish. Like, I knew that as a child, so I could tell where my lineage was from, whereas most black Americans don't know. So, I guess that's one of the things that I can distinguish,

and going and living in Europe there's a clear distinction between the way white people see Afro-Caribbeans and African-Americans, so I guess because Trinidad was under British rule for so long, those are just beliefs that we adopted.

Consider Stacy's response to whether she had ever dated African-American men:

Never. I never saw them attractive. When I see a black American, or when someone says describes what is black American...I would think of gold teeth, pants sagging and driving those big cars that make a whole lot of boom-boom noise. Now I know it's the minority, but it's the majority of what I think of makes it black-American. And that never turned me on; it never did anything for me. I've always dated a West Indian. Whether Antigua, Jamaica. I've never dated an American. Not that I don't like them, but just my preference.

When asked if she would want her son to be raised as African-American, Stacy replied the following:

No I don't at all. I know he'll grow up in it around it, but I'm going to instill in him the West Indian culture that was instilled in me. It's gonna be around him so I know that he hopefully, he doesn't pick that up. If he does, I can't stop it, but I know there's certain things I can try and alter, at least not gold teeth and sagging pants.

Waters (1999) found that ethnic respondents, like their first-generation parents, see vast differences between themselves and African-Americans (Waters, 1999). As such, ethnic respondents feel a great need to distance and distinguish themselves from African-Americans. They view the culture of lower-class African-Americans as inferior to the culture of West Indians. As a result, ethnic respondents embrace the culture of their parents and reject the

culture of their African-American peers (Waters, 1999). Although ethnic respondents understand the dynamics of racism, they believe that education and hard work will yield success.

Schooling Experiences in North and South

Four of the participants were born in Brooklyn, New York and relocated to Florida anywhere from the age of twelve to fifteen. Beyond the geographical differences of the South, the women described the extent to which their schooling experiences were similar to or different from their experiences in the North. In some cases, the women described the shock they experienced upon contact with their southern, Black counterparts. In other cases, the women's schooling experiences in the south mirrored what they experienced in the north.

In the following, Nubian described the shock she encountered upon her arrival to Florida:

They [parents] raised me to identify myself as West Indian or Trinidadian first and black, second. So, when we lived in New York it was not an issue. But, I didn't start to realize that I was *black* American until I moved to the South, because there's a clear distinction on the way people treat you. Um, getting into the college setting, and being around, because I went to a majority white school, being around majority whites and it's like, it's just different. And especially in the South there are certain stigmas that go with being black. And it was almost it's like, I remember being in high school and the conversation of chitterlings came up, and everyone just assumed because I was black I knew what it was and ate it. And I'm just like, 'I don't know what a chitterling is.' To this day, I've never even seen a chitterling [laughing].

On the other hand, Stacy described the differences in racial and ethnic make-up between the schools she attended in New York versus the schools she attended in Florida:

It was a lot of West Indians [in New York]. A lot of Trinidadians, and a lot of white Americans, Black Americans, but it was mostly a West Indian place. It was different [in Florida]...Black Americans and Jamaicans, mainly. It was just different than when I lived in New York.

Stacy also reflected on the fact that in New York, the majority of her friends were West Indian, but when she moved to Florida, her friends were mainly African-American because, "...that was the majority."

Despite the changes in whom her circle of friends became, Stacy believed her experiences in New York served as the catalyst to shaping her early identification as Trinidadian-American:

I think so. Because it's like in NY it was all around and I grew up in it and I saw it [West Indians]. So, I knew what I was. When I came to a different atmosphere, it was like I wasn't used to it. I was used to being embraced by my West Indian friends.

Conversely, TP's descriptions of the schools she attended in New York and Florida suggested there were few difference between them:

It was around the same thing. The building I lived in [in New York], all of them were West Indians. There was Trinidadians, Jamaicans. I think I was raised in the same type of atmosphere for a lot of my life. Like Miramar [FL] has the same type of West Indian status, the same way. My friends were Jamaican, Trinidadian in New York, same thing now. The majority of my friends are Jamaican. I have one American friend, but she relates to us a lot.

TP described the dynamics of the schools she attended in Florida in greater detail:

Actually, I went to school, I went to middle school in Miramar. I went to high school in Fort Lauderdale. At Miramar, it was a good amount of African Americans, there was the

West Indians. A lot of the time, the kids were of parents that were from the West Indies. So it was basically they were born here. But yeah, I went to school with a lot of West Indians. In Fort Lauderdale high school, it was more Haitian American or Haitian-born. It was a handful of West Indian kids, apart from the Haitian, and you know they had the American kids as well.

Nina described a similar experience regarding her move from New York to Florida:

Mainly where we lived. Probably the common denominator – when I moved, a lot of West Indians and New Yorkers moved to Florida at around the same time. Probably about '89 through the next couple of years it was always a lot of people from the same type of background no matter what island, whether it was Haiti or Jamaica. So you kind of just migrated to those people who you were alike. Just West Indians.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE STUDY

The primary purpose of this study was to examine how family and school socialization affected the identity choices of second-generation Black Trinidadians. This examination concludes with implications for educational practitioners and researchers in hopes that the findings will encourage not only continued discussions of identity formation, particularly the role that the institutions of home and school play in shaping this process, but also inform educational policies and practices to ensure schools provide a healthy experience for all the students they serve. Moreover, this study sought to contribute to the larger discussion concerning West Indians (second-generation) by focusing on Trinidadians, a population often excluded from this analysis. When broken down by specific groups, Trinidadians are the third largest West Indian population in the U.S. (U.S Census, 2000); however, their experiences are rarely documented. Greater attention, by far, has been given to immigrants of Jamaican, Haitian and African descent. The research questions that guided this study were as follows:

1. How do second-generation black Trinidadians come to self-identify racially or ethnically, or nationally?
2. In what ways do the identities (racial, ethnic and or national) of second-generation black Trinidadians interact with the various contexts and institutions (home and school) to which they belong?
3. To what extent do these contexts and institutions influence the identity choices of individuals within this group?

Discussion

Two factors resonate from this study: 1. the women prefer an ethnic identity, as evidenced by the labels they self-selected; and 2. the home significantly influenced the women's self-identification label choices. At the conclusion of the interviews, three of the women self-identified as Trinidadian; one woman self-identified as Trinidadian-American; one woman self-identified as Afro-Caribbean; two women self-identified as Black; and one woman identified as African American. Although the label choices of the women are overwhelmingly ethnic in nature, there are a variety of labels represented in their choices. For example, the labels Trinidadian-American and African-American, although ethnic, have two very different connotations. The former label acknowledges a Trinidadian ancestry and American socialization, but the latter embraces an identity that suggests a history situated in the U.S. for multiple generations. Two of the women preferred a racial identity and selected the label Black. What is more important than the label choices of the women, however, are the motivations behind their selections. Their reasons ranged anywhere from having a desire to acknowledge their Trinidadian roots to being politically correct.

The women almost exclusively attributed their self-identification labels to their home socialization. Although the women did not describe explicit familial expectations to identify racially, ethnically, or by a specific label, they believed their experiences at home shaped the way they came to identify. In most, if not all cases, the women described their close relationships to family members, particularly their primary family members (i.e., mother, father, siblings), which may explain the influence of the home institution. What the women shared about their schooling experiences suggested schools served to challenge the ways in which they

viewed themselves and others. For some of the women, school either confirmed or disproved their preexisting beliefs about other ethnic groups.

Implications for Research and Theory

Researcher as Insider and Outsider

The questions of reflexivity (Alridge, 2003; Morris, 2003) and objectivity (Alridge, 2003) are often raised with any study of human and non-human subjects. Of great concern has been whether objectivity is actually achievable when the researcher seeks to research communities with which she identifies. These and other dilemmas were explored by Alridge (2003), an African-American educational historian, in his reflection on his research of Black people.

Similarly, the researcher of the present study encountered similar challenges and was forced to reconsider the extent to which she was an insider of the population under investigation. At the very least, she questioned what criteria were necessary to deem her an insider of the group she was researching. Was it sufficient that her parents were born and raised in Trinidad and that she was born and raised in the U.S? Or, did she also have to espouse the opinions her participants had of African-Americans? One fact to consider was the difficulty she encountered in gaining participants on her own; it became evident she was, to some degree, viewed as an outsider. Clearly, her attendance to and participation in the monthly Trinidad and Tobago Association of Georgia meetings, although they assisted somewhat, did not allow her full access to the group about which she desired to write. That the researcher considered herself a member of the group was an inadequate prerequisite to the current study. Furthermore, careful consideration to factors that may have hindered full access was imperative. For example, the researcher's gender, association with a predominantly white university, and the very fact that she was "conducting research," collectively, may have contributed to the tensions she encountered in

both gaining the access and trust of her participants. Hence a reflexive position is necessary to negotiate this dilemma, as Alridge (2003) reminds the research community that one is “not assured of complete ‘insider’ status” (p. 31) simply because one views oneself as a member of the community one is researching.

Revisiting Double Consciousness

The term double consciousness, historically, has been used to depict the experiences of Blacks juxtaposed to their white counterparts. Data from this study, however, suggests a need to consider an alternative notion of double consciousness—one that transcends a black and white dichotomy—to also examine how West Indians view themselves in relation to African-Americans. In other words, within a U.S. context, the West Indian individual, unless she has observable West Indian traits (accent, and such) is involuntarily grouped with African-Americans, a grouping that in many cases, as revealed from this study, is rejected, if not despised. The researcher, however, does not seek to advocate for or against this grouping but instead argues that acknowledgment of this grouping and its implications are necessary if progress towards solidarity between dispersed Black people is a desired outcome.

Monolithic View of West Indians

Indeed, the women’s stories acknowledged the similarities that exist among WI groups; however, the women revealed there is merit in documenting and validating the unique experiences of Trinidadians. Hence, Vickerman’s (1999) argument that Jamaicans, because they are from the largest island, can speak for all West Indians was repeatedly dismissed by the participants of this study. Thus, there needs to be a deliberate effort to include the experiences of Trinidadians in the scholarly literature when we talk about West Indians. The present study not only initiated an examination of second-generation Trinidadians, but it clearly delineated specific

explanations apropos their stance on identity, self-identification labels, and their views of African-Americans and other Black groups.

Implications for Educational Practice

Certainly, identity, in addition to other factors, poses a hardship for Black West Indians, and educators must be prepared to meet the educational needs of these students—needs that are different from members of the domestic black population (Rong & Preissle, 1998). Black West Indians must come to understand what it means to be Black in the United States and that the relationships they develop with whites can compromise their status within the Black community. At the same rate, African-Americans need to understand that Black West Indians' hesitation to assimilate or identify with African-American culture has little to do with their aversion to blackness, but more to do with their resentment towards what it means to be Black in the U.S.

For a variety of reasons, some students adopt a “raceless” identity (Fordham, 1988). The raceless phenomenon has been examined considerably to understand the educational experiences of African-Americans (Fordham, 1988; Fordham & Ogbu, 1986); however, it occurs among second-generation West Indians as well. While it is possible for the second-generation to succeed in school without developing healthy relationships with African-Americans, there may be severe consequences if opportunities for the growth of these relationships are denied. Above all, it is likely for a student's school success to be interpreted as “acting white” and an attempt to “join forces with the enemy” by their black peers (Fordham, 1988; Fordham & Ogbu, 1986).

Nubian's high school experiences in Florida illustrate this point:

Right. It was more so that I was an oreo versus I was West Indian. Um, and I think the only people that really...I felt ostracized by African-Americans when I was in high school. Not because I was West Indian but because I was majority in advanced

placement classes. I lived in a white neighborhood, and the majority of my friends happened to be white.

Nubian's ostracism continued in college as well:

I ostracized myself. I think it was more so on my part because I felt like I was, I felt like in college it was more of me identifying who I am as a person and for the rest of my life, and I felt like I'm West Indian, I'm Caribbean, this is who I am. This is what I know. And, like I say, because I rarely went to BSU functions, that's where the equal ostracism came from, because it was like, "Oh, she's really not feeling us cause she West Indian; she think she better than us." And I was on some, "I'm really NOT feeling ya'll."

Fordham (1988) warns, however, adopting a raceless persona, an identity that sees fit to disassociate with one's group member because of the perceived stigmas associated with the group, is the high price some black students pay to do well in school. Thus, individuals may sabotage positive peer relationships. In fact, Schofield (1986) argues that students as well as teachers can adopt a "colorblind perspective," a "point of view which sees racial and ethnic group membership as irrelevant to the ways individuals are treated" (p. 232). She warns against this behavior, as it "...easily leads to a misrepresentation of reality in ways which allow and sometimes even encourage discrimination against minority group members..." (p. 233). In other words, the colorblind perspective has negative consequences for both teachers and students, white or black. Interestingly, despite individual's effort to ignore race, Frankenberg (1993) argues that race shapes individuals and that "...white people *and* people of color live racially structured lives" (p. 1), whether they acknowledge this or not. More importantly, there are negative consequences for ignoring the role race plays in our lives and the lives of others.

While racial and ethnic solidarity between groups is desired, there are negative implications for West Indians adopting an identity aligned with African-Americans if the association is deemed a negative one. For example, Leslie recalled the effort she made to identify with and sound like the “ghetto people” of her new neighborhood:

I did, but I guess – I don’t know. Maybe [it’s] something in my personality. They still had ghetto people at Norwood, so I targeted those ghetto people. I found my kinfolk. [Laughs.] And we became best friends. I targeted out those ghetto people, and I guess I was always kind of popular, even from elementary school. I remember in the fourth grade, in our little yearbook, I got voted at Best Dressed, because my dad is married to a black¹³ woman now, and she bought me all the latest and things like that. But yeah, I found my kinfolks and I started doing all the ghetto things, being bad and being rude and stuff. I wouldn’t say bad – I was never bad in school. I was always a rude child, because I always felt like I had a right to speak my mind. So if my dad told me to do something and I didn’t agree, I’d want to know why. “Why do I have to do that?” I always felt like I had a right to speak my mind.

The following section highlights ways in which a multicultural educational approach can foster healthy interactions between second-generation Trinidadians, their African-American peers and teachers, within the context of schools.

Multicultural Education

Banks (2001) contends that a multicultural education “focuses on equal educational opportunities for different groups within the national culture” (p. 72). A multicultural educational approach is the antithesis of a colorblind perspective, is concerned with highlighting

¹³ For clarity, Leslie’s stepmother, the woman her father married after his first wife died, is an African-American woman.

and comparing the problems of various groups, and most importantly assumes that concepts such as “prejudice, discrimination, and identity conflicts are common to diverse microcultural groups” (Banks, 2001, p.77). Studies indicate that children become aware of racial differences at early ages and that their racial attitudes tend to become increasingly negative if special efforts are not made to affect them (Aboud, 1988). Therefore, multicultural education asserts that “both racial and cultural differences must be reflected in educational programs...to reduce intergroup conflict and misunderstanding” (Banks, 2001, p. 84).

In order to encourage a harmonious classroom environment where students’ racial attitudes can be modified, Banks (2001) argues that teachers must have experiences that influence their feelings and perceptions of students. He argues further that because teachers are (and can be) important agents of change, their impact on the social atmosphere of the school climate is profound. Thus, teacher in-service education is crucial in order to reduce institutional racism in the school context (Garcia, 1996).

Banks (2001) proposes that all in-service education for teachers and school personnel include the following major objectives:

1. To help teachers gain a new conceptualization of the history and culture of their societies;
2. to help them confront their own racial feelings, which can be a painful process, and if not handles competently, can be destructive and unsettling;
3. to help them to conceptualize and develop teaching techniques that will enhance the academic achievement of students from diverse racial, ethnic, and language groups. (p. 85)

On the other hand, schools, too, have a responsibility in fostering a positive school climate.

Donaldson (1996) contends that schools can help reduce cultural racism and ethnocentrism by

teaching students they have cultural options. Because most individuals are socialized in one ethnic enclave, it is likely these individuals will find the customs and lifestyles of others as strange. Therefore, schools "...should provide all students with opportunities to become familiar with other races, lifestyles, and cultures..." (Banks, 2001, p. 86). Finally, if schools seek to respect the cultural and ethnic diversity of its populations, they must be willing to assume new responsibilities, to include the following:

1. recognize and respect ethnic and cultural diversity;
2. promote societal cohesiveness based on the shared participation of ethnically and culturally diverse peoples;
3. maximize equality of opportunity for all individuals and groups;
4. facilitate constructive societal change that enhances human dignity and democratic ideals.

(Banks, 2001, p. 315)

What is important to note is that the inclusiveness of a multicultural educational paradigm is a wonderful alternative to the "one-size-fits-all" approach typical of most schools. Multicultural education embraces all possible identities of individuals (i.e. gender, social class, racial, ethnicity, religious, exceptionality, and regional) and seeks to illuminate them, not ignore them, as would a colorblind perspective. For this reason, a multicultural environment can provide maximum opportunities for second-generation youths to interact positively with their teachers, peers, and school personnel.

Implications of Multicultural Education for Intra-Racial Dynamics

While the researcher proposes the implementation of multicultural education as a possible means of fostering inclusiveness within schools, the researcher is cognizant of the limitations of a multicultural approach. Conventional applications of multicultural education

emphasize the improvement of relationships between members of different groups. For example, as a result of systemic racist practices schools have long been sites that, one might argue, perpetuate the tensions that exist between Blacks and Whites, Latinos and Whites, Blacks and Latinos, and such. Therefore, given the historical and incessant issues that currently plague our schools, it is no wonder why such a linear approach to multicultural education has been embraced. Often ignored, however, are the intra-racial dynamics that exist between members of *seemingly* the same group, as in the case of African-Americans and second-generation West Indians, or second-generation Trinidadians and second-generation Jamaicans. This study shed light on the accounts of 8 women who, at varying degrees, described their conflicts, hostilities and uneasiness, not with Whites, but with individuals who looked and sounded very much like them—other Black people. For this reason, a multicultural approach that takes into account the intra-racial dynamics between members of the same group is essential for the success of political and racial unity.

Recommendations for Future Study

Although the present study contributed to the body of literature on second-generation West Indians it is not intended to be exhaustive. This study was confined to face-to-face, open-ended, and semi-structured interview methods. Participants were Black second-generation Trinidadian women between the ages of 18-39. A potential limitation of the study is the relatively small number of participants included. Although eleven participants were interviewed, only 8 were included in the final analysis. Three of the participants were found to be part of the 1.5 generation, a population of West Indians that was beyond the focus of this study. As a result, this study is not representative of all second-generation Black Trinidadians. A larger sample may have yielded more diverse revelations of the women's experiences regarding identity.

Second, although a mixed-gender investigation was the goal for the present study, future studies may consider including the experiences of males to further understand the identity choices of second-generation Black Trinidadians. At the least, such an investigation would offer understandings about the differences and similarities between how and why men and women select their identification labels. Third, traditional examinations of second-generation West Indians focus on individuals who are born and raised in gateway cities such as New York and Miami. In these cases, that the majority of the peers with which they interact and have most in common are other second-generation West Indians is unsurprising. However, while the present study attempted to examine the experiences of individuals born and raised in non-gateway states, future studies should consider the potential complexities surrounding how second-generation West Indians come to identify when the majority of their peers are African-American. Furthermore, it would be equally important to investigate whether the diminished contact with West Indian influences would impact the saliency of the home as the overall factor shaping self-identification label choices.

Finally, the present study required participants to recall familial and schooling events that occurred, in some cases, 10 or more years prior to the interviews. Unfortunately, memory can be unreliable (Onyx & Small, 2001), as “memories about situations fade with time” (Peterson, 1980, p. 372). Therefore, rather than rely solely on participants’ memories, future studies may consider including ethnographic, longitudinal investigations of Black Trinidadians to capture their experiences in real time and the long-term effects of family and interactions with other institutions (<http://www.experiment-resources.com/longitudinal-study.html>).

Final Thought

In conclusion, it is expected that the results from this study will encourage further research in the identity of not only second-generation Black Trinidadians, but also African-Americans. In a time when the use of culturally sensitive research approaches can serve as a catalyst for educational change (Kershaw, 1992), Tillman (2002) has noted, “[c]ulturally sensitive research approaches both recognize ethnicity and position culture as central to the research process” (p. 3). The need for understanding the complexity and variation of racial identity formation between African-Americans and West Indian Blacks is crucial for educators. Educational research, specifically that which examines the racial identity of African-Americans and first and second-generation Black immigrants, is crucial for informing practices that can adequately meet the needs of children who look very much alike yet have different experiences and interpretations of race relations in the U.S.

One cannot ignore the unique histories of both African-Americans and West Indians, as these incomparable histories inform the present-day realities and worldviews of each group. Nor should the role that Whites have played in the shaping of Black identity be excluded from this discussion. Historically and presently, there is a persistent division and suspicion among Blacks of darker and lighter hue. This was evident during the slavery era, when darker slaves were confined to the fields, while the lighter complexioned chattel was more likely to be assigned to the house of his or her master. As a result, resentments developed between these two groups. In that rival state of mind, Blacks were unable to recognize their true enemy, thus becoming the tools of their master’s hand. Today, this type of division continues, as lighter-skinned African-Americans are deemed less angry and threatening by whites than their darker-skinned counterparts. Consequently, the divisions between Black West Indians and African-Americans

may be explained by the same involvement of Whites, as both groups, now and in the past, have struggled and competed to be accepted and validated by the dominant group. But as Model (2008) points out, although black West Indian immigrants have experienced greater success in the U.S., they remain vulnerable to racism. Hence, as long as we live in a racialized society, black skin will always be the tie that binds African-Americans and West Indians together.

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APPENDIX A

ANNOUNCEMENT FOR PARTICIPANTS

Research Participants Needed!!!

Hi, I am Stacy Gibbs, a graduate student at the University of Georgia, currently finishing my Ph.D. degree and looking for participants on a study about the racial and ethnic identities of Black second-generation Trinidadians. Also a second-generation Trinidadian, I would like to interview individuals between 18-35 years of age, who were born in and went to high school in the United States (preferably the metro-Atlanta area) but whose parents were born in Trinidad.

Eligible participants will participate in 1 or 2 tape-recorded interviews.

By participating in this study participants may gain a better understanding of themselves and other racial/ethnic groups and may alter certain behaviors or adapt to new ones as a result of their new awareness. It is hoped that this study will encourage self-reflection on the part of the participants.

If you choose to participate, interviews will begin immediately. If you or anyone you know may be interested in participating in this study, please contact me at gibbss@uga.edu or 678-334-9968.

APPENDIX B

IRB CONSENT FORM

I, _____, agree to participate in a research study titled “Navigating Race, Culture, and Society: Effects of Family and School Socialization on Identity Choices of Second-Generation Black Trinidadians,” conducted by Stacy K. Gibbs from the Department of Workforce Education, Leadership, and Social Foundations at the University of Georgia (678-334-9968) under the direction of Dr. Jerome Morris, Department of Workforce Education, Leadership, and Social Foundations, University of Georgia (706-542-8117). I understand that my participation is voluntary. I can stop taking part without giving any reason, and without penalty. I can ask to have all of the information about me returned to me, removed from the research records, or destroyed.

The reason for this study is to examine the extent to which family socialization and schooling experiences shape the racial, ethnic and or national identity choices of second-generation Black Trinidadians.

If I volunteer to take part in this study, I will be asked to do the following things:

- 1) Answer questions of a screening questionnaire
- 2) Participate in at least two interviews, approximately one hour in length.
- 3) The researcher may call me to set up an additional interviews to clarify my responses from the interview

I will be interviewed by the researcher. After the interviews and observations, my participation in the study will be completed. I understand that audio taped interviews and transcript data will be analyzed by the researcher and kept indefinitely for educational and research purposes. If I would like a copy of any transcript or ensuing publication, I will make a request to the researcher.

No risk is expected but I may experience some discomfort or anxiety during the interview process when the researcher asks me questions about my racial and/ethnic identity.

I will not be penalized in any way should I choose not to participate. There may be some benefit for me for participating in the project, as I will reflect on experiences that may encourage personal growth. My participation in this study will be used to help further the knowledge about the identities of second-generation Black Trinidadians in the U.S.

The results of this participation will be confidential unless required by law. Pseudonyms will be used.

The investigator will answer any questions about the research, now, during, or after the course of the project (Stacy K. Gibbs: 678-334-9968).

I give my permission for the researcher to use excerpts from my audio-recordings at meetings of researchers.

Circle one: YES / NO. Initial_____.

I give my permission for the researcher to use excerpts from audio-recordings for educational purposes in classrooms with students.

Circle one: YES / NO. Initial_____.

I understand that I am agreeing by my signature on this form to take part in this research project and understand that I will receive a signed copy of this consent form for my records.

Name of Researcher (Print)

Signature

Date

Telephone: _____

Email: _____

Name of Participant (Print)

Signature

Date

Please sign both copies, keep one and return one to the researcher.

Additional questions or problems regarding your rights as a research participant should be addressed to The IRB Chairperson. Human Subjects Office, University of Georgia, 606A Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, Georgia 30602-7411; Telephone (706) 542-3199; E-Mail Address IRB@uga.edu

APPENDIX C

PARTICIPANT SCREENING QUESTIONNAIRE

Name _____

Birthplace _____

Age upon arrival to U.S. _____

Birthplace of Parents _____

High School _____

Current Age _____

Race _____

Ethnicity _____

Gender: ___ Male ___ Female

Phone _____

Email _____

Address _____

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. Tell me about when you first realized you were Black.
2. Tell me what it means to be Black in the United States.
3. Tell me what you think about African-Americans.
4. Tell me what you think about White Americans.
5. What was your family life like growing up in your household?
6. Did your home life differ from your peers? How?
7. Tell me how you think you are treated by African-Americans.
8. Tell me how you think you are treated by White Americans.
9. How do you identify yourself? Racially or ethnically? Why?
10. Do you prefer the term race? Ethnicity? Why?
11. Is being a second-generation Trinidadian advantageous to you? How?
12. How would you describe your friends?
13. What kinds of places do you spend your leisure time?
14. What were your schooling experiences like?
15. Who were your friends in school?