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"It's Better in the Bahamas" the Stigma of Being Haitian, Citizenship and Identity Choices Among Second-Generation Haitians in the Bahamas

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**“IT’S BETTER IN THE BAHAMAS”
THE STIGMA OF BEING HAITIAN, CITIZENSHIP, AND IDENTITY CHOICES
AMONG SECOND-GENERATION HAITIANS IN THE BAHAMAS**

by

Charmane M. Perry

A Dissertation Submitted in
Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirement for the Degree of

Doctorate of Philosophy

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May 2017

ABSTRACT

“IT’S BETTER IN THE BAHAMAS” THE STIGMA OF BEING HAITIAN, CITIZENSHIP, AND IDENTITY CHOICES AMONG SECOND-GENERATION HAITIANS IN THE BAHAMAS

by

Charmane M. Perry

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee 2017
Under the Supervision of Professor Erin Winkler

Haitian nationals represent the largest immigrant population in the Bahamas. Due to the Nationality Act of 1973, which changed citizenship to *jus sanguinis*, children born to non-Bahamian nationals in the Bahamas are not citizens of the state. This means that children born to Haitian nationals in the Bahamas are not citizens but are eligible to apply for citizenship upon their eighteenth birthday. Although much attention is given to undocumented migration, little work has been produced that speaks to the plight of the children of these immigrants. These people are a part of a growing underclass who are stateless and marginalized but who simultaneously feel entitled to the Bahamas and the right to access the benefits of Bahamian citizenship. Through 28 semi-structured interviews, this dissertation examines the experiences of second-generation Haitians living in the Bahamas with a specific focus on the stigma of being Haitian, the road to citizenship, and identity which are themes that emerged from the interviews. I will argue that their experiences are characterized by the stigma associated with being Haitian in the Bahamas which follows them from childhood and into adulthood. I also argue that the road to citizenship is an arduous process that leaves many second-generation Haitians feeling defeated and that there is a social hierarchy in Bahamian citizenship creating a second class citizenship category for those not considered to be “real” Bahamians. Additionally, a majority of the

participants (twenty-three) believed that there should be changes and advocated for one of three categories: birthright citizenship (thirteen), granting of citizenship prior to eighteen (four), and no changes but a quicker turnaround time (six) indicating the problems associated with the structure of applying for citizenship. Finally, my respondents shaped their identities into six categories: individual (three), African/Pan African (two), Bahamian (two), Bahamian of Haitian descent (five), Haitian (eight), and Haitian-Bahamian (seven). I argue that second-generation Haitians negotiate their identities in an environment where they are constantly told who they are and/or that they have to choose either Haitian or Bahamian because they cannot be both. I also argue that there are not any patterns of correlation between specific participant characteristics and chosen identity categories.

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This dissertation is dedicated to all of my participants and to all those struggling to gain citizenship, inclusion, and acceptance in society.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Topic and Purpose

“It hurts you to be a nobody....This community is here because of discrimination. When you’ve been treated so bad, so long, you don’t feel for the Bahamas. I don’t know why the Bahamians hate us so much.”¹ Living in a one room house made of plywood with no running water and no electricity, Marc Sedione talks about his experiences as a “nobody,” as a child of Haitian descent born in the Bahamas to undocumented Haitian immigrants. The community he is referring to are second-generation Haitians in the Bahamas who struggle to obtain citizenship and become a part of Bahamian society. Due to Bahamian citizenship laws, which are by blood and not birthright, Sedione is not a Bahamian citizen, and Sedione is not a Haitian citizen. In fact, he has never been to Haiti. Sedione has spent \$4,500 trying three times to achieve Bahamian citizenship, but his efforts have been in vain. As a result, Sedione believes there is no future for him in the Bahamas. Because of this, he intends to travel to the United States in hope of a better life. Yet, his lack of citizenship means that he does not have a passport. This means that he will be making a dangerous, undocumented trip to West Palm Beach, Florida. Sedione knows a guy who owns a boat, and he will be paying \$2,500 for a trip that may not even be successful.

How do we understand Marc Sedione’s plight? How do we understand the plight of thousands of second-generation Haitians who are marginalized in the country of their birth? In this dissertation, I will examine the experiences of second-generation Haitians living in the Bahamas with a specific focus on the stigma associated with being Haitian, the road to

¹ “Haitians Living in Limbo,” *The Washington Times*, May 26, 2003, <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2003/may/26/20030526-104012-5119r/>

citizenship, and identity. This research revolved around two main research questions: What does it mean to be a person of Haitian descent born and/or raised in the Bahamas? How do persons of Haitian descent define themselves and construct their identities in the Bahamas? The answers to these research questions, as this dissertation will demonstrate, reveal that Sedione's experiences are not isolated. His struggles with discrimination, the lack of citizenship, feelings of exclusion and not belonging, and feelings of hopelessness are recurring themes discussed by participants in my study. My research shows that many young adults of Haitian descent go through life in the Bahamas experiencing exclusion, discrimination, and stigma because of their Haitian heritage. Many also find the road to citizenship to be long and frustrating. Additionally, many reveal that the stigma associated with their Haitian heritage still impacts them even after receiving citizenship, suggesting a social hierarchy in Bahamian citizenship. These experiences shape their lives in profound ways and impact the construction of their identities as people of Haitian heritage born in the Bahamas.

Background to the Problem

My dissertation examines the contemporary period and focuses on the experiences of second-generation Haitians born and/or raised in the Bahamas. However, Haitian migration and the institutionalization of anti-Haitian sentiment in the Bahamas is historical and warrants a brief discussion because it helps contextualize the problems of discrimination, stigma of being Haitian, xenophobia, and feelings of exclusion and not belonging experienced by many of my participants.

In general, immigration has played an important role in the development of the Bahamas. In *The Migration of Peoples from the Caribbean to the Bahamas*, Keith Tinker provides a historical account of the various Bahamian institutions Caribbean people have influenced, such

as the role of Barbadians in the development of the police force in the late nineteenth century and the recruitment of Guyanese teachers in the post-independence era.² Evelyn McCollin (2002) has also noted the role of Caribbean immigration not just in Bahamian society but in the construction of a national Bahamian identity.³ Although the Bahamas has a history of Caribbean, British, and American migration (and the lesser-mentioned Chinese migration) to the Bahamian islands, the group of people who have received the most backlash and scrutiny have been those from Haiti. According to Sean McWeeney (1992), the earliest period of Haitian migration to the Bahamas occurred during the Haitian Revolution and was quickly followed by the first set of discriminatory legislation that would replicate itself in the twentieth century.⁴ As it relates to the institutionalization of anti-Haitian sentiment and xenophobia in the Bahamas, McWeeney states, “establishing a pattern that would replicate itself with little variation at regular intervals in the ensuing centuries, Bahamians were determined to have it both ways: issuing solemn proclamations and enacting draconian laws prohibiting the admission of Haitians in the Bahamas while at the same time absorbing them into the economic machine to meet the exigencies of the day.”⁵ Beginning in the mid-twentieth century, Bahamians would indeed replicate the tightening of immigration laws while simultaneously exploiting Haitian labor. This argument rings true in the title of a 2005 newspaper article, “Immigration in the Bahamas: You Can’t Have Your Haitian and Eat Him Too.”⁶

² Keith Tinker, *The Migration of Peoples from the Caribbean to the Bahamas*, (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2011).

³ Evelyn McCollin, “Resistance and the Impact of Caribbean Immigration,” *Journal of the Bahamas Historical Society* Vol. 21-25 (2002): 43-48.

⁴ Sean McWeeney, “The ‘Haitian Problem’ in the Bahamas,” *The Bahamas Historical Society Journal* (1992): 2-9.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁶ Larry Smith, “Immigration in the Bahamas,” *The Tribune*, September 28, 2005, 8.

The next important period of Haitian migration to the Bahamas begins in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The northern point of Haiti, Ile de la Tortue/Tortuga, is located only 55 miles from Great Inagua, the Bahamas southernmost island, while Nassau is only 400 miles north of Haiti. There are two important dynamics of this early migration period, which would change after the 1950s. First, Haitian migration to the Bahamas functioned largely as a circular migration, not a permanent migration. This is evidenced by the Creole proverb used during this period, “Nou vin Nassau, nou pa vin rété se g-in-n dola nou vin chaché” which means “We come to Nassau, we don’t come to stay, we come to look for dollars only.”⁷ As circular migrants with no intention to remain, Haitians who migrated to the Bahamas returned home with their savings the first time to buy a house, the second time to get married, and finally returning home with money to invest in business or agriculture.⁸ Second, prior to the 1950s, a reciprocal migration existed between Bahamians and Haitians. Bahamians, usually from the southern islands, traded items such as dried conch, salt, British and American products, and fish for livestock, fruits, and Haitian rum. Moreover, Bahamians in the southern islands sometimes sent their children to be educated in Port-au-Prince and utilized Haitian hospitals not only because of proximity but also because of similar and sometimes better institutions in Haiti.⁹

According to Dawn Marshall (1979), the circular and the reciprocal migration shifted beginning in the 1950s and continued into the succeeding periods. The development and success of the tourist industry in the Bahamas during the early twentieth century led to a demand for

⁷ Dawn Marshall, *The Haitian Problem: Illegal Migration to the Bahamas*, (Kingston, Jamaica: Institute of Social and Economic Research, University of the West Indies, 1979) 18.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Michael Craton, “The Bahamian Self and the Haitian ‘Other’: The Migration of Haitians To and Thru the Bahamas, 1950-2000,” *Immigrants and Minorities* 14 (1995): 265-288; William J. Fielding, Virginia Ballance, Carol Scriven, Thaddeus McDonald, & Pandora Johnson, “The Stigma of Being ‘Haitian’ in the Bahamas,” *The College of the Bahamas Research Journal* 14, (2008): 38-50.

labor (skilled, semi-skilled, and unskilled), which was fulfilled by not only Haitians but other West Indians, British, and some Americans.¹⁰ Additionally, the Bahamas was gaining a popular reputation among Haitian migrants as a place of affluence. In the North West Department (from where the early Haitian migrants to the Bahamas usually hailed), many migrants associated the prosperity in their community with the Bahamas. Individuals who had travelled to Nassau were known as “Nassau Men” and often spoke of Nassau and Freeport as “ultra-modern cities.”¹¹ Moreover, the rise and longevity of the Duvalier dictatorship (1957-1986) led to political and economic turmoil for the Caribbean nation increasing external and permanent migration outside Haiti.¹²

However, and more immediate to the concerns of the 1950s, the Bahamas experienced an economic recession which led to a competition for jobs. According to *The Nassau Daily Tribune*, Mr. Cyril Stevenson of the House of Assembly “said that for the first time in many years the Colony was faced with an unemployment condition because of the recession and the destruction of crops in the United States which led to the mass repatriation of Bahamian labourers from the U.S.”¹³ It is in this period that Haitian migration received intense scrutiny, as migrants were targeted as threats to job security. It is also at this time that the institutionalization of anti-Haitian sentiment begins. According to Marshall (1979), “since May 1957, the Bahamas Government has been trying to solve what has become known as ‘The Haitian Problem’: the problem of the continuing, and apparently increasing, illegal entry of Haitians into the Bahamas.”¹⁴

¹⁰ Marshall, *The Haitian Problem*, 1979; Michael Craton and Gail Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream, A History of the Bahamian People. Volume One. From the Ending of Slavery to the Twenty First Century, Volume II.* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1998).

¹¹ Marshall, *The Haitian Problem*, 1979.

¹² Craton, “The Bahamian Self,” 1995.

¹³ “Steps Taken to Keep Haitians Out,” *The Nassau Daily Tribune*, May 30, 1958, 2.

¹⁴ Marshall, *The Haitian Problem*, 1979, xiii.

Additionally, this “problem” has extended in the post-Independence era as children of Haitian descent born and raised in the Bahamas are challenging definitions of the Bahamian nation and seeking their rights to citizenship.¹⁵

The fact that the Haitian immigration has been and continues to be referred to as a “problem” acknowledges the xenophobia and disdain exhibited towards this group as well as a resistance to the inclusion and integration of Haitians into the Bahamian nation. As noted by Alfred Sears (1994) when discussing “the Haitian Question,” little distinction is made between the different categories of Haitians residing in the Bahamas. These categories are “those Bahamians of Haitian parent or parents; those persons who were born in Haiti and are now naturalized Bahamians; those Haitians who have Bahamian permanent residency; or those undocumented Haitians who came into the country illegally.”¹⁶ He goes on to say that “one of the dangers of the public discussions on this issue is that all of these categories are indiscriminately included as part of the ‘Haitian Question.’”¹⁷ Sears’ analysis is important especially as it relates to second-generation Haitians because it reflects the notion that children born and raised in the Bahamas to Haitian parents are viewed as a problem and do not belong. This is reflected in Sedione’s story above.

Although Bahamians view Haitian migration as a threat to the cultural and national sovereignty of the Bahamas, the Haitian community represents a small portion of the Bahamian population. In 1957, the Haitian community was approximately 1,000.¹⁸ In 1970, Haitians

¹⁵ Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream*, 1998; Fielding et al., “The Stigma of Being ‘Haitian’ in the Bahamas,” 2008.

¹⁶ Alfred Sears, “The Haitian Question in the Bahamas,” *Journal of the Bahamas Historical Society* Vol. 16, (1994): 10.

¹⁷ Sears, “The Haitian Question,” page 10.

¹⁸ Marshall, *The Haitian Problem*.

represented 3.6% (6,151) of the Bahamian population.¹⁹ Between 1970 and 1990, the Haitian population did not increase significantly. According to the 2000 census, 21,426 Haitians were living in the Bahamas out of an overall population of 303,611. This meant that Haitians represented 7.1% of the Bahamian population.²⁰ In 2010, the Department of Statistics reported that the Haitian community represented 11.5% (39,144) of the Bahamian population.²¹

Significance

This project is significant for a number of reasons. First, my dissertation will discuss the specific experiences of second-generation Haitians born and/or raised in the Bahamas. This is important because, as my literature review will demonstrate, this population is under-researched as it relates to the broader scholarship on Haitians in the Bahamas. Haitians represent the largest immigrant community residing in the Bahamas. Bahamian citizenship law is based on *jus sanguinis* and not *jus soli*; this means that children born to Haitian nationals do not have citizenship. Upon turning eighteen years old, second-generation Haitians may seek citizenship and thus represent a very important and growing part of the Bahamian nation-state. However, there is little research which speaks to the experiences of this population. This research seeks to begin to fill some of those gaps in the literature by examining the experiences of second-generation Haitians. As such, this research is also significant because it places the voices and experiences of second-generation Haitians at the center of the narrative. It is not only an analysis of second-generation Haitians that is missing from the literature but also literature that uses their

¹⁹ Juan McCartney, "The Rise of the Haitian Population: Community Expands Since Independence," *The Nassau Guardian*, June 17, 2013, accessed March 15, 2017, http://www.thenassauguardian.com/index.php?option=com_content&id=39885:the-rise-of-the-haitian-population&Itemid=37

²⁰ College of the Bahamas, "Haitians in the Bahamas," *A Report for the International Organization for Migration* 2005, 19.

²¹ McCartney, "The Rise of the Haitian Population."

experiences in their own words. My research is driven by the voices and experiences of this population. And it is their voice that allows me to understand what it means to be a second-generation Haitian in the Bahamas.

This research is also significant because it addresses and critiques the institutionalization of documentation as a system that systematically excludes, exploits, discriminates, and marginalizes people within society. The lack of citizenship and a passport prevents second-generation Haitians from fully participating in Bahamian society. As my dissertation will show, they have difficulty enrolling in college and getting jobs without those documents. Although they are born and raised in Bahamian society, the lack of these documents means that they are not able to access the same opportunities that their peers with citizenship are able to obtain. The barriers to opportunities are a result of the lack of documents, the absence of citizenship in the land of their birth. And so, this dissertation critiques documents as a method of exclusion and discrimination against vulnerable populations.

Outline of Dissertation

In chapter two, I analyze the extant literature on Haitians in the Bahamas. I argue that most scholarship pertaining to the topic of Haitians in the Bahamas generally focuses on Haitian nationals, undocumented Haitian nationals, and the impact of immigration—specifically Haitian immigration—on Bahamian national identity and culture. As it relates to this study, little of the literature focuses on the plight of the individuals born to Haitian nationals and raised in the Bahamas. As such, the literature rarely discusses the unique experiences of those born and/or raised in the Bahamas to Haitian parents. Their story and their voices are missing from the literature. And so, this study adds to the extant literature because it focuses on the experiences of second-generation Haitians which is an under-researched topic in the broader scholarship on

Haitians in the Bahamas. I also examine the extant literature on citizenship, immigration, identity, stigma, and belonging and use Aviva Chomsky's *theory of undocumentedness* and Fielding et al. *concept of the stigma of being Haitian*. Chomsky's *theory of undocumentedness* essentially explores how illegality and being undocumented are socially constructed terms and systems used to exploit and exclude particular groups of people. In their concept of *the stigma of being Haitian*, Fielding et al. discuss the various ways Haitians have been stigmatized in Bahamian society and attempt to explain this stigma through the use and analysis of census data and newspaper articles. As Fielding et al. argue, "structural and individual discrimination characterize the stigma of Haitian migrants."²² It is this stigma of being Haitian that greatly shapes the everyday lived experiences of people of Haitian descent born and/or raised in the Bahamas.

Chapter three explains the method and methodology used in this dissertation. I argue that qualitative research is best suited for my project because it allowed for the analysis of the underlying meanings and patterns in relationships that cannot be explained in solely numerical ways. Qualitative research allowed me to understand what it means to be a person of Haitian descent born and raised in the Bahamas to Haitian parents. This project was based on interviews as the primary qualitative research method. I interviewed twenty-eight people of Haitian descent for a period of eight weeks in Nassau, New Providence of the Bahamas. Interviews were the most appropriate method because my goal was to understand the experiences of second-generations Haitians in the Bahamas with a specific focus on citizenship and how they identify. Interviews best allowed me to do this because I was able to talk to second-generation Haitians about their experiences being a

²² Fielding et al., "The Stigma of Being 'Haitian' in the Bahamas," 47.

person of Haitian descent. My goal in interviewing was for my participants to be able to tell me about *their* experiences, explain to me *why* they feel the way they do about particular situations, and describe *how* and *why* they construct their identity the way they do. Because of this, I chose qualitative, open-ended interviewing (or in-depth interviewing) as the most suitable and efficient interviewing style for my research objectives.

In chapter four, I analyze the experiences of second-generation Haitians in childhood and adulthood. I argue that second-generation Haitians go through life experiencing stigma because of their Haitian heritage. This stigma of being Haitian greatly shapes the everyday lived experiences of people of Haitian descent born and/or raised in the Bahamas. Based on my research, I argue that the first major institution where children of Haitian descent are exposed to the idea of being the “other” is primary school. Stigma, prejudice, and discrimination follow them or people they know through their primary and secondary education manifesting in the form of teasing (“Haitian” is used as a negative word) from teachers and students. Stigma begins in school and continues into adulthood. In the interviews, respondents reveal that they experience stigma and hostility in public spaces such as the bus, public hospital, and everyday encounters on the street if one is heard speaking Creole. Stigma and discrimination not only appear in the form of everyday Bahamian’s discontent towards Haitians, but also manifests institutionally. Lack of citizenship tends to create challenges for many adults of Haitian descent. According to the interviewees, many have difficulties getting a head start in life as they struggle to find employment, continue their post-secondary education, open a bank account, get a driver’s license, or simply start a career.

Chapter five analyzes the issue of citizenship for second-generation Haitians born to Haitian nationals in the Bahamas. Based on my data, I argue that the road to citizenship is an

arduous process that leaves many second-generation Haitians feeling defeated. Interviewees expressed many frustrations with the citizenship process, such as the lack of structure and the unpredictable time frame they had to wait for approval. Additionally, having citizenship allows individuals the rights and protections of Bahamian society, however, due to the stigma associated with being Haitian in the Bahamas, many still experienced (or expect to experience) discrimination because they are not considered by many to be *real* Bahamians. As such, I also argue that there is a social hierarchy in Bahamian citizenship creating a second class citizenship category for those not considered to be “real” Bahamians. The notion of a *real* Bahamian suggests that there is a hierarchy in Bahamian citizenship, i.e. some Bahamians (those of Bahamian heritage) are more authentic than others (those who have to apply for citizenship and whose parents are not Bahamian nationals).

Participants also discussed their perceptions of the current Bahamian citizenship law. A majority of the participants (twenty-three) believed that there should be changes and advocated for one of three categories: birthright citizenship (thirteen), granting of citizenship prior to eighteen (four), and no changes but a quicker turnaround time (six). The chapter concludes by discussing the new immigration policy parliament passed on November 1, 2014, a part of which requires all persons living in the Bahamas to acquire a passport of their nationality. This means that Haitian children born to undocumented parents will be required to acquire a Haitian passport. For the participants who spoke about this new policy, there is the fear that the Bahamas will limit and/or cease the granting of Bahamian citizenship to those born in the country.

In chapter six, I examine how second-generation Haitians in the Bahamas define their identity. Participants were asked similarly structured questions regarding identity construction: “How do you identify yourself? Do you identify as being Haitian, Haitian-Bahamian, Bahamian,

or something else?” Based on the interviewee’s responses, six categories emerged: individual (three), African/Pan African (two), Bahamian (two), Bahamian of Haitian descent (five), Haitian (eight), and Haitian-Bahamian (seven). I argue that second-generation Haitians negotiate their identities in an environment where they are constantly told who they are and/or where they are told they have to choose one or the other because they cannot be both Haitian and Bahamian. I also argue that there are not any patterns of correlation between specific participant characteristics and chosen identity categories. What does become apparent, however, is that participants in all categories are negotiating similar factors, including connection to culture (Bahamian and Haitian), legal documentation, legal status, and ideas of belonging and/or not belonging in the Bahamas (which are associated with legal status but also address the overall sentiment toward Haitians in the Bahamas).

Finally, in chapter seven, I argue that the Bahamas must develop policies that are inclusive of second-generation Haitians. Over twenty years ago, Alfred Sears’ suggested that the Bahamas develop a national immigration policy that is humane and effective to help regularize the status of those who have a right to be in the Bahamas. I argue that the Bahamas must not only fix their citizenship process but also create programs that seek to create understanding and a sense of belonging between both Haitians and Bahamians.

Terminology

One foreseeable critique of this dissertation is the seemingly indiscriminate and uncritical use of the term “Bahamian” in this project. In this project, I use “Bahamian” to describe those of generational Bahamian lineage and heritage; those who have ancestral roots in the Bahamas. The use of “Bahamian” to describe this population does not mean that I do not view second-generation Haitians who have or do not have citizenship as “paper” Bahamians or not as

authentic Bahamians. Instead, I am simply using “Bahamian” as a way to conceptually categorize the larger nation-state from children born to Haitian nationals or those who have regularized their stay in the Bahamas. Additionally, and as my research will show, second-generations categorize themselves in very different ways. Prior to this research project, I defined those born and raised in the Bahamas as Haitian-Bahamians. However, I have learned that this is a highly contested project, and so I have elected not to use this term to define this diverse group of people. And so, I chose “second-generation Haitians” as the most suitable term to use for this specific research project.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The literature on the Bahamas and Haitians in the Bahamas primarily explores undocumented Haitian nationals, the impact of Haitian immigration on a Bahamian national identity and culture, changes in immigration policies, characteristics of early migrants, the ostracism, exploitation, discriminatory legislation, and abuse toward Haitians in the Bahamas by Bahamians and the new phenomenon of an emerging underclass of children of Haitian descent born in the Bahamas who are denied citizenship. It also explores arguments that there is a lack of a clear and coherent Bahamian national identity, Bahamian migration, the impact of Caribbean migration on Bahamian national development, ideas of belonging and identity and lesser explored themes concerning education and religion of Haitians in the Bahamas. All of this literature is extremely helpful to my work because it provides a foundation for understanding Haitian migration to the Bahamas and some of the resistance and xenophobia Haitians experience. The literature also provides a historical analysis which helps provide a framework for understanding perceived threats of Haitian migration on the Bahamian nation-state as well as the continued systematic oppression of Haitians in the Bahamas.

As it relates to my work, there is a gap in the literature which discusses the specific experiences of second-generation Haitians in the Bahamas. The existing literature examines the experiences of Haitians nationals or provides a general assessment of the overall experiences of the Haitian community residing in the Bahamas. However, there is little research that looks at the specific experiences of those born to Haitian nationals in the Bahamas. Research is needed that looks at this particular population because this is the land of their birth and many experience stigma and exclusion based on their Haitian heritage despite being Bahamian born. And so, my

research is important because will add to the small body of literature on second-generation Haitians in the Bahamas by filling in the gaps by using their voices, experiences, and stories.

Haitians in the Bahamas

A central theme in much of the literature on Haitians in the Bahamas is the Haitian “problem” or the Haitian question in the Bahamas.²³ The Haitian “problem” or question can be best understood as the undocumented migration of Haitian nationals to the Bahamas since 1957 as well as the question of citizenship for children of Haitian descent born in the Bahamas since independence in 1973. An important aspect to this literature is how Bahamian laws, policies, and public attitudes have functioned as a reaction to undocumented Haitian immigrants and their children born in the Bahamas.²⁴

Dawn Marshall’s *The Haitian Problem: Illegal Migration to the Bahamas* is arguably one of the most important works on Haitians in the Bahamas. Marshall provides the first comprehensive analysis of early Haitian migration to the Bahamas, characteristics of the migrants, and the Bahamian government’s response to their presence.²⁵ Through questionnaires and interviews, Marshall’s study provides information concerning early Haitian migrants (i.e. demographics and characteristics). Many scholars have used Marshall’s work as a foundation for

²³ Marshall, *The Haitian Problem*; Sears, “The Haitian ‘Question,’”; Ermitte St. Jacques “Today Haitians, Tomorrow Bahamians: Reassessing the Integration of Haitian Immigrants in the Bahamas.” MA thesis, University of Florida, 2001.; Tinker, *Migration of Peoples*; Craton “The Bahamian Self and Haitian Other”; Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream*; McWeeney, “The Haitian Problem”; Fielding et al., “Stigma of Being Haitian”; Jake C. Miller, *Plight of the Haitian Diaspora*, Westport, Connecticut: Praeger Publishers, 1984; College of the Bahamas, “Haitian Migrants in the Bahamas”; Yale Law School Lowenstein International Human Rights Clinic. “Human Rights Delegation Report on Haitians in the Bahamas.” June 1994. Accessed March 3, 2010 <http://avalon.law.yale.edu/diana/haitibahama.asp>; Louis Bertin Jr. “The Haitian Diaspora in the Bahamas: An Alternate View.” *Wadabegei: A Journal of the Caribbean and its Diasporas* Vol 13, Issue 3 (2012); J. Robertson “The Haitian dilemma,” *Bahamas Handbook and Businessman’s Annual*, Etienne Dupuch Jr., (Nassau, Bahamas: Dupuch Publications, 2001).

²⁴ Marshall, *The Haitian Problem*; Sears, “The Haitian ‘Question,’”; McWeeney, “The Haitian Problem”; Craton “The Bahamian Self and Haitian Other”; Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream*; College of the Bahamas, “Haitian Migrants in the Bahamas”; Fielding et al., “Stigma of Being Haitian”; Yale Law School Report, “Human Rights Delegation Report”; Louis Jr., “The Haitian Diaspora in the Bahamas”; McCollin, “Resistance and Impact”.

²⁵ Marshall, *The Haitian Problem*.

their own work specifically as it relates to the continued patterns of discriminatory legislation towards Haitian migrants.²⁶ Marshall's research also demonstrated that Haitian immigrants were socially and economically isolated and in 1998, Ermitte St. Jacques conducted a study see whether nationals still remained excluded from Bahamian society. St. Jacques found that Haitian nationals continued to face social and economic marginalization. However, St. Jacques found that their children were experiencing a different set of issues. The challenge for children of Haitian descent was not integration but the issue of citizenship. They were not as isolated because school functioned as the primary institution for integration.²⁷ Although second-generation Haitians are more integrated and better educated than their parents, I argue that second-generation Haitians remain isolated because of the barriers presented from not having citizenship. Additionally, although children are better educated, school functions as the first institution where second-generation Haitians are confronted with the stigma of being the "other" in the land of their birth.

Other scholars take note of the ways in which the lack of citizenship and regularization policies systematically discriminate against Haitians in the Bahamas. This discrimination aids in the continued oppression, exploitation, and marginalization of second-generation Haitians and undocumented Haitian nationals from Bahamian society.²⁸ In terms of patterns of discriminatory legislation, Sean McWeeney (1992) examines the earliest period of Haitian migration to the Bahamas and the development of policies targeted specifically toward Haitians in the late eighteenth century. McWeeney's work is important because he shows that discriminatory

²⁶ Craton, "Bahamian Self"; Craton & Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream*; St. Jacques, "Today Haitians"; Tinker, *Migration of Peoples*, Fielding et al., "Stigma of Being Haitian."

²⁷ St. Jacques, "Today Haitians."

²⁸ Craton, "Bahamian Self"; Craton & Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream*; Sears, "The Haitian Question"; Tinker, *Migration of Peoples*; Yale Law School Report, "Human Rights Delegation Report", Fielding et al., "Stigma of Being Haitian."

legislation against Haitians has existed since the late 18th and early 19th century. The main concept connecting eighteenth and nineteenth century policies to late twentieth century policies is McWeeney's assertion that the Bahamas wanted it both ways: the enforcement of strict laws prohibiting Haitian entry and inclusion in society while simultaneously economically exploiting Haitians.²⁹ This type of discriminatory legislation is exactly what Aviva Chomsky discusses in *Undocumented: How Immigration Became Illegal*, which looks similar issues in United States' immigration law. Laws and policies create "illegal" populations and illegalization allows for the maintenance of a system that exploits and oppresses undocumented (or other institutionally marginalized) populations.³⁰ McWeeney's article adds to a larger body of work which addresses legislative exploitation of vulnerable groups but also adds insight into my work surrounding systematic challenges obtaining citizenship and how the barriers to citizenship creates a vulnerable and exploitable population.

The issue of discriminatory legislation is particularly interesting because the Bahamas has historically been a colony and nation of in-, out-, and circular migration. Howard Johnson (1988) and Raymond A. Mohl (1987) both discuss the post-emancipation Bahamian economy and the increasing emigration of black Bahamians to the work in agriculture and other industries in South Florida, particularly Miami and Key West. According to both authors, black Bahamians were crucial to the infrastructural development of these cities.³¹ Black Bahamians were discriminated against by Americans not only because of their race but also because of their foreign citizenship *and* their refusal to obtain U.S. citizenship.³² This is interesting because

²⁹ McWeeney, "The 'Haitian Problem.'"

³⁰ Aviva Chomsky. *Undocumented: How Immigration Became Illegal*. Boston, Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 2014.

³¹ Howard Johnson. "Bahamian Labor: Migration to Florida in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries." *International Migration Review* Vol. 22, No. 1 (Spring 1988); Raymond A Mohl "Black Immigrants: Bahamians in the Early Twentieth-Century Miami." *The Florida Historical Quarterly* Vol. 65, No. 3, (January 1987).

³² Mohl, "Black Immigrants".

Bahamians would exhibit similar discriminatory practices within a few decades to Haitian nationals (even towards those who wish to be a part of Bahamian society). Besides the emigration of Bahamians to South Florida and the circular migration of Bahamians themselves, a few scholars have addressed how immigration has played a central role in the development of the Bahamas.³³ For example, Keith L. Tinker's *The Migration of Peoples from the Caribbean to the Bahamas* discusses immigration to the Bahamas, how and why the Bahamas recruited people from places such as Guyana and Barbados, and how that immigration impacted the national development of the Bahamas. According to Tinker, Caribbean migrants were influential in government, education, industry, and the development of the police department.³⁴ The history of Bahamian immigration and Caribbean immigration to the Bahamas presents the irony of anti-immigrant legislation. The Bahamian government has developed policies that are anti-immigrant while simultaneously recruiting people from the Caribbean and Britain to help develop the colony/country.³⁵ Immigration is an important aspect of Bahamian history but immigrants, Haitians in particular, have been blamed for threatening the cultural and national sovereignty of the Bahamas.

Scholars also discuss the living conditions of Haitian communities as well as the growth of a Haitian underclass in the Bahamas. These scholars assert that the growth of an underclass has considerable negative implications for the future stability and development of the Bahamas particularly that continuing to exclude the Haitian community may erupt into the form of physical violence in the country.³⁶ Scholars who discuss the lack of integration and stratification

³³ Tinker, *Migration of Peoples*; Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream*; Marshall, *The Haitian Problem*; McCollin, "Resistance and Impact."; McWeeney, "The 'Haitian Problem.'".

³⁴ Tinker, *Migration of Peoples*.

³⁵ Tinker, *Migration of Peoples*; Craton, "Bahamian Self"; Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream*; McCollin, "Resistance and Impact."

³⁶ Louis Jr., "The Haitian Diaspora"; Fielding et al., "Stigma of Being Haitian"; College of the Bahamas, "Haitian Migrants in the Bahamas"; Robertson, "The Haitian Dilemma."

also argue that Haitian-Bahamians are forced to hide their Haitian heritage because of the stigma associated with being Haitian in the Bahamas as well as the socially constructed concept of being a “true true” Bahamian (an individual whose lineage is Bahamian) versus a “paper” Bahamian (an individual who is a naturalized Bahamian) which creates a hierarchy in citizenship.³⁷ The notion of a “true true” Bahamian and a “paper” Bahamian highlight socially constructed hierarchies in citizenship which is an important theme in my dissertation. These ideas address notions of belonging and questions of identity for second-generation Haitians in the Bahamas. This work is also important because second-generation Haitians should be well integrated into Bahamian society, but this work demonstrates that they encounter discrimination and exclusion which is socially constructed and systematic. This is a theme heavily explored in my dissertation. Additionally, my work is different because the previous literature primarily explores these issues in regards to the first-generations of Haitian migrants.

The concept of belonging and identity is another important theme in the literature on Haitians in the Bahamas and one that is important in my dissertation. Since 1957, when the Bahamian government first declared Haitian immigration as a concern, Bahamians perceived, and continue to perceive, Haitians as a threat to the national and cultural sovereignty of the Bahamas. And so, some scholars have examined how Haitian migration has impacted the construction of Bahamian nationalism and national identity.³⁸ Others discuss how Haitians have

³⁷ Fielding et al., “Stigma of Being Haitian”; Louis Jr., “The Haitian Problem.”; Nicolette Bethel “Roots or Routes: Migrations of Identity in the Bahamas.” *Yinna: Journal of the Bahamas Association for Cultural Studies* Vol 2, (2007): 74-93. Accessed on November 16, 2010 <http://www.nicobethel.net/nico-at-home/academia/roots.html>

³⁸ Jacqui Alexander “Not Just (Any) Body Can Be A Citizen: The Politics of Law, Sexuality and Postcoloniality in Trinidad and Tobago and the Bahamas.” *Feminist Review* No. 48, (1994); Nicolette Bethel “Navigations: The Fluidity of Identity in the Post-Colonial Bahamas.” (Phd thesis, University of Florida, 2000); Nicolette Bethel “Engendering the Bahamas: A Gendered Examination of Bahamian Nation Making, or National Identity and Gender in the Bahamian Context.” *College of the Bahamas Research Journal* Volume 12, (2003); Bethel, “Roots or Routes.”; Craton, “Bahamian Self.”; Craton & Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream.*; Fielding et al., “Stigma of Being Haitian.”; McCollin, “Resistance and Impact.”; Rommen, “Home Sweet Home,” 1999; Tinker, *Migration of Peoples*; Timothy Rommen,

been used as the “other” in terms of forging a Bahamian national identity.³⁹ For example, Michael Craton (1995) argues that Haitians have been framed as the “other” in Bahamian society and a Bahamian identity has formed in direct opposition to ideas of Haitian identity and culture. Other scholars such as Timothy Rommen argue that it was not until the era of independence that the question of a national identity, i.e. a Bahamian identity, began to surface as a matter of concern.⁴⁰ These works are important because some of my respondents identify feelings of not belonging or feeling connected to the Bahamas. Despite being born and raised in the Bahamas, some feel like an outsider or “other.” Negative reactions to Creole or surnames reinforce arguments in the literature that Bahamians view Haitians in opposition to their own identity and images of a Bahamian nation.

Religion, education, media, race and racialization, and other social activities and ways of life are less explored themes in the literature on Haitians in the Bahamas. As it relates to religion, in his ethnographic study, Bertin M. Louis Jr. (2015) discusses the growth of Haitian Protestants in the Bahamas, Haiti, and the United States. In this work, Louis examines the religious practices of Haitians in the Bahamas, how Christianity and Protestantism are conceptualized as distinct terms/practices, and explains why Haitian migrants in the Bahamas practice Protestant forms of Christianity. Louis argues that Haitian nationals use Protestantism as a means to navigate

“Home Sweet Home: Junkanoo as National Discourse in the Bahamas.” *Black Music Research Journal* Vol. 19, No. 1 (Spring 1999).

³⁹ Craton, “Bahamian Self”; Craton & Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream*; Fielding et al., “Stigma of Being Haitian”; McCollin, “Resistance and Impact” 2002; Tinker, *Migration of Peoples*; Bethel, “Navigations”; Bethel, “Roots or Routes”; Tiffany J. “Lightbourn “When Diasporas Discriminate: Identity Choices and Anti-Immigrant Sentiment in the Bahamas.” (Phd diss., University of Michigan, 2000); Louis Jr., “The Haitian Problem,” 2012.

⁴⁰ Bethel, “Engendering the Bahamas”; McCollin, “Resistance and Impact”; Rommen, “Home Sweet Home”; Catherine Palmer “Tourism and Colonialism: The Experience of the Bahamas.” *Annals of Tourism Research* Vol. 21, 4 (1994).

xenophobia in the Bahamas.⁴¹ This is helpful to my work on second-generation Haitians because it provides a framework for gauging one of the ways Haitians use their identity (in this case religious identity) to negotiate living in a hostile society.

There is also a very small body of work which discusses the myth that Haitian immigrants are absorbing hospitals, schools, and social services.⁴² This work is important because it provides a critique and a response to Bahamians who believe Haitians are taking over the hospitals and schools. Many Bahamians believe that Haitian nationals and their children are overtaking and abusing services rendered at hospitals and schools, and these scholars dispel that assumptions with statistics. Very few works have addressed the educational needs of the Haitian immigrant population.⁴³ In his article “Education for All,” Marcellus C. Taylor discusses the unmet educational needs of the Haitian community and the issues associated with providing education to Haitian children. Although not a central component of this research, education is related and worth looking at because it can tell us a lot about the levels of integration of Haitians into Bahamian society. As St. Jacques argues in her thesis, second-generation Haitian-Bahamians are more integrated into Bahamian society than their parents because of their rearing in the Bahamian educational system. And so, as scholars argue, the school system functions as the primary form of assimilation into Bahamian society which increases the chances of upward mobility for children of Haitian descent born to undocumented immigrant parents.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Bertin Jr., Louis. *My Soul is in Haiti: Protestantism in the Haitian Diaspora in the Bahamas*. New York: New York University Press, 2014.

⁴² College of the Bahamas, “Haitian Migrants in the Bahamas”; St. Jacques, “Today Haitians”; Fielding et al., “The Stigma of Being Haitian,” 2008.

⁴³ Marcellus C. Taylor. “Education for All: Addressing the Educational Needs of Haitians in the Bahamas.” In Ministry of Education, *18th National Education Conference: Transforming Bahamian Education for the 21st Century*, 16-21. Nassau: Ministry of Education, 2005.

⁴⁴ Craton “Bahamian Self”; Taylor, “Education for All.”

Three scholars have written on the relationship between the media and Haitians.⁴⁵ In the 2005 study “Haitian Migrants in the Bahamas,” Pandora Johnson, Virginia Ballance, William Fielding, Thaddeus MacDonald, Carol Scriven, and Donna Stuart used content analysis as a method for assessing media coverage as well as the assessment of public opinions of the Haitian immigrant population. The researchers found that it is difficult to make a legal distinction between undocumented Haitian immigrants and the resident community in the Bahamas. Alfred Sears also argues the same point when he asks, “When we say the ‘Haitian Question’ who are we talking about?”⁴⁶ Sears states that the way Haitians are presented in the media creates a national image of all Haitians being undocumented when there are actually Haitians who have regularized their stay and thus are legal residents of the Bahamas. According to this research, this generalization, oversimplification, and one-dimensional perception of Haitians in the Bahamian media greatly shapes how Bahamians understand the Haitian “problem” as well as their interaction with (or lack thereof), and prejudices and discrimination toward Haitians. This work is important because it reinforces ideas of belonging discussed in my dissertation. Characteristics associated with being Haitian (for example one’s surname or speaking Creole) often suggest to some Bahamians that second-generation Haitians are foreigners, and thus the “other,” and reinforces many Bahamians’ inability or unwillingness to recognize the heterogeneity of the Haitian community in the Bahamas.

Scholars such as Michael Craton, Gail Saunders, Bertin Louis Jr, and Katuscia Pelerin have addressed the relationship between race and/or racialization and Haitians in the Bahamas.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ College of the Bahamas, “Haitian Migrants in the Bahamas”; Sears, “The Haitian Question”; Louis Jr., “The Haitian Problem.”

⁴⁶ Sears, “The Haitian Question” 10.

⁴⁷ Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream*; Louis Jr., “The Haitian Problem”; Katuscia Pelerin “Blackness of a Different Color: The Complexities of Identity of Haitian Migrants and Their Descendants in the Bahamas.” (Phd diss., State University of New York at Albany, 2013).

According to Craton and Saunders (1998), Haitians "...are perceived by Bahamians as less creolized than themselves, more African, unmodernized, superstitious, fatalistic, emotional and at least potentially violent."⁴⁸ Craton and Saunders are demonstrating how Bahamians have racialized Haitians as a different kind of black; a black that is inferior to how they view themselves. In her dissertation, "Blackness of a Different Color," Pelerin argues that Haitians in the Bahamas are subjected to a form of black on black racism. Internalizing racism, Pelerin argues that black Bahamians are racist towards Haitians and this racism is disguised in the form of immigrant status, education, language, and nationalism.⁴⁹ These works support the theme of belonging and the representation of Haitians are different from Bahamians. If Haitians are socially constructed as the opposite of Bahamians then it increases the difficulty for second-generation Haitians to be recognized as Bahamians and contributing members of Bahamian society.

Finally, Kristy Belton (2010) has written on second-generation Haitians without status. Her work has particularly focused on the ways the Bahamas has failed to incorporate and consider Bahamian born children without citizenship into their laws and policies as well as theorizing why Haitians without status have failed or been reluctant to organize for their basic rights and protections.⁵⁰ While Belton's work brings attention to the issues of rights and protections to second-generation Haitians, her work does not have the voice of those impacted by laws and policies which exclude. Belton uses semi-structured interviews in which the majority

⁴⁸ Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream*, 284

⁴⁹ Pelerin, "Blackness of a Different Color".

⁵⁰ Kristy A. Belton "Arendt's Children in the Bahamian Context: The Children of Migrants Without Status." *The International Journal of Bahamian Studies* Vol. 16, (2010); Kristy A. Belton "Dry Land Drowning or Rip Current Survival? Haitians without Status in the Bahamas." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* Vol. 34, No. 6 (2011).

were Bahamian and government employees, academics, lawyers, a journalist, and community leaders.

Questions of a Bahamian National Identity

As discussed above, immigrants, particularly Haitian migrants, are viewed as a threat to Bahamian culture, sovereignty, and identity. However, some Bahamian scholars assert that a distinct Bahamian identity is a contested notion.⁵¹ Geography and the legacy of British colonial rule can be cited as critical issues that have affected the ability to define and point out a distinct Bahamian identity. For starters, the Bahamas is located midway between the United States and the rest of the Caribbean, and, as a result the United States' influence, it has been argued that the Bahamas is not a Caribbean country.⁵² Marion Bethel (2010) asserts that the Bahamas' proximity to the United States has affected its Caribbean identity and that the Bahamas has often identified culturally with the southern United States opposed to the rest of the Caribbean. For example, Bethel references that the Bahamian diet is more like the U.S. south than the rest of the Caribbean.⁵³

Although there are arguments pertaining to whether the Bahamas is a part of the Caribbean, it can be stated that the proximity to and historical relationship with the United States has led many Bahamians to identify with the southern United States. Some scholars have discussed the impact of Loyalists (American colonists who remained loyal to Britain during the American Revolutionary War) on the political, economic, and cultural development of the

⁵¹ Rommen, "Home Sweet Home"

⁵² John McCaughey. A Centre of Stability. *Caribbean and West Indies Chronicle*, (1980).

⁵³ Marion Bethel "What Does the Caribbean mean to You?" *Caribbean Intransit*. Accessed on November 14, 2016. <http://caribbeanintransit.com/marion-bethel/>

Bahamas.⁵⁴ These scholars assert that Loyalists fled colonial America, recreated cotton plantations, and brought enslaved Africans with them. Additionally, descendants of these Loyalists would eventually control the political economy of the Bahamas. Other scholars have discussed the steady social and economic relationship between the Bahamas and the United States since the nineteenth century.⁵⁵ In discussing the impact of the Bahamas functioning as an intermediate nation, Keith L. Tinker (2011) argues that “‘Americanism’ has produced a pseudo-identity of ‘West Indian elitism’ in many Bahamians, an attitude of economic and, perhaps, social superiority exhibited toward other West Indians.”⁵⁶ Furthermore, and as it relates to geography, space, and movement, the impact of globalization cannot be separated from the lack of a clear national identity. For example, Tinker notes that Bahamians travel to Florida to purchase material items and that advertisements for Miami and Fort Lauderdale businesses can be found in Bahamian telephone books. Nicolette Bethel (2007) asserts that some Bahamians suggested that the influence of the American media and the circular movement of Bahamians to Miami and Key West has overhauled and shaped their culture while Rommen (1999) argues that “radio, television, sound recordings, and magazines provided ample opportunities for Bahamians to look toward other cultures for identity.”⁵⁷ Furthermore, tourism and offshore banking have been the main economies of the Bahamas to which most patrons to both sectors are American.⁵⁸

These works are important because they speak to the perceived fragility of a clear Bahamian

⁵⁴ Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream*; Thelma Peters “The American Loyalists in the Bahama Islands.” *The Florida Historical Quarterly* Vol. 40, No. 3 (1962); Howard Johnson “A Modified Form of Slavery: The Credit and Truck Systems in the Bahamas in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Century.” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* Vol. 28, Issue 4 (1986).

⁵⁵ Johnson, “Bahamian Labor Migration to Florida”; Mohl, “Black Immigrants”; Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream*.

⁵⁶ Tinker, *The Migration of Peoples*, 172.

⁵⁷ Rommen, “Home Sweet Home,” 74.

⁵⁸ Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream*.

national identity and the notion that Haitians represent a threat to the national and cultural sovereignty of the Bahamas.

The Bahamian archipelago has also had a significant impact on the development of various identities. The topography and economy of the Bahamas, both a result of the archipelago, created a reliance on the sea and have resulted in the Bahamas developing in a different way than other Caribbean countries.⁵⁹ According to Bethel (2000), reliance upon the sea for livelihood has contributed to the formation of many ideas about Bahamian identity. From island to island, social structures vary and Family Islands, being more isolated, have often been deemed more culturally authentic than New Providence by many Bahamians who view Nassau as highly Americanized. Despite efforts by the Bahamian government to create a homogenous country, the archipelago has led to a fluidity of identities. Bethel notes that "...the Bahamian construction of 'race' is atypical of the Caribbean region as a whole, as political colour falls into two major categories, 'black' and 'white', with little mention being made of the intermediate group."⁶⁰ Once more, a primary reason for this social construction of race and the practice of racism is a result of the proximity to the United States as well as the impact of U.S tourists to the Bahamas. According to Bethel:

In certain islands, for instance, particularly those with a high proportion of native whites, the delineation between 'white' and 'black' is fairly rigid, and resembles that of the Southern United States in that any admixture of African blood qualifies one as 'black'; in these places coloureds are classified as 'blacks' as well. In those islands where most of the inhabitants are of African descent, on the other hand, the opposite may happen: fair skinned people may be designated 'white' no matter what their racial background. Where there are sizeable communities of mixed-race people, the third category is recognized; again, though, what people mean when they refer to 'coloured', 'brown', or 'mixed' people may vary from place to place.⁶¹

⁵⁹ Bethel, "Navigations"

⁶⁰ Ibid., 9.

⁶¹ Ibid., 9.

All of these factors, in different ways, have had an impact on the construction of identity in the Bahamas.

Yet, despite this transparency of borders, cultures, and histories, Michael Craton (1995) asserts that “no people...has served more effectively as a defining Other for the Bahamian Self than have the Haitian migrants to and through the Bahamas, particularly since the 1950s.”⁶²

Scholars, politicians, media, and everyday Bahamians have, in a variety of ways, discussed the concept of the Haitian “other” and the Bahamian “self.”⁶³ This concept is directly related to ideas of and distinctions between what it means to be Bahamian and what it means to be Haitian.

Bahamians have constructed and defined their identity in opposition to Haitian culture and history through nominal factors such as language and religion but simultaneously have shaped themselves as different because they have racialized Haitians as being distinct from Bahamians arguing, for example, that you can tell if someone is Haitian because of their short stature, dark complexion, and as being less modern (i.e. more African) than Bahamians.⁶⁴

Indeed, as it pertains to the Bahamas, discourse on Bahamian national identity is a contested topic, and the overall sentiment is that there is a lack of a clear and cohesive Bahamian national identity. According to Nicolette Bethel (2007), it is not uncommon for Bahamians to state that the Bahamas has little or no sense of national identity. In response to the question of a national identity, Bahamians often respond by saying “National identity?” “What is that?” or “We don’t have a national identity.”⁶⁵ According to some scholars, the question of a Bahamian

⁶² Craton “Bahamian Self,” 266.

⁶³ Tinker, *Migration of People*; Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream*; Marshall, *The Haitian Problem*; McCollin, “Resistance and Impact,”; College of the Bahamas, *Haitian Migrants in the Bahamas*, 2005; St. Jacques, “Today Haitians”; Fielding et al., “The Stigma of Being Haitian,”; Craton “Bahamian Self,”.

⁶⁴ Craton “Bahamian Self”; Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream*; Fielding et al., “The Stigma of Being Haitian,”; Tinker, *Migration of Peoples*.

⁶⁵ While doing summer research in the Bahamas in 2010, I encountered a young Bahamian man who told me that Bahamians did not have an identity. He followed up by making a reference to Bahamians listening to reggae music

identity or a Bahamian national identity is rooted in decolonization and independence from Britain during the late 1960s and early 1970s.⁶⁶ Bethel (2003) and Rommen (1999) argue that prior to the 1960s, the question of a national identity was unheard of, and the prospect of independence developed an urgent need for Bahamians to find their *true* identity.⁶⁷ During this period, “the euphoria of independence was paralleled by a growing desire for an articulated and visible postcolonial identity—a desire stemming from a distinct lack of confidence in Bahamian cultural expression.”⁶⁸ For example, in a 1966 speech to the United Nations, Sir Lynden Pindling (the first Prime Minister of an independent Bahamas) stated:

“Bahamian” is not a legal term under the constitution; yet no one can say with any degree of truth that we are British. As a people we are without history, without culture, and without national identity. We study British history, British civilization, and even British weather; but about ourselves, we have no past—and under colonialism, no future.⁶⁹

Pindling’s statement reinforces the idea that there was a lack of a national identity and that it was not easy to point out things that were distinctly Bahamian and not an influence from British culture. These questions arose around the time Haitian migration became a concern for the Bahamas. And so, this may add insight into the reasons why Haitians and Haitian immigration have been so heavily connected to ideas of perceived threats to the cultural and national sovereignty of the Bahamas.

As the concept of a national identity has been questioned within the Bahamas, Bethel (2000) and Rommen (1999) argue that Junkanoo—a festival which has its cultural and historical roots in enslaved African celebrations—has come to serve “...as a central and defining symbol

and Bahamians not knowing “thy self.” It was here that I first began to question what Bahamian culture is and also, what it means to be Bahamian.

⁶⁶ Bethel “Engendering the Bahamas”; Rommen, “Home Sweet Home,”

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Rommen, “Home Sweet Home,” 74.

⁶⁹ Palmer, “Tourism and Colonialism.”

of Bahamianness” and the ultimate national symbol.⁷⁰ Junkanoo is figured in the Bahamian imagination on currency, stamps, custom stickers, drinks, and in restaurant names. In terms of identity, Bethel argues that Junkanoo has represented the development of black working class Bahamians’ conception of self and their consciousness.⁷¹ She also argues that since the period of independence, Junkanoo has served a critical role in perceptions of the nation, Bahamian identity construction, and gender socialization as it is almost exclusively male.⁷² Outside of Junkanoo, little else is referenced to be Bahamian. Bethel (2007) discusses conch as a native food or the straw market as something connected to Bahamian identity. However, the straw market is dependent on the tourist industry, and the goods sold within the market are not “authentically” Bahamian but cheap merchandise imported from outside the country. Nonetheless, these works are important because they demonstrate that ideas of a Bahamian identity are fragile and contested. They are also important because they provide substance to understanding the argument of why Haitians are imagined as a threat to the national and cultural sovereignty of the Bahamas.

In this literature review, I have argued that the extant scholarly literature related to my research focuses on undocumented Haitian nationals, the impact of Haitian immigration on a Bahamian national identity and culture, changes in immigration policies, characteristics of early migrants, the ostracism, exploitation, discriminatory legislation, and abuse toward Haitians in the Bahamas by Bahamians and the new phenomenon of an emerging underclass of children of Haitian descent born in the Bahamas who are denied citizenship. I have also explored arguments that there is a lack of a clear and coherent Bahamian national identity, Bahamian migration, the

⁷⁰ Rommen, “Home Sweet Home,” 75; Bethel, “Navigations” 2000.

⁷¹ Bethel, “Navigations”

⁷² Bethel, “Junkanoo in the Bahamas”; Bethel, “Engendering the Bahamas”

impact of Caribbean migration on Bahamian national development, ideas of belonging and identity and lesser-explored themes concerning education and religion of Haitians in the Bahamas. This literature has provided a broad foundation for my work particularly as it relates to the historical analysis of Haitian migration to the Bahamas and institutional discrimination. However, as this review demonstrates, there is a significant gap in the literature concerning second-generation Haitians and their experiences. This dissertation will help to begin to fill that gap through interviews and looking at their experiences living in the Bahamas.

Theoretical Discussion

In this theoretical discussion, I will explore three major categories of frameworks through which scholars have approached the kinds of questions I ask in this dissertation. First, I will explore theories that discuss concepts of the “other.” These are helpful in understanding the construction and power of difference, which, in turn, creates the subject of the “other” in the host society. Second, I will examine scholarship on immigration and citizenship, which I have grouped into the following categories: economic, nationalist, political, and identity. All of these are helpful because they take into consideration the impact of the role of the economy and globalization on immigration as well as pointing to the significance of the nation-state and the myth of a homogeneous national identity in how governments and citizens view immigration and construct immigration policies, which in turn impact questions of citizenship. Finally, I will explore theories on personal and group identity. These frameworks on identity (social identity, self-categorization, cultural identity, ascribed identity) provide insight into intergroup interactions, why individuals identify with groups, and how people see themselves as connected to groups.

While all of these approaches provide insight into questions concerning immigration, citizenship, production of the “other,” and concepts of identity, as I will show below, they are either outdated, ahistorical, or cannot fully explain my respondents’ identity construction. They also fail to draw parallels between economics, politics, history, culture, international and national events, and the power of race in approaches to dealing with the question of immigration and citizenship. In this dissertation, I will use Aviva Chomsky’s *theory of undocumentedness* and William Fielding, Virginia Ballance, Carol Scriven, Thaddeus McDonald, and Pandora Johnson’s concept of *the stigma of being Haitian*. Chomsky’s theory provides a legal, political, social, economic, and historical approach to understanding and interpreting immigration and the social construction of laws as well as how immigration has become criminalized, which has provided a justification for states to exploit and exclude people and maintain a system of legalized discrimination. Fielding et al. provide a specific framework for understanding the ways in which Haitians have been stigmatized as the “other” in the Bahamas.

Power of Difference and on Being the “Other”

The concept of being the “other” can be discussed through the lens of stigma, difference, and race. Edward Said’s *Orientalism* is a classic text on the concept of being the “other.” In this text, Said critiques the cultural representations of Orientalism, which is Western scholarship about the East (peoples living in North Africa, Asia, and the Middle East).⁷³ In Western scholarship, these people are depicted as the “other.” They are seen as the opposite of what it means to be European, of what it means to be civilized. Scholars have followed in Said’s footsteps and analyzed how colonial and subjugated peoples have been depicted as the “other.”⁷⁴

⁷³ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, New York: Random House Inc., 1978.

⁷⁴ Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream*; Jorge Duany, *The Puerto Rican Nation on the Move: Identities on the Island and in the United States*. North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002; Joanna Cohan

An example of this is Stuart Hall's *spectacle of the other*, which seeks to analyze and address how people who are perceived as different are represented in popular culture and the mass media. According to Hall (1997), representation is a concept and a practice. It is a "...complex business and, especially when dealing with 'difference,' it engages feelings, attitudes and emotions and it mobilizes fears and anxieties in the viewer, at deeper levels than we can explain in a simple, common-sense way."⁷⁵ Hall also explains that difference "...can be positive and negative. It is both necessary for the production of meaning, the formation of language and culture, for social identities...and at the same time, it is threatening, a site of danger, of negative feelings, of splitting, hostility and aggression towards the 'Other.'"⁷⁶ Media is an institution of the state that plays a significant role in popular culture, shaping how people perceive other people.

Racialization theories also help explain constructions of difference and concepts of power within society. In their racial formation theory, Michael Omi and Howard Winant (1994) argue that concepts of race provide structure to state and civil society and thus shape identities and institutions.⁷⁷ In the age of modernity, race has functioned as a significant indicator of status, privilege, and inequality with blackness lying at the bottom and whiteness positioned at the top of the social hierarchy. Critical whiteness studies is composed of a variety of theories and schools of thought which seek to explain the meaning of whiteness and racial domination. *White skin privilege* discusses the institutional social, political, and economic advantages attached to

Scherer "Historical Photographs as Anthropological Documents: A Retrospect." *Visual Anthropology*, Volume 3, (1990).

⁷⁵ Stuart Hall (ed.) *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 1997, 226.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 238.

⁷⁷ Michael Omi and Howard Winant. *Racial Formations in the United States*. New York: Routledge Press, 2014.

whiteness.⁷⁸ This connects being white to a social position which is institutionalized and exclusive. Yet it remains important to remember that whiteness changes over time in the same way meanings of race and racism have transformed over time. Whiteness, like race and blackness, is a process.⁷⁹ Other theories situate whiteness, conceptions of race, and institutionalized racism in the origin of European colonialism in the Americas.⁸⁰ Other scholars argue concepts of whiteness and blackness are relational terms and cannot be understood as separate entities. Thus, by understanding what whiteness is, it is possible to discern what blackness is not.⁸¹ Others argue that categories and other social identities such as class, nation, and sexuality complicate access to whiteness and obscure the benefits of being white.⁸² Understanding racialization and how it relates to power is important to this work because, as shown in the literature review, Haitians are perceived to be *more* African and thus *less* modernized than Bahamians, which impacts the relations of power between the two groups. As

⁷⁸ Birgit Brander Rasmussen, Irene J. Nexica, and Eric Klinenberg (ed). *The Making and Unmaking of Whiteness*. North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2001.

⁷⁹ Omi and Winant, *Racial Formation*; Omi Winant. "White Racial Projects," in *The Making of Whiteness*, ed. by Birgit Brander Rasmussen, Irene J. Nexica, and Eric Klinenberg, (North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2001). Gilroy, Paul. *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack*. (London: Routledge, 1992). Ruth Frankenberg "The Mirage of Unmarked Whiteness," in *The Making of Whiteness*, edited by Birgit Brander Rasmussen, Irene J. Nexica, and Eric Klinenberg, (North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2001).

⁸⁰ Winant "White Racial Projects"; Anibal Quijano "Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America." *Nepentla: Views From the South* 1, 3 (2000) doi.org/10.1177/0268580900015002005; Nelson Maldonado-Torres "On the Coloniality of Being." *Cultural Studies* 21, 2 (2007) doi.org/10.1080/09502380601162548; Edmund S. Morgan *American Slavery, American Freedom*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company Inc., 1975; Theodore W. Allen *The Invention of the White Race, Volume 1: Racial Oppression and Social Control*. London: Verso, 2012.

⁸¹ Winant, "White Racial Projects"; Michael Omi "(E)racism," in *The Making of Whiteness*, ed. by Birgit Brander Rasmussen, Irene J. Nexica, and Eric Klinenberg, (North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2001). Paul Gilroy *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1993). George Lipsitz *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness*. (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Temple University Press, 1998).

⁸² Dalton Conley "Universal Freckle, or How I Learned to be White," in *The Making of Whiteness*, ed. by Birgit Brander Rasmussen, Irene J. Nexica, and Eric Klinenberg (North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2001); Annalee Newitz and Matt Wray (editors) *White Trash: Race and Class in America*. (New York: Routledge, 1996); Troy Duster "The 'Morphing' Properties of Whiteness," in *The Making of Whiteness*, ed. by Birgit Brander Rasmussen, Irene J. Nexica, and Eric Klinenberg (North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2001).

such, Haitians are perceived as being different, as the “other” not only because of their nationality and cultural differences but also because of the ways in which they have been racialized by Bahamians.

Stigma is also important in terms of understanding difference. Erving Goffman (1963) defined *stigma* as an attribute or behavior that does not meet the standards of full social acceptance.⁸³ Goffman’s text is important to the work on stigma because he provides the first theoretical approach to understanding societal stigma. Despite his early contribution to this topic, little scholarship was produced to extend analyses on stigma until the latter half of the twentieth century and early twenty-first century.⁸⁴ Much of the contemporary scholarship on *stigma* concerns health related issues.⁸⁵ Within this literature, scholars largely discuss the stigma surrounding HIV/AIDS as well as stigma and discrimination associated with mental illness and other health related issues. It is also concerned with understanding stigma, prejudice, and discrimination in an attempt create more effective public health strategies. Other scholars have researched the impact of social stigma on the self—particularly the impact stigma has upon one’s self esteem.⁸⁶ While other scholars have looked at how social stigma increases an individual’s

⁸³ Erving Goffman. *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*. (New York: Simon & Schuster Inc., 1963).

⁸⁴ Maneula Barreto and Naomi Ellemers “Currents Issues in the Study of Social Stigma: Some Controversies and Unresolved Issues,” *Journal of Social Issues* Volume 66, Issue 3 (2010).

⁸⁵ Jennifer Stuber, Ilan Meyer, and Bruce Link, “Stigma, Prejudice, Discrimination, and Health,” *Social Science Medicine* Volume 67, Issue 3 (2008); Richard Parker and Peter Aggleton. “HIV and AIDS Related Stigma and Discrimination: A Conceptual Framework and Implications for Action,” *Social Science and Medicine* Volume 57, Issue 1, (2003); Harriet Deacon “Towards a Sustainable Theory on Health-Related Stigma: Lessons from the HIV/AIDS Literature,” *Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology* Volume 16, Issue 6 (2006); Arachu Castro and Paul Farmer “Understanding and Addressing AIDS Related Stigma: From Anthropological Theory to Clinical Practice in Haiti,” *American Journal of Public Health* Volume 95, Issue 1 (2005); Patrick W. Corrigan, Fred E. Markowitz, and Amy C. Watson, “Structural Levels of Mental Illness Stigma and Discrimination,” *Oxford Journals* Volume 30, Issue 3 (2004).

⁸⁶ Hope Landrine and Elizabeth Klonoff *Discrimination Against Women: Prevalence, Consequences, Remedies*. (Thousand Oaks, California: Sage, 1997); Nyla Branscombe, Michael T. Schmitt, Richard Harvey “Perceiving Pervasive Discrimination among African Americans: Implications for Group Identification and Well-Being,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* Volume 77, (1999): 135-149; Michael T. Schmitt, and Nyla R. Branscombe “The Meaning and Consequences of Perceived Discrimination in Disadvantaged and Privileged Social Groups,” *European Review of Social Psychology* Volume 12, (2002): 167-199.

identification with the stigmatized group and their increased awareness of societal and individual prejudice.⁸⁷ Stigma relates to my project because, due to their Haitian heritage, my participants do not meet the full standards of social acceptance in the Bahamas. This stigma has impacted their experiences in the Bahamas as well as impacted how they shape their identity. Although these theories add insight into my work, as will be shown below, Fielding et. al theory is better suited for my particular project because they have provided a foundation that speaks to the different ways Haitians in the Bahamas have been stigmatized. Although their analysis speaks largely to first-generation Haitians, my work demonstrates that this stigma still applies to their children.

Immigration and Citizenship

Economic approaches are one of the commonly used frameworks discussing immigration and immigration policies. Theories falling within this broad category focus on why people choose to immigrate and the relationship between globalization, capitalism, and the movement of people from developing countries to developed countries. For example, the *equilibrium theory* focuses on international human migratory patterns by focusing on the global supply and demand for labor.⁸⁸ The *segmented labor market theory* asserts that there is a difference in immigration in developed and developing countries contending that developed economies are dualistic (primary market of higher skilled work and a secondary sector of low-wage work) and so immigrants are recruited to fill low-wage work.⁸⁹ In a similar approach, Aviva Chomsky (2007) analyzes

⁸⁷ Nyla Branscombe, Michael Schmitt, and Richard Harvey, "Perceiving Pervasive Discrimination Among African Americans"; Brenda Major, Wendy J. Quinton, and Toni Schmader "Attributions to Discrimination and Self-Esteem: Impact of Group Identification and Situational Ambiguity," *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* Volume 39 (2003): 220-231. Don Operario and Susan T. Fiske "Ethnic Identity Moderates Perceptions of Prejudice: Judgments of Personal versus Group Discrimination and Subtle versus Blatant Bias," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* Volume 27, (2001): 550-561.

⁸⁸ W.W. Rostow, *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960).

⁸⁹ Michael Piore, *Birds of a Passage: Migrant Labor and Industrial Societies*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

dualistic economies in her discussion of Mexican immigration to the United States. According to Chomsky, Mexicans are not taking away jobs from Americans because they are working within this secondary sector. Mexicans, as well as other undocumented immigrants, are extremely vulnerable because they have no rights, low pay, and no laws to protect them within the workplace. The relationship between their undocumented status (illegality), vulnerability, and exploitation had created an economic system the United States has come to depend upon in the form of cheap labor.⁹⁰

Two additional economic approaches—*world-systems theory* and *societal systems approach*—argue that migration is a function of an individual’s decision-making process. *World-systems theory* asserts that international migration is a result of global capitalism and that migration is a movement of people from developing countries to developed countries.⁹¹ While *societal systems approach* addresses the different structures in society (economic, political, and social) as a root cause for migration.⁹² These theories are useful because they provide frameworks for understanding the forces that cause people to move. However, they do not analyze how migrants are received in the host country and are therefore insufficient because they ignore the role immigrant labor plays in the host country’s economy.

The nationalist approach speaks more to the way in which immigrants are perceived and received in the host country. Ideas of nationalism often produce acts of hostility towards immigrant groups which can be found within laws, practices, and attitudes. As a result, xenophobia is a complex global phenomenon occurring all over the world and challenges

⁹⁰ Aviva Chomsky. *They Take Our Jobs! : And 20 Other Myths about Immigration*. Boston, Massachusetts: Beacon Press Books, 2007.

⁹¹ Robin Cohen, *The New Helots: Migrants in the International Division of Labour*. Grower Pub Co. 1987. Saskia Sassen, *The Mobility of Labor and Capital: A Study of International Investment and Labor Flow*. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

⁹² Bonham C. Richardson. “Freedom and Migration in the Leeward Caribbean, 1838-1848,” *Journal of Historical Geography* Volume 6, Issue 4 (1980): 391-408.

concepts of the nation-state, national identity, citizenship, and border security.⁹³ *Anti-migrant alarmism and symbolic threats* are frameworks used by scholars seeking to explain the common use of terms such as “swamped” and “invasion” to describe immigration. This can be explained in terms of racial, linguistic, and cultural differences in relation to the host society.⁹⁴ Alexseev (2006) argues immigration phobia must be framed within the context of a national security problem. The perceived threats to sovereignty, usually defined using words such as “hordes”, “swamped”, and “absorbed”, whether real or imagined, are explained through concepts of national identity, economic interests, and security dilemmas in order to gain a thorough analysis and understanding. Other scholars note that governments, although establishing an immigration policy against a particular group, may be lax in their enforcement of immigration policies because of economic benefits undocumented immigrants provide to the host society which is a primary method of the exploitation of immigrants.⁹⁵

Another theoretical approach to the study of immigration and questions of citizenship and inclusion is *identity threat argument*. *Identity threat argument* argues that migrants pose a threat to the survival of the nation, the host country, because migrants wish to remain apart from the nation by remaining a distinct cultural and ethnic group.⁹⁶ However, *identity threat argument* lacks an understanding of power relations between immigrants and the host country. In his

⁹³ Mikhail Alexseev *Immigration Phobia and the Security Dilemma*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Mary Chamberlain, editor, *Caribbean Migration: Globalized Identities*, (New York: Routledge, 1998); David C. Brotherton and Philip Kretsedemas, editors, *Keeping Out the Other: A Critical Introduction to Immigration Enforcement Today*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008); Linda Newton *Illegal, Alien or Immigrant: The Politics of Immigration Reform* (New York: New York University Press, 2008).

⁹⁴ Stuart J. Kaufman, *Modern Hatreds: The Symbolic Politics of Ethnic War*, (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University, 2001); Myron Weiner, *The Global Migration Crisis: Challenge to States and Human Rights*, (Addison Wesley Publishing Company, 1995).

⁹⁵ Newton, *Illegal Immigration*; McWeeney, “The ‘Haitian Problem’”; Bulant Diken *Strangers, Ambivalence and Social Theory* (Ashgate Pub Ltd, 1998); Mark Dow *American Gulag: Inside U.S. Immigration Prisons* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2004).

⁹⁶ Samuel Huntington, *Reconsidering Immigration: Is Mexico a Special Case?* (Washington D.C.: Center for Immigration Studies, 2000).

analysis of Africans, Asians, and Muslims immigrating into France, Alec G. Hargreaves (1995) refutes the argument that new immigrants are impossible to incorporate into French society. According to politicians on the Left and the Right, immigrants are impossible to incorporate into society because they are too different from what it means to be French (i.e., in a nationalist perspective, white, Catholic, and a Francophone speaker). Hargreaves is not convinced by this argument. Instead, he argues "...the state plays a central role in cultural production and other aspects of social experience....There is overwhelming evidence to show that the receiving state far outstrips in economic resources and political authority anything that can be mustered by the majority of sending states."⁹⁷ This means the hegemony of the receiving state is generally more powerful than the cultural heritage of the immigrants. His primary example is that of Europeans who migrated to Africa and Asia during the colonial period. Numerically, Europeans were outnumbered, but their political and economic power allowed Europeans to culturally dominate these areas. His analysis is specific to western countries concern about immigrant's inability or refusal to assimilate into society. This approach is helpful because it helps deconstruct the idea that Haitians are a threat to the cultural and national sovereignty of the Bahamas. It also suggests that the exclusion of migrants and their children reflects the nation-state's refusal to accept and regularize those populations.

And finally, there is the politics of immigration approach which seeks to explain the role policies and laws play in matters concerning immigration. In Linda Newton's *immigration imagery and narrative structures*, she argues that policy narratives and the social constructions of target populations embedded in those narratives are critical to understanding group power and immigration policy development and outcomes. According to Newton, social constructions (of

⁹⁷ Alex Hargreaves, *Immigration, "Race" and Ethnicity in Contemporary France*. (London: Routledge, 1995) xv.

the target group) and immigration policy have a particular relationship in which “the construction of these groups will involve strategic uses of symbols and imagery that the society (both elites and the mass publics) associates with these groups.”⁹⁸ And so, some groups are considered deserving immigrants while others are undeserving and worthy of restrictive, exclusionary, and hostile treatment through laws and policies.

Newton’s theory is a mixture of nationalism and politics. It is nationalist because politicians play on the nation’s fear of cultural and ethnic transformation, and it is based on politics because it is those policies and laws which lead to the immigration imagery and narrative structures concerning immigration. Donathan Brown and Amardo Rodriguez (2014) take a similar approach to conceptualizing immigration. The increasing change in racial and ethnic demographics in the United States creates a fear of the decline of America, American values, the American way of life, and what it means to be American. However, at the core of this analysis is “...law and policy, as opposed to mere headlines, as it is policy and the debates it produces that inform the headlines and subsequently introduce quarrels to the greater public.”⁹⁹ Brown and Rodriguez’s approach is critical because it shows the top-down process of immigration paranoia. Furthermore, they demonstrate how policies and laws concerning immigration reform in the United States serves to maintain a system of inequality, are becoming increasingly malevolent towards Latinos (particularly Mexicans), and seek to penalize not only undocumented immigrants but also those with legal rights to be in the United States.

⁹⁸ Newton, *Illegal Immigration*, 35.

⁹⁹ Donathan L. Brown and Amardo Rodriguez. *When Race and Policy Collide: Contemporary Immigration Debates*. (Praeger, 2014) xviii.

Identity

Identity theories explore one's identity being connected to a group, and identities that are given by others. *Social identity theory* explains a person's identity as being connected to a social group to which they feel they belong and explains intergroup behavior through that lens.¹⁰⁰ Henri Tajfel created this framework as an attempt to understand the psychological processes behind group formation in order to understand intergroup behavior and social categorization. For example, in her dissertation "When Diasporas Discriminate," Tiffany Lightbourn uses *social identity theory* as a theoretical framework to determine whether thoughts about one's social identity among young college Bahamians had an impact on Bahamians' expressions of hostility and prejudice toward Haitian immigrants. Lightbourn asked her respondents whether they identified as an individual (personal), Bahamian (national identity), black (racial identity), or Caribbean (regional identity). Students were then asked to fill out a form about their attitudes, emotions, and public policy preferences regarding Haitian immigrants in the Bahamas. Out of the 343 respondents, 49% responded as an individual, 44% as Bahamian, 5% as black, and 2% as Caribbean. There was a discrepancy between those who identified in an inclusive way (black or Caribbean) and those who identified in an individual or national way. Those who perceived themselves as black or Caribbean were less hostile to the Haitian community compared to those who perceived themselves as Bahamian or an individual. This meant that 93% were more inclined to be hostile toward Haitians.¹⁰¹

Within *social identity theory*, there is the idea of an *ascribed identity*. Essentially, an ascribed identity is an identity that has been constructed for you (some before you were even born) and then assigned to you. Theories on ascribed identity can be broken down into two

¹⁰⁰ Henri Tajfel, *Human Groups and Social Categories: Studies in Social Psychology*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

¹⁰¹ Lightbourn, "When Diasporas Discriminate"

factions: “self-ascription” (the way one defines oneself) and “ascription by others” (the way others define people).¹⁰² For example, in “Black and Latino,” Benjamin Bailey discusses how second-generation Dominican Americans negotiate their identity in terms of race. Race functions as a social category which is socially constructed and ascription varies based on space and time. The social and historical construction of race in the United States has meant that others have ascribed many of these second-generations Dominicans as black while they themselves do not see their identity in terms of racial categories but national and/or ethnic category of Dominican or Spanish.¹⁰³

Other scholars discuss the relationship between *self and social identity*.¹⁰⁴ Within this framework, scholars discuss the ways in which group commitment and social contexts can impact one’s self. *Self-Categorization Theory*, developed by John C. Turner, also concerns itself with identification with social groups, the psychological processes underlying group behavior and identification, and the relationships of the individual to the group. *Self-categorization theory* is developed out of the work produced by Tajfel. According to Turner, “the self-categorization theory makes social identity the social-cognitive basis of group behaviour, the mechanism that makes it possible. ...and by asserting that self-categorizations function at different levels of

¹⁰² Henri Tajfel *Differentiation Between Social Groups: Studies in the Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations*. (New York: Academic, 1978); Henri Tajfel and John Turner “An Integrative Theory of Intergroup Conflict,” in *The Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations*, edited by William G. Austin and Stephen Worchel, (Monterey, CA: Brooks-Cole, 1979). Fredrik Barth *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference*. (Long Grove, Illinois: Waveland Press, Inc., 1969); John D. Palmer, “Who is the Authentic Korean American?: Korean-Born Korean American High School Students’ Negotiation of Ascribed and Achieved Identities,” *Journal of Language, Identity, and Education* Volume 6, No. 4 (2007); LeeAnn M. Sutherland “Black Adolescent Girls’ Use of Literacy Practices to Negotiate Boundaries of Ascribed Identity,” *Journal of Literary Research* Vol. 37, Issue 3 (2005): 365-406; Badi Hasisi and David Weisburd “Going Beyond Ascribed Identities: The Importance of Procedural Justice in Airport Screenings in Israel,” *Law and Society Review* Volume 45, Issue 4 (2011): 867-892

¹⁰³ Benjamin Bailey “Black and Latino: Dominican Americans Negotiate Racial Worlds,” in *Mixed Messages: Multiracial Identities in the “Color-Blind” Era*, ed. David L. Brunsma, (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2006).

¹⁰⁴ Naomi Ellemers, Russell Spears, and Bertjan Doojsje “Self and Social Identity,” *Annual Review Psychology* 53, (2002): 161-186; Mahzarin R. Banaji “The Self in Social Contexts,” *Annual Review Psychology* 45 (1994): 297-332.

abstraction makes both group and individual behaviour ‘acting in terms of self.’”¹⁰⁵ While social identity theory explains intergroup behavior, self-categorization theory explores how individuals associate themselves with particular groups in certain social contexts.

Scholarship on *cultural identity* suggests that people have a shared sense of belonging to a group of people based on cultural linkages.¹⁰⁶ These cultural linkages include nationality, language, religion, ethnicity, and gender among other factors. *National identity* concerns a sense of belonging and group identification with a nation-state based on shared history and culture.¹⁰⁷ In *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson questioned the notion of national identity and nationalism by asking broader theoretical questions about why people decide to fight, kill, and die in the name of nationalism. According to Anderson, nations are socially constructed communities; they are imagined political communities. The reason they are imagined is due to the fact that people within a nation feel a sense of belonging with others in that community even though they will never meet every member of that community. Yet and still, nations have a shared sense of community through history and culture which connects and identifies people as one group.

However, there are ways in which national identities have been racialized and people may not see themselves as a part of a nation-state they may legally belong to. For example, Patrick Bellegarde-Smith (2004) argues that the African American concept of nationality differs in many ways from Western concepts of nationality because “...the meaning of the word in the

¹⁰⁵ John C. Turner *Rediscovering the Social Group: A Self-Categorization Theory*. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987).

¹⁰⁶ Duany, *The Puerto Rican Nation*; Frank Cunningham, “Could Canada Turn into Bosnia?” in *Cultural Identity and the Nation-State*, edited by Carol C. Gould and Pasquale Pasquino. 31-56, (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, INC, 2001); Catherine Audard “The French Republic and the Claims of Diversity,” in *Cultural Identity and the Nation-State*, edited by Carol C. Gould and Pasquale Pasquino. 85-108, (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, INC, 2001).

¹⁰⁷ Bethel, *Navigations*, 2000; Bethel, “Engendering the Bahamas,”; Anthony D. Smith *National Identity* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1991); Benedict Anderson *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983); Ross Poole *Nation and Identity* (London: Routledge, 1999).

current Black American vocabulary that equates the two [race and nationality], denoting ‘race’ as ethnic culture and nationality.”¹⁰⁸ In fact, he argues this alternative way of viewing nationality (which has become conflated with ethnicity) can be found in other areas of the African diaspora despite space and time. To illustrate his point, Bellegarde-Smith uses the example of the connection between nationality and race in Haiti’s first constitution in 1804. According to Bellegarde-Smith, “...at its independence in 1804, Haiti made ‘race’ coterminous with nationality and established a ‘law of return’ for all of Africa’s children who landed in the new republic.”¹⁰⁹ This was predicated on two factors: 1) cultural similarities and 2) imperialism, slavery, and colonization.¹¹⁰

Theoretical Approaches for Dissertation

While all of these approaches provide insight into questions concerning immigration, citizenship, production of the “other,” and concepts of identity, as I will show below, they are either outdated, ahistorical, or cannot fully explain my respondents’ identity construction. They also fail to draw parallels between economics, politics, history, culture, international and national events, and the power of race in approaches to dealing with the question of immigration and citizenship. For my dissertation research, I will use Aviva Chomsky’s *theory of undocumentedness* and Fielding et al. *concept of the stigma of being Haitian*. Chomsky’s *theory of undocumentedness* essentially explores how illegality and being undocumented are socially constructed terms and systems used to exploit and exclude particular groups of people. Chomsky’s analysis is primarily concerned with undocumented Mexican immigration to the

¹⁰⁸ Patrick Bellegarde-Smith “Hormones and Melanin: The Dimensions of ‘Race,’ Sex, and Gender in Africology; Reflexive Journeys.” In *The Black Studies Reader* edited by Jacqueline Bobo, Cynthia Hudley, and Claudine Michel, 329-342 (New York: Routledge, 2004) 333.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., page 332.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

United States and how Mexicans have been legally, and thus culturally and ideologically, transformed from workers to undocumented immigrants over the course of the twentieth century. The key moment of transformation was the implementation of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965. Understanding this scenario requires a historical approach and must take into account the economic, ideological, and cultural changes in the latter half of the twentieth century in the United States which are directly related to race and racism and institutional discrimination. These changes resulted in the construction of the present concept of illegality which is a system created and predicated on inequalities, discrimination, racism, and exclusion. Undocumented immigration has become criminalized and this criminalization justifies discrimination and maintains a system of legalized inequality.¹¹¹

Chomsky's theory is extremely useful to this study because her assertion that "laws are made and enforced by humans, in historical contexts, and for reasons. They change over time, and they are often created and modified to serve the interests of some groups—generally the powerful and privileged—over others" applies to the Bahamian context, as well.¹¹² One of the goals of my research is to understand second-generation Haitians' experiences with getting citizenship in the Bahamas, as well as their ideas regarding citizenship and the citizenship process. Chomsky's work allows me to frame these experiences and ideas within the context of Bahamian laws, policies, and public attitudes taken towards Haitians in the Bahamas and how they have impeded not only the citizenship process but also the social hierarchy of citizenship. Chomsky's theory also argues that the process of becoming undocumented is a highly racialized crime because nationality, or one's national origin, is usually thought of in racial terms.

¹¹¹ Chomsky, *Undocumented*, 2014.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 1.

Although both Bahamians and Haitians are primarily of African descent, there is evidence that Haitians are racialized in the Bahamas as “more African” (which is viewed negatively) and therefore different from Bahamians. This helps explain how and why second-generation Haitians may have citizenship but are still seen as outsiders in the land of their birth. Additionally, in the same way that illegality has become associated with Mexicans in the United States, illegality, being an immigrant, or being undocumented has become associated with Haitians in the Bahamas, regardless of actual legal, immigration, or citizenship status.

In their concept of *the stigma of being Haitian*, Fielding et al. discuss the various ways Haitians have been stigmatized in Bahamian society and attempt to explain this stigma through the use and analysis of census data and newspaper articles. According to Fielding et al., Haitian migrants have been associated with poverty, illegality, poor education, language, and overpopulation. The political and socioeconomic problems of Haiti have also helped characterized this stigma. The media is saturated with images and articles which support this stigma and is propelled by the government indicating a deeper, structural and institutionalized stigma of Haitians in the Bahamas.¹¹³ As Fielding et al. argue, “structural and individual discrimination characterize the stigma of Haitian migrants.”¹¹⁴ It is this stigma of being Haitian that greatly shapes the everyday lived experiences of people of Haitian descent born and/or raised in the Bahamas. Although the stigma, in many ways, is attached to Haitian nationals, the inability and/or refusal of Bahamians to recognize the different categories of Haitians in the Bahamas has resulted in all Haitians being viewed as the same. This means that being born and raised in the Bahamas does not allow one to escape the stigma of being “Haitian” in the

¹¹³ Charmane M. Perry “Invasion from the South: Social Construction of the Haitian ‘Other’ in the Bahamas.” *The International Journal of Bahamian Studies* Vol. 20, Issue No. 1 (2014): 1-12.

¹¹⁴ Fielding et al., “The Stigma of Being ‘Haitian’ in the Bahamas,” 47.

Bahamas. Additionally, the lack of citizenship greatly impacts their opportunities and keeps them marginalized in Bahamian society. This framework allows me to explore the ways that the stigma of being Haitian impacts second-generation Haitians in the Bahamas.

Chapter 3: Methods and Methodology

Methodology

Since its inception as a new discipline in the academy in the late 1960s, Black Studies has been criticized, accused, and attacked for allegedly being intellectually bankrupt, not a legitimate discipline, as exclusive to blacks and hostile to whites, used as a tool to promote a racist or Black Nationalist agenda, and a feel good study for black students. The discipline has also been accused of relaxing academic and professional standards because of its focus on the black experience, as having no set curriculum, foundational theories, and canonical texts, and, most insulting, as academically, intellectually, and, one could argue, historically irrelevant because there is nothing unique or of value about the black experience which necessitates the need for an autonomous discipline.¹¹⁵ As a black woman, born and raised in the United States, fully intellectually and professionally trained in the field of Black Studies (bachelor's, master's, and Ph.D.), I understand that there is something different about the way subject matter is approached, conceptualized, and explained in comparison to other disciplines.

In “A Debate on Activism in Black Studies” and in the introduction to *Dispatches from the Ebony Tower*, Manning Marable situates the discipline of Africology or Black Studies in the historical development and presence of the black intellectual tradition.¹¹⁶ It is this exact black intellectual tradition which creates Africological scholarship.¹¹⁷ According to Marable, “at the

¹¹⁵ Manning Marable (ed.) “Introduction: Black Studies and the Racial Mountain” in *Dispatches from the Ebony Tower: Intellectuals Confront the African American Experience*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000). Floyf Hayes (ed.) “Preface to the Instructor” in *A Turbulent Voyage: Readings in African American Studies*. (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2000).

¹¹⁶ Marable “Introduction: Black Studies and the Racial Mountain”; Henry Louis Gates and Manning Marable. “A Debate on Activism in Black Studies.” In *Dispatches from the Ebony Tower: Intellectuals Confront the African American Experience*, edited by Manning Marable, 186-195, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000).

¹¹⁷ Karanja Keita Carroll “Africana Studies and Research Methodology: Revisiting the Centrality of the Afrikan Worldview.” *The Journal of Pan African Studies* Vol. 2, No. (2008):4-27.

heart of black studies is the black intellectual tradition, an enormous body of scholarship in the social sciences and humanities by and about people of African descent. That intellectual tradition has generally been ‘descriptive,’ ‘corrective,’ and ‘prescriptive.’”¹¹⁸ As descriptive, black intellectuals have placed black people at the center of their analysis and analyzed the black reality from the point of view of black people. As corrective, black intellectuals have, in words of Michael Thelwell, attempted to correct white cultural and ideological terrorism and the colonization of education and history. And as prescriptive, black intellectuals have generally been scholar-activist.¹¹⁹ This means that in the historical development and solidification of black racial oppression, black intellectuals have combined their scholarship with their political activism.

Additionally, Karanja Carroll (2008) argues that “...this understanding of Africana Studies is grounded in the concept of the Afrikan worldview. Generally speaking, ‘A worldview refers to the way in which a people make sense of their surroundings; make sense of life and of the universe.’”¹²⁰ Furthermore, Carroll states that “the Afrikan worldview...not only functions as the perspective, but it is most importantly the root of the philosophical assumptions which determine the research methodology...” of scholarship in the field of Black Studies.¹²¹ Carroll asserts that an individual’s worldview is a product of one’s culture, and it is this way of life which creates assumptions that influences one’s research project. In bridging the relationship between worldview and methodology, Africologists have argued an individual’s worldview is essential to their methodological approach because views such as axiology, logic, and epistemology, ideology, teleology, cosmology, and ontology help shape a worldview.¹²² In fact, it is exactly the issue of

¹¹⁸ Gates Jr. and Marable, “A Debate on Activism in Black Studies,” 189.

¹¹⁹ Marable, ed., “Introduction: Black Studies and the Racial Mountain”; Michael Thelwell “Black Studies: A Political Perspective,” in *The African American Studies Reader*, edited by Nathaniel Norment Jr., 568-575, (Durham, North Carolina: Carolina Academic Press, 2001).

¹²⁰ Carroll, “Africana Studies and Research Methodology” 6.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹²² *Ibid.*

worldview which created the necessity and historical presence of the black intellectual tradition which formed as a resistance and a response to white ideological and cultural domination, objectivity, racism, and historical distortion.

In my research, it has remained important that my participant's experiences are at the center of the narrative. A part of my research objective is to produce a platform for their voices to be heard. The experiences of second-generation Haitians in the Bahamas are rarely heard or studied as most research centers on Haitian immigration and Haitian nationals.¹²³ By placing my participant's voices and experiences at the center of my research, I am also attempting to address their humanity. They are people who are caught in the web of politics, man-made laws, nationalism, and xenophobia. As will be shown in this dissertation, these factors often place these individuals' lives on hold, particularly after they turn eighteen and must apply and wait for citizenship. Hopefully, this dissertation will expose the urgency of this matter by placing their voices and their plight at the center of the narrative.

Qualitative and quantitative methods are more than different numerical and non-numerical ways to approach research. Instead, one should select between qualitative and quantitative research by choosing the method that has the best strengths and logics to satisfactorily answer the questions and goals of the project. Joseph Maxwell argues that qualitative methods are best suited for five intellectual research goals that can substantially contribute to three practical research goals. The five intellectual goals and 3 practical goals are:

1. Understanding the *meaning*, for participants in the study, of the events, situations, experiences, and actions they are involved with or engage in....
 2. Understanding the particular *context* within which the participants act, and the influence that this context has on their actions....
 3. Identifying *unanticipated* phenomena and influences, and generating new, "grounded" theories about the latter....
 4. Understanding the *process* by which events and actions take place....
 5. Developing *casual explanations*....
- These intellectual goals, and the inductive, open-ended

¹²³ College of the Bahamas, "Haitians in the Bahamas," 2005.

strategy that they require, give qualitative research a particular advantage in addressing three practical goals: 6. Generating results and theories that are understandable and experientially credible, both to the people you are studying and to others....7. Conducting formative evaluations, ones that are intended to help improve existing practice rather than to simply assess the value of the program or product being evaluated....8. Engaging in collaborative or action research with practitioners or research participants.¹²⁴

Maxwell's description of these intellectual goals supported my decision to conduct qualitative research because I am interested in analysis of the underlying meanings and patterns in relationships that cannot be explained in solely numerical ways. Qualitative research allows me to understand what it means to be a person of Haitian descent born and raised in the Bahamas to Haitian parents through its strengths of inductive reasoning, emphasis on words, and the focus on specific events and/or people.¹²⁵ I was able to achieve this by discussing with my participants events, situations, and experiences which were situated in the historical and contemporary context of Haitian immigration, citizenship, and the stigma of being Haitian in the Bahamas.

Methods

This project was based on interviews as the primary qualitative research method. Interviews were the most appropriate method because my goal was to understand the experiences of second-generations Haitians in the Bahamas with a specific focus on citizenship and identity. According to Steven J. Taylor and Robert Bogdan (1998), "social scientists rely largely on verbal accounts to learn about social life."¹²⁶ An interview is a conversation in which one person

¹²⁴ Joseph A. Maxwell *Qualitative Research Design: An Interactive Approach*, second edition. (Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, Inc, 2005) 22-24.

¹²⁶ Steven J. Taylor and Robert Bogdan. *Introduction to Qualitative Methods* (John Wiley & Sons Inc., 1998) 87.

(interviewer) asks questions of another person (respondent).¹²⁷ Interviews were most appropriate for this research project because the dialogue between the researcher and respondent allows for a greater understanding concerning being Haitian in the Bahamas because participants are able to guide the conversation about their experiences. Additionally, the experiences and voices of young adults of Haitian descent are under-researched and under-represented in the Bahamian media and scholarly literature concerning Haitians in the Bahamas.¹²⁸ Due to the lack of literature speaking to the experiences of Haitians reared in the Bahamas, the most appropriate method for ascertaining information concerning the day-to-day experiences, issues with citizenship, and the construction of identity must come from conversations with the people themselves.

My goal in interviewing was for my participants to be able to tell me about *their* experiences, explain to me *why* they feel the way they do about particular situations, and describe *how* and *why* they construct their identity the way they do. Because of this, I chose qualitative, open-ended interviewing (or in-depth interviewing) as the most suitable interviewing style for my research objectives. Qualitative, in-depth interviewing involves “face-to-face encounters between the researcher and informants directed toward understanding informants’ perspectives on their lives, experiences, or situations as expressed in their own words. The in-depth interview is modeled after a conversation between equals rather than a formal question-and-answer exchange.”¹²⁹ This form of interviewing allowed me the opportunity to ask young adults of Haitian descent questions specific to their experiences. Additionally, “the in-depth interview takes seriously the notion that people are experts on their own experience and so best able to report how they experienced a

¹²⁷ Earl Babbie *The Practice of Social Research* (Eleventh Edition. Australia: Thomson Wadsworth, 2007) 264.

¹²⁸ College of the Bahamas, Report on Haitians in the Bahamas, 2005; St. Jacques, “Today Haitians,” 2001

¹²⁹ Taylor and Bogban, *Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods*, 88.

particular event or phenomenon.”¹³⁰ Because of this, the conversations also allowed respondents to direct my research to new ideas or themes I had not previously known or considered such as the perceived significance of the new immigration policy on citizenship.

The interviews were also semi-structured. Semi-structured interviews involve a set of questions and topics; however, “the interviewer is prepared to be flexible in terms of the order in which topics are considered, and, perhaps more significantly, to let the interviewee develop ideas and speak more widely on the issues raised by the researcher.”¹³¹ This method is well-suited because it provides enough structure for me to ask the main questions I am interested in while simultaneously allowing the participants to lead me in the direction of important topics.

Sample

My target population for this study were English-speaking women and men of Haitian descent born and/or raised in the Bahamas to Haitian parents (at least one) aged 18 and over. I originally sought to interview adults of Haitian descent born in the Bahamas to undocumented Haitian parents, but during my research I decided to expand my population to include adults born or raised in the Bahamas to Haitian parents regardless of status. I chose to expand the criteria for my population because, once in Nassau, I recognized the heterogeneity of the Haitian community and believed the expansion could enhance the richness of the data. For example, I had three respondents who were born in the Bahamas but spent some of their childhood in Haiti due to their mothers being deported to Haiti. Upon returning to the Bahamas, these individuals experienced the same—if not more severe—struggles as their peers who were born and raised solely in the

¹³⁰ Yvonne Darlington and Dorothy Scott. *Qualitative Research in Practice: Stories from the Field*. (Australia: Open University Press, 2002) 49.

¹³¹ Martyn Denscombe, *The Good Research Guide: For Small-Scale Social Research Projects* (Berkshire: Open University Press, 1998) 167.

Bahamas. I also chose to expand my parental status inclusion criteria because the differences in experiences reflect the reality that there is a stigma attached to being Haitian in the Bahamas. For example, one respondent had a Haitian mother and a Bahamian father. Because she had her father's last name, she felt that she escaped some of the ridicule her peers received during childhood due to the simple fact that people assumed she was Bahamian because of her last name. These examples demonstrate that the decision to expand the criteria for inclusion added a richness and complexity to my study.

My population consisted of women and men of Haitian descent residing in Nassau, New Providence. Although Haitians are scattered throughout the islands of the Bahamas (primarily New Providence, Eleuthera, Abaco, and Grand Bahama), Nassau is the capital and represents the primary economic hub of the country. As a result, a majority of Haitian migrants travel to and take residence in Nassau.¹³² Although my population was located in Nassau at the time of our interviews, I did not exclude individuals who were born and raised in the Family Islands. In fact, I had three respondents who spent a portion or all of their childhood in Eleuthera. Based on my interviews, the experiences concerning being Haitian in the Bahamas varies little whether in Eleuthera or Nassau. Finally, I chose English-speaking women and men because of my lack of proficiency in Haitian Creole to conduct an interview. This did not prove to be a challenge as the Bahamas is an Anglophone country.

Data Collection

Between February and April 2015, I conducted 28 semi-structured, opened-ended interviews with English-speaking women and men of Haitian descent born and/or raised in the Bahamas, currently living in Nassau, and aged 18 and over. In terms of my sample, fifteen were

¹³² Johnson et al., "Haitian Migrants in the Bahamas," 2005.

women and thirteen were men. My youngest participants (Nadia, Rose, and Peter) were eighteen years old while the oldest, Liza, was forty-three. A slight majority (sixteen) of my participants were in their 20s; six were in their late teens, and five were in their 30s. The median age was 23 years old. The mean age was 25 years old.

My recruitment of participants primarily relied on snowball sampling and word of mouth. Snowball sampling is the act of establishing relationships with research participants and asking them to refer additional people who would be interested and/or suitable for the project.¹³³ Prior to going to Nassau, I had established a relationship with Dr. Bertin M. Louis, who was the Vice Chair of African Studies and Assistant Professor of Anthropology at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. Dr. Louis had contacts in Nassau due to his own research on Haitians in the Bahamas. Through this relationship, I was able to establish contact with Dr. Antoine St. Louis, the founder and Senior Pastor of Victory Chapel Church of the Nazarene and Pastor Kevin Pierre of International Tabernacle of Praise Ministries, Inc. Through Pastor Pierre, I was also able to establish contact with Youth Leader Raymond Charles at Metropolitan Church of Nazarene.

During my stay, I went to church every Sunday to build a relationship with the congregation, get a glimpse into the lives of Haitians in the Bahamas, and to look for participants. I attended church not only for Sunday service but also during the week. For example, I attended youth night on at least five occasions at Victory Chapel and Metropolitan. The relationships with Pastor Pierre, Brother Raymond, and Pastor Louis were extremely important because they helped allay people's fears and/or hesitancy because I had gained the endorsement and support of people they respect and trust. This was also true for individual participants I was able to establish a relationship with beyond their interview. They were able to trust me and build a relationship with

¹³³ Taylor and Bogban, *Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods*, 1998; Babbie, *The Practice of Social Research*, 2007.

me outside of the initial contact, resulting in a few of them spreading the word to their friends, which led to more interviews. Because the recruitment of my participants was heavily concentrated in two churches, it may have shaped my data and analysis in particular ways. Since the sample is drawn primarily from two locations or connected to individuals from these locations, there may be an inherent bias in the data. It is possible participants share similar beliefs or positions towards certain topics and experiences such as stigma, citizenship, and identity. Because of this, my sample may have also excluded second-generation Haitians who do not identify as Haitian whether personally or in public. Since my recruitment of participants were heavily concentrated at Haitian institutions, it is very possible that I may have missed a population who completely rejects or denies being Haitian despite their parental ancestry.

Participants were asked to take part in a 60-to-90 minute interview about their personal experiences growing up in the Bahamas, their experiences trying to get citizenship, and how they construct their identity. Due to the low risks associated with this research, I requested and was approved by the Institutional Review Board to waive written documentation of informed consent, needing only oral informed consent. I believed oral consent would be better than written consent because it would help alleviate any concerns or worries participants may have had regarding being interviewed and recorded on such a politically sensitive topic. For example, during one interview, although I had disclosed who I was and the purpose of my study, Ricky was noticeably nervous. Afraid to say the word immigration, Ricky thought I was a reporter and was going to put him in the newspaper.

To allay similar fears, I decided to stay away from questions that discussed the status of my participants' parents. I believed that this may be a sensitive question for many respondents because of the large stigma of Haitians being undocumented in the Bahamas. Because of this, I

was often able to postulate their parent's status based on their own struggles with citizenship. Additionally, it was not particularly necessary to know the parents' status since my research was focused on the experiences of the children of migrants. Nonetheless, the fact that majority of my respondents had to apply for citizenship suggested their parents were not regularized or were not citizens of the Bahamas.

During my interviews, I used the audio-recorder on my cellular phone to record the interviews. After I conducted each interview, I uploaded the file to my Drop Box and deleted the file on my phone. Audio-recording has become a standard interview practice that helps document with accuracy the interview session.¹³⁴ I used an audio-recorder to document each interview and to be able to use the participant's words verbatim. This was important because the goal is to place their voices and experiences at the center of this research. Participants were given the option to refuse to be recorded but none of them refused. I transcribed each interview during the period from May to August 2015.

Interviews were generally conducted in public spaces for the comfort and convenience of both the researcher and the respondent. A majority of my interviews were conducted on a bench across the street from the College of the Bahamas. This location seemed to be convenient and easily accessible for many participants. I also conducted interviews at the McDonald's in the same vicinity as well as a McDonald's located downtown. A few interviews were conducted at Victory Chapel and Metropolitan. For these interviews, the researcher and the respondent found an empty room at the church for the sake of privacy and convenience. One interview was conducted on the beach and another at a participant's job. Participants did not appear to be uncomfortable with being interviewed in the public. At the time of setting up the interview, participants were given options,

¹³⁴ Denscombe, *The Good Research Guide*, 2003.

and these public spaces were often the most accessible for both the participants and the researcher. Despite being in public, most interviews were isolated from people nearby. Particularly at the location across the street from the College of the Bahamas, I would try to choose a bench that was isolated from others to prevent the possibility of participants feeling uncomfortable. The only person I sensed nervousness from was Ricky, but this was because he thought I was a reporter and he would be quoted in the newspaper. Additionally, Ricky was interviewed in a private room at Metropolitan.

Data Analysis

According to Joseph A. Maxwell (2005), one of the primary issues of data analysis is that researchers tend to wait until they complete their data collection to begin analyzing. Maxwell argues this is a problematic pattern in qualitative research because the data is piling up, which makes data analysis more difficult, frustrating, and discouraging.¹³⁵ Other scholars agree with Maxwell about the need to begin data collection immediately after collection to create a more systematic approach to the research project.¹³⁶ Therefore, I conducted data analysis throughout the duration of the data collection process. This strategy was particularly useful because early in the interview process, topics began to arise that I was unaware of or had not given much thought. For example, some participants brought up the new immigration policy that took effect November 1, 2014. This policy and the conversation around it became an important part of my analysis on citizenship. In this way, the data led me in an unexpected direction as it related to having a deeper

¹³⁵ Maxwell, *Qualitative Research Design*, 2005.

¹³⁶ Bernd Heinrich *In a Patch of Fireweed*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984); Amanda Coffey and Paul Atkinson *Making Sense of Qualitative Data* (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 1996).

understanding of the issues associated with citizenship from the standpoint of my participants. As a result, after this issue arose in earlier interviews, I explicitly asked participants about the new immigration policy in later interviews.

Data analysis while in Nassau consisted of reviewing notes taken during the interview, sharpening future interview questions, and listening to interviews. I kept a journal during the data collection and data analysis process. For my personal journal, I used two concepts of memoing: theoretical notes and operational notes. Theoretical notes are "...reflections of the dimensions and deeper meanings of concepts, relationship among concepts, theoretical propositions...."¹³⁷ This was particularly helpful during and directly after an interview, as well as while during transcribing and reviewing transcriptions. If I took notes while interviewing, I would simply jot down short sentences, terms, or ideas. Shortly after the interview, I would revisit the notes and expand on them. Operational notes specifically address methodological concerns such as data collection resources, issues at research sites, ideas for future resources, or name, numbers, and/or emails of people I meet throughout the entire research process. As such, the journal had two purposes: 1) to keep or write theoretical daily notes to myself during the data collection and data analysis process and 2) to keep or write daily operational notes during the data collection and the data analysis process. For my own systematic approach to organizing my thoughts and retrieve ideas/information, I kept the theoretical notes in the front of the journal and operational notes at the back of the journal.

After returning to the United States, I began to transcribe my interviews. Transcription is the process of transferring the audio-recorded interview into text, which includes the documentation of pauses in responses (including the length of the pause) and other verbal cues

¹³⁷ Ibid., 389.

(such as laughing or coughing) and non-verbal cues (which, when applicable, were retrieved from the interviewer's journal). This indicates that transcribing interviews requires an eye for attention to detail. According to Martyn Denscombe (2003) transcribing is "...a very valuable part of the research, because it brings the researcher 'close to the data.'"¹³⁸ Because of the need for detail, interviews may need to be transcribed and reviewed more than once to ensure accuracy.¹³⁹ The process of transcribing brought me closer to the data because the interviews were more than just words. Transcribing allowed me to relive the interviews and connect the statements to particular people and their experiences. In many ways, this process manifested in highlighting the humanity of my participants, and so I felt more connected to my participants and the importance of their stories being told. All interviews are confidential. I am the only person who has had access to the audio-recorded interviews and any information which could possibly link specific responses to a particular participant. All interviews were transcribed, saved, and stored as Microsoft documents on my password-protected personal laptop computer. All transcriptions were printed and safely stored in my home. Pseudonyms were also used to conceal participant's identity. Despite using pseudonyms, to ensure greater confidentiality, in this dissertation and other presentations of my research, I was careful not to use too much information that could allow someone to identify a participant. Names and specific identifying information were not used. For example, I would not give a participant's specific job title or location but a general occupation such as educator or customer service.

During the data analysis process, I also used coding and memoing as the qualitative analytical method. Coding is defined as "the process whereby raw data are transformed into a

¹³⁸ Denscombe, *The Good Research Guide*, 2003, 183.

¹³⁹ Darlington and Scott, *Qualitative Research in Practice*, 2002.

standardized form suitable for machine processing and analysis.”¹⁴⁰ Memoing is the act of writing notes (i.e. memos) to yourself during data collection and analysis. In addition, “memos can describe and define concepts, deal with methodological issues, or offer initial theoretical formulations.”¹⁴¹ Due to the structure of coding and memoing, both occurred simultaneously. In terms of coding, I read over my transcripts multiple times and found patterns and themes linked between the interviews. For example, I already anticipated citizenship and identity to be themes, but, through data analysis, school, stigma of being Haitian, and Haitian pride were also important themes that emerged. It should be noted that I did not use any data analysis software.

In terms of my own positionality as it relates to my data analysis, I struggled with separating how I view my identity from the ways in which many of my participants construct their identities. As a person who identifies as African American, I expected many of my participants to identify as Haitian Bahamian. I expected them to view themselves as a combination of both groups. However, as my research shows, the term “Haitian Bahamian” is a highly contested category, and many believed that you were either one or the other; you could not be both. As I further analyzed my interviews, it became clear that many of my participants believed that they had to choose between being Haitian or Bahamian because they received messages from the broader society that they could not be both. Whereas in the United States, it is not uncommon for people to identify as more than one group such as African American, Italian American, Korean American, Haitian American, and so on, the Bahamas functions as a different space. Although there are people of Chinese, Jamaican, and Haitian heritage residing in the Bahamas, it is not common to see the term Chinese Bahamian, Jamaican Bahamian, Haitian Bahamian.

¹⁴⁰ Babbie, *The Practice of Social Research*, 2007, G2.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 388.

Additionally, my position and sympathy towards the issue of citizenship may have been influenced by United States citizenship laws. In terms of worldwide citizenship practices, birthright citizenship is uncommon. Only 30 out of 196 countries have birthright citizenship meaning that it is a relatively uncommon practice.¹⁴² Operating from a position where individuals born in the United States are automatically citizens of the country, this may have influenced my sympathy towards second-generation Haitian's struggle with citizenship as well as my support of better citizenship practices for those born there. Birthright citizenship does not eliminate the issue of xenophobia towards immigrant populations in the United States, but it does alleviate the citizenship status troubles experienced by children born to undocumented or non-naturalized parents.

¹⁴² Cabaniss, Will. "Only about 30 Countries Offer Birthright Citizenship," *Pundit Fact*, August 23, 2015. Accessed on March 10, 2017 <http://www.politifact.com/punditfact/statements/2015/aug/23/se-cupp/se-cupp-only-about-30-other-countries-offer-birthr/>

Chapter 4: “Carry Your Haitian Self” The Stigma of Being Haitian in the Bahamas

Introduction

The goal of this chapter is to discuss how adults of Haitian descent have gone through life in the Bahamas experiencing exclusion, discrimination, and stigma because of their Haitian heritage. In this chapter, I will use the concept of the stigma of being “Haitian” as developed by Fielding and his colleagues (2008) as a lens for viewing and interpreting those experiences. According to their framework, Haitians are stigmatized because of linguistic and cultural differences, style of dress, physical appearance, lack of education, employment/unemployment, poverty, stereotypes (such as having too many children, overpopulating the public hospital, or taking Bahamian jobs), and the indiscriminate notion that all Haitians are undocumented. It is this stigma of being Haitian that greatly shapes the everyday lived experiences of people of Haitian descent born and/or raised in the Bahamas. Additionally, the lack of citizenship greatly impacts their opportunities and keeps them marginalized in Bahamian society. As Fielding et al. argue, “structural and individual discrimination characterize the stigma of Haitian migrants.”¹⁴³ And, as I will argue in this chapter, my data shows that their children who are born and/or raised in the Bahamas are also discriminated against due to the stigma associated with being Haitian in the Bahamas.

Based on my research, the first major institution where children of Haitian descent are exposed to the idea of being the “other” is primary school. Stigma, prejudice, and discrimination follow them or people they know through their primary and secondary education and manifest in the form of teasing (Haitian is used as a negative word), social stigma because of their heritage, and discrimination from teachers and students. Stigma does not stop in secondary school but

¹⁴³ Fielding et al., “The Stigma of Being ‘Haitian’ in the Bahamas,” 47.

continues into adulthood. As I will demonstrate in this chapter, in the interviews, respondents reveal that they experience stigma and hostility in public spaces such as the bus, public hospital, and everyday encounters on the street if one is heard speaking Creole.

Stigma and discrimination not only appear in the form of everyday Bahamian's discontent towards Haitians, but also manifests institutionally. Lack of citizenship (to be discussed more thoroughly in the next chapter) creates challenges for many adults of Haitian descent. According to the interviewees, many have difficulties getting a start in adult life as they struggle to find employment, continue their post-secondary education, open a bank account, get a driver's license, or simply start a career due to structural barriers to citizenship. The lack of citizenship impedes moving forward and can lead to deferred dreams for many individuals. I conclude this chapter with a discussion of themes of resiliency present throughout the interviews. It is important to add this section because, although they are navigating a society which is xenophobic and mentally, emotionally, and spiritually challenging, many of the interviewees have embraced their Haitian heritage and wear it as a badge of honor, whether it is through speaking Creole in public, celebrating Haitian Flag Day in the streets, or simply being proud of the fact that they are Haitian.

“Kouri. Kouri. Bus l’ap vini.”¹⁴⁴ School as the first site for stigma and discrimination

School is one of the most significant institutions in the adolescent and teenage years of Bahamian people. Besides family and church, school functions as a primary source of socialization, especially as it relates to Bahamian norms and culture.¹⁴⁵ Bahamians generally

¹⁴⁴ “Kouri. Kouri. Bus l’ap vini” means “Run. Run. The bus is coming” in Haitian Creole. The bus referred to is the yellow school bus used by the Department of Immigration to transport undocumented Haitians to the detention center.

¹⁴⁵ Giavana Jones and Kathryn Lafreniere “Exploring the Role of School Engagement in Predicting Resilience in Bahamian Youth,” *Journal of Black Psychology* Vol. 40(1) (2014) 47-68.

attend primary and secondary school between the ages of five to sixteen thus spending a good portion of their childhood within the school setting. In terms of primary and secondary education, children of Haitian descent are not refused educational services due to the Bahamian Education Act, which guarantees all residents between the ages of five and sixteen access to tuition-free public education regardless of legal status, as well as the Bahamas' support of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, in which Article 2 opposes discrimination based on legal status, national or ethnic origin.¹⁴⁶ Hence, children of Haitian descent are not excluded from primary and secondary education, and thus school indeed functions as an important part of their experiences growing up in the Bahamas.

Based on my research, primary and secondary school is arguably the first space where children of Haitian descent are most explicitly and consistently confronted with discrimination and stigma as it relates to being Haitian. They experience covert and overt discrimination primarily from their Bahamian peers, some teachers, and, to a much lesser extent, administrative staff. My data suggests that there is probably less discrimination from administrative staff due to lesser degrees of interaction whereas children have more contact with teachers and peers on a typical day. In high school, interviewees reported the experience of being excluded from programs or not receiving special honors based solely on their heritage as well as a lack of Bahamian citizenship. For example, Nadia shared that she was the head girl in her class (i.e. the most outstanding student). With aspirations of becoming a doctor, Nadia wanted to enroll in a cadet nursing program at her high school. According to Nadia, "We went to join. And they were like, 'Oh. If you're Haitian or you're Jamaican, just pick up and leave because we just deal with Bahamians in this program. We don't cater to other nationalities.'" When Nadia and her friend

¹⁴⁶ Taylor, "Education for All," 2005.

inquired why they were not able to join, the instructor told them the program was “just for Bahamians or persons that only have Bahamian passport.” Although Nadia was a high performing student at her high school, she was not able to participate in a nursing program which would aid in her future career goals because she was not Bahamian.

Ridicule, prejudice, exclusion, and discrimination are not particular to children of Haitian descent in the Bahamas but is a common experience of immigrant children or children considered “other” or foreign. In a study of Sikh students in Britain and the United States, Margaret A. Gibson and Parminder K. Bhachu (1991) write,

A climate of prejudice permeates the school experience of all Sikh students. In school, Sikh children are told directly by white classmates and indirectly by their teachers that they stink. They are verbally and physically abused by majority students, who refuse to sit by them in class or on buses, crowd in front of them in lines, spit at them, stick them with pins, throw food at them, and worse.”¹⁴⁷

As will be discussed below, this example mirrors some of the experiences discussed by my participants. And so, in this way, school is the first place that children of Haitian descent realize they are the “other” in Bahamian society.

With the exception of one, all of my interviewees received either all or a portion of their primary and secondary education at Bahamian public schools. The one interviewee who did not attend Bahamian public school did not do so because, although being born in Nassau, she went to Haiti as a young child when her mother was deported and did not return until she was an adult. Three interviewees (two being born in Nassau but leaving because of parental deportation and one being born in Haiti but migrating to the Bahamas as a child) received some of their primary

¹⁴⁷ Margaret A. Gibson and Parminder K. Bhachu. “The Dynamics of Educational Decision Making: A Comparative Study of Sikhs in Britain and the United States,” in *Minority Status and Schooling: A Comparative Study of Immigrant and Involuntary Minorities*. Edited by Margaret A. Gibson and John U. Ogbu, (Garland Publishing, Inc: New York, 1991) 69.

education in Haiti but finished their education in Nassau when they returned as children. One respondent, Yvonne, grew up in Eleuthera (another island of the Bahamas) and moved to Nassau after graduating high school to attend the College of the Bahamas (COB), the primary tertiary institution of the Bahamas. And lastly, there was one participant, David, who was born in Nassau but lived in Freeport for four years and did not return to Nassau until he was in middle school. The remaining sample was educated at public institutions in Nassau. Although Eleuthera is a different island, as will be shown below, school experiences were generally the same as those experienced in Nassau suggesting stigma on other islands.

Participants expressed a mixture of reactions to their overall school experiences, ranging from “loved” and “awesome” to “a bit rough.” However, based on the interviewees’ answers, these overall school experiences were not generally shaped by a disdain and/or love for learning in the classroom, homework, and other school-related activities but were more so shaped by how they were treated at school because of their parents’ national origin. I argue this point because the interviewees rarely brought up these school activities in their responses and because respondents usually suggested that high school was better because they received less discrimination and ridicule for being Haitian in comparison to primary school. Participants such as Yvonne, Nadia, and Olivia stated that high school was not as bad as primary school but students were still teased because of their Haitian heritage. Sherry expressed that “It was really rough because like in primary school the kids would tease you because you were a Haitian. They used to have this thing, it’s like a curse word. Like carry your Haitian ass. That’s what they used to call us. Like you’re a Haitian. The whole class would tease you.” In fact, twenty-one out of twenty-eight interviewees expressed either experiencing teasing or watching others being teased.

And so, the discrimination and ridicule is directly associated with the stigma attached to being Haitian in the Bahamas.

In primary and secondary school (particularly primary school), the stigma associated with being Haitian was displayed through teasing from Bahamian peers. Aspiring singer Marjorie says, "I've had to go through school being teased and picked on because of just being Haitian." Another participant, Olivia, states, "Sometimes you feel kind of bad because the other children will tease you and like, 'Oh, you're a Haitian,' this and stuff like that." For Olivia, the teasing went beyond name calling into her Bahamian peers' disgust and contempt for her being within close proximity. Olivia continues, "And then some days, they would be like they don't want you to sit next to each other and stuff like that." This experience is not specific to Olivia. In a Bahamian newspaper article, a man riding the Jitney reflects upon hearing a young girl from S.C. McPherson Junior High School (he knows her school because of her uniform) tell another student, "I don't want you to sit next to me with your Haitian self."¹⁴⁸ Clement Johnson, the author of the article, tells the young girl that her statement was rude and impolite, to which the young girl replies, "Whatever." Johnson discusses his internal battle with this situation writing, "The question we need to ask ourselves today is what would we do if an unclean spirit wandered in here next to us? Let's say a person plagued by a mental illness comes in and sits down near us, what would we do?"¹⁴⁹ The fact that Johnson likens this situation to a person with a mental illness sitting down next to a Bahamian further illustrates the notion that Haitians are indeed perceived to be a social ill, a disease, a problem in society. This young lady's statement on the bus, as well as that of Olivia's peer, reflect more than a stigma associated with being Haitian but also indicate a level of fear and contempt for Haitians as a group.

¹⁴⁸ Johnson, "I Don't Want You to Sit Next to Me With Your Haitian Self," *The Tribune*. February 9, 2005.

¹⁴⁹ Johnson, "I Don't Want You to Sit Next to Me With Your Haitian Self."

Interviewees shared that Bahamian children were particularly harsh in their teasing of Haitian schoolmates. Bahamian children would say, “Oh, you’re a Haitian!” “Did you come over on a boat?” “Go back to your country,” “Carry your Haitian self,” “Carry your Haitian ass outta here,” and “Carry your Haitian ugly ass,” among other phrases. Yvonne recalls not only being told to “carry ya Haitian self” but also remembers hearing, “Whateva with ya Haitian-selves, you look like a Haitian, and you smell like a Haitian.” Wilma, Sherry, and Tiffany remarked hearing Bahamian peers say comments like, “Kouri, kouri bus l’ap vini” which means “run, run, the bus is coming” in Haitian Creole or other comments about immigration officials coming to get them. This comment is worth examining on a number of levels. First, although Bahamian students would say this in English, they also say it in Haitian Creole. In a country hostile to Haitians and the use of Haitian Creole, it is noteworthy these students knew this particular phrase. A part of the xenophobia towards Haitians is a resistance to and hatred of Haitian Creole. Bahamian children were not repeating popular Haitian Creole words or terms such as “sak pase” or “ki jan ou ye?” but knew a very specific phrase that was used to taunt their peers about their supposed illegality.¹⁵⁰ Second, the bus being referred to is the bus used by the Department of Immigration to “catch” Haitians in an attempt to deport them back to Haiti and handle the country’s immigration “problem.” And so, this taunting catch phrase suggests that the Haitian students are undocumented and do not belong in the Bahamas. Finally, these respondents reported hearing “kouri, kouri bus l’ap vini” as early as primary school, which demonstrates the depth of anti-Haitian sentiment as a part of the national fabric of the Bahamas. Bahamian children are learning at a young age that there is something wrong with being Haitian as well as the idea that Haitians did not belong within *their* country. They, Haitian children, are perceived as foreigners despite

¹⁵⁰ “Sak pase” means what’s up? What’s happening? And “ki jan ou ye?” means how are you?

being born in the Bahamas, and this idea is learned as early as primary school by both Bahamian and Haitian children.

Although many of the participants describe experiencing prejudice, teasing, and discrimination because of being Haitian, there are participants who did not experience that hostility. When asked about her school experiences, Crystal replies, “School was fine. In terms of being exposed or experiencing some of the negative things, the experience with being Haitian in the schools in the Bahamas, I can’t say that I experienced a lot of it.” However, Crystal’s experience may differ from the general experiences of the sample because she has a Bahamian last name. Crystal’s father is Bahamian and her mother is Haitian. Because of her last name, people do not “know” or cannot “tell” she is Haitian. This is something Crystal admits may have helped shape her experiences as a child as well as an adult living in the Bahamas. Even though her peers (Bahamian and Haitian) often did not know she was Haitian, Crystal was not immune from the reality of what it meant to be Haitian in the Bahamas. Reflecting on how she identified as a child, Crystal replied, “I think in a way I was, like my brother and I, we were kind of glad or proud that we had the...Bahamian last name. Right. Because, again, we weren’t really looked upon as the lower Haitians.” Crystal describes never having experienced the feeling of not wanting to go to school due to the fear of being teased because, as she put it, “We could hide it. You understand. So unless we tell you, you wouldn’t know that we were Haitian.”

This idea of someone “knowing” you are Haitian was raised throughout the interviews in regards to different areas of life. However, as it relates to school, Bahamian students “not knowing” if someone is Haitian often impacts participants’ school experiences because they do not have to face ridicule because of their Haitian heritage. For example, Jessica says, “In terms of school, no one really saw me as an outcast kind of thing. I guess for me, it was easy because I

blended in. So I never got, I never got picked on. I didn't look or I didn't sound different, it was easy to blend in." The notion of "knowing" if someone is Haitian is based on stereotypical perceptions of Haitians that often go beyond recognition of the last name as Francophone or Haitian in origin. "Knowing" if someone is Haitian is often associated with ideas of what Haitians generally look like physically. According to Michael Craton (1995), "Many Bahamians claimed that they could identify a Haitian simply on physical appearance, an exaggeration based on the facts that many Haitians were of a smaller stature, poorly dressed and, of necessity, pedestrians."¹⁵¹ Yvonne discusses this stereotype in response to a question about what it means to look like you're Haitian. Yvonne states, "like in school, like the children if they see you looking...if you're not well dressed...if you're just dirty, then they'll be like, 'Oh you look like a Haitian'...I'm guessing they are tying that in with that because I know that a lot of Haitians when they come into this country they do a lot of gardening and therefore they do get dirty and stuff...." Yvonne's response reinforces ideas of the relationship between class and the Haitian community. However, physical appearance is not just about perceptions of style, wealth, or cleanliness, it is also about perceptions of beauty, which are related to skin color. Yvonne went on to say:

And one of my friends, she's pretty and then some people would be like, "Oh my God, she's so pretty, how is she a Haitian? Like, she's too pretty to be a Haitian".... If they see a bright [lighter-skinned] Haitian, they be like, they question if that person is really a Haitian because they don't really see Haitians as being bright. In my opinion, I think they just see Haitians as being dark, ugly, and dirty. That's how I feel most Bahamians look at Haitians.

Yvonne's response demonstrates the various stereotypes associated with Haitians. According to these stereotypes, Haitians are dark, unattractive, dirty, poorly dressed, and

¹⁵¹ Craton, "The Bahamian Self and the Haitian Other," 277-278.

ideas of class. Again, her response represents the different stigmas associated with being Haitian in the Bahamas.

Twelve interviewees noted that their teachers could be just as cruel and openly expressive in their contempt for Haitians, often using some of the same slurs as their Bahamian peers. It is not uncommon for teachers to discriminate or display negative attitudes towards immigrant students or children considered to be undesirable.¹⁵² In fact, resistance to the incorporation of foreign children occurs in many countries, whether through the government, administration, or individual teachers.¹⁵³ In describing his general experiences in school, 23-year-old Alex recounts, “My experiences in school, they were awesome. I would say, they were awesome. But at the same time you got some of the teachers as well being rude. Some of them saying they don’t like Haitians. ‘Get your Haitian self out of my class.’ Yep. I witnessed that.” Although the teacher’s comment was not directed to him, when I asked Alex how it made him feel, Alex responded, “That made me feel very bad, I’d say. You know. It kind of hurt me because that teacher used to love when, she used to love when I came to class.... And next thing you know, I just got to witness her saying that. And that right there made me feel like wow. I didn’t even know what to say from there.” And so, although Alex is not the student to whom the teacher is speaking, he does not separate himself from his teacher’s offensive remarks even though he had a great relationship with that teacher.

Similarly, Jessica believes that Bahamian students and teachers express feelings of dislike and prejudice toward Haitians. Recalling a specific experience in junior high school, Jessica says

¹⁵² Marcelo M. Suarez-Orozco, “Immigrant Adaptation to Schooling: A Hispanic Case,” in *Minority Status and Schooling: A Comparative Study of Immigrant and Involuntary Minorities*. Edited by Margaret A. Gibson and John U. Ogbu, (Garland Publishing, Inc: New York, 1991) 43-44.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 43-44; Christine Inglis and Lenore Manderson. “Turkish Immigrants in Australia,” in *Minority Status and Schooling: A Comparative Study of Immigrant and Involuntary Minorities*. Edited by Margaret A. Gibson and John U. Ogbu, (Garland Publishing, Inc: New York, 1991) 99.

“I had a teacher.... She decided to have an open discussion about me in the class.... She was like, in front of the entire class, if I’m a Haitian. I’m like yes. ‘Oh if your mother and father is Haitian, then why do you guys come here in the first place?’” This occurred in front of the entire class and left Jessica feeling as if she was different, as if she did not belong. Another respondent, David, says “Some of them had that discrimination in them but they’ll try to hide it.” Even though teachers may hide their feelings regarding Haitians, David believed that even as a child you could often feel that certain teachers resented them. David went on to say, “Sometimes they’ll look at it as we probably being a burden in the class because you know of all the things that probably be on the newspaper or the Haitian students taking up the class and this and that.” In response to an example of how he felt teachers demonstrated resentment toward students of Haitian descent, David says, “The teacher would just pay more attention to the other student. Or sometimes they would just ignore you. As a child being sensitive, you notice those little hints. Those little clues. Sometimes you withdraw. You just distance yourself. Or you just sit in a corner and look at another student’s book, try to see what you can learn or ask him what he knows.” David’s response reinforces the argument that school functions as an institution where Haitian children are exposed to anti-Haitian sentiment at an early age. This is especially true for children like David who grew up in a Haitian village or a neighborhood of predominately Haitian residents.

Examples of the feelings of resentment and burden expressed by David can be seen in the media. In a section of *The Tribune* called “Why You Vex?” a Bahamian public school teacher despises the idea of Bahamian teachers learning Haitian Creole in order to accommodate and help Haitian children who are not proficient in English. In her confusion and frustration, the Bahamian teacher exclaims, “I vex with this trend I see they have where Bahamians are bending

to accommodate all these illegal immigrants in this town. Now they have us teachers learning Creole so we can teach them English. What happen to teaching us Spanish or French?...Well I could tell them one thing, I won't learn it."¹⁵⁴ The school teacher goes on to say that the reason the Bahamas has to build new schools annually is a result of this immigration. The teacher's refusal to learn Creole reflects this last sentiment when she asked, "Why do we have to build new schools every year? Who fillin them up so much? It ain't Bahamian children, I can tell you that for sure."¹⁵⁵ This opinion piece addresses the fear of a growing Haitian population as well as the perceived loss of Bahamian culture and way of life at the expense of Haitian immigrants. Additionally, it addresses a privilege and hierarchy in the value of languages as the Bahamian public school teacher is not opposed to learning and teaching European languages but does not see the value of learning Haitian Creole in order to help Haitian children become more proficient in English, excel in school, and become functioning members of Bahamian society.

Still, at least three participants report that they did not experience discrimination and differential treatment by their teachers. Migrating to the Bahamas at the age of nine, Pierre-Elie spoke little English and had to learn to read, write, and speak proper English. Throughout this undoubtedly tough experience trying to adapt to a new environment, Pierre-Elie says that all his teachers were good teachers who invested in his learning by disciplining him, staying after school to help improve his English, and providing guidance. Interestingly, Pierre-Elie says that most of his teachers were actually foreigners. He had a Spanish teacher, a Jamaican math teacher, and a Trinidadian physics teacher. "So," he says, "the teachers couldn't give you no hard time because most of them are not literally Bahamian." Tony corroborates this, saying, "Most of

¹⁵⁴ Paul G. Turnquest, "I Tell You One Thing...I Ain't Learning Creole!" in the "Why You Vex?" section of *The Tribune*, Saturday, February 26, 2005, 5.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 5.

the teachers were foreign teachers. Like, they just come over here to teach. So, they never used to treat me different from the other children. They treat me, like, the same.” Since, as discussed above, the primary issue associated with Haitian immigration is one of xenophobia and nationalism due to Bahamian fear of being overtaken and out-populated and in effect losing their culture, it makes sense that immigrant teachers would not partake in anti-Haitian behaviors.¹⁵⁶ However, this was not always the case. In fact, Marjorie discusses a negative experience with a teacher of Jamaican heritage while in the third grade. While in class, Marjorie became confused about a classroom assignment and expressed her confusion to her teacher, to which the teacher responded, “Y’all Haitian children! Y’all come here to take over and y’all don’t never want to learn!” Marjorie was not only confused about her teacher’s behavior toward a student asking for academic help but also at her teacher’s remarks about Haitians because, as Marjorie pointed out, “She herself wasn’t, was a foreigner. She was of Jamaican background.” In an attempt to make sense of a non-Bahamian making anti-Haitian statements, Marjorie states “I don’t know if because she felt as if...I think she was married to a Bahamian at that time. And her last name was considered to be a Bahamian last name, so she used that to make me feel as if being a Haitian was, ummm, meant that I was nothing.” The teacher’s stance may suggest that anti-Haitian sentiment is so firmly embedded in the national fabric of the Bahamas, which views Haitians as a threat to the Bahamian way of life and thus to the Bahamian nation, that even other migrants to the Bahamas have internalized this xenophobic way of thinking. This teacher may have articulated these ideas because she may see herself as a Bahamian through marriage and/or possibly previously held negative feelings about Haitians stemming from her Jamaican background.

¹⁵⁶ Tinker, *The Migration of Peoples*, 2011; McCollin, “Resistance and the Impact of Caribbean Immigration,” 2002.

“You can’t speak Creole in here. English only.”

Being Haitian, stigma, and discrimination in public spaces

Twenty interviewees expressed feeling or experiencing discrimination and stigma in public spaces. The remaining eight did not speak specifically to public stigma in their interviews, and so this does not suggest that they have never experienced or witnessed stigma surrounding Haitianness in the Bahamas. This included negative reactions from Bahamians due to Creole being spoken in public, discriminatory and prejudicial treatment due to their surname, and being stopped by immigration officers. Wilma discussed her sister’s experience in the waiting room at the hospital when she was going into labor.

She told me the story and umm it was her and two other girls. They were Bahamians of course because they could hear another lady, a Haitian lady, going into labor. She was pushing out her baby and like they was talking about her like, “Oh she can’t even speak English” because she was speaking in Creole. Like, she was saying, “God help me” in Creole and stuff like that. And she was, and the two other girls that was there in the waiting room with my sister was like, “Oh she can’t even speak English.” This and that. That and this. And then my sister didn’t say anything though. She just sat there and listened to their conversation. So the nurse came. The nurse helped the two young ladies with their bags. But my sister had to pull her own bag. So, and every time she tell me that story, like tears just come to her eyes. So like I can feel, I feel what she felt. It’s, it’s, it’s so, it’s so wrong.

Wilma suggests her sister had to pull her own bag because she was identified as Haitian which may have been indicated by her last name. According to Fielding et al. (2008), “Surnames can be an indicator of ethnicity and used to label and discriminate.”¹⁵⁷ Fielding et al. go on to say that sometimes the discrimination and stigma is so intense that some Haitians may change their name just to avoid the hostility that may accompany disclosure of one’s ethnicity. Although none of my interviewees admit that they changed or lied about their names, they have expressed

¹⁵⁷ Fielding et al., “The Stigma of Being ‘Haitian’ in the Bahamas,” 47.

hesitancy in telling people their names because of the reaction they may receive from Bahamian nationals.

Marjorie tells a similar story about discrimination experienced by Haitians at the public hospital. “When they would call your name, like, say for example the nurse would call your name to come in the doctor’s office. She would say it funny and then look, the way she looked would just give it away. And then sometimes, sometimes they don’t just look at you. They look at you and they say negative things. They would say, ummm, ‘These Haitians filling up the hospitals,’ and all sorts of stuff or whatever.” The discrimination and stigma discussed by Marjorie and Wilma reflect xenophobia and notions that Haitians are taking over the Bahamas. According to Fielding et al. (2008), the high levels of poverty in the Haitian community in the Bahamas means they are more likely than Bahamians to utilize government hospitals, “which has encouraged the public perception that the Haitian population is taking over and make use of facilities designed for Bahamians.”¹⁵⁸ This means that Bahamians view the Haitian community as overpopulated as well as comprised of foreigners (whether born in the Bahamas or not) taking advantage of public resources designed for the privilege and use of Bahamian citizens.

Verbal encounters and assaults from Bahamians in public spaces appear most frequently in the interviewees as a response to Haitians speaking Creole in public. For example, Wilma conveys a story about an experience at the Department of Immigration where two women are speaking Creole to each other. According to Wilma, “the immigration officer came over and was like, ‘Oh you can’t speak in Creole here. English only.’” Even further, interviewees report, Bahamians will tell you to speak English even if you are not in conversation with them. Alex exclaims that many Bahamians get angry when Haitians speak Creole. “They get mad,” he says,

¹⁵⁸ Fielding et al., “The Stigma of Being ‘Haitian’ in the Bahamas,” 47.

“and then they spin around and they be like, ‘Umm excuse me sir. Excuse me ma’am. It’s very rude that you’re speaking this language around me and I do not understand.’” Denise also says when she speaks Creole in public, she often gets a negative reaction from Bahamians. According to Denise, they give “an ugly look. Or tell you to speak English if they don’t understand you.” Finally, Pierre-Elie remembers an experience at the bank. While speaking to a woman in line, his phone rang. He answered the phone and started to speak Creole. He described the woman’s reaction as “Whoa!” The woman reacted in shock.

According to Wilma, the fear of public confrontation results in her refusal to speak Creole in public. Wilma describes a time at work when a fellow employee asked her in Creole where the ladies restroom was located. The fellow employee asked Wilma this in front of a Bahamian immigration officer who also works at the airport. Wilma expresses, “I didn’t answer. I looked at her dead in her eye, and I didn’t say a word to her. So she just walked off. Two to one... I wanted her to think that I didn’t speak Creole. That was my reason for not answering her. But I didn’t say a word to her. And she just turned around, and she left. The immigration officer looked at me, and I looked at him, and I just turned around and left.” Wilma did not want to speak Creole because of her overall fear of Bahamians’ perceptions and reactions, and in this case, the reaction of the Bahamian immigration officer who is standing nearby during the encounter with the fellow employee. Wilma’s fear is rooted her belief that things are increasingly becoming worse for people of Haitian descent in the Bahamas. Wilma laments, “It’s getting so bad. I don’t even know how to deal with it anymore.” Although Wilma asserts that she does not know how to deal with increasing difficulties for Haitian people, she is in fact dealing with it by not dealing with it. In this particular example, declining to speak Creole in public is not simply avoidance but may also reveal Wilma’s desire to protect her mental, emotional, and spiritual

well-being. Wilma resides in a society that is hostile to Haitians, and so she is navigating these boundaries by making a personal and political decision to not speak Creole in public.

The reactions by Bahamians to Haitians speaking Creole reflect ideas of nationalism and cultural preservation. According to Michael Craton (1995), in the Bahamas a Haitian person is perceived as an “invasive alien, as imaginary raptor, and as necessary exploitee. Invading aliens are a threat to our integrity because they threaten the familiar with radical change: they are not what we are, and they are what we are not.”¹⁵⁹ Craton goes on to state the obvious difference between British and French colonial history and influence, finally arguing that “all of these features either clash with Bahamians’ idealized view of themselves, their history and culture, or uncomfortably remind them of aspects of themselves (particularly their African heritage) which they deny, diminish, disparage or reject.”¹⁶⁰ And so, Haitians are perceived as a threat to the cultural and national sovereignty of the Bahamas, and this is clearly exhibited through the often-hostile reactions to Haitians speaking Creole.

This hostility toward Haitians and fear of their “taking over” is also evidenced in popular media. In the 2005 newspaper article “Creole ‘will be the dominant language within ten years,’” the author discusses the continued undocumented immigration of Haitian nationals into the country and how, “with an estimated 300 Haitians per week trying to enter the country, total submersion of Bahamian culture is not far off.”¹⁶¹ The author went on to say, “Within a decade, the Bahamas could be overrun, with people of Haitian origin installed at every level of business and government,” likening the undocumented immigration of Haitian nationals into the Bahamas to the Latino population of Southern Florida and the prevalence of Spanish over English.¹⁶² The

¹⁵⁹ Craton, “The Bahamian Self,” 1995, 284.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 284.

¹⁶¹ “Creole ‘will be the dominant language,’” *The Tribune*. November 10, 2005, 9.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 9.

claims made in this paper were unfounded, based on biased fears, and did not come to fruition as in 2000 Haitians only represented 7.1 percent of the population and by 2010 only 11.5 percent of the population.¹⁶³

In the 2005 newspaper article “Bahamians of Haitian Descent ‘will make up swing vote in 10-15 years,’” Haitian lawyer Elizier Regnier states that in the coming years children of Haitian descent will make up the swing vote in elections, not in an attempt to create hysteria, but just to acknowledge the growing political importance of Haitians in the Bahamas.¹⁶⁴ Although Regnier may not have intended his analysis to be taken this way, it indeed adds fuel to the fire of the idea that Haitians are “taking over” the Bahamas.

The notion of Haitians “taking over” is not just rhetoric but lived experience for Haitians in the Bahamas through interactions with Bahamian immigration officers and police officers. Five interviewees, all men, discuss being stopped by immigration officers or police officers. For example, Antoine discloses an experience on the Jitney (public bus) where he is asked for proof of his identity. Because of his status, Antoine does not have proper identification but what is more important is that he gives the immigration officer a fake name. He does this despite being born in the Bahamas. Antoine reveals:

And there’s a point in time when they actually stopped me on the bus. And they asked for I.D., and I gave them a false name. Because I have a funny last name, and I know if I say it they would carry me.... They start asking everybody’s name and everybody’s I.D. They stopped me. I said I don’t have an I.D. on me. So they said get off the bus. Me and two other folks. So they was like, ‘Uh, what’s your name?’ And I was like, I held it. I started to stutter. I just gave them a false name. I said Antoine Johnson. They say “Do you have an I.D.? I was like ‘No, I don’t have an I.D.’ So they asked me where am I going? And I said I’m going to work. And they asked me where I work and who’s my boss.... They went to check my

¹⁶³ McCartney, “The Rise of the Haitian Population,” June 17, 2013.

¹⁶⁴ Karin Herig “Bahamians of Haitian Descent ‘will make up swing vote in 10-15 years.’” *The Tribune*. October 11, 2005, 1&10.

name in the system. And come to find out it was a good thing that the name I gave them was a clean name. So I was good. I was straight....And they just let me left.

Although born in the Bahamas, Antoine fears being deported to Haiti, a country he has never been to and knows little about. Antoine has a “funny last name” which would surely reveal that he is Haitian but not necessarily undocumented. Additionally, by Antoine noting that he has a “funny last name” he understands that it is not a traditional Bahamian last name and that the immigration officer would assume he is not Bahamian and possibly does not belong. Antoine also reveals that he believes this bus was stopped because it goes through Carmichael, an area known for heavy Haitian residency. Although everyone on the bus is asked for identification, it is important to understand that Antoine believes this bus is stopped because it is assumed that a lot of Haitians may be riding the bus on their way to work. According to Antoine, this bus was targeted by immigration officers. Because of this, Antoine exclaims “And from then, whenever I hear immigration is hot on the road...I’m calling my boss. And I said I’ll be coming in late. I know there’s a certain time immigration go like around one o’clock. They just carry everybody straight to immigration in Carmichael.”

Eric also discusses the issue of one’s last name, assumed illegality, and discrimination by immigration officers. According to Eric, “You would see immigration officers walk up to you and say ‘What’s your last name?’ You say, ‘Pierre.’ They don’t care to check if you have proper documents or not. ‘On the bus. Let’s go.’ So you live in fear, you live in fear of being persecuted because of your last name.” Eric went on to say, “Because of your last name you have to walk around with your passport, walk around with some type of I.D., some kind of document so you don’t get deported by mistake because they don’t care.” Eric and Antoine’s statements suggest the anxiety and fear many Haitians feel just by walking down the street. This anxiety and fear is heightened during periods of immigration raids or when seeing immigration officers walk down

the street. Additionally, the surname acts as an indicator for ethnicity and nationality, which then leads Bahamian immigration officers to detain Haitians. A lot of times, this takes place in public spaces.

Furthermore, Antoine and Eric's story reveal how Haitians, both those who are undocumented Haitian nationals and those who were born and raised in the Bahamas but lack citizenship, live in a climate of fear. This experience left Antoine with feelings of embarrassment, shame, and fear. Jean also discusses this experience with immigration and living in fear. According to Jean, his friends have been picked up by immigration for "Just being of Haitian descent. Because you don't have no documents or you can't show that you're a citizen of the Bahamas basically. Or residency here." When asked whether he grew up living in fear, Jean responded, "Yeah. Of course you live with a fear of that, you know. It's always in the back of your mind. Sometimes you see immigration, they wear green. Every time you see green you feel like they're going to get me or whatever, you know." The fear of being picked up by immigration begins in childhood. For example, three respondents, Liza, Tony, and Denise, were all born in the Bahamas but spent a portion of their lives in Haiti because their mothers were deported. This fear continues into adulthood even when it can be proved their status is authorized.

Nadia also addresses this fear of being caught by immigration despite being born and raised in the Bahamas. Nadia says "I was frightened because I didn't have my documents on me.... And I was going to work, then I started talking to my friend. And she was like 'Do you have your documents on you?' And I was like 'Why would I carry my documents on me?'" Speaking specifically to November 1, 2014 when the Bahamas released their new immigration

policy, Nadia expresses "...everywhere I looked over my shoulder, like, I really don't want to go to the detention center where someone has to come and bring my documents."

"We have goals. We want to educate ourselves. We want to be successful."

Difficult Starts and Deferred Dreams in Early Stages of Adulthood

Although citizenship, the problems associated with citizenship, and the process of acquiring citizenship will be discussed more in depth in the succeeding chapter, citizenship or the lack thereof greatly impacts the early stages of adult life for people of Haitian descent who are not citizens of the Bahamas. Many of the respondents reveal that after graduating from high school, the lack of citizenship prevented them from or made it extremely difficult for them to find employment and attend college. Although four respondents had graduated from college (one with an associate's degree, two with bachelor's degrees, and one with a master's degree) and five were currently enrolled in college, eighteen informants discussed challenges associated with continuing their post-secondary education. In terms of employment, nineteen report difficulties associated with seeking employment. Additionally, there are other challenges, such as opening a bank account or acquiring a driver's license, that impede their ability to jumpstart their adult lives. Nevertheless, difficulty finding employment and attending college were the two most common themes that occurred throughout the interviews. These issues point to the structural discrimination that characterizes the stigmatization of children of Haitian descent in the Bahamas. According to Fielding et al., "The granting of Bahamian citizenship exemplifies structural discrimination against children born to non-Bahamian parents.... A passport is commonly used as an identification document in the Bahamas; without it, one cannot open a bank account, travel abroad or fully participate in the activities of mainstream society. 'Stateless'

children may be treated as foreigners and charged higher rates than Bahamians for the same services, for example tuition fees at the local college.”¹⁶⁵

In response to a question concerning the events of a typical day in their life, respondents who were not enrolled in school or gainfully employed demonstrated that there is a lack of structure and productivity. This lack of structure and productivity is directly related to the impediments due to the lack of citizenship after graduating high school. For example, although 18-year-old Rose is trying to seek employment at a new resort, she says, “Because I am still waiting for the job, I don’t really do anything. I’m usually just home or reading or at church.” Because you need a passport in order to work, Rose says finding work without a passport can be extremely difficult. Although she does not have a Bahamian passport, somehow she was able to secure a position at the resort. At the time of the interview, she was waiting for the resort to open, but it kept getting delayed. And so, unless she is able to find another job in a labor market where you need a Bahamian passport or a work permit in order to gain employment, Rose may possibly continue to spend her days at home, reading, or at church instead of enrolling in college and finding gainful employment.

Tony has a similar experience, stating that on an average day during the week, he can be found at home or hanging out with his friends. Tony says, “If I ain’t home, you can find me with one of them [referring to his friends who sat nearby]. Like, just sitting around, cracking jokes, watching movies or what not. That’s it.” Tony provides a great example of deferred dreams. Although he dreams about being employed as a servant for the Bahamas, Tony had to quit his job due to his lack of proper documentation. His goal is to join the Royal Bahamas Defense Force (RBDF), which only admits individuals up to the age of 25. Although Tony applied for

¹⁶⁵ Fielding et al., “The Stigma of Being ‘Haitian’ in the Bahamas,” 47.

Bahamian citizenship at the age of 18, he is still waiting for the process to be completed three years later. Now age 21, Tony solemnly shares, “If I reach 25 years old and I still ain’t get the passport that means I can’t get in. I’m just praying to God that I can reach 25 so I can try to get it. I already have the forms filled out to try to get in and everything. But without the passport, ain’t nothing happening.” The unpredictability of the citizenship process is impacting Tony’s career decisions and life goals. Tony has no desire to go to college; his desire was to join the defense force. The lack of Bahamian citizenship and passport delays not only his overall career goals but also his ability to get a job while he moves toward his larger goals.

Rose and Tony are not alone in this experience. Responding to the same question about a typical day in her life, Denise simply states “Wake up. Sleep. Cook. Go out. Try to find a job. And back home and sleep.” Although Denise has applied for citizenship, she has been waiting four years with no luck. In expressing her frustration, Denise stresses “I can’t get a driver’s license, and I can’t get a permit. I can’t get a good job. I basically find like bartender’s job and something would always end up happening. But...that’s Nassau.” Denise describes her last job at a restaurant as a good job but says because of her lack of proper documents, they are going to fire her. She also talks about the difficulty in cashing her checks because of her lack of identification. The only way she is able to secure her job and cash her checks is due to the sympathy expressed by her manager, who is not only Bahamian but also her partner.

Like Rose, two other interviewees—Peter and Wilma—expressed the difficulty in trying to obtain a driver’s permit or a bank account. Peter explains how he often feels discriminated against because of his last name and thinks that this impedes his ability to get a driver’s permit. When he went to get a driver’s permit, he witnessed a young man whom he perceived to be Bahamian in front of him get his permit with no difficulty. Peter says when he reached the

window, the woman asked for his last name. After hearing his last name, the woman asked if he had a passport, to which he replied that he did not. She proceeded to tell him he had to come for an interview in order to get a driver's permit. Peter was frustrated about this process and asserted that it was because of his last name that he received difficulty versus the young man in front of him who was able to get his permit that same day.

Wilma recalls a similar experience. Although she does not fully explain, Wilma bought a driver's license and was able to get her first bank account opened without Bahamian citizenship because she supplied a letter from the Department of Immigration that stated that her paperwork for citizenship was in process. Wilma wanted to open another bank account and called the bank to see about the process. She was told over the phone that she could open a bank account with just her driver's license. She then explains, "When I went to the bank, and I gave them my driver's license, two to one, she saw my last name, and she was like, 'No, sorry sweetie. We don't do it with driver's license alone. You have to bring either a voter's card or a citizenship.'" Even though Wilma explained she had called and asked if a driver's license was enough, she was denied the opportunity to open an account. Wilma attributes this refusal to her last name and the idea that her surname indicates that she is Haitian, which suggests she is foreign (i.e. not from the Bahamas) and perhaps undocumented. Again, surnames are used as a way to discriminate against Haitians because they function as an indicator of one's ethnicity.

In the aforementioned newspaper article "Bahamians of Haitian descent 'will make up swing vote in 10-15 years,'" Haitian lawyer Elizier Regnier stated that "Haitian' today is a cuss word, it is used to humiliate people." Addressing the desire by some to "hide" their ethnicity, Regnier stated "I do not fault them, being called a Haitian carries very negative connotations in Bahamian society.... It's about self-preservation, I can understand that. In this climate it has

negative implications on your career if you say you're Haitian.”¹⁶⁶ Regnier's comments are not only addressing the stigma associated with being Haitian but also the structural implications of being Haitian as it has the possibility to impact access to opportunities and resources. As shown above, access to opportunities and resources such as a driver's permit, opening a bank account, and employment can be challenging when your surname is associated with being Haitian.

The lack of opportunities can greatly impede individual development and future success. For example, David describes his road to citizenship as a rollercoaster ride. He was frustrated not only by the process itself but also the time wasted due to not being able to have access to opportunities readily available to their Bahamian peers. David confesses:

You don't play with people's lives. They [people of Haitian descent] want the same thing that what somebody would call a regular Bahamian wants, you know. We have goals. We want to educate ourselves. You know. We want to be successful. ...I watch a lot of young individuals, you know, they just give up on that. You know. They just, they just adopt the mentality, "Oh I'll just live from day to day." ...I work two jobs trying to hold onto a dream. Still trying to make the best that could happen. In reality, come on, from 18, how much people going to hold onto the aspirations, to the dream? Going to be that focused? Because when you have all those challenges, trust me, you're going to defer sometimes. And pray to God you don't make some dumb mistakes sometimes, you know. Because you have a lot of females, all them challenges, sometimes they end up having kids young you know.... And then you get some of the young men, they get stressed out, messing around and want some company. A lot of their goals and dreams sometimes go to waste.

David asserts that the lack of citizenship leads to difficulties securing employment and attending college, which greatly impedes and sometimes stifles the goals of young adults of Haitian descent. "Regular" Bahamians, i.e. those who are born with Bahamian citizenship, have Anglophone last names, and have generational lineage in the Bahamas, do not have to engage these same battles. Fresh out of high school, many Haitians have difficulty going to school and finding employment because of their lack of citizenship. Unlike primary and secondary school,

¹⁶⁶ Hering, "Bahamians of Haitian Descent," 10.

where a minor cannot be refused enrollment based on status, those regulations do not apply at the college level. Those without status are not barred from attending university but must pay international fees instead of national fees, making school more difficult to afford. Similar to Haitians without status in the United States and other areas of the diaspora, “this leaves many bright young Haitian youngsters without hope or prospects for the future.”¹⁶⁷ As will be discussed in detail in the next chapter, the citizenship process is generally unpredictable with no reliable timeline for knowing when one will receive citizenship and a passport. The lack of citizenship and lack of opportunities not only hurts the development of individuals of Haitian descent, but also the development of the Bahamas as a nation.

In her interview, Yvonne expresses the challenge of trying to attend college due to her lack of citizenship. A student at the College of the Bahamas, Yvonne moved to Nassau from Eleuthera to attend college.¹⁶⁸ Even though Yvonne graduated from high school with honors, she was unable to receive a scholarship from the Ministry of Education because she does not have a Bahamian passport. Yvonne discloses, “It wasn’t that I wasn’t smart enough to get it but because of who I am and not having citizenship in the country, they rejected me. And that’s where it impacted me because I had to worry about getting money to go to school.” She expressed that it has been hard for her because her mother has had to help her find ways to pay her school fees as well as using the earnings from her own job to help finance her education. In fact, Yvonne unveils that most of her challenges as a young adult of Haitian descent are connected to trying to pay for college.

¹⁶⁷ Sandra L. Woods and Adolph A. Thompson. “Haitian Immigrants in South Florida: Economic, Social and Cultural Issues and Problems,” in *Perspectives in Immigrant and Minority Education*. Edited by Ronald J. Samuda and Sandra L. Woods, (Texas: University Press of America), 1983, 109.

¹⁶⁸ Eleuthera is one of the islands of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas.

Once graduating high school, many children of Haitian descent born and raised in the Bahamas have difficulty jumpstarting their adult life. This is particularly true due to the lack of citizenship and passport for many second-generation Haitians. The lack of citizenship and a passport increases the difficulty of attending college as well as obtaining employment. Other areas important to life success, such as securing a driver's permit and a bank account, are also areas in which Bahamians of Haitian descent are met with challenges. Many second-generation Haitians have goals, but it is difficult for many to accomplish their goals when there are institutional barriers preventing them from moving forward.

“I'm Proud of Being Haitian.”

Haitian Pride as an Act of Resistance and Valued Symbol of Identity

It is important to acknowledge that although the Haitian community faces discrimination, overt hostility, xenophobia, and stigma, there is a great amount of courage and agency displayed by people of Haitian descent born and/or raised in the Bahamas. Certain behaviors exhibited by Haitians exemplify their tenacity in a society that is particularly hostile to their presence. These behaviors are seemingly connected to their identity or association with Haiti and/or being Haitian. In “Small Acts of Living,” Allan Wade states that “any mental or behavioral act through which a person attempts to expose, withstand, repel, stop, prevent, abstain from, strive against, impede, refuse to comply with, or oppose any form of violence or oppression (including any type of disrespect), or the conditions that make such acts possible, may be understood as a form of resistance.”¹⁶⁹ As has already been shown, many interviewees suffered teasing, discrimination, and stigma because of their Haitian heritage. This resulted in some being embarrassed about being Haitian as children and hiding this background when possible. However, as respondents

¹⁶⁹ Allan Wade “Small Acts of Living: Everyday Resistance to Violence and Other Forms of Oppression,” *Contemporary Family Therapy* Vol. 19, Issue 1 (1997) 25.

grew older, most seemed to embrace their Haitian heritage and expressed pride in who they are, who their parents are, and where their parents come from.

Ten respondents use the language of being “proud” to be Haitian or that they “love” being Haitian in their interview responses. This was not a standard question asked during the interviews but rather sentiments expressed in their responses. At least thirteen other respondents demonstrate in their answers that they also value being Haitian either through their discussion of food, music, or being bilingual. In response to the question “So it’s safe to say that you’re proud to be Haitian?” Yvonne relates, “I am proud and scared at the same time. Because I am proud of who my parents are and who I am. And then sometimes it scares me to say that I’m a Haitian because I’m afraid of the way people will treat me after I say that.... And I know I will feel the courage to not be afraid to say that anymore. But yeah, I am proud of who I am.” Although Yvonne expresses hesitancy and anxiety in telling certain people she is Haitian because of their possible reaction to her, at the end of the day, she is very proud to be Haitian. Her courage and pride appears to grow stronger as the older she gets, the more obstacles she is presented with, and the more she is able to overcome those obstacles, many of which are related to the barriers connected with being Haitian and having no citizenship.

Additionally, some stated that their experiences with discrimination at school did not discourage them but actually pushed them to excel. This reality is not atypical from general immigrant experiences. Scholars have noted how immigrants understand they are foreigners in the host society and understand that education plays a key role in upward mobility and inclusion.¹⁷⁰ Although born in the Bahamas, as demonstrated in this chapter, children of Haitian

¹⁷⁰ Ogbu, John U. Ogbu “Immigrant and Involuntary Minorities in Comparative Perspective,” in *Minority Status and Schooling: A Comparative Study of Immigrant and Involuntary Minorities*. Edited by Margaret A. Gibson and John U. Ogbu, (Garland Publishing, Inc: New York, 1991) 11.

descent are still treated as the “other,” and some said that this ostracism motivated them to excel educationally and professionally. In response to being teased at school, Tiffany affirms, “It impacted me in a positive way! Why? Even though I did not understand back then how it would impact today, I believe they were my audience to push harder and strive for excellence.... I would say they were my motivators to propel to soar in my schoolwork and life in general. And this impacts me positively even today with what is going on at the moment.”

Marjorie expresses a similar sentiment concerning the influence her school experiences had on the development of pride and resiliency in being Haitian. Revealing an experience from the third grade where a teacher called her a Haitian in a derogatory manner that equated it with being an animal, Marjorie says, “It just wasn’t a good feeling to be in or whatever. But I somehow learned to look past that and not...let people take advantage of the fact that I’m Haitian. But I respected myself growing knowing that, okay, no matter what background I’m from, I’m somebody. I’m going somewhere. And nobody can stop that.” Marjorie also admits that she fought a lot in primary school and that, if she could do things over, she would not fight because people called her Haitian. Instead, she feels that she should have used it to better herself. She discloses, “I mean, I still did it. I did it leading up to high school, but I wish I just did it more in primary school because I don’t want anyone to feel as if I’m not proud of my background, and I hate being Haitian. I love being Haitian. And even going through that process and growing up and experiencing different things...it really made me value myself more.... I’m proud of being Haitian....”

Although not all interviewees participate in holiday celebrations in general (for example, Junkanoo), at least five respondents celebrate Haitian Flag Day, which is celebrated May 18th in

Haiti as well as throughout the diaspora.¹⁷¹ More respondents may participate in Haitian Flag Day festivities, however this was not something they were asked directly, but rather something several of them raised on their own. Celebrating Flag Day is an important indicator of resistance from oppression because it is a public display of a Haitian presence and Haitian pride in the Bahamas (as well as everywhere it is celebrated in the diaspora). Although Alex has received his Bahamian citizenship, he still celebrates Haitian Flag Day and rarely celebrates Bahamian independence, which is July 10th. The celebration of Haitian Flag Day is important not only because it is an act of pride but also because this display of pride lets others “know” that one is Haitian. Alex reveals, “People see me and be like ‘Oh wow, I didn’t know you were Haitian.’ And I say, ‘Yes I am.’ Because I dress up red, blue, and white. Haitian colors.”

In the 2004 newspaper article “Excited Crowd Enjoys Flag Day Frolics,” Clement Johnson discusses Haitian Flag Day celebrations by the Haitian community, particularly people of Haitian descent born and raised in the Bahamas. At the celebration, there is Haitian music such as Zouk and Kompa, Haitian food for sale such as legumes, plantains, and Akusan as well as cultural dances that reenact important events of the Haitian Revolution. Johnson also notes that people are wearing Haitian colors (red and blue) as well as shirts with the description “100% Haitian and Proud, Bahamian-Haitian and proud of it.”¹⁷² In the article, a member of the Victory Chapel Church of the Nazarene (a Haitian church in Nassau), is quoted as saying, “This generation of Bahamian/Haitians are proud of their heritage, they are no longer staying in the closet. They want to be recognized for who they are, we are not here to drain the Bahamas, we

¹⁷¹ Junkanoo is a celebration dating back to slavery in which enslaved Africans were excused from their labor on Boxing Day (December 26th) and New Year’s Day to celebrate with friends and family. According to Timothy Rommen, during the independence era, Junkanoo became a part of the Bahamian national identity due to “...a growing desire for an articulated and visible postcolonial identity...” (page 74). See Timothy Rommen, “Home Sweet Home: Junkanoo as a National Discourse in the Bahamas”

¹⁷² Clement Johnson, “Excited Crowd Enjoys Flag Day Frolics,” *The Tribune*, May 19, 2004.

are here to make a contribution.”¹⁷³ This matches what interviewees revealed in their interviews. When asked why he attends Haitian Flag Day, Antoine simply says, “Because that’s the other half of me.” In terms of the activities that she partakes in, Nadia reveals that “Majority of the events I go to are Haitian events.... Like, let’s say for instance Haitian Flag Day....” Alex, Antoine, and Nadia are proud of their Haitian heritage and Haitian Flag Day is one of the ways they express this pride.

Finally, I argue that speaking Creole in public despite negative reactions represents an act of resistance, and nine respondents reveal that they do in fact speak Creole in public. In response to what makes her proud to be Haitian, Yvonne explains, “The Haitian people on the whole because like enduring all of this discrimination and prejudice in this country, they’re just standing strong and being who they be and being who they are. They are not afraid to speak Creole when they are in a crowd of Bahamians.” Pierre-Elie describes speaking Creole in public as “bold.” When asked if he felt comfortable speaking Creole in public, Pierre-Elie responds, “I speak Creole in public everywhere I go. If someone comes to me and they speaking in Creole, I respond in Creole. Basically, I think it’s a very beautiful language.” Denise has a similar reaction, relating that she speaks Creole in public “all the time” even though she usually receives negative reactions from Bahamians. Denise not only openly spoke and embraced Creole but also says that she is comfortable telling people she is Haitian and that people can “take it or leave it.”

In a conversation about speaking Creole in public, Alex exclaims, “Yeah! I do it. I do it a lot!” When I asked why, Alex responds, “Because it’s the language I love. And I grew up with it. So I have no need to feel ashamed of it. I’m not ashamed, I’m not ashamed of my language.” Alex states that some Bahamians do not mind Haitians speaking Creole and ask him to teach him

¹⁷³ Ibid.

how to speak Creole. Alex still encounters Bahamians who are hostile to Haitians speaking Creole in their country, but this does not discourage him from speaking Creole in public even though he has received some quite hostile reactions such as being cursed at and people saying, “Why [are you] f’n speaking this language around here?” These reactions come from people he knows as well as strangers. Yet, Alex stated “I just say, ‘You know what? Dude, it’s my language, and I’m going to speak and that nothing’s going to stop me.’”

I argue that we should understand celebrating Haitian Flag Day, speaking Creole, and pride in being Haitian as acts of resistance in a society hostile to Haitian people’s existence, but also “as symbols of identity to be maintained.”¹⁷⁴ In “Immigrant and Involuntary Minorities in Comparative Perspective,” John U. Ogbu proposes the need to establish cultural models of education that are heterogeneous and cater to the needs of specific groups based on the fact that their experiences are historically, culturally, and socially different. Within this argument, Ogbu makes a distinction between immigrant minorities and involuntary minorities. According to Ogbu, “immigrant minorities have generally moved to their present societies because they believed that the move would lead to more economic well-being, better overall opportunities or greater political freedom.”¹⁷⁵ Even though they encounter prejudice and discrimination, immigrant minorities’ expectations in the host society are directly related to their perceived better way of life. Involuntary minorities (whom he also classifies as nonimmigrant minorities) “are people who were brought into their present society through slavery, conquest, or colonization. They usually resent the loss of their former freedom, and they perceive the social, political and economic barriers against them as part of their undeserved oppression.”¹⁷⁶ Of

¹⁷⁴ Ogbu, “Immigrant and Involuntary Minorities,” 15.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 9.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 9.

course, like immigrant minorities, involuntary minorities also experience prejudice and discrimination.

Ogbu's categories of analysis are not firmly defined, as children of Haitian descent can fit into both groups depending on the experience at hand. His definition of immigrant minority would seem to just be discussing their parents or possibly even children who were born in Haiti but moved to the Bahamas, like Pierre-Elie. However, Pierre-Elie's parents made the decision to move, not Pierre-Elie himself. Ogbu's analysis also fails to address which category one fits into when immigrant minorities' descendants are one, two, or three generations removed from the initial migrant. Due to the definition of involuntary migrant, those descendants do not fit neatly within this category. Yet, in places like the United States, scholars have discussed the role of race as a unifying category/identity.¹⁷⁷ It would seem that second-generation Haitians in the Bahamas may possibly fill some kind of intermediary status because they are neither the individual who made the decision to migrate nor were they forcibly brought to the Bahamas. They were born in the Bahamas, and the Bahamas is xenophobic toward Haiti and Haitians. Like immigrant minorities, some of my respondents believe that their opportunities are better in the Bahamas than in Haiti but like involuntary minorities, and as expressed in this chapter, their Haitian heritage and lack of status create social, political, and economic barriers which can be seen as oppressive.

Adults of Haitian descent do not fit neatly into the immigrant minority category as it relates to the interpretation of economic, social, and political barriers because they do not have a "home" to use as a point of reference for comparison. In reality, their point of reference is the Bahamas. Instead, their interpretation of societal barriers fit more neatly into the involuntary

¹⁷⁷ Flore Zéphir, *The Haitian Americans: The New Americans*. (Greenwood Press: Westport, CT, 2004).

minority perspective of “symbols of identity to be maintained.” According to Ogbu, “involuntary minorities do not, unlike [voluntary] immigrants, interpret the language and cultural differences they encounter in school and society as barriers they have to overcome. Rather, they interpret these differences *as symbols of identity to be maintained*. The cultural frame of reference gives the minorities both a sense of collective or social identity and a sense of self-worth.”¹⁷⁸ Ogbu goes on to say that it is after involuntary incorporation that a group begins to develop their shared sense of identity. “This identity is based on their interpretations of subsequent discriminatory treatment including denial of equal treatment and true admission into mainstream.”¹⁷⁹ Celebrating Haitian Flag Day, speaking Creole, and building pride in being Haitian can be seen as both acts of resistance as well as “symbols of identity to be maintained.”

Conclusion

As demonstrated in this chapter, the stigma of being Haitian shapes the experiences of second-generation Haitians from childhood to adulthood. It is virtually inescapable. Children born and raised in the Bahamas to Haitian parents have to deal with ridicule and prejudice throughout their school years. Once they have graduated high school, they face different problems related to being Haitian. Their lack of citizenship, which will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter, creates barriers for enrolling in school and gaining employment. They struggle with opening bank accounts and getting their driver’s licenses. Additionally, the stigma of being Haitian follows them into public spaces as they face prejudice for speaking Haitian Creole in public and experience discrimination based upon their surname. There is also a climate of fear many Haitians live in due to immigration officers and immigration raids, which makes

¹⁷⁸ Ogbu, “Immigrant and Involuntary Minorities,” 15.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 15.

navigating public spaces worrisome at best. Even though second-generation Haitians experience vast amounts of stigma in many areas of their life, many interviewees nevertheless express strong pride in their heritage.

According to the interviewees, the stigma of being Haitian does not disappear over the lifespan, as will be shown in the next chapter regarding citizenship. Even once having citizenship, many respondents still reported feelings of exclusion and of not being authentic Bahamians (i.e. born in the Bahamas to Bahamian parents of Bahamian heritage). As shown in this chapter, the surname continues to act as a signifier letting others know they are of Haitian heritage and not “true true” Bahamians. Citizenship represents a critical moment for young adults of Haitian descent because it finally allows these individuals to have full access to Bahamian society. However, the acquisition of citizenship does not necessarily eliminate the stigma of being Haitian or guarantee full to equal rights and protections as suggested through Bahamian citizenship.

Chapter 5
“Citizens in Waiting”
The Challenges of Citizenship and the Myth of Inclusion

Introduction

In a 2005 letter to the editor called “Answering the Question of Who is a Citizen,” a Bahamian citizen calling himself “The Patriot” wrote, “because a person is born in a garage, it does not make that person a car. Because a person may happen to be born in a stable, does not make that person an animal.”¹⁸⁰ The Patriot goes on to say, “so being born in the Bahamas of itself does not make one a Bahamian. A child born in the Bahamas of foreign parents must by international law take the nationality of his parents. Nationality and citizenship are not synonymous.”¹⁸¹ Based on this logic, The Patriot asserts that there are no stateless people in the Bahamas and that many undocumented migrants (mainly Haitians) are purposely giving birth “to as many children as possible” in the Bahamas as a “ploy” for citizenship.¹⁸² This letter illustrates some of the tension concerning citizenship and the rights to citizenship in the Bahamas. In this chapter, my respondents discuss not only the difficulties getting Bahamian citizenship but also their perceptions of a two-tier system of citizenship. The idea of a two-tier citizenship reinforces claims insinuated by The Patriot, i.e. there are authentic Bahamians and then there are others who are not Bahamian regardless of place of birth. One being born and raised in the Bahamas is not enough to assert claims to Bahamian citizenship creating a system of second class citizenship for Haitians.

The goal of this chapter is to address the issue of citizenship for twenty-eight interviewees born to undocumented Haitian parents in the Bahamas. This chapter will start by contextualizing the meaning of Bahamian citizenship in the colonial era and how that shaped the

¹⁸⁰ The Patriot, “Answering the Question of Who is a Citizen,” *The Tribune*. April 5, 2005, 4.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 4.

nationality law upon independence. Due to the structure of Bahamian citizenship, which is based on *jus sanguinis* (i.e. citizenship is determined by having parents who are citizens of the state), children born in the Bahamas to parents who are not Bahamian nationals are not granted citizenship at birth but must apply upon their eighteenth birthday. Prior to their eighteenth birthday, these children are issued a Certificate of Identification which provides proof of identity and permits one to travel.¹⁸³ As will be seen in this chapter, interviewees expressed many frustrations with the citizenship process, such as the lack of structure and the unpredictable time frame they had to wait for approval. Additionally, having citizenship allows individuals the rights and protections of Bahamian society, however, due to the stigma associated with being Haitian in the Bahamas, many still experienced (or expect to experience) discrimination because they are not considered by many to be *real* Bahamians. This reality suggests that there is a social hierarchy in citizenship which presents a continued set of challenges and hardships as it relates to becoming a part of Bahamian civil society.

This chapter will also address the participants' perceptions of the current Bahamian citizenship law. A majority of the participants believed that there should be changes and advocated for one of three categories: birthright citizenship (thirteen), granting of citizenship prior to eighteen (four), and no changes but a quicker turnaround time on citizenship applications (six).¹⁸⁴ The chapter will conclude by discussing the new immigration policy parliament passed on November 1, 2014, a part of which requires all persons living in the Bahamas to acquire a

¹⁸³ The Official Website of the Government of the Bahamas, "Certificate of Identification." Accessed on March 1, 2016 http://www.bahamas.gov.bs/wps/wcm/connect/mof_content/internet/all+services/c/applying+for+a+certificate+of+identification

¹⁸⁴ Birthright citizenship means citizenship should be received at birth. Granting of citizenship prior to eighteen means that citizenship does not have to be given at birth but should be received before the age of eighteen. Finally, time frame for receiving citizenship means that citizenship does not have to be given at birth or before the age of eighteen but that the process itself to receive citizenship should be more efficient.

passport of their nationality.¹⁸⁵ This means that Haitian children born to undocumented parents will be required to acquire a Haitian passport. For the participants who spoke about November 1st, there is the fear that the Bahamas will limit and/or cease the granting of Bahamian citizenship to those born in the country. Finally, in this chapter, I will use Aviva Chomsky's concept of undocumentedness to critique legal notions of citizenship as social constructs and demonstrate how citizenship laws and the new immigration policy produce and reproduce inequality.

“Laws are made and enforced by humans, in historical contexts, and for reasons.”¹⁸⁶

Contextualizing Bahamian citizenship

July 10, 2013 marked the 40th anniversary of Bahamian independence from Britain and its status as a member of the Commonwealth of Nations.¹⁸⁷ In an attempt to celebrate this moment and recognize the growth and challenges of the past four decades, *The Nassau Guardian*, the oldest newspaper in the Bahamas documenting 168 years of colonial and independent history, created a special edition to discuss various aspects of the nation's political, economic, and social progress.¹⁸⁸ In “The Independence Story,” Candia Dames interviewed various political leaders from the independence movement such as Sir Arthur Foulkes, Arthur Hanna, and Sir Orville Turnquest who discussed the many challenges in moving the colony toward independence.¹⁸⁹

In Dames' article, there are two points which provide some insight on the significance of citizenship and belonging in the era of independence. These points are important because 1) they

¹⁸⁵ “New Rules to Tackle Immigration.” *The Tribune*, September 18, 2014, Accessed on April 13, 2016 <http://www.tribune242.com/news/2014/sep/18/new-rules-tackle-illegal-immigration/>

¹⁸⁶ Chomsky, *Undocumented*, 1.

¹⁸⁷ Although independent, the Bahamas remains within the British Commonwealth and the queen is the head of state. See Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream*, 362.

¹⁸⁸ Anthony Ferguson “Message from the Publisher.” *The Nassau Guardian*. 40th Independence Anniversary Supplement 2013.

¹⁸⁹ Dames, Candia. “The Independence Story.” *The Nassau Guardian*. 40th Independence Anniversary Supplement 2013.

contextualize the significance of citizenship in the independence era and 2) provide greater insight to challenges of independence on the behalf of movement leaders. Additionally, Chomsky argues laws are created by humans for specific reasons, at specific times.¹⁹⁰ Bahamian citizenship must be viewed within this context. As it relates to Haitian immigration and citizenship for second-generation Haitians, this section will help explain Dawn Marshall's argument that the change in citizenship upon independence was the last step in draconian immigration practices against the Haitian community.¹⁹¹

As early as the 1950s, young black Bahamians who were being educated abroad in London and who would be future politicians in the colony and independent nation, were considering whether the Bahamas was ready for independence. According to the article, Hanna reveals "We felt we were part of that revolution at that time, that we had a duty to move The Bahamas to independence."¹⁹² The revolution Hanna's referring to was the decolonization movements happening globally.¹⁹³ However, in response to that thought, Lynden Pindling (the first Prime Minister of an independent Bahamas and leader of the Progressive Liberal Party, PLP) responded that it would not be an easy feat because "remember Bahamians are house slaves; they love their masters."¹⁹⁴ This last point can be highlighted through the PLP's defeat by the United Bahamian Party in the 1962 elections.¹⁹⁵ According to Michael Craton and Gail Saunders (1998), "The main reason for the PLP's 1962 setback, however, was almost certainly a

¹⁹⁰ Chomsky, *Undocumented*, 2014.

¹⁹¹ Marshall, *The Haitian Problem*, 1979.

¹⁹² Dames, "The Independence Story," 12.

¹⁹³ Nona Martin & Virgil Henry-Storr. "Demystifying Bay Street: Black Tuesday and the Radicalization of Bahamian Politics in the 1960s," *The Journal of Caribbean History* 43, 1 (2009): 44-45.

¹⁹⁴ Dames, "The Independence Story," 12.

¹⁹⁵ The United Bahamian Party was an all-white party formed in 1958 in response to the growing strength of the PLP. Although the PLP was inclusive of all ethnicities, it quickly became identified as the party for the people, i.e. black Bahamians. Gail Saunders "The 'Race Card' and the Rise to Power of the Progressive Liberal Party in the Bahamas." *The Journal of Caribbean History* 41, 1 & 2 (2007): 51-71.

fear of the consequences of black majority rule, shared not only by the white minority and the nonwhite middle classes but by many blacks themselves.”¹⁹⁶ To support their argument concerning “this lack of confidence in their fellow blacks,” Craton and Saunders quote a letter written to the *Tribune* two days before the 1962 election which allows the reader to look “even deeper into the psyche of Bahamian blacks” at this time.¹⁹⁷ The letter writer, the “Coloured Carpenter” says, “Let us look and see where we get our bread from. Not coloured people because the blind can’t lead the blind. We are all poor and we have to go to the white man for jobs.”¹⁹⁸ The “Coloured Carpenter” and Pindling’s statement suggest that there was a belief that black Bahamians were not ready for and might have even feared majority rule. And so, “Bahamian voters rejected [the PLP], opting for the security and stability of the familiar, ruling White oligarchy.”¹⁹⁹

According to Loftus Roker, independence was not an immediate concern for the PLP, the first successful (black) political party in the Bahamas, because the PLP were still battling issues of belonging and political rights for black Bahamians. According to Roker, “the first thing the new PLP government had to overcome in 1967 was this idea that somehow black people were second-class citizens in The Bahamas.” Roker is making two points. First, black Bahamians were historically treated and regarded as second-class citizens in the Bahamas. Second, Roker is also stating that many black Bahamians had internalized that second-class status. So, as Roker admits, “That’s the first thing we had to overcome because some of us believed that too.”²⁰⁰ In “Demystifying Bay Street,” Nona Martin and Virgil Henry Storr explore the defeat of the PLP in

¹⁹⁶ Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream*, 314.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 314.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 314.

¹⁹⁹ Martin and Storr, “Demystifying Bay Street,” 37.

²⁰⁰ Dames, “The Independence Story,” 13.

the 1962 and how the PLP was able to achieve victory in the 1967 elections. Comparable to Roker, Martin and Storr argue “it was widespread fear of Bay Street’s power that explains the PLP’s defeat in 1962, and it was the PLP’s ability to demystify that power that led to the party’s narrow victory in 1967 and their overwhelming victory in 1968.”²⁰¹ The ability of the PLP to deconstruct white authority helped the process of black Bahamians dismantling the perception of second-class citizenship and black subjectivity leading to majority rule.²⁰²

In 1972, the PLP and the Free National Movement (FNM), who initially opposed the push for independence, came to an agreement about the future of the colony. According to Sir Arthur Foulkes,

The glorious moment was when opposition and government got together on the question of citizenship, and it was the Bahamian delegation against the British government, not the PLP and FNM, because the British had their ideas about Bahamian citizenship....On that issue, we were, as we say, solid as a rock. We thought that Bahamians should decide who would become Bahamians in the future.²⁰³

In 1971 there was not a significant push for national independence but the opposition agreed with concerns about citizenship and soon after supported the demand for independence from Britain agreeing that the Bahamas belonged to the black majority.²⁰⁴ The last sentence is important because, considering the issues of immigration and second class status, black Bahamians would have the opportunity to protect the safeguards of Bahamian

These points from Dames’ article provide insight into how black Bahamians and their leaders perceived themselves as a people and an emerging nation in the era of independence. During the era of independence, the question of belonging and the pursuit of the Bahamas for

²⁰¹ Martin and Storr, “Demystifying Bay Street,” 38.

²⁰² Martin and Storr, “Demystifying Bay Street,” 2009 and Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream*, 1998.

²⁰³ Dames, “The Independence Story,” 15.

²⁰⁴ Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream*, 358.

Bahamians became an increasingly pressing issue for black Bahamians. This was taking place at a time when the PLP, who were perceived “as the authentic black people’s party,” had won the 1967 elections, and so black Bahamians were entering an era in which their social, political, and economic rights were beginning to change.²⁰⁵ The transfer of power to majority rule was extremely important. The PLP taking power represented a significant moment for change in the Bahamas especially as it related to black power, i.e. the pursuit for political and socioeconomic power and inclusion. In his discussion of Bahamian slavery, Bahamian historian Michael Craton (2007) asserts:

The ex-slaves and their descendants were left politically powerless, educationally and economically neglected, and burdened with a psychological legacy that included political inertia, dependency and a form of inferiority complex that has been called the ‘Black Crab’ Mentality. Though the Bahamian descendants of slaves demonstrated great endurance, adaptability and inventiveness, true freedom did not dawn until the coming of black majority rule in 1967, and the full liberation of the Bahamian spirit did not occur until after the achievement of national independence in 1973.²⁰⁶

In the next few years, the PLP would be crafting a new constitution and would carefully consider the concept of citizenship for the new nation. And so, independence, and thus citizenship, represented a moment in the black Bahamian imagination of access to rights and protections that they had not been previously afforded. They wanted to protect these rights not only from whites (including expatriates) but from foreign immigrants (whites from the United States and blacks from the Caribbean) as well.

This last point is not unfounded. In the period prior to independence, the rate of immigration was increasing primarily as a result of the growing tourist industry. The growth of the tourist industry necessitated the need for skilled and unskilled labor. The majority of the

²⁰⁵ Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream*, 359.

²⁰⁶ Michael Craton, *A-Z of Bahamas Heritage*. Macmillan Publishers Limited: Oxford, 2007, 349.

skilled and professional labor was recruited from the United States or the United Kingdom, and those workers were generally white.²⁰⁷ Black Bahamians, however, were employed as domestics, cooks, waiters, and manual laborers. They did not have access to managerial or other professional positions because they were black. Instead of qualified black Bahamians being employed in skilled positions, whites were recruited.²⁰⁸ The growth of the foreign population in the twentieth century is evidenced by the census. Between 1901 and 1943, the foreign-born population varied in size between 2-4%. In 1953, the foreign-born population represented 7% of the population and by 1970 it would reach 18.4%. Between 1901 and 1970, migrants from the United States and the Caribbean (Turks and Caicos Islanders, Jamaicans, and Haitians) represented 60-70% of the foreign born population while British expatriates represented 9 to 15% of the foreign born population.²⁰⁹ It is important to note that Haitians represented, and continue to represent, the largest immigrant population in the Bahamas.²¹⁰

As such, in addition to the pursuit for majority rule, the PLP was also invested in protecting the Bahamas for Bahamians. According to Craton (2007), “tighter restrictions on immigration, work permits and citizenship, and on the ownership of land and businesses by non-Bahamians were natural concomitants of the achievement of majority rule in 1967 and of national independence in 1973.”²¹¹ The attention on immigration, citizenship, work permits, and land and businesses related to tourism is a two-sided issue. In a sense, the PLP were challenging certain laws and policies for the benefit of Bahamians. However, they were also doing this in an effort secure a place for black Bahamians. Inspired by the black power movement in the United

²⁰⁷ Marshall, *The Haitian Problem*, 1979.

²⁰⁸ Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream*, 1998.

²⁰⁹ Marshall, *The Haitian Problem*, 1979, page 83.

²¹⁰ College of the Bahamas, “Haitian Migrants in the Bahamas,” 2005.

²¹¹ Craton, *A-Z of Bahamas Heritage*, 2007, page 37.

States, the PLP wanted to increase and protect opportunities for black Bahamians—opportunities that were never available to them and which were being challenged by immigrants.²¹² The lack of opportunities was because of discrimination and institutional racism, and the majority rule represented the opportunity to create access to opportunities and inclusion in full citizenship for black Bahamians.

Examples of these pursuits were critiques and challenges to the Hawksbill Creek Act of 1955 and the creation of the Bahamianization policy of 1967. The latter, known as the policy of the Bahamas for Bahamians, “was attempted by the government to control the recruitment of non-Bahamian labor into the country. Specifically targeted under this program were white foreigners recruited by the Grand Bahama Port Authority, Haitians, and Jamaicans.”²¹³ The objective of Bahamianization was to limit the dependence on foreign labor and increase job and business opportunities for Bahamians by limiting foreigners’ access to permanent residency, work permits, and citizenship. In order to help increase these job and business opportunities, the Bahamianization policy required employers to only hire Bahamians unless a qualified Bahamian could not be found.²¹⁴

In a peaceful negotiation with the British Parliament, the Bahamas became independent on July 9, 1973. But along with independence came the tightening of citizenship, work permits, permanent residency, and immigration all of which should be viewed as an extension of solidifying access to and protection of opportunities for black Bahamians.²¹⁵ According to Dawn Marshall (1979), “in effect the Independence Order put the finishing touches on the Bahamas for Bahamians movement which had always been the policy of the P.L.P., but which it had only

²¹² Martin and Storr, “Demystifying Bay Street,” 2009 and Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream*, 1998.

²¹³ Tinker, *Migration of Peoples*, 8.

²¹⁴ McCollin, “Resistance and Impact,” 2002.

²¹⁵ Craton, *A-Z of Bahamas Heritage*, 2007.

been in position to put in practice since 1968.”²¹⁶ According to the Bahamian Nationality Act of 1973, citizenship is based on *jus sanguinis*. Everyone born in the Bahamas or born to a Bahamian father outside the Bahamas before July 10, 1973 were granted citizenship, yet those born in the Bahamas to non-nationals after July 9, 1973 were not citizens of the Bahamas but could apply for citizenship upon their eighteenth birthday.²¹⁷ Under colonial rule, unless you were a citizen of a non-British nation, if you were born in the Bahamas, you were considered a British subject. Everyone born in the Bahamas prior to independence was a Bahamian citizen.²¹⁸ This means that upon independence, the Bahamas became stricter on citizenship changing their policy from *jus soli* to *jus sanguinis*.²¹⁹

According to Marshall (1979), “the Independence Order further restricted the possibilities for children born of Haitian parents in the Bahamas to claim Bahamian citizenship, and this can be viewed as the final step in the intensification of legislative controls against Haitians.”²²⁰ This argument is very important to this study. Since 1957, the Bahamas has considered itself to have a Haitian “problem,” and, as discussed above, Haitians represent the largest immigration population in the Bahamas. According to Aviva Chomsky (2014), “Laws are made and enforced by humans, in historical contexts, and for reasons. They change over time, and they are often created and modified to serve the interests of some groups—generally the powerful and privileged—over others.”²²¹ Considering the desire to secure and protect opportunities for (black) Bahamians and to control undocumented Haitian immigration, it is not unfounded that these factors played a key role in the PLP’s decision to change citizenship from *jus soli* to *jus*

²¹⁶ Marshall, *The Haitian Problem*, 127.

²¹⁷ Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream*, 1998.

²¹⁸ Marshall, *The Haitian Problem*, 127.

²¹⁹ Amnesty USA. “Statelessness: Congressional Testimony.” November 12, 2006. Accessed on September 29, 2016 <http://www.amnestyusa.org/news/document.do?id=5E413BE9A7F29CD785256FF00064>

²²⁰ Marshall, *The Haitian Problem*, 127.

²²¹ Chomsky, *Undocumented*, 2014, 1.

sanguinis upon independence. “Each country expresses its sovereignty by deciding who is allowed to enter into its territory and who is allowed access to citizenship.”²²² And so, citizenship, like the Bahamianization policy, was another strategy to both protect the Bahamas for Bahamians and create harsh sanctions against the Haitian community. These sanctions have created a marginalized population of second-generation Haitians seeking to obtain citizenship and become full members of Bahamian society, the land of their birth.

“I applied for citizenship when I was eighteen. But that process is taking forever.”

Applying and waiting for citizenship

For people of Haitian descent born in the Bahamas without citizenship, applying for citizenship represents a critical moment in their lives. It is especially important to these young adults because access to Bahamian citizenship and a passport has the potential to open doors which are mostly or completely closed without Bahamian status. According to Anthony W. Marx (1998), “citizenship is a key institutional mechanism for establishing boundaries of inclusion or exclusion in the nation-state. It selectively allocates distinct civil, political, and economic rights, reinforcing a sense of commonality and loyalty among those included.”²²³ As noted in the previous chapter, the lack of citizenship often leads to deferred dreams, wasted potential, delayed starts in life, difficulty or inability to attend college, and difficulty or inability to find decent employment. The goal of citizenship for the people of Haitian descent in this study is to become a full member of the Bahamian nation-state. And so, citizenship is not always (or only) about becoming Bahamian but instead about having access to opportunities that all of the respondents feel they should have in the land of their birth.

²²² Chomsky, *Undocumented*, 2014, 23.

²²³ Anthony W. Marx, *Making Race and Nation: A Comparison of South Africa, the United States, and Brazil*. United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1998, 5.

In this study, fifteen of the twenty-eight interviewees had citizenship at the time of their interview. In fact, one interviewee, Tiffany, had just received her letter of approval for citizenship not long before our interview. Crystal never went through the citizenship process but received it at birth because her father was Bahamian, and her mother was a Haitian who had been in the Bahamas prior to independence. Although Crystal was the only one who received citizenship at birth, she was not the only respondent who did not have to go through the citizenship process. Eric did not have to apply for citizenship because his mother was approved for her citizenship prior to his turning eighteen. This meant that citizenship was automatically transferred to Eric. Thirteen of the twenty-eight interviewees did not have citizenship. Twelve out of these thirteen respondents were either in the process of applying, waiting to hear back from immigration, or had given up on the process due to frustration. Of those who were in the midst of the process, only Yvonne had already been interviewed, which is one of the last steps in the process before taking the oath and being sworn in as a Bahamian citizen. Finally, the thirteenth respondent had not applied for citizenship but was a permanent resident of the Bahamas. Pierre-Elie was born in Haiti and came to Nassau at the age of nine. Unfortunately, Pierre-Elie declined to speak on his desire, or lack thereof, to seek Bahamian citizenship. None of my respondents had been denied citizenship. According to the Bahamas 2014 Human Rights Report, 167, 290, and 247 persons were granted citizenship in 2011, 2012, and 2013. However, it does not indicate how many were denied or how many were of Haitian heritage.²²⁴

According to Article 7 of the Constitution of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas “a person born in The Bahamas after 9th July 1973 neither of whose parents is a citizen of The Bahamas shall be entitled, upon making application on his attaining the age of eighteen years or

²²⁴ United States Department of State, “Bahamas 2014 Department of State,” 12, Accessed on February 25, 2017. Retrieved from: <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/236874.pdf>

within twelve months thereafter in such manner as may be prescribed, to be registered as a citizen of The Bahamas.”²²⁵ According to the Government of the Bahamas’ website for the Department of Immigration, there are three steps in the process for citizenship. This process simply refers to the act of submitting the application because it does not mention the required interview or the oath of allegiance and renunciation of citizenship. The first step delineated is to select and complete the appropriate application form (there are three different applications). Second, the applicant must attach supporting documentation to the completed application form. Finally, the applicant must submit the application with the supporting documents to the Department of Immigration along with the non-refundable payment fee of \$100.²²⁶

This process is very onerous, particularly step two, which requires applicants to submit two passport-sized identical color photographs, birth certificate, parent’s birth certificate (not applicable to spouses), parent’s marriage certificate (for persons born outside the Bahamas to a Bahamian mother and foreign father), mother’s passport (for persons born outside the Bahamas to a Bahamian mother and foreign father), BS \$10 postage stamp, police certificate of good character issued with six months of application (all applicants 14 years and older), spouse’s birth certificate (spouses of Bahamian nationals), marriage certificate (spouses of Bahamian nationals), medical certificate dated not more than thirty days prior to submission of application (female spouse), bio-data page(s) of applicant’s passport (valid for a minimum of 6 months), work visa (where applicable), permit to reside (where applicable), and permanent resident visa

²²⁵ The Official Website of the Government of the Bahamas: The Department of Immigration. Bills, Laws, and Acts. *The Constitution of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas*. 2011, 20. Accessed on March 15, 2016 www.bahamas.gov.bs

²²⁶ The Official Website of the Government of the Bahamas, The Department of Immigration, “Citizenship and Naturalization,” 2011. Accessed on March 15, 2016 www.bahamas.gov.bs
Furthermore, Bahamian currency is called the Bahamian dollar and is pegged to the US dollar at par.

(where applicable).²²⁷ Additionally, the Department of Immigration requires that all supporting documents are original copies. For documents written in a language besides English, the department requires the original document as well as a translated certified copy of the document. Finally, and very importantly, the website states that the turn-around time for a completed application is three to four weeks.²²⁸

As it relates to the steps to applying for citizenship, twenty of the respondents considered the citizenship process to be a daunting, long, and/or frustrating experience. They also described the process as varying a great deal from what was delineated on the government website and therefore lacking structure and order. Interviewees explained being required to provide additional documents, such as high school transcripts, not listed in the official government guidelines. Alex's experiences give us a glimpse into some of these frustrations. Alex describes having to walk back and forth to the Department of Immigration for over a year in order to check on his application. The Department of Immigration is located on Hawkins Hill off Shirley Street in Nassau and is literally positioned on a hill with little-to-no sidewalk in some areas on a busy street. Alex, along with other respondents such as Marjorie, often walk this hill with the sun blazing on their backs. Alex shares that the lack of structure and transparency in the citizenship application process necessitated his repeatedly walking back and forth to the Department of Immigration and the Haitian counsel. "There was a lot of process I had to go through," says Alex. "And they gave me another paper. This paper had another list. I said, 'Wow. Another list.' Then this list included me going to Princess Margaret Hospital....After the hospital, then I went to get my police record. After police record, then they send me back into high school to...show

²²⁷ BS simply denotes Bahamian currency. Another abbreviation used is BSD (Bahamian dollars), and the symbol used for Bahamian currency is B\$ similar to the US' \$ symbol.

²²⁸ The Official Website of the Government of the Bahamas, "Citizenship and Naturalization," 2011.

proof that I went to school over here.” It is unclear whether Alex’s application was initially incomplete due to his own oversight or whether the expectations were not clearly articulated, as the current website does not discuss the need for high school transcripts. Either way, it is clear that many applicants find the process arduous and unclear. “Yes,” Alex confirms, “it’s very confusing. Because their system, their system is very hectic. It’s very hard and very confusing at times.”

One of the primary issues concerning the citizenship process was the length of time one had to wait to be granted citizenship. Although the Department of Immigration states that the turnaround time for a completed application would be three to four weeks, 20 interviewees expressed frustration at the duration of the process as well as the inability to receive adequate feedback on the status of their application. For my participants, the shortest length of time to be granted citizenship was reported by Patrick, who waited six months. The longest reported length of time was from Liza and Rita, both of whom waited eight years for their citizenship. As for those respondents who have not yet received citizenship, the shortest length of time waited was reported by Tony and Nadia, who had applied less than a year prior to our conversations.²²⁹ Denise, who applied four years prior to speaking with me, had been waiting the longest.

Elide, a 32 year old high school mathematics teacher, reveals “now the process for me, now the process is very long. I don’t think it should take that long to give someone something that’s actually entitled to them. That’s how I see it. It’s policies and stuff like that. But for me the process, it took about two years.” After the interview with the Department of Immigration, Elide says, “then that’s it. And then you wait until they call you. Now of course, during that time, you find yourself, as often as you can, to go there to inquire about it. Because you want to hopefully

²²⁹ There was one respondent, Rose, who was actually in the process of applying for citizenship, and so she had not yet submitted an application.

speed up the process because without the Bahamian citizenship, it's kind of difficult." Still, despite her preparedness and having received the interview six months after submitting the application, it took Elide two years to become a Bahamian citizen.

Elide was not the only participant frustrated with the length of time, and twelve interviewees actually waited or have been waiting longer than Elide's two years. It took Rita eight years to receive her citizenship. Although she did not say why it took so long, Rita did not apply until the day before her nineteenth birthday as she was trying to get all of the required documents together. Rita explains that her main issue with the wait was that she could not go to school, and due to her lack of a passport, she was not able to take advantage of a medical educational program in Cuba. One of the people she knew in the program eventually became a doctor. In response to these missed opportunities and length of time waiting, Rita asserts "everything happens for a reason.... You have some things that bother you, but I don't penetrate on it."²³⁰ Another respondent, Peter, who is 18 years old, just recently applied for his citizenship but says that even though he has applied, it is an unpredictable process. "You have to wait 18 years. And even though you wait 18 years, you don't know how long it will take you to get it. You may get it when you're 25, 22. It depends." Peter's response reflects the unpredictability of the citizenship process and how the time frame varies from person to person. Although the Department of Immigration provides a time frame for application approval, it is clear that it frequently does not meet its own standards even when the application is complete.

Seven respondents also spoke to the ways that elections and policy changes impact the application process by creating more delays and frustrations. Wilma has been waiting for her approval for citizenship for three years. "And I applied for citizenship when I was eighteen. But

²³⁰Meaning she does not overanalyze unpleasant situations but just tries to move forward with her life.

that process is taking forever.” Wilma explains, “When I went it was during election time. They told me the government have everything on hold because they’re trying to change government. So I went back constantly, constantly, and constantly. And they just tell me the government processing everything, and it’s been processing ever since.” Since applying, Wilma travels to the Department of Immigration once a week, but her attempts have slowly decreased. Wilma’s most recent visit to the Department of Immigration had been a week prior to our interview, and she says they told her the government was still processing everything. She solemnly reveals, with clear frustration, “I been like last week, and I ain’t going next week or the week after that because I know my stuff ain’t ready.” Another respondent, David, echoes Wilma’s frustration, also noting how political changes also impede the process. It took David four years to receive his citizenship elucidating, “In the Bahamas I’d say you face a rollercoaster ride with the process. You may have one party that comes in. They tend to make it a little easier. Another party comes in, and they make it a little harder.”

Marjorie applied for her citizenship upon her eighteenth birthday, and it took her nearly three years to receive her citizenship. Marjorie expresses her frustration with the application process specifically policy changes and the length of time to receive her citizenship. According to Marjorie, “it’s a back and forth issue that is never resolved. Every day it’s something else, and it’s frustrating because it’s, it’s, it’s time consuming and, umm, you have to spend money to get there. And the sun is hot and all those different things. It causes one to be frustrated, and it sometimes makes you make decisions that you don’t want to make.”²³¹ Marjorie went on to exclaim that:

Every year the policy changes. Something else is added or something else is taken off. Like there isn’t a strict, they don’t have a strict policy that says this is what you need and in any event this always going to be what you need. There’s always

²³¹ The hot sun mentioned by Marjorie is in reference to walking to the Department of Immigration.

something else. And I mean, it's just poor. And sometimes when they do give you an update on your status, they will say, like me, in my case, umm after having an interview I was waiting on an update for me to know when I had to go back to the immigration department to swear in. And every day I went, the receptionist would tell me my file is at the cabinet's office, and they still haven't made a decision as to whether or not they're going to give me my citizenship...I mean, the process is just long. Some other people I know, I know a guy, it took him ten years to get his citizenship, and we swore in together. And he was telling me about his process, and it was just unbelievable. The pressure they put you through and the frustration level is just unbearable. It's nothing that I would ever wish, not even my worst enemy to go through....

Marjorie's frustration is representative of nineteen other interviewees in this study. They felt that the process was unorganized and unjustly long. These respondents were unable to receive specific and detailed feedback regarding the status of their application which often created feelings of frustration, anxiety, and despair. There were also larger issues surrounding efficiency, structure, and professionalism. For example, two respondents, Tony and Antoine, had applied for citizenship, but their files were lost, forcing them to start the application process over. Tony explains, "The lady who I did my interview with—she either got fired or she quit. She was the one dealing with my document. When she left, she had lost some of my file. So I had to try to get them back." Similarly, after a long process of trying to get his father's documents, Antoine says, "I applied. Then they said—when I went to check on it, they said they lost my files. They couldn't find my files inside the system. So I had to go redo everything all over again." These participants find applying for citizenship is a long and frustrating process. The Caribbean weather and hot sun makes walking up Hawkins Hill undesirable. Once at the immigration office to check on the application status, there can be delays in the process as evidenced by eleven respondents who had their application placed on hold as they were told their application was incomplete. And two respondents had to start over because an employee had lost their files.

Finally, the interviewees' experiences show there is not really a reliable time frame for those applying for citizenship to expect to hear back from the Department of Immigration.

Although the frustration with time and structure represents the sentiments of the majority of the respondents, there were some respondents who did not have the same battles with the citizenship process. For example, Jessica, a college student, says that, "For me, for me I was one of the lucky ones.... Even though for me it still felt kind of long, compared to my friends, I got it pretty fast. I applied in October and by, and by August, I had my passport.... So it wasn't really an uphill battle for me." Although Jessica received her citizenship less than a year after applying, she considered herself to be lucky. Jessica understands that her experience was unusual, not the norm as compared to her friends and other people she knows. Her description of herself as being lucky indicates that she believes most people of Haitian descent applying for citizenship tend to have a difficult time receiving citizenship and usually wait an unjust amount of time.

Patrick, an employee on Paradise Island, explains that his process for citizenship was "easy" as it took him only six months to receive his citizenship. Patrick tells, "I think it took such a short time, and it was easy because I had everything I needed. And like we knew all that we had to do. And we took everything all at once. And I probably can say...." At this point in the interview, Patrick placed the recorder to the side and mentioned something off the record and then continued into the recorder, "so because they knew [my father], they would ensure that this process doesn't take long. It doesn't lag you know." He continued by saying, "I didn't say they took it and moved it to the top of the pile...but I really don't know. But because they saw the name and probably who the parent was, they said, 'You know what? Let's not overlook this. Let's continue to allow it to move along, probably. There was no one paid off or anything like that. Regular process.'" However, Patrick's comments revealed that his process to citizenship was

not entirely a regular process—at least, it was nothing like the other participants’ reported feelings of frustration and defeat. In fact, even Patrick himself seems to indicate that his father’s knowing someone in the Department of Immigration helped expedite Patrick’s application.

In terms of expediting the citizenship process, four respondents spoke about paying someone at immigration under the table to help move their application along and two people spoke about their fathers knowing people in immigration. Rose, the only respondent who was in the process of submitting her application, was not worried about the process because her “father knows people in immigration” and her sister received her passport in seven months. However, there were respondents who discussed bribery. Referring to the contradictions of the Bahamian citizenship laws, Jean believes “Cause everything has to do with money too. Because say now immigration office, they try to get money off Haitians. Those schemes and stuff like that.... Bribes and things.” Wilma followed this belief when discussing the length of time she has been waiting for her citizenship approval, asserting, “I don’t know why mines is taking so long.... Because I think over here, you know, to do stuff you have to pay somebody to get it. Because I met a guy at immigration, and he told me I have to give him \$7,000. And I can get my stuff in two weeks.” Although Eric received citizenship when his mother received her citizenship, he also insinuated that if a person receives their citizenship in less than a year, they were probably paying someone. Eric explains, “But it’s person to person. Because some people got it in a year. Some people got it in months. But that’s when you greasing somebody.” Only one respondent, Antoine, actually gave someone money to help his application move along. Fearing the new immigration policy imposed on November 1, 2014, Antoine wanted to expedite his process. Antoine confides, “So I started to pay the woman who works at the front desk at immigration. Every time I visit, it’s either I give her \$50 or buy her lunch. You know, to give her the push to

let them push it in.” Even though he started to pay her, his efforts were fruitless. It is also uncertain if the woman at the front desk even had the power to push Antoine’s application along. It is highly possible she was taking advantage of his situation. Nonetheless, these statements and Antoine’s actions demonstrate the desperation some adults of Haitian descent undertake just to receive citizenship.

The frustration with the citizenship process left some participants discouraged and in a place of giving up. Although Alex eventually received his citizenship, he stated that he experienced a period of depression. Discussing how he felt once receiving his citizenship, Alex confides, “I really felt happy because I could relax.... Because it was very long, and it was very hectic, you know. I went through a phase of depression because I couldn’t even get into school.... I couldn’t even get a decent job because of this little blue book.” Denise, a 23-year-old restaurant worker, has been waiting four years and has still not received her citizenship. She stated that if she did not receive her citizenship by July 2015 that she was going to return to Haiti. Denise feels that “I was just born in a country by mistake” and that she “would have been better off in Haiti.” Jean expresses a similar sentiment. In regards to the application process, Jean conveys, “You see, it’s just ongoing process. It keep going, and it discourages you. It doesn’t even make any sense. It’s just an ongoing process to bring you down, to throw you down, to just, you know.” Like others, Jean is discussing the longevity of the citizenship process and the despair it can create. The length of time and the back and forth can lead to discouragement which can lead to people giving or wanting to give up. Jean says that he has tried to get his passport but “it don’t make sense to try anymore. Let me just get my Haitian passport, and I’ll be good.” I then asked Jean whether getting his Bahamian citizenship was important to him, and he replied, “Not anymore”, indicating that at one period in time obtaining his Bahamian citizenship mattered, but

he feels his struggles in getting his application approved has greatly impacted its significance and desirability.

“Because at the end of the day, you’re still a Haitian.”
Citizenship and the Myth of the Road to Full Inclusion

In April 1994, a group of lawyers, Haitian refugee workers, law students, and a documentary film crew, who were organized by the Yale Law School Lowenstein International Human Rights Clinic, and the Grand Bahama Human Rights Association visited four islands in the Bahamas in an attempt to assess and analyze the conditions of Haitians in the Bahamas. In the section on citizenship, the delegation discovered three major issues with Bahamian citizenship. According to the report,

First, many teenagers born in the Bahamas of Haitian parents are unaware of the application requirement—or of its short window of opportunity....²³²Second, and more problematic, numerous persons entitled to citizenship under this provision of the Constitution reported to us that neither they nor anyone they knew had been granted citizenship in spite of timely applications....A third, perhaps even more serious problem arising from the citizenship policy, as applied, is pervasive social discrimination against Haitians. The scheme in effect creates a two-tier, segregated society in which Haitians face unequal treatment in the workplace, at school, and even on the streets.²³³

In terms of point number one, in my research, I did not have any participants who were unaware of the application requirements for citizenship. In fact, the lack of citizenship and the need to apply at the age of 18 appeared to be common knowledge for those of Haitian descent born and/or raised in the Bahamas to Haitian parents. Some respondents, such as Alex and Elide, began preparing their application in the months prior to their eighteenth birthday. Additionally, respondents seemed to be aware that if you did not apply within a year of turning eighteen that

²³² The short window of time refers to the one year application period an individual has to apply for citizenship. Applicants have one year from their 18th birthday to apply for citizenship.

²³³ Yale Law School, “Human Rights Delegation Report,” 7.

you would have to pay an additional fee due to a late submission. However, it is possible that participants in the Yale study were relatively uninformed about the law because the study was conducted a generation after independence. In the early 1990s, it is possible that fewer people were informed about the application process and the timeframe for applying, whereas in 2015 it appeared to be common knowledge. Moreover, for point number two, I did not encounter anyone who did not know anyone with citizenship. As the figures above show in terms of my data sample, fifteen of the twenty-eight interviewed had received citizenship. In terms of those who did not have citizenship, there was no indication that they did not know anyone without citizenship. In fact, many of the respondents without citizenship knew some of the people I had interviewed with citizenship whether it was from church, family, or friends. This was mainly a result of the methods used in the research, snowball sampling and word-of-mouth, which in turn may reflect a bias in the sample as it relates to this point. Evidence also suggests that second-generation Haitians are aware of their rights to apply for Bahamian citizenship.²³⁴ In terms of point number two, the issue was not the lack of knowledge of people with citizenship in spite of the submission of timely applications but rather, as discussed above, the granting of citizenship in a *timely* manner. For the participants in this study, point number three seems to be the most pressing issue. The issue of a two-tier system within citizenship that continues to exclude people of Haitian descent despite having received Bahamian citizenship.

Citizenship, in the most fundamental sense, confers equal status before the law as citizens of a country. However, this is not always the case and citizens are not always equal before the law or in every day experiences. Even though one may be a citizen, citizenship can still exclude

²³⁴ College of the Bahamas, "Haitian Migrants in the Bahamas," 2005.

and marginalize groups of people.²³⁵ Fifteen respondents articulated the reality of a two-tier system of Bahamian citizenship. This two-tier system was one based on institutional and individual discrimination related to one's Haitian heritage. This reality was expressed by both those who had citizenship as well as those who did not have citizenship. Jean, the young man who had given up on the idea of getting his citizenship, feels that one of the reasons it was no longer important to him was "basically because at the end of the day, you could get a Bahamian passport, you still ain't getting no benefits of being Bahamian." When I asked did he not think that he deserved access to the same things as his Bahamian peers, Jean replied "I can't have access to it. It's impossible. Even if I get a Bahamian passport it's still impossible."

The fifteen respondents who believe in a hierarchy in citizenship believe it is related to the recognition of their surname as non-Bahamian. Because they had a Francophone or "Haitian" surname, many Bahamians would assume that they were not born in the country and were thus foreigners. For instance, in response to a question concerning whether or not she still felt discriminated against even though she had a Bahamian passport, Liza responds, "Yes, everybody still look at you cus the last name...Ok, I gone somewhere right now. So they ask me what your name. And I say my name....When they look at the last name that be problem for Bahamian people....In the Bahamas, they don't call you Bahamian like that because they don't look at you like Bahamians." Another respondent, Destiny, addresses the role one's surname (as well as speaking Haitian Creole) plays in distinctions between people in the Bahamas. "Once you go through the naturalization process you become a Bahamian just like I am....I have a Bahamian

²³⁵Richard Delgado "Citizenship," in *Race, Identity, and Citizenship: A Reader*. Edited by Rodolfo D. Torres, Louis F. Mirón, and Jonathan Xavier Inda, 247-252. (Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 1999); Renato Rosaldo, "Cultural Citizenship, Inequality, and Multiculturalism," in *Race, Identity, and Citizenship: A Reader*. Edited by Rodolfo D. Torres, Louis F. Mirón, and Jonathan Xavier Inda, 253-261. (Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 1999).

passport. The only thing that would distinguish or have you differentiate that I am of Haitian heritage is either the last name or if not the last name, when I speak. If I decide to speak Creole to you and make it known to you.”

As shown, the surname acts as a signifier to one’s supposed ethnic heritage and thus one’s nationality. This is important especially as it relates to citizenship and ideas of belonging for second-generation Haitians in the Bahamas. According to Chomsky, “Nationality itself has its origins in racial thinking and still bases itself on birth and origin in ways that echo racialism.”²³⁶ She goes on to say, “The categories ‘Mexican’ and ‘Latino’ have been racialized in the United States, and the category of illegality is heavily associated with the category ‘Mexican,’ whether this is understood as a nationality, an ethnicity, or a race.”²³⁷ In the Bahamas, the category “Haitian” is definitely racialized but also heavily associated with illegality. As noted by Dawn Marshall, since 1957, the Bahamas has been dealing with undocumented Haitian immigration which has been referred to as the Haitian “problem.”²³⁸ Media outlets and the government primarily discuss Haitians in relation to undocumented immigration, using xenophobic language such as Haitians are “flooding” the Bahamas or are a “threat” to the Bahamas. This becomes problematic for all categories of Haitians in the Bahamas.²³⁹ As noted by Alfred Sears, when the Haitian “problem” is discussed in the Bahamas, all Haitians, regardless of their status, are indiscriminately lumped into this discourse.²⁴⁰ And so, their last name, which is not Anglophone, acts as a marker for difference. This difference is associated with a group heavily demonized in the media. Even though they may have Bahamian

²³⁶ Chomsky, *Undocumented*, 15.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, 15.

²³⁸ Marshall, *The Haitian Problem*, 1979.

²³⁹ College of the Bahamas, “Haitian Migrants in the Bahamas,” 2005.

²⁴⁰ Sears, “The Haitian Question,” 1994.

citizenship, their last name groups them with a Haitian nationality marking them as different, the “other,” and not Bahamian.

There is also the belief that one’s surname can impact access to resources such as employment. Although Marjorie had received her Bahamian citizenship, she feels she still experiences discrimination and finding work is still difficult. According to Marjorie, “We’re just, I believe umm children of Haitian descent are just Bahamians by, they only have a book to prove that they’re Bahamians. But umm we’re not equal to the actual Bahamians.” Marjorie continues, “Because although we have the passport, they still go according to the name and what they consider to be French name and Haitian name and what’s Bahamian name.” Marjorie feels people of Haitian descent, even with Bahamian citizenship, are not equal because of the way they are treated. In response to any noticeable changes in her life since receiving citizenship, Marjorie stated, “Not really. Because regardless of the citizenship, you’re still considered Haitian because of your last name. So it’s not, nothing actually changed. The only difference is you didn’t have a passport in the past, and you have a Bahamian passport now. That’s the only difference. Apart from that, there’s nothing else.”

In the article, “Are Emily and Greg More Employable than Lakisha and Jamal?” Marianne Bertrand and Sendhil Mullainathan seek to determine whether one’s name can impact hiring practices. Studying the role of racism in the United States’ labor market, Bertrand and Mullainathan sent fictitious resumes to various companies in Boston and Chicago, randomly assigning African American and white sounding names to each resume. The researchers then measured callbacks for interviews for each fictitious job applicant. Based on their research, Bertrand and Mullainathan found that there was a fifty-percent gap in responses from potential

employers, a significant finding.²⁴¹ According to the findings, “a white name yields as many more callbacks as an additional eight years of experience on a resume. Since applicants’ names are randomly assigned, this gap can only be attributed to the name manipulation.”²⁴² This study is important because it shows the role one’s name, which is usually connected to a race, ethnicity, and/or nationality, can impact hiring practices. Although a study of this kind has not been conducted for Haitians in the Bahamas, Marjorie’s concerns that her last name impacts employment opportunities is not far-fetched. It also demonstrates that even though she has Bahamian citizenship, she is not treated as a full Bahamian because her last name acts as signifier to her difference. Her last name functions as a cue to her Haitian heritage resulting in discriminatory hiring practices.

Donald agrees with Marjorie, asserting that “even when you’re a Bahamian, some persons still really don’t accept you fully as a Bahamian.” In response to my questions about why Bahamians do not accept people of Haitian descent who have acquired Bahamian citizenship, Donald retorts, “Because at the end of the day, you’re just a Haitian. You’re still a Haitian. You’re not born to Bahamian parents so, ‘We just granted you time to,’ they would say this sometimes, the mean ones, ‘We’re just letting you live here. It’s not where you’re from.’” Ronald echoes a similar sentiment about the relationship between being of Haitian descent and notions of Bahamian authenticity. After receiving his Bahamian citizenship, Ronald discloses that people have jokingly told him, “‘Say boy, I revoke your citizenship....’ They tell me, ‘Oh, I can revoke your citizenship.’” Ronald went on to say that “My passport says Bahamian. Then I’m a Bahamian. But if I go amongst the peers, amongst my peers that are Bahamians...even

²⁴¹ Marianne Bertrand and Sendhil Mullainathan, “Are Emily and Greg More Employable Than Lakisha and Jamal? A Field Experiment on Labor Market Discrimination.” *The American Economic Reviews* Vol. 94, No. 4 (2004): 991-1013.

²⁴² Bertrand and Mullainathan, “Are Emily and Greg More Employable than Lakisha and Jamal?” 992.

though I have a passport they will say ‘Hey, he’s Haitian.’ You know. ‘But he has a Bahamian passport.’ And they’re under the impression that you either buy the passport or you bought it in Haiti or something like that.”

The last statement of *how* you became Bahamian was another important theme. Elide describes that when she tells people she is Bahamian but her parents are Haitian, people usually want her to go into details about how she became Bahamian. People then proceed to ask “‘Oh were you born here? Did you marry a Bahamian?’” According to Elide, they would ask if she married a Bahamian “because if I’m pure Haitian, I was probably born in Haiti or whatever. And then married a Bahamian, I could get a Bahamian passport. I could claim Bahamian status. So I guess they want to find out how did I become a Bahamian... Yeah, that’s their thing. ‘How did you become a Bahamian?’” The inquiries into the process of how you became Bahamian allude to the notion that you are not really a “true true” Bahamian but a “paper” Bahamian. As discussed above by Chomsky, a person’s nationality bases itself on birth and origin. In Elide’s case, although she discloses she was born in the Bahamas and has Bahamian citizenship, Bahamians still question the authenticity of her citizenship and her true place of origin, thus challenging her belonging in the Bahamas. In the only place she knows as home, Elide, and others like her, are still not “true-true Bahamians” but “paper Bahamians.”

In a report prepared by researchers at the College of the Bahamas for the International Organization for Migration, researchers address the issue of “Who is Bahamian?” by discussing the existence of a two-tier hierarchy in citizenship. According to the researchers:

The on-going debate about who is a “true-true” Bahamian” and who are “paper Bahamians” may reflect an unwillingness by some to accept naturalised citizens as Bahamians. This was illustrated in one of our interviews with a senior government official who consistently referred to a “Haitian.” On further questioning it was found that the “Haitian” had a Bahamian passport, and so was a Bahamian. However, in the mind of the official, this Bahamian citizen was still a “Haitian.”

This lack of acceptance, at all levels, may discourage the integration of new citizens into the mainstream of Bahamian society, and from participating in matters relating to The Bahamas and their “fellow” Bahamians.²⁴³

The existence of an idea of a “true-true Bahamian” and a “paper Bahamian” clearly indicate a hierarchy in the authenticity of one’s Bahamian status and identity. However, it may not be far-fetched to suggest that being Haitian may place one even lower because there is such stigma associated with being Haitian in the Bahamas. In fact, Michael Craton (1995) argues that Bahamians have constructed their identity in opposition to the Haitian “other.”²⁴⁴ And so, to be Bahamian is to be not Haitian. This widespread notion exists despite the fact that people of Haitian descent born and raised in the Bahamas are challenging, redefining, and expanding ideas of what it means to be Bahamian.²⁴⁵

“I think if you were born here...”

To change or not to change citizenship laws: That was the question

Citizenship concerns ideas of belonging, membership, obligations, and rights.²⁴⁶ My respondents all agree with these ideas but differ on when children of Haitian immigrants should be granted Bahamian citizenship. Twenty-three respondents felt that the Bahamas should alter their citizenship laws in some way. Twenty-one of the responses can be grouped into three categories: 1) birthright citizenship (i.e. citizenship should be received at birth), 2) citizenship during adolescence (i.e. citizenship should be received not at birth but before one turns eighteen), and 3) no changes but a quicker turnaround time (i.e. applying at eighteen is fine but the time

²⁴³ College of the Bahamas, “Haitian Migrants in the Bahamas,” 69.

²⁴⁴ Craton, “Bahamian Self and Haitian Other, 1995.

²⁴⁵ This will be discussed in more depth in the next chapter on identity.

²⁴⁶ Nick Stevenson, “Culture and Citizenship: Introduction.” In *Culture and Citizenship*. Edited by Nick Stevenson, 1-10. (London: SAGE Publications, 2001).

frame for approval should be more efficient and shorter).²⁴⁷ There were four respondents who were not asked this question. Two respondents felt citizenship laws should be amended but did not fit within these three categories. Finally, one respondent, Wilma, stands alone as she reported not caring. All answers will be explained below.

First, thirteen respondents agreed that the Bahamas should change citizenship laws to birthright citizenship. Respondents usually referenced the United States when discussing birthright citizenship believing if you are born in the Bahamas, you should automatically have Bahamian citizenship. The Fourteenth Amendment of the United States Constitution established citizenship by birth in an attempt to include newly freed Africans into the nation in the post-emancipation society.²⁴⁸ And so, it is this inclusion to which the respondents were speaking, especially as it related to access to opportunities and ideas of belonging. For example, Elide says, “I think if you were born here, you should be granted automatic citizenship. It makes everyone’s life easier. Because think of the countless persons who walk around here jobless. That could have been avoided.” She goes on to say, “this is how I see it, if I was granted Bahamian citizenship from birth, I probably would not have been here. Simply because I was an excellent student in school. Which means when I left high school I could have applied for a scholarship to go abroad.” David echoes this sentiment by stating that the Bahamas should “give them a chance to start. Give them a chance to prove what they can do at a young age. Don’t have them crippled and then have them figuring out how they can get their life together.”

²⁴⁷ There was one respondent, Marjorie, who gave answers to all three categories. Marjorie says “They could possibly put the age bracket down say to 13 or 14.” A few sentences later she says, “Or they can just give citizenship at birth.” Finally, she also says, “And if the timeframe for someone to gain citizenship, like say, it shouldn’t take no longer than six months. Or a year. Maybe that can help.” This is why there are nineteen respondents but thirteen in the first category, four in second, and six in the third category.

²⁴⁸ Chomsky, *Undocumented*, 2014.

In terms of birthright citizenship, ideas of belonging and access to opportunities do not go hand in hand. Tony reveals, “I feel as if once we were born here, we should have the same rights as a Bahamian child.” Olivia echoes a similar sentiment when she says, “Give the child what they deserve or what they need so that they could grow up and live a better life without having to feel left out. Without having to struggle and stuff like that. Because I feel like if you have your Bahamian passport then you feel like, ‘Yeah I’m a Bahamian.’” Based on these responses birthright citizenship is related to having citizenship in the country of one’s birth. However, it is also connected to not only having access to the opportunities but what those opportunities mean as it relates to being a part of a nation. Citizenship at birth, in the most superficial sense, allows a child to know that they are a part of a country, that they are members of a nation as well as have access to opportunities and rights reserved for citizens.

Second, four interviewees believe that citizenship should be received not at birth but prior to turning eighteen. This, too, was connected to ideas of access to opportunities (as it relates to college and employment) and thus avoiding the current reality of deferred dreams. For example, Jessica states,

I don’t mind if they don’t change the birthright but the age that when you’re eighteen, I think that they should push it back to at least when you’re still in school. Like, you apply when you’re sixteen, and you get it by seventeen or you apply when you’re fifteen and you get it by sixteen so when you actually come out of high school you will have your passport. Because that’s most, that’s the time you do need it to be a part of society. To work and do all these other things.

Nadia also feels that the Bahamas should lower the age to apply for citizenship “so by the time you turn eighteen, they’ll have that passport, and so they can get the rest of the benefits that everybody has who were born in the Bahamas.” The issue of delayed starts and deferred dreams was discussed in the preceding chapter. Jessica and Nadia’s responses speak to the relationship between delayed starts and the lack of citizenship. And so, for Jessica and Nadia, receiving

citizenship prior to turning eighteen is important because it will allow for young adults of Haitian descent to have a better chance at jumpstarting their life.

In terms of birthright citizenship, Patrick feels that "...I don't feel when a person is born there, when a foreign person is born there they should automatically gain citizenship. Not only in the Bahamas but any country.... But for here I feel that yes they should lower the age.... Maybe twelve or thirteen." Patrick continues, "I didn't need it for anything. I didn't need it to do anything. I didn't vote. I couldn't vote before that. So I didn't need it for anything." Although not the only way to exercise citizenship, the ability to vote is an important idea as it is often noted as a critical component of citizenship and a way for citizens to be a part of the political community.²⁴⁹ However, Patrick also believes that it is important to lower the age because "...at twelve or thirteen, it gives someone a sense of belonging. So from thirteen or twelve to eighteen, it gives you a sense of, "You know what? Yes I am a part of this country. I am accepted in this country because I was provided with citizenship." So it gives you some time to get a sense of belonging." It is important to note that Patrick is one of the few participants who experienced a relatively easy-going citizenship process. And so, maybe because he did not have to struggle for citizenship and traveled a lot as a child impacts his decision. Nonetheless, his ideas about belonging to a nation remain valid because it may help to provide an identity and sense of belonging for children of Haitian descent who live in Bahamian society.

There were six respondents in the third category. In this category, respondents did not take issue with the requirement that children born to non-Bahamian parents apply upon their eighteenth birthday. Their main issue was the length of time one had to wait to receive citizenship. As discussed above, participants have found that the citizenship process seems to

²⁴⁹ Rainer Bauböck, "Expansive Citizenship: Voting beyond Territory and Membership." *PS: Political Science and Politics*, Vol. 38, No. 4 (2005): 683-687.

lack coherency in some areas and the turnaround time after submitting a completed application can take an unpredictable amount of time and not the three to four weeks articulated on the Department of Immigration's website. For example, Alex feels, "They really, really need to change not the process but the timing. They really need to change that timing. A year, a year and a half, two years. That's not necessary." Alex continues, "The application process, I'll be honest, it could stay as it is. Just the timing. Like, you know, like how I took a year and eight months just to get mine. That timing."

Jean echoes the same sentiment stating "They should change basically the time that you could get it or receive it. Cut it down, you know. Because you have to go thru so much in order to get it. You have to go thru hell....You could wait a whole three years, four years to get a Bahamian passport. It makes no sense. It's just crazy." Marjorie also agrees arguing that "...the timeframe for someone to gain citizenship, like say, it shouldn't take no longer than six months. Or a year." The lack of a more efficient timeframe means "You're between a rock and a hard place because you don't know if you're going to get it. And even if you do get it, you don't know when you're going to get it." And so, for those within this category, the length of time one has to wait is one of the most pressing issue concerning citizenship.

There were two respondents who felt that there should be some alterations, but their responses do not fall into the three categories listed above. Yet their critiques were still predicated on the unfairness of current citizenship laws and addressed specific technicalities of the process. Donald felt there should be changes concerning particular documents needed for a complete application—specifically, the requirement to obtain both parents' birth certificates. Donald's reasoning is personal as he was not raised by his mother and did not have much of a relationship with her. Donald confides, "Like...my situation, they request your mom's birth

certificate and your dad's birth certificate.... Me personally, I didn't know my mom. She left when I was four. I knew my dad, right. So now, I had to go find my mom to get her birth certificate to then get my citizenship." Although Donald still had some contact with his mother, he believes this process is harder for someone who may not know their mother.²⁵⁰ Additionally, retrieving both parents' birth certificates could be difficult even if an individual knows their parents. Parents may not have their birth certificate whether because they did not bring it when they migrated or due to the Haitian government's insufficiency in providing documents of identification to their citizens.²⁵¹

Eric's opinions were also rooted in a personal reasoning. Eric, who had received his Bahamian citizenship at seventeen when his mother became a citizen, had one child. His child's mother was of Haitian descent and did not have Bahamian citizenship. Even though Eric had citizenship, his child did not have citizenship because his parents were not married and children born to unwed parents take the citizenship of the mother. And so, Eric's issue was one of gender equality in citizenship. Eric eagerly expresses, "I should be able to do certain things as the father of my child." He went on to say, "Because if I have gender equality, doesn't that mean that I can give my son citizenship as a man?" Eric's frustration was rooted in wanting his son to avoid feelings of not belonging and despair that he had experienced growing up. According to Eric, despite being the child's biological parent and primary caregiver, the only way he would be able to give his son citizenship would be to legally adopt him. There is scholarship on the issue of gender equality in Bahamian citizenship, but it is particular to Bahamian women, their right (or

²⁵⁰ In fact, there were three other respondents who discussed the inability to locate one's parents as a very challenging aspect of the citizenship process.

²⁵¹ Laurel E. Fletcher and Tim Miller, "New Perspectives on Old Patterns: Forced Migration of Haitians in the Dominican Republic," *Journal of Ethnic & Migration Studies* 30,4 (2004): 659-679.

lack thereof) to confer citizenship to their children and/or spouses, and what this suggests about the way gender is constructed in the imagination of the Bahamian nation.²⁵²

Finally, there was one respondent, Wilma, who was indifferent to whether the Bahamas should make changes to their current citizenship laws. According to Wilma, “I could care less about what they do with their citizenship laws because I don’t intend to have nothing to do with the Bahamas. I could care less honestly.” Although Wilma expressed a disinterest in Bahamian citizenship laws, her response is still important because it demonstrates the impact of dreams deferred, feelings of not belonging, and difficulties in attempting to attain citizenship. Wilma reached a point in her process where she simply did not care about citizenship, was no longer invested in the Bahamas, and simply wanted out of the country. Furthermore, Wilma’s frustration was also rooted in the new immigration policy (to be discussed in detail below) that requires all people living in the Bahamas to obtain a passport in the country of their nationality. Immediately following her statement above, Wilma continues on to say, “But it’s so ridiculous because they made it easy whereas when you were 18 you apply, but now Haitians have to get a passport to apply for citizenship. Like, that’s just crazy. So, I don’t even care no more.”

“They are not ‘stateless.’ They are ‘Citizens in Waiting.’”²⁵³
November 1, 2014 and the Bahamas’ New Immigration Policy

Effective November 1, 2014, the Bahamian government put in place new procedures in an attempt to regulate work permits. According to Fred Mitchell, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Immigration, “With immediate effect, we will not accept applications for people who do not

²⁵² Bethel, “Engendering the Bahamas,” 2003. Also see, Jacqui Alexander, “Not Just (Any) Body Can be a Citizen,” 1994.

²⁵³ Fred Mitchell, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Immigration declares the new policy makes children born in the Bahamas to foreign parents “citizens in the waiting” not “stateless.” See, Editor, “Citizens in Waiting.” *The Tribune*. February 6, 2015, Accessed on July 7, 2016 <http://www.tribune242.com/news/2015/feb/06/citizens-waiting/>

have legal status in The Bahamas to work and anyone who comes to do so, the application will be refused and the applicant will be arrested and charged and deported.”²⁵⁴ Employers who wished to apply for a work permits for an employee would have to complete an application at the Department of Immigration and that information would be sent to the Embassy of the Bahamas in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, where the applicant would complete the application and be certified by an embassy officer in Port-au-Prince.²⁵⁵ Additionally, and critical to this study, Mitchell stated, “I also wish to announce that we will as of November 1 require all persons who live in The Bahamas to have a passport of the country of their nationality. Those people who have been born here will get a particular residence permit which will allow them to work and live here until such time as their status pursuant to any application under the terms of the constitution is decided.”²⁵⁶ This change was created in collaboration with the government of Haiti as they agreed to meet the supply and demand for Haitian passports. Finally, the new proposal would end the distribution to certificates of identification to non-nationals born in the Bahamas.²⁵⁷ According to Mitchell,

The idea is to ensure that people are properly documented if they are living in The Bahamas. The situation with immigration in The Bahamas is most vexing....The RBDF [Royal Bahamas Defence Force] is working actively on the high seas. The level of interdictions on land is ongoing. There is so much criminality involved in immigration that these new rules and procedures are necessary in order to get on top of this problem. This requires the efforts of all Bahamians to guard our borders and protect our country.²⁵⁸

Twelve respondents discussed what happened on November 1, 2014. These events were not an original question but emerged as an important theme. Respondents discussed fear of deportation and having to carry identification to verify their status if detained by immigration officers. This

²⁵⁴ Fred Mitchell “Immigration Policy Changes.” *The Nassau Guardian*. September 19, 2014, Accessed on January 3, 2017 <http://www.thenassauguardian.com/opinion/op-ed/50397-immigration-policy-change>

²⁵⁵ Ibid.

²⁵⁶ Ibid.,

²⁵⁷ Ibid.

²⁵⁸ Ibid.; RBFD is an acronym for the Royal Bahamas Defense Force.

is also important to mention because it addresses a critical question regarding the status of children of Haitian descent born and raised in the Bahamas to parents without Bahamian status. The question of the legal status of children of Haitian descent born in the Bahamas to non-Bahamian parents has been a topic of consistent debate and analysis.²⁵⁹ One part of this debate has revolved around the issue of statelessness and whether or not this population fits within that category.²⁶⁰ If children of Haitian descent born to Haitian parents without status in the Bahamas are indeed stateless, the next question becomes who is responsible for their statelessness? The Bahamas or Haiti?

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Article 1 of the 1954 Convention on the Status of Stateless Persons defines statelessness as “a person who is not considered as a national by any State under the operation of its law.”²⁶¹ According to this definition, a person is stateless due to a lack of a nationality (lacks citizenship to a country) and can occur at birth or throughout an individual’s life. As discussed thus far, children born to non-Bahamian nationals in the Bahamas are entitled to apply for citizenship at the age of eighteen. Haitian citizenship is also based on *jus sanguinis*, however, their policy grants citizenship to those born in the diaspora. According to Haitian citizenship law, “any person born of a Haitian father or Haitian mother who are themselves native-born Haitians and have never renounced their nationality possesses Haitian nationality at the time of birth.”²⁶² Yet, children do not automatically receive Haitian citizenship. The parent(s) must register their child at the nearest Haitian embassy or consulate to bestow Haitian citizenship.²⁶³

²⁵⁹ Sears, “The Haitian Question” 1992; Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream*, 1998;

²⁶⁰ Belton, “Arendt’s Children,” 2010.

²⁶¹ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. “What is Statelessness?” 2015, Accessed on February 1, 2016 <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49c3646c158.html>

²⁶² Amnesty USA, “Statelessness,” 2.

²⁶³ *Ibid.*

Registering one's child or children becomes difficult to do when Haitian expatriates are unaware of the registration requirement and/or are undocumented and cannot prove Haitian citizenship.²⁶⁴ However, it is also very possible that Haitian expatriates do not want their children to have Haitian citizenship preferring instead for their children to have citizenship in the country where they were born. For example, Ricky says his "background is Haitian. But since I born here, my parents don't want me to take that background." When I asked why his parents did not want him to be a Haitian national but rather Bahamian, Ricky replied, "Because I have more opportunities...if I'm Bahamian in this country where I'm born at." And so, it is very plausible that Haitian parents understand there are more opportunities elsewhere (which is probably why they migrated) and want their children to benefit from those opportunities.

Twelve interviewees mentioned the new immigration policy and a few discussed the issue of having to acquire a Haitian passport. These respondents felt that this clause was an attempt by the Bahamian government to limit or cease issuing Bahamian citizenship to children of Haitian descent born in the Bahamas to non-Bahamian parents. In regards to the new immigration policy, Wilma stated "...I feel they just want the Haitians to have an identity but they just want us to be Haitians and probably get...just have a work permit. They want us to have a Haitian passport but just have a work permit so they can stay here." Another respondent, Peter, felt that the immigration policy was an indication that the Bahamas was becoming stricter in regards to the citizenship process. Peter stated "So they're getting stricter...I don't think that the youth will get they passport now or they citizenship...." Peter was one out of eight respondents who felt that acquiring citizenship was becoming more and more difficult as a few

²⁶⁴ Amnesty USA, "Statelessness," 2006 and Belton, "Arendt's Children," 2010.

expressed not only the frustration with the process itself but the perception that being approved for citizenship was becoming harder for the upcoming generations.

Although this new immigration policy can be seen as an attempt to manage undocumented immigration and regularize status, it may also be reproducing inequality. One of Aviva Chomsky's main arguments is that laws are social constructs created for particular reasons, at a particular time, to the benefit and interests of particular groups. "Countries, sovereignty, citizenship, and laws are all social constructions: abstractions invented by humans."²⁶⁵ Additionally, "even if a law looks like it treats everybody equally, laws only exist in social contexts. If the social context is unequal or unfair, even a law that purports to be equal might serve to cover up, or even reinforce, existing inequalities."²⁶⁶ This immigration policy would not be the first discriminatory legislation passed by parliament which specifically targets the Haitian community.²⁶⁷ In fact, in reference to anti-Haitian (i.e. anti-black) policies at the close of the eighteenth century in the Bahamas, Sean McWeeney (1992) asserts, "Establishing a pattern that would replicate itself with little variation at regular intervals in the ensuing centuries, Bahamians were determined to have it both ways: issuing solemn proclamations and enacting draconian laws prohibiting the admission of Haitians into the Bahamas while at the same time absorbing them into the economic machine to meet the exigencies of the day."²⁶⁸ As such, these policies established inequality which justified, and continues to justify, differential treatment towards Haitians, and these discriminatory policies and laws are justified because it is the law.

²⁶⁵ Chomsky, *Undocumented*, 23.

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 24.

²⁶⁷ Marshall, *The Haitian Problem*, 1979; Sears, "The Haitian Question," 1992, Tinker, *The Migration of Peoples*, 2013; St. Jacques, "Today Haitians, Tomorrow Bahamians," 2001; and Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream*, 1998.

²⁶⁸ McWeeney, "The 'Haitian Problem' in the Bahamas," 6.

Based on the new immigration policy, the Bahamas is seemingly solving the problem of statelessness. However, the new immigration policy may also be serving as a reason not to administer (or less frequently administer) Bahamian citizenship to children born and raised in the Bahamas to foreign parents. Even though Fred Mitchell states children born to foreign parents are still entitled to apply for Bahamian citizenship, it does not mean that they will receive it. Young adults of Haitian descent born to non-nationals may continue to be stuck in a systematic limbo because they would technically be Haitian nationals eliminating the Bahamas bearing responsibility for this population. However, groups such as the Human Rights Association are challenging this new policy to help protect the rights to citizenship for children born to foreign parents in the Bahamas.²⁶⁹ As suggested in the article, “requiring them to get a Haitian passport and/or a visa is creating confusion and it is prejudicing their entitlement.”²⁷⁰ It is not uncommon for countries to pass legislation in the attempt to tighten who could become a naturalized citizen. For example, in the United States, citizenship would not be conferred to individuals who committed a felony, could not speak English, could not pass a literacy test, or were Communist. The goal of this type of legislation is to make U.S. citizenship more difficult to obtain. In addition, proposals to change U.S. citizenship from *jus soli* to *jus sanguinis* would be in the pursuit of limiting and ceasing undocumented immigration.²⁷¹

According to a report by Amnesty USA (2006), “Compounding the problem is the wide discretion of the Bahamian government in granting citizenship. The government can withhold citizenship from any applicant who is deemed to have threatened the public order or whose citizenship would not be considered conducive to the public good.” The report goes on to note

²⁶⁹ *The Tribune*, “Citizens in Waiting,” February 6, 2015.

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 1.

²⁷¹ Delgado, “Citizenship,” 1999.

how Fred Mitchell “has been quoted on the ‘Haitian problem’ as saying that the ‘large numbers of people coming in who are undocumented migrants...pos[e] a threat to the safety and security of the country.’” It has been noted that many Bahamians feel that Haitians pose a threat to the national and cultural sovereignty of the Bahamas.²⁷² In the International Organization for Migration report, researchers assert “characterizations in the media can create images and heighten perceived threats by the immigrant population in the mind of the newspaper reading public. News reports used metaphors to evoke images such as: ‘Haitian cheap labour,’ ‘Haitian hordes,’ ‘invaders from the south,’ ‘Haitian invasion’ or describing Bahamian society as being ‘under assault’ by migrants.”²⁷³ The researchers go on to state that “a study of estimates of the ‘Haitian’ population in The Bahamas is revealing of the overarching fear that Bahamians have expressed for many years: they are taking over.”²⁷⁴ This research demonstrates xenophobia towards the Haitian community in the Bahamas. In terms of sovereignty, there are citizens and politicians who believe that a country should be able to exercise national autonomy how they see fit. This would include the ability to determine their own membership. “If large numbers of outsiders were free to settle, bringing with them new values, languages, and patterns of behavior, they would in effect have the right to force the nation to become something it is not.”²⁷⁵ If Haitians (whether migrants or second-generation) are considered a threat to the national and cultural sovereignty of the Bahamas, a new immigration policy requires passports in one’s nationality, and the Bahamian government is the ultimate decision maker in the approval of

²⁷² Craton, “The Bahamian Self and Haitian Other,” 1995 and McCollin, “Resistance and the Impact of Caribbean Immigration,” 2002.

²⁷³ College of the Bahamas, “Haitian Migrants in the Bahamas,” 10-11.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 11.

²⁷⁵ Delgado, “Citizenship,” 249.

naturalized citizen, it is worth considering for future study how all three of these factors may or may not play out.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed the many issues concerning citizenship as articulated by my participants. These issues were about the frustration with the citizenship process in general, hierarchy in citizenship, and the new immigration policy and the issue of Haitian citizenship as a tactic to refuse Bahamian citizenship. Additionally, participants articulated the ways they believed Bahamian citizenship should be amended, whether it was through birthright citizenship, receiving citizenship prior to eighteen, or just creating a more efficient system so people do not have to wait years for citizenship. Finally, the use of Aviva Chomsky's theory as a framework for discussing citizenship allows one to challenge ideas of citizenship and sovereignty as natural. Citizenship, and laws in general, are not natural but instead man-made creations which produce and reproduce inequality.

As stated in the beginning of the chapter, one of the goals of the Progressive Liberal Party in the independence era was "Bahamas for Bahamians," to protect opportunities for Bahamian citizens. One way this goal was achieved was through the Nationality Act of 1973 which based citizenship on *jus sanguinis*. As shown in this chapter, the lack of citizenship impedes second-generation Haitians ability to access opportunities in the Bahamas. Their dreams are stifled, and it is difficult to jumpstart their lives because they lack citizenship. In this way, the PLP achieved its goal of protecting opportunities for and limiting opportunities to Bahamian citizens. The cost of this purported success, however, may be high for the Bahamas as a nation. Haitian nationals and their children are a part of the Bahamian nation-state. They live, work, go to school, and start families in the Bahamas. Their ability to access opportunities means a greater

investment in the Bahamas. Yet, difficulty accessing opportunities can result in larger consequences for the Bahamas as second generation Haitians would be less educated and unable to achieve social mobility as well as this population feeling less connected and less invested in the advancement of the country.

An important theme in this chapter was ideas of belonging and membership. Belonging and membership are ideas connected to citizenship and what it means to be a part of a nation-state. In many ways, citizenship bestows identity because it links the individual to a particular space. As Bahamian nationals, it would appear that Haitians are fully included in the nation-state. But as seen in this chapter, this is not always the case. Moreover, citizenship or the lack thereof does not necessarily mean that one identifies or does not identify themselves as a Bahamian. In the following chapter, I will discuss the various ways that my respondents construct their identity. Ideas of belonging will continue to be an important theme as it plays a significant role in the production of their identity and why they personally chose to identify as such.

Chapter 6 “You’re a Bahamian or You’re a Haitian” The Politics of Belonging and Exclusion in Identity Choices

Introduction

In a 2005 article in the newspaper *The Nassau Guardian*, Betty Vedrine discusses her experiences being a person of Haitian descent born and raised in the Bahamas. In addition to addressing issues of equality, citizenship, discrimination, and ideas of belonging, Vedrine also discusses the problems of identity. As it relates to her identity, Vedrine says, “I love Junkanoo, conch, Reggae Music and taking a vacation for me means shopping in Miami. I also love ‘grillo’ (fried pork) with green plantains. I can dance to ‘Compas’ and ‘Zouk’ music and I speak Creole fluently.”²⁷⁶ Junkanoo, conch, reggae, and Miami all refer to aspects of Bahamian culture.²⁷⁷ Grillo (griot), plantains, Compas (kompa), Zouk, and Creole all refer to aspects of Haitian culture. From these statements, it seems as if Vedrine has embraced both sides of her culture. Vedrine clearly understands the dilemma readers may be facing as she then poses the question, “So what’s my beef?” Vedrine goes on to say, “I’m a Bahamian born of Haitian parents and every day I have to struggle to validate my identity.”

In another newspaper article, “Caught between Two Cultures—The Problems of Diversity,” Rodline Lazarre says, “I was raised with two cultures brewing inside of me. Outside of my home was the Bahamian world, but inside were the comforting sounds of my mother’s

²⁷⁶ Betty Vedrine, “Trying to Fit In,” *The Nassau Guardian*, August 23, 2005.

²⁷⁷ First, there is a historical relationship between the Bahamas and Miami. In the early twentieth century, many black Bahamians migrated to Miami and were instrumental to the development of the emerging city. See Raymond A. Mohl “Black Immigrants: Bahamians in the Early Twentieth-Century Miami.” Second, there is a cultural connection between the Bahamas and Miami as many Bahamians often travel to Miami to shop, and Bahamian culture is heavily celebrated in Miami (for example, Goombay Festival). See Laine Doss “Four Ways to Party Like a Bahamian at the Miami/Bahamas Goombay Festival.” *Miami New Times*, August 12, 2012, Accessed on June 4, 2016 <http://www.miaminewtimes.com/arts/four-ways-to-party-like-a-bahamian-at-the-miami-bahamas-goombay-festival-6505780>

tongue, and her wonderfully Haitian ways.”²⁷⁸ Lazarre goes on to say, “I loved it. I loved my diversity and embraced both worlds that helped to mould me into the woman I am today.”

Although Lazarre loved the exposure of two cultures, as a child she battled the stigma of being Haitian which made her ashamed of her Haitian heritage. And as an adult, she struggled with citizenship, and the fact that she did not belong to the Bahamas. This theme is constant as children of Haitian descent relentlessly go through life negotiating the stigma and love for their Haitian heritage and their place of belonging in the Bahamas. As such, it can be a struggle to construct one’s identity as a person of Haitian descent born and raised in the Bahamas.

The objective of this chapter is to discuss the various ways that adults of Haitian descent in the Bahamas construct their identity. During the interviews, I asked interviewees similarly structured questions regarding identity construction: “How do you identify yourself? Do you identify as being Haitian, Haitian-Bahamian, Bahamian, or something else?”²⁷⁹ Based on the interviewee’s responses, six categories emerged. As shown in the table below, these categories were individual, African/Pan African, Bahamian, Bahamian of Haitian descent, Haitian, and Haitian-Bahamian. Of the twenty-eight participants, three stated individual, two stated black/African, two stated Bahamian, five stated Bahamian of Haitian descent, eight stated Haitian, and, finally, seven also stated Haitian-Bahamian.²⁸⁰ The table also includes another important concept concerning identity among second-generation Haitians: because the notion of

²⁷⁸ Cara Brennen “Caught between Two Cultures—The Problems of Diversity.” *The Tribune*, Saturday November, 12, 2005, 6.

²⁷⁹ Due to the flow and semi-structure of the interviews and increased comfortability, sometimes the question slightly varied from the original wording of the proposed interview question used in earlier interviews. So, for example, in the 12th interview, I asked “So how do you identify? Like do you identify as being Haitian? Do you see yourself as like Haitian-Bahamian? Do you see yourself as Bahamian? Or do you see yourself as something else?” Whereas in the final interview, I asked “How do you identify yourself? Do you identify as Haitian, Bahamian, Haitian-Bahamian?”

²⁸⁰ Out of the twenty-eight participants, only twenty-seven respondents are represented in these categories. The missing participant was not asked about her identity due to an oversight in the interview.

a Haitian-Bahamian identity is a contested category, more than one-third of the interviewees stated that there is no such thing as a Haitian-Bahamian. Often while asking this question about identity, many interviewees would state there was no such thing as a Haitian-Bahamian. And so, this category was also important to analyze as well.

Category of Identity	Number of Participants
Individual	3
African/Pan African	2
Bahamian	2
Bahamian of Haitian Descent	5
Haitian	8
Haitian-Bahamian	7
No Such Thing as a Haitian-Bahamian	10

Vedrine and Lazarre’s personal stories will echo in various ways throughout this chapter. In this chapter, the interviewees discuss how they negotiate being a person of Haitian descent born and raised in the Bahamas; a person exposed to two cultures. They negotiate their identities in an environment where they are constantly told who they are and/or where they are told they have to choose one or the other because they cannot be both Haitian and Bahamian. There do not appear to be any patterns of correlation between specific participant characteristics and chosen identity categories. What does become apparent, however, is that participants in all categories are negotiating similar factors, including connection to culture (Bahamian and Haitian), legal documentation, legal status, and ideas of belonging and/or not belonging in the Bahamas (which are associated with legal status but also address the overall sentiment toward Haitians in the

Bahamas). Due to each individual's subjective experiences, they have come to identify themselves in different ways even though they may negotiate similar themes and issues in the identity development process. In this chapter, it is important to understand that the embrace of one national or cultural identity does not necessarily negate the existence or embrace of the other. Identity functions as a fluid concept. And so, although interviewees may identify the same way, their reasons for doing so are varied and complex and based on personal experiences.

“A Race Doesn't Make Me. A Nationality Doesn't Make Me. I am Who I am:”
Ideas of an Individually Based Identity

Only three interviewees identified themselves in the category of individual. From the outset, there do not seem to be any significant similarities between these three participants. Two of the interviewees were male, Eric and Patrick, and one was female, Destiny. All three interviewees had received their Bahamian citizenship. Both men had one child, while Destiny did not have any children. The mother of Patrick's child, his wife, was Bahamian while the mother of Eric's son was Haitian.²⁸¹ Based on the three participants' interviews, it does not appear that they placed much weight on defining themselves with a particular national or ethnic identity. They saw themselves as people first, just individuals. However, as will be described below, this does not necessarily mean that they do not embrace their Haitian heritage and Bahamian culture. These three interviewees seemingly appeared to view themselves as individuals who happened to have been born to Haitian parents in the Bahamas.

Although they all identified as individuals, their reasoning for doing so was diverse. In response to the question, “How do you identify yourself?” Eric stated, “Depending on who I'm talking to and if I feel like the person is defensive about culture and all that other stuff. I pick my

²⁸¹ For clarity, Patrick's wife is a Bahamian-born citizen. She is not of Haitian heritage. The mother of Eric's child is a Bahamian-born Haitian and does not have Bahamian citizenship.

battles. But for me, how I identify myself, I'm just here. I'm not, I'm just someone who is trying to make it in this world. I was born into a particular circumstance. I don't let that circumstance define me or who I am because at one point in my life it was a negative outlook." Eric went on to say, "It's just to a point where I just don't care. It is what it is. And I have to make the best of it, so, for me, I'm not a Bahamian or a Haitian. I'm just who I am. It doesn't matter to me."

Eric's decision to identify himself as an individual appears to be rooted in the ostracism he experienced while growing up in the Bahamas. Throughout his interview, he repeatedly discussed how he was not Haitian or Bahamian because neither country "claimed" him and by the time he received his citizenship at the age of seventeen "the damage had already been done." When I pressed for an explanation regarding the damage, Eric confides "Haiti doesn't claim me. Bahamas doesn't claim me. So what am I? I'm not Bahamian because I don't have a passport. And I'm not a Haitian because I don't have Haitian citizenship." Eric continues saying, "I can't travel. I can't experience certain things. I can't open a bank account.... You can't do anything without a passport. So, you don't have a sense of identity because people tell you, 'Oh! You're a Bahamian man. You were born here.' But the law don't say that." Eric's frustration reflects the damage created when one recognizes that they do not have access to Bahamian society in the same fashion that their Bahamian peers do. Eric spent all of his childhood and the majority of his teen years being told he was Haitian because he was not legally a Bahamian even though he was born in the Bahamas and had never been to Haiti. And although he was told he was Haitian by Bahamian citizens and the government, he did not have Haitian citizenship either. Eric's frustration is not unique, but rather is reflective of a bigger problem occurring in the Bahamas when he asserts, "So now you have a whole generation of people like me who don't claim nothing. They regret whatever they were born into." And so, Eric does not feel a part of

Bahamian society because of his lack of citizenship, but he also does not feel a part of Haiti because he lacked Haitian citizenship as well.

Evidently, the granting of Bahamian citizenship did not alter Eric's position. As Eric conveys, "Oh, so now I am a Bahamian because I got the passport. So without this book, I'm not a Bahamian. So basically a piece of paper makes you a Bahamian. Not where you were born." The apparent pain and confusion of not legally belonging to any country resulted in indifference. According to Eric, "Because for me, personally, I just exist. Because without my passport I ain't no Bahamian. And without Haitian citizenship I ain't a Haitian. So I'm just over here. I just got the citizenship of the country I was living in to make my life easier." Later in the interview, he went on to say "If you have that citizenship...that can be revoked when they feel like it. Why care for status? I care about the convenience it brings and the peace of mind it brings to my life. That's what I care about. I don't care about the title....There's no pride or loyalty or any other birthright or sense of entitlement involved. It's convenience. It's peace of mind. That's all it is." And so, for Eric, Bahamian citizenship does not make him Bahamian. It simply makes his life easier and holds no significant weight other than the convenience it provides. Undoubtedly, this convenience is the ability to open a bank account, to find employment, to attend college at national fees, and to not feel the fear of immigration. However, Bahamian citizenship has not provided Eric the convenience of transferring his citizenship to his son. This, too, is a source of resentment for Eric.

According to Bahamian citizenship laws, children born to unwed parents in the Bahamas must take the nationality of the mother while children born to married parents take the nationality of the father. At the time of the interview, Eric discussed a referendum being proposed by Parliament that would create gender equality in the Constitution. In June 2016,

Bahamians voted on referenda, one of which would be the ability of unwed Bahamian fathers to pass their citizenship onto children born to non-Bahamian women. The majority voted “no.”²⁸² This is a particularly sensitive issue for Eric as he and the mother of his child were never married, and so although Eric had Bahamian citizenship at the moment of his son’s birth, because his parents were not married, Eric’s son took the citizenship of his mother, who is Haitian. When asked about his son, Eric states “He is already aware of what he can and can’t do because he doesn’t have a passport. At his age [six years old], which is terrible, he should be able to feel like he can do anything. At his age, he’s already aware that he can’t do this. I want to go this place, I want to go to the United States or Atlantis or something.” It hurts Eric to watch his son not only be excluded from activities but also adjust to the exclusion. Eric continues saying, “He smiles, he laughs about it now....but he wants to go because he hear other kids going on the field trip or something. He understands what it means.” Eric’s statement is a reflection of how the process of recognizing that one does not belong or that one is different begins at an early age. It is rooted in childhood and continues into adulthood. Sometimes the resentment disappears, and sometimes, like with Eric, the resentment lingers even when one has finally received citizenship. Finally, Eric has spoken to a lawyer, and although an expensive process, the only way for his son to receive citizenship is for Eric to legally adopt his biological son. “I have to adopt my own son in order to give him citizenship because of a legal loophole....Although I can prove he’s my son with certificates and a DNA test. But I have to adopt my son to give him citizenship.”

According to Agnes Szabo and Colleen Ward (2015), the development of an individual’s identity is greatly shaped by socio-cultural factors. However, “negotiating or living in-between

²⁸² “Voters in Bahamas Say ‘No’ to Gender Equality Changes in Constitution,” *Caribbean 360*, June 8, 2016, Accessed on March 13, 2017 <http://www.caribbean360.com/news/voters-bahamas-say-no-gender-equality-changes-constitution>

two cultures/societies can be psychologically and socio-culturally challenging, and as a result immigrants frequently experience normative acculturation identity crises, including ethno-cultural identity conflict, which has a detrimental effect on the psychological and socio-cultural adjustment of acculturating individuals.”²⁸³ Although the participants in this study are not immigrants, as repeatedly shown throughout this study, they are born and raised in a society that sees and treats them as the other, as an immigrant. For my participants, the negotiation of two cultures, Bahamian and Haitian, begins in childhood and continues, often unabated, into adulthood. At such a young age, Eric’s son is living in-between two societies. The society into which he was born, the Bahamas, is telling him that he does not belong through his lack of citizenship and his inability to participate in activities like his peers. As his father says, “he understands what it means” when he cannot go on fieldtrips. This exclusion is possibly shaping his son’s identity in a profound way, but it has definitely impacted Eric’s identity as he chooses to neither identify as Haitian or Bahamian as he feels he had been rejected from both nations.

Although identifying as an individual as well, Patrick’s reasoning is not grounded in the reality of not belonging but instead in a more cosmopolitan approach to self and life. To be clear, the issue of not belonging or facing discrimination because of being Haitian did not seem to be a major theme in Patrick’s upbringing. In response to the question of whether he encountered discrimination or prejudice while growing up, he says “Not that I can remember.” He also states “Growing up in the Bahamas was real good for me. Hmmm, shucks I grew up like any normal kid would grow up....Even being of Haitian descent really wasn’t any different for me....I was just another child in the neighborhood.” Patrick also reveals that he did not really grow up

²⁸³ Agnes Szabo and Colleen Ward, “Identity Development during Cultural Transition: The Role of Social-Cognitive Identity Processes.” *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 46, (2015): 13.

around a lot of Haitians. The most interaction he had with Haitians growing up was in church, and so most of his childhood friends were Bahamian. Additionally, Patrick's citizenship process was not as emotionally arduous as Eric or most interviewees in the study. Although Eric did not have to physically travel to the Department of Immigration and go through the application process because his mother had received her citizenship when he was seventeen thus granting Eric citizenship as well, he held many pains from the experiences growing up not belonging anywhere. Patrick did not express this same sentiment, and when it came time to apply for citizenship, it took only six months for him to receive his citizenship and passport. And so, these experiences alone represent a major difference between Patrick's and Eric's lived reality as children of Haitian descent in the Bahamas.

In response to the question of how he identifies himself, as Haitian-Bahamian, Haitian, Bahamian, or something else, Patrick rather simply articulates "Just a man. A human being." When pressed further, Patrick continues saying "I don't see myself as any of those things. We're all human beings. You could classify me as that if you want but technically I don't even know where I sit to tell you the truth. I might carry a document that says I have Bahamian citizenship....But I also have blood ties, blood ties to another country." Regarding his connection to both the Bahamas and Haiti, Patrick declares "For me it never comes up. It's never an issue. So, to say I identify with being a Bahamian, to say I identify with being a Haitian, I really don't because I could go anywhere. I love Bahamian things. I love Bahamian music. I love Bahamian culture. Bahamian art. But, the same thing with the Haitians. Love Haitian music. Really gotten in tune with Haitian culture now. Haitian history. Bahamian history." And so, Patrick does not shape his identity as specifically Bahamian or Haitian or even both. However, when pressed further, he states "If I was to say that I can identify with a culture, I'd say I identify with

Bahamian culture. I would say that I identify with Bahamian culture, but my Haitian heritage is still strong.”

These last statements from Patrick are important because it shows that although he views himself as an individual first, he still connects and constructs parts of his identity in relation to a social group based upon nationality and/or ethnicity. He just chooses not to label his identity according to either, but it does not mean he does not identify with both groups. In “Self and Social Identity,” Naomi Ellemers, Russell Spears, and Bertjan Doosje argue that “rather than trying to decide whether the individual self or the collective self is more important, we think a more fruitful approach is to specify the conditions under which one is likely to take precedence over the other, and with what effect.”²⁸⁴ The authors assert that the social context plays an important role in how one’s connection with an identity, as individuals carry a multitude of social identities simultaneously, manifests itself. As discussed thus far in this dissertation, Haitians in the Bahamas are exposed to varying levels of discrimination, exclusion, and xenophobia. As shown in this chapter, this impacts how they have come to identify with and embrace both identities. Earlier in his interview, before Eric states, “I’m just who I am. It doesn’t matter to me,” he initially shared that he chooses what to say about his identity, “Depending on who I’m talking to and if I feel like the person is defensive about culture and all that other stuff. I pick my battles.” This suggests that social context plays a very important role in the way Eric negotiates his identity and when he chooses to identify with a particular group or both. But it is also clear that the ostracism in the Bahamas has resulted in Eric identifying as an individual.

This last point is important because “the extent to which group characteristics and group processes affect the social self may differ from one group member to the next, depending on the

²⁸⁴ Ellemers, Spears, Doosje, “Self and Social Identity,” 163.

extent to which they consider themselves in terms of that particular group memberships.”²⁸⁵ As discussed, it is clear Patrick and Eric have very different experiences which has impacted how they see themselves. This is true regardless of the fact that both identify as individual. I argue this because the processes for how they reached that identification were completely different. Patrick has less resentment than Eric, if any. For Patrick, he chooses individual because he views himself as cultured beyond the confines of a national or ethnic identity but also because “For [him] it never comes up. It’s never an issue.” Patrick has never felt the tension of having to choose an identity or being ascribed an identity from others as many interviewees in this study have experienced. Because of this, Patrick’s construction of his identity is not connected to a label related to nationality or heritage. He equally values both cultures as well as other cultures and histories.

During our interview, Patrick communicates that he could not really speak Creole until he was in his twenties. He wanted to learn Creole because he was becoming more active in church. The congregation is a mixture of immigrants (with little to no English proficiency) and those born and raised in the Bahamas who speak English and most likely Haitian Creole as well. And so, learning Haitian Creole would allow Patrick to be able to converse with other members and participate in sermons which are often in Haitian Creole. However, learning Creole was rooted in something deeper and bigger. It was not really about being Haitian but the desire to be multi-lingual. Patrick says,

I’m trying to learn French, to learn more French. I can definitely understand some and read French. Like I say, for me, I don’t know, it’s nothing like cultural behind it or heritage behind it. It’s just not that. It’s just, for me, it’s just good to be more than just Chinese. Just be more than just that. Because the world is more than that you know. The world is more than that. I don’t only know Bahamians. I don’t only know Haitians. I know Americans. I know Puerto Ricans. I know, uh, people from France. I know people from Canada. Shucks, I even know someone from

²⁸⁵ “Ibid., 164.

Greenland. Swedish people. Danish people. Norwegians. Dutch people I know. A lot of people, so it's more than just that.

Patrick's perception of self is not confined to or defined by his legal status or his cultural roots. Patrick loves his country and loves Haiti and Haitian people as well, but he also views himself more cosmopolitan, as a person of the world. Importantly, this is not specific to his own identity construction but also that people in general should aspire to be more diverse, hence his statement that it is good to be more than Chinese. Regardless of identifying as an individual, as discussed, Patrick still connects parts of his identity to being Haitian and Bahamian, and this fact is reinforced in the rearing of his child. When asked if it is important that his daughter learns Creole, Patrick replies "It's important not because she's of Haitian descent, but I feel, I feel languages are important. I feel being bilingual is important. So if she can get that and have a second language, I feel that is important. But I would still definitely like her to learn about her Haitian culture. Learn about as many cultures as you can. Because, again, I feel like I'm a world person, a global person. Not just a Bahamian or a Haitian." Although languages in general are important, Haitian Creole is important because she is of Haitian descent meaning that he identifies with his Haitian heritage and that his Haitian heritage is important to him.

The final respondent, Destiny, fits somewhere in between Eric and Patrick. Like Eric, Destiny questions the idea of belonging to the Bahamas and Haiti and, like Patrick, expresses a balance and love for both cultures. When asked about how she identified herself, Destiny communicates "I identify myself as Destiny. First of all. My name is Destiny and that's who I am. See what I'm saying. A race doesn't make me. A nationality doesn't make me. I am who I am." She continues her thought by saying "Now, as it relates to legal status, I am a Bahamian of Haitian descent....But I'm Destiny first. I'm a human being is what I'm trying to say. You know, so, if it comes to a point where I have to identify myself legally for legal reasons or for national

reasons when it comes to documents, I'm a Bahamian of Haitian descent." And so, even though Destiny acknowledges that she is a citizen of the Bahamas while simultaneously recognizing that she constructs her identity as a human, as a person. Again, although she constructs herself as a human, as a person, Destiny also still remains connected to group identities. As a Bahamian of Haitian descent, Destiny views parts of herself as parts of those groups. She is legally a Bahamian, and her family is from Haiti which, as she asserts, is "a part of me that's never going to go away."

Like Eric, it is possible that the decision to construct her identity as being just herself is rooted in notions of not belonging to either the Bahamas or Haiti in her upbringing and in her citizenship. In response to a question concerning how she became used to the discrimination she and other Haitians experienced as a result of their heritage, Destiny answers "They have a sort of umm thing going where you're neither Haitian or Bahamian. You see what I'm saying. Because when you go to the Haitian people they look at you as Bahamian. When you go to the Bahamian people, once they find out that you are of Haitian heritage, they consider you a Haitian. So, where do I fit in? What am I? You see what I'm saying? What am I really?" This thought is quite similar to Eric's position on identity, being Haitian, and being Bahamian. Her documents do not necessarily define her identity because for the majority of her life she did not have Bahamian or Haitian citizenship. And so, although Eric, Patrick, and Destiny all identified first as an autonomous human being, it is clear that Haitian and Bahamian identities still impact the individual identity. Being a person of Haitian descent born in the Bahamas still matters in important ways.

“The Root of the Tree is Africa:”
Ideas of a Black/African/Pan African Identity

There were two other interviewees who did not situate their identity in a national identity. However, unlike Eric, Patrick, and Destiny, who individualized their identity by simply stating “I’m just me,” “A race doesn’t make me,” or “A nationality doesn’t make me,” participants Donald and Cedric situated their identity in a broader context of blackness eliminating the restrictions often produced by national boundaries. Identifying as black and/or African represented an identity that was not limited to national borders or regional constraints while simultaneously creating unity based on a shared heritage and history within the Bahamas and the larger Caribbean. This shared heritage and unity is rooted in Africa, the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, and the cultural and historical bonds that glue the African diaspora together.

Donald and Cedric share some basic characteristics. They were both men, had acquired Bahamian citizenship, and had careers. Donald had an Associate’s degree in electrical engineering and employed in IT, and Cedric worked for the Department of Immigration. In terms of ideas of their identity, Donald and Cedric both state that the root of their identity is African. When I asked Donald if he identifies as being Haitian, Haitian-Bahamian, or Bahamian, he quickly retorts, “I describe myself as neither.” Donald went on to elaborate, “In my eyes, I’m just black. That’s how I see it. I don’t consider myself like say a nationality. So I just think of myself as another guy in the town that’s trying to do what I got to do.” In a similar question, Cedric explains that he identifies himself “As a person of African descent.” Even though both recognized their Haitian heritage and had Bahamian citizenship, neither respondent defined themselves by a nationality but instead by their African identity. For example, after explaining that he identifies as being black, Donald states “My passport says Bahamian. My family says I’m Haitian. I was born and raised here. This is all I know. I mean, I visited other places. I’ve been to

Haiti. I've been to the U.S. But it's still, at the end of the day I look at it like all of that doesn't make sense. We all still black." Not only is Donald situating his own identity in blackness but recognizes those around him, whether Bahamian or Haitian, as black as well.

Cedric also defines himself as a person of African descent, "But there's a reason," he says. He continues, "The reason for that is Haitian, I see it as only a denominator. There's more value when they say I'm a Haitian of African descent. So you ascribe to the epics. The epic is Africa. When you go down and say I'm a Haitian, then you devalue." Cedric continues, "I wouldn't say I don't see myself as Haitian...but my value system is more on the African identity. Probably before, [when] I was in Africa, I wasn't no Haitian. I was an African." Cedric went on to say, "It's a part of our DNA. Being African. You can't devalue it." Like Donald, Cedric recognizes his Haitian heritage, but at the core of their being is an identity that is rooted in being a person of African descent. However, the point of devaluing made by Cedric is important and should not be ignored. As Cedric explains:

You know of the history of Haiti that when you say you're Haitian you're basically saying you're a black man. And because of that, even the term Haiti, there's some political terms with saying I'm Haitian. You can be black. They saying I'm a black man from a black man. I'm a Haitian. But over the years it's been devalued to only a national. It's been devalued to a confined space. But historically it wasn't to a confined space. Being Haitian meant I'm a proud black man from Africa. I have all the capabilities just as the white man.

Cedric's statement references two important ideas. First, after becoming the first black nation to free itself from slavery and colonialism in 1804 from the French, the Republic of Haiti's constitution declared all Haitians to be black in an attempt to create national unity. According to Patrick Bellegarde-Smith (2004), "'Black pride' was a major factor in the wars of independence, and 'race' remains one of the most important criteria in the overall definition of Haitian nationality. In the context of Haitian history and demography, national pride and racial pride

have been almost synonymous.”²⁸⁶ Additionally, Haiti represented an international image of blackness and freedom as it extended its arms to enslaved and oppressed people elsewhere as a place of refuge, equality, and humanity. A great example of this is the 1817 case in which seven enslaved Africans from Jamaica escaped to southern Haiti. An international case ensued as their enslaver, James McKowen, tried to reclaim his lost property, but President Alexandre Pétion refused to return them, instead offering them legal protection as afforded in the Haitian constitution of 1816. According to Article 44, “All Africans and Indians, and the descendants of their blood, born in the colonies or in foreign countries, who come to reside in the Republic will be recognized as Haitians, but will enjoy the right to citizenship only after one year of residence.”²⁸⁷ Other scholars such as Chris Dixon discuss the importance of Haiti as the world’s first independent black republic for people of African descent in the United States during the nineteenth century. Haiti not only represented an alternative place for repatriation and liberation but also helped form ideas of Black Nationalism.²⁸⁸ Cedric emphasizes this point when he asserts “That when the powers that be in Haiti were encouraging all black men that were rejected in America to come to Haiti. So Haiti was like the symbolic Africa. It may take you a long journey to go to Africa but you can come here. This is Africa. Haiti is the capital. It is the Africa of the Caribbean.”

Second, Cedric is addressing the issues associated with nationalism and national identity and how it becomes counterproductive to black unity and economic and political freedom. Nationalism disrupts African unity. According to Cedric, Haiti being confined to a nationality is

²⁸⁶ Patrick Bellegarde-Smith, *Haiti: The Breached Citadel*, Toronto: Canadian Scholars’ Press Inc., 2004, 19.

²⁸⁷ Ada Ferrer, “Haiti, Free Soil, and Antislavery in the Revolutionary Atlantic.” *The American Historical Review* Vol. 117, No. 1 (February 2012): 43.

²⁸⁸ Chris Dixon, *African America and Haiti: Emigration and Black Nationalism in the Nineteenth Century*, (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2000).

translated to mean that when you say “you’re from Haiti. You’re only from a poor space in this hemisphere.” Cedric argues that this is rooted in slavery and colonialism and the hierarchy associated with being Anglophone and Francophone in the Caribbean and rooting that history to a confined space. And so, identifying with a nationality “it devalues...you’re against another African because of his geographical space. So nationalism devalues the whole concept of what it means to be African.” And so, nationalism, according to Cedric, “it creates that confusion so that we as black people won’t see the broader principle. You become the threat. I become the threat. It’s not the system that oppresses you and I but you. The system put us up against each other. But it’s not us. It’s them.” Cedric seemingly operates out of a Pan African ideology because he bypasses nationalism for the sake of African unity and recognizes the political and economic barriers presented to people of African descent globally as a result of enslavement and colonialism. Although Pan Africanism as an ideology and practice predates the twentieth century, it did not become a term until Henry Sylvester Williams “called a conference of black people to ‘...protest stealing of lands in the colonies, racial discrimination and deal with all other issues of interest to blacks’” in 1900.²⁸⁹ Pan Africanism has grown as an ideology and movement but the origins are rooted in African enslavement and colonization, “Back to Africa” movements, and the political and economic struggles of African people (at home and abroad) against slavery and colonialism by European powers on the continent.²⁹⁰ Throughout the twentieth century, the term and movement has expanded to be inclusive of liberation for women and the African diaspora which, like Africa, also suffers from neocolonialism.²⁹¹

²⁸⁹ Tajudeen Abdul-Raheem “Introduction: Reclaiming Africa for Africans—Pan Africanism: 1900-1994,” in *Pan Africanism: Politics, Economy and Social Change in the Twenty-First Century*. Edited by Tajudeen Abdul-Raheem, 1-30. (Washington Square, New York: New York University Press, 1996) 1.

²⁹⁰ Ibid.

²⁹¹ Horace Campbell and Rodney Worrell, *Pan-Africanism, Pan-Africanists, and African Liberation in the 21st Century: Two Lectures*. (Washington, DC: New Academia Publishing, LLC, 2006); William Ackah, “Pan-African

However, one of the key issues for Pan Africanists in the face of imperialism and neocolonialism was the issue of nationalism.²⁹² Nationalism in the African diaspora is often counter-productive to Pan Africanism because it works against the interest of common goals and beliefs for colonized Africans on the continent and diaspora.²⁹³ The issue of nationalism and the tension and disillusion of unity it creates in the African diaspora is clearly manifested in the relations between Bahamians and Haitians in the Bahamas. According to Donald, “I noticed that...it’s only when you start to like force your nationality on people is when they start to feel some type of way. And they start to give you a negative response. They feel as if their nationality is being threatened in a way.” I asked Donald to further explain what he meant by being threatened. He explains, “Once a life form feels threatened, it feel like it must defend itself....You’re violating my personal space here. So now when as a Haitian, right, ‘cus we Haitians, we tend to be very patriotic, so they flash their flag. They be like, ‘Oh, I’m Haitian...’ And then you in a fort, that’s like saying, ‘You know what? This is my kingdom. You from another kingdom. You come into my kingdom. You’re just visiting.’” Donald is arguing that Bahamians tend to feel threatened by Haitians. The idea of feeling threatened has occurred in this dissertation specifically as it relates to speaking Creole and Bahamians’ perception of Haitians as a threat to their national and cultural sovereignty. When Donald says, “You come into my kingdom. You’re just visiting,” he is reinforcing the notion that Bahamians envision Haitians as foreigners who are, in many ways, invading their space. From Cedric and Donald’s perspectives, Bahamians ignore the larger socioeconomic and political forces that propel Haitians to migrate

Consciousness and Identity: Reflections on the Twentieth Century,” in *Black Identity in the 20th Century: Expressions of the US and UK African Diaspora*, Edited by Mark Christian, 3-33. (Hertfordshire, England: Hansib Publications, 2002).

²⁹² Kwame Nkrumah, *Africa Must Unite*. London: PANAF Books, 2007.

²⁹³ Ackah, “Pan-African Consciousness and Identity,” 2002.

from their homeland. It has been noted by scholars that Bahamians and the Bahamian media often fail to place the migration within a larger context.²⁹⁴ The lack of a broader historical and contemporary understanding of economic exploitation and neocolonialism often results in, as Donald asserts, “Bahamians [having] this concept or this view on Haitians that they’re plotting.”

Although Donald understands Bahamians’ position claiming “I don’t blame them in a way,” he also challenges the idea of Haitians as foreigners. In response to the idea of the root of Bahamians and Haitians identity as black, Donald explains,

‘Cus if you want to get tech, if they want to get technical, ok let’s get technical then. You say oh you were born here? Ok. So that makes you Bahamian? Alright. I was born here too so what does that make me? ‘Oh, you’re not Bahamian, you’re a Haitian.’ Ok. Why am I Haitian? ‘Because of your parents.’ Ok. Cool. Let’s go with that. Alright, in that case then let’s go back down your tree, your family tree and last time I checked, black people weren’t always here. You feel me. Before this was discovered no one was here. Technically, you’re not even Bahamian. You’re African then. So it’s no way you could fight it. Like, why you putting all this labels on it when at the end of the day we all came from the same place. That’s it. We just have different cultures, different leafs. And different opinions on things. But we all still black. That’s one thing we can’t change.

And so, although Donald can understand Bahamians’ point of view because it is their country, he still asserts that blackness is the root of Bahamian and Haitian identity and that root is what should make them one. However, like Cedric asserts, nationalism and a national identity has divided both groups. “It all boils down to the economics within the confined space,” Cedric replies. “You’ve been socialized to view that next man as a threat to your space. But at the same way that we have been socialized to view that man as a threat to your space...you don’t belong to this space either...Like Bob Marley said, any time you holding the gun at the brother but when you realize the underlying confusion that you and your brother to have it.” And so, “It’s confusion within the diaspora and it boils down to nationalism.” And so, then there is no unity

²⁹⁴ College of the Bahamas, “Haitians in the Bahamas,” 2005.

based on the common (historical) experiences of oppression and exploitation as people of African descent. Instead, Bahamians feel Haitians are a threat to their national and cultural sovereignty which minimizes the larger issues faced by both nations such as the issue of political independence but not economic independence.

“I’m a Bahamian [and] My Background Should Not be Public Knowledge:”

Ideas of a Bahamian Identity

Elide and Wilma were the only interviewees to define their identity as Bahamian. Elide, a young woman in her early thirties, is a teacher at a local high school. As a child, Elide says that she grew up around more Bahamians than Haitians. Even though her neighborhood had more Bahamians than Haitians, Elide did not heavily socialize with either because her parents did not allow her to go outside that often. But even as an adult, Elide says that most of her friends are Bahamian. As a child, Elide reveals that she had been teased in school for being Haitian but that she never allowed those things to bother her. A part of her strength came from her parents. Elide communicates, “I grew up with parents who had already instilled in us from young, you’re a minority in this country. But you have to aspire to greater than what we have or what we’ve achieved. And so from young I never allowed those kind of things to bother me.” Elide also conveys that her parents told her and her siblings that they were foreigners. “They would say that they were foreign in this country, and, in essence, we were foreigners....So we knew that, you know what, our parents are Haitian so we’re Haitian. So until you get to that point where you can apply for Bahamian citizenship you cannot claim to Bahamian status. And so their thing was, we’re Haitian. We’re foreigners.” Elide reveals that her Haitian heritage did not necessarily make her feel different but special. She felt special “because I knew that, ok, I had an extra advantage that some kids didn’t have. Alright. I could go home and speak Creole....I knew I had

a gift. I knew that I was intelligent. So it didn't matter if other kids tried to make me feel as if I didn't belong or whatever have you." And so, the combination of her Haitian heritage and parental guidance propelled Elide to aspire to greater things.

As it specifically relates to her identity, Elide asserts, "I identify myself as a Bahamian because legally that's who I am. A Bahamian." When I asked why she considers herself purely Bahamian and not a Bahamian of Haitian descent, Elide proclaims, "Because I feel that when you add, when you have an identity, right, you don't say I'm a Bahamian from Cat Island. Or I'm a Bahamian with Andros roots or whatever have you, right. I'm just a Bahamian.... The other thing with the Haitian descent shouldn't matter because everyone has a heritage. Everyone has a background. And my background should not be public knowledge." Elide's decision to not state "of Haitian descent" may be a political choice as well. Elide continues, "Because when you begin to say I'm a Bahamian of Haitian descent then that opens up a whole can of worms. And then it leads to discussions and questions and things like that. I mean, who has time for all of that?" The questions Elide refers to are grounded in ideas of being a "true" Bahamian. However, the choice of simply stating "I'm a Bahamian" without adding the qualifier "of Haitian descent" does not eliminate others' ability to question how authentic of a Bahamian she really is. After stating that she defines herself as a Bahamian, Elide says, "Now granted people see your surname, you may have a Bahamian passport. People see your surname and they say 'Where's your surname from?'So I would normally tell if someone be like, 'OK, I'm a Bahamian but my parents are Haitian.' Simple. Of course people want to go into details. 'Oh were you born here? Did you marry a Bahamian?' And all of that." And so, the obsession to know if one is a "true" Bahamian cannot be escaped with the decision to not include the qualifier "of Haitian descent" to her identity. As long as one is Haitian and/or has a Haitian surname, one may always

be exposed to questions and comments which question ideas of their legality and right to belonging in the Bahamas.

Even though not adding “of Haitian descent” may be an indication of a political act/decision, Elide may also simply see herself as Bahamian. First, her documents designate her status as Bahamian. She has a Bahamian passport. She is a Bahamian citizen. However, it may also be related to how she culturally understands large parts of herself. In response to whether, upon reflection, she always considered herself Bahamian, Elide replies, “Maybe subconsciously. I probably always did consider myself, probably because I spent most of my time around Bahamians. And even though society labeled me as a Haitian, the people I was around was like ‘Oh you’re not a Haitian. You’re a Bahamian. You’re born here.’” According to social identity theory, “...the individual perceives him- or herself as similar to others of the same background (the we), but social identity also refers to a difference, to a specificity of that we in connection with members of other groups or categories (the them)...The stronger the identification with a group, the more significant the differentiation of that group from other groups will be.”²⁹⁵ Elide sees herself as Bahamian (and not Haitian or a Bahamian of Haitian descent) because this is the group that she identifies with the most.

According to Elide, “I see myself as a Bahamian simply because I grew up in a Bahamian society. Most of what I know culturally is more Bahamian than Haitian. Because really and truly, you’re not going to get much of Haitian culture here in the Bahamas...I know more of the Bahamas, more of the Bahamian culture than of Haiti. I can’t really identify with a true Haitian, you know.” Very importantly, Elide notes, “Yes I may choose to call myself a Bahamian. Other

²⁹⁵Jean-Claude Deschamps and Thierry Devos, “Regarding the Relationship between Social Identity and Personal Identity.” In *Social Identity: International Perspectives*, edited by Stephen Worchel, J. Francisco Morales, Darío Páez, and Jean-Claude Deschamps, 1-12. (London: SAGE Publications, 1998) 3.

people may say you're a Haitian-Bahamian. Then people may be like, 'Oh you're a Bahamian of Haitian descent.' But me calling myself a Bahamian, I never deny my Haitian roots. So I don't even see that as being of importance." This point is particularly important because the acceptance of one culture or nationality does not necessarily translate to the negation of the other. Elide made a personal choice to define herself as Bahamian, however, she does not deny her Haitian culture or heritage. In "Socially Embedded Identities," Kerry Ann Rockquemore and David L. Burnsma discuss the processes of racial identity and the assumption that people of black and white descent only choose between black or biracial in terms of identity. However, their research shows that these individuals construct various identities which are shaped depending on an individual's structural location. Importantly, individuals of black and white descent do not have to choose (or pledge allegiance to) an exclusively white or black identity.²⁹⁶ Instead, there is a fluidity that exists which allows these individuals to move back and forth between black, white, and biracial depending on the "interactional setting and cultural community."²⁹⁷ Although this research is not concerned with biracial identity, it is useful for understanding the fluidity that exists in identities. Elide's decision to call herself Bahamian does not mean that she is only pledging allegiance to a Bahamian identity while negating her Haitian heritage. As the social identity literature suggests, Elide simply has a stronger identification with her Bahamian identity.

Elide's decision to define herself as a Bahamian and not a Bahamian of Haitian descent brings into question important notions of what it means to be Bahamian and ideas of a Bahamian national identity. According to Evelyn McCollin (2002),

²⁹⁶ Kerry Ann Rockquemore, Kerry Ann and David L. Burnsma. "Socially Embedded Identities: Theories, Typologies, and Processes of Racial Identity among Black/White Biracials." *The Sociological Quarterly* Vol. 43, No. 3 (2002): 335-356.

²⁹⁷ Ibid. 338.

In this age of globalization many countries are engaged in redefining national identity and citizenship. A nation, however defined, is thought to be a relatively homogeneous entity with shared characteristics which transcend the internal divisions of class, status and region. All forms of nationalism address the issue of identity. Identity is based on group solidarity, a sense that a certain people belong naturally together, and share a common history and culture, which distinguish them from others. It is a sort of collective consciousness generated by “ways of life” and is sometimes referred to as a group’s ethnicity.²⁹⁸

Every nation is imagined to be a homogeneous entity suggesting that they are culturally distinct from other nations. Yet, “nations that have to face an intense process of immigration by minority groups with their own forms of culture and social organization have been forced to ask whether they have a distinct identity of their own.”²⁹⁹ Immigration, especially in large forms, poses a perceived threat to a nation’s identity. This is true for Haitians as Bahamians perceive Haitian immigration as a threat to the national and cultural sovereignty of the Bahamas. They literally fear the impact of Haitian immigration on the Bahamian nation-state.³⁰⁰ The fear of Haitians changing the Bahamian nation-state and national identity is so real and ingrained in the Bahamian imagination that the term “Haitianization” has been used to describe the perceived dangers and threats Haitian immigration pose to the Bahamian nation.³⁰¹

Interestingly, although Haitians are perceived as a threat to the national and cultural sovereignty and homogeneity of the Bahamas, the Bahamas already has a history of Caribbean, British, and American immigration which has shaped the Bahamas in profound ways. According to Bertin Louis, “Bahamian identity has a diverse base that contains African, American, British, Gullah, and Haitian elements and stems from a history of slavery, migration throughout the

²⁹⁸ McCollin, “Resistance and the Impact of Caribbean Immigration,” 43.

²⁹⁹ Ibid., 43.

³⁰⁰ Louis, *My Soul is in Haiti*, 2015; Craton, “The Bahamian Self and the Haitian Other,” 1995; Pelerin, “Blackness of a Different Color,” 2013; College of the Bahamas, “Haitians in the Bahamas,” 2005; McCollins, “Resistance and the Impact of Caribbean Immigration,” 2002.

³⁰¹ Pelerin, “Blackness of a Different Color,” 160.

Caribbean, and in-migration from other areas of the Caribbean.”³⁰² Additionally, “the physical interposition of the Bahamas between the United States and the rest of the Caribbean...has meant that the Bahamas has also absorbed the impact of cultural expressions radiating from larger Caribbean nations such as Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago.”³⁰³ American influence stems back to the American Revolution and the Loyalists who migrated to the Bahamas. A number of scholars cite the arrival of the Loyalists as a significant turning point in Bahamian history.³⁰⁴ The settlement of the Loyalists would alter the economic, political, social, and cultural development of the Bahamas. They would introduce and try to maintain a plantation economy based on the cotton system of the southern United States.³⁰⁵ By the era of emancipation, a small white merchant class consisting of Loyalists and descendants of the Loyalists had gained a political and economic monopoly of the Bahamas. This minority rule would last well into the twentieth century and play a critical role in the political, economic, and social development of the Bahamas.³⁰⁶ Importantly, American influence has continued throughout the twentieth century as black Bahamians migrated to Key West and Miami for work in the early twentieth century, the close proximity of southern Florida to the Bahamas, and the role of tourism in the Bahamian economy particularly Nassau. As it relates to African influence, it is important to note that there were a variety of African ethnic groups who came to the Bahamas with their own culture instead of one single culture.³⁰⁷

³⁰² Louis, *My Soul is in Haiti*, 61-62.

³⁰³ Rommen, “Home Sweet Home,” 74.

³⁰⁴ Peters, “The American Loyalists,” 1962; Craton, *A-Z of Bahamas Heritage*, 2007; Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream*, 1992; Johnson, “A Modified Form of Slavery,” 1986; Laurie A. Wilkie and Paul Farnsworth, *Sampling Many Pots: An Archaeology of Memory and Tradition at a Bahamian Plantation*. (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2005); Howard Johnson, *The Bahamas in Slavery and Freedom. Bahamas*. (James Currey, 1991); Whittington Johnson *Race Relations in the Bahamas, 1784-1834: The Nonviolent Transformation from a Slave to a Free Society*. (Arkansas: University of Arkansas Press, 2001).

³⁰⁵ Johnson, “A Modified Form of Slavery,” 1986.

³⁰⁶ Wilkie and Farnsworth, *Sampling Many Pots*, 2005; Johnson, “A Modified Form of Slavery,” 1986.

³⁰⁷ Wilkie and Farnsworth, *Sampling Many Pots*, 2005

As a former British colony and a member of Commonwealth of Nations, the Bahamas has a long and continued relationship and influence from British culture. British influence ranges from language, English names, structure of government, history, to the statue of Queen Victoria which is located in Parliament Square in downtown Nassau.³⁰⁸ Caribbean influence (particularly Haitian, Jamaican, Guyanese, and Barbadian) has been equally powerful. In the late nineteenth and early to mid-twentieth century, Barbadians were recruited as constables and policemen and skilled artisans. “Barbadians contributed significantly to the development of society, politics, and economics in the Bahamas.”³⁰⁹ Although Jamaican labor was largely undocumented, some were recruited as professionals for government service and agriculture. Jamaicans were very influential in the area of politics and society especially through the spread of influence of Marcus Garvey and the development of trade unions in the early twentieth century. In the 1980s, Guyanese teachers were recruited as well as other professionals such as judges and draftsmen.³¹⁰

The idea of a Bahamian national identity is a contested topic within the country. According to Nicolette Bethel (2005), “it is not at all uncommon for Bahamian intellectuals to assert that the Bahamas has little or no sense of national identity. Often discussions of the topic are greeted with raised eyebrows and comments like ‘National identity? And what is that?’ or ‘We don’t have a national identity.’”³¹¹ These questions are rooted in the alleged inability to locate a distinct Bahamian culture. But based on these historical realities discussed above, one can assert that to be Bahamian is a mixture of British, African, American, and Caribbean influence. And so, when Elide says that she is a Bahamian and does not need to add her Haitian heritage, she is also addressing larger notions of a Bahamian identity which is rooted in a variety

³⁰⁸ Bethel, “Roots or Routes,” 2005.

³⁰⁹ Tinker, *The Migration of Peoples*, 4.

³¹⁰ Tinker, *The Migration of Peoples*, 2011.

³¹¹ Bethel, “Roots or Routes,” 1.

of ethnic, racial, and national identities. Elide, a Bahamian citizen with Haitian heritage, possibly represents exactly what it means to be Bahamian. Instead of a homogeneous identity, maybe the Bahamian identity is heterogeneous.

Although Wilma did not have her Bahamian citizenship at the time of the study, she too identifies herself as a Bahamian. Wilma understood her identity to be Haitian-Bahamian until she was told otherwise. When asked how she identifies, Wilma replies “I don’t even know what to call myself because when I went...I was applying for something. And I asked the lady, ‘Should I put Bahamian or Haitian? Should I put Bahamian because I’m born here or should I put Haitian because my parents are Haitian?’ And she told me, ‘There’s no such thing as Haitian-Bahamian.’” Wilma continues, “Because I grow up saying Haitian-Bahamian all my life. But she said there’s no such thing as Haitian-Bahamian. Either you’re Haitian or Bahamian. So I from now on, I started using Haitian.” Wilma’s statement reflects the fact that identity is fluid and constantly shifting based on time and space. Although Wilma has battled with how others have defined her, she declares, “I define myself as a Bahamian.” She stated “Because I’m born here obviously I’m a Bahamian. It doesn’t matter what my parents are...I grew up here. This is the only place, Nassau is the only place or country I’ve ever stepped for it.”

Unlike Elide, Wilma appears to be negotiating conflicting ascriptions of identity. In “Black and Latino,” Benjamin Bailey discuss how second-generation Dominicans negotiate their identity in American society which has historically categorized race and racial identities differently. Due to phenotype and the fact that many Dominicans are of African descent, second-generation Dominicans are assumed to be African Americans by others but when asked about their racial identity tend to define themselves as Spanish or Dominican.³¹² As such, an

³¹² Bailey, “Black and Latino,”2006.

individual's social identity takes form in two ways: "'self-ascription'—how one defines oneself—and 'ascription by others'—how others define one."³¹³ Constructing and understanding her identity is wracked with tension as Elide battles between how others define her and how she wants to define herself. Elide has been told by others that she is Haitian, not Bahamian. At the times she defined herself as Haitian, she did so due to the "ascription by others." However, in terms of "self-ascription," Elide believes herself to be Bahamian.

Wilma's decision to call herself Bahamian is based in the fact that she was born and raised in the Bahamas. "I was born here, and I was raised here," says Wilma. "Like they tell me to call myself Haitian, and I started calling myself Haitian because there's nothing like a Haitian-Bahamian. So I started calling myself Haitian even though I didn't know nothing about Haiti. But I personally feel like I was born here so I'm supposed to be a Bahamian. And that's what I believe I truly am." Despite how others see her identity, Wilma believes that she is Bahamian because she was born and raised in the Bahamas. Yet, it is also possible that Wilma rejects the term Haitian because of the way Haitians are treated in Bahamian society. As Wilma explicates, "When you listen to the talk shows, they have something to say about Haitians. It's just getting to the point, you don't even, like my coworker told me it look like I'm embarrassed to say I'm a Haitian and sometimes I am." Wilma continues, "Because I'm scared of what people might think or what they might say. So it's gotten so hard. As soon as I get my passport, my intent is to move...and to never come back. I could care less about the Bahamas now." Although Wilma has the right to consider herself Bahamian because she was born and raised in the Bahamas, it is also possible that the xenophobia towards Haitians influences her decision to identify as Bahamian.

³¹³ Ibid., 287.

“I Cannot Throw Away One and Keep Another:”
Ideas of a Bahamian-of-Haitian-Descent Identity

As Elide and Wilma chose to identify as a Bahamian, there were five interviewees who also chose to identify as Bahamian but specifically as a Bahamian of Haitian descent. Three of the interviewees were women and two were men. All of the interviewees, with the exception of one, had received their Bahamian citizenship. With the exception of the non-Bahamian citizen, the interviewees in this category appeared to base their identity on the Bahamas being the land of their birth, their status as Bahamian citizens, and the recognition of their Haitian heritage. In some cases, defining oneself as a Bahamian of Haitian descent is connected to the notion that you are not a “true” Bahamian. This decision is based on the interpretation of responses from Bahamians and their lived experiences as Haitians in the Bahamas.

For those with Bahamian citizenship, the decision to define oneself as Bahamian is connected to both one’s legal status as well as being born and raised in the Bahamas. For example, Rita says, “I’m a Bahamian of Haitian descent. That’s me...The minute I have my blue book, I’m a Bahamian of Haitian descent.” Rita’s passport is an important aspect of her identity being defined as Bahamian. In response to a question concerning what makes someone a Bahamian, Rita articulates, “I guess, where you’re born is where you’re from. If you born in Haiti, you a Haitian. If you born in Nassau, you a Bahamian. If you born in America, you’re an American.” The Bahamas is the place of her birth, and Rita’s passport represents and authenticates that fact. Rita also feels that she is more Bahamian than Haitian. Again, this was related to the Bahamas being the country of her birth. “When you born somewhere” Rita declares, “and you have all the habit of that, I have to say more Bahamian. ‘Cus I born here. I don’t know nothing, you know, if I don’t go there and visit or read, I wouldn’t know nothing

about Haiti.” As discussed earlier in the analysis of biracial identity construction, the declaration of one identity does not deny the affection or presence of the other. “On Haitian flag day, I wear my Haitian colors. On Bahamian flag day I’ll wear their colors.” Although feeling more Bahamian, Rita admits “I’m very proud to be Haitian.” And so, her identity is a reflection of her legal status, place of birth, and her cultural connection to two spaces.

Ronald also connects his identity to his status and parental heritage. Ronald identifies himself as a “Bahamian of Haitian descent. Because that’s how the society makes it....My passport says Bahamian. Then I’m a Bahamian.” Despite having Bahamian citizenship, Ronald states that his Bahamian peers often reinforce that he is Haitian. Again, there is the battle between how others see his identity and how he identifies himself. Regardless of the “ascription by others,” Ronald firmly considers himself a Bahamian of Haitian descent because he is a citizen but also because of culture. Ronald identifies himself as Bahamian because “Culturally, for example, I’m a Junkanoo fanatic.³¹⁴ I love Bahamian food. Right after the culture which I love. I really know about the stories, about the history. So Bahamian...I embrace the culture.” But, and very importantly, “At the same time I embrace the Bahamian culture, I embrace the Haitian culture.” Ronald calls Haiti “a mix of motherland” acknowledging his connection to his parents’ country of birth and his own cultural connections to the nation. Ronald’s embrace of Haitian culture reflects his place in the Haitian diaspora as he recognizes Haiti as the motherland. In “Caribbean Families, Social Capital and Young People’s Diasporic Identities,” Tracey Reynolds argues that the family plays an important role in the development of an ethnic identity

³¹⁴ Junkanoo is considered to be the national symbol of the Bahamas. Junkanoo is similar to Carnival in Trinidad. The promotion of Junkanoo as the national symbol occurred in the post-Independence era as Bahamians searched for a distinct postcolonial identity. The promotion of Junkanoo as a national symbol also reinforces blackness as a national identity as Junkanoo was a festival celebrated by enslaved Africans. Interestingly, Junkanoo is not particular to the Bahamas but is present in other formerly enslaved Caribbean societies. See Timothy Rommen “Home Sweet Home: Junkanoo as National Discourse in the Bahamas” and Nicolette Bethel “Junkanoo in the Bahamas: A Tale of Identity.”

among second and third generation young people of Caribbean descent born and raised in Britain.³¹⁵ Through familial ties, second and third generation British Caribbean youth are able to celebrate their heritage. Importantly, “the function of these transnational networks is particularly important in a society where Caribbean young people often feel excluded and marginalized.”³¹⁶ This may help explain why, in the context of the Bahamas, Ronald (and other participants in this category) do not identify as Bahamian but as a Bahamian of Haitian descent. The ability (and maybe necessity) to link oneself to their ancestral homeland may provide a sense of belonging and membership not always felt in the Bahamas.

As shown, Ronald’s Haitian heritage is incredibly important to him. One area that this manifests was in discussion about his dating life. Ronald discloses “Even in a few relationships that I had, uh, the first time I’d meet a girl and we start to talk and everything like that. And that first thing I’d say is ‘Hey you know I’m of Haitian descent. So before we get any further, let me know if you want to continue’ and so on like that. And I haven’t any disregard in it, you know. But they continued on. And it was, it was good, you know.” When I inquired further as to why he felt the need to provide a disclaimer regarding his Haitian background, Ronald divulges, “Because I feel at the end of the day, it will come up. And I don’t want to hold anything against anybody....Simply because at the end of the day, when you get married or when we do get married or if we intend to get married, you’re going to take on my title....And you will be faced with persons asking, ‘Hey are you Haitian?’” Ronald displays a certain level of pride and comfort with the immediate announcement of his Haitian background. In a society hostile to Haitians and where Bahamians discredit Bahamian authenticity on the account of your surname,

³¹⁵ Tracey Reynolds, “Caribbean Families, Social Capital and Young People’s Diasporic Identities.” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* Vol. 29, No. 6, (2006) 1087-1103.

³¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 1096.

Ronald's open declaration and desire for his wife and children to carry his last name function as an indicator of the importance of his Haitian background. In fact, Ronald was married to a Bahamian woman and at the time of the interview she was pregnant with their first child.

Jessica also connects her identity to her status and heritage. Jessica defines herself as a Bahamian of Haitian descent "Because they say there's no such thing as a Haitian-Bahamian here. And because for me to get my passport, I had to actually give, I had to actually renounce the right, I had to renounce saying I'm not a Haitian anymore. So that in itself I can't call myself a Haitian. So I would say I'm a Bahamian of Haitian descent." Interestingly, Jessica says "So I would say I didn't consider myself a Bahamian until I gave up my right to be Haitian." In terms of the renunciation of her Haitian nationality to become Bahamian, she says "I had to actually raise my hand and give up that right....At that moment, I'm like, it feel like I give up all rights to say or to claim....And at the same time...I was going by what my documents say." This act of renunciation is extremely important because it played an important role in the way she identified herself. Growing up, she considered herself Haitian due to an "ascription by others." As a child, she was told she was not Bahamian, and her travel documents said Haitian. She says "like, when I was in school, I would call myself Haitian....Now, I would tell you I'm a Bahamian of Haitian descent. But then, I was just a Haitian." In an interesting way, Jessica's identity as a Bahamian of Haitian descent continues the pattern of accepting an ascribed identity from others. This time it is not through her peers but through Bahamian institutions. It was through the renunciation of her Haitian nationality and the retrieval of her Bahamian passport that she then began to identify as Bahamian.

This last part is extremely important because the change in Jessica's legal status is the primary reason she considers herself a Bahamian of Haitian descent. In response to a question

whether Bahamian citizenship changed how she defined herself, Jessica responds “It didn’t change who I was. It just changed how I worded things. Like, before my passport I’d say I was a Haitian. Now I’d say I’m a Bahamian of Haitian descent. It just changed how I would say it and how I would write it on paper. But that’s about it. It didn’t change me. Kind of.” However, the “Haitian descent” may also be connected to ideas of not belonging. Jessica expresses the sentiment, “I think people don’t want to fully call themselves a Bahamian. Because at the end of the day, people don’t consider us being a Bahamian. As being a complete breed Bahamian. So I could understand that, that’s why I say I’m a Bahamian of Haitian descent.” Jessica continues saying, “Some people would never want to say I’m Bahamian. Because they feel they are, wherever I go in this country, I still won’t be considered as a pure or regular, because of my last name, I still won’t be considered a regular Bahamian.”

In many ways, Marjorie resembles Jessica. “I go by Bahamian of Haitian descent because no matter what I’m never going to deny that I’m from Haitian background.” Marjorie continues, “Regardless of my Bahamian passport, I was Haitian before I was Bahamian. So I will always say I’m Bahamian because I’m a citizen of the Bahamas, but I will never stop saying that I’m of Haitian descent because it’s where I come from.” Marjorie went on to say “And that’s the heritage that I’m from so I see myself as a Bahamian of Haitian descent. Although people may say it doesn’t make any sense. But to me it does. I cannot throw away one and keep another. They go hand in hand. I mean, not hand in hand but for me in my case, they go together.” In this statement, Marjorie recognizes both of the cultures that she was exposed to. She is a Bahamian because she is a citizen of the country, and she is Haitian because of her parents.

Like Jessica, Marjorie expresses that before receiving her Bahamian citizenship, she defined herself as a Haitian because the Bahamian constitution did not consider her to be a

citizen. Although she now has Bahamian citizenship, Marjorie still feels like she is not truly Bahamian. According to Marjorie, “Regardless of my Bahamian citizenship, I was considered Haitian for twenty years of my life and feeling, being treated as one and being... a person who was discriminated as one, there’s nothing, well, nothing else I would say I’m connected to.” Although Marjorie considers the Bahamas home, she does not feel connected to the Bahamas beyond that. The discrimination she experienced for her entire life has contributed to her feelings of contempt toward the Bahamas. Unfortunately, Marjorie does not feel like much has changed since she received her Bahamian citizenship, stating that, “We’re not equal to the actual Bahamians. Because although we have the passport, they still go according to the name and what they consider to be French name and Haitian name and what’s Bahamian name.” Marjorie’s own use of the term “actual Bahamians” to refer to Bahamians who are not of Haitian descent reveals how deeply ingrained the idea of hierarchies of authenticity as it relates to Bahamian citizenship. Her statement suggests that there are differences and that she has internalized these differences in “true true” Bahamians and “paper” Bahamians. Additionally, although she has only been to Haiti once in her entire life, Marjorie feels more connected to Haiti than the Bahamas. She attributes this sentiment as having “a lot to do with growing up and experiencing what I experienced. It kind of didn’t matter to me because if I wasn’t accepted there was nothing else I could do or whatever to make me feel as if I am truly Bahamian.”

There was one respondent in this category who could not connect his identity to his status because at the time of the interview he did not have Bahamian status. However, he considers himself Bahamian because it is where he was born. According to Antoine, “I identify myself as being a Bahamian of Haitian descent.” When I inquired as to why, Antoine answers, “Because I was born in the Bahamas. Just like my mom and dad is Haitian so I identify myself as being a

Bahamian of Haitian descent.” So, Antoine’s identity as a Bahamian of Haitian descent is rooted in being born and raised in the Bahamas and his parents being Haitian. Antoine also states that “Mostly all parts of me is Bahamian. Because like I told you earlier that I was raised in a Bahamian household. Or a household not only Bahamian but even though my grandma was a Jamaican, it’s more like a Bahamian household. So, I don’t really know much about the Haitian part.” Unlike many of the interviewees in the study, Antoine did not grow up speaking Creole and was raised by his grandmother, who was Jamaican, for the majority of his life.

“I Don’t See Myself as Bahamian...I See Myself as Haitian”
Ideas of a Haitian Identity

There were eight interviewees (six women and two men) who identified as Haitian. Interestingly, and perhaps not surprisingly, seven of the interviewees did not have Bahamian citizenship. Six (four women and one man) of these seven were either in the process of getting citizenship or had attempted to obtain citizenship. Of the remaining two interviewees (one man in his late twenties and one woman in her early forties), Pierre-Elie was born in Haiti, came to Nassau at the age of nine, and was a permanent resident of the Bahamas and so a citizen of Haiti. The last respondent, Liza, was born in the Bahamas, moved to Haiti at the age of six when her mother was deported, and did not return until she was thirty. She spent the majority of her life in Haiti and received Bahamian citizenship after returning to the Bahamas.

Similar to the category of Bahamian of Haitian descent, these interviewees seem to identify as Haitian because of culture, documents (i.e. Certificate of Identification and status as non-Bahamian citizens), and ideas of not belonging.³¹⁷ In this section, with the exception of Liza, I argue that the interviewees who identify as Haitian do so primarily as a result of an identity that

³¹⁷ Certificate of Identification was mentioned in chapter 2. The Certificate of Identification is a document given to children born in the Bahamas to non-nationals.

is ascribed by others which is reinforced by their documents (or lack thereof) and Haitian heritage. I also contend that because of the exclusion (which includes not having citizenship in the land of their birth), discrimination, and xenophobia they experience, these interviewees probably reject the Bahamas and construct their identity in opposition to a Bahamian identity. This rejection of a Bahamian identity, in many ways, meant that the interviewees pulled more closely to their Haitian heritage. In “Formation and Persistence of Oppositional Identities,” Bisin et al. argue that the greater the degree of harassment, discrimination, and prejudice in a society, the more likely an oppositional minority culture will develop within a society.³¹⁸ Although the majority of my participants have experienced rejection and exclusion, participants in this category have internalized those experiences and define themselves as Haitian as resistance to and rebuffing of the prejudice and pain experienced living in the Bahamas.

In response to a question regarding her identity, Nadia states, “I identify as Haitian. I was born here. But I would go to school, and they wouldn’t say Haitian-Bahamian....So you’re automatically Haitian, from since I was small that’s all I heard. So in school I was a Haitian. And wherever you go you’re a Haitian.” Bahamians reinforced to her at school and in other places that she was Haitian and not Bahamian. However, her documents also told her that she was not Bahamian. Nadia continues saying “You could go to the passport office, and they will call you a Haitian because you’re black...we have this thing, I mean, those of us born here, there’s this thing called certificate of identity. And it’s inside of that it’s Haitian. It’s not Haitian-Bahamian. It simply says Haitian because in that book it says, your nationality it says Haitian so I just see myself as Haitian. I don’t see it as Bahamian of Haitian descent.”

³¹⁸ Alberto Bisin, Eleonora Patacchini, Thierry Verdier, and Yves Zenou. “Formation and Persistence of Oppositional Identities.” *European Economic Review* Vol. 55, 8 (2011) 1046-1071.

Olivia expresses a similar sentiment revealing, “I identify myself as being a Haitian because that’s what I grew up with. People would always call you that so I see myself as a Haitian because my documents says Haitian before it says Bahamian.” Holly also replicates this notion saying “I’m Haitian. And when they ask me what I am, I say Haitian. Because like the Bahamians have always been saying I’m a Haitian....So I’m Haitian. My parents are Haitian so I’m Haitian. I’m not accepted in this country.” Yvonne also says, “When it comes to identity, I don’t identify myself as a Bahamian at all. I am born here, but when people call me a Bahamian I, umm, reject that because I am not...although I am born here I just don’t feel as if I’m Bahamian because just of my last name and who my parents are, Bahamians don’t look at me...as a Bahamian so why should I consider myself a Bahamian...? So I do consider myself a Haitian or sometimes I call myself of Haitian descent.”

As discussed above, in the construction of one’s identity, people often navigate and negotiate how they view/define themselves (“self-ascription”) and how others view/define them (“ascription by others”).³¹⁹ It is clear from the proceeding statements that interviewees in this category have internalized an identity that has been ascribed by others. Since they were children, people have called them Haitian and told them they were not Bahamian. Not only people, but also institutions reinforce this message. For example, encounters at Bahamian institutions such as the Department of Immigration, school, and hospitals, and also the nationality placed on documents and the lack of Bahamian citizenship, all reinforce this idea of Haitian identity. The participants in this category posit that Bahamians do not consider them to be Bahamian, regardless of their origin of birth, and because of this and their lack of a Bahamian identity, they have internalized as fact the “ascription by others” that they are Haitian and not Bahamian.

³¹⁹ Bailey, “Black and Latino,” 2006.

As shown above by Yvonne, the feeling of not belonging is transmitted not only through one's documents but also through the discrimination and xenophobia experienced by the interviewees. Nadia recalls a recent event when a man asked her "Where were you born?" After she responds, in the Bahamas, the man proceeds to ask, "Who are your parents?" She told him that her parents were Haitian to which he retorts, "Oh! You're a Haitian. You should just say you're Haitian." This event, and others like it, have caused Nadia to feel like a foreigner and alienated in the land of her birth. Nadia reveals, "So sometimes, most of the times, I feel as though I'm a foreigner. Because certain places...majority of the benefits...you can't receive because they look at you as a foreigner. If you go to the hospital and so on, you have to pay the foreigner's fee and so on." When Nadia visited Haiti the preceding year, she experienced feelings that she was not accustomed to in the Bahamas. Nadia affirms, "I felt like I was home. I mean, I really didn't want to come back...I feel as though I was at peace. Nobody was discriminating. Everybody welcomed, like they made me feel a part of home. And I felt, I felt at peace there. I felt good. I felt connected." The feeling of exclusion is an important theme in this category. For instance, Olivia addressed notions of not belonging when she says, "It feel like I'm just living here not really, like you're just a part of a place. Like you just in a place but you're not a part of it. Yeah." In response to a question concerning the importance of her Bahamian passport, Olivia reveals, "To be honest, I don't know...it's very important because you could use it to do things. To travel and stuff like that. You need it to get a bank account. You could probably get loans to help you get your house, your car, stuff like that...It's a must that you have it." And so, Bahamian citizenship is not necessarily about *becoming* Bahamian but about having access to opportunities that are excluded without citizenship.

Two things are happening in these statements. First, interviewees are continuing to demonstrate that Bahamians are projecting their ideas of a Haitian ascribed identity onto second-generation Haitians. Second, Nadia, Olivia, and Yvonne are indicating that exclusion, xenophobia, and discrimination has resulted in their feeling like foreigners in the land of their birth. They often feel as if they do not belong, and the rejection and feelings of being a foreigner have probably increased their affinity towards a Haitian identity. In *The Haitian Americans*, Flore Zéphir asserts, “In their resolve to make it in America, Haitian immigrants make conscious identity choices with regard to who they are and how they want to be perceived by society at large.” Zéphir continues by saying that Haitian immigrants negotiate their ethnic identity through values and culture from Haiti as well as experiences shaped by living in America meaning the construction of an ethnic identity is directly related to immigrant experiences.³²⁰ “Through their attachment to their homeland or nation, their language, their religion, and their particular lifestyle, Haitian immigrants have managed to remain a separate Black ethnic group in the United States.”³²¹ With my interviewees, their experiences in the Bahamas are shaping how they construct their identity. On the one hand, the Bahamian nation-state has ascribed a Haitian identity onto second-generation Haitians. The lack of Bahamian citizenship and the Certificate of Identity (which reads Haitian) reinforces that they are Haitian.

Because of this and their experiences of feeling like foreigners in the Bahamas, interviewees in this category have pulled more closely to their Haitian heritage to maintain their own identity in the Bahamas. When asked why she celebrated Haitian Flag Day, Nadia voices, “I mean, I celebrate it because I basically see myself as a Haitian. I don’t see myself, although I was born over here, I don’t see myself as a Bahamian. Because everything I learned to me was

³²⁰ Bailey, “Black and Latino,” 2006.

³²¹ Zéphir, *The Haitian Americans*, 126.

Haitian....So celebrating Haitian Flag Day is like celebrating the culture.” Olivia expresses a similar sentiment concerning her upbringing and connects her identity as a Haitian to culture. As Olivia divulges, “I see myself as a Haitian. And to be honest, I know more things about Haitians than I do Bahamians and stuff like that. The only way I think I know stuff about the Bahamas is because I went to school, and we did social studies and stuff like that.” Olivia went on to express that she also did not see herself as Bahamian because her parents raised in her a Haitian household which was different from Bahamians. “Because like, like the way your parents bring you up, it’s like a different culture. Even from down to the clothing. Down to your curfew. Places you could stay....Haitians you gotta be dressed well and you have to have respect for everyone that surrounds you. And things like that.”

Although not the first to discuss the role of their home in shaping their identity, Olivia provides an important aspect of the parental influence on the construction of her identity. Although a Bahamian citizen, Liza considers herself Haitian. Liza represents an outlier in this category because, although born in the Bahamas, she lived in Haiti from the age of six to thirty. Because of this, I argue that Liza identifies as Haitian simply because everything she knows is Haitian regardless of her documents. In this way, Liza is also an outlier because she is the one respondent in this category who does not suggest an identity ascribed by others but rather truly sees herself as Haitian. Again, this is because she spent a significant amount of time Haiti. However, Liza’s discussion of how she is raising her children reflects the role parents play in children’s identity development. When asked how she was raising her children, Liza says, “I raising my baby like Haitian. I tell them they’s a Haitian. I says you is not Bahamian. You were born in the Bahamas. Your mommy a Haitian. Your daddy’s a Haitian. Your granddaddy, your grandparents are Haitian. So I tell them, they have to be proud with the name, with the last

name.” However, it appears that at least one of her children was in the process of constructing his own identity as a Bahamian. Liza exclaims, “I had one say, ‘No mommy, I’m not a Haitian. I’m a Bahamian’” To which she replies, “I said, ‘Stop. You’re a Haitian. When you be Prime Minister you say you wanna be, put that in your mind, I’m a Haitian....Don’t hide your Haitian nationality.” Liza demonstrates pride in being Haitian and reinforces this with her children, but this does not mean that her son will construct his identity as “Haitian”. As shown by Elide, her parents told her she was Haitian, and she embraced her Haitian heritage, but at the end of the day, she identifies as Bahamian. Identity is subjective to one’s experiences.

It is unclear whether the interviewees in this category without citizenship will continue to call themselves Haitian once they receive their citizenship or, like Jessica and Marjorie, simply change the way they nominally state their identity. Nadia feels that “Even though I will receive that when they give me the Bahamian passport, I still will define myself as Haitian. That’s how it is.” In a more general response, Pierre-Elie says, “You see yourself probably one day to be a Bahamian upon attaining citizenship. But from background status, a lot of my people, for now, they are comfortable with you might as well say you call being a Haitian is what you are, what I am.” In response to a question regarding what makes someone Bahamian and what makes someone Haitian, Holly retorts, “I really don’t know, you know. Because even though you have the Bahamian passport, once you have that Haitian last name, they will still say you’re Haitian.” This theme was consistent throughout all the interviews. It is possible that if Holly receives her passport that she would continue to define herself as Haitian. When asked if she saw any parts of herself as Bahamian, she merely says, “No.” When asked why, she says “Because the Bahamian government said we are not. Once your parents are foreigners, we are not Bahamians. They don’t classify us as Bahamians because we are Haitians. Yeah. No matter if you are born here.” Of

course, this statement regarding the government is in reference to being born in the Bahamas to non-Bahamian parents. However, when asked if Bahamian citizenship would change how she identified, she said “No. I’m still Haitian.” Of course, it is impossible to know if the granting of citizenship would alter how they define themselves.

In response to a question of how connected she felt to the Bahamas, Yvonne reveals that she does not feel connected because her nationality had been rejected for so long. “Like I know more about the Bahamas than I do about Haiti but because I don’t identify myself as the Bahamas, I don’t really feel connected to the Bahamas because I don’t really feel the need to like do that because like where they reject us, I don’t really feel the need to be connected to the Bahamas like that.” In the following question, I asked Yvonne whether how connected she felt to the Bahamas would change if the Bahamas were more accepting and her answer was yes.

Yvonne replies, “Now with that, if they did, I do think I’d probably reject my Haitian culture and pull more towards the Bahamian culture because they’re be accepting of us and I’d be like well I don’t know anything about Haiti. I was born here in the Bahamas. I know Bahamian history, culture, and all that stuff so I’d feel more comfortable with being a Bahamian than being a Haitian.” Yvonne’s statement supports my analysis of the role of rejection and exclusion and the pull toward Haitian culture for those who identify as Haitian. It only serves as a hypothesis, but Yvonne’s statement of embracing Bahamian culture more if they were less hostile toward Haitians leaves room to speculate the different ways interviewees might identify if they felt more included in society.

Although they identify themselves as Haitian, some of the interviewees in this category still embrace Bahamian culture. “I love Junkanoo,” reveals Nadia. Denise states that “When they have Independence Day, I participate and do stuff like that. Yeah, I’se back up them when my,

when Haitians talking bad about the Bahamians and stuff.” Denise defends Bahamians, but she also defends Haitians against Bahamians as well. Still, her choice to defend Bahamians against Haitians is a reflection of some connection and affection for the country. Pierre-Elie also felt that parts of himself were Bahamian, and these parts were related to culture. Even though Pierre-Elie was a permanent resident of the Bahamas and did not come to the Bahamas until the age of nine, he does not feel much of a connection to Haiti because he left at such a young age. As it relates to a connection to Bahamian culture, Pierre-Elie believes, “When you young, you grow up knowing this culture of this country. And you can say culture-wise you know a lot of Bahamian stuff.”

Although identifying as being Haitian, Christopher embraces Bahamian culture. He understands that his status was not Bahamian but still embraced the people and culture. Christopher admits, “I don’t know about my status, you know...it’s just like, you already embodied so much that you become it. Like, like, you know, I wear a shirt with the Bahamian colors. But it would be like, say I want to do a Haitian flag shirt or whatever, I’ll feel skeptical about it.” When asked why he would feel skeptical about it, Christopher responds, “I don’t know why. Because I adapted to the culture so much, the Bahamian culture so much that I just like the colors. I just like the colors and stuff like that.” Not only does he see more of himself as Bahamian but does not feel much of a connection to Haiti or Haitian culture. Christopher states, “But see I never embodied the Haitian culture. All I know about Haitian culture is that we eat legume and sos pwa and bannan and stuff like that.³²² You know and speak Creole and stuff. But I never went to Haiti and experienced all that culture.” For Christopher, the Bahamas is home. “To me,” Christopher answers, “I born here. I embody it. I embrace it. I went to school here. You

³²² Sos pwa is a popular Haitian dish. It is a bean sauce or a black bean puree. Bannan means plantain in Haitian Creole. Legume is another popular Haitian dish and is simply stewed vegetables.

know. I work in town where tourist be. You know. I just like the Bahamian culture. I just love the Bahamian culture.” For Christopher, it appears that he possibly identifies as Haitian because he does not have Bahamian citizenship. Like many others in this category, Christopher is basing his identity not on what he truly feels he is but what others, i.e. people and his documents, says he is.

“[I’m] Haitian-Bahamian because I’m Brought Up in Both”
Ideas of a Haitian-Bahamian Identity or the Lack Thereof

Of the seven interviewees who identify as Haitian-Bahamian, five were men and two were women. Four of the interviewees did not have Bahamian citizenship and were in the process of applying or had already applied while the remaining three had already received their Bahamian citizenship at the time of the interview. Based on my analysis, the decision to label oneself as Haitian-Bahamian is grounded in the belief and perception that their identity is a mixture of both cultures. This appears to be the case whether one has status or not. Labeling oneself as Haitian-Bahamian does not necessarily equate to a 50/50 perception of identity but mainly the acknowledgement of both in how they chose to label themselves which challenges societal notions of the Haitian “other” as distinct and separate from being Bahamian.

According to Alex, a naturalized Bahamian citizen, “I define myself as a Haitian-Bahamian....I classify myself as both because I’m born here and my mother is a Haitian. That’s how I classify myself.” Offering his own equation, Alex considers 85% of his identity to be Haitian and 15% to be Bahamian, and the majority of this identity is related to his Haitian culture. According to Alex, “The things that make me a Haitian is that understanding the language...the type of church I attend...my surname...the type of music I listen to. And that’s Haitian music. Haitian gospel music....” as well as Haitian Flag Day when he wears red, blue, and white. Rose, who does not have a Bahamian passport, also saw her identity as rooted in her

church, Kompa, legume, sos pwa, and bouyon, whereas her Bahamian identity was situated in being born in the Bahamas, her Bahamian accent, and Bahamian history learned in school.³²³

Alex also shares, “Even though I have a Bahamian passport, even though I was born in a Bahamian country, it’s like, Haitian runs in my blood. It runs in my blood....I really love being a Haitian. I feel more comfortable as it. Sometimes I used to say to myself, ‘I wish I was born in Haiti.’” When considering the discrimination and xenophobia experienced by Haitians in the Bahamas, it is tempting to assume that Alex’s desire to be born in Haiti is directly related to that oppression and exclusion. However, in response to a question of whether a better treatment of Haitians would change how he felt about the Bahamas, Alex retorts, “I don’t think so.”

David also identifies as Haitian-Bahamian because he felt that his experience was particular to having been raised and exposed to both cultures. David, a Bahamian citizen, affirms, “I’d say Haitian-Bahamian because I feel that at least back then that the experiences that you had as a Haitian-Bahamian or a person of Haitian descent growing up in the Bahamas, I really don’t think that a lot of Bahamians could really relate to that. To that discrimination, things like that.” David disagrees with those who believe that there is no such thing as a Haitian-Bahamian and argues “I think it really exist because of the history to it you know. It’s like I can’t deny where I come from. I can’t deny who I am. You know.” David constructs his identity as a combination of both of his experiences. As David continues, “We eat and boil plantain. We eat steamed turkey prepared in a certain way. My mother speaks Creole. My daddy speaks Creole....but I’m born over here. I’ve never been to Haiti.... So what I experience over here now, I go to school, work, so we experience a Bahamian lifestyle.” David perceives his identity to be a fusion of both of these worlds and feels “connected to Haiti through history and lineage

³²³ Bouyon is a popular Haitian dish. It is the Haitian version of beef stew. Kompa is one genre of Haitian music popularized in 1955 by Nemours Jean-Baptiste.

and by your parents” but feels “connected to the Bahamas also because you’ve adapted to a lifestyle you know.” For David, identifying as Haitian-Bahamian means that there is something particular about his experience. Yes, he was born and raised in the Bahamas but being of Haitian heritage molds that experience in a particular way that cannot be understood by other Bahamians.

While growing up, Tony did not consider himself Haitian-Bahamian but rather Haitian. Tony says, “From when I was growing up, like, at first, like my early years of school I consider myself a Haitian because the children would always be getting off on me calling me a Haitian this, Haitian that.” As for other participants, the reactions and words from his Bahamian peers played a critical role in how Tony understood his identity. School, which (as I argued in chapter four) functions as the first institution where one is confronted with being “Haitian,” played an influential role as the space where he constructed his identity. But as he got older, Tony continued to negotiate how he understood his experiences and, thus, his identity. “But now, I consider myself as a Haitian-Bahamian,” says Tony. “Like, I was born over here. I spent most of my years over here. The only difference between me and them is that I have Haitian parents. But I consider myself, I can speak English, and I can speak Creole. I consider myself to be a Haitian-Bahamian.” Like David, Alex, and Rose, Tony constructed his identity as Haitian-Bahamian because he has Haitian parents, and he was born and raised in the Bahamas. There is a cultural connection to both spaces. The only distinction Tony perceives to be between himself and his Bahamian peers is his Haitian heritage.

The interviewees in this category chose to identify themselves as Haitian-Bahamian because they are shaped by both cultures. Because of this, I argue that interviewees in this category are challenging larger notions in Bahamian society that Haitians and Bahamians are

binary opposites and, thus, mutually exclusive identities that cannot be merged but rather exist in juxtaposition against each other. According to Michael Craton (1995), "...the Haitian has provided for the Bahamian the real or imagined almost certainly necessary Other who facilitates a people's self-definition."³²⁴ In a very simple way, there are linguistic, cultural, and historical differences between the Bahamas and Haiti. As discussed thus far in this chapter, many of the interviewees embrace speaking Creole, listening to Kompa, and eating dishes that are specific to Haiti. The Bahamas has an Anglophone colonial history that has shaped the country in specific ways culturally, ideologically, and historically whereas Haiti has a Francophone colonial history and was the first black nation to gain independence at a time where most people of African descent were enslaved or colonial subjects. This undoubtedly has shaped Haiti's political and socioeconomic history which has also played a particular role in how Haitians are represented in the Bahamian imagination and media. According to Craton:

They [Haitians] are perceived by Bahamians as less creolized than themselves, more African, unmodernized, superstitious, fatalistic, emotional and at least potentially violent. Overwhelmingly black, they are yet split by a savage traditional socioeconomic and political division between the black peasant and urban poor majority and the brown bourgeois elite based on the capital and other large towns....All of these features either clash with Bahamians' idealized view of themselves, their history and culture, or uncomfortably remind them of aspects of themselves (particularly their African heritage) which they deny, diminish, disparage or reject.³²⁵

Haitians and Bahamians have linguistic, cultural, and historical differences. For example, as shown throughout this study, speaking Creole in public and/or an individual's surname will cause one to be categorized as Haitian and not Bahamian. However, as represented above, Bahamians also view Haitians to be inferior to themselves in a way in which whites have often categorized and subjugated people of African descent. Haitians are not Bahamians not only

³²⁴ Craton, "The Bahamian Self and the Haitian Other," 283.

³²⁵ Craton, "The Bahamian Self and the Haitian Other," 284.

because they speak a different language and have different culture but also because they are not fully human.

In her dissertation, “Blackness of a Different Color,” Katuscia Pelerin argues that Bahamians have internalized racism as a result of British colonialism and that Haitians are experiencing a “black on black” racism. According to her argument, Bahamians consider Haitians to be inferior to themselves and racism, oppression, and discrimination are represented in the form of nationalism, education, language, and immigrant status. Through the use of media images, Pelerin shows how Haitians are represented in the Bahamian media as different, the “other,” and uncivilized and thus excluded from Bahamian national identity and nation-state. “In the Bahamas, the social categorizations or binary oppositions between who is Bahamian and who is Haitian are further compounded by national rhetoric from media outlets.”³²⁶ In the Bahamian imagination, Haitians and Bahamians are represented as polar opposites. However, interviewees who define themselves as Haitian-Bahamian are, in many ways, challenging the idea that both cultures are in direct contrast to each other. They situate their identity in the merging of both cultures.

Furthermore, identifying as Haitian-Bahamian challenges the notion that this category of people does not exist. In this way, interviewees are claiming their own unique space in the Bahamas. Whereas eight people defined themselves as Haitian-Bahamian, at least ten interviewees assert that they did not think that there was such a thing as a Haitian-Bahamian. The root of this argument is grounded in the fact that it is not a legal category. No one possesses a document that says Haitian-Bahamian. When asked about the term Haitian-Bahamian, Elide says:

³²⁶ Pelerin, “Blackness of a Different Color,” 164.

I mean, I don't have a problem with the term. If it would be legalized as a term because I feel that, I mean, you live in a legal world. Right? And if my passport can say Haitian-Bahamian, that's fine. So then we'll have Jamaican-Bahamians, Chinese-Bahamians and whatever other Bahamians, that's fine. But if my passport is not going to say Haitian-Bahamian, why should I call myself Haitian-Bahamian? Because technically that doesn't really exist. It doesn't exist. It's not real. It's like using a word that's not identified as a word.

Eric conveys a similar sentiment. When asked if he identified as Haitian, Bahamian, or Haitian-Bahamian, his immediate response was "There's no such thing as a Haitian-Bahamian." When I asked why, he simply responds, "It doesn't exist." When I pushed further asking him to explain why it does not exist, Eric affirms, "Because technically, legally, in reality it doesn't exist. You see like on people passports in the United States, you see Korean American, you see Chinese American. That does not exist in the Bahamas. There's no such thing as a Haitian-Bahamian. You're either a Haitian or you're a Bahamian.... There's no in between. You're either one or the other. There's no such thing as a Haitian-Bahamian." As Eric put it, and many others agree, "Society tells you you're either one or the other." Although it is untrue that American passports include the combination of one's ethnic and national identity (but rather just the nationality, i.e. American), Eric's assumptions serves an important point. In the United States, people defining themselves as African American, Chinese American, or Haitian American is an accepted practice. It reinforces the notion of America being a melting pot. However, in the Bahamas, people are either Bahamian or something else; to be Bahamian is to be a homogenous entity.

Rita expresses the same sentiment, "There's no such thing as a Haitian-Bahamian. Either you're Haitian or you're a Bahamian." During our interview, Rita recounts how she came to understand and support the notion that there is no such thing as a Haitian-Bahamian. She states, "Because I remember about a couple years back, I remember a parliament member, something

Pender. And he was an African Bahamian. And he came to speak to us, to children who were born here. And he was like, ‘There’s no such thing as Haitian-Bahamian. Either you’re a Haitian or you’re a Bahamian.’” Rita explains that he told the audience, “‘You cannot be a Haitian, you know why? Because you weren’t born in Haiti. You don’t know nothing about Haiti. You ain’t grow up in Haiti.’ And he was like we have to say we are Bahamian because we are born here....we don’t know nothing about Haiti, but we know everything about the Bahamas. And he’s like there’s no such thing....only ignorant people will say he’s a Haitian-Bahamian. And that do make sense.” Based on Rita’s account, the parliament member asserted that children of Haitian descent born in the Bahamas must claim the Bahamas. They are not Haitians because they were not born in Haiti but in the Bahamas. And so, the speech was not in an attempt to deny their existence but have them legally plant and acknowledge their rights to existence in the Bahamas which undoubtedly means full access to Bahamian society.

In his interview, David (who considers himself to be Haitian-Bahamian) made parallels between the usage of the term Haitian-Bahamian and African American. David asks rhetorically, “Why would you call it African American and you’re born there? Because of the history. You don’t want to deny that you know. So, I think that I’d express that in the same sense.” Drawing parallels between culture, history, and the political usage of the term African American, David was validating and politicizing his decision to call himself Haitian-Bahamian. Peter also makes similar connections. When asked how he identifies himself, Peter states, “To me Haitian-Bahamian, Haitian-Bahamian. But over here they say there’s no such thing as Haitian-Bahamian so...If they have African American or say they have Jamaican and Haitian, why can’t they have Haitian-Bahamian.” As shown throughout the chapter, status played a key role in how individuals chose to construct and label their identity. This occurred whether one identified as

Bahamian, Bahamian of Haitian descent, Haitian, and even the notion that there is not a such thing as a Haitian-Bahamian. And so, the decision to identify oneself as Haitian-Bahamian is a personal decision that is indeed political. Although it may not be a legal category, those who identified as Haitian-Bahamian are indeed creating a space for themselves through this terminology, and this terminology is a reflection of how they perceive their identity.

Building on the idea of the relationship between legal categories and identity, the Bahamas allows dual citizenship for those who were born abroad. They are allowed to remain dual citizens until the age of twenty-one, at which point they have one year to renounce the foreign citizenship or they will lose the Bahamian citizenship.³²⁷ It is possible that if the Bahamas allowed dual citizenship, the term Haitian-Bahamian would be a less contested term. However, it does not mean that all second generation Haitians would identify as such and that there may still be a variety of ways they would define themselves.

Although some interviewees expressed the idea that there is not such a thing as a Haitian-Bahamian, the term was still used as a way to define children of Haitian descent born in the Bahamas. Ronald asserts he does not believe in the term Haitian Bahamian. Like the examples provided above, he says, “It’s either you’re a Bahamian or you’re a Haitian.” However, in different parts of his interview he uses the term to define those who were born in the Bahamas. Earlier in the interview, Ronald discusses his role in the church saying, “Because I don’t know if you would find a lot of Haitian churches, you don’t find much Haitian children, Haitian-Bahamian I would say. Children that are born to Haitian parents in the Haitian churches.” Within this statement, he is using the term Haitian-Bahamian to specifically discuss those who were

³²⁷ “Dual Citizenship Bahamas,” 2016, accessed on April 30, 2017, <https://www.dualcitizenship.com/countries/bahamas.html>

born in the Bahamas. Shortly thereafter, Ronald uses the term again to define his church as a Haitian-Bahamian church. He says, “Alright because there is a lot of, it’s basically made of a lot of Haitian-Bahamians. The pastor himself is Haitian-Bahamian...a lot of the leaders are basically more Haitian-Bahamian, you know.” While in Nassau, his church was constantly referred to me as a place that I should seek out participants because a lot of their younger congregation were Haitian-Bahamian, i.e. people of Haitian descent born in the Bahamas. And so, although people do not believe in this term as a legal status, it is clear that it is simultaneously used as a way to make a distinction between Haitians (those born and raised in Haiti) and Haitian-Bahamians (those born and raised in the Bahamas).

Conclusion

In this chapter, the interviewees discuss how they construct and negotiate their identity through a variety of factors. Factors such as citizenship, ideas of belonging (status as well as exclusion, rejection, and stigma), and connection to Haitian and Bahamian culture (which is often shaped by the preceding factors) play important roles in how each person constructs their own identity. Based on their subjective experiences, interviewees negotiated their identities into six categories: individual, African/Pan African, Bahamian, Bahamian of Haitian descent, Haitian, and Haitian-Bahamian. As discussed in the preceding section, ten interviewees also asserted that there is no such thing as a Haitian-Bahamian. This does not necessarily mean that people of Haitian descent born and raised in the Bahamas cannot identify with both cultures. Instead, it tends to mean that Haitian-Bahamian is not a legal category and thus not an identity. However, and as discussed in various sections of this chapter, this is another example of an identity ascribed by others. Second-generation Haitians have been told since they were children that they are not Bahamian but Haitian. In the same way, they have also been told that there is no

such thing as a Haitian-Bahamian and that they must choose Haitian or Bahamian. Of course, they are then told to choose Haitian as the category for their identity. For my interviewees, identity is as important as the stigma associated with being Haitian and the struggle for citizenship and belonging. All three of these issues are critical factors and profoundly shape the experiences of children of Haitian descent born and raised in the Bahamas.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

The goal of this dissertation has been to understand the experiences and identities of second-generation Haitians in the Bahamas. Based on the interviews, my participants reveal that there is a stigma associated with being Haitian in the Bahamas. This stigma shapes their experiences in a very profound way and remains present from childhood into adulthood. This stigma takes the form of discrimination, teasing, and exclusion institutionally and on an individual level. Interviewees also express many frustrations with the citizenship process, such as the lack of structure and the unpredictable time frame they have to wait for approval. Additionally, having citizenship allows individuals the rights and protections of Bahamian society, however, due to the stigma associated with being Haitian in the Bahamas, many still experience (or expect to experience) discrimination because they are not considered by many to be *real* Bahamians.

Participants' also discuss their perceptions of the current Bahamian citizenship law. A majority of the participants believe that there should be changes and advocate for one of three categories: birthright citizenship, granting of citizenship prior to eighteen, and no changes but a quicker turnaround time. Finally, as it relates to identity, it is clear that second-generation Haitians negotiate their identity/identities in an environment where they are constantly told who they are and/or where they are told they have to choose one or the other because they cannot be both Haitian and Bahamian. Negotiating similar factors, including connection to culture (Bahamian and Haitian), legal documentation, legal status, and ideas of belonging and/or not belonging in the Bahamas (which are associated with legal status but also address the overall sentiment toward Haitians in the Bahamas) participants revealed six categories of identification:

individual, African/Pan African, Bahamian, Bahamian of Haitian descent, Haitian, and Haitian-Bahamian.

The issues discussed in this dissertation are important because, whether some Bahamians like it or not, children of Haitian descent born and raised in the Bahamas are a part of the Bahamian nation-state. The Bahamas is their home. They go to school in the Bahamas. They graduate from school and get jobs in the Bahamas. And they will most likely get married and/or start families in the Bahamas. The difficulties posed by citizenship once turning eighteen do harm not only to that individual person and the Haitian community, but also create a problem of concern for the Bahamas. The restrictions posed by the lack of citizenship mean that second-generation Haitians are not able to contribute to Bahamian society as first class citizens. They are not afforded the same opportunities as their Bahamian peers and often have a harder time entering adulthood (i.e. getting a college education and finding decent employment) after graduating high school. The inability to obtain, or increased difficulty in obtaining, decent work and/or post-secondary education means that the Bahamas is producing and reproducing an underclass in the Bahamas.

The issues discussed in this dissertation are also important because they add to the literature on Haitians in the Bahamas. In some ways, this dissertation continues certain analyses such as the overall discussion of Haitians in the Bahamas, the stigma of Haitians in the Bahamas, and the systematic and social exclusion faced by the Haitian community. But in other ways, this dissertation adds to gaps in the extant literature on Haitians in the Bahamas. The experiences of second-generation Haitian are missing from the scholarship, but they are at the center of analysis in this study. Their voices are heard as they speak about their experiences with stigma during childhood and adulthood, their difficulties obtaining citizenship, second class status even after

obtaining citizenship, feelings of not belonging, and how they construct their identity. It is important for the experiences and voices of second-generation Haitians to be explored because they are an increasingly significant sector of the Bahamian nation-state. Born and raised in the Bahamas, this population seeks inclusion. They desire citizenship and access to the same opportunities as their Bahamian peers who are born with citizenship. As a growing proportion of the population, second-generation Haitians and their children will become an ever more important part of the future of the Bahamas.

For decades, the Bahamas has been trying to solve the issue of undocumented Haitian immigration, and the children born to these Haitian nationals have been caught in this storm. In his 1992 article, Alfred Sears proposes the question, “When we say ‘the Haitian Question,’ who are we talking about? Those Bahamians of Haitian parent or parents; those persons who were born in Haiti and are now naturalized Bahamians; Haitians who have Bahamian permanent residency; or, those undocumented Haitians who came into this country illegally?”³²⁸ As shown by Fielding et. al (2005) in their study “Haitian Migrants in the Bahamas,” when it comes to discussing Haitians in the Bahamas, the Bahamian media is filled with images and words suggesting that the country is being overtaken by Haitians and that Haitians are a threat to the national and cultural sovereignty in the Bahamas. If the Bahamian media is filled with these ideas of Haitians, it supports Sears’ notion that Haitians are indiscriminately lumped into one category and that all are viewed as a problem. The participants in my study revealed that Haitians are indeed lumped into one indiscriminate category. As children, second-generation Haitians are teased by their Bahamian peers simply for being Haitian. They are told to go back to their country. They are taunted with the catch phrase, “kouri kouri bus l’ap vini” which suggests

³²⁸ Sears, “The Haitian Question in the Bahamas,” 10.

that they are undocumented and do not belong. Despite being born and raised in the Bahamas, despite having Bahamian citizenship, many of my participants are viewed as Haitian.

Moving forward, the Bahamas must develop policies that are inclusive of second-generation Haitians. Over twenty years ago, Sears' suggested that the Bahamas develop a national immigration policy that is humane and effective to help regularize the status of those who have a right to be in the Bahamas. As it relates to this study, Sears' argues that "we must immediately regularise those persons who were born here or have some valid constitutional or legal claim to Bahamian citizenship and integrate them into Bahamian society."³²⁹ Citizenship is a key issue for second-generation Haitians. Citizenship will create access to opportunities denied to them without it. As shown in this study, many second-generation Haitians expressed frustration with the citizenship process. Participants were frustrated with the lack of structure as well as the unpredictable time frame they had to wait for citizenship. Thus, it may behoove the Bahamian government to restructure the current application process so that the applicants are able to submit complete applications as well as respond to applicants within the allotted time frame specified on the government's website.

However, citizenship alone will not create a sense of belonging and inclusion. As seen in this study, the stigma of being Haitian, discrimination, and the hatred and disdain displayed toward Haitians has created an environment where many feel unwelcome and like outsiders. And so, in addition to revamping the application process for citizenship, the Bahamas must also work harder to incorporate the Haitian community into the nation. In May 1967, Dr. Doris Johnson recognized the social isolation and poor treatment experienced by the Haitian community as well as the important role Haitians played in the social and economic livelihood of the Bahamas.³³⁰

³²⁹ Sears, "The Haitian Question in the Bahamas," 1992, page 10.

³³⁰ Etienne Dupuch, "The Haitian Problem," editorial, *The Tribune Nassau*, May 1, 1967.

Johnson, along with a group of supporters, created the Committee to Promote Haitian-Bahamian Relations.³³¹ The goal of the committee was “...aimed at assisting and integrating Haitian immigrants into the social and economic structure of the Bahamas.”³³² The approach was two-pronged in that the committee wanted to educate Haitians about the Bahamas as well as educate Bahamians about Haiti and Haitians. Although the committee was short-lived, programs like these are important because it can build the relations between both groups who are coexisting in one shared space.

Over the years, other initiatives have been created. In 2002, the National Alliance for the Advancement of Bahamians of Haitian Decent created a program aimed at bolstering the self-esteem of second-generation Haitians who feel isolated, not connected to the Bahamas, and who do not think highly of themselves as a result of the stigma of being Haitian in the Bahamas.³³³ As shown in my study, some participants rejected a Bahamian identity because of the exclusion they felt from the Bahamas. And so, programs like these are important because can help create a sense of belonging; they can help second-generations feel empowered and not question their sense of self or place in the Bahamas. However, initiatives like these are not well known. None of my participants acknowledged such programs in their interviews and did not view the Haitian community or the Bahamian government as particularly proactive in better integrating this population into the Bahamas. It is important for the Bahamian government, the Bahamian community, and the Haitian community to take action on the incorporation and social acceptance of Haitians into the Bahamas. The general climate toward Haitians must be revamped to create a society in which second-generation Haitians feel welcome; where they feel like Bahamians.

³³¹ “Culture Seen as a Way to Integrate Haitians Here,” *The Tribune*, May 6, 1967, 1.

³³² *Ibid.*, 1.

³³³ Rupert Missick Jr, “Programme to Build Haitian Self-Esteem,” *The Tribune*, May 13, 2002.

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Appendix

1. Can you tell me a little about yourself? Can you tell me a little about your background?
2. Could you tell me about a typical day in your life? Or a typical work day? How about a typical weekend?
3. Could you tell me whom you associate with? (For example, describe the ethnicity or nationality of your friends.) Or do you belong to any organization? If so, what is the ethnicity or nationality of the members? (Note to self: Is there a reason why you mainly have Haitian/Haitian Bahamian/Bahamian friends?)
4. How do you define your ethnicity? Are you Haitian? Are you Bahamian? Are you both? Are you neither? Please explain.
5. In your view, could you explain what it means to be Haitian in the Bahamas?
6. Based on your experiences, can you explain what it means to be a person of Haitian descent born and raised in the Bahamas to undocumented Haitian immigrant parents?
7. Do you have citizenship? If yes, what was the process like for you? Have you experienced any differences since gaining citizenship?
8. How, if at all, does the lack of citizenship impact your day-to-day life?
9. How, if at all, does the lack of citizenship impact your future aspirations?
10. How important, if at all, is Bahamian citizenship to you?
11. How connected, if at all, do you feel to the Bahamas?
12. How connected, if at all, do you feel to Haiti?
13. Do you ever think of migrating? Please explain. If yes, where would you like to go and why?
14. Do you think the Bahamas should alter citizenship laws? (Please tell me a bit about your answer. As a follow up if they just say “Yes” or “No”).
15. What are your hopes for the future of the Bahamas as well as Haitians in the Bahamas?

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Curriculum Vitae

EDUCATION

- Ph.D. University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
Africology, 2011-2017 (expected)
Department Concentration: Culture and Society
Outside Concentration: History
Dissertation: “It’s Better in the Bahamas’: The Stigma of Being Haitian, Citizenship, and Identity Choices among Second-Generation Haitians in the Bahamas.”
- M.A. Syracuse University
Pan African Studies, 2011
Thesis: “Preventing Bahaiti: Controlling the Haitian ‘Problem’ through Legislative and Social Exclusion in the Bahamas”
- B.A. Temple University
African American Studies, 2008
Senior Research Project: “Dietary Patterns and the Black Philadelphia Community”

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

- University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
- Introduction to African American History, Fall & Spring 2016-2017
 - *African American History: 1865 to Present*, Fall 2016
 - *History of Blacks in the American City*, Instructor, Fall 2015
- University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
- *The Black Reality*, Teaching Assistant, Spring Semester 2016
 - *The Black Reality*, Teaching Assistant, Fall and Spring Semester 2011-2012
- Syracuse University
- *Introduction to African American Literature in the 20th and 21st Century*, Teaching Assistant, Spring Semester 2010
 - *African International Relations*, Teaching Assistant, Fall Semester 2009

PUBLICATION

Perry, C. M. “Invasion from the South: Social Construction of the Haitian ‘Other’ in the Bahamas.” *The International Journal of Bahamian Studies*. Vol. 20, Issue No. 1 (2014): 1-12.

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

- University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee February-April 2015
- Dissertation fieldwork on Haitians in the Bahamas, Nassau, New Providence of The Bahamas
 - Conducted semi-structured, open ended interviews with twenty-nine individuals

Syracuse University June-August 2010

- Summer Externship for Research on Haitians in the Bahamas, Nassau, New Providence of The Bahamas
- Conducted Archival Research and Interviews

Temple University October 2007-March 2008

- African American Studies' Senior Research Project on the Quality, Quantity, and Availability of Healthy Food in Black Neighborhoods, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
- Conducted Empirical and Quantitative Research through Questionnaires

CONFERENCES AND PRESENTATIONS

“The Relationship between Race, Labor, and Immigration among Haitians in the Bahamas” paper delivered at University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Alliance of History Graduate Student Conference, *Racial Formation, Racial Blindness: An Interdisciplinary Graduate Student Conference*, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, February 14-15, 2014

“Pesi, Perejil, Parsley: Remembrance and Reconstruction in Edwidge Danticat’s *The Farming of Bones*” paper delivered at the 3rd International Conference on Caribbean Studies, *Looking to the Caribbean: Film, Literature and Gender Studies*, Marquette University, April 11-13, 2013.

“Invasion from the South: Media and the Social Construction of the Haitian Other in the Bahamas” paper delivered at the Haitian Studies Association Annual Conference, *Haiti Beyond Borders: Challenges and Progress Across the Diaspora*, York College CUNY, November 8-10, 2012.

A Beautiful Struggle: Transformative Black Studies in Shifting Political Landscapes, A Summit of Doctoral Programs, Attended, Northwestern University, April 12-14, 2012.

“Preventing “Bahaiti”: Controlling the Haitian ‘Problem’ in the Bahamas through Legislative and Social Exclusion” paper delivered at the Department of African American Studies’ *Brown Bag Series*, Syracuse University, December 9, 2010.

“The Haitian Question in the Bahamas: A Space of Legal and Social Exclusion” paper delivered at the Syracuse University Graduate Symposium on *Challenges of Globalization: Theories and Practices*, Syracuse University, November 16, 2010.

“The Eradication of the Creole Pig” paper delivered at the 21st Annual AYA Spring Conference for Graduate Students, *The Future Role of Black Studies in the Diaspora*, Temple University, April 9-10, 2010.

AWARDS AND FELLOWSHIPS

Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies Graduate and Advanced Undergraduate Student Research Travel Award, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee 2014

Advanced Opportunity Fellowship, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee 2012-14

George W. and Winston Van Horne Award, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee 2012

Foreign Language and Area Studies Fellowship, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee 2012

Foreign Language and Area Studies Travel Grant, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee 2012

Chancellor's Award, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee 2011-2013

African American Fellowship, Syracuse University 2010-2011

Summer Research Fellowship, Syracuse University 2010

Horatio Alger Scholarship 2004-2008

SPECIAL TRAINING

Haitian Summer Institute June-August 2012

- Haitian Creole Language Program, Florida International University

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

Haitian Studies Association

DEPARTMENTAL SERVICE

University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee 2013

- *The Africologist*
- Helped Organize and Create the Department of Africology's Annual Newsletter
- Served as the Editor of the First Edition

Syracuse University 2010-2011

- Faculty Search Committee
- Served as the Department of African American Studies' Graduate Student Representative for the Hiring of the Department's Musicologist

Temple University 2008

- Ceremony of the Drums
- Organized the Department of African American Studies Annual Senior Graduation Ceremony

Temple University 2008

- African American Undergraduate Senior Forum
- Planned the Department of African American Studies Undergraduate Senior Forum