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Black Like Me? A Narrative Study of Non-Anglophone Black
U.S. Immigrant Selves in the Making

by

Yvanne Joseph

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Critical Social/Personality Psychology in
partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy,
The City University of New York

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2015

Abstract

Black Like Me? A Narrative Study of Non-Anglophone Black U.S. Immigrant Selves in the Making

by

Yvanne Joseph

Adviser: Professor Michelle Fine

The passage of the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act abolished discriminatory national origin quotas that favored European immigrants. The U.S. has since experienced steady flows of immigrants of color. These diverse groups have brought their racial, social, cultural and historical experiences, which adds greater complexity to the existing Black/White and ingroup/outgroup models that shape group relations, and psychological theorizing about identity. This dissertation focuses specifically on the smaller, less visible, yet growing segments of these immigrant populations. It presents a study of the lives of ten individual immigrants of African descent originating from a non-Anglophone country within Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean. Using a narrative identity framework, informed by critical race and cultural theories, life story interviews were conducted. The objectives of this inquiry were threefold. First, this study sought to understand how diverse groups of individuals construct, and make-meaning of their identity development while situating each life within a global/local and temporal context. Specific attention was devoted to the formative role played by historical experiences, different cultures, migration, and the power dynamics framing the varied localities of each individual's development. Also considered was the specific influence other individuals and groups have had

in shaping conceptions of self/others. Second, this study documents how being Black and an immigrant is socially and subjectively experienced within race, and across differences in ethnicity and nationality. Third, this study explores the distinct changes, opportunities and difficulties each individual negotiates as his/her hybrid racial and cultural identity challenge dominant stereotypes and static conceptions of group identity. The findings highlight nuances in meaning-making and in narrative constructions of self. For this dissertation, two sets of narratives emerged. One small group constructed narratives focused on the historical, cultural and political nature of racial identity and its intersections with class, gender and nationality—illustrating the influence that social location plays in navigating different environments marked by power dynamics. The other set of stories focused on multiple adaptation and movements within and across national borders. Both sets of narratives speak to the human capacity to assert agency and adapt to change. They also magnify the multidimensionality and elasticity of identity. The implications of these findings for studying persons and groups in psychology are discussed.

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CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCTION

Yvonne: Do you think your story about being both Black and Latina will help other people? If so, how?

Carmen: I am not the only person in this situation. There are many. I think I know for a fact that there are many Black Latinas who are ashamed to say that they are a Black Latina. Like I said, in the Dominican Republic, it is looked down upon and even here, when I say that I am Black, people say, "No, you are not Black, you are Dominican." And I say, "Dominican is not a race, it's the place where I came from." So, I think it would be helpful for other people to understand, to hear my side of the story, being a Black woman who also speaks Spanish. I know there are a lot of people who are in the same situation, but who are just, I guess, with society and everything that goes on, they just don't want to accept it.

The quotation above is an excerpt taken from Carmen's life story. She is one of the ten respondents that participated in the life history interviews I conducted for this dissertation study. The identity negotiations she describes experiencing within the U.S. and the Dominican Republic provide a broader view of the global-local context in which her identity formation process unfolds and is situated. Despite facing social and societal pressure to choose between identifications within two different contexts, she personally decides to embrace her hybrid identity as a Black Latina. This reflects the human capacity to exercise agency in response to normative and societal expectations for social identification. What conditions (social, cultural, political and historical) underlie Carmen's decision to personally embrace her hybrid identity as

authentic to whom she is as a person? How does she experience this in-between social location throughout her life, which spans the course of time and different localities? How does she deal with the incongruence between her personal understanding of self as multiple and hybrid compared with the singular categories that others use to define and partition her identities? These are the questions that the present dissertation study sought to answer through querying the life histories of ten self-identifying Black U.S. immigrants. Each originates from a non-Anglophone country within Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean.

The purpose of the present study was to gain a better understanding of how individual immigrants with hybrid black racial and cultural identities construct their identity formation process. As a social phenomenon, the hybridization of identity has been linked to historical transformations such as colonialism (Bhabha, 1994; Hall, 1990) and globalization (Hermans & Kempen, 1998). Because large-scale migration is a fundamental aspect of both of these historical processes, they have provided the conditions (sometimes violently) for racial and cultural hybridization to occur through the intermixing of groups from different backgrounds. The individuals that participated in this study reflect some form of cultural and racial hybridization as a result of one or both of these historical processes.

As contemporary voluntary immigrants, each relocated to the U.S. from a country in a different region of the world that either has a history of colonialism and/or has experienced some intense intraregional voluntary migration, which resulted in different ethnic groups coming together. The African born are from Northern Sudan, Guinea-Conakry, and Ethiopia. The Latin American born are from Brazil, Costa Rica and Panama, and the Caribbean born are from the

Dominican Republic and Haiti. All of the respondents in this study self-identify as Black in racial terms, and each emigrated to the U.S. from a country where English is not the dominant language. The only exception is Sudan where English is spoken as a second language. However, the respondent from Sudan arrived to the U.S. with no knowledge of English, but was fluent in Arabic until he eventually learned to speak English. As language functions as a marker of social identity, specifically cultural and racial identity, these groups of individuals bring to the U.S. diverse and different racial and cultural permutations of Blackness. Their lived experiences and identity formation process is the focus of this inquiry because each has a uniquely different combination of intersecting social (Black and immigrant male), linguistic (Spanish/English speaking) and ethno-national identities (Costa Rican of Jamaican descent). They, therefore, occupy an interesting in-between location, and each stretches the boundaries of singular categories of social identification. As a result, I was interested in learning about their identity formation process. I wanted to understand how each experience being a person of visible African descent. Secondly, because the respondents are also immigrants, and most traveled to other countries and remain intimately connected to their country of birth as a transnational, I wanted to understand how they socially experience their identities in different localities. In essence, I wanted to grasp what personal “meanings” they derive from having experienced life from the unique space of being a Black racial and cultural hybrid, and from having experienced this location in two or more countries.

This paper, therefore, presents a study of the lives of individual U.S. immigrants of African descent that troubles the singular categories, and the ahistorical and decontextualized

understanding of the person that has dominated mainstream psychological theorizing about identity processes. This research is grounded in a narrative identity perspective (Polkinghorne, 1991; Somer, 1994; McAdams, 1996; Hammack, 2008) informed by critical race (Crenshaw, 1991; Lorde, 1993; Anzaldua, 1987) and cultural theories (Hall, 1990; Bhabha, 1994; Bhatia & Ram, 2001; Gjerde, 2004).

Research Questions

This study is driven by the following research questions:

1. How do larger socio-historical and political processes influence the hybridization of Black immigrant racial and cultural identities?
2. How do individuals come to recognize and embrace that they have a hybrid Black racial and cultural identity, and what are some of the social challenges and opportunities that accompany occupying this intersectional location?
3. How do these individuals manage, and cope with the difficulties associated with not fitting into broad categories of social and cultural identification?
4. Lastly, what personal meanings are associated with being a person of visible African descent, and experiencing life and the self from the unique standpoint of being a product of different cultures, and having lived in (and traveling to) different countries?

Organization of Chapters

The chapters in this dissertation study are organized as follows. The first Chapter will examine the theoretical terrain and various academic works that form a foundation for this

dissertation while concurrently unpacking the research questions posed. Chapter 2 discusses the research design and methodology, and introduces the reader to the ten individuals whose lives are the focus of this investigation. Chapter 3 provides a broader demographic picture of the larger U.S. immigrant populations of which the respondents are a part and it provides a summary of the existing empirical research on the particular immigrant group of which each is a member. Furthermore, this Chapter provides a general understanding of the national history of each respondent's country of origin. It also locates each individual's personal story within this larger narrative. The purpose of this chapter is to situate the lives of all respondents within the broader social, historical and political context of pre-and post-migration. More concretely, this contextual grounding is provided to illuminate the dynamic relationship among self, others and society. Chapter 4 presents one of the two different narratives of identity formation that emerged out of the ten life histories the respondents constructed: *Narrating the Self within the Context of Historical, Cultural and Political Struggles*. Chapter 5 presents the second one: *Narrating the Self within the Context of Relocation, Multiple Movements, and Migration*. A central premise of narrative theory is that people construct identities (however multiple and changing) by locating themselves, and being located within a repertoire of emplotted stories (Somers, 1994; Hammack, 2008). The two different narratives of identity that the respondents in this study constructed reflect a subjective understanding of the self as being constituted through the engagement with either an oppressive past (which is connected to a larger narrative about exploitation, subversion and inequality), or a network of relationships within different localities (which is connected to the larger narrative about globalization, immigration, travel and adaptation). The distinctions

between the two narratives are not always easily disentangled as both types reflect a sociopolitical relational understanding of the self and its development. Nonetheless, in both cases, culture (via personal values and systems of beliefs) plays a powerful role in the production of liberating experiences, but is also the cause of emotionally painful experiences (as a marker of difference). Interestingly, culture also helped to *mitigate* emotionally painful experiences. In Chapter 6, the final chapter, I discuss the theoretical and practical significance of this study's findings for the psychological understanding of persons and groups, and specifically for individuals of African descent. I also underscore the complexity of identity as the narrative which each respondent constructs reproduces as well as challenges dichotomous distinctions.

Identity and Developmental Context

The concept of *identity* embodies the notion that individuals will come to recognize (beginning in adolescence) that they are similar to others (which is the basis of collective identity), and that they are also uniquely different (which is the basis of personal identity) (Erikson, 1980; McAdams, 1996). Identity is also a multidimensional construct as it is acquired through birth (as in gender, nationality and class), is ascribed by others (as in racial categorization), is chosen (personal identity as in I am a feminist), and is achieved (physician, teacher, lawyer). Not only is it multidimensional, but its development and formation are also a dynamic process that is subject to the influence of change, time, culture, history, politics, and the social and physical environment. In other words, context both influences and shapes identity by giving it social and personal meaning. However, individuals can also influence and change

societal definitions of self and others by challenging and/or resisting those definitions. For instance, the theory of racial formation advanced by Omi and Winant (1994) serves as an illustrative example of the context dependent nature of identity. According to these scholars, race is a social-historical construct and not a biological certainty. It, nonetheless, has real implications for behavior and perception because physical differences are used as markers of race and differentiation. In the present study, each respondent is seen, and views him or herself in a particular way based on physical differences. According to Omi and Winant (1994) “racial categories and the *meaning* of race are given concrete expression by the specific social relations and historical context in which they are embedded” (p. 11). As a result, racial meanings will vary over the course of time and among societies. To demonstrate this point, these scholars highlight the contrast between racial meanings in the U.S. as compared to Latin America. In the former, the rule of hypo-descent designates anyone of interracial mixture as non-white, regardless of physical appearance; whereas, in the context of Latin America, the opposite can be true because racial meanings are less rigid than the Black/White color line that pervades all aspects of life in the U.S. The central idea being advanced in this paper is that context gives specific meaning to identity. Therefore, the study of identity also requires an understanding of the context of its development.

The second key point is concerned with the issue of agency, which also serves as the theoretical underpinnings for how the concept of identity is conceptualized in this study. Although context shapes and assigns meaning to the categories by which individuals and groups are identified, and defined, individuals can also influence and change structural and societal

definitions of self and others. This is often achieved through personal identifications that challenge existing categories, and through political mobilization. An example of the former was illustrated at the very beginning of this paper through the excerpt taken from Carmen's life history. Her personal decision to identify herself along two group categories that are differently racialized (Black and Latina) reflect a much larger shift in how race is being redefined and presently understood in the United States. In a report on the 2010 U.S. Census, Humes, Jones and Ramirez (2011) highlight two major changes that provide new information on diversity and the population of people that identify as belonging to two or more races. One of the revisions made to the 2010 Census was that instructions were added to specify that Hispanic origin is not a race. The second change allowed individuals to racially identify themselves along two or more races, rather than a single, racial category. Among the people who reported more than one race in the 2010 Census, majority reported exactly two races. The four largest combinations among this group were: White and Black, White and some other race, White and Asian, and White and American Indian and Alaskan Native. Based on the results from the 2010 Census, Humes, Jones and Ramirez (2011) reported that the two or more race populations are one of the fastest growing groups over the last ten decades. In a country that once held anti-miscegenation laws to guard the purity of whiteness, and to uphold its Black/White color line, the recognition of multiracial populations in the 2010 U.S. Census lends support to the idea that individuals can, over the course of time, and through personal identification and political mobilization influence and/or change structural and societal constructions of individual and group identities.

The perspective that self and society are inextricably linked, and that one cannot be studied without the other, is central to the present study. This idea has roots in the narrative approach to the study of lives, which grew out of Erik Erickson's emphasis on life span development and psychobiography as well as other personological writings and approaches from the classic works of Henry Murray and Alfred Adler (McLean & Pratt, 2006). The idea that there is a profound interplay between self and society also has roots in the classic work of George Herbert Mead. In *Mind, Self and Society*, Mead stresses that the development of identity is a social process, and that society makes the individual as much as the individual makes society. It is based on these theoretical perspectives that I posited the research question that follows, which I will now unpack.

Research Question 1: How do larger socio-historical and political processes influence the hybridization of Black immigrant racial and cultural identities?

In the classic text, *Identity and the Life Cycle*, in the very first chapter, *Ego Development and Historical Change*, Erikson establishes the significance of context for understanding the process of identity development and change. He states: “. . . the life cycle [is] interwoven throughout with the history of the community.” The first research question this dissertation posed is guided by the understanding that context is integral for obtaining a fuller and richer understanding of the psychology of the person. This is a perspective that is also reiterated by McAdams (1996) in his narrative theory of identity. According to McAdams, the basis for formulating a narrative theory of identity is for the purpose of “explicitly situating the individual

person within the particular sociohistorical setting that deeply contextualized that person's life” (p. 296). Although much of the research in psychology on the subject of identity draws from Erikson's classic model of psychosocial development, the significance Erikson attributed to context is often lost, or is under explored. In the latter situation where cultural and historical context is given some consideration, the national and social history of one group is often used as a proxy for contextualizing the situation of all individuals that share this common social location. For example, based on a single shared identity category such as race, all individuals that are of African descent, for instance, are often constructed as if they also share the same history and cultural background. As a result, the variability within a group is often overlooked. This problem occurs consistently within the discipline of psychology because there has generally been a tendency to view individuals and groups in dichotomous and homogeneous terms. This often occurs most glaringly when the analysis of identity is at the levels of race, culture, gender and nation.

Racial, Cultural and National Identity within the Context of the U.S.

Within the context of the U.S., the subject of race and racial identity has been framed through a Black/White dichotomy, which has also influenced analyses of identity at the levels of culture and nation. This lens for seeing and thinking about identity stems from the forced migration and enslavement of Africans, which was followed by a history of racial inequality post emancipation. The inequality between Americans of African and European descent following the antebellum period were based primarily on differences in physical characteristics, which not only

served as a marker of group differentiation, but also became the basis for the governmental policies of Jim Crow. These were laws that legalized racial segregation from 1876 to 1965 in Southern States. Because psychology as a discipline is devoted to the study of human behavior, the social conditions of persons of African descent, and the political relations between them and individuals of European descent presented fertile grounds during mid-twentieth century for psychological theorizing about the dynamics of identity and intergroup relations.

Writing against the backdrop of racial segregation, Gordon Allport, in *The Nature of Prejudice*, provided the field with the first systematic studies on the relationship between prejudice and categorical thinking (Katz, 1991). With the firm objective of explaining the causes of racial prejudice, Allport framed his analysis mainly along Black and White race relations, which at the time, was the most visibly antagonistic within the U.S. context. As one of the most influential theorists in the field of psychology, particularly within the subdiscipline of social psychology, his framing of group relations along Black/ White relations has since shaped and informed how identity processes and group relations are studied. For example, Katz (1991) points out that Allport's work remains one of the most influential and often-cited publications in the entire field of intergroup relations. Allport espoused that prejudice is a learned behavior informed by attitudes and a belief system. Fundamental to this process is stereotyping. People form and come to rely on categorical representations for evaluative purposes. Although stereotypes are generally inaccurate categorical representations, they work to stabilize and simplify one's perceptions of others. They thus shape assumptions about others, and condition behavior towards others that are perceived to be different from the self (based on physical

characteristics that serve as markers of race, culture, gender, class or nationality). Although Allport's theory laid the foundation for other major theoretical innovations within the discipline of psychology, particularly social identity theory, his work also set the foundation for dichotomous and homogeneous constructions of groups. For example, social identity theory shifted the emphasis in the analysis of intergroup relations from individualistic constructions to binary group constructions (ingroup/outgroup or Us/Them). One of the challenges that dichotomous constructions of groups present for understanding the processes involved when people belonging to different groups interact is that contemporary U.S. society is no longer homogeneous (Chrysochoou, 2000). New flows of Eastern European immigrants in the early 20th century, and much later the passage of the 1965 Immigration Act, which lifted restrictions on immigrants of color in the wake of the civil rights movement have both complicated the ethnic, racial and cultural composition of the U.S. population. Therefore, at a national level, the concept of identity has become more complex than the binary group constructions that inform psychological theory and analysis.

However, because racial prejudice is still very much a problem in contemporary U.S. society resulting in Black and White differences in educational attainment (McDaniel, Diprete, Buchmann & Shwed, 2011), income (Orr, 2003), incidents of police brutality (Brunson, 2007) and rates of incarceration (Unever, 2008), psychological research on race relations and identity processes continues to be guided by dichotomous Black/White constructions. Research on racial identity development is one area in which Black/White distinctions are most glaring. As summarized by Janet Helms (1996), the basic premise that guides most psychological theories of

racial identity development is the assumption that Black persons develop a sense of racial identity in response to a social environment in which members of their own racial group are overwhelmingly represented negatively in contrast with White Americans. Therefore, the primary racial identity issue individuals must resolve is to overcome internalizing the negative stereotypes associated with their own racial group membership. Working within this framework, most Black identity models propose that Black persons generally start the process of racial identity development from an unhealthy or negative place; therefore, mapping out the different stages that individuals are likely to undergo (throughout the life cycle) in order to develop a healthy Black racial identity has been a central focus of theory (Cross, 1971; Parham, 1989). Along these lines, theory and research also focus on the effects of racial socialization in the individual's ability to cope with experiences of racism (Stevenson & Arrington, 2009). The effects of racial identity attitudes on psychological functioning, and developing measures for assessing individual differences in the internalization of a racial and ethnic identity are also central areas of research (Cross, Worrell & Vandiver, 2001; Helms, 2007; Cokley, 2007).

The literature on racial identity has played a significant role in providing answers to, and a framework for thinking about how Black persons can adapt in a healthy way to a hostile racial environment. However, there are significant challenges associated with conceptualizing Black racial identity development strictly in terms of a Black/White dichotomy. Reynolds and Pope (1991), for example, argue that binary constructions are restrictive because they offer a segmented view of individuals that have multiple identities, and are members of more than one oppressed group. Constantine, Richardson, Benjamin and Wilson (1998) express concern that the

stages of racial identity development are being generalized to broad range of Black individuals. They suggest that future research should address how one's racial identity intersects with additional aspects of one's personal identity such as gender and socioeconomic status. In this regard, they stress that attention should be devoted to intersectionality because other components of identity may play a significant role in shaping an individual's Black identity or vice versa. Additionally, Constantine and colleagues suggest that future research should attend to within-race differences in identity development. Celious and Oyserman (2001) explain that within-group heterogeneity is often overlooked because racial identity theories typically handle race as a simple Black/White dichotomy. These scholars make the argument that while persons of African descent do distinguish between themselves and Whites, they also distinguish between and among themselves based on physical features, socioeconomic status, and gender. All of these arguments lend support to the present study's objective to break through the binary dichotomy for studying differences. However, none drive the point home more compellingly while also magnifying the relevance and significance of the first research question posed than Kusow (2006) who declares:

The changing racial and ethnic profile of the North American population, particularly the increase in the number of non-white foreign-born immigrants introduces a new sociological moment in which non-white immigrants not only bring their homeland racial and cultural identities, but also redefine the meaning of racial categories from the historically and contemporaneously normative black/white dichotomy to a situation of multiple and hybrid identity categories

(p. 534).

For the individual immigrants whose lives were the focus of this inquiry, the U.S. and its history of race relations is not the initial context of their racial and cultural socialization. However, its influence is far reaching as will be evident in the national profiles and the contextual analysis provided in Chapter 3.

Summary

Throughout this section, I have argued that an understanding of the context of identity development is instrumental for obtaining a fuller understanding of the individual and the processes that have influenced and shaped his or her social and personal identity. Focusing primarily on the U.S. context, I highlighted how the concept of identity, particularly race, has been understood. I discussed how this understanding is shaped and informed by the political and historical relationship between persons of European and African descent. Shifting the focus to the more contemporary U.S. context, I underscored how greater intermixing between racial groups and increasing flows of immigrants from the developing world both add greater heterogeneity and complexity to the Black/White dichotomy that has dominated group categorization. Moreover, I emphasized that the latter group also brings to the U.S. a conception of self and others that is informed by the country and culture of origin, and in some cases one or more other national settings. At the governmental level, these changes in the U.S. population are bringing about new understandings of race and ethnicity, but without negating the reality that racial disparities continue to exist. However, psychologists have yet to incorporate a more complex and multicontextual understanding of Black racial and cultural identity formation particularly in developmental theory and research. Therefore, the first research question posed in

this dissertation seeks to underscore that in this historical moment there is a need for more complex understandings of identity in psychology. More specifically, the first research question posed seeks to provide an understanding of the racial and cultural identity development process for individuals whose lives and experiences stretch across two or more countries, cultures, and group histories. Answers to the first research question are considered in Chapters 3, 4 and 5.

Research Question 2: How do individuals come to recognize and embrace that they have a hybrid Black racial and cultural identity, and what are some of the social challenges and opportunities that accompany occupying this intersectional location?

Research Question 3: How do individual immigrants with a hybrid Black racial and cultural identity manage, and cope with the difficulties associated with not fitting into broad categories of social and cultural identification?

The second and third research questions posed by this dissertation will be addressed and unpacked together as both are complementary in that each is concerned with the issue of personal identity (a sense of self one develops over time) rather than social identity (which refers to one's group memberships and how one is perceived and labeled by others). However, it is important to note that personal identity, which represents the answer to the question "Who am I?" may also include a sense of self derived from one's social identities, such as one's racial, cultural, ethnic, gender and class locations. In this respect, the concept of personal identity is extremely difficult to grapple with at a theoretical level because parceling the personal from the social is not a neat or simple task. Hitlin (2003) reminds us that a person's self-conception does not consist solely of his or her various roles and group memberships. He defines personal

identity as “a sense of self built up over time as the person embarks on and pursues projects or goals that are not thought of as those of a community, but as the property of the person.” This definition emphasizes “autonomy,” “consciousness,” and “reflectiveness,” and a sense of “ownership” acquired over “time” and through “experience.”

In the previous section, I addressed the concept of personal identity as being an aspect of the larger process of identity development. However, in this section I deal with the concept of personal identity more directly because the second and third research question posed by this dissertation seeks to understand how individuals come to recognize and personally embrace an otherness within the self. This awareness may be reflected as a “feeling” of not fitting in, and/or seeing the self as being the same as others in terms of shared social locations, yet experiencing the self as being divergent and different from one's established social group memberships (particularly in terms of subjective experiences, level of consciousness and personal understandings). In expanding upon this view of personal identity, and in showing its connection to the second and third research questions posed by this dissertation, I draw on the scholarship of critical cultural theorists (Hall, 1990; Bhabha, 1994; Bhatia & Ram, 2001; Gjerde, 2004), and feminist scholars, particularly women of color (Crenshaw, 1991; Lorde, 1993; 1994; Anzaldua, 1987). I will, therefore, precede this discussion by defining the concept of hybridity as a social-historical and cultural phenomenon. I then move to a discussion of this concept as an embodied social location that is subjectively experienced over the course of time and place as a form of cultural and historical differences within race. Next, I draw on the larger feminist discourse to illustrate how this scholarship critically intervenes and disrupts analyses in which the concept of

difference is used to reproduce differential power relations between men and women, particularly within the discipline of psychology. Thereafter, I turn to the feminist discourse produced by women of color, which reappropriates the concept of “difference” and “otherness” through purging them of their original association with “deviance” and “disorder.” Through this scholarship, I underscore how the concept of hybridity reemerges as an *Otherness* within the self, which becomes a site for the development of critical consciousness, and the basis for the formation of personal identity.

Although I draw on different factions of the scholarship produced by feminist, I see this literature as one large discourse that aims to complicate the concept of identity by drawing attention to differences, and variability within a group. Therefore, in the next section I underscore how this body of literature, along with the postcolonial concept of hybridity, provides a theoretical and methodological foundation for the present study. Moreover, I highlight how this body of work provides a pathway for one of the present study's objective, which is to render greater visibility to the differences within Black racial, cultural and immigrant identities without reducing anyone of these locations to a single essence.

The Concept of Hybridity

The concept of “a hybrid” was originally used in the biological sciences to refer to “the product” of different species of plants and animals that were cross-bred (Stross, 1999). It later reemerged in the early 18th century and was given racial connotations in the context of colonization where miscegenation was associated with racial impurity (Kraidy, 2002). In its

association with racial mixture, the concept took on pejorative connotations as is reflected in terms such as “mongrel,” or “half-breed.” These negative associations served the purpose of relegating the “difference” hybridity implied to “otherness.” In Latin America, it is against this discourse of racial impurity and otherness that national identity is constructed. These are issues that I take up in Chapter 3.

In the wake of decolonization, the concept of hybridization took on new meaning in its application in postcolonial theory. It embodied both the destabilization of racial binaries and a resistance to essentialized constructions of culture and identity (Bhabha, 1994; Hall, 1990). Similar concepts have also emerged that reflect the fundamental idea of mixture particularly in the discourse on identity in cultural studies. These include, creolized identities (Cohen, 2007), transculturation (Ortiz, 1995), and *mestizaje* (Wade, 2005).

A renewed interest in the concept of hybridity has emerged in the contemporary context of globalization. This is largely because developed nations have become more multicultural due to immigration, which has contributed to greater cross-cultural contacts and exchanges (Hermans, 2001). The renewed interest in the concept also stems from the blurring of national boundaries due to the unprecedented and accelerated movement of people, goods, ideas and services around the globe. Within the discipline of psychology, these changes have sparked greater interest in the concept of cultural identity, differences and hybridity (Lafromboise, Coleman, & Gerton, 1993; Hermans & Kempen, 1998; Bhatia & Ram, 2001; Bhatia & Ram, 2004; Fine & Sirin 2007). In particular, Herman and Kempen (1998) posed the question, “What is the innovative and creative power of hybridity?” upon considering how the artwork produced

by a person of Arabic origin living in Germany will be interpreted given that two different cultures influenced his work. The question posed by Hermans and his colleague is informed by the assumption that the difference this artwork reflects will be valued and appreciated. However, Bhatia (2011) indicates that missing from such interpretations of hybridity is an understanding of how power works. He notes that psychologists, particularly cross-cultural psychologists, have neglected to examine the conflicting, and unevenly painful historical experience of living in-between. Bhatia (2011) therefore calls for “critical notions of hybridity.” The present study responds to this call, and in doing so I return to the work of critical cultural theorist Homi K. Bhabha (1994), and Stuart Hall (1990); both are key figures in the study of cultural hybridization. Their scholarship provides an understanding of the larger sociocultural and historical transformations that have helped to produce hybrids.

In, *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha (1994) conceptualizes hybridity as a social-historical phenomenon that emerges from the boundaries—the in-between spaces wherein social and cultural differences collide. In this social and historical engagement lies the possibility for transformations to occur where *neither one* nor *the other* stays the same, but becomes something else. As an embodied human experience, the emergence of new identities, namely hybrid identities, constitutes what the collisions and transformation produce, fused cultural, racial, and/or social identities. Individuals, groups, and nations with hybridized cultural identities therefore present a challenge in terms of representation because they fall outside the boundaries of dominant social representations by which self and others are constructed, and made knowable. In Bhabha's view, hybridity as a form of identity is subversive to the *power* and *control* that

established social categories, and essentialized notions of culture have over us. This is precisely because such identities do not cohere with existing dominant representations of self/other. In this respect, a hybrid identity elicits panic because: “it resists the binary opposition of racial and cultural groups, sipahis and sahibs, as homogeneous polarized political consciousness” (p.207). Bhabha's sees hybridity as a theoretical and political innovation because it forces us to gain an awareness of subject positions and to think beyond narratives of original and initial subjectivities.

Stuart Hall's (1990) conceptualization of cultural hybridity as a form of identity is not far removed from Bhabha's (1994) understanding of the concept. However, Hall's focus is situated within a larger cultural theory that is interconnected with Black racial identities. What is also distinct about his formulation is that he presents two very different ways for conceptualizing Black racial and cultural identities. He does this by focusing specifically on the common and varied ways in which history, and the mixtures that have emerged as a result of movement (forced and voluntary migration, and travel) create unique plays of differences within Black cultural, and by extension, racial identities. Although race and culture are two very different concepts, the two have been treated as one and the same for persons of African descent. Hall's conceptualization of culture, and his delineation of the concept of hybridization provides a rich understanding of how static and fluid notions of Black racial and cultural identities continue to exist side-by-side. Hall argues that Black cultural identities can be understood along two axes or vectors that are simultaneously operative—similarity and continuity, and difference and rupture. The first position “defines cultural identity in terms of one shared culture, a sort of collective

'one true self,' hiding inside the many other, more superficial or artificially imposed selves, which people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common." It is this understanding of Black racial and cultural identity that has been the sole focus of psychological theories of Black racial identity development. Likewise, the psychological literature on immigrant acculturation also shares this homogeneous and singular construction of immigrant cultural identity. Gjerde (2004) indicates that individual immigrants are commonly treated in psychology as if they are miniature representations of their society, culture and continent with little regard for the reality that cultures are neither static nor ahistorical. In this regard, the second position that Hall offers for understanding Black racial and cultural identities speaks to the fluidity of identity. Hall asserts that the second position, "recognizes that as well as the many points of similarity, there are also critical points of deep and significant *differences* which constitute 'what we really are'; or rather—since history has intervened—'what we have become.'" Hall goes on to explain that in this second sense, Black racial and cultural identity "is a matter of 'becoming' as well as of 'being.'" It is this less studied and hybridized conceptualization of Black racial and cultural identities that the present research investigation is concerned with. However, the first vector is also relevant as it emerges in some of the life histories that are constructed by the respondents. With regards to the second vector, I conceptualize the process of hybridization experienced by immigrant persons of African descent not as an inauthentic, imposed, internally oppressed or colonized selves. Rather, I see the respondents that participated in this study as individuals that have developed *liberated selves*—that is, they developed a sense of personal identity that is simultaneously informed by a profound understanding and appreciation for the varied Black

histories that brought them into being, and those that have fought against racial, cultural and psychological oppression—and secondly, they have learned to embrace their hybridity and multiplicity. These developments occur once each individual came to the realization that *there is no going back* to an “original” or a “singular” (e.g. Black, Haitian, or Ethiopian) self that has been immortalized in history, and in culture. The concept of *liberated selves* that I offer is not far removed from the second view of culture identity that Hall defined. However, rather than seeing changes in the self (in the form of developing and acquiring new or other social locations) as being negative (as is the case in the first view of cultural identity he advanced), I see these developments as having the potential to be positive additions to the self as long as one's preexisting social identities are as equally and personally valued as newly acquired identities. In making this statement, what I am arguing is that there are some individuals within society who emerge from oppressive or intercultural situations with a critical consciousness about what their difference or hybrid identity means for them personally, and for the external world wherein fixed categories of identification are taken on, and assigned in ways that limit, and imprisons the self. These ideas, which this dissertation study grapples, are at the heart of feminist theorizing. .

Therefore, in the next section, I underscore the connections between the present study's aims, objectives, research questions (particularly the second and third) and the contributions feminists have made for studying self and identity.

Feminist Engagements with Culture, Difference, Power, Hybridity and Representation

The significance of the scholarship produced by critical feminist women of color in relation to the aims and objectives of the current study cannot fully be understood without locating their work within the larger feminist engagement with gender based inequality. Because this larger discourse sets the stage for other personal and critical engagements with differences (in race, class, nationality, culture, subjectivity and consciousness) within difference (gender), it also provides a foundation for understanding why a separate discourse by, and for women of color emerged. The larger feminist discourse, and the subdiscourse produced by women of color, moves the postcolonial concept of hybridity and difference from a focus on *sociocultural and historical transformations* to a focus on the *lived experiences* of those individuals who live hybridity at different levels of power relations. Because this literature provides an analysis of personal identity as it is socially and subjectively experienced within larger contexts (geographical, cultural, political and historical) and across different degrees of power differentials (male/female, Black/White, middle class/poor, first world/developed world), it also integrates the concern that some psychologists have expressed about the need to study identity in context, and more critically.

Gender and the Larger Discourse of Feminism

The larger feminist scholarship provides a more basic, but critical approach for studying and analyzing differences. This is because the broader focus is on drawing visibility to, and eradicating the patriarchal values that underlie social and cultural constructions that work to

disadvantage women and empower men. Feminists came to recognize that if their aims and objectives were to be met, they not only needed to engage different academic discourses and critique sexist perspectives, but they also needed to change how knowledge was being produced.

Psychology constitutes one of the many disciplines that feminists contributed to significantly. Fine (1985) indicates that feminist psychologists have challenged traditional psychological paradigms of the individual by demonstrating how traditional psychological research, when decontextualized, distorts the psychology of gender. She points out that this decontextualizing occurs most visibly in laboratory research where gender differences that are more pronounced in applied settings are muted in lab results. In addition to documenting the “ill effects of a context-free psychology,” feminist psychologists have made significant contributions in challenging established ways of thinking about self and identity (Fine, 1985). In this regard, the scholarship produced by feminist is transgressive as is Bhabha’s (1994) conceptualization of the concept of hybridity.

The uniquely different ideas that early feminist psychologists introduced for studying and understanding gender, and more broadly the ideas of self and identity, are discussed by Bohan (2002). She traces the radical shifts in thinking that earlier feminists contributed to the psychological study of differences. Bohan (2002), indicates that rather than using the long held assumptions that inherent differences exists (e.g. in intellect and abilities) between men and women, feminist scholars debunked these ideas. They shifted this thinking by showing that the presumed differences between men and women are *socially constructed*, and *not* biologically determined. They also did this by challenging the dominant view within psychology that there

are essential qualities inherent among individuals that belong to particular groups (men, women, Black, White, immigrants, and so on) that can objectively be studied and understood outside of other social and contextual factors—thereby calling for a contextualized psychology. Bohan (2002) further indicates that in early American psychology, appeals to biology were commonly used to support beliefs that women are inherently conservative and passive, and that men's brains are larger than women's, which accounted for men's greater intellectual power. Instead of working within the established paradigm in psychology, feminist used their scholarship to intervene and disrupt analyses in which the concept of difference was used to reproduce differential power relations between men and women. The parallels drawn between this dissertation study and the larger feminist discourse are that in the current research I do not approach the study of Black identity exclusively from the prism of Black/White differences. Like early feminists, I explore (through the historical analysis provided in chapter 3) how differences (Black/White and cultural) came to be constructed across time and in different geographical contexts. In this respect, the present study is informed by the feminist commitment to study identity within context. It also shares their understanding that dichotomous distinctions are not naturally formed, but are social, cultural and historical productions. This way of conceptualizing between group differences are consistent with the second definition that Stuart Hall (1990) offered for thinking about identity as a historical production. In this section, my central objective is to draw tighter connections among feminist, postcolonial and psychological perspectives on self, identity and difference. In bridging the three, I seek to render greater visibility to the various levels of complexity the present study attends to in exploring the identity

development and the lived experiences of U.S. Black immigrants from non-Anglophone countries.

In tune with this objective, another contribution that the larger feminist discourse advanced is the idea that if there are essential qualities of the self, it is the self's *relatedness*. Bohan (2002) notes that a central tenet of feminist epistemology is the assumption that, “without relationship, there is no self.” In other words, the self exist always, and only in relationship. For example, what being a “woman” means exists in relation to what being a “man” means, and these meanings will change as other social (such as class, education) and context specific relationships (such as culture, and history) are factored in. The central idea here is that although relational differences between groups are informed by dichotomous distinctions, variability exists within groups. These differences become visible when other social and contextual factors are taken into consideration. In the present dissertation study, the narrative identity constructed by each respondent reflects a relational understanding of social and personal identity, which is consistent with this feminists thinking. As I will show in Chapters 4 and 5, the relational understanding of the self constructed by the respondents in the present study are informed by, and move beyond a Black/White dichotomy. This perspective and understanding of the self as being constituted by relationships, but not determined by essential qualities is particularly challenging for psychology. It does away with the notion that self and identity are *determined* by social location, and that individuals belonging to the same social groups reflect intrinsic qualities. Instead, what the larger feminist discourse offers as being central for the psychological study of self and identity, and difference, as does the present study, is the study of “experience.”

In this regard, another central tenet of feminist epistemology is the idea that while social location does not *determine* identity, people's every-day-lived experiences are informed by their social locations in such a way that the individual is consciously aware that the self is being defined and viewed in terms of his or her social locations. Again, these ideas are central to the current research not only because they inform the life story methodology that was utilized, and the findings that are presented in Chapters 4 and 5, but they also shaped this study's design.

Although, I will discuss methodology and research design in greater details in the next chapter, a basic criteria that was set for participation in this study was that all participants had to self-identify as “Black,” and “immigrant,” and be proficient in another language other than English. In establishing these criteria, the operating assumption was that those who agree to participate in the life story interviews would most likely be individuals that experience themselves in these terms. Another basic assumption was that those who elected to participate in this study would also be more likely to be critically aware of how others define and view them in terms of their Black racial, immigrant/cultural and ethnolinguistic identity. These assumptions were made based on the role that feminist attribute to *the awareness of self as being constituted and defined by social categories* (Sandoval, 1991). In much of the feminist scholarship, this awareness of self is expressed as a form of personal and political identity. Bohan (2002) indicates that although many other theories in the mid-20th century psychology portrayed the self as developing and being expressed in relation to others, the focus was on personal striving (e.g. self-actualization), and not on relational fulfillment as is the case in feminist scholarship. Although the relational fulfillment in the earlier feminist discourse is reflected in the personal/political objective to end

gender based inequality between men and women, feminist women of color have taken the personal and political aspect of identity to different and deeper levels of analysis. Their scholarship more than any other academic discourse illuminates the complexity, multiplicity and fluidity of identity while magnifying the varying degrees of power relations that shape how personal identity is experienced and expressed. It is the scholarship produced by feminist of color that I now turn. This scholarship has achieved what the present study aims to accomplish in exploring the commonalities across and the differences within the lived experiences of U.S. Black immigrants from non-Anglophone countries.

Feminist Women of Color: the Study of Differences within Difference

It was in the spirit of galvanizing support for women's equality that feminist women of color also found an opening for claiming and expressing the multiplicity, fluidity and hybridity that inform their personal identities. Like the larger discourse, their scholarship moves from the bottom up, and from the personal to the social to the political. Distinct from earlier feminists, the scholarship produced by women of color aims to generate an understanding of the particular realities (social and subjective) that they, and other women of color face. Central to this reality is the intermediate location between established and recognized struggles for liberation that these groups of women occupy. In giving voice to their experiences as women and as racialized beings from different cultural, national and class locations, research methodology constitutes an even greater issue. I will return to this point after establishing in greater details the social,

historical and political factors that led to the emergence of a feminist discourse by, and for women of color.

Based on a critical review and analysis of one hundred six articles published from 1978-1981 in the *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, Fine (1985) found that the experiences of diverse groups of women, particularly those whose lives are neglected by prevailing ideologies, and are absent from public view, were missing. She urged this publication, devoted to the dissemination of scholarly feminist work, to include research that provides greater representation of the experiences of diverse groups of women, or risk mirroring the traditional focus in psychology on White and middle class professionals. The development of a feminist discourse for, and by women of color emerged in response to the omission and suppression of their voices and experiences in both the academic feminist scholarship and in the larger suffrage movement. Their work also emerged in response to the lack of representation attributed to the different forms of oppression that simultaneously shaped their lives, and that of other women of color (Hooks, 1982; Castaneda, 1992; Espin, 1993; Sandoval, 1991).

These factors (suppression, omission and invisibility) contributed to the emergence of a feminist scholarship by, and for women of color. They also inform the present study's focus on the lived experiences of U.S. Black immigrants from non-Anglophone countries. Although the respondents in the current study hold membership in both the larger U.S. Black and immigrant community, their lived experiences and subjective understandings have remained largely understudied. In psychology, research on Black racial identity focuses mainly on non-immigrants. In the acculturation literature, the experiences of Black immigrants are rarely the

focus of inquiry when the subject of language and culture are studied. Black immigrants originating from non-Anglophone countries are therefore invisible in both of these literatures. A central goal of the present dissertation study is to bring visibility to the distinctly different intersectional locations and hybrid cultural identities reflected among immigrants that originate from a non-Anglophone country within Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean. The current study seeks to draw visibility to the lived experiences of individuals within these groups in order to magnify the different and distinct forms of oppression each individual confronts in addition to documenting how each negotiate and bounce back from difficult situations. Because I am committed to studying the uniqueness of this groups' experiences in ways that do not result in the essentialization of their identities or in the reproduction of unequal power relations, I found the scholarship of feminist of color to be most helpful in meeting this study's objectives. Their work not only provides me with a methodology for studying differences within individual subjectivity and between persons, but it also allows for an understanding of how to study differences critically and responsibly.

Central to the scholarship produced by feminist of color is rendering visibility to, and affirming the humanity of those individuals and groups whose personal and social identities are “forged in the crucibles of difference” (Lorde, 1984), and therefore occupy a marginalized location within society. Because the experiences of such individuals generally tend to go unheard, unseen or misunderstood when represented by the dominant majority (Espin, 1993), the scholarship produced by women of color seeks to bring those who live in the margins to the center of analysis (Hooks, 1984). This is done in a way that affirms each person's humanity. By

recognizing that such individuals have unique standpoints (Collins, 1986), and through utilizing lived experiences as legitimate sites for knowledge production, the scholarship produced by women of color also allows us to see life as it is experienced through the eyes of the subjugated and marginalized. The larger significance of focusing research attention on the lives of individuals is reflected in the recent appeals in psychology to bring the person back as the central focus of analysis (Molenaar, 2004; Gjerde, 2004; Chirkov, 2009). For example, Molenaar (2004) argues that almost completely lacking in psychology is the study of the individual. He maintains that research attention is almost exclusively restricted to variations between persons, and therefore advocates for the use of more idiographic approaches as a means to help restore the balance. On a similar note, Gjerde (2004) proclaims, “subjective variations within and between human beings have been obscured by our fixation on 'groups.' If we can free ourselves from the constraints of nationalism or ethnicity, subjectivities (e.g. identities, emotions, etc.) could be freely expressed in so many more forms” (p. 151).

The scholarship produced by feminist of color both informs and frames the present study's critical approach for studying identity and differences. This body of work is committed to giving voice to individuals who have been deemed different by society, and thus fall outside of the dominant sphere of representation. In rooting this study within this scholarship, I hope to break through what mainstream psychology continues to struggle with. This includes studying the individual as an integrated and dynamic whole, situated within time and place, and subject to different power dynamics. Additionally, feminists also devote considerable attention to broader social, and cultural and historical changes. Despite the contributions feminists have made to the

study of self and identity, Frable (1997) reveals in a critical review of the psychological literature on identity that research has tended to be fragmented, dealing separately with gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality and class. She concludes that in addition to excluding certain minority groups from research consideration, little if any room is left for the development of new theoretical conceptions that reflect dual or multiple social group memberships:

Gender identity research excludes racial and ethnic minorities and those who are not middle class. Racial and ethnic identity research often avoids gender and sexuality. Sexual identity research focuses on White middle-class gay men and lesbians. Class identity research attends to the wealthy (usually White) or the poor (usually women and ethnic minorities). Critiques of these practices exist, but when new research with previously excluded social groups contradicts traditional theory, it rarely leads to new theoretical conceptions. Even more unusual is the actual testing of any new theoretical conceptions that reflect dual or multiple social group memberships (p. 10).

The aims and objective of the present dissertation study is to disrupt this trend, which has a stronghold on the discipline of psychology. In achieving this objective, I will highlight some of the key concepts and ideas I draw from Audre Lorde (1984), Oliva Espin (1993), Gloria Anzaldua (1999), Patricia Hill Collins (1986), and Kimberly Crenshaw (1993). It is there scholarship that has influenced my turn to narratives for studying identity. It is also their work that influenced this study's focus on exploring the meanings that individual U.S. Black immigrants attribute to the changes they experience in self and identity across time and place.

Moreover, it is their scholarship that shaped my interest in exploring how these groups of individuals experience their distinct intersectional and hybrid cultural locations.

From Audre Lorde (1984), I gained an understanding of *why* differences (particularly in social and personal identity) are made to occupy a marginal location in society: “We have been programmed to respond to human differences between us in one of three ways: ignore it, and if not possible, copy it if we think it is dominant, or destroy it if we think it is subordinate.” Also from Lorde (1984), I learned that differences are critical sites for the production of change and for generating new knowledge: “Differences must not be merely tolerated, but seen as a fund of necessary polarities between which our creativity can spark like a dialectic” (p. 111). This idea is also reflected in Bhabha's (1994) conceptualization of hybridity, which I discussed earlier.

Although Lorde (1998) provides a perspective for understanding “*why*” human differences are treated at the social and societal levels as a problem and emphasizes its positive potential, Espin (1993) underscores *how* difference is subjectively experienced as an *Otherness* within the self. She illustrates that its development arises from social experiences. In her essay, *Giving Voice to Silence*, Espin draws on her lived experiences to illustrate the challenges associated with developing an *Otherness* within herself, and the personal freedom that comes with acknowledging and claiming her own voice. She writes, “I am compelled to listen to the experiences of marginal people. My own experiences of not being heard, seen, or understood created in me a passion to give voice to others' experiences (p. 409). I also found it interesting that Espin attributed the development of the *Otherness* within herself to the experience of rootlessness (from having lived in four different countries by the age of twenty), assuming a

heterosexual path unquestionably (resulting in divorce), and experiencing herself as a visible Hispanic minority in the U.S. due to her nationality and her accented English. Earlier in this paper, I introduced the concept of *liberated selves*. This concept embodies the idea that some individuals are able to develop a sense of self, free from the constraints of labels while also recognizing that labels have social, cultural and political significance. In Espin's essay, I saw her ability to define, and find her own path while also recognizing the social and political importance of her marginality to be an example of a *liberated self*. Likewise, Gloria Anzaldúa (1999) provided another example of a *liberated self*. In using her biography in *Borderlands* as the basis for generating theory about the development of critical consciousness, she magnifies the usefulness of lived experience as a methodological tool for exploring the concept of a *liberated self*. Not only does her work underscore the social processes that foster the development of an *Otherness* within herself, which she calls *a new mestiza consciousness*, but she also provides an account of how this location is subjectively experienced and recognized:

The work takes place underground—subconsciously. It is the work that the soul performs. That focal point or fulcrum, that juncture where the mestiza stands, is where phenomena tend to collide. It is where the possibility of uniting all that is separate occurs. This assembly is not one where severed or separated pieces merely come together. Nor is it a balancing of opposing powers. In attempting to work out a synthesis, the self has added a third element which is greater than the sum of its parts. That third element is a new consciousness—a *mestiza* consciousness and though it is a source of intense pain, its energy comes from continual creative motion . . .(pp. 101-102).

Much like the individuals that participated in the present dissertation study, Anzaldua (1999) straddles different languages, social locations, national borders, and cultures. As a result, much of the personal biography she weaves into her theory of *mestiza* consciousness is informed not only by her social locations, but also by the personal meanings she attributes to her lived experiences. Her theory of *mestiza* consciousness therefore provides an understanding how she sees the world, her place in it, and the role that she and others can play in the fight for justice and equality. Although these are lofty and idealistic goals, they provided the inspiration for the current study's interest in studying the lives of U.S. Black immigrants from non-Anglophone countries. In fact, the second and third research questions posed in this dissertation are informed by the critical consciousness feminist of color have developed and connect to their cross cutting experiences with oppression. I see these women as examples of the concept *liberates selves* because in the process of experiencing, negotiating, and resisting different form of oppression, they have successful emerged from these conditions not as psychologically oppressed beings. Rather, because they have lived through different oppressive situations, they have developed a personal identity and a critical consciousness that enables them to document, and theorize about its different manifestation in order to disrupt its reproduction and extinguish its proliferation. In doing this, they recognize the importance of collective group membership. However, each is also able to break from her social and cultural group memberships in order to give voice to her personal understandings and commitments.

I focused the present investigation specifically on the lives of Black identified U.S. immigrants from varying ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds because I wanted to

understand what role critical consciousness plays in their personal decision to claim their multiplicity, hybridity and intersectionality. I also realized from my reading of Espin (1993) and Anzalda's (1999) work that this unique space is not easy to inhabit or claim as one's own. As a result, I also came to recognize that there is something unique about those individuals that are able to withstand social and societal pressures to define themselves in singular, and in homogeneous terms. Through Anzaldua's (1999) I came to realize that there is a critical level of consciousness operating that allows such individuals to: "see through the fictions of white supremacy" in order to see themselves in their true guise. It is these ideas that influenced the second and third research questions that guided this investigation. In posing them, I was particularly interested in understanding how each respondent in the present study came to recognize and embrace an *Otherness* within him or herself. I also wanted to understand how each experience (subjectively and socially) this otherness, and how each expresses its existence.

Because the individuals that were recruited to participate in this study might also occupy various different intersectional social locations, I was also interested in understanding what distinct challenges they face and what benefits they associate with their unique standpoint. In this regard, Collins (1986) offered a language and a theoretical construct, "outsider within," for thinking about how the respondents in this study may benefit from the nearness (e.g., as Black identified persons of African descent) and remoteness (e.g., as immigrants) their multiple and intersecting social locations offer. Although Collins (1986) framed her standpoint theory and the concept of "outsider within" through a focus on Black female academics that are in touch with their marginality, I saw the broader applicability of her ideas for the present study. Moreover, her

work also reinforced the importance of using research methods that give marginalized individuals the authority to define and make meaning of their own lived realities.

Through my reading of Kimberly Crenshaw's (1993) work I also acquired a language for defining and theorizing about the unique space (subjective and social) that the individuals that participated in the present study occupy through the concept of *intersectionality*. Crenshaw's work also alerted me to the difficulties that accompany finding scholarly research that provides an integrative rather than a fragmented view of intersecting identities. As I illustrated earlier in this document, research in psychology on Black identity focuses primarily on African Americans. The process of racial identity development among other Black ethnic groups that are also immigrants has not been thoroughly explored. Likewise, empirical research in cross-cultural psychology on immigrants has tended to focus primarily on the cultural adjustment of immigrants of color, but not Black immigrants. Therefore, the racialized, social and cultural experiences of Black immigrants of varying class, gender, ethnic, cultural, and religious backgrounds are marginalized in both literatures. In introducing the concept of intersectionality, Crenshaw (1993) provided a conceptual tool for theorizing about the experiences of the participants in this study. Their identities reflect the integration of multiple social locations that have either been studied separately or seen as being mutually exclusive.

Equally important, Crenshaw's (1993) alerted me to the political implications of studying the distinct experiences of Black immigrants within the larger U.S. political context where anti-Black and anti-immigrant prejudice abound and compete. Earlier on in this section, I indicated that the current study is committed to studying the unique experiences of U.S. Black immigrants

from non-Anglophone countries without essentializing their identities or reproducing unequal power relations. This objective was informed by Crenshaw's (1993) work. In meeting this goal, the life histories that are presented and analyzed in Chapters 4 and 5 were specifically selected because each underscores how different forms of intersectionality are subjectively and socially experienced. As a result, the life histories presented do not essentialize identity nor do they reproduce unequal power relations. Instead, they illustrate how different forms of oppression and discrimination frame individual experiences based on race, physical features, religion, culture, gender and class. In this regard, the life histories presented and analyzed in Chapters 4 and 5 provide a view of common struggles. They also provide an understanding of how each individual uniquely experiences and make sense of social problems. Rather than emerging from oppressive experiences as psychologically oppressed beings, each develops a critically consciousness that is freeing.

Summary

Thus far, I have been sketching out a framework for understanding and studying identity at various levels of complexity by drawing on the postcolonial concept of hybridity and the feminist scholarship on self, identity and difference. I established that psychologists tend to approach what is a multidimensional and dynamic process primarily in terms of singularities and dichotomous distinctions. As a result, very little attention has been attributed to the multiplicity of identity and the variability in its developmental context. Additionally, minimal attention has been attributed to the variability within groups and within individual subjectivity even as greater migratory flows and the ease of travel facilitate greater heterogeneity within race, culture, class

and ethnicity. Therefore, through the postcolonial concept of hybridity and the feminist scholarship on self, identity and difference, I outlined what contributions each makes for studying the individual and the concept of identity critically. I underscored that the present dissertation study is a respond to the calls made by critical psychologists that stressed the need for more situated and person centered approaches in studies of identity and differences (particularly within the context of globalization). Moreover, I emphasized that the focus on *experience* and *firsthand accounts*, which are central themes in feminist epistemology, renews psychology's disciplinary commitment to study the individual in all of his or her complexity.

In the next section, the theoretical framework that guides the present research study comes to a full circle. As I unpack the forth research question, I illustrate that narrative inquiry has an integrative quality that serves the current study's interest in exploring the concept of identity through the prism of difference, hybridity, fluidity and complexity. More specifically, I highlight how the focus on *meaning-making* and *lived experiences* allows research participants to exercise greater agency in the research process. I also illustrate how the focus on *meaning-making* and *lived experience* permits the *researcher* to study the person as a dynamic whole, and the concept of identity within changing social, historical, cultural and political contexts.

Research Question 4: What personal meanings are associated with being a person of visible African descent, and experiencing life and the self from the unique standpoint of being a product of different cultures, and having lived in (and traveling to) different countries?

The last research question posed in this dissertation brings us to the heart of this investigation. It seeks to explore commonalities and differences in *meaning-making* within race and ethnicity. Adding greater complexity to the within-group level of analysis, the present study explores how individuals that share a common racial self-identification make sense of race, the self and the worlds they inhabit. However, meaning-making is framed through the vantage point of being a racial and cultural hybrid, and through experiences with the multiple movements (e.g. migration to the U.S., transnationalism and/or travel and tourism). In line with the present study's research focus and interest, the narrative study of lives provides a framework for understanding how individuals internalize, process, evaluate, derive, create and express meanings from social experiences that they have had over the course of time and place, and seek to have in the near future (McAdams, 1996; Burner, 1991; Anderson, 1997; Singer, 2004; Josselson, 2006; Chase, 2003; Hammack, 2008).

The narrative study of lives comes out of the subdiscipline of personality psychology, which is devoted to the scientific study of whole persons (McAdams, 2006). The turn to narratives as a mode of inquiry for studying and understanding why one person thinks, feels, strives and acts differently from another emerged in response to mounting criticisms, and a dissatisfaction with broad trait theories (McAdams, 2001; 2006). Up until the late 1960s, personality psychologists attributed variance in human behavior, thought and feelings mainly to personality traits until behaviorists questioned the lack attention given to situational variations and environment. In response to such critiques, the study lives, and specifically, life stories emerged. According to McAdams (2006), the study of "life stories served as an alternative to

traits in the effort to show that people's behavior and experiences are guided at least as much by internal factors as they are by external situations" (p.13). To illustrate why a narrative inquiry and its corollary, narrative identity theory, are the basis of the present study's theoretical framework and methodological approach, I first discuss its integrative capacity. Second, I highlight the other distinctive features that make this mode of inquiry significant and relevant for carrying out this study. Third, I discuss how the concept of "narrative" has been conceptualized and defined before mapping out the scope and nature of inquiries. Focusing specifically on one mode of narrative inquiry, the study of life story/history approach, I discuss how this particular mode of inquiry is applied in the current study. Finally, I also underscore some of the critiques advanced about this approach in order to show how the current study overcomes some of the problems associated with the use of the life story/history approach.

The Significance of Narrative Inquiry in Psychology

Narrative inquiry has and continues to serve an important function in the field of psychology, particularly because this discipline has tended to study and provide a decontextualized, fragmented and fixed view of the person while also framing groups in homogeneous terms. The strength and, therefore, the significance of a narrative inquiry lies in its integrative capability, its relational focus, its transformative function as it can result in the production of new knowledge, and because it provides the researched the opportunity to express agency. It is these various qualities that inform why the present study is situated within and informed by a narrative framework.

The integrative capability of a narrative inquiry is reflected in its aim to study the person as a dynamic whole through the simultaneous focus on human understandings, emotions, motivation, behavior, change, adaptation and context (McAdams, 1996; Hammack, 2008). In this sense, its wide and concurrent focus weaves together different disciplinary perspectives within psychology, including cognitive, clinical, developmental, social, and cultural psychology (Singer, 2004; Hammack, 2008). Although its focus is grand and daunting, the objective of a narrative inquiry is to capture the complexity of human life (Singer, 2004; Josselson, 2006). This consist of the nuances and subtleties of the social worlds individuals inhabit, the meanings they derive from past and present experiences, and the factors that make one person similar to and different from another (Chase, 2003). In order to capture these dynamics, narrative analysis integrates two central principals, which Chase (2003) outlines. The first is an assessment of *how* individuals and groups make sense of their experiences, and construct meaning and selves. The second is an assessment of *what* social resources (cultural, ideological, historical and so forth) individuals draw on, resist, and transform as they tell their stories. This brings us to the relational and transformative function, and significance of a narrative inquiry.

According to Anderson (1997), narratives develop in social and local context, and they involve conversations and interactions with others. They, therefore, reveal the social nature of the self as emerging in and embodied in relationships. As Anderson (1997) further notes, the self is multiauthored. As a result, a narrative never represents a single voice, but a multiplicity of voices that make up what Hermans (2002) refers to as “the society of the mind.” Not only do others become integrated into the self in the form of dialogical relationships, but narratives are

constructed and interpreted within, and influenced by sociocultural, historical and political discourses. The transformative function of a narrative study is best reflected in its capacity to generate new ways for understanding and thinking about a phenomenon, individuals or groups. For example, in a narrative study of two transgender women, VanOra and Ouellette (2009) attempt to reframe the pathological representations of transgender persons that are prevalent within the clinical and behavioral-health literature. By drawing on the details in the life story each woman constructed, these researchers provide new understandings of the particular challenges these individuals face within larger structures. In this regard, the transformative function of a narrative inquiry is reflected in its capacity to generate new knowledge, and to reveal how inaccurate representations cause violence in the day-to-day lives of individuals and groups that are stereotyped and misunderstood. The conscious raising aspect of a good narrative inquiry is what gives this form of research its transformative potential.

Because a narrative inquiry can provide new ways of thinking about and understanding a phenomenon, persons and groups, it has been utilized in both feminist research and in the analyses of postcolonial theorists. In line with the goals and objectives of both of these areas of study and the current investigation, a narrative inquiry also creates a space for individual agency. Because a first person account is one central area of focus in empirical studies, individual participants have the freedom to reflect, talk about, come to terms with and overcome past experiences, including dealing with constricting narratives of identity (Anderson, 1997). Furthermore, because narrative research articulates a set of principles different from hypothesis testing through its focus on subjectivity and *understanding*, research participants have the

opportunity to express their own standpoint, convey their own opinions, and envision their own future.

A narrative framework guides the present study and the methodological focus on individual accounts because this mode of inquiry and analysis attends to all of the goals and objectives of this dissertation, which I outlined earlier in this chapter.

I will now discuss how the concept of a “narrative” has been defined and theorized while also providing a view of the scope and nature of inquiries.

What are Narratives? Scope and Nature of Inquiries

According to narrative theorists, how we organize our experiences and memories, how the mind grows, makes meaning and grasps the world, and how we represent and express our identities are achieved through narratives. A narrative therefore reflects the dynamic process that constitutes both the way we organize the events and experiences of our lives to make sense of them, and the way we participate in creating the things we make sense of, including ourselves (Anderson, 1997). It is a social cognitive process that reflects the relationship between the self and society, and between the self and others (Bruner, 1991; Polkinghorne, 1991). Simply stated, narratives are accounts that we create that are often expressed in the form of a story that has a plot with a beginning, middle and an end (McAdams, 1996). It is also a discourse, which is a particular way of talking about, understanding, and representing the world, or an aspect of the world. For example, the academic discourse of psychology seeks to provide an understanding of different facets of human behavior. Different understandings are then represented through the

construction and consumption of theories. A theory is an account (a narrative) that seeks to explain *how* or *why* some thing, person or group works as it does. Different academic disciplines provide different perspectives (theories) that try to account for *how* and *why* things are, and how and *why* people, groups and institutions *work* or *do not work* as they should. In this regard, narratives and discourses are expressed through different forms of communication, including talk (conversation), text (e.g. books, journals, magazines, newspapers) and media (television, radio, and the Internet). They are shaped by culture as our thoughts and representation of reality are mediated by culture, and they are located within and reflect power structures. Because culture, in of itself, is framed by structures of power, narrative constructions and discourses are not neutral. A central function of discourses and narratives, particularly dominant ones, are that they can be used in a non-coercive way to control how we think, act and behave (Gjerde, 2004). The scope of narrative inquiries and analyses are vast because narratives are the tools of the mind (Burner, 1991), and discourses are the instruments of society (Foucault, 1991).

The present dissertation study provides a narrative study of the lives of U.S. Black immigrants from non-Anglophone countries because this mode of inquiry fulfills personality psychology's fundamental commitment towards understanding variations in human experiences (Molden & Dweck, 2006). It also fulfills social psychology's commitment to studying the person in context (Mead, 1934), and critical psychology's commitment to studying the systems through individual meanings are made, negotiated, resisted and transformed (Weis & Fine, 2012). In this regard, Molden and Dweck (2006) indicate:

The search for universal principles of human behavior and information process is (and should be) one of the primary goals of psychological sciences and has led to great advances in the field. Yet psychological sciences has (and should have) another primary goal as well: to understand how people give meaning to their experiences and to their relations with the world around them” (p. 192).

In providing an understanding of the meanings the respondents in this study attribute to their experiences, and their identities, narrative identity theory, and the life story/history approach was used.

The Story/History Approach: Expressing Meaning & Constructing Selves

Narrative identity theory provides both a perspective for framing, and an approach for studying the relationship between the individual and society, and the individual and groups. According to Singer (2004), narrative identity theories are fundamentally concerned with providing answers to questions about how individuals make sense of their lives. This is achieved through an assessment of how individuals understand themselves as unique, and as social beings that are multiply defined by life stage, gender, ethnicity, class and culture. Singer (2004) further indicates that “to understand the identity formation process is to understand how individuals craft narratives from experiences, tell these stories internally and to others, and ultimately apply these stories to knowledge of self, other and the world in general” (P. 438). Burner (1991) explains that our social experiences become accounts of happenings in our lives, which are eventually converted into more or less coherent autobiographies centered on a self, acting more or less

purposefully in a social world. Likewise, Polkinghorne (1991) notes that individuals construct private and personal stories that link diverse events of their lives into unified and understandable wholes, which form the basis of personal identity and self-understandings. These plots provide answers to the question, “Who am I?” In doing so, they also make clear how I am living my life and what moral and ethical motives guide my existence and personal striving. Polkinghorne (1991) also maintains that self-knowledge is an appropriation of the past such that a disconnection with it results in the loss of identity. This understanding of personal identity as having a history coheres with how this concept is defined in the present study. Earlier in this chapter, I drew on Hiltin's (2003) definition that personal identity is “a sense of self, built up over time.” Consistent with this understanding of personal identity, Polkinghorne (1991) also views this aspect of the self as continually evolving and not static. Because we have the capacity to construct a coherent account of who we are by drawing on, organizing, and making connections between the accrual of happenings in our lives (past and present), which form the basis of our experiences from childhood to adulthood, identity has been linked to a story that chronicles the history of the self and its development.

Central to a narrative identity perspective is the life story of individuals. Theoretically, the life story is a narrative account of *situated stories* (McLean, Pasupathi & Pals, 2007) that individuals use to give coherence and purpose to, and find continuity in the self (McAdams, 1996). The most cited and utilized theory of narrative identity, which the present study draws on, is McAdams's (1996) life story framework. According to McAdams (1996), the life story is a “self-history that explains how the Me of yesterday became the Me of today and will become the

anticipated Me of tomorrow” (p. 306). He specifies that this third level for analyzing personality is critical for gaining an understanding of how, and to what extent the individual person living in a modern society is able to find unity, purpose and meaning in life. Because the current study is situated within this framework, I will briefly provide an understanding of the central tenets of this perspective.

As a narrative, the life story, according to McAdams (1996) is a psychosocial construction. In the act of consciously defining and expressing my life story, I become the author of my self-history. However, as both the composer (creator) and the narrator (speaker), the account I construct is not my story alone, nor is it my voice that speaks (and is heard) alone. Because other persons (family, friends, peers, colleagues, acquaintances, and my past selves), physical environments (home, school, work, country of birth and residence), and social factors (culture, class, gender, race, ethnicity, national histories) also inform the composition of my self-history, the account I construct will reflect specific settings, scenes, characters, plots and themes. However, as the composer of my self-history, I control how the story is told by shaping its structure, progression and content. In this regard, the story has my imprint. It is, therefore, both a construction and reflection of my personal and social identity. Because the structure and content of the life story is where identity is created, expressed and represented, McAdams outlined seven features that typically manifest in the structure and content of adult life stories. Because his framework is rooted in a Western cultural mode of storytelling, the current study only drew on four out of the seven-prototypical features he outlined. The four that inform the present research study's analysis are: (1) *narrative tone*, (2) *ideological setting*, (3) *turning points* and (4)

imagoes. These prototypical features of an adult life story were integrated into the present study's analysis because each has a broader applicability for assessing other non-western cultural schemes for constructing and narrating a life history. *Narrative tone* refers to the emotion (feelings) that the story reflects (e.g. playful, serious, optimism, pessimism, and so on).

Ideological settings refer to the moral stance that forms the backdrop for understanding how the individual judges the quality of his or her life and the lives of others. This ideological setting is drawn from the person's religious, political, and ethical beliefs and values. Adding to this understanding of the ideological setting, Phillip Hammack (2008) includes the analysis of "master narratives," which is consistent with the concept of "dominant discourse." He argues that in constructing a personal narrative of the self, the individual engages with and fuses into his or her life story the larger stories of culture, groups, and country. Thus, the meaning that the individual attributes to the master narratives that he or she has internalized provides an understanding of the extent to which he or she reproduces social structures. In this regard, Hammack (2008) argues that the relationship between a master narrative and a personal narrative of identity provides direct access to the process of social reproduction and change. In the present dissertation study, the life stories that are presented in Chapters 4 and 5, and the historical profiles included in Chapter 3 highlight this relationship between master narratives and personal narratives of identity.

In addition to *narrative tone* and *ideological setting*, the current study also integrates the concept of *turning points* into the analysis of each participant's life story. According to McAdams (1996), *turning points* are either reflections or declarations of symbolic changes.

These changes are *disruptive happenings* that provoke insight (McLean, Psupathi & Pals, 2007). Therefore, the overall significance of turning points are the meanings they give to the larger story that emerges from the chronicles of one's life history. In the current study, migration and movement were major turning points in the life stories respondents constructed. I will elaborate on this point in the next chapter. Nonetheless, the fourth and last prototypical feature of an adult life story that this dissertation integrates from McAdams (1996) is the concept of *imagoes* or what I conceptualize as *multiple identities*. *Imagoes* refer to different personifications of the self (personal and social). McAdams specifies that *Imagoes* are like “little mes populating the big Me narrative.” In this dissertation study, the concept of *imagoes* was conceptualized as internalized representations of one's multiple and intersecting social identities. They are sources from which personal identity draws meaning. In the present study, the analysis of how each respondent personifies his or her multiple and intersecting identities provided much insight into how each experience his or her distinct hybrid location both internally and externally.

It is from the analysis of *imagoes* or *multiple identities* that the concept of *liberated selves* emerged. This concept is both a descriptor and an approximation of what I saw as a very complex and dynamic process. Each of the respondents in this study personifies, within his or her life story, an internally healthy integration of different facets of his or her social and personal identities. Collectively, their stories demonstrate that this achieved healthy integration occurs within social worlds in which their multiple and intersecting categories of identification are perceived as separate and distinct locations. Each of their categories of identification is differently ranked in a hierarchical scale in which Blackness is located at the very bottom. The

concept of *liberated selves* seeks to magnify the mental fortitude that these individuals possess in being able to ultimately resist internalizing the fragmentation and negative estimations ascribed to different facets of their identities. In this regard, the analysis of each life story provides a view of the individual's psychological well-being. Although this study does not provide an assessment of mental health, psychological well-being is a cornerstone of Black identity theory. A central focus of this area of study is mapping out the path for the development and integration of a healthy Black racial identity (Parham, 1989; Franklin, 1999; Worrell, Cross & Vandiver, 2001). Likewise, psychological well-being is also a central focus in the study of immigrant acculturation. The concept of *acculturative stress*, for example, speaks to the stress inducing nature of adapting to a new environment, and it refers to the coping strategies the immigrant person utilizes (Berry, Kim, Minde & Mok, 1987).

As I have argued in this chapter, and demonstrated particularly in this section, this dissertation is grounded in a narrative study of lives. This mode of inquiry provides an integrative theory and a method for studying the person as a dynamic whole. It also allows for an analysis of the dynamics of context, change and power. This mode of inquiry is well suited for carrying out the present investigation because it meets its overall goals and objectives. A central criticism of narrative identity theory and the life story method is that their strength in attending to so many different processes are also their weakness (Peacock & Holland, 2006). I now discuss these issues, and outline how the current study overcomes these challenges.

Overcoming the Limitations of the Life Story/History Approach

Based on a critical review of empirical research that used a life story approach, Peacock and Holland (2006) found that most studies poorly integrate larger sociocultural and psychocultural description, analysis and theory. They argue that most researchers tend to approach the study of lives from either a life-focused or formalist story-focused approach, but not both. Each taps into different poles of experience, and emphasize different ontologies. At one extreme, the life-focused approach takes the view that the narration of the life story is only a *mirror* of reality, and at the other end of the extreme, the formalist story-focused approach takes the view that the narration is a *creation* of reality. Compared to the former where the concern is with the *how events external* to the narrator are *represented* through his or her subjectivity, the latter is concerned with *what the structure* of the narrator's story *reveals* about how the individual *creates* his or her *subjective* reality and selves. More simply put, most empirical studies of lives focus on *the life* that is represented in the story and how it mirrors and translates an external reality. In the second approach, the focus is on *the story* and what its structure or form tells us about how individuals create and live the realities they construct for themselves. In focusing on either the first or the second approach, Peacock and Holland (2006) argue that most empirical studies fail to provide a fuller account of the various processes that are so crucial to human life. They, therefore, maintain that an integration of the two different approaches are needed to conduct better narrative analysis of lives. In attending to these strong and compelling criticisms, the present dissertation study provides this integration. Both the life-focused and the formalist story-focused approach are used in the analysis and presentation of the life stories. To assess how each respondent represents and interprets his or her external reality, the historical,

social and political events referenced within each narrative was researched and are presented alongside a summation of each respondent's life story in Chapter 3. The formalist story-focused approach was applied through an analysis of the organizational and thematic structure of each life story. From this analysis, two different sets of narratives were identified and each is presented in Chapters 4 and 5. The next chapter goes more deeply into data analysis, and the interpretation process. It also speaks to the role the *interaction* between the researcher and researched played in the co-construction of each story.

CHAPTER 2:

Research Design & Methodology

This chapter delves into this dissertation study's research design, methodology, and the analytical procedures utilized to interpret the data collected. The overall objectives of this research investigation were threefold. First, this study sought to develop an understanding of how a group of individuals who hold membership in two (Black and immigrant), or more (e.g., Black, immigrant, Latin, and Panamanian of Jamaican descent) distinct sub-populations within the U.S. construct their process of identity development in the form of a life story. Secondly, this study sought to understand how such individuals, defined as Black racial and cultural hybrids in the present study (but who are *not* African-American as traditionally defined), socially experience and make-meaning of their lived experiences. Thirdly, and equally important, this study aimed to gain an understanding of the distinct challenges and opportunities that accompany being a person of visible African descent, and a product of two or more different cultures while also having experienced life (and the self) in different countries as a result of migration, transnationalism and/or international travel. To explore these dynamics, this investigation queried the life stories of ten Black identified U.S. immigrant originating from a non-Anglophone country within Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean. These groups of individuals are the focus of analysis because their distinct identity configurations provide an opportunity to study intersectionality and hybridity as it is embodied and lived. Moreover, their

experiences are excluded in both the psychological literature on Black racial identity, and the immigrant acculturation literature. As I indicated in the previous chapter, research in psychology on Black identity focuses primarily on African Americans, and not on the racial identity development process of other Black ethnics who are also immigrants. Likewise, the research in cross-cultural psychology on immigrants has tended to focus on the cultural adjustment of immigrants of color, but exclude Black immigrants. In sum, these individuals are the focus of this inquiry because they are rendered invisible in both the literature on Black identity, and immigrant identity. Moreover, they are the focus of this inquiry because their identity configurations place them in a distinct in-between location that stretches the boundaries of the singular categories that typically inform the psychological study of persons and groups. Likewise, they also challenge the notion of homogeneity that is so often central to the study of groups.

Given this study's objectives, its theoretical framework, and the group of individuals that are the focus of analysis, the best method for conducting this study is a qualitative approach. Tappan (1997) indicates that because the field of psychology as a discipline is devoted to the study of human behavior it must take seriously that individuals have the capacity to reflect and interpret the situations in which they find themselves. Likewise, in their review of the psychological literature on Black racial and ethnic identity, Ponerotto and Park-Taylor (2007) strongly encourage researchers to conduct more qualitative investigations that focus specifically on what the process of racial and ethnic identity development mean for individuals. These scholars further indicate that this area of research is dominated by correlational investigations

that cannot tap, by design, the developmental process of racial and ethnic identity as it occurs over time. The need for more interpretive research coupled with my interest in “understanding” and “meaning-making” also played a pivotal role in the methods used for data collection and analysis in the present study.

The goals of this chapter, therefore, is to provide a full understanding of how the present research study was carried out, and the assumptions that shaped the choices and decisions that were made. This will first include a discussion of the eligibility requirements, and a rationale for selection and participation. A description of the sites of recruitment is then provided, and each of the ten respondents is introduced through a general demographic profile. Secondly, this chapter delves into the mode of inquiry that was used for data collection, which consists of a description of the life story interview protocol that was used. Because the process of narrating one's life history/story involves both a teller (in this case the respondent) and an active listener/inquirer (the researcher), this chapter also goes into how the interview process shaped the life story each respondent constructed. The latter half of this chapter delineates the data analysis process, and the interpretation of the life stories. The chapter concludes with a discussion of ethical dilemmas I faced during the course of conducting the interviews. Additionally, I locate myself within this study by providing an understanding of how my personal background, social experiences, and reading of the psychological literature on identity informed my interest in conducting this investigation.

Data Collection Procedure

Eligibility Requirements

In order to participate in this study, a set of eligibility requirements was established. They are as followed: (1) must self-identify as Black in racial terms, and as an immigrant, (2) must be proficient in English as well as another language, (3) must have emigrated to the U.S. from a non-Anglophone country within Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, and (4) must be 18 years of age or older. An additional criterion established was that all eligible participants must have completed some schooling in the United States (e.g. middle school, high school, college or trade school) or be in a public profession (e.g., teacher, police officer, public administrator, doctor, sales person, or journalist). The first three eligibility requirements were established based on the feminist view point that while social location does not determine identity, people's everyday-lived experiences are informed by their social location; as a result, there is an *awareness* of the *self* as being defined by social categories (Sandoval, 1991). Therefore, the rationale for establishing the first three eligibility requirements was based on the assumption that the individuals that meet the set requirements for participation would most likely be persons that socially experience themselves as racialized beings, as immigrants and multinationals, and as members of different ethnolinguistic, and thus cultural communities. Another basic assumption made was that such individuals would also be more critically aware of how their multiple social locations shape how they are perceived and how others construe their social identities. The fourth criterion was established in order to recruit individuals who were old enough to give their

informed consent to participate in the present study. The last and final criterion was set based on the psychological concept of acculturation. According to Berry (2002), sites where people experience daily intercultural encounters will result in an increase demand for cultural and psychological change, producing a potential for conflict, and the need for negotiations in order to achieve outcomes that are adaptive for both parties. In establishing the eligibility requirement that all potential participants must have had some schooling in the U.S. or be in a public profession, the operating assumption was that these individuals would more likely to have experienced cross-cultural and cross-racial interactions. As a result, they would also be more likely have experienced the demand to make adaptive changes as part of their adjustment process. Moreover, having had some schooling in the U.S. was also established as a criterion for participation because school represents a major context in which individuals are socialized into the dominant culture, in addition to being a place where persons of different cultural and linguistic backgrounds convene and interact (Bourdieu, 2001). In establishing these eligibility requirements, the study gives voice to those individuals who are fully immersed into the social and cultural life of the U.S., but also retain and participate in many aspects of their own culture.

The Research Site

This study was conducted in New York City, which is well known for its racial and ethnic diversity. According to a report published by the New York City Department of City Planning (2013), this city boast the most diverse population of any major city in the world because of the flow of immigrants from across the globe. The foreign born that make up the city's immigrant population are literally from around the world, including from Latin America,

Mexico, Asia, the Caribbean, Africa, and Europe. Contributing to this diversity was the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act, which produced both resurgence and a shift in the immigrant population. Prior to this period, the immigrant population was mostly Southern and Eastern Europeans and then the Great Depression and World War II produced a slump in immigration. The city has since changed from a place of largely persons of European origins to a diverse mix where no one group is the majority. As of 2013, New York City is home to 3 million immigrants, and close to half of this population speaks a language other than English at home. It is this unmatched diversity coupled with the reality that I could easily find participants that meet this study's eligibility requirements that made this city an ideal site for carrying out this research investigation.

Recruitment Procedure

To recruit eligible persons for participation in this study, I employed a number of strategies. Because New York City is so diverse, there are a plethora of cultural and ethnic specific lectures, events, film screenings and festivals that are free and open to the public. I was deliberate in finding and attending events about groups from non-Anglophone countries within Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean. I searched through newspapers like the *Village Voice* for announcements of cultural events. I also searched the websites of local cultural institutions such as *The Brooklyn Academy of Music*. I searched their calendar of events for free and open concerts and lectures, which I would attend. I also attended a number of free and open lectures that I was invited to by colleagues, friends, and former professors that I informed about the

nature and purpose of the present research study. I attended lectures at New York University and at the different campuses in the City University of New York, particularly John Jay College where I was an undergraduate and at Medgar Evers College where I work. It is important to note that a distinctive feature of Medgar Evers College, which made it a rich site for recruiting eligible participants, is that it boasts the largest population of Black immigrant students and faculty in all of the twenty-two colleges that make up the City University of New York. Nonetheless, at the different events hosted at these different venues, I would identify potentially eligible participants based on their self-identification in posing a question to the speaker or presenter for example. I also used language as a marker for identifying eligible participants. For instance, when at these events, if I spotted individuals of visible African descent speaking a language other than English or that moved between English and another language in conversing with a friend, after the event ended, I would approach these individuals and inform them about the nature and purpose of my research study. I also informed them about the study's eligibility requirements.

Those individuals that expressed an interest in participating in this study were asked to complete (on the spot) a short one and a half page pre-interview survey (see Appendix A). The pre-interview survey asked for basic demographic information, which included first name, contact information, country of origin, age of migration to the U.S., profession, level of education, and level of proficiency in a second language. The purpose of the pre-interview survey was not only for obtaining the contact information of potentially eligible participants, but it was also used as a tool for screening their eligibility. Upon completing the short survey and

returning it to me, I provided each individual with my graduate student business card, which contained my full name, the institution I attended and my personal phone number and email. Each person that completed the survey was informed that she or he would be contacted to discuss eligibility further, and to schedule a date for conducting the life story interview based on availability.

A referral technique was another strategy used to recruit eligible participants. Either during the process of setting up a date for conducting the interview or after conducting the interview, eligible participants were asked to refer, or to give my contact information to other individuals like them that met the study's set eligibility requirements. In all, I was able to recruit a total of twelve eligible potential participants through these recruitment efforts. Finally, ten participants actually completed their participation, being able, for instance, to coordinate a meeting time that was mutually beneficial for conducting the life history interview.

The Respondents

All ten of the respondents who participated in this study shared a Black self-racial identification in addition to being an immigrant. Moreover, none expressed any ambivalence about being identified by others, and/or personally identifying him or herself as Black. Despite their shared racial self-identification, the respondents differed from one another in terms of phenotypic features (including skin color, and hair texture), class, gender, age, ethnicity, and linguistic and cultural background. In my recruitment efforts, I was successful in the deliberate attempt to find eligible participants that originate from a non-Anglophone country within Africa,

Latin America and the Caribbean. In this regard, the African born respondents in this study emigrated to the U.S. from Northern Sudan, Guinea-Conkary, and Ethiopia. The Latin American born came from Brazil, Costa Rica and Panama, and the Caribbean born came from the Dominican Republic and Haiti. Table 1, which follows provides a brief introduction to, and a profile of all the respondents.

Table 1. Demographic Profile of Respondents

Region	Origin Country	Pseudonym	Gender	Age During Interview	Age of Migration to the U.S.	Number of Years in the U.S.	Profession
Africa	Ethiopia	Amira	F	33	8	25	Journalist
	Sudan	Ahmed	M	39	24	15	High school Math teacher
	Guinea – Conakry	Ali	M	21	14	7	College sophomore
	Guinean-Conakry	Fatima	F	27	21	14	Recent college graduate
Central & Latin America	Costa Rica	Carlos	M	38	32	6	Pastor/ Religious Leader
	Panama	Nadia	F	36	30	6	College Administrator & English Instructor
	Brazil	Rita	F	40	35	5	College Administrator
Caribbean	Haiti	Marc	M	38	27	11	Law Enforcement Officer
	Haiti	Jean Pierre	M	67	25	42	Endocrinologists Medical Doctor
	Dominican Republic	Carmen	F	24	2	22	College Senior

By meeting the eligibility requirements I specified, an operating assumption was that all participants would likely embrace the hybridity and multiplicity that distinctively shapes and

defines his or her identity. This assumption was confirmed by the life stories the respondents constructed. Each expressed the breadth and depth of his or her identities. In all, respondents discussed the challenges, struggles, emotions and opportunities that accompany adapting to change as a result of migration. They also discussed the hardships and insights that come along with being a member of different social and cultural groups simultaneously.

What was particularly distinctive about all the respondents that participated in this study is that they plotted a “middle course” for themselves. None relinquished or diminished his or her claim to Blackness, and Spanishness, or Frenchness (and so on). Through his or her narrative, each emphasized the multiple dimensionality of his or her identity despite how others may have perceived him or her. In participating in this study, respondents gained an opportunity to openly reflect and draw connections between past and present experiences. They also were given the chance to imagine and express what the future holds. Furthermore, they had the opportunity to have an audience. At the end of the interviews, each respondent was asked to express what he or she thought others, particularly researchers, might gain from hearing his or her story about being both Black and an immigrant. In response to this question, they all tended to emphasize that their story might help bring greater visibility to others individuals like themselves. Additionally, they stressed that their story could provide others with more knowledge and a greater understanding of the variability in experience that exist within Black immigrant experiences. They believed this knowledge and understanding would be helpful for immigrants and non-immigrants alike.

Mode of Inquiry

Life Story Interviews

One-on-one, in person, life story interviews—live and face-to-face—were conducted with each of the ten respondents. The protocol used during the interviews was modeled after McAdams's (2008) Life Story Interview protocol (See Appendix B). The interview protocol he created invites individuals to construct their life story on the spot by focusing on key and defining aspects of their personal history, and communicating those experiences and memories in the form of a life story, which is similar to what one would find in the chapters of a book or a novel. Using this approach, each individual was guided to narrate his or her life story as if the content of his or her lived experiences were to be contained in a book, but specifically a biography with five chapters. However, in adapting this instrument, several modifications were made by the researcher in order to address the specific goals, concerns and objectives of the present investigation. For example, only the first part of the protocol (the introduction to the interview and the life chapter/book metaphor) was used. These two components were less structured, and provided the narrator with greater freedom and control in scripting his or her story. Not only were these two portions of the protocol its key components, but they also had a broader cultural applicability. I also made slight changes to the language in the interview protocol's introduction. For example, at the start of the interview, respondents were instructed to tell me about those experiences that helped them to better understand who they are as a person. As part of this process, they were instructed to think about those experiences that have shaped their understanding of themselves as both similar to and different from others who come from their origin country. They were asked to think about themselves in relation to other individuals in

the U.S. with whom they share some of the same social (nationality, ethnicity, and race) and physical characteristics (skin color). These instructions were included in order to encourage the respondents in this study to think and speak from their own cultural and social locations, which are central to this study's focus.

Additionally, to help respondents feel more comfortable in speaking from their own social and cultural location, I also disclosed at on the onset of the interview that I share a similar background. I expressed that I am an immigrant from Haiti with family and cultural ties that still connect me to this locality. Although there are pros and cons associated with being an insider in the research process (Green, 2014), I felt that disclosing my shared background with respondents would permit them to speak more candidly about their lived experiences. I also used this positioning to probe more deeply into the cultural and social dynamics that they spoke about, and with which I was familiar as a person of African descent and an immigrant. Later on in this chapter, I discuss in greater details the role my insiderness played in shaping the narrative each respondent constructed.

Another change made to McAdams's (2008) Life Story Interview protocol was concerned with how the researcher and research participants were positioned vis-à-vis one another in the instructions provided. Rather than direct respondents to tell their life story as a research subject, I sought to shift this power dynamic. I invited each respondent to view me (the researcher) as a biographer he or she had employed to write his or her story. This change in how the directions were scripted was informed by my sensitivity to the methodological critiques about reproducing unequal social relations in the research process (Fine, 1994; Marecek, Fine &

Kidder, 1997). Consistent with this study's theoretical framework, McAdams's (2008) Life Story Interview protocol provided respondents with a systematic way to organize, structure and give coherence, and meaning and purpose to their temporal experiences. Upon completing their narrative account, respondents were also asked a series of structured questions that probed directly into the research questions that guided this investigation (See Appendix B). In most cases, I only asked a few of the standard questions because most were answered during the course of the life story each person constructed.

The interviews took approximately one to two hours to complete per person. Prior to the start of the interview, the goals and purpose of the study were explained. Next, each respondent was provided with a consent form approved by the Institutional Review Board at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York (See Appendix C). The form outlined the purpose and goals of the study, the respondent's rights, and the benefits and minimal risks associated with participating. Additionally, it informed respondents of their option to allow or disallow the use of a digital cassette recorder during the interview, but none declined. After giving his or her consent, each respondent was given a copy of the form, and asked if he or she had any questions about the study or the consent form. In most cases, no questions were asked. In two cases, respondents inquired about how many other people I had interviewed; they both also inquired about the cultural background and nationality of other participants. After the consent forms were signed and the respondents questions were answered, if there were any, each individual was provided with a list of free or low cost mental health service agencies within the New York City

area in case they felt they needed to consult with a professional after the interview (see Appendix D).

The interviews were conducted in a number of different locations. One was conducted at the respondent's home, another in the respondent's car, and a third at a Starbucks Coffee house. One was also conducted in the respondent's office at work, which she had access to on the weekend. Most, however, were conducted in an empty classroom either at the Graduate Center or at Medgar Evers College. Upon completing the interview, I asked each respondent if he or she had any questions for me. Some asked me about my personal experiences as a graduate student, which I shared. Other asked about my next steps in completing this project. Although no one requested a copy of my report, two respondents e-mailed me to learn about my progress and completion of the dissertation.

Data Analysis & Interpretation

The data analysis process was guided by this study's theoretical framework, which is tightly interwoven with the four research questions this dissertation seeks to provide answers for. The first research question posed was informed by the *role played by context* (sociocultural, historical and political) in shaping the identity formation process. Because this study explores the lives of immigrant individuals, the analysis focused on the role the context of pre-and post-migration, past and present, and local and global play in shaping identity formation. The second and third research questions were concerned with *the process of recognizing differences* at the within group, and individual levels. More specifically, they focused on *how differences are*

experienced. Going more deeply into these processes, the second and third research questions probes into how individuals come to embrace, *deal with, cope, manage and negotiate* socially and personally their hybridity and intersectionality. The fourth research question was concerned primarily with *meaning-making*, but specifically from the vantage point of being a racialized being, and embracing one's racial location as an aspect of one's ontology. The fourth research question was also concerned with how the experience of being Black, a product of different cultural communities, and experiencing the self across different localities shapes one's worldview, personal understandings, and perceptions of self.

As I illustrated in the first chapter, each of the research questions that guided this investigation were linked to a specific body of literature that provided the tools for thinking about, analyzing and framing the dynamics of identity that this study queries. In keeping with the research questions that guide this investigation and the theoretical perspectives (narrative identity, critical race and cultural theories) that inform how the concept of identity was conceptualized, data analysis was carried out in four stages.

In the first stage of analysis included the transcription of the recorded life story interviews. Each transcript was read several times. In the course of this process, blocks of texts that spoke directly to the research questions posed by this dissertation study were highlighted and coded for the particular identity dynamics they reflected. Keeping in mind this study's theoretical framework, I made connections between the highlighted texts and the codes I assigned them. This was done in order to arrive at an understanding, and an interpretation of how each respondent experiences his or her identities, and makes meaning of particular happenings related

to identity. Table 2 provides an illustration of this coding and interpretation procedure. This first stage of analysis examined the social worlds each respondent recreates and interprets.

Table 2. Sample of Data Analysis & Interpretation Process

Respondent: Carmen Age: 24 Birth Place: Dominican Republic	Coding	Significance of Highlighted Text & Researcher's Interpretation
1 Researcher: So tell me about the first time you went back to the 2 Dominican Republic after you moved back here to the U.S. with 3 your parents.		
4 Carmen: Um, my I never went back the Dominican Republic by 5 myself, my mom always sent me with my aunt. I really can't 6 remember because I was small.		
7 Researcher: Tell me about when your first were able to remember?		
8 Carmen: I was maybe in sixth or seventh grade when I can 9 remember, <u>it was like completely different</u> . My Spanish is like 10 broken down Spanish because even when I speak in the Dominican 11 Republic, <u>I am always being corrected</u> , "that's not how you say this 12 word, that's not how you say it." But <u>that is how I say it at home</u> and 13 my mom doesn't correct me. <u>They always correct me, so I have that</u> . 14 I am the darkest in my house, so <u>I was always made fun of</u> as a little 15 kid. I have like the curly hair and mom is light, my dad isn't too 16 light, but he's a little lighter than me and I am the darkest. <u>I am</u> 17 <u>always made fun of</u> , "oh, you're the darkest!"	-Recognition of cultural differences between U.S. & DR context	-Beginning to recognize cultural hybridity –not entirely American nor Dominican culturally
18 Researcher: By whom?	-Penalized and Ridiculed for being different	-Learning to see the self through the eyes of others
19 20 Carmen: My brother. Like <u>my brother still makes fun of me until this day</u> . He's like, "were you switched at birth, why you are so dark?"	-Intersection of skin color and race	- Highlights the cost of not fitting into prototypical representation of being Spanish
21 22 Researcher: Switched at birth? (Carmen: Yeah, He tells me that, hopefully he is joking, but you know).	-on going differentiation	-Difference continues to hold significance even over the course of time
23 24 Researcher: How did that make you feel because it wasn't like just one person?		
25 26 Carmen: No, like a lot of people would make fun of me. In a way, <u>I</u> 27 <u>felt like less than</u> because I was just learning about the races in school, like in fifth and sixth grade that am like when <u>it really started</u>	-Internalization of negative family evaluation	-Developing a sense of inferiority

<p>28 <u>to hit me, before that I didn't care.</u> I was like, they are just making 29 fun of me, brothers, and cousins, and so after <u>I started learning the</u> 30 <u>whole racism thing, like the Black against the White.</u> I took it I guess 31 differently, I guess. <u>I was like that is kind of racist what they are</u> 32 <u>doing, seeing all what Blacks went through in the struggle,</u> it just like 33 went to the back of my head, and I was like it's just family stuff, <u>I am</u> 34 <u>not evening going to take it in the wrong way,</u> and well, where <u>I</u> 35 <u>grew up, my family, we were the only Spanish family</u> in my 36 neighborhood, so <u>I grew up in a predominately Black neighborhood</u> 37 and no body spoke my home language so, that was)</p> <p>38 Researcher: Did they assume you were ah, not Spanish speaking? 39 Carmen: Well, <u>if they see me alone, yeah,</u> but <u>if they see my family,</u> 40 <u>like I walk with my mom, I walk with my cousins, they know they</u> <u>are Spanish, to them, the Spanish people have a look, I don't know</u> <u>what the look is, but they have a look.</u></p>	<p>-Turning point</p> <p>-Developing consciousness of racism</p> <p>-Making sense of family dynamics through the prism of race consciousness</p> <p>-Affixing color and culture in the broader context of community</p>	<p>-Change in understanding of race and family attitudes towards race initiated by education</p> <p>-Learning to make sense of the effects of racism</p> <p>-Forgiving family ignorance</p> <p>-Intersection of race culture in the broader context of community</p> <p>- Recognition of racial hybridity</p>
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This first stage of data analysis, which was undertaken in each transcript, helped to generate a larger picture of the commonalities and differences across individual cases. It is from this first stage of analysis that I identified specific themes that emerged in each narrative, and that cut across individual cases.

The second stage of data analysis focused on the *narrative form* or *structure* of each story. I examined *what the structure* of the narrator's story *reveals* about how each *creates* his or her reality and defines his or her identity. In conducting this analysis, I drew from four out of the seven prototypical features McAdams (1996) outlined as being common to the structure and content of an adult life story. In this regard, I looked closely at the beginning, middle and end of each story, and explored shifts in the emotional or *narrative tone*, which gave me a sense of each individual's personality and emotionally well-being. I explored the ideological *settings* (*religion*, and *other ethical systems of beliefs*) that served as the backdrop at different points in in

each story, which gave me a sense of the factors that guide each individual's behaviors and understandings. This also included an assessment of what *master narratives* (Hammack, 2008) each respondent engaged with in constructing a personal sense of self, and in reconstructing his multiple contexts of development. Thirdly, I coded for turning points or disruptive happenings that provoked new insights. I found that these were generally adaptive changes that coincided with social psychological processes such as dealing with the loss of a love one, or adjusting to changes in the physical and cultural environment as a result of migration and movement (international and regional). The turning points or disruptive happenings were also transitions to new life stages such as entering and completing college or postgraduate education, learning to be financially independent, beginning one's professional career, establishing one's own family, occupying new roles such as becoming a parent and financial provider, and finding new sources of mental and social support. As part of this second level of analysis, I also coded for *imagoes*, how respondents personified different aspects of the self, including the racial self, the ethnic self, the religious, gendered, immigrant, the professional self, and so on. It was from this second level of analysis that I came to recognize that although each individual lives and negotiates a different set of realities, they all shared a profound level of personal resilience, and flexibility. It is from this second level of analysis that I began to formulate the idea of *liberated selves*. I recognized that in navigating the difficult and oppressive currents of the multiple social worlds each inhabits, each was able to recover from difficult situations with minimal damage to self-esteem. Their ability to bounce-back from stressful situations seemed to have occurred as a result of each individual's ability to anchor him or herself within a tradition and within multiple group

histories. However, each seemed to be able to step outside tradition and resist group conformity when the dictates became too restrictive and imprisoning. This flexibility seemed to be the source of each individual's resiliency. Their ability to navigate and bounce back from difficult and oppressive situations also seemed to be a source of critical insight on the nature of being and changing the social worlds they inhabit. In sum, it was through the combination of the first and second phase of data analysis that I came to recognize that two distinct sets of narratives were emerging from the data.

At the third stage of analysis, I coded for the role I (the researcher) and others play in co-constructing the life story each respondent narrated. At this third level, I explored how the questions I asked, my nudges, reactions and interpretations during the course of the interview informed the development of each respondent's life story. At this level of analysis, I found that my positioning as an insider worked to my advantage. Having some shared knowledge of what the experience of being an immigrant and a person of African descent can entail allowed me to probe more deeply into certain aspects of the respondent's life. For example, when respondents made reference to a particular cultural or social issue with which I was familiar with, I briefly shared how I came to be personally aware of this issue. In the transcripts, I found that in such instances respondents provided greater details concerning how, and why they came to take a particular position on the issue. Because the respondents felt comfortable speaking to me, I was also able to probe more deeply into each individual's life history. Through analyzing our interaction, I also noticed that in each transcript there were many instances in which I summarized and interpreted what seemed to be a chunk of the respondent's life history; in

response, each respondent engaged my interpretations, agreeing or disagreeing with no hesitation when he or she saw fit. Likewise, when I spotted what seemed to be a contradiction in his or her story, I also pointed this out with no hesitation. This back and forth interaction, and active listening, questioning and challenging helped, in my opinion, to produce an honest account of each individual life history. It also facilitated a shared understanding of each respondent's personal interpretation of things that happened.

The fourth and final phase of analysis, which is presented in the next chapter connects the individual to his or her social group and to the larger local and global society. In conducting this dialectical analysis, I researched the social groups that each respondent holds members in. Additionally, the historical and political references that each respondent drew visibility to in his or her life story were also researched for accuracy and for understanding each individual's personal interpretations of events. It is from this fourth level of analysis that I gained a greater appreciation and an understanding of the different social and societal constraints all the respondents contend with, navigate and resist in order to assert their humanity, and to obtain in some cases basic human rights.

Locating the Researcher in the Research Process

How I arrived at conceptualizing and conducting this investigation is both a personal and intellectual journey that spans across two different countries that I call my home, and the various others I have visited. The shifts that I have experienced in geographical contexts, and by extension social and cultural milieus, have broadened my view of others, myself the world

around me, and my place in it. My interests in the experiences of different subsets of U.S. Black immigrants derive from my own life experiences. I emigrated from Haiti to the U.S. with my parents and older brother back in the early eighties. At the time of my arrival, I was a child. Although I was old enough to grasp this change in context, it was the deep contrast between my home life and the world outside that ignited in me an intellectual curiosity about the diverse nature of Black cultural identities, and the social realities faced by other Black immigrant groups.

When I first arrived with my parents and older brother to the U.S., we moved into my aunt's three-story colonial home. What was unique about this space was that because of its large size, each floor housed one of our relatives, grandparents, cousins, great aunt as well as some close family friend that also moved to the U.S. from Haiti. In those early years, my aunt's house served as our *Island home*. In it, my family recreated the world they had left behind. From the attic to the basement apartments, the smell of Creole spices filled the air and loud voices speaking in Haitian Creole could be heard no matter where you were. Within that dwelling, it was the Haitian culture, its music, values, and the political situation of that country that took precedence above all else, and this very much defined my daily social and cultural reality. As a female, I was expected to take on a more traditional role, caring for younger cousins, and later my younger brother. I was expected to help my mother in the kitchen and with house chores. In comparison, my older brother and male cousins were given more liberties with their free time, but they too were expected to stay close to our traditions, and our home. When speaking to our parents or other adults in our extended household, we were all expected to speak in our native language. When we violated this rule, we received no reply, a disapproving look, or a harsh

request to speak in the language in which we could be understood. In retrospect, all the adult members of my family seemed to work in tandem in enforcing this rule. Because I grew up in a very close, and in hindsight, a very insular community, when I first started school, I felt immediately that I had entered another world, complete with its own culture, language, traditions and social norms. However, none of it was familiar to me except for some of the faces that I was use to seeing on my block and in its vicinity. Although most of my peers shared the same racial background as me, most of us differed from one another in terms of ethnicity and nationality. I grew up in Brooklyn in the neighborhood of Flatbush, which was comprised predominately of working and middle class Black immigrants from different parts of the Caribbean. However, there were also very small pockets of Indo-Caribbean and Panamanian immigrants, and African Americans, and Puerto Ricans.

For me, it was within the context of school and through my social interactions with peers that I made the shocking discovery that it was not a good thing to be from Haiti. Because my brother and I acquired English proficiency fairly quickly, we were both soon able to speak the language without the slightest detection of a foreign accent. In seeing the torment faced by other Haitian kids or those who were discovered to be Haitian, we sought to blend in to our surrounding. We had gotten into the habit of concealing our ethnic background because of the problems it posed, and so we assumed an African American ethnicity. However, our cover would always be blown when my mother, father or grandfather came to pick us up from school, which occurred infrequently. Their utterances in Haitian Creole would immediately give away our ethnic background, and the next day at school, we would be confronted with the question, “You

Haitian?” Our confirmation of this fact would be followed by a stinging pejorative about our ethnicity.

The negative reaction to our ethnicity that we were experiencing as children in school was a reflection of the larger negative reception Haitian immigrants were receiving at large as unwanted immigrants within the broader U.S. context. Cultural anthropologist, Alex Stepick (1998) reports that discriminatory policies enacted at the level of government coupled with negative media coverage and representations of Haitians assisted in creating a very chilly climate for this community in the 80s into the early 90s. For example, at the level of government, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) contributed to the stigmatization of a Haitian ethnicity by classifying this community as one of the primary groups at risk for AIDS, along with homosexuals, hemophiliacs and intravenous drug users. Likewise, media representations of Haiti were rarely positive, and Haitian refugees as compared to Cubans were portrayed as poor and dissolute people.

Although I was unaware back then of how this larger social and political climate affected my parents, and the adults in our family, my father seeing our desire to shed off our ethnic difference, stood steadfast in his resolve to teach us to maintain a sense of pride in our ethnic background. He refused to let us identify as anything other than Haitian. In public spaces, where I would stress an English pronunciation of my name, he would follow with its French pronunciation, always to my embarrassment. He would often try to make up for the lack of historical knowledge we had about our ethnic background by teaching us about Haiti’s place in history as the first independent Black republic—the first country in the world to disavow slavery.

(And in fact, some of this history figures in the negative, prejudicial attitudes spawned by the imperialist nations, France and the US, which I now realize, filtered down into my own life experiences. Within my life, therefore, I see the very sort of larger contextual issues that I want to highlight in this study. When they could, they took us back to Haiti to reunite with extended family. During those visits, we formed stronger bonds with distant cousins and aunts.

My parents were also very politically active when it came to Haitian affairs. For example, On April 20, 1990, they joined over a 100,000 Haitians who walked across the Brooklyn Bridge to Manhattan to protest against the CDC's prohibition against Haitians donating blood as they were classified as one of the primary groups at risk for AIDS. In hindsight, I realize now that they too were very much affected by what was going on in the world around us, and that their resolve to keep their children connected to their home country, language and culture was in part a reaction to the ethnic prejudice and discrimination they too confronted outside of our doorsteps.

These earlier experiences constitute the first ten years of my life in the U.S. post-migration. They fostered in me a sense of Otherness that led me to gravitate toward other immigrant persons of African descent that shared similar experiences of being cultural outsiders. As I grew older and gained a greater acceptance of my own background, I built strong alliances with other Haitian peers, and I was soon introduced to other Black immigrants from St. Lucia and Martinique who spoke a variety of the French Creole different from what I grew up speaking. I also developed friendships with the daughter of a Costa Rican family and the children of two Panamanian families that lived in our neighborhood, and with whom I went to

school. Through our friendship, I gain exposure to their distinct cultural backgrounds. I learned that they too had experienced a sense of Otherness from having to explain how they were both Black and Spanish speaking upon meeting others that might have witnessed their fluency in Spanish for the first time. Among this group of peers, I could identify and commiserate about what seemed at that time to be burdens of being different, and not fitting in.

My ascendancy into other Black immigrant cultural and social worlds became more intensified as I grew older, particularly after my parents moved out of my aunt's house, and purchased a two family home of their own. It was conveniently located down the block from my aunt and the rest of our family. Since they now had an apartment to rent, other Black immigrant families occupied that space over the years. Some of these tenants were from different from Panama and different countries within Africa. In living more closely with individuals from these different groups, I began to learn more about their cultural backgrounds. These experiences opened up my cultural conceptions of Black people.

However, within the context of middle and high school, the education that I was provided that encompassed a focus on the Black experience, what little there was at the time, provided no cultural or historical acknowledgment or mentioning of the people I lived with at home or interacted with in my neighborhood at school. When I entered college, the same was true; however, there I took advantage of the option to take courses in African American literature and African American history, which I enjoyed. These courses taught me a great deal about African American culture, racism as systematic issue, black solidarity, and the Civil Rights Movement. However, I continued to feel the absence of the cultural and historical experiences of

the people from my own ethnic background as well as the different Black cultural groups from my neighborhood.

In my senior year of college, I had the opportunity to travel to Europe. I went to Paris, London, and Amsterdam. In London, for example, I had my first encounter with British individuals of African descent. I was extremely surprised to hear these individuals speak with a very heavy British accent. I had come to associate this accent with being nothing other than White because this is what I had been accustomed to seeing on American television. From this and other similar discoveries that I made while overseas, I began to feel the weight of my own ignorance after recognizing the closedness of my own cultural conceptions of Blackness. I began to wonder if the experiences of persons of African descent living in Europe were parallel to my own immigrant experiences in the United States. I began to connect my lack of knowledge in this context with my past experiences in being teased for being Haitian by my Black peers. I realized that they must have had very little knowledge about Haitians outside of what they saw on American television. I also realized that outside of the conversations that I had with the people in my neighborhood, I really did not have any formal knowledge about the different cultures and histories of Black people outside of the African American experience within the U.S. context. As I prepared to complete my undergraduate education, I decided to pursue my graduate education in social psychology largely because I was very much interested in understanding how issues pertaining to race, culture, ethnicity and migration informed the individual's psychology.

Since beginning my graduate education, I have worked on a number of different research projects that focused on the experiences of immigrants, particularly of African descent. This research background coupled with my own personal experiences, intellectual curiosity, and the various gaps I identified in my reading of the psychological literature on immigrant acculturation and Black identity led me to conduct this dissertation study.

Ethical Dilemmas

Despite my closeness to the issues that are at the center of this inquiry, my curiosity for learning about other cultures, and my thirst for understanding the uniqueness that characterizes the lives of other individuals helped to keep my mind open to new discoveries throughout this research process. In conceptualizing and designing this study, I struggled with the reality that my closeness to the background of respondents might be perceived as clouding my ability to hear and understand differences among them, and between their experiences and my own. The result of having this insecurity was that I started to lack confidence in my ability to implement this investigation, but because my thinking about the concept of identity was well grounded in the different intellectual works that serve as this study's theoretical framework, I was well prepared for doing this study. In the course of conducting the life story interviews, all of my previous reservations and concerns melted away. In listening to each life story, and engaging with the narrator, I was transported into his or her multiple social and cultural worlds. My reading of the postcolonial, feminist and narrative identity literature coupled with my own personal expertise as a research interviewer helped in facilitating and creating a free and open space for hearing and

sharing of experiences. During the course of the interviews, I was able to follow each respondent through the different paths in the journey each took me on. Because of my attentiveness, genuine interest, and lack of judgment, each shared with me what seemed to be deeply personal understandings of self, others, and happenings in their lives.

I believe that my shared background, intellectual grounding in different theoretical perspectives, and my expertise as a research interviewer helped to create a balance that made it easier for my participants to divulge deeply personal understandings and experiences to me, a complete stranger. I believe that it is this balance that also helped to calm the emergence of any other ethical dilemmas during the research process. In this regard, the richness and depths of the life stories presented and analyzed in Chapters 4 and 5 reflect and vivify the unique space for sharing and listening that was created during the interview process.

Interlude: Seeing the Parts that Make the Story Whole

This interlude provides a rationale and an understanding of the particular structure that guides the next four chapters. Because each chapter reflects a part of the analysis that make it possible to study the individual as a dynamic whole, it is important to establish the significance of this structure before moving forward.

Consistent with the theoretical framework I sketched out in chapter one, the life story each respondent constructed reflects the multidimensionality and complexity of identity. In this respect, the story each composed is like a painting with geographical bearings. In the foreground are the personal experiences and personality characteristics, which draw us closer to seeing the respondent as an individual person, differentiated from others, and simultaneously similar. In the midground are the influential people that nurtured each respondent's personal and social development. In focusing on the midground, we gain a sense of the role played by others (family, friends, mentors, teachers and so on) in shaping each respondent's personal and social development. This includes both the positive and/or negative effects these other individuals have had either in stunting and/or nurturing the respondent's personal growth. In casting our gaze on the background, we see the varied localities that each individual's life is in embedded, and which informs his or her sense of self and identity. In this sense, the backgrounds are the settings against which the foreground and midground gain their vividness, richness, complexity and significance.

Across each individual's life story, the backgrounds differed with respect to the details that were included and emphasized. They also varied in how they were made to relate to the

foreground and midground. Nonetheless, each background provides a specific view of the historical, cultural, social, political, and economic forces within varied localities that frame each respondent's lived experiences. All respondents shared at least three common social locations (Black, immigrant and a member of a non-Anglophone community), and were provided with the same parameters for narrating his or her life story. However, each composition revealed a different set of changes and dynamics relating to how racial and cultural identities are socially and subjectively experienced over time and place. To render visibility to the multiple dimensions of the life stories, magnify the uniqueness of individual experiences and highlight shared struggles across cases, the next four chapters are intentionally organized so that each provides a view of different dynamic relationships. For example, Chapter 3, which follows, shows the connections among each individual's story, his or her group memberships, and the local/global contexts of his or her identity development. Chapter 4 highlights the influence that the past has had in shaping how one group of individual respondents make meaning of the present as they navigate race, culture and different systems of power relations within the U.S. context. Chapter 5 focuses in on the second collection of stories, which gives greater attention to the influence that, others, and varied physical and cultural environments have had in shaping the behaviors, outlook and emotional states of individual respondents. Chapter 6 brings together the three different narratives in the previous chapters and integrates them into one story that seeks to provide new insights and future directions for the study of Black racial and immigrant cultural identity.

CHAPTER 3

The Temporal, National and Global Context of Development

Central to this study is the perspective that identity development occurs within a particular social, cultural, historical and political context. For immigrants, this process occurs within two or more countries. As all the respondents that participated in this study are immigrants, their lives are embedded within two or more settings within which Black racial and cultural identity development occurs in a particular matrix of social, cultural, political, and historical relationships. This chapter brings these differently marked sites into close view for analysis. Weis and Fine (2012) stressed that narrative material should be deliberately placed within context in order to understand how structures shape lives, and how individuals negotiate and resist them. To arrive at such an understanding, this chapter moves across the global, local, and historical context of each respondent's development. It, therefore, provides a view of the larger external and temporal worlds that frame the life of each respondent, which also informs the personal narrative each constructed. In providing a view of the multiple context of development, this chapter brings greater coherence to each individual's life story.

The Contemporary Context of Globalization and Black Migration

Since the Transatlantic Slave Trade, which resulted in the forced transportation of Africans from diverse countries and cultural backgrounds, there has not been until more recently such large scale accelerated movement among Africans, and their descendants from Latin

America and the Caribbean (Roberts, 2005). The contemporary and voluntary movement of these groups in the 20th and 21st century is in part a reflection of global dynamics, including the globalized market economy that directs the flows of goods, money and labor within and beyond nations (Castle, 2002). It is also a reflection of the political and economic instability, and the corruption that plagues many developing countries. These factors drive individuals and families to migrate in search of more, if not better, economic and educational opportunities. As a result of these dynamics, the United States, France, Canada, England, Sweden, Australia and a number of other developed countries have all reported an increase in their foreign born population as more immigrants of color take up residence (Suarez-Orozco & Qin-Hilliard, 2004).

Although less documented and occurring on a much smaller scale, developing countries have also experienced increasing flows of Black migration. These movements tend to be internal (from the country side to the city) and intraregional. For example, within the Caribbean, there are significant numbers of Haitian immigrants in the Dominican Republic (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, 2006). Likewise, there are sizable Dominican immigrant communities in Puerto Rico, Venezuela, Aruba, and Martinique (Duany, 2005). In Central America, the country of Panama and Costa Rica have Black populations that are the descendants of British West Indians who migrated to these settings to work on constructing the Panama Canal, the railroad systems and to man banana plantations (Harpelle, 1993). Within Africa, violence, civil wars, and economic decline in the West (Sierra Leon Liberia, Cote d' Ivoire and Nigeria), Central (Democratic Republic of Congo), East (Sudan) and in the Horn of Africa

(Somalia, Eritrea) spurred contemporary trans-Saharan migration (Bakewell & Hein de Hass, 2007).

These movements are part of the larger contemporary process of globalization. They are also changing the way national identities and cultural belonging have traditionally been experienced by unmaking the neat fit among territory, language and identity (Suarez-Orozco & Qin-Hilliard, 2004). The unprecedented acceleration in the movement of people, the formation of transnational communities, and the advent of new information technologies (such as the Internet) have all been identified as contributing to the deterritorialization of national borders (Schiller, Basch & Blanc, 1995; Hermans & Kempen, 1998; Portes, Huarnizo & Landolt, 1999; Arnett, 2002; Diaz & Zirkel, 2012). These changes, which are part of the broader sociocultural changes that define the current era of globalization led psychologist Edward Sampson (1989) to declare: “The functional unit whose understanding we must seek is no longer the individual as currently understood, but something more globalized in its form (p. 917). Likewise, Patterson and Kelly (2000) maintain that the Black world can only be understood in the context of the larger world and vice versa. To bring greater visibility to these interconnections, this chapter is organized as followed. First, a demographic profile is provided of each respondent’s larger U.S. immigrant community. This is done for the purpose of establishing a general understanding of the different groups of foreign nationals that are part of this global community. Thereafter, a profile of each respondent’s origin country is constructed with a specific focus on national demographics, group relations and the sociopolitical dynamics that serve as a push factor for migration (intraregional level and the U.S.). Next, a brief summary of each participant’s life

story is provided. I highlight how the respondent connects him or herself to these broader settings and the groups within them. Lastly, a summary of the empirical research conducted on each respondent's immigrant and ethnic community is included in order to highlight the larger significance of the life stories, which reflect subjective representations and interpretations of the past and present.

African Born U.S. Immigrants: Population Overview

According to U.S. census data collected in 2010, immigrants from Africa are the most recently arriving and fastest growing Black immigrant groups. Majority (78 percent) entered the U.S. in 1990 or later. The top sending countries for the African born are: Nigeria, Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan, Sierra Leone, Cameroon, Eritrea, and Guinea (Kent, 2007). It is estimated that if the growth of the African population continues to follow the trends of the past decade, Africa will likely replace the Caribbean as the major source region for the U.S. Black immigrant population (Migration Policy Institute, 2012). African immigrants are also the most educated within the larger Black immigrant population, and are much more likely than other immigrants to enter the U.S. through the diversity visa program (designed to promote pluralism in immigration). Additionally, they are more likely to be admitted to the U.S. as refugees or through political asylum. In terms of race, seventy-four percent of African immigrants (1.1 million) are reported to racially identify as Black in 2009 based on U.S. census data collected from 1980-2009 (McCabe, 2011).

In the present study, the African born respondents emigrated to the U.S. from Ethiopia, Sudan, and Guinea. Each country of these countries has a unique history, cultures, economic and political structures, and systems of social relations. Because each respondent weaves the dynamics within his or her origin country into his or her life story, a sociocultural, historical, economic and political profile of each country is followed.

Ethiopian Immigrants

Ethiopian immigrants constitute the third largest immigrant group in the U.S. (Getahun, 2007). The population is numbered a little over 200,000 (U.S. Census bureau, 2009-2013 American Community Survey). This immigrant community reflects much diversity in terms of class, religion, and political and cultural affiliation as well as modes of entry into the United States. Although Amharic is the national language of Ethiopia, it is the mother tongue of only 20 percent of the population as there are about 77 different ethnic groups, with the largest three being the Oromo, Amhara, and Tigray (Fransen & Kuschminder, 2009). Internal divisions are based on ethnic and religious differences that are often tied to differences in political views (Karbo, 2013). Although Ethiopia is one of the poorest countries in the world, it is nonetheless rich in its history and culture. It is one of the only African countries without a history of European colonization as it was able to successfully fight off, among other encroachments, a brutal 1930s Italian invasion. The country's rich cultural heritage is also reflected in its diverse religious groups, which includes Ethiopian Jews, Muslims, Orthodox Christians, Protestants, and so on (The Central Intelligence Agency-CIA, The World Factbook on Ethiopia,

https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-worldfactbook/geos/countrytemplate_et.html

(retrieved August 1, 2014).

Consistent with the larger foreign born-African population, Ethiopian immigrants are a fairly new immigrant group to the United States. A big push factor for interregional and international migration was a protracted famine and the resultant overthrow of the emperor, Haile Sellassie in 1974 by the Marxist-Leninist military group. In *The History of Ethiopian Immigrants and Refugees in America*, Solomon Addis Getahun (2007) distinguishes two waves of mass migration, the pre-1980 wave (political asylees) and the post-1980 wave (political refugees). The former group came to the U.S. prior to the 1974 revolution, and some came during its early stages. Those who came prior to the revolution consisted of highly educated Ethiopians. These groups included tourists, businessmen, students from well-to-do families, and students that had parents with connections in high places. This group traveled to the U.S. before the war broke out, but failed to return home because of the revolution. Immediately following the war, Ethiopian government officials opposed to the communist military also left the country and many were admitted to the United States. Their entry was largely influenced by a U.S. immigration policy that was increasingly shaped by Cold War politics. Amira, the Ethiopian respondent that participated in this study, is part of the pre-1980 cohort. She has an affluent background. Her father had a well-paying job and was a respected member of his community. They lived in the national capital in the city of Addis Ababa before he made the decision to seek employment and relocate his family to the U.S., specifically Los Angeles, California. Not only

did the move change the course of each of their lives, it also expanded the context of Amira's personal, social and cultural identity development.

Although Amira and her family's exit out of Ethiopia occurred prior to the 1980s, it is important to understand the dynamics that resulted in the second wave of Ethiopian migration to the United States. Had Amira and her family been part of the second wave, the historical undertones within her life story might have been much different. According to Getahun (2007), the second wave arriving to the U.S. in the 1980s came from refugee camps located mainly in Sudan. This group consisted of political refugees that left Ethiopia because the military conducted mass arrests and killings, which were referred to as the "Red Terror." These groups were also the victim of drought and famine, which plagued the country during the war. As refugees, they not only differed in their mode of entry to the U.S. as compared to the pre-1980 wave, but they also were more diverse in terms of social, economic and educational background. However, once in the U.S., both groups dispersed throughout the country with the largest populations concentrated in metropolitan and gateway cities, including New York, Washington, D.C., Los Angeles, Dallas, Houston, Seattle and Atlanta (Kent, 2007). Amira and her family are among the groups that settled in Los Angeles California and New York City. These two contexts are the backgrounds against which she recounts her experiences in the United States. Her story is presented and analyzed in Chapter 4 alongside two others, which share a common organizational and thematic structure wherein historical, cultural and political struggles are central to the narrative each constructs. Amira's story also has its own uniqueness. It magnifies the interrelated effects of class, skin color, and ethnicity in shaping her social and subjective

experiences with race. Additionally, her story highlights the influence Ethiopia and its political situation had in influencing her and her family's acculturation to the United States.

Empirical Research

Despite being one of the largest African immigrant populations in the U.S., there are very few studies that focus on this community's sociocultural and racial experiences within the U.S. context. Most of the research on the subject of acculturation and Ethiopian immigrants has been undertaken in other countries. For example, the acculturation and settlement of Ethiopian Jews in Israel has the subject of various inquires (Ponizovsky, Ginath, Durst, Wondimeneh, Safro, Minuchin-Itzigson & M. Ritsner, 1998; Ojanuga, 1993; Soskolne & Shtarkshall, 2002). Other studies have focused on the adjustment of Ethiopian immigrants in European countries such as England (Papadopoulos, Lees & Gebrehiwot, 2004; Palmer, 2007) and Italy (Andall, 2002). Among the few studies that focus on Ethiopian immigrants in the U.S., two deal specifically with the subject of identity and immigrant adaptation (Chacko, 2003; Kibour, 2001). Chacko's study explored whether ethnicity or race informed personal identification among a group of Ethiopian immigrants in the United States, and found that ethnicity trumps race. Kibour (2001) examined the psychological consequences (specifically depression) faced by Ethiopian immigrants who undervalue, and are ambivalent about being identified and self-identifying as Black in racial terms. Both of these studies are important and contribute significantly to our understanding of the societal/structural influences on Black immigrant racial identification and the emotive consequences associated with poor racial self-esteem. However, the present investigation differs

from both of these inquiries in that the Ethiopian participant in this study is not ambivalent about being identified and self-identifying as Black. Amira's story, therefore, provides a much needed understanding of the factors that contribute to the development of a healthy Black racial identity among foreign born Black immigrants.

Sudanese Immigrants

Sudanese immigrants constitute another African foreign-born population in the United States. They are subsumed within the larger Black and African immigrant community, and some factions also identify as Arab. According to the U.S. census, the Sudanese immigrant population are numbered little under 40, 000 (U.S. Census bureau, 2009-2013 American Community Survey). Although Sudanese immigrants are a much smaller population as compared to Ethiopian immigrants, Sudan is among the top ten leading countries for refugees admitted into the United States between 1980 and 2005 (Kent, 2007). Like other African nations, Sudan's population reflects much ethnic, cultural and religious diversity. In the northern part of the country, the largest groups are Arabs, Nubian, Beja and the Fur who are all Muslims. In the South, the largest groups include the Dinka, Nuer, Shilluk, and Nuba (Library of Congress, 2004). The South is also home to a small Christian population. In terms of language, it is estimated that there are approximately 134 languages spoken in Sudan (Library of Congress, 2004). However, Arabic is the national language, and it is the primary language spoken in the North and Central South; English is also widely spoken as a second language in the North, and to a lesser extent, in the South.

In the global media, Sudan has been the subject of much attention. Ahmed, the Northern Sudanese respondent that participated in this study drew visibility to this reality from the start of his narrative by stating: “Most people know Sudan because of Dafur.” Although the political situation in Dafur is not figured in Ahmed’s life story, a general understanding of the religious and ethnic component of this conflict does provide an ideological context for comprehending the significance of cultural and religious identity in the country of Sudan itself, and for Ahmed. Since emigrating to the U.S., Ahmed has occupied a transnational existence. He spends his summers in Sudan annually. The other three seasons, he spends in the U.S. where he lives and works as a mathematics teacher in a New York City public high school.

Historical accounts of the conflict in Darfur generally start with a much broader view of the governmental politics that were instituted in Sudan under Egyptian (1820-1885) and then British colonial rule (1898-1956). Both assisted in creating a sociocultural and regional divide between the North and South (O’Fahey, 1996; El-Tom, 2006; Sharkey, 2008; Kustenbauder, 2012). Following Sudan’s independence in 1956, the division created by the previous colonial administrations gave rise to a powerful Arab/Muslim elite governing body, which is concentrated in the North, in the capital city of Khartoum. This group sought to spread Arab civilization and Islamic religion as part of the nation-building project, marginalizing Sudan’s diverse ethnic groups and tribes, particularly the Christian South. Further straining group relations were inequities in access to essential resources between the Arab/Muslim North and the Christian South. This drove the second civil war, which spanned a little over two decades (1983-2005), and resulted in the deaths of more than two million, uprooting the lives of over four million

(Kustenbauder, 2012). This war ended with the succession and independence of the South from the North. During this period of unrest, millions of Sudanese fled to the neighboring countries of Ethiopia, Uganda, Kenya, and Egypt. Groups of individuals were accepted as refugees for resettlement in the United States in the refugee camps established in these countries (Abusharaf, 2002).

Toward the tail end of the conflict between the North and the South, the intermittent clashes in Darfur between Fur and Arab communities emerged into a full-scale racial and ethnic conflict in 2003. U.S. government officials characterized the situation in Darfur as a “genocide,” backed by the Northern Sudanese government (Wesman, 2004). Sharkey (2008) reported that Black Muslims were killed, and women and girls raped by Arab-identifying nomadic Muslim who, in part, were driven by a sense of racial superiority. Aside from the issue of race, the cause of this conflict were also due to numerous other complex dynamics, which includes struggle over lands and natural resources between Darfur’s sedentary population and nomadic tribes; Also a source of conflict was the Northern government’s fear of insurgence from the West due to the uprising of other ethnopolitical groups in Darfur seeking greater representation and more economic support by the government.

As I indicated previously, the life history constructed by Ahmed is not scripted against the racial, religious and ethnic conflict that characterizes Sudan’s national history. However, the importance and seriousness attributed to religious and cultural identity in Sudan’s national history are emergent themes in Ahmed’s narrative construction of self and others. His narrative is analyzed and presented in Chapter 5 alongside to others. It shares with the other two stories a

common organizational and thematic structure wherein multiple movements, relocation and migration are central to the story. More specifically, his narrative illuminates the social and cultural changes, and negotiations he confronts in establishing a life for himself in both the U.S. and in Sudan. Distinct to his narrative is the influence of personality (optimism) in shaping his outlook, and how he navigates difficult situations.

Empirical Research

Empirical studies of Sudanese immigrants in the U.S. have focused mostly on refugees, and the physical and mental health issues they face (Ackerman, 1997; Tompkins, Smith, Jones & Swindells, 2006; Stoll & Johnson, 2006; LyFrancop, Paredes, Dismukes, Nicolls, Hidron, Workowski, Rodriguez-Morales, Wilson, Jones, Manyang & Kozarsky, 2007). The groups of Sudanese Refugees that have gained the most attention in both the scholarly research literature and in the wider U.S. media are the *Lost Boys of Sudan*. This group of refugees is the largest population of minors displaced by Sudan's second civil war. Approximately 3800 to 5000 of these children are currently living in the U.S. (Conly & Johnson, 2008). Their story is compelling. The war forced thousands of young children to flee their burning villages as their parents and families were killed. Composed mostly of boys, these children walked hundreds of miles to the neighboring country of Ethiopia, Kenya and Egypt. Through resettlement programs, many were relocated to the U.S., Canada and Australia to start a new life (Conley & Johnson, 2008).

Outside of the experiences of refugees, empirical research is almost nonexistent on voluntary migration among the Sudanese. However, a qualitative study conducted by Hailu, Mendoza, Lahman and Richard (2012) does examine the experiences of Diversity Visa winners, like Ahmed, who now reside in the United States. Their study focused on the expectations Diversity Visa winners have before migration as compared to the realities they face in the United States. The participants included immigrants from Albania, Morocco, Bulgaria, Ethiopia, Jordan, Togo and Ghana. The findings highlight the range of emotions the participants experienced upon winning the lottery, the expectations they had for a new life in the U.S., and the disappointments they experienced. These were largely due to the financial hardships each experienced in his or her transition. The significance of this study is that it brings to the forefront the emotional experiences of diversity lottery winners as they make the transition to life in the United States. However, in focusing exclusively on the emotion state of individuals, no attention was attributed to the influence of social, and contextual factors, including race, culture, and nationality in framing and shaping each person's transition to the United States. As Ahmed's narrative will attest, his social locations (Black and Muslim), personality characteristic (optimistic), personal values (importance attributed to education), and the forms of social support he established all played an instrumental role in shaping his transition to the United States. In this regard, the broader focus his life story provides in addition to being a diversity winner allows for a view of the constellation of factors (social, contextual and individual) that shaped his social transition.

Guinean-Conakry Immigrants

The other two African-born respondents that participated in this study both come from Guinea-Conakry, which is among the ten leading countries for African born U.S. Black immigrants (Kent, 2007). The social, historical and political profile provided on Guinea is informed by two different sources: (1) the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency's World Fact book, an online data base containing general demographic information on the different countries around the world, and a historical/political analysis of national citizenship in Guinea by Robert Groelsema (1998).

The county of Guinea-Conakry is located in West Africa, and is a former colony of France. It gained its independence 1958, and has since experienced many periods of political turmoil, which is an issue that has also affected Fatima and her family directly. Fatima's decision to remain in the U.S. and apply for political asylum is the result of the worsening political situation her mother was facing in Guinea. Fatima is one of two respondents from Guinea-Conakry that participated in this study. She is a wife, mother and a recent college graduate. Ali is the second respondent and is a sophomore in college. Both are fluent in French and English in addition to being other languages tied to ethnicity. Like most African nations, Guinea-Conakry's national population is ethnically and linguistically diverse. The three largest ethnic groups are the Fulani (or Puel) followed by Malinke, and Susu. Region and ethnicity constitute two important boundaries of identity because different regions are populated predominately by different groups. Groelsema (1998) indicates that the three major groups are distributed across three different regions within Guinea. The Fulani ethnic group inhabits middle Guinea, the Malinke group is

further east, and the Susu group dominates the low lying coastal region. Although differences in group history and claims to larger African empires also shape political divisions, particularly between the Malinke and Fulani ethnic groups, moving and mixing has also occurred among these groups. As a result, group boundaries lines are fluid and flexible.

Although Ali did not specify his ethnic background, Fatima did indicate that she is the product of two of the three largest ethnic groups in Guinea. Her father is Malinke and her mother is Fulani, She developed fluency in both of her parent's ethnic language. In terms of religion, the majority of Guinea's population (85%) is Muslim as are both Ali and Fatima. During her interview, Fatima was wearing a white hijab. This is a veil that covers the head and chest, and is traditionally worn by Muslim women. The hijab symbolizes many things, including modesty, virtue and respect (Siraj, 2011). Fatima's ultimate decision to wear the hijab is a subject that she speaks candidly about in her narrative, although it is not the central focus of her story.

Ali, on the other hand, was more reluctant in talking about his religious identity. His narrative was framed around the easygoing life he lived with his grandparents in Guinea-Conakry as compared to the difficulties and challenges he has faced upon reuniting with his parents and meeting his U.S. born siblings for the first. His narrative was not selected for presentation and analysis. Nonetheless, his story highlights the disruptions that migration creates in the family structure, and the challenges that accompany family reunification. Fatima's life history, which is analyzed and presented in Chapter 5, reflects some of these same themes. Her story is presented along Ahmed's story because central to its organizational and thematic structure are issues concerned with the changes and negotiations that accompany of multiple

movements, relocation, and migration. However, specific to her story are the forms of intersectionality it magnifies. Through her narrative, we see the workings of class, language, gender, and religion in influencing her pre- and post-migration experiences. These social locations both empower and challenge her sense of self and belonging. In being able to overcome the various challenges she has faced in her life course, her story ultimately magnifies the resiliency of the human spirit, and the individual's adaptive capability.

Empirical Research

Guinean immigrants constitute a much smaller group in relation to other immigrants from West Africa (e.g. Nigeria, Ghana and Benin). Empirical research on the experiences of Guinean U.S. immigrants is nonexistent. Contributing to this dearth in research is the newness of African born immigrants to the U.S. more generally.

Latin American Born U.S. Immigrants: Population Overview

Data on the Latin American-born U.S. immigrant population is broken up into two regions, Central and South America. Central America is comprised of seven countries, Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama. South America is comprised of twelve countries, Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Paraguay, Peru, Suriname, Uruguay and Venezuela. The participants in this study that are from Central America were born in the country of Costa Rica and Panama. The South American born respondent is from Brazil, a country that boasts the largest population of African descended outside of the continent of Africa. Based on U.S. census data from 2011, it is estimated that the foreign born immigrants to the US from Central America are numbered at approximately 3.1

million (Stoney & Batalova, 2013), and those from South America are numbered at 2.7 million (Stoney, Batalova & Russell, 2013). Comprising of a grand total of more than 6 million, the Latin born are the second largest U.S. immigrant population after immigrants from Asian countries (Nwosu, Batalova & Auclair, 2014).

Within Central America, the top three sending countries are El Salvador (41 percent), Guatemala (28 percent) and Honduras (16 percent). A much smaller population comes from Panama (3 percent) and Costa Rica (3 percent) (Nwosu, Batalova and Auclair, 2014). Despite constituting a significantly smaller share of the Central American born immigrant population, immigrants from Panama are a relatively large group are estimated at 103, 874 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009-2013 American Community Survey, Place of Birth for the Foreign-Born Population).

Within South America, the top sending countries are Colombia (24 percent), Ecuador (16 percent), Peru (15 percent) and Brazil (12 percent). In terms of specific numbers, immigrants from Brazil are estimated at 335, 132 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009-2013 American Community Survey, Place of Birth for Foreign-Born Population).

For Latin born immigrants from both Central and South America, the greater New York metropolitan area is home to significant numbers. This is also the case for Rita, a former professional Brazilian dancer, a yoga instructor and college administrator, and for husband and wife Carlos and Nadia. Carlos is a minister and religious leader born in Costa Rica and Nadia is a college English instructor and the assistant director of a minority program. She was born in Panama. Consistent with the mode of entry most typical for immigrants from Central and South

America, all three of the Latin American born participants in this study entered the U.S. lawfully. However, Rita, over-stayed a U.S. travel visa, and was eventually able to file for amnesty likely through the Nicaraguan Adjustment and Central American Relief Act, which was passed under President Clinton's Administration. This government legislation granted amnesty to 1,000,000 illegal aliens from Central America (Library of Congress, 1998).

Outside of demographic distribution, typical mode of entry, and the U.S. governmental policies that affected immigrants from Central and South America most directly, the subject of race, language and culture are also crucial for understanding the different factors that shape the lives of the respondents from Costa Rica, Panama and Brazil. Changes were made to the 2000 U.S. census giving individuals the option to identify with more than one race. Previously Black persons of Latin origin were often faced with the dilemma of having to choose between the category "Black" or "Hispanic" when filling out government forms (Mendez, 2000). Based on the definition provided by the U.S. Census Bureau, the category "Hispanic" or "Latino" refer to persons that are Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, and of other Spanish cultural origins regardless of race (Humes, Jones & Ramirez, 2011). Although the concept of Hispanic or Latino is a pan-ethnic identification rather than a racial location, Blackness has often been positioned as foreign to being Hispanic or Latin both within the U.S. and throughout Central and South America. Social scientists within the disciplines of anthropology and Latin American studies have attributed the exclusion of Blackness within Central and South America to national discourses of *Mestizaje*, *Mulataje* and other notions of racial mixture (Martinez-Echazabal, 1998; Hooker, 2005; Rahier, 2008; Silva & Reis, 2012). This ideology has dominated

constructions of national identity throughout Central and South America since the Nineteenth Century.

Mainstream media representations of Latin persons have also played an instrumental role in broadening the discourse that Latin Americans are non-Black, but are a people of mixed races (mostly White and Indian), but bearing a resemblance closer to Whiteness. This is illustrated in Rahier's (2008) analysis of Ecuadorian visual and mainstream media representation of its national citizenry. Rahier finds that Afro-Ecuadorians continue to be constructed as national outsiders despite recent changes from a discourse of monocultural *mestizaje* to an endorsement of multiculturalism at the level of government. The life histories constructed by two out of the three Latin born respondents, Carlos and Nadia's, are framed against this ideological background of Black exclusion. Rita's story is a bit different. She is of mixed racial heritage, and grew up in a Black neighborhood in Bahia Brazil. The latter has shaped her racial identity more than the former.

Black Costa Ricans

Because slavery and plantation life played a minor role in Costa Rica as compared to other Latin American countries during the colonial period, a national discourse of White exceptionalism emerged (Campo-Engelstein & Meagher, 2011). The Costa Rican government espoused that their country was not only different from their Central American neighbors and even other countries in Latin America, but they were also better: specifically, as more White, peaceful, egalitarian and democratic. Threatening this White self-image in the early twentieth

century was the growing population of English speaking West Indian migrant workers. They formed a sizable immigrant community on the Caribbean coast in the province city of Puerto Limon (Harpelle, 1993). These workers were recruited to build railways, work on docks and man banana plantations owned by the United Fruit Company, which was one of the first multinational corporations. It now operates under the brand name Chiquita (Bucheli, 2005). The cultivation of Bananas ultimately made Costa Rica one of the world's leading 'banana republics' (Harpelle, 1993).

Carlos, the Costa Rican born respondent that participated in this study, traces his ancestry to the population of migrant workers that were hired by American businessman Minor Keith to help build the railways. Although many of the workers eventually left Costa Rica after the government began to enact racially biased labor laws, some factions, including Carlos's family stayed. The life story Carlos tells is structured around the social, cultural and political struggles he has faced as a descendant of this population. The historical profile of West Indian migrant workers that follows highlights this history.

West Indian Migrant Workers Negotiating Marginality in Costa Rica

The social history of West Indian migrant workers who came to Costa Rica to work on the railroads, the docks, and later on Banana plantations is one of economic exploitation, and discrimination rooted in xenophobia and fear of a "Black invasion" (Sharman, 2001).

The construction of the railways began in 1871. However production was halted due to financial problems, and a shortage in the labor force. As a result of these issues, West Indian

men, mostly Jamaicans, were imported in large numbers to help complete construction. Although the government of Costa Rica had laws in place against the immigration of non-Europeans, American contractors used the argument that these groups were more resistant to the hardships of working in the tropics to justify their recruitment (Harrell, 1993). These groups were paid low wages, so to entice them to stay and finish the construction, the government allowed the new settlers to work on small farms that could later be purchased for a modest price (Koch, 1977). Coinciding with the construction of the railroads was the successful cultivation of Bananas, which eventually became a booming export business for the United Fruit Company. As the success of the Banana exportation grew, more Black British West Indians were imported to man plantations. As employment was available all year around on the company owned plantations, the West Indian migrant workers were able to sustain a healthy livelihood for themselves and their families. Because they lived in isolation from the larger Costa Rican nationals, these groups were also able to maintain much of their cultural heritage, including their proficiency in English.

The social and economic situation of the West Indian migrant workers living and working in the province of Limón soon took a downturn as White highlanders began pouring into the lowlands. The success of the Banana boom coincided with higher wages, which created competition for employment. Harpelle (1993) explains that upon arriving in Limón, Costa Ricans began protesting against what they discovered to be an entrenched West Indian community with whom they were competing against for work, and who were paid higher wages. Tensions increased in 1927 when the census revealed that over 21,000 people of African descent lived in the country. Costa Rican nationals then began to fear that the West Indian workers living mostly

in the province of Limón would migrate to the other side of the country and “Africanise” yet another part of the nation (Harpelle, 1993). Because of this fear, a series of legislative measures by the government were enacted (Sharman, 2001). For example, in the late 1930s when the United Fruit Company moved its operation to the Pacific Coast after the Caribbean coast was hit by a devastating plant fungus, the national government obliged the company to adopt racist labor practices aimed at restricting Black movement. The company's contract was only renegotiated based on their agreement not to hire any persons of color in the Pacific coast, and to give preference to White Costa Ricans for employment. Subsequently, rules on immigration were tightened, and the government prohibited immigration of Blacks, Chinese, Arabs, and other persons of color. During this period, West Indian farmers living in the Caribbean coast were asked to pay higher rent on rented farmlands, and the police began to enforce policies of racial segregation much like the Jim Crow laws enacted in North America. As these and other racist policies were enforced, the employment and living conditions for West Indians became more tenuous. As a result, thousands of West Indians moved to the neighboring country of Panama where they found work in the Panama Canal Zone (Harpell, 1993). Others migrated to the United States. The West Indians that remained, which includes Carlos's family, continued to be subjected to racist governmental policies. This included being denied national citizenship. As a result of the marginalization and disenfranchisement these groups experienced many joined the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), which was a political organization founded by Marcus Gravy in 1919 (Mitchell & Pentzer, 2008). Gravy had worked for the United Fruit Company in Costa Rica and returned in 1921 to promote UNIA's program for education and

promotion of Black culture to the residents of Limón and the smaller communities on the southern coast (Mitchell & Pentzer, 2008).

A major turning point for the West Indian community's social, economic and political condition in Costa Rica coincided with their political participation in the 1948 civil war. Many supported reformist Jose Figueres who emerged as the victor and seized control of the government. He initiated sweeping changes in national ideology, including deemphasizing racial divisions, extending citizenship to all Afro-Caribbeans, expanding national education, and making Spanish the language of instruction for most of the newly Afro-Costa Rican children. Moreover, a small number of Black persons were placed in elected local and regional positions. However, as Purcelle and Sawyers (1993) points out, these groups were given no dispensation beyond their legal rights as immigrant citizens, and no affirmative government policies were instituted. For Carlos, the respondent that participated in this study, the sweeping changes, which occurred before his time did little to change how he experienced life in Costa Rica as a person of visible African descent and Jamaican heritage. Carlo's life history is presented in chapter 4 along Amira's story. Similar to her story, his narrative is organized and thematically structured around the themes of historical, cultural, and political struggle. Distinct to his story are the specific racialized experiences he had in different localities and the influence each has on his cultural, ethnic, and national identity.

Empirical Research

Because Costa Rican born immigrants are a significantly small share (3%) of the larger Latin immigrant population in the United States, there is very little empirical research on this group. Far less attention has been given to the descendants of West Indian migrant workers. According to the U.S. Census, immigrants from Costa Rica are estimated at 82, 203, and out of this population an estimated 5, 443 individuals self-identify as Black or African American alone, or in combination with one or more other races (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006-2010 American Community Survey Selected Population Tables). The combination of being a smaller share of the Latin or Hispanic U.S. immigrant population, and not fitting into the prototypical representations of this group has contributed to the social invisibility of Black Costa Ricans. Outside of the plethora of empirical research that has focused on the U.S. immigrant population from the Dominican Republic, the social and subjective experiences of Black immigrants from Central and South America remains largely understudied. The present investigation brings visibility to the lived experiences of such individuals. Through the presentation and analysis of Carlos's life history, this dissertation draws visibility to the complexity and fluidity of identity. It also renders greater visibility to the shared and distinctly different racialized experiences faced by persons of African descent within and outside the larger Spanish-speaking community.

Black Panama & Panamanians of West Indian Descent

The second Latin American born respondent that participated in this study is Nadia. She is Panamanian of West Indian descent. The social history of Black Panamanians is parallel to that of Black Costa Ricans of West Indian descent. As I highlighted in the previous section,

many West Indians who left Costa Rica moved to the Panama Canal Zone where they were able to find work. Outside of this group, a significant number of British West Indian immigrants from Trinidad, Barbados, Martinique and Jamaica were recruited by the U.S. government to assist in building the canal in 1904 after France was unable to see the project through (Frankel, 2002). Nadia traces her lineage to this group: “I stem from the builders of the Panama Canal.”

For most of the twentieth century, these groups were caught between two systems of racial hierarchicalization (the U.S. and Panama). From the U.S., West Indian laborers were subjected to racial discrimination. They were obliged to live in racially segregated and unequally maintained towns, which were constructed in the Canal Zone for Canal employees. These towns existed independently and in isolation from the larger country of Panama. Within them, “Jim Crow affected all aspects of society down to the layout of public buildings such as commissaries and post offices” (Frankel, 2002, p.93). Additionally, West Indians were paid significantly lower wages than White U.S. laborers. The difference in pay, which was initially reflected in the type of currency used to pay each group, became a euphemism for referring to the different sides of town, “Silver” and “Gold” (Biesanz, 1950). West Indian towns and facilities were designated as the “Silver roll” based on the silver-backed currency of Panama in which they were paid. White towns and facilities were referred to as the “Gold roll” because workers were paid in the gold-backed currency of the United States. In narrating her life story, Nadia draws on this history because it was part of the lived reality her grandparents and parents faced. Ultimately, she sees their history as intertwined with hers: “I am a mixed from my father who experienced this with his father—having lived in the silver roll, and going to the silver roll schools; they were better

than the Hispanic side where my mother went because there was more money, but they were still in lower quality to the White Golden side.”

From Panamanian nationals, West Indian laborers had to deal with issues relating to their status as unwanted Black immigrants, and the perception that they increased competition in the local labor market (O'Reggio, 2006). In the latter case, they were perceived as taking jobs away from “legitimate Panamanians,” (George Priestley, 2004). Moreover, their cultural differences as English speaking Blacks were viewed as incongruent with Panama's Spanish culture and its preferred mestizo self-image. Although Panama also has a Black population that descended from African slaves (commonly referred to as “colonial blacks),” this population had increasingly become racially mixed due to miscegenation (Biesanz, 1949). Therefore, West Indian migrant workers and their Panamanian born children were visibly different not only because of language and culture, but also because skin color was also used as maker of difference. As this population grew, anti-West Indian sentiments soared, and Panamanian nationals began to call for the deportation of West Indians. In response to these calls, the national government approved a series of anti-immigration Policies over the course of two decades. For example, in 1904 a law was passed that prohibited immigrant Blacks who did not speak Spanish (De Paulis, 2007). In 1928 a constitutional amendment was used deny citizenship to West Indians born in Panama until adulthood. This left a large number of Panamanian children of West Indian heritage without nationality (De Paulis, 2007). The logic used to enforce this policy was based on the viewpoint that the Canal Zone was not under the effective jurisdiction of the Panamanian government (Priestley, 2004). Although the Constitution of 1946 gave conditional citizenship to

the children of West Indians born in Panama, it was not until the early 1950s that thousands were able to gain full citizenship (Priestley, 2004).

Although the political situation of West Indians improved by the 1950s, their social and economic situation would continue to take a downturn especially after 1955. As the U.S. and Panama reached an agreement, reflected in the Remón-Eisenhower treaty, the U.S. began the process of moving out of the Canal Zone and began to relinquishing their power over the area to the Panamanian government. Priestley (2004) explains that decolonization process had an adverse effect on the West Indian population residing in the communities within in the U.S. Canal Zone. Many had to move out, lost their jobs, and were now obliged to pay taxes to the Panamanian government. When many were unable to find work to sustain themselves and their families, thousands migrated to North America in the 1960s, specifically moving into Brooklyn and Queens (Priestley, 2004).

In Nadia's case, her immediate family (comprising of her mother, sister and father) were among the populations that eventually left Panama. Although Nadia did not specify exactly when her family left, their migratory journey took on a number of different routes, which included their return to Panama before Nadia settled more permanently in the U.S. in her adulthood. In Chapter 5, Nadia's story is presented and analyzed alongside Ahmed's (the Sudanese respondent) and Fatima's story (the Guinean respondent). Similar to the narrative constructed by these two respondents, Nadia's narrative is organized and structured around themes of relocation, multiple movements and migration. Her story is also distinctive in that it magnifies the particular

types of negotiations she faces in different contexts as Black person of Latin descent. Her story also speaks to the intersections of gender, culture and race.

Empirical Research on Black identified Panamanian U.S. immigrants of West Indian Descent

Empirical research on the U.S. Black Panamanian immigrant community is extremely limited. This is due in part to the small size of this immigrant community. According to U.S. Census data, of the 102, 223 U.S. immigrants born in the country of Panama, 36, 474 claimed to be Black or African American alone, or in combination with one or more other races (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006-2010 American Community Survey Selected Population Tables). The greatest concentration of American Panamanians of West Indian descent live in New York City, but primarily in central Brooklyn in the neighborhoods of Crown Heights and Flatbush (Priestley, 2004). Because this group lives in close proximity to a variety of people from the Caribbean, demographers and social scientists have tended to classify them as West Indians. This immigrant community has therefore remained relatively invisible, and so have their social histories and subjective experiences.

Of the few empirical studies of Afro-Latin U.S. immigrants, Anulkah Thomas (2005) conducted a qualitative investigation that explores racial and ethnic identity negotiations among second-generation American youths of Afro-Latin American backgrounds within the context of Southern California. Of the nine individuals that participated in the in-depth interviews she conducted, three were of Afro-Panamanian background. Thomas (2005) found that the dominant construction of Latin persons in California excluded these individuals. Each, depending on skin

tone and physical features had to negotiate this exclusion in their own ways. For example, darker-skinned individuals were more likely to have their claim to Latindad challenged. Their demonstrated proficiency in Spanish was often required to authenticate their claim to a Latin ethnicity. Thomas's (2005) findings are consistent with some of the challenges that Nadia, Carlos and Rita's spoke candidly about in their stories. However, distinct to the present study is that all the Latin respondents are immigrants, and therefore each individual's life stretches across different geographical locations, As a result, each life story provides a broader multi-contextual and developmental perspective on negotiating ethnicity, race and national identity among Afro-Latin individuals.

Afro-Brazil

Rita is the third Latin American born respondent in this study. She is of mixed racial heritage as her great grandmother was White Portuguese and married her grandfather who was considered a mulatto. They bore her grandmother who looks Indian and has green eyes. Rita's mother married a Black man, and together they had eight children. Rita is the third born.

The social history of Brazil is parallel to other Latin American countries in that attitudes toward mixing between groups during and following decolonization were more relaxed (Willems, 1949). Outside of this common factor, Brazil is very unique from the rest of Latin America on many fronts. It not only is the largest country in the region, but is also the only Portuguese speaking nation due to history as a former colony of Portugal. Distinct to its history, Brazil is the last country in the Americas to abolish slavery, and end the importation of Africans

as slaves (Alberto, 2011). Because Africans were being imported in the last decades of the 19th century, and were located mainly in urban cities, including Salvador da Bahia where Rita is from, Brazil has rich and vibrant African cultural traditions. Condomble is one of them. Rita belongs to this religious sector, which is rooted in the Yoruba tradition. Also distinct to Brazil is that it has the world's largest multi-racial population (Andrews, 1996; Htun, 2004). Moreover, Brazil holds the title for having the world's largest population of African descended people outside of Africa (Andrews, 1996; Htun, 2004). The richness of its history coupled with the uniqueness of its culture and national population has made Brazil a center focus on the world stage particularly with regards to the study of race, music and culture.

Although Brazil's unique racial composition has been, and continues to be the focus of much interest at the level of academic scholarship, and in the wider global media, the promotion of race mixing was initial a governmental strategy aimed at whitening the majority mestizo and Black population. Silva and Reis (2012) indicated that this racist strategy was adopted by elites in the wake of decolonization in response to European and U.S. racial thought, which condemned racially mixed societies based on the racist science of eugenics. Much later, the idea of whitening was abandon, and a revision of Brazil's national identity was inspired by the intellectual thought of social theorist Gilberto Freyre (Andrews, 1996). Based on his experiences as a student in the U.S. where he witnessed the horrors of racial segregation, Gilberto Freyre espoused a different view of racial mixture, which was taken up as national ideology. Rather than being a transitional road to Whiteness or a shameful aspect of the national character, Gilberto Freyre emphasized the symbolism of racial mixture as the embodiment of racial

democracy and unity that would set Brazil above, and apart from other nations, particularly the United States.

Brazil has one of the most complex racial classifications systems, which intersects with class and education. Majority of Black Brazilians live below the poverty line, have inadequate housing and have higher rates of illiteracy (Htun, 2004). Rita's Black racial identification and her class location in Brazil coincide with the national picture. She describes growing up in Salvador da Bahia in a really poor Black neighborhood—a *Favela* (a shanty town). Within the context of Brazil, her narrative brings visibility to the role class and culture plays in framing and shaping how she experienced her life. Although she grew up in an extremely poor neighborhood, it was extremely rich in Black culture. Her grandmother's decision to enroll her in a better school in the city changed the course of her life. It gave Rita the opportunity to try out for a school dance troupe, which helped her to gain admittance into a Brazilian dance company. This opportunity allowed her to travel throughout Latin America and most of Europe during her early teens and young adulthood. In her mid-thirties, she was invited by a business contact to teach a series of Brazilian dance courses at a prestigious university in California. After overstaying her travel visa after her teaching obligations end, Rita's story as an undocumented immigrant began. Her story was not selected for presentation and analysis because it shares a common organizational and thematic structure as the narratives constructed by Nadia, Fatima and Ahmed. It highlights the role relocation, multiple movements, and migration to the U.S. played in shaping the changes she experienced in her personal sense of self. Nonetheless, her story has its own distinct qualities as well. Specifically, it highlights the influence of race, immigration status, and

representations of Brazilian women as being promiscuous had in shaping the kinds of challenges and negotiations she faced within the United States.

Empirical Research on Black Identified Brazilian U.S. Immigrants

According to a report compiled by the U.S. Census Bureau in 2010, the population of foreign born individuals from Brazil living in the U.S. is estimated at 335, 505. Within this population, the report indicates that about 6% (14, 197) self-identified as Black or African American alone or in combination with one or more races. There has been a significant amount of research on Afro-Brazilian culture and race within the national context of Brazil. Some examples, include Andrew (1996), Htun, (2004), Wade (2005), Silva and Reis (2011) and Patai (2013). Within the context of the U.S. far less attention has been attributed to the Black Brazilian immigrant population. This is likely to be a reflection of the smaller size of this immigrant community as compared to other groups from Latin America. The lack of empirical research on this group might also be related to the lack of Black racial self-identification.

The Francophone and Hispanophone Caribbean: Overview

The French Caribbean consists of eight countries--Guadeloupe, Martinique, Saint-Barthelemy, Saint--Martin, French Guiana, Dominica, Haiti and Saint Lucia. The last three are independent nations. The Spanish Caribbean consists mainly of the Dominican Republic and Cuba. As the final three respondents that participated in this study are from Haiti and the Dominican Republic, sociohistorical profiles will focus exclusively on each setting. U.S.

demographic information will also focus exclusively on the U.S. immigrant population from Haiti and the Dominican Republic.

Haitian U.S. Immigrants

Haitians are the fourth largest U.S. immigrant group from the Caribbean after Cubans, Dominicans and Jamaicans (Nwosu & Batalova, 2014). According to the 2010 census, this immigrant population is estimated at 542,091. Out of this group, majority 98% racially identify as Black or African American alone or in combination with one or more other races (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006-2010 American Community Survey). Haitian migration to the U.S. has occurred along three different waves, each corresponding with some form of political turmoil in Haiti's national government. The first wave came to the U.S. in the late 1950s to early 1960s, and was composed of the upper and middle classes. These groups were the first to flee the dictatorial regime of Francois "Papa Doc" Duvalier (Wah, 2013). Jean Piere, one of two respondents from Haiti who participated in the present study, is part of this first cohort. The second wave of Haitian immigrants consisted mostly of the middle and working class. They arrived in the 1980s after the succession of power was passed down to Jean Claude Duvalier, also referred to as "Baby Doc." According to Wah (2013), over three-quarters of Haitians now residing in the U.S. arrived after the 1980s. In fact, the largest numbers recorded within a one-year period of legal immigrants (44,570) occurred in 1980-81. During this period, the U.S. also received a large numbers of Haitian refugees. They were referred to as the "Haitian boat people" by the television media. These groups of unsanctioned immigrants acquired this ascription because they landed on

Florida shores on makeshift boats. The U.S. generally viewed this population as economic migrants rather than political refugees. As a result, many were sent back to Haiti or put in detention centers. Because Cuban boat people were also landing on Florida shores during this time and were being granted political asylum, Haitian advocates claimed that racism was a central factor in shaping the differences in perception and treatment of the two groups (Stepick, 1982). As a result of the mounting pressure advocacy organizations placed on the U.S. Congress, the Haitian Refugee immigration Fair Act was passed in 1998. The act enabled Haitians that filed for asylum and those paroled in the U.S. to adjust their status to legal permanent residence (Wasem, 2005). The third wave, which consisted of both legal and undocumented immigrants, came in the 1990s following the coup d'etat against the democratically elected president Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

Following their entry into the U.S., Haitian immigrants encountered a very unwelcoming climate particularly in the 80s. During this time, not only did the media perpetuate a very negative representation of them and their country as desperately poor and pathetic people, but they were also branded as carriers of the AIDS virus and Tuberculosis by the Center for Disease Control (Stepick, 1998). Although they were later removed from this list of likely carriers of AIDS and Tuberculosis, the damage was already done. These larger representations not only contributed to the stigmatization of the Haitian ethnicity while also fueling anti-Haitian sentiments, but they also shaped the realities Haitian immigrants faced on the ground. In an ethnographic study of Haitians in Miami Florida, Stepick (1998) found that negative representations of this group in the larger society created barriers for them in employment during

the 80s, and contributed to severe ridicule, and even violence. The Haitian immigrant community has responded in various different ways to their treatment and representation, including reasserting greater pride in their ethnicity, and developing a transnational identity. Some have also been reluctant to identify themselves as Haitians (Flick-Schiller & Fouron, 1990). Others have also constructed counter narratives to combat negative U.S. societal representation of them as is reflected in the anthology, *The Butterfly's Way: Voices from the Haitian Diaspora in the United States*.

As the fourth largest Caribbean Black immigrant population in the U.S., Haitian immigrants are a very visible minority, especially in New York City, Miami Florida, Boston Massachusetts, Connecticut and New Jersey where they are concentrated (American Community Survey Briefs, 2010). They have maintained their cultural heritage and have opened restaurants, clubs, clinics and stores that cater to their community (Wah, 2013). They also belong to various associations in the U.S. that span from student and professional organizations to charitable causes for Haiti, to cultural and artistic groups and political cliques (Wah, 2013).

On January 12, 2010, Haiti and Haitians became the center stage of global media after a devastating earthquake hit the country and claimed 230, 000 thousands of lives according to the Haitian government and displaced more than 1.5 million people (Batalova & Nwosu, 2014). The country and the Haitian immigrant community received an outpouring of global support. Five years later, despite the briefly focused relief efforts and media attention, Haiti continues to struggle to recover from the damages, disease and displacement caused by the earthquake.

“Disaster Capitalism” arrived, vulture-like, to take advantage of the massive displacement—a sad example of the “*Shock Doctrine*” defined by Naomi Klein (2007).

Dialectic between Haiti's National History and Two Expatriates

Haiti is often characterized as the poorest country in the Western hemisphere. However, in 1780 it was France's most prosperous colony such that it was commonly referred to as “the pearl of the Antilles” (Girard, 2010). Following a slave revolt in 1791, which emerged into a full-fledged Haitian revolution (1802-1803), Haiti gained its emancipation, and earned a page in history as the first Black Republic in the world (Girard, 2010). Although this country played a central role in the liberation efforts of a number of Latin America countries and its independence also influenced France's sale of Louisiana, color became a source of internal division in Haiti following emancipation. The city-based mulatto elite struggled for power and control over the nation against the Black rural military elite. These on-going political struggles contributed to the tumultuous political history of the country. Moreover, after gaining independence, Haiti earned the crushing enmity of the imperialist nations in general and was burdened with seemingly everlasting debt that the Haitian people were forced to pay to France. The lack of stable government and rampant corruption also contributed to the country's impoverished economic situation (Girard, 2010). For both of the respondents born in Haiti, it is the poor economic situation in this country that served a big push factor for their migration to the United States. In their narrative, each expressed being personally affected by financial hardship and a lack of stable employment. For example, Marc and his family were sustained partially by the remittance

his mother sent to him and his family as she had already migrated to the United States. For Jean Pierre his residency as a physician in training provided him with some means to help support his mother and siblings.

Another a central push factor for migration, particularly for Jean Pierre and many other Haitians, was the reign of terror that followed the presidency of Francois Duvalier (Papa Doc). His rise to presidency in 1957 was rooted in a populist and Black Nationalist platform, which sought to shift the balance of power from the mulatto elite to the Black middle class. Although this did occur, his presidency also resulted in his installation of his own dictatorship. His reign has been characterized as a period of terror, political repression and rampant violations of human rights. Thousands of Haitians were killed and many more were exiled when deemed a threat to the government (Losecher & Scanlan, 1984). Jean Pierre's life story is framed and informed by this time in history. Because his narrative is organized and structured thematically around the themes of historical, cultural and political struggle, his story is presented and analyzed alongside Amira's and Carlos's story in Chapter 4. Although Marc's story was not selected for presentation and analysis, his narrative is thematically structured and organized around the themes of multiple movements, relocation and his migration to the United States. More specifically, his narratives focuses on culture and its intersections with race as his experiences span three different countries—Haiti, the U.S. and the Dominican Republic. Distinct to his story are challenges he faced while being raised in Haiti by his father who practiced a religion (Haitian Voodoo) that was contrary to his Christian faith.

Empirical Research

Empirical research on the Haitian immigrant community in the U.S. has been very extensive. Because this group represents one of the most studied Black immigrant populations in the United States, I will highlight a small sampling of the empirical research in order to provide a view of the scope and nature of inquiries. The majority of this research has been ethnographic. Much of this work has focused on the struggles and challenges faced by the Haitian immigrant community and the second generation in Miami Florida (Stepick, 1998; Portes & Shou, 1993), in New York City (Buchanan, 1979; Waters, 1994; Laguerre, 1984) and in smaller cities in the Midwest (Woldemiakel, 1989). Life histories interviews have also been conducted with second-generation Haitian immigrants with a focus on race and gender experiences within the context of school in New York City (Lopez 2002). Participant observations and archival research have drawn attention to Haitian transnational activities and identity formation (Glick-Schiller & Fouron, 1998; 1990). As Glick-Schiller and Fouron (1990) argue, Haitians in both the U.S. and in Haiti have formed their identities in a global context and in relation to a global audience. The present investigation adds to this existing body of research through focusing on individual lives as they unfold in, and are shaped by different national, social, cultural and political histories.

Dominican U.S. Immigrants: Population Overview

Carmen is the remaining respondent to be discuss in this study. She was born in the Dominican Republic. Within the U.S., Dominicans are the second largest Caribbean immigrant group after Cubans. Among the U.S. Hispanic immigrant population, Dominicans are the fifth largest group, and began entering the U.S. in larger numbers in the 1960s after their country

experienced economic and political turbulence following the assassination of the dictator Rafael Trujillo in 1961 (Nwosu & Batalova, 2014). As the U.S. intervened and occupied the Dominican Republic following this period, Dominicans were encouraged to migrate to the U.S. as a way to relieve political pressures in the country well into the 70s (Itzigsohn & Saucedo, 2002).

However, as the population of Dominicans in the U.S. began to grow substantially, immigrant visas became more difficult to obtain and the context of reception changed from passive and neutral to discriminatory (Itzigsohn & Saucedo, 2002). According to the 2010 U.S. Census, Dominican immigrants are numbered estimated at 802,000 and out of this population 12% (102,430) self-identify as Black or African American alone, or in combination with one or more races. Although Dominicans are predominately people of African descent, upon gaining their independence from Haiti in 1844, they defined their racial identity in opposition to their Haitian neighbor (Torres-Saillant, 1998). Within the context of the Dominican Republic, Dominicans have tended to define their racial identity as White (*blanco*), Indian (*indio*) or a mixture of the two (*mestizo*). The racial category Black is reserved for Haitians (Duany, 1998). It is this conception of race that many Dominicans bring with them to the United States.

In the U.S., Dominicans are concentrated in New York, New Jersey, Florida, Boston, and Miami. These states account for about 75 % of the total population (Nwosu & Batalova, 2014). Most Dominicans enter the U.S. lawfully although they are segments of this population that are undocumented (Nwosu & Batalova, 2014). In their adjustment to the U.S., Dominicans have faced intense stigmatization, stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination to which all people of African origin are subjected (Duany, 1998). These experiences have been linked to transnational

participation among Dominants as increasing numbers move back and forth, and orient their lives toward the U.S. and the Dominican Republic (Itzigsohn & Saucedo, 2002). Racism, therefore, constitutes a central issue that has shaped how Dominicans experience life within the context of the United States.

Because of their Spanish culture and African ancestry, Dominicans challenge the U.S. system of group categorization in that they match the criteria for inclusion in two racial categories, Black and Hispanic (Bailey (2001). Carmen's narrative echoes these challenges as her Black features and Spanish cultural background are often viewed by others as incompatible with the dominant conception and representation of what a Latina or Hispanic person looks like. However, Carmen's self-identification as a Black Dominican is not typical. In fact, a consistent findings in empirical studies is that Dominicans tend to self-identify based on nationality (Dominican), language (Spanish) or pan-ethnicity (Latino/Hispanic) while many, including darker-skinned Dominicans, reject a Black racial ascription (Duany, 1998; Itzigsohn & Dore-Cubral, 2000; Bailey, 2001; Itzigsohn & Saucedo, 2002). Carmen's life story was not selected for presentation and analysis. However, her story is thematically structure and organized around the theme of historical, cultural and political struggles. Distinct to her story are issues related to interethnic conflicts between Haitians and Dominicans, and Dominicans and Puerto Ricans, both of which have historical roots. In order to render greater visibility to these histories, I now provide a brief national, sociocultural and historical profile of the Dominican Republic. I focus specifically on the issue of race and cultures as they emerged within with the life story Carmen constructed.

The Dominican Republic: National and Historical Profile

The Dominican Republic is a Spanish speaking country that occupies the same landmass as Haiti, which is located on the Western part of what was called the Island of Hispaniola. The Dominican Republic initially was a colony of Spain. When the Taino Indians that inhabit the land were unable to meet labor demands as many began to die of diseases brought over by Spaniards, Spain imported African slaves in larger numbers to work on plantations. The intermixing between Africans and Spaniards resulted in the contemporary Dominican populations, which are Black and mulatto in majority (Tores-Saillant, 1998).

Much of the Dominican Republic's social history is intertwined with Haiti's history. After Haiti gained its independence from France, it made various attempts to seize the Dominican Republic. In 1822 Haiti was successful, and occupied the whole island until the Dominican Republic gained their independence in 1844 (Atkins & Wilson, 1998). In defining national identity the Dominican Republic looked toward Latin America and defined their national identity based on shared language and racial mixture. In defining their national identity, the Dominican Republic gave greater importance to their Indian and European heritage while dismissing their African roots (Tores-Saillant, 1998; Sawyer & Paschel, 2007). Although Blackness was defined as antithetical to Dominicaness, the height of anti-Black and anti-Haitian prejudice occurred during the Rafael Trujillo dictatorship, which culminated in the Haitian massacre. Under the discourse of nationalism, Trujillo in 1937 ordered the massacre of thousands of Haitians, many of whom were Dominicans of Haitian ancestry in order to secure

the border between Haiti and the Dominican Republic. It is this history that Carmen engages with in her narrative as it comes up in her interactions with her Haitians coworkers, and in a Caribbean literature course she took while in college. Through personally researching the history of social history between Dominicans and Haitians, Carmen discovers the roots of the antagonist relations between the two groups: “I have always asked myself like why is there always this tension, this animosity between Haitians and Dominicans because we are from the same island. Then I started getting information and then I start piecing things together.” Carmen remarked that she has no animosity toward Haitian people, but in her visits to the Dominican Republic she has observed anti-Haitian sentiments. In the U.S., she has experienced some “playful tension” with her Haitian coworkers once they learned that she is from the Dominican Republic.

Her narrative also delves into the tension between Puerto Ricans and Dominicans as her family had initially disapproved of her boyfriend because he was Puerto Rican. The history between Dominicans and Puerto Ricans coincides with the end of the Trujillo regime. After the fall of Trujillo, the Dominican Republic experienced political and economic turbulence. As a result, many Dominicans migrated to Puerto Rico. Once in Puerto Rico, Dominicans were confronted with an unwelcoming social climate. According to Duany (2005), within their new context, Dominicans confronted the issue of racial identity as Puerto Ricans classify them as racially Black. Accompanying this racialization, Dominicans that have a more visible African ancestry confront intense stigmatization, prejudice, discrimination and exclusion. Duany (2005) concludes that the dominant discourse on Dominicans in Puerto Rico resembles that of Haitians in the Dominican Republic, and Puerto Ricans and Dominicans in the United States. The life

story Carmen constructs engages with these different histories and group struggles. The distinctiveness of her story is that it presents a counter narrative to “Dominican negrohobia” (Tores-Saillant, 1998).

Summary

The goals of this chapter were to provide a contextual and relational view of the local and global, and the historical and political contexts of each respondent’s development. As these settings are figured in the background of each respondent’s personal narrative, this chapter also sought to provide a greater understanding of the broader sociocultural worlds, and group memberships that shape and inform each life story. The next two chapters will shift the focus to individual’s interpretations of his or her lived experiences, and personal understandings of different temporal, social and geographical contexts.

CHAPTER 4:

Narrating the Self within the Context of Historical, Cultural And Political Struggle

The stories of a culture—stories of national identity, struggle, suffering, and resilience—become the stories of an individual as he or she construct his or her own personal narrative, fusing elements of daily experience (themselves dependent on his or her particular social identity and its status in a larger social order) with the experience of a collective to which he or she perceives some affinity. Phillip L Hammack, (2008, p. 233)

In sync with the quotation above, the life stories presented and analyzed in this chapter weave together personal, national and group histories. In this respect, this chapter builds on the previous one. Each of the three life stories presented reflects an individual respondent's personal engagement with his or her national, political and social group histories locally, and globally. Central to this investigation is the perspective that self, others and society are linked such that one cannot be studied without the other. The life stories presented and analyzed in this chapter show the effects of these linkages on the individual's psychology and sociocultural development as his or her life unfolds across two or more countries.

Before presenting the individual stories, it is important to establish the research literatures to which this collection speaks. In chapter one, I argued that the sociopolitical dynamics within

the U.S. context frame and inform much of the research on Black racial and cultural identity development within the discipline of psychology. However, outside of this disciplinary perspective, the concept of *African Diaspora* is often used to provide a broader (international) frame for studying and theorizing Black racial and cultural identity development (Hall, 1990; Gilroy, 1993; Zeleza, 2005; Patterson & Kelley, 2006). Much of this scholarship seeks to define the dynamics that link together persons of African descent to the continent of Africa and to each other regardless of differences in nationality, history and culture (Palmer, 2000). In defining these links, research has largely focused on commonalities across Black movements for liberation in different national contexts (Davis & Williams, 2007). Research has also focused on the persistence, resilience and hybridization of African based traditions within the Atlantic and British Diaspora (Hall, 1990; Hall, 1995; Gilroy, 1993). Moreover, the influence of European colonialism (and by extension capitalism) in the production of an internationalized hierarchical system of racialization in which Black persons are placed at the very bottom has also been the subject of theory and research (Winant, 2004; Robatham, 2008). Anti-Black racism, discrimination, and social, cultural, and political exclusion have all been linked to this racial hierarchical system. These factors have been defined as common struggles faced by persons of African descent, and each emerged as issues with which each respondent in this chapter contended with in narrating his or her story.

However, missing from the interdisciplinary literature on the African Diaspora is an understanding of how differences in national history, and personal, political, and cultural experiences create distinct understandings and contours within the larger Black experience. For

example within this literature, the development of a Black racial and political consciousness is often framed and linked to an engagement with Africa (real or imagined) and/or pan-Africanism. However, Patterson and Kelley (2006) argue that a Black racial and political consciousness can also emerge from other engagements as well.

The three life stories that were selected for presentation and analysis in this chapter each speak directly to the commonalties as well as the differences in experience (social, cultural, historical and political) that influence the development of a Black racial and political consciousness. Collectively, the narrative constructed by Amira, Carlos and Jean Pierre demonstrates that the development of these forms of consciousness emerges with, and without a connection to Africa. In both Amira's and Carlos's case, this connection is facilitated in part through having visited a country in Africa to which each already developed a personal and historical connection. Having some knowledge and education about the histories of different Black groups was also instrumental for the development of a Black racial and political among this group. Additionally, having had some direct experience with some form of oppression (racial, cultural, gender and/ or political) contributed to the development of a Black racial and political consciousness. What is distinct to these narratives is that the experience of oppression is both informed by, and expands beyond Black/White differences.

Amira, Carlos and Jean Pierre's story are being brought together in this chapter as a distinct collection of narratives because each is thematically structured and organized around the common themes of historical, cultural and political struggle. Narrative theorist, Phillip Hammack (2008) stressed that in analyzing personal narratives, researchers gain the opportunity to query

larger processes of social reproduction and change as the content of a life story reflects the individual's engagement with dominant ideological representations. In this regard, the life stories presented in this chapter reflect each individual's engagement with larger historical, cultural and political narratives. Therefore, another distinctive feature of this collection of stories is that each provides an opportunity to understand which narratives each individual draws on and resist in conveying a personal understanding of his or her racial and cultural identity development process.

To render greater visibility to the common thematic structure that link the three life stories together, each is presented separately, but with a broader analytical focus on the role national history, culture and political struggle plays in shaping the narrative each individual constructs about his or her racial and cultural identity development. To magnify differences across the narratives, I highlight difference in each story's sequence and progression. I also draw attention to the distinctiveness of each individual's personal experiences and understandings. To illuminate these dynamics, this chapter is organized as followed. First I present and analyze Amira's story in four parts. Each reflects the sequence of events she drew together in order to tell her story. Each part of her story also speaks to the major turning points, challenges and negotiations that have influenced her personal understanding of self as distinct from, and similar to other individuals with whom she shares common group memberships. Next, I present and analyze Carlos's story in five parts. Each chapter of his story also reflects the sequence of events, negotiations and major turning points he draw from in order to convey a personal understanding of his process of identity development. As the eldest in the group, I end this chapter with Jean

Pierre's story. Following the same format I utilize in the two previous life stories, I present and analyze his narrative in five parts. Each corresponds with the sequence of events, turning points and negotiations that he drew from in order to render an understanding of the experiences that have defined his life journey, and informs his understanding and development of self.

Amira's Story

Our lives changed with one radio announcement that said that everything is nationalized and nobody owns anything. The start of Amira's life story and the setting that framed her development is the change in government that took place in Ethiopia in 1974 when the Emperor Haile Selassie was overthrown. Although Amira was only a toddler at this historical moment, it is a major turning point in her life. The story she tells is framed and organized around this specific historical event. It is significant to her because it initiated several changes in her parent's life, which ultimately changed and shaped the course of her own life. One immediate impact was that it affected her parent's affluent economic situation, which Amira connects to the series of events that followed:

My father having forethought applied and started competing for a position outside of the country. He could have been either relocated to London or Los Angeles. He had already taken my mother to both places and she had chosen Los Angeles because (I didn't know this until I went back as an adult) the climate, the flowers, and everything is so similar. After her father secured a position in the United States, Amira and her parents moved to Los Angeles and began their new life as sojourners sponsored by her father's job. Because the

position her father secured was somehow tied to the company he was working for back in Ethiopia, the family could be called back to return home at any given time. Although her parent's transition to the U.S. did not result in any immediate change in her family's economic situation, disagreements between them about their lifestyle, and possibly returning to Ethiopia caused constant friction between the two:

Yvonne: Your mother was not comfortable leaving?

Amira: No, with returning, ever, so she already knew. She didn't trust them, so remember, we are going through communism where the communist government really nationalized everything, so she told my father don't get comfortable. They may ask us to come back, don't get comfortable with this job. Don't get comfortable with them paying our rent. Don't get comfortable with them paying the kids schools; let's live a more modest life style.

Ultimately, her parents were asked to return to Ethiopia, but her father managed to find ways to stall as his plan was to return when the political situation improved. For Amira, the impending possibility of returning created in her a sense of rootlessness:

“I never felt a sense of permanency in the United States until I was probably eighteen years old. My parents and family were like as soon as things get better we are out of here so don't get comfortable. That leaves a little uneasiness in you because you feel like, “I am not really home,” so because of that my parents didn't necessarily get involved with social things in the United States, or even in the Ethiopian community.

For much of Amira's childhood, her time was spent with her immediate family nestled in the Ethiopian culture her parents had recreated. When she was old enough to go to school, Amira was faced with the challenge of learning a new language. However, once she learned to speak English, she only wanted to converse in her new language. She credited her family's deliberate efforts as playing a significant role in her ability to retain fluency in Amharic.

As the situation in Ethiopia did not change, other members of Amira's family arrived and settled in the United States. Many of them had obtained scholarships to prestigious universities on the East Coast. It is in the context of discussing the conditions that resulted in the movement of other members of her family to United States that Amira shifts the focus of her narrative to issue of class and its intersection with gender and culture. Here she uses the lens of intersectionality to make sense of the difficulties her father had in his own adaptation process:

The United States is a difficult place for a man, an African man to acclimate himself. My father came from being someone who got a tremendous amount of respect, extremely well known accolades for his accomplishment within his companyso he came from a position of being highly respected and being well known to a place where you ain't no body, and that was difficult for him to connect with.

Although her father had much difficulty adapting to their new life and environment, her mother did not. As the differences between the two could not be bridged, Amira's parents divorced. The end of her parent's marriage not only created a new social and family situation for Amira, but it also marked another major turning point in her immigrant life.

Navigating and Negotiating Culture

When you are a kid, you kind of know that something is going on. It is playing out in the background, and it wasn't explosive or anything. You just kind of cope, and you just go on. In the meanwhile, the difficult part of growing up is my mom didn't believe in none of these play dates or spending the night at a friend's house, you know what I mean, so I kind of always felt different. The transition from living with both of her parents to living only with her mother and younger sister constituted a major life change for Amira. Although both of her parents had tended to live in isolation from the broader culture, Amira began to feel the weight of this isolation particularly after the divorce. As her mother had now assumed the role of the provider, she kept her daughters under closer watch. Amira described her mother as being a very resourceful person who was industrious and entrepreneurial. Following the divorce, her mother was able to make ends meet working as a book keeper until she eventually opened her own business, an Ethiopian restaurant. Because much of her mother's time was spent at the restaurant, Amira and her sister also spent much of their time at this place after school.

Within the context of school, Amira confronted her own battles. Because her origin marked her and her sister as being different from the predominately White and African-American kids in school, she and her sister were subject to taunts from both sides. Each had a poor conception of Africa: "in Los Angeles, it was either you are Black or you are White. If you say you are from Africa, it is like you are from another planet. . . .Their concept of Africa and what Ethiopia is like a dry desert with nothing but starving people with flies on them. Literally begging for a millet, and that is not what it was for us." Outside of the context of school, Amira's and her sister spent most of their time following her parent's divorce at her mother's

restaurant. Most days after school, they were both remanded to stay in a backroom where they completed homework before pitching in to help in the restaurant. From working so closely with her mother, Amira believes she gained many invaluable and lifelong skills:

You had a choice, you were either studying or you could come and start working. It was very immigrant style. Like sitting around, there was none of that or watching T.V.

(Yvonne: Keep yourself busy). Yeah. I appreciate that now because I see that I can sit down for an extended period of time especially if there is something to do. People say I am very disciplined, but that is because we worked with our mom.

This routine held until Amira was about twelve. When her grandmother, on her mother's side immigrated to the United States, and settled in with her uncle in New York, Amira moved from the West coast to the East coast to join them. Amira was quick to explain that while her move may sound strange to Western ears, it was not atypical in her culture to move in with other family members for brief or extended periods of time. In fact while she was living in New York with her grandmother and uncle, her sister, had been living with their aunt in Virginia for almost two years. Nonetheless, the time Amira spent living with her grandmother and uncle was not, at first, very different from when she was living with her mother. Like her mother, her uncle and grandmother kept the family very close and also lived, more or less, in isolation from the broader culture. However, "a whole new world" opened up for Amira once she began attending school in New York. The isolation she had been experiencing in New York, and the exclusion she confronted in school in Los Angeles were no longer her reality. She had made the acquaintance

of other Black immigrants children like herself, and this marked a major shift in her social and cultural experiences:

Amira: The reason why the New York shift was so significant is because once I got here, I found the Caribbean.

Yvanne: In New York?

Amira: Yeah, they were like, “Oh, I get you.”

Yvanne: So you found a niche?

Amira: Exactly. There were no Jamaicans in Los Angeles. It was either you are Black or you are White. If you say you are from Africa, it is like you are from another planet like I said before. I did my junior high school and part of high school in New York. It was a totally different world, and once I got to Brooklyn, I was like everybody is here, Panamanian, Guyanese, everybody, and there was this thing, like you get me. Oh, you are not allowed to go anywhere either.

Having found a group of people among whom she could feel a sense of belonging was particularly helpful for Amira at this time in her life. The recent arrival of her female cousin who was close to her in age and well versed in Ethiopian traditions had become a constant source of comparison and critique of Amira's hybridity:

When my cousin came to live with my uncle, and he is not her father either, and this just shows you what kind of family I come from. They would be like she knows how to do this. She knows how to do that, and they wanted me to know how to cook certain things for certain holidays; things that I was never exposed

to. They would make her look like she is this shining star, and I was like, what! You know they pit you against each other, and that is something that I don't want to do in the future. It is not about who is better than the other one because one knows more about the culture.

In narrating this aspect of her life experiences, Amira also brought attention to the intersections of culture and gender in shaping the roles her and her cousin were assigned: "We were totally responsible for the keeping of the house, you know. We had to clean, and it went to the extent that we had to take care of my uncle's shirts for work." Outside of these gender roles that were prescribed and tied to culture, Amira was also pushed to take her education very seriously particularly by her uncles who were all ivy league educated: "They opened my eyes to a whole other world, and it wasn't really a choice. It was like this is what you are going to do." As a result of this additional push, Amira worked much harder in school, and gained admittance into one of the top specialized public high schools in New York. Her uncles also reinforced that going to college was a requirement rather than a choice. These experiences left an imprint and affected how Amira engaged not only with her education, but also in other aspects of her young life:

That kind of push stays with you. It leaves an imprint on you, and you take that to other facets of your life too. So, I was doing really well. I was running track. I was with a private team, I played tennis.

In the course of talking about the influence her family in New York played in shaping her development, Amira also credited her aunt, a Jewish woman, as playing a critical role in her life by introducing new experiences that taught her how to be more self-reliant and independent.

Because the time Amira spent in New York opened up her world by providing her with a much broader social and cultural experience, her return to Los Angeles was anticlimactic. She found it particularly difficult to go back to the insular cultural world her mother created and wanted them all to live within. She also could no longer deal with the restrictions her mother placed on social life as she had become accustomed participating in different activities outside of school back in New York. Because of these Amira decided that after living with her mother for a brief period of time, she would move in with her father. He was also living in Los Angeles, and was remarried. The move gave her an opportunity to get to know better, but on a one-on-one basis. At this time in her life, Amira felt that she had a better grasp of herself as an individual:

“I was already very, very grounded in who I was. I was not mature completely like I needed to be because I still needed some life experiences because I was very sheltered, so I do not know how to do a lot of things, but again, I did have that exposure in New York because they pushed me a little more. That was a different kind of training. It gave me more confidence.

On her father's side, Amira found fewer restrictions and was given the opportunity to have more experiences although her activities were still bounded: “My dad's family got out a little more, and my cousin on my dad's side was the first one to take me out skiing, and would jump up and drive to Vegas, but again very controlled with the family, so it was different. I saw how they did

things.” Having now been exposed to both sides of her Ethiopian family and seeing how each operates, Amira, began to exert greater agency with respect to what aspects of the Ethiopian culture in which she would participate in or not. At this juncture in her narrative, Amira steps outside of her culture and discusses its inner-workings as if she occupied both an insider and outsider status:

Amira: Navigating your way through Ethiopia’s social structure, it is very difficult in a lot of respects. To me, I think it is more effort than it is worth. You have to watch how you talk to this one, and this person is using authority in the wrong ways. I have done it my whole life particularly with my father’s side of the family, and I choose not to continue with that. I will not! It is too much. Because while you are trying to work on that, you are not taking care of things that are more important than that. They make things that are insignificant, so highly significant.

Yvonne: So, to a certain extent, you are going against certain aspects of that tradition. What led you to that decision?

Amira: Experience. Again, you can never cater enough to those kinds of expectations. Once you give in, then it becomes higher, and higher and higher. I want to live an authentic life, you know. If I am constantly catering to what you want, how do you even know if anything that I am doing or saying to you is real?

Although living with her father was a bit less restrictive than living with her mother, Amira had grown tired of Los Angeles and longed to return to New York, and its diversity. Her time in New

York had definitely left its mark on her identity, and her sense of self: “I definitely have the New York tough girl in me. You can’t go to school in New York, and in Brooklyn and not get a certain, you know, confidence!” At the age of twenty-one, Amira returns to New York, and was fortunate to land a job at Microsoft while she was still completing her college education. She was also living in an apartment with her boyfriend, at the time. He was of Bahamian, Bayesian, American, and Panamanian descent background. Amira expressed very clearly that culture played a big factor in her decisions on dating and relationships. Given her experiences within her own culture, and the amount of energy required to cater to the men in her family, her preference was not to date or marry someone from her own background. Given her and her boyfriend's shared a hybrid background, Amira got along well with his family. He got along well with hers. Later on, her younger sister moved in and the three lived together for some time. Although Amira had established a comfortable routine, she began to feel a sense of emptiness in her life:

I was always making just enough, just enough where I was paying my tuition at Baruch, and keeping a roof over our heads, and things were kind of ok. I was just comfortable enough in the relationship, comfortable enough in my work, and comfortable enough in my situation, but it wasn’t like my ideal.

Amira did not feel passionate about the kind of work she was doing at Microsoft, and was coming to the realization that working with computers was not her calling. In the midst of trying to figure out her next steps, her mother planned a trip to return to Ethiopia. Amira and her sister decided to join their mother on this trip. This was Amira's first of two trips back since leaving the country as a child: “I was really like overwhelmed. I couldn’t wait to go and I already had my list

of things that I wanted to see.” Upon arriving to Ethiopia, Amira was happy to meet to aunts, cousins and other family members whom she had talked to, but never met. Initially she was shocked that family and others labeled them as American foreigners. However, she quickly accepted this ascription recognizing that otherness within herself:

Of course everyone gives you that “ah, the Americans are here,” and I am like American? Again, that confidence kicked in, and the New York thing kicked in, and I am like “oh, well.” And the kids on the streets, they call you in Amharic “Americans! Americans! So, my sister and me were like “What!” We stuck out like a sore thumb, but the nice thing is I still felt connected to the culture.

The connection that Amira felt, and the distance her life in America provided allowed her to take a critical stance for making sense of the poor economic situation faced by some of the people she encountered on the streets:

We got surrounded by all of these kids when we are shopping in this well-known shopping area, so we saw them all day and we kind of ignored them. By the end of the day, we brought them candy and sodas, and that just doesn’t happen. My mom raised us to not think that we were better than anybody. So when we go, the kids think that, and the people think that you might think you are better than them because you got to live in America. This is something that makes me emotional; no, we love you. This is the route that God took us on, but that does not mean that we don’t know what you are going through. A lot of people come back home with their noses in the air, and they are like “uh, look at these kids.”

Her return trip to Ethiopia was humbling and transformative. Upon resuming her life in New York, Amira began to rethink her situation, and started to question her own identity. One particular experience she had while visiting the countryside with her aunt in Ethiopia contributed significantly to the existential crisis she was experiencing upon returning to New York:

Amira: After the trip, I had a whole new vision.

Yvonne: So now you are rethinking your life?

Amira: Oh, yeah. We went out to the bushes in the middle of nowhere, you know like the huts that you see in National Geographic. There are people who still live in them. We went into one of those huts, and it is amazing how it is constructed. It is like cool inside when it is hot outside, like there is some engineering that goes into them. And I remember we went to see this family, and my aunt was saying, you know how you would know that she is a wealthy farmer's wife, look at her dress. She was able to get good fabric to make that dress, and look at her children. As we looked around, she would point things out to me and I got them, and they were just the nicest people. We were out in the middle of nowhere and these people were happy. They live in a Gojo, a hut, and they are happy, God, that made me look at my life in America, and I had to ask myself, where are my priorities? Who am I?

The search to give her life greater meaning and purpose led Amira to reevaluate what happiness and fulfillment meant over the course of the next few years of her life. Through much introspection, Amira soon discovered that her conception of happiness and sense of self were tied to the idea of personal accomplishments, and not to spirituality:

“I had like a religious reawakening when I was there. The people look happy like I wanted to be, and I had connected that to having to achieve certain things. I got that from my family. They would be like you should not be happy with yourself unless you have done x, y and z, and these people don’t have anything and they are still optimistic.

In making these connections, Amira made changes to her life by developing her spiritual life, and embarking on a new career path. She had decided to go into journalism because she felt she was a natural communicator. Although this career had always been a passion of hers, she was persuaded by her family when she was younger to study something more practical. When she started college, Amira had majored in corporate communications with the intentions of going into that field, but once she got the job at Microsoft, she had decided to pursue working with computers. In moving toward her new career path, Amira took some college courses in journalism, and applied for an internship at a local television station where she learned how to put a story together, edit film, and so on. She had also assisted with several documentaries. Amira loved the work she was doing, and when she saw a vacancy for a free-lance reporter, she applied and got the job. Her assignments have taken her to several other countries, including Japan, Greece, France and England. She feels blessed to have been able to make the transition into journalism so smoothly. Along the way, she has found much support and mentorship, which assisted her in transitioning to a new career.

In looking toward the future, Amira remarks that culture has played a major role in shaping her life journey. One of the most important lessons she has learned is to not allow others on the basis of culture to bully her socially and emotionally. When she has her own children, her

hopes are to take bring together the best of each the different cultures with which she is familiar and utilize them in raising her own children.

Toward the end of the interview, I probed more directly into Amira's experiences with race and inquired about what challenges she confronts in her interactions with other individuals and groups outside her culture and nationality. In the next section, I highlight the kinds of identity negotiations my questions elicited from her.

Navigating Race at the Intersections of Skin Color and Ethnicity

There is an assumption that Black people just look one way especially if they are from Africa. You know someone really irritated me one time when he was like "you look Dominican. Do all of you look Dominican?" And I said, "Dominican people look like us because Black people were around a whole lot longer before the mixed Dominican was created, and he was like, "Oh, excuse me!" I could be a very New York girl, and she comes out. I am like, you assume that all African people look a certain way, all Black people look a certain way, and why are you assuming that I am either mixed or Dominican, or Latina of some type that you feel disappointed when I tell you that I am Black. For Amira, her racialized experiences are interwoven with her physical features and ethnicity. Amira has a caramel complexion, bold dark brown eyes and long Black wavy hair reaching her mid-back. Because her physical features do not cohere with dominant media representations of Africans, Amira expressed that discussions about racial and ethnic identity have often been a thorny subjects for her. This is primarily because others (mostly other persons of color) often assume she is of mixed racial heritage. Amira explains to me that that both of her parents are Black. She notes that a common

misconception that many individuals here in the U.S. and from Latin America have of Africans is the perception that they all have very similar physical features. Amira expressed that what other do not seem to realize is that people from Africa vary in their skin tones and physical features depending on climate and region.

Although much of her narrative was concerned with her experiences in navigating different cultural currents and the struggles she experienced in moving between cultural worlds, during the course of her the interview Amira also exhibited much pride in both her national and Black racial identity. Toward the end of the interview, I discovered that the sources of her pride is rooted in the Black historical and political consciousness that her family instilled in her.

Amira: Ethiopia was like the only country in Africa that was never colonized.

The Italians tried to come. In fact, we are the first Black people to, for lack of a better phrase “Kick the Asses” of people who tried to come in and take over, and that was at the battle of Adwa [battle fought march 1896 between Ethiopia and Italy near the town of Adwa, which secured Ethiopian sovereignty] and nobody talks about that, similar to the Haitian Revolution, and nobody wants to talk about that.

Yvonne: So how did you get this information because all of your schooling was here?

Amira: Oh, from my family.

The life story Amira constructs reflects her engagement with Ethiopian culture, religion and its class strata and political history. Moreover, her story engages with other Black immigrant communities, the broader Black/White dynamics of race, the dominant representations of Africans, and her personal understanding of being a New Yorker. Her story magnifies the multi-

dimensional nature of identity as a theoretical construct. It also illuminates the range of social and cultural experiences and understandings that exist within ethnicity, nationality and race. Her story complicates stable and static understanding of identity while also drawing attention to both the liberating and oppressive power of culture.

Carlos's Story

I have faced in this country, in the United States, many African Americans who have said to me, "Oh you don't understand the struggle." I say to them, "Your struggle may have been a little more dramatic and a little more notorious than the struggles we had, but we had struggles too." We had to fight. Many of my ancestors in Costa Rica had to actually join the Revolution that was fought and formed in 1948, and because the side of the revolution that they were on won, we gained citizenship in that country. Carlos's story begins much like Amira's narrative. He utilized a defining moment in his birth country's national history to create a point of entry for narrating his own biography. In his particular case, he also engages with the North American discourse on race, and establishes his insiderness on the issue of racial oppression and the struggle for equality. Carlos's life story shares a common narrative structure and the same organizational themes as Amira's narrative. His story is very much like hers in that it allows us to gain an understanding of how specific historical and political events in his country of origin influenced the course of his life. However, his story is also distinctively different. It progresses very quickly from his childhood to his adulthood. Moreover, the identity negotiations he confronts are informed by very different structures of power that are simultaneously operative

(U.S. versus Costa Ricans, and Costa Rican versus Costa Ricans of West Indian heritage). The influence each has in influencing the personal struggles, changes, and negotiations he experiences, and the personal decisions and opportunities he seeks out are central to his story.

Navigating and Negotiating Race, Culture and Nationality

I always felt that the Spaniards would always look at us as if we are not necessarily Costa Rican...we were... yeah, but we were different. As a matter of fact, part of our identity that our grandparents gave us was that they would always ingrain in us that you are a Black man and your language is English. Born into a context in which power differentials were framed by language (English/Spanish), race (Black/mestizo) and heritage (West Indian/Spaniard), Carlos realized early on in his childhood that his West Indian heritage and English speaking cultural background were devalued. These realities coupled with the limited job opportunities Costa Rica offered for persons of African descent motivated Carlos to set sight on leaving Costa Rica to live in an English speaking country from a very early age. Once he set this personal goal he expressed that every personal decision he made thereafter was informed by it. The first of the many decisions he made to reach this goal included committing himself to perfecting his proficiency in both Spanish and English:

I think it was when I was eleven or twelve, I started thinking about the future and what I wanted to do. A lot of my friends that I grew up with and the people I went to school with, I realized that because we were running between these two languages, Spanish and English, a lot of my Black counterparts, they were not developing or perfecting any of the

languages. It seemed like they were stuck in-between some middle ground of both languages. Their Spanish was poor and their English was poor. I guess it was God because I began to see then that this would be a disadvantage if I wanted to really educate myself, so I made a decision that I would speak Spanish without the accent from the people from my own town, and I would try to perfect my English the best way I could because in my heart of hearts, I always knew that someday I would live in an English speaking country.

Because English was widely spoken in his town, especially by the ministers in the church who were highly regarded, another important decision Carlos made was to become a minister.

Resolved in this pursuit, he sought out opportunities to lead the sermon in church. He was also very receptive to the critiques his elders gave to help him improve his English proficiency:

I wanted to be able to be a preacher in an English speaking country, and I knew if I didn't develop this language well, I would not be able to do that, so every time I got an opportunity to preach in an English church, I would preach in English and the older folks, they would correct me and say son, "this word, you pronounce it this way" and I was open to accepting all their critiques.

In addition to having set his sights on leaving Costa Rica and perfecting his command of both Spanish and English, Carlos also came to realize early in his adolescence that the idealization of beauty that the larger Costa Rican society perpetuated ran counter to his ideals, dreams and beliefs:

Because you watched T.V. and on the commercials and everything you saw there were no Black people. So it was like we were not even factored as part of the country, and so beauty and everything was emphasized as this was beauty. . . . so a lot of Black kids I grew up with had this complex that Black girls are not beautiful enough, so a lot of them would marry Spanish girls. I saw this from an early age. I knew that would not work for me because she would not be able to help me to have the world as my destination. I would go somewhere and she doesn't speak English.

Although Carlos was born into a society that devalued and excluded him and his community on the basis of race and cultural heritage he does not internalize these negative ascriptions. In his early childhood he is socialized by his parents, his church and his West Indian community to see his racial and cultural identity as positive aspects of who he is as a person. It is this foundation that guides and informs his fight for equality and inclusion, which are the focus of the next chapter in his life story.

Fighting for Inclusion

Part of all that we went through in college was my generation saying, "we will not just be quiet" like the generation of my parents who were just confined to just one province in the country. They were very passive about things. We wanted to be more proactive. We wanted to establish ourselves more. Our parents would say to us, "Get an education, and be better. If the Spaniards do one hundred, you do two hundred. You need to be better than they are, so that no one can push you aside." Carlos's college years constitute another major turning point in his life

experiences. It reflects a time in which he and many of his Black Latin peers were successful in fighting for cultural inclusion and representation in their university's religious services. Set on becoming a religious leader, Carlos decided he wanted to go to college when he became of age. With the financial support of the Seventh-day Adventist Church he attended in Limon, he moved to the city of San Jose where he majored in theology. Because the university he attended was also a religious institution, participating and attending religious services were a big part of the college experience. As a result, many of the students took the opportunity to lead religious services on campus. However, Carlos and his peers were often denied such opportunities because their style of preaching and singing was deemed by the college administration as being too worldly and Afrocentric: "They would say, our music sounds too worldly, but it was not. It was just religious music, but with a Black expression, and so we challenged that." Because of the exclusion they experienced, Carlos and many of his Black peers started their own religious prayer services near campus. Their religious prayer services were well attended by many students on campus. It also eventually gained a larger following because many individuals that lived in the surrounding area began to attend regularly. When the administration found out about their activities and success, they sought to shut down their prayer services. Carlos and his fellow peers, many of whom were also Black, protested, and sought the support of a group of White Americans from the American Embassy. They attended his group's religious prayer services regularly as it was one of the very few in the city that was conducted in the English language:

. . . So we went to these people and we were like, "they want to shut us down," and they were like "they can't do that," and so they went and spoke for us. It was these White

people from the United States; they went and spoke for us. So let me put it this way, it's like if a White person is speaking to them then it makes it more legitimate. So, now it was not just these Black kids' issue, now they were coming up against these White Americans, so now they were like "they are not misbehaving; we are worshiping," so that took them off our backs so-to-speak, but then they said, "well some of your programs will have to be integrated into the larger church, the Spanish Church.

In this instance in Carlos's story he highlights the different plays of cultural and racial power that were simultaneously operating within the more local context of his college campus. The American influence was pervasive in Carlos's preaching style as well. In narrating his life story, he emphasized that he was heavily influenced by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s oratory style and other Black American preachers. Not only did he study how Dr. King spoke, but he also blended King's oratory style with his own. Moreover his exposure to Dr. King led him to educate himself more about the history of Black people in the United States:

At one point, I could actually recite the "I have a Dream" speech. I got a lot of inspiration from that and it drove me to the library in college where I started reading more about Blacks in America and their history, so I knew a lot about Black people in the United States and that also kind of helped me during my college years in shaping my identity as a Black person. I began to see myself as an African American.

During his college years, Carlos had the opportunity to travel throughout Latin America because he was employed during the summer months as a traveling salesman. His experiences within these different contexts also helped to bolster his self-confidence. In order to help students

earn money to pay their tuition, the Seventh-day Adventist Church back in his hometown of Limon employed students as traveling sales persons to sell religious books. These experiences not only helped Carlos build greater self-confidence, but they also gave him the opportunity to see a world beyond his town and country of birth. Of the different experiences he had while traveling during the summers as a salesmen, Carlos spoke most candidly about a specific encounter he had with another individual he met while in Guatemala. His interactions with this individual was jarring, but taught him a valuable lesson about never allowing his racial location to be a barrier in his social interactions with a person of another race:

I had a very interesting experience in Guatemala. I went into this government building. I actually went from office to office presenting my books and I would introduce myself and present my books. This gentlemen saw me and looked at me and said, "If you were to stay in this country you could become a millionaire." And I said, "Why do you say that?" He said, "I have known other Black people and they are not as confident as you are and I know a lot of Black people even in Canada." He also said, "Black people have a certain fear just facing life, but you just walked in here and introduced yourself to me. And you just told me who you are and I saw no fear in you." That experience really taught me that as a Black man, I need to believe in myself as a human being and not allow some of the challenges that Black people have had around the world and in Latin America, for that matter, make me feel fearful to face life.

Carlos's years in college constituted a major shift in his social and cultural life in Costa Rica. Not only did he develop a political voice and stronger racial consciousness, but he and his

peers were able to rally American support for their own cause based on shared culture, specifically language. The leadership and communication skills Carlos developed along with the pride and confidence he exhibited in himself ultimately landed him the opportunity to gain employment as a minister in several different English speaking Churches in Costa Rica after completing his college education. Years of hard work and accomplishments distinguished him as a minister. Ultimately, he was recruited by elders that were visiting the congregation he lead in Costa Rica to work as the lead minister in their church in the United States. He was a perfect fit for the job. The congregation he was hired to minister had become divided by cultural differences as the neighborhood changed from predominately African Americans to a growing population of Black immigrants who became part of the congregation. The next chapter of his life story focuses specifically on how he experiences his racial and hybrid cultural identity within this new context, and how he negotiates this social location.

Negotiating Hybridity and Developing a Pan-African Theology

In the congregation that I first started in when I came to the U.S., the Black Caribbean people did not embrace me or see me as a Black Caribbean because I was not coming from the West Indies, so I was not a West Indian. The Black Americans in the congregation did not see me as an African American because I wasn't born in the United States. But that gave me an advantage wherein sometimes the rift between West Indians and African Americans I was able to bridge it because none of the two sides could claim me. Carlos's emigration to the United States is a personal achievement. In addition to realizing his childhood dream of living in an English-

speaking country, he now confronted new forms of identity related negotiations because his hybrid racial and cultural identity bends U.S. group categorizations in which Black and Latino are different racialized. As is reflected in the quotation above, rather than seeing his hybridity as a barrier, Carlos used his in-between location to bridge the differences between the members of his congregation. Realizing that they perceived him as an outsider, he defined his identity and theirs in pan-Africanist terms in order to establish that he and they had a much broader connection to each other beyond their differences:

I began spreading my philosophy that I am an African American even though I wasn't born here, and that I am also a West Indian because my Grandparents migrated from the West Indies. During Black history month, I started expanding more in my teaching and preaching on pan-African Americanism. I began to speak of Black history beyond the borders of the United States, and I spoke about how Blacks are connected everywhere.

Despite his efforts, Carlos still sensed that there was some confusion about his identity:

I know that they kind of did not know exactly what to make of me or where to place me or put me. Some would ask me questions like, "Are you Spanish?" And I would say, "No, I am not," and they would say, "How come, because you are from Costa Rica?" and I would say, "Yes," but for me, I am a Black man first because for me Spanish or Spaniard is a race, a race of those who are light-skinned and have straight hair and that look European, those are Spaniard to us, and to my folks. To me, I am Black and that is the way we would identify ourselves in my country, but in the broader sense, I am a Black Latino.

Although race is an important aspect of his personal and social identity, Carlos came to realize that within the U.S. context, he could no longer define himself in singular terms as he had done back in Costa Rica. He, therefore, chose to embrace his intersecting identities. However, in the same moment that he describes having developed a more fluid and multidimensional conception of his identity, he also points to other social situations in which he finds it necessary to adopt a more static and singular definition of race:

The Hispanics that I encounter here, when they realize that I speak Spanish, they have said to me many times, “Oh, I thought you were Black,” and I say, “Yes, I am Black,” and they say, “no, no, no, I thought you were Black like....”

And I say, “I am exactly the same Black, like the Blacks from here. It just so happened that I was born in a Spanish Speaking country, but racially we are exactly the same.”

So, I have had to make that distinction that racially, I am Black just like a Haitian, just like a West Indian, and just like an African American. It just happens to be the case that we were dropped off in different ports.

In these situations, Carlos’s political and historical consciousness played an influential role in his refusal to be differentially positioned from other Black persons based on his ethnolinguistic background. Although his experiences in Costa Rica already fostered in him a deep sensitivity to, and an awareness of Black struggles and the political nature of identity, the U.S. taught him about the covert nature of anti-Black prejudice:

It is after coming here that I really began to learn about this country more, and to understand it’s political make-up, it’s racial dynamics and how race plays a role in just

about everything in this society. In Costa Rica, race, racism is there, but um, it's, it's kind of different in that the separation is clearer.

As Carlos's narrative continues to progress, the scope and depth of the different experiences that fostered in him critical racial and political consciousness comes into full view as he makes meaning of his trip to the *House of Slaves*, a museum located off the coast of the West African country of Senegal. The next chapter of his life story focus specifically on this experience and the personal meanings it held for Carlos, and his family's history with racial oppression.

Africa and the Door of No Return

When we walked through the "Door of No Return," the guide said, let's turn around. He then said, "Your fate is not like those who went through these door centuries before because you can turn back and walk back." When we turned around there was another sign that read, "The Door of Return." For me that was a spiritual experience because I literally felt that I was able to bring closure to my ancestors because they could not return, and never did, but I returned for them. I returned and I walked back through that door. Carlos's visit to the *House of Slaves Museum* on the Goree Island is part of a much larger story. He had traveled to Togo and Ghana on behalf of his church after one of the members of his congregation who had fallen ill returned home to visit family. When she died during her visit, the church sent Carlos as a representative on their behalf. While participating in the funeral services, Carlos had the opportunity to visit Goree Island and the *House of Slaves Museum*. In witnessing first-hand the horrors of the Atlantic slave trade as he saw the conditions that these individuals were subjected to before

being shipped out to the Americas and Europe, Carlos also saw his personal connection to this physical place, and the past it memorialized:

Standing in the dungeon made me realize that somebody who was related to me was in the dungeon many, many years and centuries ago and they survived it, and that's how I could be born in the Americas. That was a transformational experience for me.

Carlos's father was equally moved by what Carlos had experienced: "when I shared that experience with my father, he cried. I am sure he felt what I felt. I was able to return to Africa on behalf of all my ancestry."

The life story that Carlos constructs engages and brings together different temporal (past and present), geographical (e.g. Costa Rica, the U.S., and Senegal) and personally lived social experiences into constant dialogue. His narrative illuminates the influence each of these different contexts have had in influencing, changing and expanding his understandings of self and others. His narrative also underscores the complexity of identity by drawing visibility to its simultaneously fixed and fluid nature. Moreover, his story magnifies the historical and political continuities that produced shared experiences, ruptures and unique plays of differences within Black racial and cultural identities (Hall, 1993).

Jean Pierre's story

My period was the period of a political dictatorship. It was during the Duvalier period. I did not understand it. I was limited to my studies. . . The University was next to the palace; everything was being controlled and I did not understand that. I only started to understand when

I started growing up in the university setting. It was when I was about to graduate that I started understanding what was happening because my mind, and myself, as a physical body, and spiritual being, I wanted more than what is happening here, and I see I can't get it because there is a blockage. So starts Jean Pierre's personal narrative. Similar to the life story that Amira and Carlos construct, Jean Pierre story begins and developed around a particular historical period in his national history. Francois Duvalier's rise to political power constitutes the historical and political era that inform and defined Jean Pierre's life trajectory. Although his story begins and is set against this period in time, his rendering of his life story differs significantly from Amira and Carlos. Although the past constantly weighs on the present in each of their stories, the narrative they construct progresses in a very linear way from childhood to adulthood. Jean Pierre's story is distinctively different in that he shifts frequently across developmental stages (childhood, adolescence, young adulthood) geographical location (the U.S., Haiti, France) and temporal worlds (past and present) in order to convey an understanding of the forces that shaped not only his racial and cultural understanding of self and others, but also his creative and professional identity. After the brief historical introduction through which he begins and grounds his story within, the next chapter of his life story takes us further back in time to his early childhood. Interestingly, he frames his early social and cultural experiences within an international Christian organization.

Life in Jérémie and Childhood Experiences

I was a boy scout. It was associated with the Catholic Church. The priest came with that, and I was a part of it. Every Saturday, we would leave the city and go to the outskirts of Jérémie. We would be walking like soldiers for hours. That gave me some discipline. . . .at the same time, many of us were involved in music, but we didn't have too many instruments you know. If you see music here [baby grand piano in the living room] it is because I learned it there. Followed by his introduction to the repressive political era that shaped his life experiences in Haiti, Jean Pierre shifts his story back to his youth. This time in his life can be described as his age of innocence. His focus is in on his adventures in the Boy Scouts of America and the various skills he learns, which continues to inform his life in the present. This multinational organization operates in one hundred and forty six countries (<http://www.scouting.org/jota/countries.aspx>). Jean Pierre's participation in this American organization from the age of five until he leaves to attend university provides a small window into the global connections that defined his life experiences early on. These memorable years nurtured in him lifelong skills, and a love for musical instruments, especially the piano. Throughout his story, he returns to this period in time showing its continued influence on his life.

Jean Pierre was the first born of seven children. He grew up in a large and humble family as his parents did not have much money. His mother was a seamstress, and his father, as he described was a “literate type,” with an interest in law and governance. His father practiced law although he was not officially a lawyer. Jean Pierre's participation in the Boy Scouts of America gave him the opportunity to have some time for leisure while also providing an escape from his close-knit and large family. As he advanced in age and completed his primary education, and

then began his secondary Catholic schooling, he began to think about career choices, as he was prompted by his teachers:

I was entering secondary school, and my teachers wanted me to be a priest. Usually they pick up on the people who are good in school and who happen to be smart. I didn't want that, and I said, "No." He then said, "What do you want to be?" and I said, "A doctor." I just said that without conviction. It was like because I said it, it stayed with me in my memory as this is what I want to be."

Despite flirting very early on with the idea of being a physician, Jean Pierre reveals later on in his story that it is really his father that sparks his interest in this profession. Out of concern with Jean Pierre's primary interest in being a lawyer, his father cautioned him against this idea and suggested that he study medicine:

My real tendency was to be a lawyer like my father, you know, but when I told him I wanted to go to law school, he said, "No." "Be something else. Be a doctor." He knew at that time under Duvalier's dictatorship, what good is a lawyer? Useless. He didn't explain this to me then. I guess at that time there wasn't really any communication like that with parents and their children. It was just like that. It could have been dangerous to say too many things also. So, I went to Port-Au-Prince.

This shift from the city of Jérémie to Port-Au-Prince starts the next chapter of Jean Pierre's life. It is also a major turning point in his narrative as it is within this period that he begins to develop an awareness of what is happening in the broader external world that he lives in, and that frames and shapes his ethos in this social environment.

Port-Au-Prince: Living in Fear

*There was a fear there. I thought this was the way we had to be. I started understanding it as I grew up as a young man. There are things that you can't constrain, so I miss playing the piano, and I see somebody playing the guitar in the other part of town, I am not going there because I do not know who he is or if he is working for the government, you just don't know. Sometimes, they misconstrue whatever you say, and they beat you down if they think you say the wrong things, and your parents tell you to be careful because people were dying. Indeed, people were dying. At the hands of the *Tonton Macoutes*, the president's paramilitary force, Haitian citizens suspected of opposing the government (with or without any evidence) were arrested, imprisoned, tortured and put to death (Losecher & Scanlan, 1984). Families were exterminated for political reprisal if even one member was an opponent of the Duvalier regime or merely under suspicion (Losecher & Scanlan, 1984). Having developed a better understanding and greater awareness of the dangers that lurked in his surrounding environment, Jean Pierre kept to himself and his studies. Initially, his belief was that his field of study would keep him safe, out of suspicion and trouble as compared to being in the social sciences particularly since there was a wider undercurrent of interest in socialism. However, as he advanced in his training as a physician, he realized that the desire to care for others could also possibly get him into trouble:*

I am in my fourth year, and then I start thinking, what about this young man who is dying in the street. This thing is in you [referring to his training]. It is inscribed in you. I want to help, but I am aware.

It is this awareness that guided him through the six years he spent in the capital city of Port-au-Prince. During this time, tragedy also befell his family:

I lost my father the second year of medical school. When he died, they didn't tell me because I was in the middle of exams. It was an important medical exam, so they don't tell me. My mother said, she didn't want me to fail, and I got mad, but I forgive her, and I take care of all of them. When I become a doctor every three quarters of my salary I send to them.

After completing his schooling, Jean Pierre did his residency in *Les Cayes*, a town and seaport in Southwestern Haiti. Away from the capital city of Port-au-Prince where everything was more political, Jean Pierre felt more at ease in his new setting. His new professional identity coupled with his distance from the capital city allowed him to find greater joy in his work and to be socially active:

I became a big guy all of the sudden because a doctor in the city, is a doctor. We are not too many, so the authorities there, they don't bother me. In fact, they try to develop a relationship with me just in case they get sick. So all of a sudden, I had a taste of power, but it was something that I could deal. It wasn't the big thing in Port-Au-Prince, you see, so I enjoy myself. I took care of people, but I had some fun also.

Approaching the end of his residency, Jean Pierre and his colleagues saw that there were no opportunities for employment. They studied for an exam that would certify them to work in the United States:

Jean Pierre: When I was a third year, fourth year medical student, an intern, and then residency, it got worse. We were like, "what are we going to do? So, I studied like crazy in English. I brought English books. As a matter of fact, I could not buy English books, a

friend of mine, we were studying together, he had family in the U.S., they would send him books, and I would use his books.

Yvanne: But how were you able to do that since most of your education was in French?

Jean Pierre: Good question. You are real smart. We were studying like crazy, but we also had English in secondary school; it was no more than two hours of English a week, but it gave us a foundation, and there used to be boats with a few foreigners coming in, but not too many. When they come, we go and talk to them. Eventually, I could read it, and I could understand. My pronunciation was not good, but I could understand it.

Luckily, America wanted people. They sent a group of people to give us exams.

Jean Pierre passed the exam and was given papers to come to the United States. Before his departure, he married his girlfriend, and they both emigrated to the U.S. together. They moved in with his sister-in-law until he was able to secure and start a medical residency. The next chapter of Jean Pierre's life constitutes a major turning point in his economic situation. In addition to the improvements he experienced financially, he is confronted with new a set of challenges as he must navigate and negotiation the intersections of race, class and his cultural hybridity.

The U.S. and Negotiating Race, Class and Hybridity

When I got to the place that they gave me, I looked at the apartment, and I cried. Tears came to my eyes when I saw the apartment that they were giving me. It was a two bedroom apartment, which was bigger than the house that I used to live in Jérémie with my parents and seven children, and I said, "I wish my father was here to see." Pierre's new life in the U.S.

altered his economic situation significantly. Upon completing his residency, he earned himself a permanent position, which enabled him to support himself, his growing family in the U.S., and the loved ones he left behind in Haiti. In addition to these possibilities, his new environment also introduced him to a whole new set of challenges. Having been sensitized to the dynamics of power and control after living in a politically repressive environment, he became aware in the course of a year, of the dynamics of race. He came to see that race not only framed and structured the social environment at work, but also penetrated the upper middle class Brooklyn neighborhood in which he was living. Although, he did not experience any racism towards himself directly within his work environment, he did observe its occurrence and shared with me his personal thoughts and understandings. For example, in one instance, he shared his observation another physician outright denying that his patient (a young Black male) could possibly suffer from a heart attack. He made this conclusion based on the assumption that the young man was not employed, and could not have had life experiences that were stressful enough to induce a heart attack. Although Jean Pierre did not address the other physician directly, he shared with me what he learned from this observation: "It was stupid what he said. I realized that racism makes you stupid. He forgot all about medicine." Jean Pierre wrestled with his observations of this and other racialized experiences, which were never directed toward him personally. In making sense of this, he expressed that within this environment he was positioned as an exception based professional identity as a physician and his foreignness as a Haitian immigrant, which is marked by his accented English and his proficiency in French:

I was treated like a king, like I was an exception in their mind, and I refused that. You see my conflict? I am not just inventing this because I was told. I had to fight with myself because one White lady told me during Christmas time, she came and hugged me like a friend and said “Merry Christmas,” and that was nice. Then she spoiled it when she said, “you know something, you are not Black, you are French,” and I said, “What do you mean?” I am Black. I just speak French.

In thinking about this and other similar experiences, Jean Pierre theorizes that his class and professional identity are important factors in shaping some of the differences in treatment he experienced as compared to other Black males within this setting:

I believe if there were fifty Black guys there, there would be a separation. The successful Blacks understand it, and I understand it, but I don't want to be bothered with that. I understood it right away. I am the only Black physician in that all White environment and I don't make waves. I am one of them. Let me come with my cousin who is a porter or somebody who is working in a factory.

He went on to theorize that the density in terms of the numerical size of the group also shaped the racial climate, in which case his class and professional identity were less of a protective factor. This he experienced directly, but within the context of his neighborhood:

I rented an apartment somewhere on Ocean Parkway. I was fine because I am a doctor, and my wife is there. From the time that my kid is born, and I call my mother to come and help me with the kids, my mother was sitting on Ocean Parkway on the bench every day with a Black kid. Now they see a Black grandma coming in and out of the building

every day. Now things started to change. They started to destroy my car to make me leave, so I understand that it is the density that scares them. I became a threat. I had to leave, so that is my personal experience with racism. I don't want to make a blanket statement when it comes to this because I have friends, White people who saved my life, who fought for me, here.

Despite these struggles with racism, and reconciling the effects that his cultural hybrid identity has in influencing how others positioned, distinguished and treated him, Jean Pierre concluded this chapter of his life story by emphasizing his successes. In drawing attention to his accomplishments as a physician in the U.S., he magnified the continuous conflicts he had faced. Each is connected to a different facet of his identity:

I studied hard here. I went through the whole system successfully; I became a clinical professor of medicine. I studied internal medicine. I have published papers in medicine, so I made it. Through this time, I have also seen some restrictions, competition between colleagues, and racism plays a role....so I had to be three times more than others. I dealt with it. It's the battle between David and Goliath. I had to do it because they like to say, "You are a foreign graduate." I cannot fight with that because that is what I am. In their mind because I am a foreign graduate, I don't have the same level of education as a graduate from the United States, but I am happy. I am happy I was here. I am happy monetarily. I was able to help my family and myself. The family here and the family in Haiti, you see. So to me, it is a success story. You have to give to César what is due to César. I am criticizing on the one hand, but on the other hand, I could have been all this in

my country, but not have enough money. So, you have to be fair. A scientific mind has to be balanced. Be true to yourself, and to the truth.

The dual frame of reference through which Jean Pierre viewed his personal and social struggles, and his achievements helped to magnify the central role these two different settings played in shaping his psychology. In weighing the costs and benefits of living in these two different settings, he comes to the realization that he has had to struggle against different oppressive forces in both places. Within the U.S., however, the greater economic possibilities he gained, which allowed him to improve his and his family social situation (locally and abroad), outweighed the larger struggles he faced within this context. His improved economic situation not only allowed him to meet his and his family's financial needs, but it allowed him to live between two countries and to pursue his creative interest:

Now, I have one piano here and one in Jérémie. I have two guitars, two saxophones, three violins, flutes, and I have time to play. I dance with my wife. I take lessons and I travel, and more importantly, I got a chance to write.

The next and last chapter of his narrative is ultimately the story of his evolution as he is now retired and has become an artist.

Evolving Self

I am both Haitian and a universal man. The final chapter of Jean Pierre's life story focuses on his development as an artist. He also talks in great details about his travels internationally to Canada, different parts of Europe including France and Belgium, and to his

home in Haiti. He also talks a great deal about his love for languages as he is now retired and free to pursue other interests. This time in his life seems to be the most personally fulfilling. He has written and published six books. The first and last are the most interesting as they seem to be a reflection of his evolution as an artist that draw inspiration from his country of birth. He describes his first book as follows:

My first book is my souvenir of Haiti while I was there. It covers a lot of the things we talked about in the first chapter of my story when I was in Port-au-Prince. There were a lot of things that I could not talk about, so that was my opportunity to talk because I am free, far away from it.

The content of his first book draws on his personal journey and evolution. It documents his movement from a culture of silence and suppression to his present life as a retiree who is now free to express and develop his creative voice. His last, and latest book, which he shares with me are a collection of his own paintings. While I was looking through the book, he say to me: “this is what I am doing now. Somebody said to me that medicine is my spouse, and art is my girlfriend, so joking around I said, “well, guess I dropped my wife to live forever with my girlfriend.” I found his use of this metaphor to be an interesting way to describe his career transition.

In arriving at the end of his life story, I asked Jean Pierre him about his future, but specifically about what legacy he wants to leave behind, and he had this to say:

I want to be remembered as somebody who identifies himself as someone who was born in Haiti, someone who got a lot of things from that country. Even though I was poor, I

was given. The legacy that I am leaving, the seeds are actually from Haiti. This is exactly what it is. What did Haiti make of me? The man that I am, with the tenderness that I talked about. The love for studying, the passion for reading, and writing books and everything, you know, the education. The discipline that I got from my mother who told me to be careful in Port-Au-Prince. Medical school, all of that I got in Haiti, which is rich, and I did nothing for it. I paid nothing for my schooling in Haiti. I became a medical doctor and I came here and I am making money, I must go back and give. This is not a poor country. Seemingly it is poor because of everything that it is lacking. The problem or what I want people who have benefited from Haiti to do is to recognize we are dealing with a rich country, but we just have to restore its riches.

Interestingly, despite the various challenges Jean Pierre has faced within his country of birth in addition to the various challenges Haiti has faced as a nation, he still sees its promise and possible future in this country where others might see none.

CHAPTER 5:

Narrating the Self within the Context of Relocation, Multiple Movements and Migration

The story of origin is always a complex saga. Philippe Wamba (1998, p.168).

The collection of life stories that are presented and analyzed in this chapter each reflect the individual's personal engagement with a repertoire of different cultures. Although the previous chapter touched on this issue, the current chapter speaks more directly to the question of how the self is shaped and reshaped by frequent changes in one's cultural and social environment. More specifically, the three life stories that are being brought together in this chapter as one collection share a common organizational and thematic structure. Each draws attention to how different forms of movement (relocation, multiple movements and migration) create new social and cultural demands on the self. This includes learning new languages, going to new schools, developing new social supports and learning to interact for the first time with persons from a different ethnic, class or religious backgrounds. For the group of respondents whose life story informs this chapter, their movement across different social, cultural and national borders complicate psychological theories of immigrant adaptation. Instead of one linear movement from country and culture A to B (Hermans & Kempen, 1998), each respondent has crossed various national and cultural borders. In fact, some traveled to the U.S. before immigrating, and others lived in various different countries before residing more permanently in

the United States. Moreover, some live between the U.S. and the country of origin as transnationals. In this regard, the second collection of narratives that emerged within the life stories complicate the neat fit between culture and national identity. The three life stories that have been selected for presentation and analysis in this chapter were constructed by Nadia, Fatima and Ahmed. However, it is important to note that relocation, multiple movement and migration also emerged as a common organizational and thematic structure within three other life stories (Rita, Carmen and Marc). However, Nadia's, Fatima's and Ahmed's story were specifically selected for presentation and analysis because the narrative each constructs vividly illustrates and magnifies the multiple roots and routes that (re) shaped his or her life experiences, personal understandings and conceptions of self and others. Because each also originates from a different country and entered the U.S. under different circumstances, their stories provide a nuanced view of contemporary Black immigrant experiences.

In presenting the three life stories, this chapter is organized as followed. First, I present Nadia's story, which unfolds across various different countries. Her story is analyzed with a specific focus on the different countries in which her life experiences are embedded and unfold. In analyzing her experiences in each national context (Panama, Belize, the Dutch Antilles, Costa Rica, and the United States), I also highlight the specific changes, challenges and opportunities she confronts as she engages with different cultures and social groups. Next, I present and analyze Fatima's life story, which is broken up into four parts. Each chapter of her story highlights how relocation, multiple movement and migration create new demands on her life, which forces her to learn how to adapt and become more self-reliant. Ahmed's life story is

presented last. His narrative is analyzed in three parts. Each corresponds with the sequencing and organizational structure he uses to tell his story. Through each chapter of his life story, I draw attention to the specific changes, challenges and opportunities he confronts as his life spans across two countries (the U.S. and Sudan).

Nadia's Story

The community that my father ministered to were largely descendants of Jamaicans, Trinidadians, all the people that had come to Panama to build the Panama Canal and never went back home, and stayed there and had their families. It was this generation of people that I stem from. So, my father pastored there. He grew up in that kind of enclave so-to-speak.

Nadia's story begins with the history of movement and relocation that defined her parent's experience. She also establishes that their past intersects with some of her life experiences:

I am a mix from my father who experienced that [Jim Crow-like system] with his father, having lived in the silver row, and going to the silver row schools. They were better than the Hispanic side where my mother went because there was more money, but they were still in lower quality to the white golden side, so you had that very clear distinction.

The complex history of her country of birth is magnified in her description of the racial and cultural boundaries that were constructed and reinforced by the United States. The contextual analysis presented in Chapter 3 grounds us with an understanding of the U.S.'s political and economic interest in Panama during the construction of the canal. However, Nadia's account magnifies the direct impact the U.S. had on her family in creating and supporting a racist system

of inequality. In this regard, her personal account also alerts us to reality that the Jim Crow Laws extended beyond the United States. It thus defined the social and cultural realities of generations of Black people that lived outside its national borders. Although Nadia did not experience the harsher realities faced by her parents, she does nonetheless experience there residual effects. During her early pre-adolescence, the U.S.'s presence still loomed in her home town of Colón, Panama and thus shaped social and cultural dynamics:

Nadia: My father ministered in the same community he was from, which were the descendants of the people who were the builders of the Panama Canal. We worshiped in English. We sang in English even though this was a Spanish speaking country, we held on to our Caribbean roots, our food, everything. We held on to them.

Yvonne: Was this hard to do?

Nadia: Not at all because it was a very large community and we had a lot of North American presence. In a way, we were kind of like under the umbrella of North Americans. They also had their own schools, and their own supermarkets. They practically divided the country up and that area was like North America.

An unintended consequence of the divisions the U.S. created was that the West Indian community Nadia grew up in were able to retain their cultural heritage. Although they lived in isolation from the larger Spanish speaking context of Panama, her community was still very nested within this national context. As a result, Nadia and her younger sister developed a bicultural identity. Each became bilingual in Spanish and English from an early age and learned to use language as marker of race:

We moved easily from the English world to the Spanish from when we were babies. That was never a problem to us; we would look at Black people and know that we had to speak in English. You know, these were transitions that we learned early on.

As Nadia's life story progresses from her early cultural socialization to her adolescence and then her young adulthood, it becomes clear that her current life in U.S. is far into future. For the next eleven years of her life she travels and lives in different countries within Central America and the Caribbean. The next chapters of her life story therefore provide a fascinating view of the different national settings in which she has lived, and the influence each has had on her developing her sense of self.

The Context of Multiple Movement

I think we underestimate the power of human adaptation. First of all, when you are young, you are flexible and your parents are like, "this is the life you are going to live." When she is about 11 years of age, Nadia's parent decide to relocate the family after her father, a minister turned missionary, accepted a job offer to be the president of a mission in Belize. They live there for four years. Nadia moves again at the age of 15 with her parents and sister to the Dutch Antilles. They live in this context for another four years before returning back to Panama. At the age of 19, Nadia returns to Panama with her family. Not too long after, she sets off again, but this time on her own. She moves to the neighboring country of Costa Rica where she attends college. After completing college, she gets married and lives in different cities within Costa Rica until her husband is offered a job in the United States and they move together. These multiple movements

constitute the various changes in context that Nadia has experienced during her life. In constructing her life story, she retraces her experiences in each of these countries. In discussing her experiences within each locality, she highlights the observations she has made, the challenges and changes she experienced, and the distinct learning opportunities she gained. I will now retrace her steps as she did in narrating her life story. In my analysis of her story, I focus specifically on the influence each of these localities have in shaping her personal understanding of self, others and society.

Life in Belize

This was a good experience for us moving to Belize because it is British...um, it was a different flavor. It was Caribbean definitely even though there was a lot of British influence particularly in education. Usually these countries they are under the mandate of the superpowers. It's usually in the education and the government realm, but the people were very Caribbean, so we went to school in English for the first time, and everything was in English. We made a very easy transition compared to other missionary kids who came from other countries in Latin America who did not speak English; they had to do the whole learning English thing, but we didn't have that problem. We transitioned very easily to the culture. The family's move and relocation to Belize offered Nadia and her sister new opportunities, which included being completely immersed for the very first time in their lives in a country where they could speak and be educated in English within the larger society. Although her familiarity with the language helped to facilitate her cultural adjustment, Nadia's social transition was initially more challenging. This new environment did not offer the modern conveniences she had grown

accustomed to back in Panama. Interestingly, some of these conveniences included having access to a popular American franchise.

When we got there, there were no McDonalds. We came from the whole American influence, so we were use to that even in Panama like having the McDonalds, and this and that, but there was none of that in Belize. There was no television. There were one or two radio stations, and if there were, they signed off at nine pm, so for us it was like, what! How are we even going to live here?

Nadia credits her mother's "get with it attitude" in playing a central role in helping her and her sister adjust to their new life. However, in addition to being very forceful and demanding that her daughters accept their new context, she also led them by example. For instance, Nadia indicates that her mother was extremely open-minded and flexible. The combination of their mother's "get with it attitude" and openness to trying new things helped Nadia and her sister to immerse themselves more fully in their new social environment. Once Nadia stopped focusing on what her new setting did not have, she began to participate and appreciate, at least in hindsight, what it did offer:

I will say that some of my best experiences when it came to art, music, and drama were there. These young people were very creative because there was nothing competing for their attention, you know, so like school plays were like this big elaborate thing, and like church was always packed and it was fun to be in church and that was the hangout, the place to be. Because people didn't have T.V.s or anything to compete with, they created. This is something that I carry with me and that I learned. I have learned from that

particular experience. Sometimes the distractions can definitely cut the creativity out because I saw, I lived it, and I experienced it. I saw young people really being leaders and going out there and doing things in the community because they just had to do it. They had the energy.

In addition to these experiences, Nadia had the opportunity to travel to different parts of the country. Because her father's work required much traveling, and the family would often accompany him, this provided Nadia with experiences that even a native Belizean might not have. Among these experiences was the exposure she gained to the very different racial, ethnic and indigenous groups that are known beyond this context for their unique history and rich cultural heritage:

We were stationed mostly in the city, but because of my father's position, we traveled a lot throughout the country. So we had been to Dangriga several times, so we had seen the Garifunas [descendants of shipwrecked slaves]. They had their own way of eating, they had their own language of course, and they had their own dance. I mean they were very different from the Caribbean mainstream Blacks in Belize. I mean just looking at a Garifuna, you knew. I mean the facial features were different. The way they dressed was different. I look back on it now and there was certain, um, a certain pride that they carried because they had a clear understanding of who they are. I think people who descended from Africa and stay close together tend to be like that. I mean there is no mistake in who they are. By the way they carry themselves, you know that they are sure of who they are, so that I experienced. There were also the Indians, the descendants of the Mayans, and

Incas, and they were also in Belize, but they were in the Corozal area, close to Mexico. They spoke a different type of Spanish, but they did speak Spanish, a more non-native Spanish. We got into contact with them because we traveled with my father. So my experiences while I was in Belize were even more colorful than even a Belizean.

For Nadia, Belize offered a new world of cultural and social experiences. Not only did her time there open up her conception of Blackness, but it also nurtured her creativity. Moreover, she gained exposure to other cultural groups, and to the history and the politics that defined another Central American country.

Life Curacao, and the Broader of Netherlands Antilles

The fact that so many people from so many different countries with their children were on this small island, you got this very global feeling. You have the Curacaoans, themselves, and their history of being descendants of slaves mixed with Dutch and Portuguese. Venezuela was right next door, so that is where everyone did their shopping, so there was this feel of adjustability and flexibility. In looking back on the four years she lived in Curacao, Nadia felt a sense of nostalgia about the diversity and plurality of cultures and people that inhabited the Island. These feelings are far different from how she felt at fifteen when faced with the idea of having to learn a new language completely unfamiliar to her:

I was like, “I am not going to learn this language, and my parents were absolutely, unequivocally, like “Yes, you are going to the Dutch school and you will learn Dutch like

everyone else.” At the time, this was completely ridiculous to me. I was like why would they put me through this, but it was the best experience.

As part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Dutch is the official language of school instruction and public administration in Curacao. Additionally, Papiamentu, a Creole language derived from Afro-Portuguese pidgin, Spanish and Dutch functions as the everyday language (Severing & Verhoeven, 2001). Many individuals also are fluent in English and Spanish. Upon learning that there was English instruction in some of the private high schools, it was Nadia's intention to get her education at one of these schools. She indicated that it was mostly other missionary kids, as well as the American children whose parents worked at the Shell Oil Refinery who attended these schools. Instead, Nadia's parents enrolled her in one of the public high schools, which facilitated her social and cultural immersion into her environment. The language learning process was not an alienating experience for Nadia. She found her peers and teachers to be inclusive and supportive:

Nadia: My schoolmates, first of all, they spoke English and they spoke Spanish, and so on a one-on-one level, I never had a problem with them. The issue was me learning Dutch for me to be able to read the text and do my work, and they were very helpful also; my classmates were very helpful. And of course my parents paid a tutor. I had an after school tutor who helped out a lot, and all my teachers knew that we were second language learners and that wasn't our language, so they were very helpful. It was a very good experience. It was not the type of alienation.

Yvonne: You didn't feel foreign or like an outsider?

Nadia: I did not feel that at any time. I was involved in everything.

Nadia found her new school to be extremely liberal, multiracial, multicultural, and rigorous in academics while cultivating a global vision:

I will tell you, and I have told people that the best school curriculum that I have ever seen in my life was the Dutch one. It was strong in academics; it was strong on worldview.

You had to learn foreign languages, and there were no, and, ifs or buts. You had to learn grammar. You had to be able to converse. They had labs, and they brought people in...to me, they were very ahead of their time. We see that happening now here, but they were way ahead of their time. I think that they had a very global vision, which I am now seeing discussions about here in North America, but they had it way back then. So, um, my parents were completely right. It was the best experience that I ever had. I was exposed to that other European influence, which I think was even richer than the British influence.

The broader community also cultivated this global/multicultural orientation. As a result of living in Curacao and being immersed in its social and cultural life, and having had the opportunity to travel to some of the islands that make up the Dutch Antilles, Nadia expressed that her life was thoroughly enriched. When asked what she thought was the most invaluable lesson she took from the experience, her response was:

Learn to be adaptable. You need to be flexible; you need to learn from people;

Everyone is unique. Every culture is unique and we need to respect that. I think a lot of times, we want to change people...we need to respect people...embrace them . . .if that is

the way they are, fine, you know. I think I have learned to be a very flexible person especially when it comes to culture.

The Return to Panama

When we went back to Panama, we actually went back to the same church we had left. I was able to hang out with my friends that I had gone to school with, and that I had played in the playground with. I really saw that I had grown....um, emotionally....I don't want to say spiritually in a religious sense, but I had a different view of the world. My friends, the stuff that they were talking about, the stuff that sucked up their energy was like nonessential to me. They were more into like boyfriends, and I was like, that's cool, that's good, but that was not something that I was going to stop living for. Upon returning to Panama and reintegrating herself back into the community she left behind, Nadia makes it clear that her sense of self expanded. She had become worldlier, and wanted more for herself than the prospect of having a boyfriend, getting married and having children. She began to look towards college as an opportunity to further her growth and development; finding a university for her to attend therefore became her main preoccupation. As her parents also shared her vision, they were initially thinking of sending her to the U.S. to finish her schooling, but then decided on a religious university in the neighboring country of Costa Rica. Because Nadia's father had also studied there, and so did many of the children of the other ministers, her parents felt the university in Costa Rica was the best option for her, and took Nadia for a visit. Upon deciding to

attend the university in Costa Rica, Nadia moved once again, but this time she was on her own. She thus began her own personal journey.

Nadia's return to Panama was very short lived, but self-affirming. It was as a result of coming back to Panama that she discovered how much her new worlds had changed her as a person, and also the course of her life:

I never alienated myself from my friends, you know. Now, when I look back, a lot of those friends remained in that same community. They never did much with their lives. Some finished high school, some never finished, and some went to college, but many did not. Many of them got married very young or got pregnant young. It is just completely different. Very few, like really, I can look back and say, "This person did this," and it's quite interesting. I think it was just too closed. I always tell people this, if I had to live my life over again and live in the same community, with the same people, in the same school, I would be bored to death. That's not the life for me.

The past eight years living abroad really nurtured in Nadia a desire to grow and to explore. It is during her years in college, and thereafter, that she really begins to see and make use of the skills and training she acquired from each of the localities that shaped her personal development, including Panama.

Costa Rica: The College Years and Thereafter

Again, the college that I went to had a very international flavor. There were lots of people from Central America, but very few Blacks, and we did stand out because the generation that we were, we lobbied ourselves into leadership positions. . . . We networked, which was a very

powerful thing for us at that time because we were a minority group. There were often a lot of misunderstandings about who we are. Latin America has a lot of racism. We had a lot of people coming from countries along Latin America. While Panama has a lot of Black influence and Costa Rica has a little bit, when you leave these two nations, when you start talking about some of the other ones, they have Black people, but their Black populations are like on the coast. You will find that in Latin America, they have these perceptions that Black people are like monkeys and all these misperceptions. Nadia's years in college reflects the first time in her life that she confronted racial prejudice directly. Although the university she was attending was populated by persons from various countries in Latin America, many of her peers and the college administrators had a very myopic view of persons of visible African descent that were steeped in stereotypes and racial prejudice. Having decided that the perceptions and behaviors of the staff and many of their peers were unacceptable, Nadia and her Black peers wage their own brand of a Civil Rights Movement. It is within this context of fighting for equality and respect that Nadia meets her then boyfriend and future husband, Carlos. His life story was presented and analyzed in the previous chapter. Working in collaboration with her boyfriend and their other Black peers, Nadia describes her personal reaction and the group's collective response to the ideologies that pervaded on their college's campus as followed:

Nadia: I thought it was ridiculous, childish, and I was very vocal, so I would definitely speak up. I think they kind of figured out after a while, we better not because we have a strong network. We came together and we were like in leadership positions. We did several things that kind of changed that whole perception, and it became like “in” to be

Black, and it was like “cool” to hang out with us. We completely rearranged the way we were viewed.

Yvanne: But how did you guys do that?

Nadia: Leadership. First of all we were tight. We even started our own church. We stopped going to the Spanish church. First of all it was boring. Secondly, we were sitting there, and we were like, they are not using us and we are talented.

So, we were like, what are they doing? We figured, we could do this better, so we started doing our own thing, and then they [nonBlack students] started coming over. And it got to the point where the college was like, “no” we are not having this. You all have to go over here [to the Spanish church], and we were like, “What!” “If we go over there, you need to give us some leadership positions,” and they did, but again, there were problems. When we were leading, the place was packed, and when they were leading it wasn’t. People would be like they are not leading, we are not going. We made sure that we stood out.

These experiences that Nadia and her peers were having were well after the Civil Rights Movement in the United States. Nadia points out that it was in the 80s that all of this was happening. In addition to taking leadership positions and challenging racist stereotypes, Nadia and her group gained the support of the other young people by also challenging some of the outdated conventions that the Spanish church were still following:

Nadia: It was a religious university, but some of the rules were really ridiculous.

We are talking in the 80s and they were like, “girls on this side, and boys on that side.” We were like, “this is crap.” When we go to our churches at home, it wasn’t like that, and we would constantly talk against it. When a new president came, they informed him about us, and they told them that we were respected by the college community and that we are leaders, but they have issues with us. The new president came and had a meeting with us, and he was like, “ok,” we are changing those rules.

Yvonne: Do you think the new president was more liberal?

Nadia: Yeah, or he felt, what’s the point...so that was like our contribution.

In reflecting on the changes she and her peers had lobbied, fought for and were able to initiate, Nadia had this to say,

Anyone from that generation, you call our names and people will be like, “Ok, yeah, I remember them.” Not only were we leaders, but we were vocal and if we thought something wasn't the way it was supposed to be we would write letters. We were a whole different influence because Latin Americans tend to be like, “Ok, if that is what the *Jefe* [the Boss] says.” But we were like, we don't agree. We were kind of a pain to the administration, but things did change because of our influence.

Nadia's leadership skills, her lack of fear, and self-confidence are all aspects of her personal development that were nurtured by her past experiences of movement, relocation and adaptation. Unfortunately, her initial experiences within the broader college community were only a microcosm of what she and her husband Carlos would face together after they both graduated from college, and moved to another part of the country. As Carlos was offered a

position as a minister in a coastal town, they moved together. Outside of race and color, Nadia had the added burden of having to navigate her gender location in a community that reserved all of its professional positions for male college graduates.

The Postgraduate Years

Nadia: When I married my husband, he was stationed in Costa Rica as a minister and we ended up living on the Coast. There was heavy White Hispanic influence.

There were many times when we were the only Black people on the bus, in the streets, in the neighborhood, so I had this whole people touching my hair, people rubbing my skin.

Yvanne: Didn't this make you angry?

Nadia: In the beginning it did.

Yvanne: So, like random people would just come up to you and touch you?

Nadia: Yeah, like kids would run up to me and be like look at her, "Negrita!"

"Negrita!" And then after a while, it was like whatever, and again, people began to know us because of what we did, because of our influence in the community through the church, they knew who we were.

The coastal town that they moved into was a predominately a fishing community. Once Nadia and her husband had settled in, she began to look for work for herself in Business given that she had a degree in this branch. However, Nadia soon learned that her gender would be a barrier for her employment:

I went to a job interview at a bank and they were like yeah, very good, we like you, but this is a fishing community and very few men are professionals, so whatever professional jobs we have we leave them for the men. So, I was wondering what I am going to do? I have this profession, I have a business degree and I can't do anything, and then someone said to me, "You speak English? Can you teach me English?" Then I said, you know what, I fixed up my garage and I opened up an English center. I just started teaching English.

The idea of being an English instructor emerged because her gender was positioned as a barrier for employment. Nadia, therefore, made a living for herself teaching the language that her parents had passed on to her. In this sense, her cultural inheritance had become a form of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1991). In a fishing town that was also a heavy tourist location, there was a growing demand for English instruction, especially among women. Many of them wanted to learn English in order to get better paying jobs in the nearby hotels. As a result, Nadia's client base grew very quickly, and many were women.

After two years, her husband is offered a new position in the city, and so Nadia and Carlos move again. Their experience in the city was much different from what they had initially experienced in the coastal towns. Not only was there already a large Black presence, but there were also many North American and Costa Rican retirees living there that had work in North America. Many of them attended the church her husband ministered in as it was the only and the largest English speaking church in the city at that time. Nadia and her husband lived in the city for some time and enjoyed their life together. She continued to have an interest in doing English

instruction, and therefore went back to school and earned a degree in English. Thereafter, she received an invitation to teach English at the bi-national center. This school was an educational institution run by the U.S. embassy in Costa Rica to provide English instruction for business professionals and Costa Rican students seeking to apply for a visa to study at U.S. universities. Nadia continued to work at this center and advanced professionally. She left this job and Costa Rica once her husband received a job offer to be the head minister at church in Corona Queens, New York. This more permanent move began her journey as an immigrant.

The U.S. and Reestablishing a Professional Identity

The central issue that dominates this last chapter of Nadia's life story is reestablishing her professional identity, which she eventually does through the course of holding various teaching jobs. Outside of this issue, her adjustment to the U.S. seems to have been accompanied by few personal challenges, which Nadia credits to her past as contributing to her ability to adapt to different localities very easily. With regard to her social experiences within her new context, her accented English, fluency in Spanish, self-assuredness and lack of apprehension to engage with others, regardless of their race and culture background, she has often gained the attention of others. In bringing these to the forefront, Nadia speaks to her sense of self:

I have had people say to me, you come off very strong. I have always had to say to myself, why? They say, when I come into a room, I am very confident, and they ask me where is this coming from? I think it's that I had to negotiate and learn to embrace who people are. I think I have become very secure about who I am. I feel like I embrace all the

multiplicities of myself in the sense that I can get down with anyone, and I love it. I don't have anything negative to say, but I am sure of who I am. Even as a woman, I never had this whole low self-esteem thing, and this is not because there is anything in me, but because in a way, I had a choice. I could be like everybody else, which is crazy because you will never be like everybody else, or you just know this is who I am. I had struggles of course, but I am a human being like everyone else.

Having come to embrace the plurality and the hybridity of her identity as authentic to who she is as a person, but also recognizing its complexity, Nadia often avoids inquiries about where she is from. In her perspective answering such a question not only requires way too much explanation, but also requires a self-justification that she does not feel she owes anyone:

I interact with a lot of people. I interact with like 1200 people at church. I interact with people here at work, with a lot of students, and colleagues. My life has really been interactions with a lot of people, and in those interactions, I have been able to keep who I am without giving much explanation or justification because people like to justify, "Oh, yeah, I have an accent because of this," and I am like, "Oh, I have an accent, you too."

[Laughs] I don't think I have anything that needs to be justified.

In coming to the end of the interview and in response to my question about her future, Nadia had this to say:

It would have been interesting to have kids and see if they could have lived the kind of life that we have lived, but of course we don't have kids. When we came to this country, my husband was like we should become citizens, and I was like, "why?" not because I

had anything against America, but being a child that has made so many transitions in the world, to me, America was not my last home. For him [her husband] it was; he had just migrated here and that was it. For me, I was like there is a whole world out there, we might not be here in a year, and he was like, “what are you talking about? We are in our thirties.” So in my future, I would have liked to do more, but I know it’s impossible to have the opportunity to travel some more and not just travel for travel sake, but to really live with and learn the culture, which I think, was the unique thing about my childhood.

Nadia's life story provides a complex view of the immigrant adaptation and identity development process. Rather than being informed and shaped by two localities and cultures, her identity development and adjustment process has been informed by a variety of different localities, cultures, languages and the particular social and political climate in each setting. Having been raised within multiple localities did not produce in her a sense of confusion or ambiguity about who she is as a person. Rather, Nadia's hybridize racial and cultural identity has provided her with a sense of clarity and certainty about herself. Having been socialized and encouraged by her parents to engage with, and embrace differences, she has come to embrace the differences within herself. Nadia has also learned to see her differences as her strengths rather than weaknesses. As a result, she has developed the capacity to lead, to question and to create opportunities for herself where there are none. Social theorists, Suarez-Orozo and Qin-Hilliard (2004) argue that managing difference is becoming one of the greatest challenges to multicultural countries in the contemporary context of globalization. Nadia's life story illustrates that the real challenges lie at multiple levels. At the social and structural level, what is needed in

the management of differences are social and political structures that promote the embracing and accepting of differences, rather than just creating policy that advocates for tolerance between groups while also ignoring within-group dynamics. At the social levels, presumptions should not be made about a person based solely on broader group categories and stereotypes. At the individual level, one's should learn to embrace his or her own differences rather than view them deficits.

Fatima's Story

When I moved to Conarkry, My mother was comfortable now, and I was in this big private school that I would never dream of attending. My mother brought a big house, and a little car for me to go to school with my brother and sister. It was life changing, you know. I mean going from eating cassava in the morning for breakfast and now I have everything on the table, like a decent breakfast. It was a big change. Fatima's life story begins with a dramatic shift in her family's economic situation as the preceding quotation highlights. Her story is similar to and different from Nadia's narrative. The commonalities between the two are that both are organized and structured around a series of movements and relocations across different geographical boundaries. However, their narratives differs in its emotional tone, and in the personal struggles and negotiations each encounters along the lines of gender, class, culture and race. Moreover, whereas Nadia's personal journey begins from an emotional space of certainty within hybridity, Fatima's personal journey is quite different. However, she also has hybrid cultural identity as her parents are from different ethnic and linguistic communities, which makes her a composite of

both. However, Fatima's personal journey evolves from an emotional space of uncertainty and insecurity due to health problems, poverty, and her poor command of French during her adolescence. Her narrative, therefore also provides a view of her growth socially, culturally and emotionally. Interestingly, the changes she experiences within herself corresponds with the changes she experienced in her social environment. Fatima's story will be presented and analyzed in three parts. Each corresponds with one of three major turning points in her life as she experiences different forms of movement, which challenges and expands her conception of self and others.

Humble Beginnings & Life in Faranah

When we go to school and they ask every student what they have for breakfast, we were shy to say "Cassava," but we would say "Cassava," and everybody would look at each other and say, "Cassava?" How can you eat that for breakfast?" and I say, "That is what we have." For the first ten years of her life, Fatima lived in the more rural setting of Faranah, which lies by the river Niger. This locality is where her father grew up and it is also the hometown of his ethnic group (Mandingo). Her mother is from a different ethnic group, which she informs me is Fulani. Due to her exposure to both sides of her parent's family, as each lived in different areas, Fatima developed fluency in each of their ethnic languages. She learned Fulani from her mother's side and Malinke from her father's side. She is also fluent in French, which is Guinea's national language. Fatima's life started out in poverty although her father was a high school teacher in their village. Her family poor economic situation was a source of shame and

embarrassment for Fatima. Adding to her woes is the sickle cell disease. She draws attention to this issue early in her story not only because it affected her physical well-being as a child, but also because it continued to affect her life dramatically as she faces with mounting stress in adjusting life in the United States. Because of her family's poor economic situation, Fatima's mother began a coffee bean exportation business, which did very well. The success of her mother's business coincided with Fatima's first relocation experience. Her family moved from her rural village in Faranah to the urban metropolis of Conakry. Fatima's move to the city center and her mother's improved economic situation changed the course of their social life.

Life in the City Center and Negotiating Cultural Differences within Class

When I came from the countryside to the capital, it was different. I mean our French, the way we speak French, it is kind of different. Over there, they speak more properly, all kinds of fancy ways. So, when I came from Faranah to Conakry, whenever I started talking in French, they started laughing. They were like, "Is that how you speak French?" and they laugh at me. . . . I use to be like, "Why are they laughing?" I use to tell my mother, "I don't want to go to that school any more. Those people laugh at me because I can't speak proper French." My mother said, "That is the reason why you are here. You have to learn." After a while, I was comfortable with them, especially since I came back from going to Paris. They were like, "Oh, she is somebody too." Although the move to Conkary improved Fatima's socioeconomic status, she confronted new challenges within her new setting. As her peers that attended the exclusive private school her mother enrolled her in were the children of dignitaries and the upper class,

Fatima soon felt the weight of her previous class location. Language served, in her case, as a marker of her difference and thus became a site of alienation. The exclusion she experienced was only absolved by “proof” that she also lived the life style that would validate her as an authentic member of their social world. However, the circumstance leading to her trip abroad was not a positive one. Shortly after her family relocated to Conakry, Nadia's father suffered a massive stroke and was hospitalized for over a year before he passed away. In the interim, Nadia would often visit her father in the hospital. Seeing his deteriorating condition was emotionally painful for her since they were very close. However, she drew strength and motivation from his advisement and encouragement:

Everything he had to do, he did it in the bed, and it was pretty sad. I visit him every day in the hospital and that was very emotional for me. I mean every time, I go visit him in the hospital, he always tells me, “Please don’t give up on school. Do whatever it takes. Try to make your life. Go to school and make something better for your life. Take care of your mom.” Every time I go to see him, he would say that, so that was my driving force in everything. I tell myself that it doesn’t matter how hard it is going to be, I am still going to push until I get where I want to go, so that is one of my driving force.

When her father passed away, Fatima and her siblings were grieving, and were very depressed. Wanting to help her children through this rough time, Fatima believes her mother took her and her siblings and cousin abroad to help them with their grieving process:

It was like one year of sickness, and he passed away. It was very painful. So one day my mother decided, “Ok we are going to France for vacation,” and then she brought all five

of us, me, my older brother and my little sister, and my two cousins. We were together in Paris for one month. It was very nice. It probably helped us with my father's death because we were so depressed about it. I was really close to my father more than my mother because she did not have time to stay with us all of the time being that she traveled more for business.

It was under these circumstances that Nadia's mother took the family first to Morocco and then to France. Although Fatima did not go very deeply into her experiences abroad, she did have this to say about Morocco: "It is an African country, but it is Arab, so they are different. We are like dark skinned, and they are lighter skinned. They are very racist too sometimes. I am sorry to say that, but they are." In Morocco, Fatima observed that the Moroccans she interacted with outside of her mother's friends made assumptions about her and her family that were steeped in racial stereotypes. Beyond this experience, race is not mentioned again. Rather, class remains the central focus particularly after she returns from her trip, and goes back to school:

After one month, we came back to Guinea, and I went to school and everybody was like, "You went to Paris? Oh, my God. Everybody was so excited; they were looking at me more, and they approach me more than before. Before when I came from the countryside to the capital it was different.

At this point of her life, Fatima seemed to allow others close to her to validate her self-worth, but this began to change as she gained more traveling experience and became more mature.

Fatima's third opportunity to travel occurred when she is nineteen. After her brother departed to the United States upon receiving a student visa to start college, Fatima and her cousin

were approved for a three-year travel visa. During the summer, her mother bought both girls tickets to go to the United States. Fatima and her course went to Brooklyn and stayed with her brother. Again, Fatima provides very little description of her social and cultural experiences. However, she does mention its influence on her decision to open up her own beauty salon:

We stayed with my brother in his apartment until it was time for us to come back.

When we were there we used to go to the salon and we would take pictures of different styles they were doing, so we could learn. When I went back home, I told my mother, I want to open my own salon. I tell her I really want to start my own thing. I want to learn everything that I saw in case I go back, so I have a skill that I can use.

Her mother helped with the financing and Fatima opened up her own little salon. She ran it with her cousin for a year before returning back to high school. Her trip to the U.S. not only ignited in her an entrepreneurial spirit, but it also helped her see the value of being able to use her hands to make money. It is important to note that later on in her story, the training and skills she acquires from running her own business serves her well when she moves to the United States more permanently. Her decision to move was influenced by the following incident:

So after twelfth grade, I didn't pass my final exams to finish high school. When I failed it was very depressing for me. I use to cry and one day one of my cousins, and a friend came and he says, "Please stops crying." We are here and we finished university. You have a three-year visa to America! Why are you crying? We are here and we are finished university and we don't have work. There are no jobs. You have a three-year visa to America. What are you crying for? Get out! Go!" It was kind of funny, you know,

because I was crying. Everybody that was next to me, they started laughing, and they say, “That is true; we can’t even get a job. Get your visa and go to a bigger school in America and learn”. . . .So, my mother decided, ok, I am going to send you guys to America to continue your education, me, my cousin and my sister.

Fatima's ability to buy a ticket with her mother's help in order to start her life anew as compared to her friends who had no other options, magnifies how differences in economic means result in very different life chances.

Adapting to Life in the U.S. and Negotiating Change

So, when I came here, people are shocked. You are Marla’s daughter working here? Oh, my God! I am, like yeah. I have too. Some people think that when you come here and your parents have everything in Africa, you don't have to work. Some people will rely on their family to bring money for them here, but I was kind of humble. I try to do everything on my own, you understand. I didn't want to rely on my mother. I say, “Here, there is no mother, and no father.” I have to work hard to get what I need to get, so when people see me working in those salons, I don't even care. As long as I am getting my little paycheck. Fatima’s relocation to the U.S. was the beginning of her journey toward independence, self-discovery, and maturation. Within her new context, she had to learn to survive. In order to do so, she learned to see beyond the class consciousness ideals of her past life. Now twenty-one, she was living in a one-bedroom apartment in Brooklyn with her older brother, sister and cousin. Fatima found comfort in living among her family. She also found comfort among the other African immigrants that lived in their

building. However, having only a travel visa, no working papers, and very limited English proficiency, Fatima needed to earn money to care for herself and to contribute to the household expenses. She drew on the skills she developed in the beauty salon she had opened back home, and found employment in an African hair-braiding salon. Fatima work there until she sensed that her employer was exploiting her:

It came to a point where we weren't getting along because sometimes she would treat me like I was her maid, and I have to do everything in the salon. One day she really pissed me off. I was angry. I was like what does she think I am. She is treating me like I am a piece of dirt, and I was like I am not going to work for her any more. I decide from then, I was not going to work for her, or anyone else in this hair braiding business. I decided to go at it on my own. I took all my savings, and I went and bought business cards. I made flyers, and then I went to a Jamaican hair salon, and I rented a booth for \$150 a week. Every week I take out of my savings and pay them until I get my own clients. Then I become well known. I was making good money, and I am independent. No one is bossing me around, and I can do what I want.

Fatima's entrepreneurship, which began back in her home country, assisted her in adapting economically to her new environment. Sociologists Silvia Pedraza (1991) indicates that immigrant women have contributed significantly in ethnic enterprising. Fatima is certainly an example of this. Although she was doing well financially, Fatima begins to feel as if she is losing a sense of herself in this line employment:

It came to a point where I was so depressed. I am like this is not me; my life is not braiding. I don't like this knowing that I am coming out of high school in my country, from a very high level private school, and I didn't even start school since I came. That was frustrating me, and I would cry because this is not me. So I tell myself, this is only for a short time. I am going to go to school.

Seeing the inconsistency between her past and present self, and wanting to bring the two into greater coherence, Fatima eventually enrolled in a GED course offered in French. She had learned about the course from her Haitian friend. After completing the course, she took the GED exam passed. Thereafter, she enrolled in a few college courses. Now, things were finally moving in the direction Fatima had envisioned for her life, and then she received notice from her mother that things were not going well in Guinea. Her mother sided with the opposing political candidate in the government's elections, so the supporters of the current administration began harassing her and making her life and business affairs difficult. Fatima's mother therefore advised her children to stay in the U.S. in fear that if they returned they also would be subject to harassment or worse. Based on her brother's counsel, Fatima, her cousin and sister filed for political asylum. Although Fatima was initially denied, she was later granted asylum after pleading her case before a judge. In the process of filing for her papers, she also applied for her husband to join her. They had met and were married a year before Fatima moved to United States. Six months after filing the paperwork, she and her husband were reunited. Although happy to have him with her, his arrival to the U.S. brought about a new set of transitions and challenges for Fatima:

When you first come here and you don't speak English, you are like a baby because whoever you are dealing is going to be teaching you how to walk because you do not know the area. They have to teach you how to speak, you know. So, I was not a baby anymore because I can communicate a little bit better now, and my brother would do a lot to help us. So when my husband came I had to do the same things with him. I have to show him around, teach him and I bring him to the English center.

One year later, Fatima found out she is pregnant with their first child. During the course of her pregnancy she was unable to work, but continued to go to school. Their new situation pushed her husband into the work force, but he was unable to sustain employment. Prior to relocating to the U.S., he was a practicing medical doctor. Within the U.S. he was unable to work in this profession, yet he lacked the skill sets for the menial jobs he was able to get. As a result of the stress of their financial situation, school, and the arrival of their first child, Fatima experienced a sudden break in her physical and mental health:

One day, I just stayed in my apartment feeling like giving up, and then I went to the hospital because I was feeling really sick. I told my husband, whatever you do, please take care of the baby. Don't let the baby stay with me. I don't want to hurt him. I do not feel well. So, I am in the hospital. I am crying to them. I don't really know what I am doing because I am in so much pain. My legs and joints are hurting, and I told them I want to die. You know, the hospital system, they don't let that kind of thing go easy. Before I come to my senses, before I know it, they had a psychiatrist come and visit me. Then I realize sometimes when you have depression, you don't think that it is something, but it is really,

really real. If I didn't experience it, I really wouldn't know the feeling of it. You feel like the whole world is just giving up on you. You are lonely. It's like you can't do it anymore. During her hospitalization, Fatima was given anti-anxiety medication and was provided with counseling services. After getting much needed rest, she regained her senses, and was discharged. Right after this incident, her husband, wanting to find a way to lighten her load, studied and took the test to become a licensed cab driver. His new job gave him the opportunity to work independently and on his own schedule. Once Fatima's husband began to earn more money, and his income was more stable, he encouraged her to focus on the baby, and school. They both also agreed to put off having another child until Fatima could complete her college education, which she eventually did.

The physical and mental health break down that Fatima suffered served as her spiritual reawakening. It helped her realize that she had lost touch with her spirituality and religious identity:

I was feeling like something is missing in my life, so one day I said, you know what, I am just going to take it easy. I will do what I believe, and do it well. I will not just do it partial because I was doing it partially. I did not wear *hijab* for my first two years of college. I knew that being a Muslim that this is something that I am supposed to do. It is part of our religion.

Fatima not only recommitted herself to her faith, but also fully embraced its dictates, which included wearing the *hijab*.

As she approached the end of her story, I asked Fatima to project her life into the future, and she had this to say:

In twenty years from now, I will be finishing my nursing education at the master's level. That is what I am looking for. I will be able to give back to the children in Africa that I know, the families that do not have health insurance, food, clothing, an education, all that. I really dream of doing this you know being that my husband is a graduate of medical school in my country. We can work together and have a clinic (**Yvonne:** So, you plan on moving back?). We will be back and forth because our life, at a certain point, our life will still be in America, you know, but we can share the life. We can live life here and still do something positive in my country.

Fatima's vision of living her life as a transnational also reflects the changes in her perception of self, which she expresses in stating: "I will never be the same person I was when I was there."

Fatima's story when read alongside Nadia's narrative vivifies the ways in which the self is made and remade within the larger context of movement, relocation, and migration. In the face of such continuous changes, each has found a way to anchor the self in order to render it more stable and coherent. For Nadia, her personal sense of self is anchored in her learned flexibility and cultural hybridity, and her racial pride and professional identity. For Fatima, defining her personal and social identity is still an emerging process. However, she has come to see her Muslim faith as an anchor and her hope to lead a transnational life as a future possibility.

When read together, both of these life stories vivify that the stability (Nadia's case) or instability (Fatima's case) that characterizes one's family and class structure will result in very

different social, emotional and subjective realities. As both respondents are also women, their narrative magnify the influence that gender roles or gender location plays in shaping how each experiences being an immigrant. In this respect, their life stories lend support to Pedraza's (1999) assertion that paying attention to the relationship between women's social positions and migration will help fill the void regarding our knowledge of women as immigrants, and contribute to a greater understanding of their lives.

Ahmed's Story

I came here when I was twenty-four years old. Actually, this is funny. I never thought I was going to be here. I tried to come as a student. I couldn't. Then there is a lady, actually, she is from Haiti. . . .I met her there [in Sudan] and I asked her if she could help me to come here. She submitted something called the DVI program, the lottery, and I won the lottery. I came here with a green card. Everybody told me that I was lucky because I came here with a green card. I didn't have to struggle to get one. Ahmed's life story shifts between two contexts (Sudan and the U.S.), and between his interactions with various social and cultural groups. Born and raised in his native country of Northern Sudan, he emigrated to the U.S. in his early twenties. In narrating his life story, he moves at a very fast-pace progressing chronologically from his childhood to his adulthood, and shifts between the geographical context of the U.S. and Northern Sudan. His story, therefore begins with a quick overview of his life experiences in Khartoum, the capital city of Northern Sudan. He then highlights the constitutive role this context played in shaping his personal, cultural and religious identity. The rest of his story is situated within the United States,

but more specifically the City of New York. Within this setting, the main focus of his narrative is his ascension from a low-level restaurant worker (barely proficient in English) to a college student and recipient of the National Science Foundation (NSF) scholarship. His story concludes with his professional life as a high school mathematics teacher, and leads to his personal life as a husband and father of two boys.

Although Ahmed's narrative seems like a clear-cut story about an immigrant's mobility and attainment of a professional identity, this main story-line is infused with various sub-stories. Each takes us into the depths of his maneuvering in and out of different social and cultural worlds. Similar to Nadia's and Fatima's life story, at the heart of Ahmed's narrative are the social and cultural changes and challenges he confronts in moving to new country. His new locality pushes him outside of his comfort zone, and forces him to view life through other cultural lenses. Through this process, he develops an open mindedness to other perspectives that facilitates his capacity to lead, and help others.

What makes Ahmed's life story so distinctively different from the previous two stories is the ownership he takes in shaping the direction of his life's course. The strong personality characteristics he brings to this endeavor also adds another layer to his story. As a result of both of these dynamics, he presents himself within his narrative as the architect of his own life. In analyzing Ahmed's life story, I therefore focus on the combined role social, (such as religion, family, migration, movement, education), personal (goals, striving, values, attitude, and world view) and personality factors (optimism, conscientiousness and openness) play in shaping how makes meaning of his experiences and defines his identity

In presenting and analyzing his life story, I begin as he did with his experiences in Northern Sudan and then in the United States. Because his life experiences in the U.S. constituted the bulk of his narrative, I present and analyze his experiences within this context, in subsections. Each one focuses in on a specific set of social, cultural and subjective experiences that he negotiated at different levels of his adjustment process.

Life in Khartoum, Sudan

Ahmed: I grew up in a family of ten. My father has two wives; my mother is the second wife. I am the oldest one of ten on my mother's side.

Yvanne: What order did you say you are?

Ahmed: I am the oldest of the second mother because I have two mothers, the first wife and the second wife. It is the norm there. The culture permits that. You can marry up to four.

Yvanne: As long as you can take care of them?

Ahmed: You have to take care of them. The main thing is to take care of them. If you cannot take care of them, you cannot get married. It is not just financial, you have to help them, support them, everything. This has another background, I don't know if this might be off track.

The snapshot Ahmed provides of his family structure renders visibility to the specific social and cultural conventions in which his life is embedded. Understanding that such

conventions are not permitted within Western cultures and society, Ahmed proceeds to explain the social, cultural and historical roots of this convention as he understands them:

Because the culture there, long time ago, people live on the farms, more hands on the farms that means more food. It's an economic issue. That is why people get married twice, three times to have more kids; moreover, most of the kids they die at birth because of diseases. If you survive after seven, eight years, you will be fine. Another thing is tribe issue. When you have a big family, and you are a man and you can produce kids this shows that you are a strong man. Moreover, you have a lot of people around you that can support you and help you. Ah, another thing because people use to live in tribes and groups, they use to have fights with each other, the men use to go to war, and the female stays home. Because there is a shortage of men that is also why the society allow you to marry more than one, and not to sleep around just to have kids, and then when Islam came they say, "You have to have a wife and take responsibility and take care of them." This is the general thing about getting more than one wife. It is the norm; it is not something that is crazy or unacceptable that is why our families work hard.

In connecting the origins of his family's structure to his Islamic faith, agricultural life and African tribal customs, Ahmed illuminates one aspect of the cultural syncretism that produced the hybrid culture within which his cultural, national and religious identities are constituted. However, it is important to note that although polygyny is common in the Arab world (with Northern Sudan being both an Arab and an African country), it is not universally practiced or accepted by Muslims. In fact, legal anthropologist Heather Johnson (2005) indicates that

polygyny is one of the greatest sources of criticism for Islam both within and outside the faith. Despite the uniqueness of Ahmed's family structure from a Western point of view, he describes his family life in North Sudan as being pretty “normal.” He grew up in a middle class family, as his father was able to adequately provide for their needs:

My father was a trader. He was doing well, you know, we live a decent life. I grew up in the capital city [Khartoum, Sudan] even though I am from the North, I grew up in the city. I have a good education in the sense that I have elementary, middle school, high school and there I started college too, so I was ok in the sense of education, food, in the sense of clothes and everything. We were middle class people. We not living high, we not living low. We are middle class people. Ah, actually, I have a normal life.

As one of the eldest of ten children, Ahmed often felt personally responsible for caring for his siblings and being their role model, especially since he grew up in a very tight-knit family structure. By the age of twenty-four, he had left his family as the opportunity to emigrate to the U.S. came about through a welcomed case of life chance. His name was selected among a pool of applicants in the diversity lottery. This changed his life by giving him the opportunity to live his dream of living in the United States. Opposed to his decision to leave, Ahmed's father refused to provide him with any financial assistance. Ahmed, feeling extremely lucky to have won the lottery, stood firm in the belief that his future would be in the United States. In reflecting on his father's objection, Ahmed explained that he understood its roots. His father loved him and feared that his son might become a victim of U.S. gun violence, an image that saturates the

global media. With no financial support from his father, Ahmed sought help from other family members. His uncle gave him a small loan, which he used to purchase his plane ticket.

Life in the U.S

When I came, I had sixty-five dollars in my pocket. That is all I had. I had nothing. No language, nobody to help me, nobody. The only thing I have is a dream and I believe in myself.

So starts the beginning of Ahmed's new immigrant reality.

Settling In

As Ahmed's life began to take its shape within the national context of the U.S., he engages in the immigrant social network in order to find housing and employment. Although he maintained that he had no one to help him as is reflected on the quotation that begins this section, Ahmed did have at least one point of contact and support upon his arrival, the woman who had submitted his application for the Diversity Visa. She hosted him in her home in Queens, New York for a few days, and then took him to Brooklyn. There he established more permanent housing in an area that has a large Arab and Muslim community. Once in Brooklyn, she also introduced Ahmed to a Sudanese restaurant owner who eventually provided him with his first source of employment:

She brought me to Brooklyn to a Sudanese person and I was looking for a job. That was my first goal. I don't care about nothing else. I was looking for a job and he owns a restaurant and I tell him, "I want to work with you," and he said, "I don't need nobody now." I told him, "I don't want no money now, I just don't want to stay home and do

nothing,” so I went with him and I start working, and when he sees what I am doing, by the way, I am a pretty neat person, very neat and organized and he liked me. He hired me, and I work for him and I use to work for six days, and I had Sundays for cleaning and things.

As a newly arrived immigrant working in the back kitchen, Ahmed had barely any social interactions with the restaurant’s patrons and was therefore able to operate with very little to no command of the English language. Because the restaurant’s location was in Crown Heights, a neighborhood in central Brooklyn, Ahmed experienced for the first time Black cultural traditions very different from his own:

Ahmed: In the beginning when I came, I believe it was August 26, and ten days later, I believe, or a week later it was Labor Day; it was so wild, you know. I come from a different culture and I am seeing people have fun, and people are wild

Yvanne: On Eastern Parkway?

Ahmed: On Eastern Parkway. This where I use to work, and that was my first time seeing this 1995, September 1995. You know it has become something that I go to every year.

Yvanne: What was it about that that kind of impressed you?

Ahmed: It was just wild. It was totally different. The way they do things, we don’t do it. I come from a very strict culture. I don’t know, in the sense of the music is different, in the sense of the way they show their expressions, the colors, the way they dance.

Everything is different. It is a different view from where I come from.

This socio-cultural experience was a positive one, and now constitutes a tradition he now partakes in annually. However, his other initial cross-cultural interactions were not so pleasant. For example, Ahmed recalled offering a woman his seat on a crowded train. Although he believed he was being kind and respectful, the woman responded with anger:

I will never forget, one day I was sitting on the train, and a lady came in, and I stand up for her and she started screaming like I touch her or something. And everybody is looking at me and I told her, “ma’am where I come from, we do respect women, and you, it is not because you are old or young. I am standing because I want to, but I believe this is my mistake, I am sorry.” So, everyone looks at her now. They stop looking at me, they start looking at her. She is the bad one. Because where I come from women don’t stand up in transportation, women sit. It doesn’t matter where, or when or why, women sit down and men stand. It is not in the sense that women can’t do it, and men can, it is that we have to show respect to sisters, women, and others, it is something like that. And this is one thing that I will never forget.

Diffusing the situation, he offers an explanation, which highlights his the positive cultural values as compared to her lack of understanding and ignorance. As I read Ahmed's transcript, I wondered if this fellow commuter made inferences about him based on his strong accented English and his physical characteristic, both of which renders visibility to his foreignness. Later in his story, when I asked Ahmed whether he ever hid any aspect of his identity for safety concerns, he makes it clear that his physical features combined with his accent renders him

visibly different from others. Having learned to accept and embrace the otherness, Ahmed responds:

I have no problems telling people where I come from. I cannot hide it because of my accent, because of my features, I cannot hide it. If you cannot hear it, you can see it. That is why I have to be happy with myself. I am not bothering you, if you want to attack me because of my culture or my religion, I will look at you like you need help.

This conception of being comfortable and happy with himself regardless of the opinions of others guides many of the decisions Ahmed made as he strategically charts his life course in the United States, and navigates different social and cultural groups.

After working in the restaurant for three months, Ahmed convinced his boss to allow him to leave earlier in the evenings so he could attend English language (ESL) courses at the Brooklyn campus at Long Island University. At this point, which still constitutes the very beginning of his immigrant life, Ahmed has come to realize that his success in this country is contingent upon him being able to be fully immersed in the socio-cultural life of his new environment. “By then I had no choice but to learn the language, because the culture, the system, I have to be part of it. And when I came here I know I am not going back soon, so I have to do something with my life.” After enrolling in the ESL course, Ahmed began a new weekly schedule of working from six in the morning to six in the evening, and then attending English classes until nine at night. Over the course of time, Ahmed found this schedule to be too difficult to manage. He then quit the restaurant.

More fully immersed

After leaving the restaurant, Ahmed gained employment as a newspaper delivery person in lower Manhattan. This new position not only met his financial needs, which he kept minimal, but it also provided him with more free time to attend school. In order to function in this position, Ahmed had to learn to communicate with others, get to different destinations, and navigate the city. Because of what the job required of him, he developed greater familiarity with the city's landscape, its vibrant cultures and people. Despite facing some challenges because of his accent, he always maintained a friendly disposition:

Ahmed: I come to the job and everybody knows me. Some people think I am naive, but I don't care if you like me or if you don't like me, it doesn't bother me. People laugh at my accent, but it does not bother me. People laugh until now, until tomorrow, but it doesn't bother me. I don't care. It doesn't bother me

Yvanne: So you are really easy going.

Ahmed: I am easy going, and I believe that I am blessed because I am here. I feel so proud of myself, I feel like I am doing something.

To further his progress academically, Ahmed decides to leave Long Island University because it is too expensive. He then enrolls in the City University of New York. Before shifting the conversation to his experiences at CUNY, Ahmed shares another shocking social experience he had with another student. Noticing his accent, the student inquires about his Ahmed background. He unintentionally insults Ahmed by drawing on stereotypes:

When I go to Long Island University, one of the students asked me about where I come from. I said Sudan. He thought Sudan is a jungle. He asked me, “Do you have transportation there?” and I look at him, and I was like, “My father has a donkey, and I have a cow,” something like that. I could not believe that somebody in college doesn’t know where the jungle is. I was just upset at that because I was just shocked. Later on I found out that he wasn’t playing he really didn’t know. I was so upset because I thought he was just playing with me, but he really didn’t know. I thought that because where I come from they teach you geography and you learn a lot, you learn about Europe, America, South and North, you learn about Australia. You learn about the country and what they do, the general, you have a good sense of background about towns, but they don’t have it here. So I have to excuse him.

Ahmed's ability to see things through the perspective of others in order to understand how they might arrive at certain conclusions is a distinguishing quality. This personal characteristic seems to enable him to develop relationships with others fairly quickly and easily.

Upon completing his language courses, he enrolled in a degree program, and because of the close relationship he developed with the staff, he landed a job in the office of student affairs. His new position now enabled him to spend more time on the college's campus, which gave him the opportunity to focus more on his studies and to develop a larger network of friends and social supports. Within this context, he meets other immigrant students that shares his motivation to succeed academically and professionally. They form a bond and develop a tight network as he explains:

Ahmed: Now, this group that I was with, we still communicate. We have people from all over, from Mexico, from here, from all over, and we have a network. I will give you an example, one of my friends from there he lives in Connecticut now and he is a doctor. I know engineers, physicians, and teachers.

Yvonne: Wow, you hang out with pretty successful people.

Ahmed: Well we were all in the same boat. All the time, I never hang with the wrong people; I try to stay away from things that distract me.

Yvonne: It seems like your cohort was pretty much immigrants too?

Ahmed: Exactly...immigrants, people of different races. I had relationships with others, but they look at me like I am a nerd or something because all my focus.

In college, Ahmed takes up computer science as his major and excels in both math and science. He explains that his aptitude for math and science did not derive from some innate ability, but from the type of education, and the discipline he acquired in school back in Sudan:

Ahmed: When I came to this country, I was so good in Math. This is not because I am good, but because I already covered all the topics back home. When I came here, I took calculus one, calculus two, calculus three, and I get all "As," and everybody thinks that I am a genius, but I wasn't a genius. I just have it.

Yvonne: You took this before?

Ahmed: No, we look at things differently. We have a sense of order. When I get it, it is easy. The physics and the chemistry, I was so good at it and then I get selected by the National Science Foundation.

Yvanne: Oh, excellent!

Ahmed: Yeah, I get award, they give me money and a certification, and they send me to Brookhaven National Lab. I worked there as a student. I have a new beginning now for working.

The NSF grant and the internship he gained in Brookhaven National Lab allowed Ahmed to meet new people and to develop new friendships. In their free time, his peers invite him to participate in various social activities, which push him out of the comfort zone of his religious and cultural beliefs. For example, Ahmed recalled attending a friend's birthday party at a club in the Village in Manhattan. At the party, another man propositioned him in a he thinks is in a romantic way, which took him by surprise. In making sense of this experience, Ahmed arrived at some very interesting comparisons and conclusions regarding the positives and negatives about individualistic and collective cultures:

Ahmed: I didn't know that the idea of gays and lesbians was so big at that time that somebody comes and talk to you. We don't talk with men like this. I don't want to say we don't have gays and lesbians, we have them, but you don't see it too much because the society doesn't allow it. That is one of the things that I see and I was like, what?

Yvanne: It was like a shock?

Ahmed: Yeah, it was a shock. He tells me he wants to take me to Atlantic City. It's just like, it doesn't click. In my country, men have to be straight, but here you have your freedom, you can do whatever you want to do.

Yvanne: So here, you are finding that there is a lot of...

Ahmed: Freedom. People could do whatever they want to. You could experience anything you want to. It is your life. It is a good thing, actually. Back home, it is not your life; it is everybody's life. You live in the community, you have a problem with your wife, and everybody is part of it. You have a problem with your brother, and everybody is part of it, your family, neighbors, your cousins, everybody. They will tell you, why you are doing this? Your problem is everybody's problem. You get sick, you have a problem, and everybody is around you.

Yvanne: That is not bad, right?

Ahmed: Here you don't have that. You cannot afford to get sick. You get sick, you are on your own. That is one of the things that I miss the most.

The complexity of the preceding discussion is that although Ahmed is shocked by what he experiences, he can still see the positive aspects of living in a culture that is less restrictive since it allows one to be free to be one's self. He also realizes that live in a free cultural society comes with the price of not having much time for others or for own one's self.

A Candle that Burns for Others

I am like a candle. It burns itself for others. That is how I see myself. I am trying to make everybody happy, but that is not easy. It is very hard. All you can do is try. As his life story shifts to its final chapter, Ahmed draw greater visibility to the various responsibilities he now has as a teacher, a husband, a father, the eldest brother, and son. Although he tries to continue to maintain a positive outlook on his life as he narrates his story, it is at this point of the interview he express a sense of feeling stressed and weighed down by all of his responsibilities. Time for himself

seems very limited as she is constantly working to meet the needs of others. Straight out of college, Ahmed right into a master's degree, which he completes. He then begins a doctoral program at Colombia University while working full time as a high school math teacher. In the summer he returns back home to Sudan. He meets his wife and they get married. When he returns back to the U.S. his wife eventually joins him, and then they have two boys. They soon discover that one of their sons is have problems with his language development. Ahmed attributes this to a lack of socializing as the kids spend most of their day in a small apartment. Realizing he was unable to meet all of his obligations, he drops out of the Ph.D. program. He stresses that despite having had to make some personal sacrifices, he feels a sense of contentment and fulfillment with himself and his life trajectory:

I believe from getting the first job to now, I actually believe all my dreams come true. I have a good education. I finish my bachelor degree in computer science. I finish my Master's degree. I try to start a Ph.D. at Columbia University, but I don't have the time, and I don't have the money.

He then decides to take his son and wife back to Sudan to live. Once both are there, and the children have more opportunities to be outside and socialize, his youngest son starts doing better with his speech development. After the summer, Ahmed returns back to the U.S. where he continues to work as a high school math teacher, which helps in to financially support his immediate family, and extended family members.

In speaking to his job as a teacher, he expressed that many of the young people he teaches face a lot of problems, which he seeing as contributing to their poor academic performance.

Ahmed links his student's academic failures to a break down in the family structure. He also links their poor performance to the desire to be independent too early:

My job is to teach, and it comes with baggage in the sense that the students do not know the math. They come with problems, and these problems sometimes prevent them from getting their work done. It doesn't get too personal, but I have to deal with the good and the bad. I believe I learn a lot from my students concerning the issues of family and the issues of culture... the kids they don't live with their fathers, it is just the mothers. They don't listen to their mother they want to move out by themselves. I think this country is good in terms of independency, very good, but people don't share their experiences very easily. If you ask for it, they will give it to you. If you don't ask they will not give it to you. Help is not something that you just get, you have to ask for it to get it. The thing with the students, they make me very patient. Even if I didn't have any patience, they force me. I have to be patient. I love what I do. I love it. I enjoy teaching. That is my passion, teaching. This is my passion, my kingdom, ok, and I have to keep it good.

In his desire to motivate and inspire his students, Ahmed devotes a lot of his time to his students and to his work. Between being a role model for his students, supporting them academically, and supporting his immediate and extended family, Ahmed feels the weight of his responsibilities. As the interview nears its end, I inquire about how moving back and forth between the two countries has affected his view of himself:

Yvanne: When you go back, do you see yourself different now?

Ahmed: Oh, yes, definitely different. This country is a mess. This country [U.S.] has a sense of order, even if you are going to die, you will do so in a line. . . . There, there is no line. If you have power or connection, you can just cut the line. That is one of the things that I miss when I go back home. When I go back home there is no sense of order. There is a lot of corruption, and I believe the corruption is part of the people because if you see something that is happening right in front of you and you don't do anything, don't complain. We don't do anything about it.

Yvanne: Maybe people are afraid of the consequences?

Ahmed: What is going to happen, you can't die twice. I'll just be dead. You die emotionally, you die of fear, and this is one of the things you see here, you can talk. Here there is freedom, in this sense that you could talk about anything. Over there, you just complain, you complain to God and somebody else.

The dual cultural, national and political frames of references that shape how Ahmed sees the two different social and physical worlds he inhabits is reminiscent of W.E.B. Dubois's concept of *double consciousness*. He is able to see and experience life through two different lenses.

However, rather than struggling to reconcile his personal view of himself against the contemptive view that others have of him, the struggle that Ahmed faces is reconciling the differences between his two very different physical environments. In *Souls of Black Folks*, Dubois made the impassioned statement that the problems of the 20th century is the problem of the color line. Although this problem continues to exist, the added issue that emerges in the 21st century is that although boundary lines have become increasingly more permeable, new lines

are constantly being drawn. In Ahmed's case, he lives within both a restrictive/collective cultural environment in Sudan and in the more liberal/individualist cultural environment of the United States. Although he is able to freely cross different national and cultural boundaries, he may never be able to reconcile the differences and contradictions between these worlds in his own head. However, each is a part of him. Each has left a lasting impression on his identity. Bhatia and Ram (2001) assert that identity is a negotiation, which sometimes involves a constant struggle. In this regard, all three of the life stories that are presented and analyzed in this chapter speak to the reality that national, cultural and social borders have become more permeable. As a result, individuals have greater freedom to move across different social and cultural spaces. However, what is less permeable are the boundary lines we have internalized, and which frame how we see others. All of the stories that are presented and analyzed in this dissertation magnify how static representations of identity limit and create distinct challenges for each of the respondent. In addition to magnifying how the perceptions of others affect the self, the life stories presented, particularly, in this chapter show that how one thinks also defines the reality that one lives.

CHAPTER 6:

Discussion & Conclusions

How we see, experience, and make sense of our surrounding environment is framed and influenced by our social locations, personality, and culture. Also central are the social and political structures within our environment and our knowledge and understanding of how to navigate them. When relocation, multiple movements and migration are added to what is already a complex and dynamic process, our way of being and engaging with the world requires constant shifts, changes and adjustments.

The present research investigation was conducted for the purpose of gaining a better understanding of the dynamic changes, and the range and complexity of experiences faced by ten self-identified Black U.S. immigrants whose lives unfold within, and are influenced by two or more countries, cultures, languages and social group memberships. This study specifically queried the life histories of Black identified U.S. immigrants from a non-Anglophone country within Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean because of the compositional structure of each individual's identity reflects different forms of intersectionality (e.g. race, class, gender, ethnicity, nationality and religion). Additionally, their status as immigrants from a non-Anglophone country combined with their racial self-identification makes it possible to query how Blackness as a physical marker of race, and language as a symbolic marker of culture are experienced (socially and personally) within different localities.

The life stories that were presented and analyzed in this study spoke to the larger aims of this investigation. Each vivifies the dynamics and complexities of living in-between and maneuvering in different physical, social and cultural environments that are marked by different structures of power and boundaries. Because the respondents in this study are persons of African descent, they share the bind of being positioned at the very bottom of a globalized racial hierarchy (Robotham, 2000). It is this social positioning and how it affects the individual's social psychology that has shaped research and theory on Black identity within the discipline of psychology. As American and British psychologists have come to dominate the psychological study of persons and groups, which coincides with the economic and political power of these two nations on the world's stage, theories of human functioning developed within these local settings have become the framework for studying and making sense of people's experiences from other cultural and national settings from within and outside these national borders. The problem that arises when universal theories that are derived from a particular social, political and historical moment in a nation's history gets mapped on to the lives and experiences of its contemporary national citizens are that the differences within groupings are overlooked or are made to conform in some way to existing theory.

Within the context of the U.S., a Black/White dichotomy and an ingroup/outgroup model has shaped and framed psychological theorizing. As I established in chapter 1, the genesis of this way of theorizing about human behavior and intergroup relations is greatly informed by U.S. race relations and the global dynamics of World War II. The theories and research informed by this era has paved the way for our current understanding of the nature of prejudice (Allport,

1994), social dominance (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and the power of social representations (Moscovici, 1976). Outside of the national context of the U.S. as well as Britain, the social psychological study of human functioning in the developing world emerged following decolonization. Coming out of this historical and political era are theories that seek to explain the social and psychological space that emerged out of the relationship between the colonized and the colonizer (Memmi, 1965; Fanon, 1952). This work has been instrumental in providing us with an understanding of the cultural and psychological violence inflicted on the colonial and former colonial subjects. These works have also sketched out the role revolution and acts of resistance have played, and can continue to play in the struggle for equality and for liberating the mind from mental slavery. An unintended consequence of this body of work, however, is that it projects on to the world stage an image that all people from former European colonies suffer from a perpetual inferiority complex. The groups theorized to be most troubled by this problem are the racial and cultural hybrids. Because they occupy an in-between social location, they have been defined as displaced and marginalized people with no history or culture of their own as they belong to neither parent group (Park, 1928). These dominant academic representations have helped to create a static social and cultural representation that the individuals that make up these groups are mentally and culturally colonized such that they have no perspective or voice of their own through which to speak (Spivak, 1998). The beauty and significance of the life histories composed by each of the respondents in this investigation is that each life story shatters these dominant representations and understandings. Collectively, their personal narratives render greater visibility to the subversiveness of hybridity.

As the life stories were presented as two distinct collections, each has its own broader significance. In speaking to this larger issue, this chapter will focus in on each collection individually in order to underscore some of the crosscutting themes underlining the individual cases in each collection. However, when the lines between the two collections become blurred as some of the themes in each collection cuts across all ten of the life stories, I will break from this structure for the purpose of discussing the broader significance of this overlap.

The First Collection of Life Stories and Broader Theoretical Significance

The first collection, *Narrating the Self within the Context of Historical, Cultural and Political Struggle*, draws visibility to a number of important dynamics for studying persons more generally, and for studying people of African descent more specifically. The first major underlining theme that cuts across these individual cases is concerned with adapting and navigating different structures of power so that there is minimal violence to one's internal world. In this respect, at the individual level of analysis, what jumps out of each of the personal narratives in this first collection is the mental fortitude, high self-esteem, and positive self-worth each individual projects consistently throughout his or her narrative. Although it is easy to argue that the co-constructive nature of the interviewing process highly influences the image of the self each respondent projected, the coherency of each narrative and the consistency reflected in the structure and content of each story helps to support its authenticity. In looking closely at the details each respondent provided to corroborate and vivify his or her state of mind, we see that each actively, and critically engages with culture, history and societal structures. The knowledge

base and high level of awareness each respondent displays appears to stem from his or her cultural socialization and from having had multiple experiences with various different forms of suppressive forces. An example of the former is reflected in Amira's constant reference to the different kinds of training she received from both sides of the family. Likewise, Carlos refers to being brought up to see himself, first and always, as a Black English speaking man. This socialization ultimately shapes his personal and social identity as well as his motivation and goals. Jean Pierre referenced his training in the boy scouts of America as contributing to the discipline, and the love for music and the arts that he develops and carries with him throughout his life. The life stories that are part of this collection, therefore, magnify and reinforce that how one is culturally socialized plays an instrumental role in shaping one's psychology. Each of the respondents in this collection are cultural socialized in such a way that they are trained to resist internalizing dominant narratives of racial inferiority and negative ideological representations of their nationality and ethnicity.

In addition to illuminating the role played by initial cultural socialization in fostering mental fortitude and positive self-esteem, the life stories in the first collection show that culture, as a system of beliefs and values, can also be an oppressive force in one's life. In this respect, Amira's personal narrative vivifies the ways in which the Ethiopian culture her family recreated within the context of the U.S. constrains and place limits on her personal development and freedom. In comparison, Carlos illustrates that within the context of Costa Rica, it is the national culture and the Spanish language that is used to constrain and limit his personal freedom. In both cases, each individual exerts personal agency by resisting and rejecting those cultural dictates

and values that run counter to his or her personal values. In this regard, the narratives constructed by the respondents demonstrate that people are not passive recipients of a reified entity called culture. Rather, each plays an active role in the elements of culture. It is in seeing the different ways in which the dynamics of personal agency plays out across all ten of the life histories that I came to posit the idea that the individual respondents in this study reflect what I call *liberated selves*. Each recognizes that culture and social location has important social and psychological functions. However, each is also able to resist the dictates of national and ethnic culture, and group conformity when the requirements for membership and belonging become too rigid and imprisoning. In this regard, the concept of *liberated selves* speaks to the broader concept of agency, but it focuses specifically on the conscious act of exercising the will to choose what aspects of one's culture requirements and the dictates of social group membership one does and does not take on. It is important to note that although exercising one's will to choose maybe experienced as personally liberating, this does not come without conflicts and consequences.

The last underlying theme within the first collection that will be discussed as it has broader theoretical and practical significance is concerned with the interconnections among person, history and societal/political structures. Thus far in this discussion, I have focused on the process of cultural socialization and its influence on the individual's internal world. More specifically, I discussed how this training informs how the individual navigates his or her own ethnic and national culture. I also discussed the impact this initial cultural socialization plays in facilitating one's ability to resist internalizing cultural ideologies and dominant representations that run counter to his or her personal conception of self, and his or her sense of belonging to

different collectivities. I will now focus this discussion on what the first collection of narratives teaches us about navigating, negotiating, and adapting to the power structures in the broader society as national context shifts.

One of the research questions posed by this dissertation was concerned with how Blackness is personally and socially experienced alongside other indices of identity, and as one's national context shifts. Each of the three life stories in the first collection provides a very different answer to this question, but each also shows that solidarity does exist within differences. In this regard, the life stories illustrate that before coming to the U.S. the respondents faced (directly and indirectly) some form of suppressive force exerted through a change in government, (Amira), exclusion (Carlos) and tyranny (Jean Pierre). In each situation, one or two aspects of the respondent's social identity are threatened by the established social order. In Amira's case, her family class location was jeopardized as the government changed abruptly from a monarchy to a socialist state. For Carlos, his heritage language (English) and physical characteristics were perceived as a threat to Costa Rica's construction of its racial and cultural identity. For Jean Pierre it was his desired professional identity (lawyer) that would constitute a threat to Francois Duvalier's dictatorship. In all three cases, social location frames how each experiences his or her surrounding environment. In this regard, none of these individuals experienced race in exactly the same way before immigrating to the United States. In each case, the country of origin rendered greater saliency to a specific social location that moved beyond a Black/White dichotomy. However, in the context of the U.S., not only does each experience race along Black/White racial lines, but race is also experienced as interlocking with

class, profession, gender, nationality, culture, language and physical characteristics. In this respect, the complexity that the life stories in the first collection brings to the fore is that race does, and does not tell us much about how persons of African descent socially experience their surrounding environment. Through each of the individual life stories presented and analyzed in this collection, we see the different forms of oppressive/suppressive forces that frames and shapes each respondent's life and the personal decisions he or she makes. In addition to these dynamics, we also see the unintended consequences of suppression, which Jean Pierre eloquently draws attention to in saying, "When they restrain you, it makes you stronger in due time." In being subjected to different forms of oppression, one develops a critical consciousness about the inner workings of power. This critical awareness becomes one's strength as it facilitates a greater interest in, and of understanding history as the past influences the present. It is this critical consciousness that makes personal identification a political act for this group of respondents. In embracing all aspects of their identity while also publicly claiming a shared Black racial identity even as their hybridity and difference allows them to penetrate group boundary lines, Amira, Carlos and Jean Pierre understand, with great clarity, that categories serve a purpose and function at both the group (solidarity) and structural (control and suppression) levels. In sum, the larger theoretical significance of the life stories that were presented and analyzed in this first collection is that they illuminate at the individual and collective level that "identity is not as transparent or unproblematic as we think" (Hall, 1990).

The Second Collection of Life Stories and Broader Theoretical Significance

The first collection of life stories addressed the ways in which culture frames, informs and guides how individuals experience their external worlds at various different levels (temporal, interpersonal, collective group and societal). The second collection continues to build on this multidimensional and dynamic view of the person as being connected to others, and to a local/national and global world. However, the second collection attributes greater attention to the various changes within the self that result when one's developmental context shifts continually over the course of one's life. More specifically, this collection focuses in on how the individual deals with and manages the constant changes experienced within the self, which are facilitated by a constant change in his or her physical and socio-cultural environment. In framing this discussion, Aihwa Ong's (1993) concept of *flexible citizenship* is extremely useful because it speaks to the formation of identity in intersecting national and transnational political arenas. Ong (1993) posits that in the context of a global economy, the crossing of multiple national borders for capital accumulation is a phenomenon that also reaches into minority communities. Her construct of *flexible citizenship* describes lives shaped by cultural hybridity and a plurality of terrains. She posits that the concept of flexible citizenship as embodied and lived vivifies subjectivities that are at once deterritorialized in relation to a particular country, but are highly localized in relation to the family. The life stories that are presented and analyzed in the second collection not only show the formation process involved in becoming a flexible citizen, but also show the depth and range of experiences associated with this ontology.

When situated within the context of the psychological study of immigrant acculturation, Nadia's, Fatima's and Ahmed's multiple acculturation and reacculturation experiences greatly

complicate the bidirectional model (Berry, 2008). Within this model immigrants are constructed as having to resolve the differences between two cultures—the origin culture and the culture of the receiving country. Within this model, the strategy of integration is therefore prescribed as the best and less stressful option for successful adaptation to a new cultural environment. It is also presumed that the immigrant's acculturation process is uniformed in that the basic issues immigrants must resolve are two folds. The first is deciding whether to maintain one's heritage culture and identity versus not maintaining them. The second is deciding whether to seek relationships with other groups, and participating in the larger society versus avoiding such relationships. The life stories presented in the second and the first collection complicate this picture. They show that the dynamics of adaptation are shaped by a number of different factors and that acculturation is a lifelong process, rather than being a one-time decision to integrate, resulting in minimal to no social and cultural conflicts. The dynamics of immigrant adaption, and more broadly human adaptation, is shaped by a whole host of factors. These include the national policy in the country of migration, the immigrant individual's background (race, class, origin, and culture), the circumstance leading to migration (war, diversity visa winner), personality, previous contact or experience in the country of migration, the social and economic support one has pre and post-migration. Although these factors have been dealt with more or less individually within psychology, one aspect of the immigrant acculturation experience that has not gained much research attention is the influence that relocation, and multiple movements (including moving back and forth between two countries) has in shaping how the self is subjectively experienced within the broader context of immigration. The concept of flexible

citizenship, therefore, provides a language for naming the social and subjective realities that frames and shapes how Nadia, Fatima and Ahmed experience their internal and external worlds. In looking closely at each of their personal narratives we see that becoming more flexible is a skill set each has developed. In this regard, Nadia talks about being able to interact with others regardless of race and culture because her multiple movements and relocation experiences have taught her how to be more flexible. Likewise, Fatima's decision to work at the African braiding salon, and then at a Jamaican salon, despite her upper class status back home, is a reflection of her increasing flexibility. Ahmed's initial shock at being propositioned by a gay man, which is a taboo in his Muslim culture and country of origin, and his ability to appreciate the freedom his current national environment allows for the expression of identity, reflects his flexibility. In each of their narratives what we see is that Nadia, Fatima and Ahmed were already racial and cultural hybrids before each immigrated to the United States. By way of their nation's postcolonial history (and U.S. imperialism in Nadia's case), and as a result of their relocation and multiple border crossing experiences, each has developed an otherness within themselves. Nadia's realization that she has changed upon returning back to Panama after living in Belize and the Dutch Antilles for many years, and her accumulation of new languages (Dutch and Papiamentu) and experiences not only breathe life into the theoretical concept of flexible citizen, it also illustrates the development of others within herself. Her ability to embrace her hybridity and plurality, and the multiple terrains that shaped and influence her personal and social identity provides us with a view of a person who is not alienated within herself. In postcolonial theory, the integration of the other within the self has often been theorized as resulting in an alienated

self or a mimic man/woman. Neither Nadia, Ahmed, nor Fatima is this kind of person. Because they have learned to embrace the differences within themselves (which Fatima is in the early stages of), each is able to accept the differences they see in others. If we apply the logic that cultural integration leads to successful adaptation and to a reduction in internal conflicts, how then do we make sense of Fatima's mental and physical breakdown? She has become integrated into her new cultural and national setting as evidenced by her decision to learn English, and she does. She is going to college, which gives her full exposure to different cultural groups and to American ideals and history. Moreover, she is facilitating her husband's transitions through the integration route, yet she falls into deep depression. Clearly, knowing the details of her life provides us with a more complex view of the other forms of adaptation that she is experiencing. This includes adapting to motherhood and to drastic changes in her economic situation, as she is unable to work during her pregnancy, and is also faced with the stressors of being a college student. All of these things are occurring while she is also trying to help her husband get oriented and acclimated into his new social and cultural environment. In essence, each of the life stories that were presented and analyzed in the second collection illustrates that the process of acculturation is shaped and informed by other major life changes. In relation to these life histories, it should be clear that universal theories of immigrant acculturation provide us with a very small peephole through which to see what it is like to be an immigrant. The adjustment and adaptation process is a lifelong process and it intersects with other major life transitions. Moreover, the adaptation process takes on very different trajectories depending on the immigrant's previous experiences with relocation and multiple movements. In this respect,

the concept of *flexible citizenship* holds much promise for theorizing about lives lived and identities formed within the interstitial space of two or more countries, cultures and languages.

The Significance of Methodology

The *Study of Lives* as a theoretical and methodological orientation has much to offer psychologists interested in studying and understanding the individual as a dynamic whole, nested in a national and global environment. Both of these settings are saturated with different forms of power dynamics, and each context exists in relation to one another. As a result of seeing, with a critical eye, the impact the broader changes in our contemporary world are having on individual and group dynamics, a small but growing number of critical psychologists are arguing for changes in how we frame and study persons and groups (Sampson, 1989; Chryssichoou, 2000; Arnett, 2002; Hermans & Dimaggio, 2007; Bhatia & Ram, 2009; Marsella, 2012; Weis & Fine, 2012; Diaz & Zirkel, 2012; Simpi & Sirkel, 2012).

The current investigation demonstrates that a focus on, and study of “experience,” which has been a key site of knowledge production in feminist research, has much to offer psychologists for studying persons and groups presently. As I highlighted in the first chapter, feminist epistemology has made many invaluable contributions to the psychological study of persons and groups. Through challenging how the experiences of women are studied and framed in relation to men, and among women that differ from each other along the lines of race, class, sexuality, and national origin, the scholarship produced by feminist has shown that the study of experience provides rich insights and details that cannot be found in numbers.

Because the terrain in which individual's live their lives are nested in a local and global environment, which facilitates greater cultural exchanges through the mixing and moving of cultures, categories of group identification are destabilizing. In mainstream psychology, the study of individuals and groups has been, and continues to be studied through the lens of binary constructions (Black/White, male/female, heterosexual/homosexual, foreign/native). Based on these constructions, individuals are categorized into a group, and an assessment of how people experience the world is heavily predicated on the idea that there is minimal or no significant overlap on either sides of the dichotomy. As Chrysochoou (2000) points out the focus was on what group membership *did*, and *not* what it means to different persons. The world is now changing, and how people experience group categories are also changing. What the current study demonstrates is that who a person is, and how they experience the social world cannot be determined by the skin they are in, or by focusing singularly on the concept of race, class, gender, sexuality or nationality. Moreover, some individuals, particularly immigrants, are experiencing their social world as being shaped by two or more countries, cultures, languages and structures of power. In this respect, the study of identity and experience must be informed by a focus on intersectionality, hybridity and difference as people's lives are informed by past histories and a local and global context. Because of its broad focus, the narrative study of lives, which privileges human experience and meaning making, offers psychologists theories and methods for studying identity, experience and meaning making in a rich and dynamic way. Starting with a qualitative narrative approach at a time in which identity is being experienced as

both fluid and fixed, and as changing and stable, offers us a way to grasp the full complexity of contemporary human experiences.

Practical Implications of the Research

Because the world in which we now live in involves greater contact between individuals who differ from each other, although they may also have shared social locations, it is critical that we go beyond dominant stereotypes and representations of a people, the national citizen, and race. Within the context of the U.S., for example, what it means to be an American will not only differ greatly along the line of race, culture, gender, ethnicity, sexuality and nationality, but personal meanings will also differ within each of these broader group categories. Therefore, based on a shared social location such as race, we cannot assume to know the depths and complexities of an individual's lived experiences or his or her identity formation process. In this respect, a focus on race alone cannot confer that an individual is a racist simply because he or she is White, or that an individual is poor or prone to criminality simply because he or she is Black. The life stories that were presented and analyzed in this study magnify that each individual is confronted with stereotypes (e.g Africa is one country and one large jungle lacking any form of modernization). The practical significance of this study is that it magnifies the need for each one of us to look deeply within ourselves in order to locate the stereotypes we have internalized about others.

Limitations & Future Research

Although the theoretical, practical and methodological significance of this study outweighs its limitations, I will, nonetheless, address a major challenge and problem associated with doing this investigation. Attending to differences at the individual level, within and between group levels, while also situating experiences within context, is extremely labor intensive. As most researchers and graduate students are often faced with serious time constraints, it is more attractive to study one aspect of a person's identity and to decontextualize his or her experiences. In this regard, future research might focus on mapping out the ins-and-outs of doing this kind of critical psychological study of the person. A key question that needs to be addressed is how one moves from theory and data collection to writing up a study that vivifies the interconnections among person, groups and society.

Appendix A

Participant Recruitment Survey

My name is Yvanne Joseph. I am a graduate student in the Social-Personality Psychology Program at the Graduate Center of City University of New York. I am conducting a research study for my dissertation, which focuses on the experiences of Black bilingual immigrants who live in the U.S., but emigrated from countries where English is not the primary language. The title of my research study is: *The Development and Negotiation of Multiple and Hybrid Identities among U.S. Black Immigrants from non-English Speaking Countries*. Do you consider yourself to be Black? Do you consider yourself to be an immigrant? Do you speak English fluently and are you proficient in the language of your country of origin? Did you emigrate to the U.S. from a country in Latin America, Africa or the Caribbean where English is not the language used in everyday life?

If you answered yes to all of these questions, you are eligible to participate in a life story interview. You will be asked to tell me your life story and to discuss some of the social and cultural experiences that you have here in the U.S. and in your country of origin. If you are interested in participating in the life story interview, please answer the survey questions below. You do not have to complete this survey if you are not interested in being contacted to participate in this research study. Your participation is completely voluntary and you can choose to decline or withdraw your participation at any point with no consequences. After I have reviewed all the surveys, I will contact you to inform you about your eligibility to participate in a one-on-one life story interview. I will conduct the interview and it will last for no longer than two hours. The interview will be tape recorded with your permission and you will be paid \$20 for your time. I may contact you again for a short follow-up interview that will last for no longer than thirty minutes to one hour. Do you have any questions for me?

Contact information:

Cell Phone:

Home Phone:

Email:

Background Information

1. First and Last Name:

2. Age:

3. Sex: () Male () Female

4. Country of Birth:

5. At what age did you migrate to the U.S.?

6. What is your religious background?

7. What is your current occupation?

8. What groups were the majority in the neighborhood you grew up?

9. Did you go to school in the U.S.? Please circle: Yes or No

If yes, please list the schools with the U.S. you went to or graduated from:

Language(s)

1. What language(s) other than English do you speak? Please circle all that applies to you:

French Spanish Haitian Creole Garifuna Afrikaans
Yoruba Portuguese Igbo Amharic Arabic Other

If you circled **Other**, please indicate below what other language(s) or dialect(s) you speak:

2. List the language (s) you circled above and next to each indicate how well you speak each language

_____	Poorly	Fair	Average	well	very well
_____	Poorly	Fair	Average	well	very well
_____	Poorly	Fair	Average	well	very well
_____	Poorly	Fair	Average	well	very well

3. Approximately how many times since migrating to the U.S. have you returned to visit your country of birth?_____.

4. What was the purpose of your return trip (s) to your country of origin?

5. Do you keep in touch with family or friends who still live in your country of origin?
Please circle: () Yes or () No

If yes, what methods do you use to keep in contact? Please select all that applies:

() Internet (e-mail; social networking sites) () Letters sent Via U.S. Postal Office

() Phone () Skype

() Other. **Please Explain**_____

Appendix B

Life Story Interview Protocol

Introduction

This is an interview about the story of your life. I am interested in hearing your story, which includes what you remember about your past, how you imagined your life to be, what is going on in your life right now, and what you envision your life to be like in the future. I am also interested in understanding what you wish to leave behind as your legacy when you are no longer living.

In thinking about your life, I would like you to be selective. You don't have to tell me every detail of your life. Just tell me about those experiences that have helped you understand who you are as a person and what makes you different from individuals who come from the same country as you, and others in this country that share some of the same characteristics as you. Please remember that this is your story and I am interested in hearing it. This interview is for the purpose of my dissertation research study. I want to learn more about the experiences of people like you who immigrated to this country. Like you, I am an immigrant, and I came to this country from Haiti with my family when I was six years old. I have been back to Haiti a number of times and I speak Haitian Creole, not as well as I would like but well enough to talk to my parents and my family members who still live in Haiti.

Okay, I would like to hear your story. But before we start, I just want to remind you again that you can choose to not answer any question you feel uncomfortable with and you can end the interview at any time.

I think we will enjoy the interview. Do you have any questions? Okay, this is how we are going to start.

A. Overall Life Assessment

I want you to just think about your life for a moment. I want you to think about the good times, the bad times, the hard times, the ups and downs, all the changes you have experienced throughout your life. Think about the people and places that have been most important in helping you understand who you are as a person today. I want you to also think about how you see yourself in the future and what legacy you want to leave behind. Now, I want you to think of me

as your biographer. You have hired me to write your life story and you want the story to be a true reflection of your life experiences so that others can understand who you are.

The book will only be five chapters, okay? Remember, we only have five chapters. Now, think about what's going to be in those chapters. Let me know when you are ready to discuss each chapter. You don't have to discuss the chapters in any particular order, but there can only be five chapters. You can tell me your life story in any order you want. If you tell me something you think should be in another chapter just let me know what chapter it should be in. As you talk I will listen, but if there is something I don't understand, I will ask you some questions about that. Okay? Also, I want you to think of a name that is completely different from your own name that you want me to use when I am writing about your life story. You can tell me what name you want me to use at the end. Okay, let's start. What chapter do you want to tell me about first?

B. Follow-up Questions to Five Chapters

Now that I heard your story through the five chapters you provided, I have a few questions that I would like to ask you that will help me understand how you see and make meaning of some of the topics and issues that my research focuses on.

The Following questions will be asked, only if they did not come up in the respondent's life story. Also, I may select from them depending on whether they were covered in the respondent's rendering of his or her life story.

1. When you are asked, "where are you from?" how do you typically respond to that question? (Possible Probes: How do people respond to your response? How do you feel about their reaction? Do you find that people from different backgrounds have different reactions to what you say?)
2. What parts of your identity are most important to you and why?
3. Can you think of any parts of your identity that other people find difficult to understand or accept? For example, do family members, friends in school, people at work, or persons you've met for the first time have difficulty accepting or understanding a part of your identity? (Possible Probe: how do you deal with those situations).
4. What cultural activities or traditions do you participate in, if any? (example, school clubs, parades, festivals)
5. What specific problems did you face when you first came to live here? (Possible Probe: Do you still face the same problems? What resources did you use to help you?).

6. What specific challenges have you faced when you go back home to see family members or friends? Or when you communicate with them via phone or Internet?
7. Have you ever traveled to a country outside of the U.S. other than the country you were born in? If yes, for what reason? What was that experience like for you? (Possible Probe: How were your experiences with the people in that country similar to or different from your experiences with people in the U.S? How did the people in that country react to you and how were you treated?)
8. How has living in this country shaped how you see yourself? Has living here changed how you see your country of birth?
9. Lastly, based on our discussion today, what do you think are some of the major differences among the various black groups that live in this country (U.S.)? Do you think it's important for researchers to understand how Black groups are both similar and different from one another? Why or why not?

Thank you for your time.

Appendix C

Consent Form

My name is Yvanne Joseph and I am doctoral student in the Social Personality Psychology Program at The Graduate Center of the City University of New York (CUNY), and Principal Investigator of this project entitled: “*The Development and Negotiation of Hybrid and Multiple Identities among U.S. Black Immigrants from Non-English Speaking Countries.*” This research study explores how the life stories of U.S. Black immigrants from the non- English speaking countries of Africa, Latin American and the Caribbean can be used to provide an understanding of the specific issues and challenges individuals, like yourself, face in adjusting to life in America in the twenty-first century. Therefore, I am interested in hearing and learning about your life experiences here in the United States, in your country of origin and in any other country that has played a formative role in shaping how you see yourself. The benefits of participating in this study are that your life story will be used to help social scientists gain a better understanding of what changes and challenges you and other people from your country face as a result of having lived within very different cultural/national contexts. Additionally, the information you provide will assist me in writing my doctoral thesis. I would like your permission to interview you about your life experiences.

This interview will take from one to two hours to complete, and I may need to come back at another time to ask you other questions about your life for clarification. I will pay you \$20 for the interview. With your permission, I would like to audiotape this interview so I can record the details accurately. For the purpose of protecting your identity, during the interview you will have the opportunity to create a pseudonym of your choice. The name you choose should not bear any resemblance to your real name. The fake name that you provide will be used in my reports and in the transcript of this interview. My advisors and I will be the only ones to hear the tape recording. All information gathered will be kept strictly confidential, and will be stored in a locked file cabinet, to which only I will have access. At any time you can refuse to answer any question and you can choose to end this interview with no consequences to you.

The risks involved in participating in this study are minimal and are not unlike what you may have experienced during those times in your life when you shared aspects of your personal history with another person. You may experience some discomfort or anxiety when recalling and narrating stories about your life experiences, particularly painful and/or very personal memories. Please know that I am not here to judge you nor am I here to serve as your counselor; rather, I am research investigator and I am here to listen to you with an open ear in order to learn about those life experiences that have helped you become the person you are today and the person you wish to be in the future. If you experience prolonged sadness or anxiety after we complete this interview, please contact your medical professional. A total of ten people will be interviewed in

this study. These individuals will all be individuals who emigrated to the U.S. from a non-English speaking country in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean.

I may publish the results of this study, but the real names of people, or any other identifying characteristics, will not be used in any of the publications. If you would like a copy of my report of this study's findings, please provide me with your e-mail address and I will send you a copy of the final manuscript.

If you have any further questions about this research, you can contact me at (646) 206- 3934 or email me at: scholarjoseph@yahoo.com or you can reach my research advisor Michelle Fine at (212) 817-8710 or Mfine@gc.cuny.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a participant in this study, you can contact Kay Powell, IRB Administrator, The Graduate Center/City University of New York, (212) 817-7525, kpowell@gc.cuny.edu.

Thank you for your participation in the study. I will give you a copy of this form to take with you.

I agree to have this interview audio-taped. Please [circle one]: **Yes** **No**

Participant's Signature

Date

Investigator's Signature

Date

Appendix D

Lists of Free and Low Cost Mental Health Services in New York City

Mental Health Services

Phillips Family Practice	212.206.5200	16 East 16th Street, New York, NY 10003
Bellevue Walk-in Psych Clinic	212.562.4721	462 1st Avenue, New York, NY 10016
New York Alcoholics Anonymous	212.647.1680	307 7th Avenue, New York, NY 10001
Brooklyn Psychiatric Centers	718.875.5625	Williamsburg
	718.769.4344	Flatbush
	718.453.2277	Bushwick
	718.875.7510	Brooklyn Heights
LifeNet- Mental Health Crisis Hotline	800.LIFE.NET	
	(English)	
	877.298.3373	
	(Spanish)	
	877.990.8585	
	(Mandarin, Cantonese, Korean)	
	212.982.5284	
	(TTY)	
National Association for Anorexia Nervosa and Associated Disorders	630.577.1330	
Renfrew Center of NY	800.736.3739	11 East 36th Street, 2nd Floor, New York, NY 10016
Brooklyn Community Counseling Center	718.338.4622	1651 Coney Island Avenue #200, Brooklyn, NY 11230
Fordham Tremont Community MH Center	718.960.0300	2021 Grand Concourse, Bronx, NY 10453
Long Island Consultation Center	718.896.3400	97-29 64th Road, Rego Park, NY 11374

Metropolitan Center for Mental Health	212.543.0777	1090 St. Nicholas Avenue, New York, NY 10032
Staten Island Mental Health Society	718.442.2225	Check website for several available addresses
Riverhead Mental Health Center	631.852.1440	300 Center Drive, Riverhead, NY 11901
Services for the Underserved Soundview-Throgs Neck Community MH Center	212.633.6900	305 Seventh Avenue, 10th Floor, New York, NY 10010
Suicide Hotline Alfred Adler Center for Mental Health	800.273.8255	
FEGS Manhattan Counseling Clinic	212.777.9492	Manhattan
	212.366.8289	Manhattan
 Max and Celia Parnes Family Psychological and Psychoeducation Services Clinic	 718.430.3852	 1165 Morris Park Avenue, Bronx, NY 10461
 Specialty Services		
Gay Men's Health Crisis	800.243.7692	446 West 33rd Street, New York, NY 10001
Bellevue Survivors of Torture	212.562.8713	462 First Avenue, New York, NY 10016

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