

"BECOMING MORE AND MORE PANAMANIAN": CONTEMPORARY
CONSTRUCTIONS OF WEST INDIAN IDENTITY IN URBAN PANAMA

By

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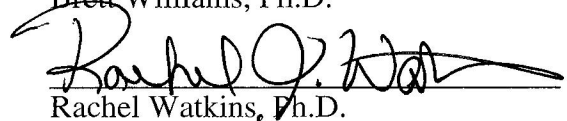
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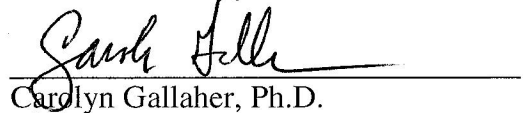
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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to the people of the Black Atlantic past, present, and future. I dedicate it to the people of Panama for embracing me as one of their own. But most especially, I dedicate this dissertation to my family for arming me with a strong sense of us & self, and for their unwavering love and support.

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ABSTRACT

The rapid political, social, and economic changes in urban Panama during the last half century have differently affected Panamanians of West Indian heritage that grew up in Colón, Panama City, and the U.S. controlled Canal Zone. This study uses specific events to survey contemporary constructions of West Indian identity practice: the 1964 flag riots, the 1977 Torrijos-Carter Canal Treaties, the 1989 U.S. invasion, the 1999 American civilian and military withdrawal, and the 2010 Panamanian census. Together, these events structure my examination of relationships between identity construction and the state. This study explores the ways in which Black identity is constructed in distinct areas of the same nation, how and why those constructions change over time, and how those changes influence the current economic and political realities of Panamanians of West Indian heritage in the Republic of Panama.

This dissertation uses ethnographic data and qualitative research methods to explore the discursive and cultural practices of West Indian identity in Panamanian urban spaces. Unlike other works about West Indians in Panama, I geographically unpack the assigned identity of “West Indian” and consider the ways in which location of origin

complicates contemporary belonging and group identity. Panamanians of West Indian heritage lived both inside and outside of the U.S. controlled Canal Zone and on the Pacific and Atlantic coasts of the Republic of Panama, which created varying relationships with the American state via the U.S. controlled Canal Zone, the Panamanian state, and with each other. I conclude that Panamanians of West Indian heritage identify each other differently based on perceived differences in where and, consequently, how they grew up. These perceived differences shape social networks, organizational belonging, and group cohesion. Although Panama has two distinct groups of Black ethnicity, coloniales and West Indians, the absence of a divisive American territory and the influx of foreign immigration have moved African-descendent populations away from traditional ethnic divisions and toward a shared nation-based racial identity of Afro-Panameño.

PREFACE

Once you have touched Panama, you never lose the infection. Some call it canalitis — Parker 2007, 204

My second full interview during my fieldwork was pivotal. It was my first interview with someone from my primary research population and my first interview in English. James had taken my online survey and agreed to an interview at the University of Panama, a place I knew well. Excitedly, I ventured to the University and met him in a copy shop near the *Facultad de Humanidades* (Faculty of Humanities). During our conversation, James articulated a number of things that jarred my assumptions regarding my proposed research project. One of the most salient stories involved his memory of learning to speak Spanish and the role of a Chinese man in that process.

AC: Did you grow up speaking Spanish and English?

James: I did not speak Spanish until I was 12 years of age. I mean, I probably knew a few words. But for conversation uh uh. When we moved from the Canal Zone to Juan Diaz¹, mom sent me to the store... I have always been somewhat arrogant, self-confident. Give me A, B, C and last give me *arena*. You know what is *arena*?

AC: Sand. (Laughing)

James: And the man said, "I don't sell *arena*." And that smart smart me said, "oh? What is that white stuff there eh? Eh? Eh?" And he said, "No. That is not *arena* that is *harina* (flour)". So when a *Chinese* (his emphasis) can tell you, can correct you, you are in trouble! (laughing) I went home and got the dictionary. And I actually went through the dictionary page by page. And I actually spoke

¹ Juan Diaz is one of the most populous neighborhoods in Panama City. According to the 2010 census, it has over 100,000 residents. 20 percent of those residents reported themselves as African-descendants

Spanish, conversational Spanish, for a purpose at 12 years of age. All of my brothers that came from the Canal Zone, we speak Spanish with an accent. My other brothers that came up in Chorrillo², natural. And spoke English also, with an accent (Personal interview, 2009).

This short anecdote about a trip to the corner store raised questions about family mobility, neighborhoods of West Indian identity, language acquisition and preservation, different social integration among families, business ownership, and also how Panamanians of West Indian heritage position themselves in comparison to other groups within the larger racial and ethnic framework of Panama. When James juxtaposed his 12-year-old Spanish abilities against those of an adult Chinese man, and implied that his should have been superior, I knew I needed to include the excerpt in this dissertation. “When a *Chinese* can tell you, can correct you, you are in trouble,” he laughed. I realized that while my research focuses on Panamanians of West Indian heritage, this dissertation would present an incomplete picture of Panama if I did not provide further description of the broader racial and ethnic diversity of the country. The study examines the relationships between the U.S. state, Panamanians of West Indian heritage, and the Panamanian state. Beyond the scope of this dissertation lie parallel stories of labor migrations, immigrations, fights for land rights, and social integration in the diverse country of Panama. Although they are in the periphery, these stories relate to, even if not the focal point of, this dissertation.

The Chinese, who James implied should not speak Spanish as well as he should, have a long history in Panama, beginning with contract labor for the Panama Railroad in

² Chorillo is a neighborhood in Panama City. According to the 2010 Panamanian census, 16 percent of residents reported themselves as African descendants

the 1850s (Cohen 1971), which also brought a wave of West Indian laborers, and steadily continuing since then (Siu 2007). A 2010 episode of The Travel Channel's *Anthony Bourdain: No Reservations* located in Panama features a first generation Panamanian-Chinese man. In the episode, he claims that Chinatown in Panama may be the oldest in the Americas, and is certainly older than that of New York. A common question from interviewees during my conversations about the 2010 Panamanian census that asked about African heritage was, "Why don't they ask about Chinese?" That question is an acknowledgement of the considerable Chinese presence in Panama.

A feature on Travel Channel's popular travel and food show is significant for the recognition of the history of Chinese in Panama, but even more so for the Republic of Panama itself. The country has recently moved from travel obscurity to garnering international attention for vacation and permanent living. Upon learning that I was Panamanian, a college acquaintance once asked me, "Where is Panamania?" This year, however, Panama holds the New York Times' number one spot for places to go in 2012 with a tagline that reads, "Go for the Canal. Stay for everything else." Panama has been featured in *The Washington Post* (2007), *The New York Times* (2012) and multiple episodes on *HGTV International House Hunters* (2007, 2011, 2012). Panama, the Panama Canal, and its history are experiencing renewed global attention.

Although Black West Indians were the largest labor immigrants for the American canal construction, they were not the only migrants. A European recruitment effort yielded approximately 12,000 European workers for the American Canal project, mainly Spaniards (Donadio 1999; Greene 2004), Italians, and Greeks, who earned twice the

wages of Black West Indians (Conniff 1985, 26, 35). Recruiters in the West Indies did not require Black labor specifically. Labor migrations, therefore, also represented the racial and ethnic diversity of the Caribbean despite the absence of sophisticated racial discourse to depict their unique experiences. Race discourse has limited their identifications in scholarship to “White and light mulattoes” or “White West Indians” (Conniff 1985, 35).

To formally capture the contributions of various ethnicities in Panama the government commissioned the creation of the Plaza de la Cultura y de las Etnias [Plaza of Culture and Ethnicities] in 2003 for Panama’s centennial. This monument in Panama City near Amador Causeway honors various immigrant groups that have impacted and shaped Panama. When I took my college roommate to see it during her visit to Panama, I had to give detailed directions to our taxi driver. He had never seen or heard of the monument. The circular monument, sponsored by the Fundación de la Cultura y de las Etnias, a nonprofit organization run by José Chong-Hon (Caballero 2003), displays a plaque for each ethnicity, detailing the contribution to Panama in both Spanish and a native language of that immigrant group when applicable. The groups represented are: Spanish, Chinese, Black West Indians³, French, Jewish, Indian, Greek, Italian, and North Americans.⁴

³ The 2003 article by Caballero in *el Panamá América* actually names “afroamericanos” as a group rather than “Afro-Antillanos”. However, I have personal pictures and fieldnotes from my multiple visits to the monument and thus recognized the error in the article.

⁴ Although *norteamericano* in Spanish literally means North American, popular usage of the term refers singularly to people from the United States. It does not intend to include Canadians or Mexicans. The Spanish word *estadounidense* translates to mean a person from the United States, but it is rarely used.

Because the monument focuses on immigrant groups, the Indigenous communities of Panama are absent. Panama has three recognized Indigenous territories —the Emberá Wonaan, Kuna Yala, and Ngöbe-Buglé — whose cultural and class struggles have been the subject of anthropological study (Bourgois 1988; Gjording 1991; Howe 1998, 2009; Verner 1920). The Ngöbe-Buglé have made international news recently for two reasons. The documentary film *Paradise for Sale* (Prado 2011) addresses the complicated issues of the land rights of the Ngöbe-Buglé in the midst of a population influx of American retirees and developers in the scenic islands of Bocas del Toro. In addition, the tribe created highway blockades in opposition of a new law that would theoretically allow the construction of dams on Indigenous lands in western Panama (AP 2012). Urban areas such as Panama City have legal structures in place to mitigate effects of immigration on Panamanians. Indigenous communities have experienced the brunt of legal complications due to sudden increased immigration their areas, which often lack formal land titles. They continue to fight against government concessions to moneyed immigrants and national development projects that adversely affect their land and rights.

Panama as the geographic crossroads of the world has led to a tremendous amount of diversity. Its position in commerce invites peoples from all over the world to this beautiful, ecologically diverse, and economically affordable country. People do not just visit Panama. Many stay. Groups that have historically contributed to Panama's cultural and economic development now co-exist with newer waves of immigration, mostly from other Latin American country such as Colombia, Dominican Republic, Venezuela, and Nicaragua. Although this dissertation centers on Panamanians of West Indian descent in

urban areas, I acknowledge the depth of human diversity within this small Central American nation. The West Indian identities that I investigated are created, perceived, reconstructed, and practiced in a multi-national, multi-cultural, multiethnic, and multi-racial space.

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My graduate school trajectory began at my undergraduate institution of Duke University, specifically through the Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship program. This program first opened my eyes to the pursuit of a doctorate, cultivated my research interests, and provided professional development and support throughout my graduate training. Thank you especially to Debbie Wahl and Dr. Lee Baker.

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Last but certainly not least, I want to acknowledge the unconditional support of my family throughout this journey that has taken me to different countries for various amounts of time. Thank you to all of my family in Panama for making my time there so special that I miss all you dearly, but especially to Nelly, Thelma, and Nazarena, for always being there for me at every turn. Thank you for always thinking of me, including me, helping me, making the transition to Panama seamless, and reminding me that “home” has multiple addresses. And to my family in the U.S., especially my parents and sister, for believing in me and doing everything in their power to make sure I finished. I could not have done this without all of you.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

“Afro-Latin America” has been a recent lightning rod for academic inquiry both within the United States and abroad (Devia and Santos 2010; Dzidzienyo and Obler 2005; Gates 2011; Guerrón-Montero 2006; Gundmundson and Wolfe 2010; Jiménez Román and Flores 2010; McKnight and Garofalo 2009; Telles 2006). The United Nations declared 2011 the “Year of the African Descendant” which promoted public and academic discourse around economic and social indicators for people of African descent in various global contexts. This identity label posed particular debate in Latin America where the term is used as a cultural ingredient of a hybrid racial product and a cultural practice. Rarely, however, is “Afro” used as a regional or national race-based political identity; it is described as cultural component of a diverse Latin American region. The disproved but still popular theories of race mixing and national identity in Latin America have complicated the separation of Blackness from other racial and ethnic identities because it unbalances perceived racially homogenous national identities. This dissertation takes a step back in order to move this discourse forward.

Rather than assuming a collective contemporary Black identity for people who share Diasporic history, are identified as or self-identify as Black across geographic spaces, this research questions the implied singularity of “Black.” It explores the political, economic, cultural, and social contexts of identity and identification of a

particular group of African descendent people within a specific national, and at times bi-national⁵, geographic space. This study is an investigation of changing national contexts and their influence on the identity construction and identification of first and second-generation populations of West Indian immigrants, a historically marginalized identity, within the Republic of Panama⁶, a nation that has experienced recent economic, social, and political shifts.

Categories of Understanding

Throughout this dissertation I use the terms Blackness, West Indian, and *colonial*. This section elucidates my understandings and consequently my usage of each term.

Blackness: I use the term Blackness to refer to a general identity or identification as being of African descent. Panama discusses their Black populations through the term “Etnia Negra,” which translates into Black Ethnicity. There are two main Black ethnic groups. I refer to these groups as West Indian/Panamanians of West Indian descent and *coloniales*. The 2010 Panamanian census form uses “negro” before each term (see Chapter 6) for contextual clarification. However, in popular discourse, the terms West Indian and *colonial* in and of themselves imply African heritage. Neither is used to describe non-African descendent populations. I maintain that both groups are of African descent, but choose not precede each term with the use “Afro” or “Black” to avoid

⁵ I use the term bi-national to recognize the adjacent states which occupied the same area. The U.S. via the Canal Zone and Panamanian states existed simultaneously from 1903-1979.

⁶ The full name of the nation-state territory is the Republic of Panama, most often called simply “Panama”. Throughout this dissertation, I use “Panama” and “the Republic of Panama” interchangeably. Panama is also the name of a province, as well as the shortened and most often used term for Panama City. I use “Panama province” to refer to the whole province and “Panama City” to refer to the capital city. When “Panama” is used by an author or speaker to mean the province or city, I have provided clarification as necessary.

redundancy. The splintering of Etnia Negra alludes to distinct geographic origins and language bases for each group, West Indian and English as opposed to Latin American and Spanish. Employing theories of the African Diaspora, both groups are included in my use of Blackness. In Panama, the term Blackness can refer to either or both branches of Black ethnicity, but can also extend outside of the country's borders. It is not a country specific, but rather a diasporic, terminology to express the panoply of African ancestry.

West Indian: I use the term “West Indian” rather than Caribbean, Antillean, or Afro-Antillean to describe the laborers from the mainly Anglophone Caribbean islands who traveled to Panama to build the Railroad construction, French canal, and U.S. canal. I acknowledge that the Caribbean contains a mixture of races, ethnicities, and languages. However, the vast majority of the laborers from the Caribbean that traveled to Panama were from English-speaking islands and of African descent. I use “West Indians” to mean Black West Indians unless otherwise noted and “Panamanians of West Indian descent” to infer both West Indian and African heritage of subsequent generations that grew up in Panama. The majority of my research participants are Panamanian citizens. I purposely refer to them as “Panamanians of West Indian descent” when applicable to distinguish these participants from other studies about immigrant West Indian laborers in Panama. The term “West Indian” most often means Anglophone and Black (Mosby 2003: 21 in Watson 2009: 232). I choose to utilize this term in an attempt to remain consistent with how my research population describes themselves, as well as how others in Panama identify them. My research participants most often describe their heritage as “West Indian” when speaking English and the equivalent “antillano” in Spanish. To preserve the integrity of phrasing of other authors and speakers, I only depart from the term West

Indian if a speaker or author uses another term, such as Antillean, Afro-Antillean, or its Spanish equivalent *afro-antillano*. Additionally, the term *chombo* was a derogatory word used, arguably, to describe Blacks of West Indian heritage. These alternate phrasings are used synonymously to mean West Indian unless otherwise noted.

Coloniales: I use the term *coloniales* to refer to native-Spanish speaking Panamanians of African descent that do not claim West Indian heritage. Popularly, the term refers to Panamanians that arrived to Panama with the Spanish during colonial times, but can extend to other Spanish speaking non-West Indian Latin Americans of African heritage. In urban Panama, *costeños*, meaning people from the coast, is a common term to distinguish *coloniales* from West Indians/Panamanians of West Indian descent. The Spanish settlements of Nombre de Dios and Portobelo, located on the Atlantic coast of Colón province, were some of the first settlements in Panama. Both African descendent groups had large populations in this province. West Indians dominated Colón city whereas *costeños*, as their name suggests, were formerly concentrated on the coast. *Costeño* does not describe the entire *colonial* population; the majority do not live on a coast. Nor is the term as widely used as *colonial*. Therefore, I use *colonial* to refer to Panamanians of African descent that do not claim West Indian heritage, remaining consistent with the language people use to identify themselves and how this group is identified by others. I depart from using *colonial* when authors or speakers use other terminology for this population. For example, the label *coloniales*, colloquially called *comecocos* (eats coconuts), refer to people, but many describe the culture as “Afro-Hispanic” (Watson 2009).

Framing the Issues

This study details the intricacy of overlapping and connected lives and the perceived divisions between identity constructions within shifting contexts that both separate and cohere. This is a study of political change over time and the contemporary identity products that change generates. In a short amount of time, the politics, population, and landscape of Panama have changed drastically. Table 1 shows the steep population increase over the last 50 years, the period that directly relates to my primary research population⁷. Although most countries experience population growth from decade to decade, in Panama, the population of the country more than tripled in the 50-year period 1960-2010.

Table 1. Total Population of the Republic of Panama, 1960 - 2010

Year	Population
2010	3,405,813
2000	2,839,177
1990	2,329,329
1980	1,805,287
1970	1,428,082
1960	1,075,541

Note: Data from <http://www.censos2010.gob.pa>

⁷ Details about research population are discussed in Chapter 3.

Table 2 shows the population increases of Panama City and Colón⁸ specifically, the two Panamanian cities that anchor my research location. Although they are two of the largest cities in the country, their size and growth are asymmetrical. Only Panama City experienced a steep increase of population. In a twenty-year period, Colón's population rose by less than 66,000 residents. In the same twenty-year period, Panama City, on the other hand, experienced an increase of almost 296,000 residents, a figure that includes both immigration and in-country migrations.

Table 2. Total Population of Panama City and Colón, 1990 - 2010

Year	Panama City	Colón
2010	880,691	206,553
2000	708,438	174,059
1990	584,803	140,908

Note: Data from <http://www.censos2010.gob.pa>

The population of Panama has increased rapidly through changing demographics, including tiers of immigration. The elevated economic status of Panama due to increased foreign investment, construction, and banking, attracts immigrants from neighboring Colombia that seek labor opportunities and a better way of life (OIM 2008). The influx of

⁸ Colón is the name of a province as well as a city in Colón province. I use "Colón" to refer to the city and specify "Colón province" or "province of Colón" when necessary to refer to the province.

Colombians⁹ in particular has created stereotypes – males as drug lords and women as prostitutes—and a stigma that have triggered a reactive cohesion of oppositional Panamanian national identity.

Another side of immigration, however, encourages American retirees to relocate to Panama by offering bi-annual visas¹⁰ to stretch their earnings into a comfortable way of life, the way they knew before the global financial crisis of 2008. Not wanting to return to Jamaica, one Jamaican-American woman purchased a retirement home on the gulf coast of Mississippi. Hurricane Katrina did not damage her home as it did countless others, but she quickly reevaluated retiring there. She sold the house and purchased two homes in Panama—one on the outskirts of Panama City in Chorrera, and land on the beach of Maria Chiquita, a small town near the Atlantic Coast, where she is building another home. She is learning Spanish along the way (Personal interview, 2010). A Black American couple sold their expensive home in Potomac, Maryland and bought an entire floor in a waterfront building in the posh Panama City neighborhood of Punta Pacifica (Personal interview, 2010). Former Panamanian presidents live in their building, which is next to the recently opened Trump Ocean Club. I also met a Canadian couple who, after years of waiting for their apartment to “be finished,” decided to return to Canada.

Construction and construction speculation surge within Panama City as urban sprawl

⁹ According to 2008 data from Organización Internacional para las Migraciones (OIM), Panama is the third largest receiving country of Colombian immigrants. The U.S. is number one, and Venezuela slightly edges out Panama for number two.

¹⁰ Beginning in 2010, Panama changed the tourist visa for U.S. citizens from three months to six months. A person can stay for six consecutive months at a time. There is no cost or application process associated with the visa. Many U.S. citizens leave Panama at least once a year to visit the U.S. or to travel to another country in order to circumvent a more permanent and costly visa process.

extends the city's borders. Immigration, development, and poverty share the same trajectory. All numbers are rising. These issues, although national in effect, are concentrated in Panama City.

Changes to the land are as radical as the changing demographics. I was shocked to hear my father's cousin tell me stories of chasing monkeys and practicing taxidermy in her youth. "Where did you grow up?" I asked bewildered. "You were in my house. The neighborhood was different then," she explained. I stayed in her parents' home in the Miraflores neighborhood of Panama City during my first visit to Panama in July of 2005. Her mother is my grandmother's first cousin. Her parents, in their late 80s when they so graciously hosted me, ate significantly less than I did. After meals, I used to sneak around the corner to Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC) for a supplement of fried chicken and biscuits, or sometimes sancocho¹¹, and sit outside to watch children play soccer on the concrete basketball courts listening to reggaeton or just people-watch across the mini-highway at the nearby universities. Where could she possibly have chased monkeys in the middle of the city? It is hard to imagine that less than a generation ago, monkeys roamed in a neighborhood where people can now rent an apartment in a high-rise building, buy a brand new car, or enjoy KFC.

Eugene Collins was born and raised in Panama City, but left in the 1960s for the U.S. He retired, moved back to Panama City with his wife, who is also from Panama, and

¹¹ Sancocho is a traditional Latin American soup, which contains broth, usually chicken, a root vegetable like yucca or potato and other vegetables. It is so common in Panama that fast food restaurants, even U.S. based chains like KFC, offer it as a side dish.

opened a Caribbean themed¹² restaurant in Rio Abajo, a neighborhood both familiar and unfamiliar to him. He grew up in the densely West Indian neighborhood of Rio Abajo, which literally means downstream or down the river, “when there was actually a river!” Like other Panamanians of West Indian descent who emigrated in the early 1970s because of General Omar Torrijos’s¹³ “Hispanization” projects, which marginalized West Indian identity, or who left due to the political and economic uncertainty between the United States and Panama via the Canal Zone, he moved back to Panama City in retirement and wondered, “Where is my river?” Rio Abajo’s river may be less observable, but the neighborhood remains densely populated with Panamanians of West Indian descent. Some Caribbean accents are still very strong. While eating lunch in Eugene’s restaurant in Rio Abajo, I had to ask one man to speak to me in Spanish. I could not understand the story he was telling in his heavily accented English. Seamlessly changing to Spanish, he told me that a man was shot and killed in his own home in a complex on the outskirts of Panama City called Brisas del Golf. Sitting just at the next table, he overheard me, speaking in English, that I had recently completed an interview in that same a complex. Crime rates and gang violence are also rising.¹⁴

Stories of topographical change, like those of my cousin and Eugene, echoed throughout my time in Panama. People used to hunt and fish to feed their families, or sell

¹² The official phrasing of his restaurant’s cuisine is “Afro-antillana y criollo,” meaning Afro-Antillean and Creole, where creole means the culinary mixture of Spanish and Latin American influence.

¹³ General Omar Torrijos was a military dictator in Panama from 1968 when he staged a coup until he died in a plane accident in 1981. This dissertation does not discuss Torrijos beyond the Canal Treaties of 1977. For more information regarding Panamanian dictatorships, see Guevara Mann 1996, Koster and Sanchez 1990. For more information about Omar Torrijos see Collazos 1991; Garcia Marquez 2007; Greene 1984; Priestly 1986

¹⁴ Rising crime is discussed with relation to the U.S. 1989 invasion in Chapter 4

their catch to supplement their low wages in Panama or the Canal Zone. I attended a talk at the Smithsonian Tropical Research Center in Panama City in 2010 where anthropologist and environmentalist Dr. Stanley Heckadon lamented the loss of mangroves in the province and city of Colón and the detrimental effects it will have on the future of Panama. The environmental focus of these stories speaks to the Republic of Panama's physical changes, but further, the ways in which these changes affect people's daily realities. What happens when people are no longer allowed or able to fish or hunt to alleviate their hunger? What happens when the economically driven Colón port expansion and a larger Free Trade Zone outweigh the ecological need for mangroves? More people go hungry. Cities become about international trade, not domestic ecological preservation. "How many jobs do the mangroves create?" is a question Heckadon said he often received. Despite possessing some of the most important ports in the country and the largest Free Trade Zone in the Western Hemisphere, unemployment is the most prominent issue in Colón, a province and city on a steep economic and environmental decline (Heckadon 1994; Herrera 2003).

This is a story about changing centers of power. Lowell, a Jamaican immigrant by way of London, moved to Panama City in 2009 with his wife and children without knowing any Spanish. After 18 years living in England, he found life too expensive and too racist. He was ready to make a new start and better life for his family. Although he lives in Panama City, Lowell chose to join Balboa Union Church, an English-speaking multid denominational Protestant church in the former Canal Zone, in order, "to be in the center of power" (Personal interview, 2010). Balboa was the former seat of the Canal Zone government, but that ceased to exist in 1979. The service I attended there,

organized by Lowell to celebrate Jamaican Independence Day, had an attendance of approximately 60 people. The majority, like me, attended to support Lowell and enjoy a home-cooked Jamaican meal after the service. Very few attendees were members or regular attendees of the church. Balboa Union Church, like other American Canal Zone based organizations and clubs, has suffered from the withdrawal of American Zonian civilian and military populations. With the loss of its government and the majority of its American population, the Canal Zone is no longer the center of regional, national, or bi-national power.

Nevertheless, as much as it is about change and circulations of West Indian identity, it is also about the maintenance of social and racial divisions. A family of Jamaican missionaries recently moved from Jamaica to Panama City. The three Bailey children attend school in the former Canal Zone where English is the primary language, but uses Spanish as a second language of instruction. Mr. Bailey told me that at school, the other children often play with the boys' hair out of unfamiliarity and curiosity (Personal interview, 2010). The former Canal Zone may not hold political power, but it is still exclusive. In the year 2010, "Black hair" is a unique and foreign experience for the Bailey's classmates.

It is also a story about the persistent practices of identity in the face of change. Children from the low-income and violence-ridden community of Chorillo attended summer camp at Mi Pueblito in Panama City.¹⁵ Fittingly, they met on the "Antillano" (West Indian) side of the replica village. With laughter and joy, they learned and danced

¹⁵ Mi Pueblito means "My Little Village" and is comprised of three replica villages: a colonial Panamanian village, a traditional West Indian village, and a traditional Kuna village, in order to show three large influences in Panama today.

to the calypso song “Matilda,” made famous by Harry Belafonte in the 1950s. The music was the same, but the lyrics the children sang were in Spanish, their native tongue.

Calypso, a typical music from the Anglophone Caribbean, illustrates through language the transitions for people of West Indian descent. Calypso songs initially arrived to Panama in English, then later translated and sung in Spanish. Now, there are songs written and performed only in Spanish, without English originals or translations.

“Imagínese Ustedes.! [Imagine that!]” an audience member exclaimed to this very fact during a Martes Culturales¹⁶ presentation on Calypso in Panama. The children at the summer camp also sang along to newer versions of calypso, written and performed entirely in Spanish that address contemporary issues in Panama. When I asked one of my bilingual Panamanian friends to assist me with transcribing the song I heard the children sing at the camp and heard again during the Martes Culturales presentation which describes the current decline of Panamanian mores, “*Panamá no era así*”¹⁷ [Panama wasn’t like this], she emailed me excitedly.

OMG Ariana!!! Thank you so much, this has brought back soooooo many memories. I've not heard the song before but I use to listen to calypso at my grandparent's house aaaaalllll the time so this was so much fun!!! thanks for the memories.

I do not know if she is of West Indian descent or if she considers herself of African descent, but her positive emotional response places calypso as part of her Panamanian family life in a way I had not previously imagined. West Indian cultural practices have

¹⁶ Martes Culturales means Cultural Tuesdays, a weekly program in Colón. It is discussed in Chapter 3.

¹⁷ See Appendix A for transcription of the song as recorded on May 25, 2010 during a Martes Culturales presentation

extended beyond just the immediate community into Panamanian memory, contemporary cultural practice, as intergenerational entertainment, and as a form of social critique.

As I prepared to leave the field, the themes that emerged from my fieldwork were reinforced during my trip to Colón for the final Martes Culturales program that I was able to attend before returning to the U.S. This particular week boasted a fashion show dedicated to various forms of *polleras*, the national dress of Panama. Rather than the *Bar Guaira* where Martes Culturales presentations normally took place, they held the fashion show in the hotel lobby. The openness of the venue change drew a larger, more diverse crowd as well. Ernesto Polanco, an academic affiliated with the Center for Advanced Studies in Fine Arts and Folklore in Colón, introduced the polleras one by one, and described the different ways in which the distinct styles, colors, and/or accessories of the dresses denoted particular regions of the country. Models showed ten different polleras. Afterward, Mr. Polanco thanked various people for making the event possible. Only then did he say that there is more than just the “afro hispano.” He had another pollera to show the audience.

Una influencia muy interesante...la afro-antillana que tiene una cultura riquísima igual a la panameña porque también son panameños de la edad de la construcción de la canal y el ferrocarril...han dejado un legado riquísimo en la música y la comida, en el arte y igualmente en el traje tradicional.

[A very interesting influence, the afro-Antillean, which has a rich culture like the Panamanians because they are also Panamanian from the time of canal construction and the railroad... they have left a rich legacy in music, and food, in art and equally in the traditional dress].

This well-respected academic first separated West Indian culture from mainstream Panamanian culture. He then backtracked to reaffirm that West Indians are, in fact, Panamanian, and that they have left a cultural legacy, erroneously implying that they no

longer have a strong or contemporary presence in the Republic of Panama. Their history is long, and their present is complicated.

Project Background: Overview
of West Indians in Panama

Between 1904 and 1914, approximately 150,000 Black West Indians arrived to build the U.S. Panama Canal¹⁸, the majority from Anglophone British islands (Conniff 1985, 29). Most of these laborers worked for the U.S. government, and lived either in the Republic Panama or in the Panama Canal Zone¹⁹, a 50-mile long, 10-mile wide U.S. controlled territory located between Panama City and Colón. The laborers experienced discrimination from both governments. Until the 1960s, the U.S. government unjustly compensated Black West Indians and other non-Americans from the “silver roll” while White Americans were paid from the “gold roll.” More than just a stark income disparity, gold roll employees enjoyed a superior quality of life in all regards: better living conditions, schools, access to food, health care, entertainment, and social activities (Conniff 1985, 31-36). The Canal Zone, with its U.S.-based laws, entertainment, judicial system, etcetera, was a wholly contained American enclave that traversed the Republic of Panama.²⁰ Within its borders, racial segregation persisted well beyond the 1954 Brown

¹⁸ This dissertation uses the term “canal construction” to refer to the U.S. Canal construction period only. Any reference to the French canal project always uses “French” as a qualifier.

¹⁹ This dissertation uses Panama Canal Zone, American Canal Zone, Canal Zone, and the Zone synonymously. The only distinction made is through the word “former”. The Former Canal Zone, or in Spanish *la antigua zona* or *áreas revertidas* [reverted areas], refer to the same space but after 1999 when the area was no longer controlled by the U.S. and became Panamanian territory

²⁰ Although the Canal Zone encompassed both civilian and military U.S. populations, this dissertation only focuses on the civilian workers and Canal related employment. Military bases, personnel,

vs. Board of Education decision. Rather than integrate the English instruction schools within this American territory, the non-White schools changed from English language instruction to Spanish language instruction, expediting the loss of English as the mother tongue for children of West Indian descent, and adding a linguistic level of Panamanian socialization for children of Anglophone West Indians and their children. The Canal Zone system created asymmetrical social and economic realities based on color and citizenship.

For those who lived outside of the Canal Zone in the Republic of Panama, the Panamanian government was equally as exclusive. The 1940 census asked specifically about race and country of origin and was followed by the revocation of the citizenship of non-Spanish speaking immigrants and their children via the 1941 constitution (Conniff 1985, 99; O'Reggio 2006, 105). One of the largest groups affected by this change in law was Black West Indians. The government reinstated their citizenship in 1946, but these changes directly affected access to economic and social resources and political engagement. Moreover, it caused a number of Black West Indians to shun their origins, stop speaking English, change their last names to Spanish surnames, and distance themselves from the larger West Indian community, a process Conniff (1985) called “Hispanization” (137).

Since the 1903 Hay–Bunau-Varilla Treaty and despite various treaty revisions, Panama had maintained political opposition to the ubiquitous U.S. domination of the Panama Canal Zone. The 1964 flag riots, an attempt by Panamanian students to raise the

their relationships with the Canal Zone, Zonians, and the Republic of Panama are beyond the scope of this research.

Panamanian flag in the Zone, left Panamanians and Americans dead on both the Pacific and Atlantic sides of the country. The riots reinforced the need for a new political arrangement, an arrangement achieved by the 1977 Carter-Torrijos Treaties. The treaties mandated the dissolution of the Canal Zone beginning October 1, 1979 and ending with the complete turnover of the Canal Zone and the Panama Canal to the Republic of Panama on December 31, 1999. While the U.S. withdrawal in 1999 eliminated jobs and privileges associated with the U.S. government and Zonian families and altered land ownership, it also aided the professional advancement of Panamanian Zonians and non-Zonian Panamanian who worked for the Canal.

This study defines the “change in sovereignty” to span the twenty-two year period beginning with the 1977 Torrijos-Carter Treaties and ending with the 1999 U.S. withdrawal. The timeline of academic investigation begins, however, in the 1960s when the struggles over the Canal Zone turned riotous and fatal. Resentment of the U.S. presence intensified particularly after the 1989 military invasion, which not only killed thousands of Panamanians and decimated neighborhoods, but also propelled Panama back to democratic civilian rule after twenty-one years of military dictatorship.

While the 1999 turnover celebrated Panamanian sovereignty in the Canal Zone, the barbed wire fences still separate the former Canal Zone from the Republic of Panama. Further, the Canal Zone turnover disbanded the collective Panamanian political identity constructed around reclaiming the Canal and the Canal Zone for Panama, leaving Black West Indian voices marginalized within the shifting national political agenda. This timely study uses the Panamanian Census 2010 campaign and resulting data as a means to explore issues of identity and identification within Panamanian populations. For the first

time since the 1940s, when the citizenship of non-Spanish speaking immigrants was revoked, the 2010 Panama Census asked explicitly if someone in the home is “Black or of African descent.” The question was met with both public approval and opposition. My dissertation uses these discourses and the mobilization around identification as a point of inquiry into contemporary meanings of Blackness and national identity in Panama.

Unlike other Latin American countries where migration to the U.S. serves as a household survival strategy (Fussell 2010), the flow of people is reverse for Panama. The investment and development opportunities opened through privatization as well as the global financial crisis lure foreigners to enter, not to leave, Panamanian spaces. Goods are comparable, the currency is the U.S. dollar, and the cost of living is lower than in the United States. Panama now rivals Costa Rica as the preferred Latin American destination for American retirees. The complex issues surrounding the economic and social development of urban Panama are exacerbated by the region’s history of racism and exclusion, as well as the current influx of foreign development and immigration. For this reason, my dissertation research also included foreign Panamanian residents as an apt way to investigate state sanctioned inclusion and exclusion practices.

Panama is a country in which citizenship, race, and class collide in a very small geographical space and over a short period of time. Building on the literature about political transitions in Panama (Barry and Lindsay-Poland 1995; Guevara Mann 1996; Lindsay-Poland 2003; Sanchez 2007) and ethnographies of land reform (Chase 2002; Verdery 2003), my project adds an urban dimension to existing ethnographic research on Panama, which has centered primarily on Indigenous peoples (Bourgois 1988; Gjording 1991). This study explores the struggles of what it means to forge an identity as a citizen

from a marginalized racial and ethnic heritage through the broader lenses of citizenship, race, and immigration. Through ethnographic research methods, archival research, and census data, my dissertation unequivocally links racial struggles to state processes and public opinion. This research directly addresses how marginalized groups deal with urban development, which is of critical interest to those concerned with globalization and the protection of rights (Gill 2000; Grandin 2006; Gregory 2007).

Research Questions

This study acknowledges that differences in racial demographics, political contexts, and language shape both identity and identifications. Unlike other works about West Indians in Panama, this study makes geographical distinctions between Panamanians of West Indian descent to explore the ways in which Blackness is constructed in distinct areas of the same nation, how and why those constructions change over time, and how those changes influence the current economic and political realities of Black populations of West Indian heritage. Furthermore, my dissertation directly investigates the roles of the U.S. state and Panamanian state in these constructions and lived realities.

The four main research objectives of this study are to investigate: 1) how self-identified Panamanians of West Indian heritage understand current social, economic and demographic reorganization in urban Panama; 2) the role of the state in the construction and perception of West Indian identification; 3) how changes in the landscape and demographics of urban Panama are perceived and lived differently by Panamanians of West Indian descent based on place, and; 4) how Panamanians of West Indian descent

mobilize around contemporary race/ethnic labels and identifications to foster social, economic, and political changes.

The ways in which people identify and organize are rooted in perceptions of belonging and difference. Panama's urban racial paradigms have been influenced by the collision of Latin American colorism with a Black and White U.S. racial binary and confounded by patterns of immigration integration. This anthropological research examines how the change in sovereignty of the Panama Canal Zone from American control to Panamanian control has affected the social and political participation and identity of Blacks of West Indian ancestry in urban Panama. I define "urban Panama" to include Panama City on the Pacific coast, the former Panama Canal Zone, and the city of Colón on the Atlantic coast. Urban Panama was the initial site of settlement for West Indian laborers during the Panamanian railroad construction (1850-1855), the French Canal project (1881-1889), and the U.S. canal construction period (1904-1914). It was also the site of struggle between U.S. colonialism and Panamanian nationalism, and the area currently undergoing commercial and residential development, which began after the 1977 Treaties but before the 1999 U.S. withdrawal.

Constructions of Blackness differed between West Indians who lived in the U.S. Canal Zone, those who lived on the Pacific Coast, and those who lived on the Atlantic coast. Attention to each area specifically, as well as the movement between the three, better illustrates patterns of historical mobility and also contemporary borders and barriers to group cohesion. Beyond differences of constructions of Blackness among West Indian descendants, this study also examines the constructions of difference between West Indian identity and *coloniales*, Spanish-speaking people of African descent

who arrived during colonial times and lived in Panama before the influx of West Indian laborers for the railroad, French canal, and/or U.S. canal projects. This study addresses the geographic and historical differences in the contemporary identity and identifications that encompass *Etnia Negra* [Black ethnicity] in Panama both among people of West Indian descent, as well as between West Indians and *coloniales*.

This project expands past research on the contributions of West Indian laborers in Panama (Anguizola 1968; Conniff 1985; Lewis 1980; Newton 1984; O'Reggio 2006; Westerman 1980) to address contemporary struggles of Panamanians who acknowledge their West Indian roots, and consequently their Black heritage, while negotiating their position as Panamanian citizens in a rapidly changing and purportedly “mixed” race nation. This research makes important contributions to the anthropological studies of urban spaces, Blackness in the African Diaspora, citizenship, immigration, globalization, Latin American studies, and race/ethnic studies.

Organization of Chapters

Including this introduction, this dissertation contains seven chapters. Chapter 2, entitled *Literature Review*, presents a review of the relevant literature used for this dissertation. The historical and contemporary complexity of this research area demanded a foundation from various academic bodies of work in order to aptly study English speaking foreign Black immigrants and subsequent generations in Latin American spaces of racial mixing during periods of rapid social, economic, and political change. The literature review opens with an overview of the discussions regarding identity and identification, including post-colonial theory, nation and national identity, cultural

citizenship, and language. The next section discusses current trends in Diaspora studies broadly, and the African Diaspora specifically, with attention to theories of immigration and assimilation, particularly for Black Caribbean immigrants. The final two sections take a geographic focus in Latin America and discuss conflicting theories of Whitening, racial mixing, and Blackness.

In Chapter 3, *Methodological Approach and Researcher Positionality*, I explain my selection of research sites, outline my previous research that led and contributed to my fieldwork, and discuss my data collection tools. Using standard ethnographic research tools, I detail my use of surveys, interviews, participant observation, and archival research. The latter half of Chapter 3 is dedicated to the meanings of co-constructed qualitative research and my unique position within this data and as the instrument of data collection. I discuss the ways in which I was identified and how I self-identified in the field influenced the data collection process and my relationships with research participants.

Although the vignettes in this introduction help to frame the context and provide a short project background, Chapter 4, *Historical Background and Research Context*, details the background and research locations of this study. Chapter 4 overviews the history of the United States in Panama as it relates to the multiple and overlapping political events that profoundly affected the spaces and boundaries of belonging and opportunities for West Indians and Panamanians of West Indian descent. For this reason, I deemed it necessary to give not only the pertinent history, but also glimpses of how people understand these events, the last 50 years in particular, in relation to their own lives and trajectories. The research context provides nuances into how my three main

research sites have changed during my period of investigation, both topographically and demographically. Because these events and places relate directly to people's understandings of group and self, the historical background and research context chapter also contains ethnographic research data to more effectively situate these events within this research and research population.

The next two chapters present my ethnographic findings. Both chapters explore the political contexts in which Panamanians of West Indian descent create and practice their own distinct identities, as well as identify others. Chapter 5, *Zoning Panamanian Blackness: Borders and Belonging*, explores the creation and practice of West Indian identity with relation to the shifting roles of the U.S. state. This chapter addresses ways in which the U.S.-controlled Canal Zone both marginalized West Indians and Panamanians of West Indian descent because of differences in race and citizenship, but later created opportunities for advancement specifically because of their Panamanian citizenship during and after the change in sovereignty. This data reveals that despite shared Panamanian citizenship, the Canal Zone generated identity fractures among people of West Indian descent that divided families and varied by geographic origin. These separations continue to influence contemporary social and professional networks, as well as how people organize and interact today.

Chapter 6, *Redefining Panamanian Blackness through the 2010 Census*, examines West Indian identity with relation to the shifting political borders of the Panamanian state. This chapter uses the 2010 Panamanian census as a lens to examine Blackness and race mixing in Panama from both academic and popular understandings, examining the frontier between what Renee Craft (2008) calls colonial Blackness and canal Blackness.

This data shows that despite shared Diasporic origins, the different colonial centers of these two groups have created distinct cultural identities under the umbrella of “Blackness.” While old associations reproduce cultural divisions among groups that identify as Black, changing national demographics have re-constituted identity labels of national belonging that include, rather than marginalize, Panamanians of West Indian heritage.

The final chapter, Chapter 7, concludes this dissertation. This chapter reiterates the main findings from this study and states the significance of the research for anthropology and related academic fields. A few chapters can never fully represent the breadth of data nor capture the emergent trends of fieldwork. As such, chapter 7 also offers directions for future research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Furthering diasporic migrations, in the early 1900s, Black West Indians traveled in number from their mainly British colonized islands to the Latin American country of Panama to build a canal under U.S. direction. Once construction ended, some lived in the English speaking racially segregated U.S. controlled Canal Zone, others in the Spanish speaking, theoretically racially mixed but politically oppressive Republic of Panama. Families settled on opposite sides of this border. None of these residences were permanent, nor did their offspring necessarily grow up in the same lands as the parents. The steady circulation of people between two legal/social/cultural systems for decades has created a geographic and ideological space ripe for investigation.

This dissertation takes root in numerous bodies of scholarship. The triangular geographies, multiple racial identities and identification, and dual languages that inform this dissertation require an equally rich foundation for analysis. The multifaceted interconnectedness of identity, immigration, and various national and regional racial structures demands complex considerations. This chapter reviews various theories and bodies of literature. Therefore, while comprehensive in its intent, no section of this review is exhaustive.

Although there is inevitable overlap between bodies of literature, this review is broken into four main sections with multiple subsections. The first section, Identity and

Identification, reviews literature from classic postcolonial to contemporary scholarship and provides definitions and interpretations for identity and identification as self, external, and academic concepts. This section includes nation, cultural citizenship, and language as part of the construction and practice of identity. These subsections explore the relationship between identity, identification, and each subtheme, with particular reference to the state and belonging.

The second section, *Diaspora and the African Diaspora*, summarizes the differences between newer and older usages of the term *Diaspora*, engages in scholarly debates about what defines the African Diaspora specifically, and lastly, reviews works that center on immigration. The immigration studies focus on voluntary Black Caribbean migrants and the patterns of integration for subsequent generations. This section furthers the conversations about circulations of identity and Blackness as they relate not only to contemporary society, but also to specific geographic locations and destinations.

The last two sections focus on Latin America. This literature represents the problematic ways in which race and color have been used to deny and support racism, promote whitening, uphold and justify prejudice, and reinforce racial inequality throughout the region. The third section of this literature review, *Race Mixing in Latin America*, tackles the various debates about how race mixture (*mestizaje*) and color determine national identities and individual opportunities within Latin America. This section draws on literature from multiple countries in the region. The last section, *Blackness in Latin America*, addresses works that diverge from the popular concept of *mestizaje* and racial mixing, and focus instead on the particular ways that Blackness has been integrated, or not integrated, within the region and history of Latin America.

I have separated these bodies of work into sections in order to review how the authors have situated their works within explicit geographic settings, against other scholars, parallel to or in opposition with academic trends, and within specific research periods. My research, however, jars these categorical distinctions and creates new ways to both survey and analyze identity creation and practice, Diaspora, race mixing, and Blackness for marginalized identities.

Identity and Identification

The way people call, organize, label, and make assumptions about themselves and others are paramount to the work of all qualitative researchers. Assigning identity, however, can be dangerous and inaccurate and thus, many scholars have contributed to improving the tools of investigation. The work of anthropologist Lee Baker (2004) provides insight into how people in the United States practice identity, toward both positive and negative outcomes. His anthology takes root in the plethora of identities that exist in the United States including those based on race, gender, class, sexuality, language, and religion, among others. Influenced by the works of Brukhaber and Cooper (2000) and Jenkins (1994), Baker makes a significant and succinct distinction between self and external classifications. He defines identity as “the way an individual chooses to identify him or herself,” and identification as “the way others identify that individual” (2). Ted Lewellen (2002), overlapping with Baker, recognizes three separate concepts of identity: how an individual perceives himself, how an individual is popularly perceived, and how the individual is perceived by the social scientist (92). The first two complement Baker’s definitions of identity and identification. The third is what Baker attempts to

tackle through contributions by a multitude of scholars. Together, they seek to remove the academic as a reifying layer of identification. Baker outlines ways in which scholars can better utilize identity as a topic of investigation. Citing Richard Handler (1994), Baker understands the difficulty with which scholars must write about identity without reifying out-dated notions of homogeneity and essentialism. He advances the idea that “surveying” the practice of identity is different, and less reifying, than attempting to theorize and analyze the concept of identity.

Analytical leverage is actually increased by viewing identity as a rather sloppy category of practice, opposed to the cleaner category of analysis because the use of practical (or bottom-up) categories can easily incorporate the fluidity involved in the way social and power relations shape identity and vice versa. By surveying identity as an everyday category of practice, one can dynamically map the way people maintain, contest, and negotiate the boundaries and borders of race, class, gender, and sexuality (3).

Innate to categories of identity is the issue of belonging. Belonging is another way to discuss identity and identifications, moving beyond person-to-person encounters to become questions of assigned, assumed, and voluntary group memberships. This too carries differences between self as identity and external as identification. Belonging represents not only a sense of shared identity and/or identification, but further, it denotes acceptance or rejection of such membership. These assumptions hold personal and political ramifications. Belonging is not always a matter of personal choice, but can instead be the result of external pressure and interpellation. While Baker’s definitions imply person-to-person identifications, Keenan Malik (1996) criticizes post-modern identity for a lack consideration for structural or systemic discourse. He argues that the literature on post-modern identities reduces the contextual role of society to accidental interaction, thus de-politicizing both the creation of difference as well as the individuality

of that difference. The context of identity construction is thus part of the construction itself, both self and external. Identity construction, both self and external, is a production, which is never complete, always in process, and always situated within, not outside, of representation (Hall 1990, 392). Identities are not static; they are processual, a matter of becoming as well as being, and have specific histories and contexts which influence how they are perceived, practiced, and shared (Hall 1990, 394). Therefore, identifying and contextualizing difference, geographic and temporal, is an important beginning in “surveying” various constructions identity practices.

Postcolonial Theories

This dissertation frames identity, belonging, and group relations in multiple ways. Although works about globalization and imperialism also address the interaction of nation states vis-à-vis individuals and politicized movements, classic postcolonial studies more accurately describes the racialized transitional context of this study and a particular form of (external) identification: Othering. Postcolonial theory uses an interdisciplinary frame to shift power from imperial centers in order to explore the issues of formerly colonized people. This field of study, which includes both fiction and nonfiction works, focuses largely on race, nation, and class, positioning oppositional identities of power against a subjected Other (Césaire 1972; Fanon 1963; Memmi 1965; Said 1978). Some of the salient themes that define postcolonial theory are: the direct connection between colonialism, trade, and violence; the role of multiple nation states; and the critique of binary reasoning. These components of postcolonial theory help frame other relevant

topics such as race, foreignness and Othering, language, perceptions of self, and complications of belonging.

The postcolonial framework constructed around trade and violence is powerful and guides each subtopic. While literature on transnationalism and globalization addresses contemporary migrations and flows of people and capital, post colonialism centers on the aftermath of asymmetrical center-metropole colonial relationships. Trade was the foundation of most colonial relationships. These relationships were maintained through violence or the threat of violence, and further, post-colonialists often advocated violence to end the colonial condition (Fanon 1963). Panama's strategic geographic position allowed the U.S. an access point to the rest of the Western Hemisphere. Panama served not only as an important thoroughway of inter-oceanic trade, but also as a critical outpost for the U.S. military (U.S. Southern Command) and military training (School of the Americas) in establishing U.S. hegemony throughout Latin America (Espino 2001; LeFeber 1989, 23-26; Major 1993; McCullough 1977, 361-86; Sanchez 2007, 1-2). Multiple riots and the diplomacy of a military dictator finally ended the U.S. colonial presence in Panama. Although the ramifications from the constant presence of the U.S. military in Panama is beyond the scope of this dissertation, the existence of U.S. Southern Command military headquarters in Panama casts a shadow over all possibilities and realities for identity creation. Post-colonial literature situates subtopics of exploration within the wake of that particular power dynamic.

Discussions of nation states and rights are partly born from postcolonial theories. Black West Indian laborers left their Caribbean islands, most of which were still under British colonial rule at the time, to travel to the Latin American nation of Panama, which

also had a colonial relationship, but with the United States not England. Some of these laborers worked and/or resided in English-speaking U.S. controlled territory and others in Spanish-speaking Panama within Anglophone West Indian enclaves. Although the relationship between Panama and the U.S. governance of the Canal Zone was not a prototypical colonial relationship because the U.S. did not have sovereignty over the whole country but instead a large bisecting chunk, this relationship fits within the racial, temporal, and political boundaries of colonialism. Postcolonial theories consider the relationships between nation states as well as international relationships from the earliest to the most recent examples, but the discipline is most concerned with colonial history (Ramone 2011, 2). During colonial times, the processes of Othering within shared geographic boundaries mandated explicit, albeit it asymmetrical, rights and privileges. In this space, citizenship emerged as a cogent concept. Postcolonial theory problematizes the relationship between multiple nation states and the complicated consequences of citizenship and belonging that arise. As Aihwa Ong (1999, 15) states, “the nation-state—along with its juridical-legislative systems, bureaucratic apparatuses, economic entities, modes of governmentality, and war making capacities—continues to define, discipline, control and regulate all kinds of populations, whether in movement or in residence” (in Gregory 2007, 5).

To better investigate the effects of these large-scale political transitions, which include not only national boundaries and responsibilities, but rather all of the government capacities outlined by Aihwa Ong (1999), postcolonial studies concerns itself with the bodily and mental states of individuals in a post-colonial context. This too has its links to identity and identification, more specifically, issues of self- hate and social positioning.

Without delving into psychological literature, the role of constant external messages can distort the relationship between self and Other. Kenneth Bancroft Clark, who was born in the Panama Canal Zone, is the psychologist famous for the doll tests used in the 1954 *Brown vs. the Board of Education of Topeka* court case that helped end racial segregation U.S. in public schools. Franz Fanon, a psychologist by training, addresses the complicated psychological impact of colonization on colonized bodies in his seminal work *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952). More than his other works, this book focuses specifically with the colonized Caribbean Black subject, discussing the psychological impact of colonization, insofar as it blurs the lines of identity, principally for children who grow in a system not created for them. Memmi (1965) described the difficulty of belonging for the colonized subject as an exclusion from his or her own history, and an identity that is negotiated between a colonizing distant land and an occupied tangible one. Thus, systematic not- belonging, or exclusion, as a mental state, despite having legal claims within physical borders, fortifies processes of Othering, which in turn, have adverse effects on the ability to positively self-identify as an individual and, as illustrated by Clark, as a group. These psychological self-defeats are discussed in the United States, in the field of education for example (Ogbu 1987), in ways uncommon in Latin America.

My work draws jointly on U.S. based and postcolonial global literature about identity in order to thoroughly address race-centered discussions of identity that move beyond race alone. The emphases on transnationalism, globalization, and neocolonialism have eclipsed the basic power structure behind postcolonial relationships. Few studies in postcolonial literature use the United States as the colonial center and Latin America as the metropole. Although the treaties ending the U.S. legal exclusivity over the Canal

Zone went into effect in 1979, the physical departure of the U.S. civilian and military forces was not complete until December 31, 1999. Therefore, I position post-1999, rather than 1979, Panama as a post-colonial space and expand the geographic reach of postcolonial theory. I examine events, interactions, and structures of power in Latin America, an area relatively under-examined through this academic lens and more than thirty years after other countries with similar racialized colonial relationships had achieved their full sovereignty. The study uses the structural foundations of post-colonial relationships to examine contemporary issues of race, belonging, and identity. These concepts relate directly to and were influenced by the political activity that defined postcolonial movements, but move both chronologically and geographically beyond those original movements. Discussions of identity practice based in contexts of racial and cultural diversity are common in the United States and add to the rich academic tradition; however, such discussions are scarce in modern Latin Americanist discourse for various reasons, the primary reason being the different ways in which race and social integration is framed on national and regional levels. My work first problematizes the narrow discourse surrounding race and identity in Latin America, and then constructs new ways to survey identity within this diverse racial and cultural context.

Nation and National Identity

The political context in which identities are constructed is, in fact, an vital aspect in self-identity creation as well as the possibilities for identification. Therefore, political and geographic boundaries are important. However, scholars differ on how and to what extent boundaries of nation guide identity formation. Writing about political transition

after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, anthropologist Katherine Verdery (1996) defines nation and its relationships with people in political terms, actually referring to people as “subjects” and implying a state power of dominance for both political and cultural realms. For her,

Nation is a name for the relationship that links a state (actual or potential) with its subjects. Historically, the idea of nation has meant a relationship of at least two kinds: first, a citizenship relationship in which the nation is the collective sovereign emanating from the common political participation; and second, a relationship known as ethnicity, in which the nation comprises all those supposedly common language, history or broader “cultural” identity (84).

Anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1973) characterizes nationalism and national identity by the purposeful consolidation of its development through ethnic-bloc formation, rather than a collection of languages, histories, or cultural identities. He refers to a conscious reference group for those who share recurrent processes of self-identification (1973).

Verdery views the nation and national identity as a shared space of potentially diverse languages, histories, and identity whereas Geertz believes a nation consolidates that difference. Neither characterization accounts for borders where ethnic identities and identifications constantly traverse them, or ethnic identities that transcend borders. Both set boundaries with political and cultural cohesion. Edward Said, in his seminal work on Othering, *Orientalism* (1978), describes the relationship between people and nation without the construction of borders. For him, identity is not based on political or geographic boundaries but rather on imagined geographies (Said 1978). These boundaries lacked roots in citizenship and do not correspond to political borders or boundaries of identification. With a political element, Said’s interpretation of the relationship between land and person is more akin to identity and place, where place is defined as “space made

culturally meaningful” (Low 1994, 66). Anderson (1991) too believes in an ambiguously shaped nation, defined more by shared perception than any concrete border. However, he does not remove the political nature from the concept of nation and, thus, links a political context to identity formation. While nation as a political entity is important for establishing and enforcing rights and laws, it cannot bind identity nor give exclusive meaning to territory-based identities. My research blends these bodies of thought by examining the inter-play of nation and space, where spaces of nation as a political constructs are incongruous with spaces of nation as identity constructs, which navigate racial, ethnic, and linguistic boundaries of identity as well.

Cultural Citizenship

Citizenship describes a legal connection to a nation. Scholarship centered on citizenship accompanies and nuances the study of race and identity, especially within defined national borders and in the contexts of specific histories and political spaces (Beauregard and Bounds 1997; Beiner 1995; Garber 2000; Ong 2003, 1996; Rosaldo 1997; Sassen 2000; Smith 1992). Citizenship emphasizes the unequivocal yet shifting role of the state in shaping the possibilities of identity. States are able to impinge on local life and significantly alter patterns of subsistence, order, and disorder (Nader 2002, 52). Within each nation, however, lies disparate treatment for different groups, despite shared citizenship. Rather than viewing community and belonging as individual choice, the role of the state as well as civil society must be explored in the erection of cultural, racial, and other identity labels (Malik 1996, 253; Young 1990, 9). Cultural citizenship does just that.

Renato Rosaldo (1994; 1997) defines cultural citizenship as the demand of disadvantaged subjects for full citizenship, in spite of their cultural difference from mainstream society. He and like minded scholars believe that theoretical concepts used in social sciences, such as multiculturalism, assimilation, acculturation, and even broad concepts of citizenship and social rights, miss the dynamic processes taking place within “minoritized” communities, which are not only sites of contestation, but also of affirmation and cultural production (Flores 1997, 9). For Rosaldo, full citizenship and cultural visibility have an inverse relationship; when one increases, the other decreases. Full citizens lack culture, and those who are culturally endowed lack full citizenship (Rosaldo 1989, 198 cited in Silvestrini 1997, 43). Cultural citizenship is the everyday practice through which people claim space and rights in society. It is less a fight for political equality than the desire for group belonging where the right to be different trumps formal status as citizens of a nation (Flores 1997, 15; Silvestrini 1997, 44).

Cultural citizenship as discussed by Rosaldo (1989; 1994; 1997), can transcend racial identity, but ignores the hegemonic influence behind identity construction. Aihwa Ong (2003, 1996), on the other hand, defines cultural citizenship through Foucault’s concept of governmentality, which has overt political linkages. Cultural citizenship does not deny the territorially based assumption of formal political citizenship and seeks to understand the processes and agents that shape the structure of human capital and citizen making through state sanctioned difference. Cultural citizenship refers to the cultural practices and beliefs produced from negotiating the ambivalent and contested relations with the state and its hegemonic forms that establish how people are able to belong within a national population and geographic territory. Like other tensions between

identity and identification as defined by Baker (2004, 2), is a dual process of self-making and being-made when the possibilities of self are produced within webs of power linked to the nation-state and civil society (Ong 1996, 738). Thus, cultural citizenship, rooted in both identity construction and the state, is a constantly evolving concept, shifting the boundaries of community and the constitution of citizen within the larger political realm of representation. Cultural citizenship explores how difference is constructed, racialized, conflated with other tenets of belonging, and how, when, and why this notion of citizenship changes. Racialization, “a process by which social, economic, and political forces determine the content and importance of racial categories, and by which they are in turn shaped by racial meanings” (Zavella 2001, 104), guides these models for cultural citizenship. The rejection of a Black-White U.S. binary informs both interpretations, moving discussions of identity from the margins of reactive identity construction into discussions of state power and intentionality. Latin American racial structure also rejects the U.S. racial binary, but has yet to interrogate Black identity as a state-directed construct of undesirability through a lens like cultural citizenship. Acknowledgement of a collective minority identity and the external identification as such is central to the politics of cultural citizenship. The quotidian and academic emphasis on national racial identity and national cultural homogeneity has marginalized non-mainstream identities throughout Latin American nations. My study explores this racialized cultural marginalization and its consequential silencing.

Language

Sociologist Erving Goffman (1963) echoes the notion that ideas of self are constructed through discourse, where personal identity is not wholly how we define ourselves, but also how others identify us. Connecting this directly to language, he believes that language choices are paramount to identity construction. Various scholars have pinpointed language as central to identity formation through formal linguistic studies, but I want to focus on those who discuss language as culture and language as identity bridges. In their postcolonial framework, Fanon (1952) and Memmi (1957) both assert that language is fundamental to identity. They view language acquisition in terms of cultural power. Adopting the colonizer's language is a step toward the assimilation of the colonizer's culture, although the process of language acquisition places the speaker between distinct cultural realms. They view processes of language as integral parts of culture and the acquisition process as a bridge between cultural identities. This idea, now widely accepted, is a "broad interdisciplinary field concerned with the intersection of language, culture, and society" called sociocultural linguistics (Bucholtz and Hall 2005, 86). The decision of language, however, is complicated. Sociolinguistic conventions "incorporate differences of power, on the other hand they arise out of- and give rise to- particular relations of power" (Fairclough 2001, 1). How, where, and when a speaker speaks is just as important as what he or she says. Language takes meaning as a social, rather than strictly individual, construction. Further, we attach meaning to language through speaking as well as through our reception. Language is a socially constructed and socially received process. It is an active form of group identity, which complicates not only notions of culture but also shapes social integration and personal experiences within

a group. Speakers who embrace the identity of a socially assigned language group experience “positive identity practices”, whereas those who reject the identity will use “negative identity practices” to distance themselves from it (Bucholtz 1999).

For immigrant populations, or any population whose identity rests within a distinct language group, “distancing” can include a break from their native language in order to better integrate into a new society or offer wider opportunities for their children. Despite the myth that national cohesion rests in part with a monolingual society, bilingual language use by a minority group is often analyzed as having two components: the “we” versus “they” code (Gumperz 1982; Zentella 1990, 1997). The straddling of cultural realms, however, makes it difficult to differentiate between we and they. There are linguistic situations that rest between bilingualism and monolingualism. In a practical rejection of a cultural linguistic binary, code-switching describes the conversational use of more than one language or language form (Myers-Scotton 1993). Code-switching in practice can assume that conversational participants are familiar with either or both languages, but can also serve as a psychological, rather than linguistic, expression of the speaker without specific intention for the listeners (Vogt 1954). Code-switching defies “we” and “they” codes by permitting “people to say and do, and indeed *be* two or more things where normally a choice is expected” (Heller 1988, 93).

While language does not have a separate area of analysis in this study, it is undercurrent for all researched themes. Language can be a marker of identity and is a tool of research. For this study, it was imperative that my linguistic scope remain as flexible as the language practices in which I participated and observed. Related to concepts of nation and identity, my work complicates the practice of language and identity where

language groups do not necessarily correspond with identifications, citizenship, or areas of residence. Further, I explore the ways in which language and space instruct opportunities with both positive and negative outcomes for group identity and cohesion. Where postcolonial theorists and immigration studies view language acquisition as a form of assimilation, I argue that it can also be an act of agency and resistance, a way for individuals and groups to actively claim rights and belonging. I also consider the different ways and reasons for language acquisition, both choice and necessity. Also, departing from ideas about positive and negative identity practice or code-switching as a display of dual identity, I advance Hall's (1990) assertion of identity as processual, and Baker's (2004) notions of identity as practice to argue for linguistic hybridity as a singular identity practice. A group can be characterized by its use of two languages, despite outdated monolingual identifications. Building on Heller (1988), I advocate the idea that the practice of *being* can include two or more things, breaking with essentialist ideas of identity components and examining individual and group identity in practice, without a "positive" or "negative" imposed academic evaluation of that practice.

Diaspora and the African Diaspora

In order to understand the multiple migrations in which my study is based, I first explore contemporary discussions of Diaspora, and then turn to the specific literature about the African Diaspora, which is seldom included in general Diaspora scholarship. Contemporary definitions of Diaspora muddle with the concepts of globalization and transnationalism due to the conceptual overlap of human mobility. Bauböck and Faist (2010) caution against the ways in which term Diaspora has become politicized through

the pursuit of nation-state building agendas and the control of populations abroad (11). Further, they recognize the incompatibility between newer and older definition. New Diasporas and their definitions are rooted in the increased mobility of people, capital, and ideas, characterized by Appadurai's flows (1996). The emphasis on capital and ideas places newer definition on the border of globalization, a concept centered on the spread of neoliberal capitalism, which has, in turn, influenced the movement of trade, finance, culture, and people (Lewellen 2002). Cohen (1997) purports criteria for Diaspora that seek to differentiate between reasons for the initial migration. He distinguishes between victim Diasporas, labor Diasporas, imperial Diasporas, trade Diasporas, and cultural Diasporas (129). Brydon (2004) on the other hand, divides Diaspora into new and old Diasporas. While newer Diasporas are situated in postmodernism and stress transnational flows, older notions of Diaspora "implied the persistence of a homeland through the scattering of its people" (701). Although definitions may vary, Diasporas are about the movement of a collective identity. Stuart Hall (1990) concludes that Diaspora identities are "those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference" (402). Despite small differences in definitions, scholars who described "older" Diasporas center on the movements of an identified ethnic group (Cohen 1997; Hall 1990; Sheffer 1986). As such, scholars write about Jewish, Chinese, Caribbean, and African Diasporas. Debates about Diaspora center on voluntary versus forced migrations, return versus circular migration, and cultural integration versus cultural distinctiveness (Bauböck and Faist 2010). Diaspora, then, is understood as the dispersal or movement of a collectively identified cultural or ethnic group from one place to many, who reproduce in these new areas, and share lived experiences, all the while

maintaining cultural identification, if not occasional physical contact, with their homeland or satellite travelers. In this way, Diaspora represents human webs of longevity and a multi-sited range that extend well beyond unidirectional migration studies. While there is overlap between the concepts of Diaspora and transnationalism, certain characteristics also separate them. Human mobility as its only unit of dispersed movement differentiates Diaspora from transnationalism, which can describe non-human processes as well as human mobility. Transnationalism also implies directed cross nation-state relationships that are absent from definitions of Diaspora. Additionally, the absence of a necessary capital component also differentiates it from conventional definitions of globalization.

A vast body of literature, in multiple languages, discusses how Blackness is conceived, perceived, practiced, challenged, and marginalized within the African Diaspora. Roger Bastide is the first francophone scholar to refer to the Black population of the new world as a “Diaspora” (1967). In his work, *The African Diaspora*, Patrick Manning (2009) names George Shepperson (1966) and Joseph E. Harris (1982) as two of the founders of African Diaspora studies. They coined the term at a 1965 conference in Tanzania. The term African Diaspora was political in origin, as this conference took place a time when African and Caribbean nations were gaining their independence and Black political activity was high across the globe (3). Harris’s definition of Diaspora has three components: voluntary or forced dispersion, emergence of a cultural identity based on origin, and an ideology of return (1982). Michael Hanchard (1990) describes the African Diaspora as “a human necklace strung together by a thread known as the slave trade, a thread that makes its way across a path of America with little regard for national

boundaries” (40). One of the most widely used, particular, and thorough definitions, however, emerges from sociologist Ruth Simms Hamilton (1990):

The African Diaspora represents a type of social grouping characterized by a historical patterning of particular social relationships and experiences. As a social formation, it is conceptualized as a global aggregate of actors and subpopulations, differentiated in social and geographic space, yet exhibiting a commonality based on historical factors, conditioned by and within the world ordering system. Among characteristics that distinguish the Diaspora as a global formation from other socially differentiated group are the following shared historical experiences: Migration and Geo-Social displacement; The circularity of a People;...Social Oppression; Relationships of Domination and Subordination;...Endurance, Resistance, and Struggle; Cultural and Political Action (18, in Whitten and Torres 1998, 15).

Simms Hamilton’s definition expands the basic criteria outlined by Harris. It discusses not only the global aggregate of the initial migrants, forced or voluntary, but also the populations that display differences based on their social circumstances and geography, but, despite distance and context, maintain commonality. Absent from Simms Hamilton’s definition is an explicit reference to home migrations. She includes circularity as a shared historical experience, but since the definition includes migrants and subpopulations, it is unclear if the circularity necessarily includes the region of origin, or if the circularity of the diasporic populations and subpopulation themselves continue to define and redefine the African Diaspora, even without Africa as a point of return. Manning himself (2009) defines Diaspora as “migrants who settle in distant lands and produce new generations, all the while maintaining ties of affection with and making occasional visits to each other and their homeland” (2). This definition of Diaspora articulates definitive ties between “distant lands” and “homeland.” His definition speaks directly to current questions among scholars about whether or studies of the African Diaspora should or should not include contemporary Africa. By articulating physical contact between diasporic

populations in disparate locations as well as Africa as the homeland, Manning's answer is: yes. Stuart Hall (1990) firmly disagrees. His notion of Diaspora is not rooted in the requirement of a homeland. He writes, "Diaspora does not refer to those scattered tribes whose identity can only be secured in relation to some sacred homeland to which they must return at all costs, even if it means pushing other people into the sea. This is the old, imperializing, the hegemonic form of ethnicity" (235).

While various scholars have discussed the parameters and experiences tied to the African Diaspora (Gordon and Anderson 1999; Hamilton 1990; Harris 1982; Manning 2009; Skinner 1993), one major interpretation of the African Diaspora takes its cue from the Diaspora as hybridity discourse forward by Stuart Hall (1990) and focuses on the "Black Atlantic." This term, coined by British sociologist Paul Gilroy (1993), describes the widespread connections among Black peoples. Rather than the global perspective and connections worldwide that are inherent in the term "African Diaspora," Gilroy's *Black Atlantic* has a narrower geographic and temporal focus. He takes a counter view to Harris and in agreement with Michael Hanchard (1990) in asserting that slavery *is* the point of departure of the African Diaspora and focuses on post-emancipation interactions within the North Atlantic. Also, he employs his well-known roots/routes play on words to argue that focus on roots of origin obfuscates the more politically salient routes which shape identities on both sides of the Atlantic, calling for the study of "the relatedness between rootedness and movement" (190). This reinforces the importance of geographic location since flows of people, goods, money, power, etc. were not equally distributed globally. The specificity of the North Atlantic illustrates the distinct realities of Blacks as minorities within a U.S./European dominated space. Modern scholarship that discusses

the role of the U.S. as a colonizer uses (cultural) imperialism, neo-colonialism, and globalization as the main tenets. It focuses on capital acquisition and cultural imposition (Bacevich 2004; Colby 2011; Foster 2006; Grandin 2006). Gilroy argues that because of the context in which they lived, Blacks in the North Atlantic created a “counterculture of modernity” which affected “Western” culture as a whole. Like authors based in postcolonial studies, Gilroy’s aim is to give agency to Blacks in the North Atlantic and de-center the perception of Western culture and modernity as U.S./European constructs. His argument is a direct attack on theorists who imagine Europe as the core of modernity and make only passing reference or no reference at all to the contributions of African and African descendants to the development of the modern world (Hall et al. 1996; Harvey 1989; Gidden 1991; Wallerstein 1974). Gilroy argues that to speak of Western culture includes active cultural contributions by people of African descent beyond slave labor. Gilroy does not negate the cultural connection with Black people outside of his “Black Atlantic,” but does, like Stuart Hall, fervently reject the “essential” view of static culture. He calls himself an “anti-anti-essentialist”, writing that “racial subjectivity” results from the exercise of power in history (99).

Building on the geographic specificity of the North Atlantic, my work blends the discourse of the African Diaspora in academic debates into how and why the term is used in policy practices by international organizations and nation-states, and how this racialized discourse is understood as a lived practice. The United Nations celebrated the year of the African Descendant in 2011 and used national censuses to count this diasporic and often marginalized community. In mixed messaging, the U.N. characterizes the realities of people of African Descent in the Americas as in need for greater social

development—lowering poverty rates, infant mortality, maternal mortality, increased access to drinking water, among other measures (Telles 2007). However, the expressed development goals remain silent on the issue of race and the ways in which Black peoples in the Americas have been historically marginalized. The U.N. is just one example of an organization that acknowledges the existence of Black populations in the North Atlantic and the overall lower qualities of life for people of African descent, but does not address the historical and contemporary maltreatment and policies that created and sustains this situation. My work examines this harmful disjuncture between acknowledgement and agency. This study problematizes the divisions between diasporic academic frameworks, policy, and the ways in which Black experiences are celebrated as a cultural regional component and as part of national identities while simultaneously marginalized politically, specifically in Latin America.

Immigration

I have created a section specifically about immigration scholarship as a sub-topic to the African Diaspora. This structure separates theory regarding the Diaspora and theories that address immigrants within a particular national context. This work takes a unidirectional, as opposed to diasporic, approach to immigration and examines processes of social integration for a particular group within definite political, economic, and racial constructs. Although there is work that addresses Black immigrants in U.S. African-American spaces (Prince 2004; Waters 2001), inter-Caribbean labor migrations (Maurer 1997; Stearns 1998) and a large scholarship about the Black West Indians laborers who built the Panama Canal (Conniff 1985; Greene 2009; Westerman 1980), works about

racialized Caribbean migrations to Latin America that discuss integration, or lack thereof, over multiple generations are less common. Scholarly works about Caribbean migrations to the United States help understand the heterogeneity of Blackness as well as generational differences in the processes of integration for these Blacks immigrants (Rogers 2006; Waters 2001). Although based in a U.S. context, these studies reveal that Blackness is not homogenous and constructions of Black identity can conflict with each other and change shape through various interactions and shared political contexts. While the elasticity of cultural and racial difference in and outside of the United States is well-documented (Baker 1998; Conniff 1985; di Leonardo 1994; Rasmussen 2001; Thomas 1997 [1967]; Wade 1993), these studies, by proving theories over generations of the same immigrant group, reinforce the learned element of racial and cultural identity within a singular, albeit it complex, national context.

Works about immigration to the U.S. help understand generational differences in social integration. Although immigration studies often focus on particular groups or nationalities, there are commonalities after first generations that speak across race, nationality, or region of settlement. In discussing Black Caribbean migrations to the U.S., sociologist Mary Waters (2001) argues that linear ethnicity characterizes the first generations of groups that immigrate with strong cultural networks. “Linear ethnicity creates social capital – the networks of social ties from church to voluntary organizations that both create links to job opportunities and reinforce parental authority and values vis-à-vis the second generation”(197). The friendship societies, lodges, and Caribbean-oriented organizations that emerged in the U.S. following the large waves of Caribbean immigrants mirror those that existed, and still exist in lesser number, in Panamanian

society as well. Although African Americans and West Indians may share racial identification and often language, their disparate social positioning and networks lead to divergent opportunities. West Indians' psychological and cultural reactions to non-Black Americans mirror those of other immigrant groups, regardless of color (Waters 2001,141). Immigrants often enter hostile and unwelcoming environments, which results in the creation of "reactive ethnicities" (Portes and Rumbaut 2006). Reactive ethnicity means that in the face of discrimination and exclusion, ethnicity is fortified rather than eroded in a new environment. Portes and Zhou (1993) argue in-group jobs, networks, and social capital are the modes of incorporation for first generations. Their networks are in-group, which creates complex tensions for second generations, whose orientations are out-group. Particularly where Black identity can be homogenously perceived, ethnic differences within Blackness can give way to more symbolic ethnic identification, in which ethnic identification is optional (Alba 1990; Waters 1990). This can result from intermarriage, acculturation/integration, lesser identification with an ethnic homeland, or also lower levels of discrimination that would nullify the production of reactive ethnicities. For Black immigrants, as the label "immigrant" lessens as a primary marker of identity or identification, both external and self, and experiences of discrimination give way to increased sensitivity to other forms of racism, social markers eventuate "native" correlates rather than immigrant exceptions, including the subsuming of an African-American identity (Waters 2001).

Scholars define the interconnections of diasporic populations and post-colonial populations in various ways. Although overlapping in objective, each term carries its own history and intent. Here, I focus on the terms that express the dynamics of connection

within an identified group, rather than those that link distinct groups. The dislocation and uncertainty of home and self relate to concepts such as hybridity (Gilroy, 2000; Hall 1996; Young 2006) and interpellation (Althusser 1971). Most relevant to this study of displacement, migration, and immigration is the myth of the return (Jones-Correa 1998). This idea addresses the intention of a migrant group to stay only temporarily in a place. Memmi's *Decolonization and the Decolonized* (2006) revisits this classic topic. The original argument states that once migrants acquire sufficient financial security, he/she will return to his/her homeland. Relating this specifically to postcolonial studies, Memmi argues that the migrant is no longer able to distinguish between "here and there" and thus the concept of "home," as well as return, is a myth (2006, 106-109). Works Rhonda D. Fredrick's *"Colón Man a Come": Mythographies of Panamá Canal Migration* (2005) explore these themes through literature and theory, following Caribbean migrants back to their island of origin after labor migrations to Panama. These themes help articulate the issues surrounding the terms place and home, but also problematize circulations and disjuncture of identity within a perceived group identity.

Race Mixing in Latin America

Anti-U.S. structural arguments dominate scholarship about race in Latin America. Rather than a Black and White racial binary, the focus has been colorism. The existence of terms denoting different shades of color in Latin America has led to the belief that the multiple spaces for racial belonging has consequently produced a racial structure that is more fluid and less oppressive than that of the United States. Essential to the idea of Latin American colorism is the theory of racial mixing, or *mestizaje*. Stutzman (1981)

defined mestizaje as an all-inclusive ideology of exclusion, meaning that this system ostensibly included everyone as a potential mestizo, but actually and purposefully excluded Black and Indigenous people (de la Cadena 2000, 2005). The idea that racial mixing is an actual embodiment of multiple races became popular through the 1925 work of Mexican philosopher José Vasconcelos in his work, *La Raza Cósmica*, or The Cosmic Race. Popular yet problematic ideas about mestizaje as a cultural product stemmed from Vasconcelos's belief that nationalist ideologies of mestizaje are fundamentally about the creation of a racially homogenous mestizo. This particular mestizo identity is a physical embodiment of the "melting pot" (*crisol de razas* in Spanish) trope, an irreversible fusion of racial and ethnic elements that lose their original identities in a process of synthesis and hybridity, which ultimately creates a unique and superior product (Ortiz 1995; Wright 1990).

Departing from the idea that races would meld into a unifying racial product, other scholars advanced ideas of colorism and the absence of racism it produced. Delger (1971) famously coined the phrase "mulatto escape hatch," denoting hues in the treatment of non-White people in Brazil. He believed the major difference between the United States and Brazil was the fact that in Brazil, mulattos receive better treatment than Blacks do, despite their shared African heritage. Rather than governing by hypo-descent, a "one drop rule" of Black racial identification as in the United States, other outlets exist between White and Black. Degler, however, felt miscegenation and the acceptance of various racial and color classifications blurred the boundaries of Blackness and thus robbed who identify or are identified as being of African descent of the political solidarity in Brazil as achieved in the U.S. Anthony Marx (1998) compares and contrasts

the concepts of race and nation in three distinct locations and historical contexts: The United States, Brazil, and South Africa. In his investigation of Brazil, he too argues that miscegenation did not produce mobility, but rather that the accepted myth of such mobility diluted potential conflict and political action (Marx 1998, 69). The acceptance of this myth still pervades Latin American societies today. The belief that racism did not exist because there was no binary racial structure led to the erroneous belief of racial equality without racial suppression or oppression. Brazil, and later Cuba, were touted as a sites of racial democracy (Freyre 1933), meaning a society free of racial prejudice or legal barriers to social attainment. Although that theory was later, and continues to be, rescinded, it is common in contemporary public discourse. Peter Wade (1993), among other scholars (Caldwell 2007; Casal 1998; Darity et al. 2005; de la Fuente 2001; Fernandez 1996; Hanchard 1994; Skidmore 1974; Twine 2000), debunks this myth by outlining the agenda of miscegenation and Whitening. These scholars expose that the myth of racial democracy is not a liberating concept of regional diversity, but instead, a power-supported color hierarchy that privileges Whiteness and uses a process of Othering to marginalize Black and Indigenous identities. Whiteness was still the goal, which implies that non-White identities are undesirable. Peter Wade's 2005 essay, *Rethinking Mestizaje: Ideology and Lived Experience*, offers a succinct analysis of scholarship surrounding mestizaje as it moved from a national ideology of racial homogeny toward a lived process that depends on the existence of Otherness, via Blackness and Indigenousness. Despite ethnographic works based in Latin America, particularly in the formerly proclaimed racial democracies of Brazil and Cuba, which disprove the embodied homogenizing ideology of race mixing (Caldwell 2007; Fernandez 1996;

Porras 2005; Priestly and Barrow 2003; Twine 2000), this same research shows that people believe that racial democracy exists and consequently, that racism does not exist in their countries.

Unlike the literature about race mixing in the U.S., discussions of mestizaje are not based on individual lived experiences, but rather larger notions of collective national identity. There are some works about individual lived experiences within mestizaje, or more specifically within Blackness in Latin American contexts, that exist in first person narratives. These accounts express the pressure or desire to lighten their offspring in Cuba (de los Reyes Castillo Bueno 2000), to overcome self-hate and accept Blackness as beautiful in Brazil (daSilva 1997), and for a dark-skinned Puerto Rican male to fully understand the identification of “Black” in the U.S. (Thomas 1997). Despite the acknowledged diversity within the United States, interracial procreation is seen as an exception that requires special analysis as opposed to being normal, as it is perceived in many areas in Latin America. Therefore, “diversity” is constructed differently, from the identification of social human elements to the social acceptance or rejection of racially mixed realities. The lack of attention given to mixed-raced or culturally diverse pairings and groups in Latin America negates diversity, denies the preservation of cultural and racial blocs, and thus removes these realities from public discourse. In this way, circulations of the myth of the homogenous national racial identity continue to have power in Latin American societies.

Blackness in Latin America

Many Latin American states undertook measures to *mejor la raza*, better the race, or *adelantar la raza*, advance the race, through official policies of *blanquemento*, or Whitening. This reached beyond simply promoting and facilitating “White” European immigration to Latin America, but also through restructuring in order to make countries more appealing for White Europeans to live. Urban reforms displaced “poverty and Blackness” from city centers and African-based dances and music were suppressed (Andrews 2004, 119-122). Whitten and Torres (1998) provide a definition of Whitening as a psychological process that is detrimental to Black and Indigenous peoples.

Although not recognized as such, the ideology of Whitening is an unconscious psychological process accompanying the economic state of underdevelopment in the twentieth century. *Blanquemento* essentially accepts the implicit hegemonic rhetoric of the United States with regard to ‘White supremacy’ and often blames those people classed as Black and Indigenous for the worsening of the nation (9).

Many assume the endorsement of a *mulato* or *mestizo* mixed race national identity was the goal of race mixing, but the more accurate hegemonic goal was the erasure of Blackness and Indigenous through promotion of Whiteness (Wade 2005). This included not only the goal of increasing the number of people who are identified as White, but also for non-Whites to make themselves “increasingly acceptable to those classified as White” (Whitten and Torres 1998, 8). Although some non-Whites embraced this process and internalized a desire for Whiteness (de los Reyes Castillo Bueno 2000; Twine 2000), others rejected the imposition of Whiteness. *Indigenismo* describes the exclusion of Indigenous people or peoples of Indigenous descent from national projects of racial mixing (Pitt-Rivers 1973, 1967) and *negritude* (Césaire 1947) promotes the positive characteristics of Blackness among people who self-identify or are identified as “Black.”

Although Indigenous populations have had some recent successes gaining sovereign land rights and recognitions of autonomy, the different integration of peoples of African descent within national identities has produced struggles for political, not cultural rights, and within, not outside of the boundaries of state recognition (Hooker 2005). From these policies and periods of Black suppression, emerges the counter scholarship about Blackness in Latin America.

Blackness in Latin America is largely understood through two domains: the colonial past, and Blackness as an element of race mixing. These two frameworks dominate literature about Blackness in Latin America, with a large geographic focus on Brazil and the Spanish speaking Caribbean (Gundmundson and Wolfe 2010). Even as they offer critique of the existing literature, the colonial past dominates the anthology produced by Gundmundson and Wolfe (2010). Their geographic focus on Central America, however, does break with former scholastic patterns. In discussing Blackness in Latin America, many scholars, such as George Reid Andrews (2004) use the slave trade as a point of scholastic departure. Through his ambitious work, which covers the years 1800-2000 in 200 pages, he defines Afro-Latin America “in the racially inclusive, ‘Latin-American centric’ sense to refer to those regions or societies where people of African ancestry constituted at least 5 to 10 percent of the total population.” He continues by defining his use of Afro-Latin Americans as one of self-identification, “however, in the racially exclusive, diasporic sense to refer to those individuals considered by themselves or others to be ‘brown’ or ‘Black’ and therefore of known African ancestry” (2004, 7). The self-identification model is problematic given the stronghold of anti-Black racial mixing ideology that pervades the region. Andrews posits Afro-Latin America as a

multiracial society based on the historical experience of plantation society and the largest single component of the African Diaspora (2004, 7). He work denies the homogenization theory of mestizaje and instead focuses on one aspect of the excluded Other: Blackness. The plantation departure to define the Diasporic experience moves chronologically with the region. Although he discusses Whitening projects and European immigration, Andrews, like other works about Blackness in Latin America, fails to address circulation of Blackness or differences in constructions in various nation states, or within nation-states, in the diverse area that is Latin America. His “Browning and Blackening” period of 1930-2000 addresses political and cultural movements of incorporation into respective national histories, but is limiting. Panama’s, like other countries in the “Black Atlantic”, largest Black population migrations were the result of voluntary Caribbean labor migrations, not the initial forced Diaspora from the African slave trade. The circular migration from Latin America to and from the Caribbean mandates that we expand our lens. Although the two volumes edited by Torres and Whitten (1998) and the work by Peter Stearns (1998) begin to fill the gap, there is a deep separation in the literature of Anglophone Caribbean and the Spanish-speaking Caribbean as well as migratory Blackness into mixed race, actual and perceived, spaces. As noted throughout this literature review, much of the literature about race in Latin America highlights racial mixing and color labels, but does not address voluntary Black migrations, how and why Blackness differs within a national context nor how it has been marginalized and/or ignored in favor of other labels and identities over generations.

In its aggregate, this diverse body of literature and specific expressions of scholarship have guided my dissertation. These works have provided important tools for

framing the context, both contemporary and historical, in which I conducted my research and made sense of my investigations as well as observations. These academic works have aided my understanding of how and why constructions of Blackness can vary in different contexts, how shared identifications do not constitute shared identities, and how immigrant experiences, despite shared Diasporic homeland, may vary in significant ways over generations within the context of a Latin American nation, but with influential roots in an African Diaspora.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH AND RESEARCHER POSITIONALITY

This dissertation focuses on the three distinct areas that encompass what I refer to as urban Panama: The former Panama Canal Zone, the Pacific capital city of Panama City, and Atlantic coastal city of Colón. I studied perceptions of change and belonging of people of West Indian descent, with relation to key moments in Panamanian history: the 1964 riots; 1977 Canal Treaties; 1989 U.S. military invasion of Panama; 1999 U.S. withdrawal; and 2010 Panamanian census.

In order to study this particular population, I chose these sites for multiple important and related reasons. West Indian labor was integral in the construction of the Panama Railroad in the 19th century, and the U.S. construction of the Panama Canal in the 20th century. Panama City and Colón were terminal cities on the railroad and consequently became densely populated with West Indian immigrants. During Canal construction, Colón was the landing site for waves of laborers who were largely West Indian. Panama City, the capital city, was the next largest site for laborers. After construction, these cities lay directly outside of the U.S. controlled Canal Zone and housed those who were unable or unwilling to live in the Zone. Today, the Canal Zone no longer exists as a U.S. enclave, but the territory remains sandwiched between Colón and Panama City. The provinces of Colón and Panama have the largest percentages of African-descendent populations that also identify as being of West Indian heritage

(census 2010), as shown in Table 3. As a result, these are the prime areas to study Blackness and social change with respect to Panamanians of West Indian descent.

Table 3. Percentages of People of African Descent and West Indian Descent by Province

Province or indigenous region	Afro-descendent population	West Indian descendent population ^a
Colón	29.0	21.4
Panama	11.3	21.7
Darien	16.7	5.6
Bocas del Toro ²¹	9.9	27.5
Herrera	3.0	12.0
Veraguas	1.4	13.3
Coclé	4.4	12.4
Los Santos	1.4	11.0
Chiriquí	2.2	18.5
Comarca Emberá ^b	2.0	6.0
Comarca Kuna Yala ^b	1.4	13.4
Comarca Ngöbe-Buglé ^b	0.6	14.4

Note: The national percentage for people who self-identified as being of African descent on the 2010 census is 9.2%.

^a Numbers represent the percentage of African descendant populations who, after first identifying themselves as African descendants, then classified themselves as of West Indian descent. The author calculated the numbers based on Panama's 2010 national census data.

²¹ For more information about the West Indian communities in Bocas del Toro, see Guerrón-Montero 2002

^b Recognized Indigenous territory

Illustration 1 displays a map of The Republic of Panama that outlines each province and recognized Indigenous territory in order to display graphically where in the country these provinces are located and accordingly where my research populations concentrate.

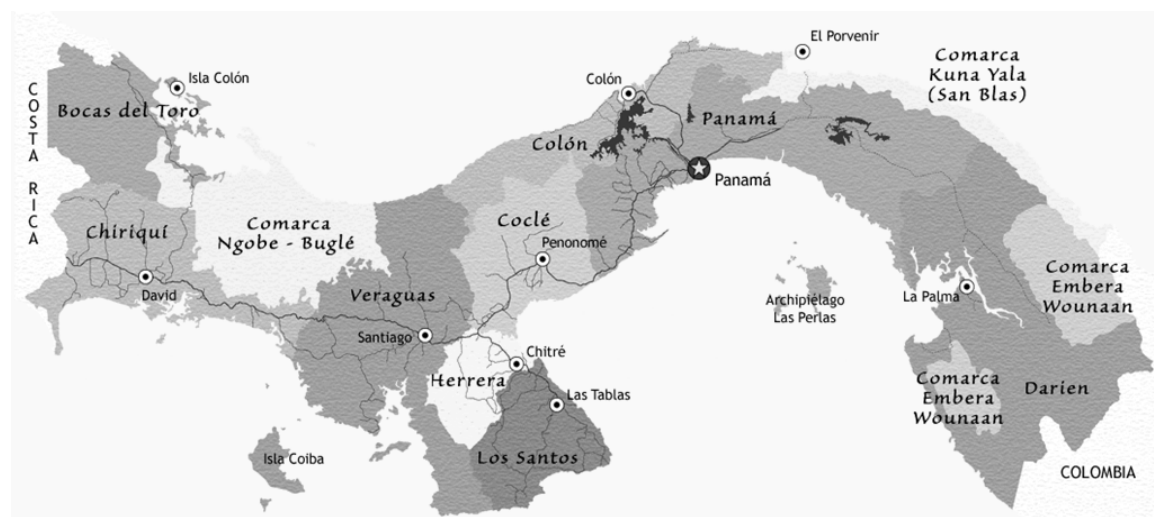


Illustration 1. Map of the Republic of Panama and its Provinces and Recognized Indigenous Territories

Previous Related Research

Various experiences, both domestic and abroad, supplemented my graduate training to develop this project and aid my fieldwork experience. My academic inquiry of race, citizenship, identity, and identifications began after a six-week undergraduate study abroad trip to Havana, Cuba in 2000. The police frequently mistook me for and treated me as a Cuban *jinetra*, loosely translated as a hustler, due to my language, color, gender and proximity to my White classmates who were seen as tourists. The maltreatment during my first experience abroad, based so largely on my being a woman of color in Latin America, fueled my interest in the overlap of race, gender, and the state. I returned

to Cuba for 3 weeks in 2001 for undergraduate research, then again in 2006 and 2009 as the resident director for American University's semester abroad program in Cuba. Again, identifications were significant. I was treated differently when I was seen as the head of a majority White American student group than when I was, erroneously, seen as a brown Cuban woman. This contrast intensified my initial questions about citizenship, belonging, and external identifications. Further, my semesters in Havana allowed me to broach these issues of race, rights, and belonging with various Cuban intellectuals, academics, other graduate students, and in daily conversations. My role as resident director also facilitated conversations with my American students, most of whom were White, about their experiences and perceptions, as well as a multi-level observatory role of their social, educational, and linguistic engagement.

Attending graduate school in Washington, D.C. afforded opportunities to advance my intellectual development through relevant applied research work during my coursework. Through an internship at the Woodrow Wilson Center for International Scholars, I contributed research for *Washington's U Street: A Biography*, a book about the U Street neighborhood of Washington D.C., particularly its history as a creator of African-American culture in the nation's capital. I also worked with The Institute for Women's Policy Research conducting ethnographic interviews in Louisiana with African-American women displaced from hurricane Katrina, the flooding from the breach of the levees, and the planned demolition of public housing. I was able to engage with low-income Black women struggling to create post-Katrina identities in Baton Rouge and New Orleans in the face of damaged social networks, limited resources and, in many cases, mistrust of their local and national government.

My dissertation project combines these pursuits by exploring the complex overlap of race, identity, citizenship, and group identifications that define urban Panama. On a grant funded preliminary dissertation research trip to Panama in 2005, I conducted interviews, toured Panama City, Colón, and the former Zone, spoke with faculty from the University of Panama, and met with scholars and activists who specifically work with Black Panamanian populations. In 2006, American University's graduate school journal published my article entitled *Rights of Passage: A Historical Overview of American Colonialism in the Panama Canal Zone, 1904-1914*, which investigates U.S. control and West Indian laborers in the Canal Zone during canal construction.

Dissertation Research Background

The fieldwork done for this dissertation is ethnographic and qualitative. Qualitative research, though methodically and theoretically diverse, is a narrative and observational driven multi-method form of data collection. As described by Patton (1990, 10), qualitative methods consist of three kinds of data collection: interviews, direct observation, and written documents. The data collection methods used in this study were: an internet based survey, semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and archival research. The data was collected specifically for this ethnography on Panamanians of West Indians heritage. Ethnography, both a research method and product, is a “description of the customary social behaviors of an identifiable group of people” (Wolcott 1999, 252-253). Ethnographic methods explore behaviors that occur within a specific situation and people’s understanding and interpretation of both behavior and context (Wilson and Chaddha 2009, 549). It explores how cultural processes develop

over time by exploring culture and behavior within a particular context. For this study, the Institutional Review Board approved all research materials, both English and Spanish versions, prior to their implementation.

Survey

The internet survey was designed to gather opinions from Panamanian citizens and residents over the age of 18 years old on issues of race and identity, Panamanian historical events, and contemporary Panama. The survey was hosted on a secure server by surveymonkey.com in two versions, one survey in English and one survey in Spanish. Despite language variation, the questions and statements on the surveys were matching²². No specific questions or responses from the survey are included in this dissertation. The objective of the survey was to capture opinions and information regarding my research questions quickly and from a variety of people who live or previously lived in Panama. The information served to provide a foundation and background for my interview data. Although I did recruit interviews from the survey, that objective was secondary. The internet-based survey gave potential access to a large and diverse audience beyond my physical capacity. This includes men and women who may no longer live in Panama, despite having grown up during my period of investigation, do not have direct connections to my affiliation, Alberto Barrow, or lack involvement with the Panamanian organizations that serve Panamanians of West Indian descent with which I had contact. It also helped to provide an anonymous outlet for participants to engage with my research

²² See Appendix F for selected questions, in both English and Spanish, from the internet survey

topics. I only required names and phone numbers or email addresses if the participant wished to be considered for an interview. All other participants remained anonymous.

The survey was eight pages in length as formatted on surveymonkey.com and included a mixture of multiple choice and open-response questions. It asked personal information, including if the respondent is of West Indian descent, income, place of birth, occupation, racial/ethnic identification. One page of personal opinion questions contained statements about race, politics, immigration, and economics among other statements. Other sections asked about life in Panama and the historical events that anchor of my research inquiry. Not all questions required answers and participants most often skipped the narrative questions about the historical anchor events. The survey began with a required affirmative response to an informed consent page and ended with the option to be contacted for an interview. Four participants agreed to be contacted for an interview. Seven replied maybe. The remainder did not wish to be interviewed. Of all survey participants who considered being interviewed, I conducted only three full interviews. Both surveys were live starting in October 2009, at the beginning of my fieldwork, and closed in January 2011.

To recruit participants, I emailed the survey links with an introductory message to friends, family, various listservs to which I subscribe, and encouraged friends and colleagues to do the same, employing a snowball participation method. The listservs that I personally emailed include D.C. Latino professionals, Latino Greeks, and Americans in Panama. During my initial meeting with my affiliate, Alberto Barrow, he gave me a list of Panamanians of West Indian heritage with whom he has worked. I emailed an introductory message, in Spanish, with the survey links to all who had an email address

listed. In total, 68 individuals living in and outside of Panama voluntarily responded to the surveys.

Interview Data

Through narrative, individuals make sense of their lives in a way that gives meaning to past events, current realities, and future directions (Ochs and Capps 1996; Hoey 2006). For this study, interview data helped record the patterns of migration, immigration, group participation, language loss and retention, employment, and property ownership that have created new forms of labor relations, social relations, and legal statuses. Interview participants were chosen through the survey, convenience, and network-based "snowball" sampling procedures.

All interviews were voluntary, conducted only by me, and digitally recorded. No participants were paid. All interviews were one-on-one in a location of the interviewee's choice to preserve his/her anonymity, when desired, and to help create a comfortable interview atmosphere. Although participants were raised primarily in three parts of the country, they now live all over, including in the United States. Interviews were conducted in Spanish or English—but usually some mixture thereof— as decided by the interviewee. Thirty-three interviews were predominately in English and fifteen were predominately in Spanish. Throughout the dissertation I have maintained the linguistic integrity of each quotation using the exact words of the speaker, whether they were in Spanish, a mix of Spanish and English, or all English. Each quotation represents the language in which it was communicated. I personally translated all Spanish communications into English unless otherwise noted.

Related to language, I have attempted to maintain the linguistic integrity of participants' names. Names can serve as intentional or inadvertent markers of identity or identification. English surnames, with or without English first names, serve as a possible indication of West Indian heritage. Conversely, Spanish surnames in Black populations are a possible indicator of *colonial* identity. Some participants had Spanish first names; others were English. I made every effort to keep surnames and first names linguistically comparable to their originals since names can be an element of both identity and identification. I used participants' real names under few circumstances: If he or she requested in writing on the consent form that use his/her real name, when I refer to a public figure, and when I refer to a person by name during a public event or public meeting. I changed all other names.

Each interview participant signed an informed consent form, electing either the English or Spanish language form as he/she felt most comfortable²³. Not all, however, chose to fill out the biographical information form. Consent forms are not required in Panama and are thus uncommon and unfamiliar. After explaining that reading and signing the form was required in order to proceed with the interview, all complied. The biographical information form²⁴, on the other hand, is not a required form and many felt uncomfortable putting their personal and familial information in writing. Of the thirty-nine participants who filled out any portion of the biographical information, civil statuses varied. Four are divorced, twenty-one are currently married, three separated, nine are single, and two reported having a long-term partner. Due to the life history nature of the

²³ See Appendix D for English and Spanish versions of consent forms

²⁴ See Appendix E for the Biographical Information form

interviews, an interviewee's civil status often assisted in orienting his or her life within the framework of the interview and events in question. Further, I want to highlight this data because I interviewed people with varying dependents, which consequently influenced their concerns and decisions over time, especially in politically charged moments. Additional family information not asked on the biographical information form emerged during the interview itself, although not everyone spoke of or referenced their personal and familial relationships.

Primary Research Group

My primary research group consists of Panamanian men and women who self-identify as being of West Indian heritage. I understand that one drawback of self-identification is that it does not capture people of West Indian descent who do not identify themselves as such, despite possible identification by others. No participants were asked to prove his/her West Indian heritage, nor were any participants turned away. All interview participants in the primary research group were born in 1960 or earlier, allowing me to capture Panamanians who were in school during or directly after the language transition of the late 1950s, were young in their professional careers during the 1977 Canal Treaties, and unambiguously remember the 1989 U.S. military invasion of Panama.

Unlike other studies about West Indians in Panama, this study explicitly links culture and identity to *place*. As such, the "West Indian" group is broken into three distinct places of origin, regardless of where they live today, to further investigate the geographic components to the dynamics and politics of belonging. This primary research

group contains thirty-three participants: thirteen raised in Panama City, ten raised in the U.S.-controlled Canal Zone, and ten raised in Colón. All participants from the primary group were born in 1960 or earlier and were asked about the same events; however, originating from and living in different, albeit interconnected, parts of the country affect not only their potential social and political participation, but also their perception of the events and contexts in which they occurred.

The participants raised in Panama City and Colón were subject to Panamanian laws. The 1941 Panamanian constitution that revoked the citizenship of all non-Spanish speaking immigrants and their children deeply affected the populations of these two cities, but not those who lived in the U.S. run Canal Zone. However, the capital city of Panama was much larger, more populated, and vastly more racially/ethnically diverse than the majority Black West Indian city of Colón. The general environment and social pressures differed between the cities, as did the spaces of normalization and belonging. During the youth of my research groups, to be Black, West Indian, and English speaking in Colón was the norm. In Panama City, Black English speaking West Indians lived in certain neighborhoods unlike their ubiquitous and mainstream presence in the city of Colón.

Participants raised in the Canal Zone lived in racial segregation. The instruction of their schools, until the late 1950s was given in English. Their studies were based on a U.S. school calendar and a U.S. based curriculum. Due to segregation, they attended school largely with other children of West Indian descent. Whether speaking of the Panama Canal Zone on the Pacific side by Panama City or the Atlantic side by Colón, their identity and opportunities were created in opposition with U.S. Whiteness inside the

Zone, and in opposition to Panamanian West Indians outside of it. Each group maintains a pride of origin and perceived difference from the other two groups.

Again, the personal information sheet was not a required form and was selectively completed. Table 4 represents the self-reported personal information of my primary research group participants, where PCZ is the Panama Canal Zone and the asterisk denotes reverted areas that are now part of the Republic of Panama, but were formerly parts of the U.S.-controlled Panama Canal Zone. The table shows that majority of my research participants' parents were born in Panama. Therefore, the majority of my research participants were born Panamanian citizens since most were also born after 1946 when the citizenship for West Indians and their offspring was reinstated. Also of note, despite the relative equity of city of origin, only four still live on the Atlantic side of the country either in or around the city of Colón. That number is less than half of the participants originally from that area, illustrating in-country migration patterns to Panama City as well as the migration from Colón.

Table 4. Self- Reported Demographic Information of Primary Research Group

Sex	Age	Raised in	English/ Spanish	Mother's place of birth	Father's place of birth	Current residence
M	51	PCZ	E	Panama City, Panama	Panama city, Panama	Manassas, VA
F	60	Panama	S	Panama City, Panama	Panama City, Panama	Rio Abajo, Panama
M	36	Colón	S	Colón, Panama	San Jose, Costa Rica	San Miguelito, Panama
M	67	PCZ	E	Colón, Panama	Silver City, PCZ	Albrook*, Panama
F	47	Colón	E	Bocas de Toro, Panama	Red Tank, PCZ	Antiguo Davis*, Panama

Table 4 continued.

Sex	Age	Raised in	English/ Spanish	Mother's place of birth	Father's place of birth	Current residence
M	59	PCZ	E	Ciego de Avila, Cuba	Colón, Panama	Clayton*, Panama
M	46	Panama	E	Panama City, Panama	Panama City, Panama	Atlanta, GA
M	57	PCZ	E	Panama City, Panama	Panama city, Panama	Manassas, VA
F	46	PCZ	S	Panama City, Panama	Panama City, Panama	Rio Abajo, Panama
M	57	PCZ	E	Colón, Panama	Jamaica	Pueblo Nuevo, Panama
F	46	PCZ	S	Panama City, Panama	Panama City, Panama	Ancon,* Pedro Miguel, Panama
M	63	Panama	E	Panama City, Panama	Bocas del Toro, Panama	San Jose, Pedregal, Panama
M	66	Panama	E	Gatun, PCZ	Gatun, PCZ	Brisas del Golf, Panama City
M	56	Panama	E	Limon, Costa Rica	Limon, Costa Rica	Rio Abajo, Panama
F	75	Panama	E	Westmoreland, Jamaica	Spanish Town, Jamaica	El Cangrejo, Panama
M	54	Panama	S	Panama City, Panama	Panama City, Panama	Santa Ana, Panama
M	71	Panama	E	Panama City, Panama	Panama City, Panama	Villas del Golf, Panama
M	54	Colón	S	Limon, Costa Rica	Barbados	Colón, Panama
M	68	Colón	E	Colón, Panama	Colón, Panama	Colón, Panama
F	72	Colón	E	Colón, Panama	Colón, Panama	San Francisco Panama City
F	50	Colón	E			Paitilla, Panama
M	61	Colón	S	Colón, Panama	Bocas de Toro, Panama	Colón, Panama
M	67	Colón	E	Kingston, Jamaica	Colón, Panama	Rio Abajo, Panama

Table 4 continued.

Sex	Age	Raised in	English/ Spanish	Mother's place of birth	Father's place of birth	Current residence
M	68	Colón	E	Jamaica	United Kingdom	Panama City
F	58	Panama	E	Panama City, Panama	Panama City, Panama	Chorrera, Panama
M	61	PCZ	E	Calobre, Veraguas, Panama	Taboga, Panama	Parque Lefevre, Panama City Panamá
M	72	PCZ	E	Jamaica	Jamaica	Chorrera, Panama
M	80	PCZ	E	Old Harbor, Jamaica	Falmouth, Jamaica	San Francisco, Panama City

Notes: English/Spanish refers to the primary language of the interview. The asterisk denotes reverted lands formerly part of the U.S. Panama Canal Zone.

Comparative Narratives

For comparative data, I also interviewed fifteen people who are not of West Indian heritage who live in various parts of the country. While the majority of the comparative narratives live in urban Panama, it was not a requirement. This group includes *coloniales*, Blacks who came to Panama before the Railroad and Canal migrations; U.S. citizen Zonians, Americans who grew up in the former Panama Canal Zone; American retirees recently arrived to Panama; as well as recent immigrants from other non- U.S. nations. This research population speaks directly to Panama's growing diversity and foreign recruitment and foreign aid in their economic development. Through these interviews, I explored perceptions of Panama, quality of life, social immersion, and push-pull immigration factors, including the Panamanian concessions

that entice American retirees and others to settle there. Table 5 represents the self-reported personal information of my comparative research group participants.

Table 5. Self- Reported Demographic Information of Comparative Research Group

Sex	Age	Place of birth	English/ Spanish	Mother's place of birth	Father's place of birth	Current residence
F	52	Panama City	E	Panama	Panama	Casco Viejo, Panama
M	42	Panama City	E	Panama City, Panama	Baton Rouge, LA	Bejuco, Panama
M	32	Springfield, MA	E	Springfield, MA	Westfield, MA	El Cangrejo, Panama
M	50	Panama City, Panama	S	la chorrera, Panama	Capira, Panama	La Chorrera, Panama
F	39	Ocu, Panama	S	Los Carates, Panama	Ocu, Panama	San Miguelito, Panama
M	25	Buenaventura, Colombia	S	Buenaventura, Colombia	Buenaventura, Colombia	Panama City
M	43	Colón, Panama	S	Santa Isabel, Colón, Panama	Colón, Panama	Colón, Panama
M	39	Linstead, Jamaica	E	Jamaica	Jamaica	Panama
M	51	London, England	E	Jamaica	Jamaica	Panama (Camino de Cruces)
F	57	Almirante, Panama	S	Canal Zone	Panama	Panama (Chanis)
F	65	Portland, Jamaica	E	Jamaica	Jamaica	Chorrera
M	39	New York, NY	E	Mississippi	Panama	San Francisco, CA
F	59	Colón, Panama	E	San Jose, Costa Rica	Colón, Panama	Paitilla, Panama

Note: English/Spanish refers to the primary language of the interview

All interviews were semi-structured interviews in which an interview guide was used, but questions were asked in accordance with the flow of the conversation rather

than a rigid and exact order (Bailey 2007, 100). All interviews with the primary research group and some from the comparative research group were designed as mini-life histories. The flexible framework of semi-structured life histories allowed space for the interviewee to identify personally significant experiences, anecdotes, shared memories, and individual trajectories; however, both the semi-structure of the question order as well as the specificity of the events which I investigated provide a comparable framework for these individual mini-life histories. Taken as a whole, the interview data allowed me to examine how ideas about citizenship, immigration, and race as well as class and gender shaped the ways through which residents self-identify and are identified through their relationships with each other and with the U.S. and Panamanian states.

Supplementing my own interview data are interviews conducted in the 1970s with West Indian immigrants. Through funding from the Smithsonian Institute in 1971, Eunice Mason, a Panamanian of Jamaican parents, researched the wealth accumulation, and lack thereof, of English speaking West Indian immigrants who traveled from their respective islands to Panama. This data gave me access to the words and thoughts of the West Indian sojourners who remained in Panama, years after they made their journeys. Most of the interviewees were in their late years of life at the time of the interview, having retired from their various occupations and raised their now adult children. All of Ms. Mason's participants have now passed away. They are two generations before my primary research population, the West Indians who came for labor, marriage, family, or even to start new lives in a new country. Informed consent is not innate to Panamanian social science research and though she obtained verbal consent from her research participants, written forms were not mandatory. Together with Ms. Mason, I created and signed a

General Confidentiality Agreement to serve as an official permission and record of our agreement to protect the original research intent and participants. Ms. Mason allowed me full access to her written interview data, which includes surveys, interview responses, as well as her own interview notes, all of which are in English.

Participant Observation

My first research trip to Panama, funded by a Robyn-Ann Mathias grant from American University, lasted from July-August 2005. I secured a Fulbright grant to return and live in Panama City from October 2009 through August 2010. During these two trips, I exercised the crux of anthropological fieldwork: participant observation. It allowed me to examine the relationships between actual and stated behavior, further contextualize my own experiences and interviews, and also observe the daily realities of multiple residents. Participant observation allows for a deeper understanding of the political, social, and economic space in which my interviews took place and the spaces in which Panamanian citizens and residents created and live.

In 2005, I lived in the Miraflores neighborhood of Panama City with two of my family members. When I returned to Panama in 2009, I rented a room in a three-bedroom apartment owned by a 50-something Black American woman in the Paitilla neighborhood of Panama City, overlooking the bay. I lived in that apartment with her for two months before moving. For the remaining nine months, I lived in a three-bedroom apartment with two twenty-something-female roommates, a French woman working at the French embassy in Panama and a German woman working for a tourism company. Our apartment was on the top floor of a high-rise apartment building in downtown Panama

City on the busy street of Via Argentina in the El Cangrejo neighborhood, near the University of Panama.

I frequently traveled back and forth to Colón via bus for interviews, events, and meetings. Each way, the trip lasted approximately 1.5 hours and cost \$2.50 each way. Air-conditioned express busses run every hour from the Albrook National Bus Terminal in Panama City to the bus station in Colón. Panama's national bus terminal is a large, modern transportation center, formerly the Air Force Base in the U.S.-controlled Panama Canal Zone. Busses run on schedule and often from Panama City to the other eight provinces, around the city, as well as some international routes to other Central American nations. My primary modes of transportation around Panama City included taxis, whose average in-city fare is \$2.00, and the public busses – old non air-conditioned American school busses adorned by creative graffiti and locally known as *diablos rojos* or red devils²⁵ which cost a quarter to ride. I lived in and observed what was happening in my research setting, but further, created ongoing relationships within it. Participant observation included daily living, attendance at and participation in summer camps, cultural festivals— the October 21 festival of the Black Christ of Portobelo for example— weekly discussions in Colón, family gatherings, formal and informal meetings, performances, census workshops, parades- including the 20th anniversary parade of the U.S. invasion, parties, museum exhibits, religious services, group lunches,

²⁵ Diablos Rojos are a colorful and loud spectacle in Panama. Every guidebook mentions these unique busses. The art on the busses includes any and everything: portraits of people's children, Barack Obama, Manuel Noriega, phrases, national symbols, abstract art, song lyrics, etc. They are regarded as a form of art as much as a form of transportation.

panel discussions, academic and social events, event forums, labor protests, and academic seminars.

An event in which I regularly participated was Martes Culturales [Cultural Tuesdays] in Colón, a weekly discussion series held in the Four Points Sheraton Hotel in Millennium Plaza run by Professor Rita Wong. This weekly event provided thematic information about Colón-centered issues ranging from sports, polleras, poetry, literature, culture, religion, academics, economy, and youth development. These events allowed me to engage with people in and around Colón in meaningful ways around topics that mattered to them. Martes Culturales was also instrumental in supplying regular access to people in Colón that are engaged in community work. This was particularly important for me because although I traveled to Colón frequently, I lived in Panama City and thus had limited opportunities for consistent participant observation in Colón.

In August 2010, I participated in “Conozca Su Canal” [Know your Canal] week in Panama City. This is an annual weeklong celebration centered around the West Indian participation in the construction of the Panama Canal, sponsored by the Sociedad de Amigos de Museo Afro-Antillana de Panamá [Society of Friends of the Museum of the Afro- West Indian of Panama], known by their acronym, SAMAAP. This organization has the largest quantity of members of any Black Ethnicity oriented organization in Panama. The people who give to the organization and thus obtain membership, are from all over the country as well as abroad, principally the U.S. It also, through listserves and an officially affiliated newsletter, maintains constant communication and participation with Panamanians of West Indian descent in the United States. Their week of events is planned around the inaugural date of the Panama Canal opening, August 15, 1914. The

week of events, August 15-21 in 2010, included: a mass at a Baptist church; a pilgrimage and prayer through the most dangerous part of canal construction, the Culebra Cut, where many lost their lives; a modest exhibit at the West Indian Museum to commemorate Jamaican Independence; mural contests at local schools; and an annual dinner dance honoring prominent members of the Panamanian West Indian community.

Another important site of participant observation was *El Mes de la Etnia Negra* [Black Ethnicity Month], celebrated each May. Black Ethnicity Day was the vision of Claral Richards. Law number 9, signed in 2000 by President Mireya Moscosco²⁶, legislated an official Black Ethnicity Day as May 30, to mark the date in 1820 that King Ferdinand VII abolished the slave trade in the Spanish colonies. The chosen date alludes to a shared history of enslavement for Black ethnicities in Panama. Rather than just one day, events occur all month long, ending with a large parade in the streets of Colón where participants are mostly dressed in clothing, hats, and headdresses to represent Africa. The events of Black Ethnicity Month in 2010 carried political undertones because of the *Orgullosamente Afrodescendiente* [Proudly African descendent] census campaign. Most events passed out educational flyers regarding the census question about African heritage, or at least one speaker read the question and explained why he or she believed it was important. The whole country celebrates the month, as well as some Panamanians in the United States, but my attendance efforts were concentrated in my geographic areas of research. I attended workshops, art exhibits, poetry readings, school performances, talks, parades, fairs, meetings, and religious services in Panama City and the province of Colón,

²⁶ Mireya Moscosco was the first female president of Panama. She is the widow of three-time elected and three-time disposed President Arnulfo Arias. He is noted in this dissertation for changing the constitution in 1941 to revoke the citizenship of non-Spanish speaking immigrants and their children

including the cities of Colón and Portobelo. Although Portobelo, roughly an hour by bus from Colón city, is outside of my expressed research context, Black Ethnicity Day extends beyond just West Indian heritage to include *coloniales*. Portobelo remains a cultural center for *colonial* identity so I traveled there, by bus from Panama City to Colón then Colón to Portobelo, to experience Black Ethnicity celebrations in a community identified as majority *colonial*.

Beyond individual interviews, I spoke with but primarily observed various government and non-government organizations whose objectives explicitly relate to the social, cultural, and/or political development of Panamanians of West Indian heritage or Afro-Panamanians. The organizations with which I had the most interaction are: Sociedad de Amigos del Museo Afro Antillano de Panamá (SAMAAP); Fundación Bayano; and El Consejo Nacional de la Etnia Negra [The National Council of Black Ethnicity]. Of all organizations, SAMAAP is the only one whose meetings are open to the public so I was able to attend regularly, although I officially met with each organization separately. Observing these organizations helped understand the available resources and modes of potential participation for my research population. Observation also helped understand how and why people create collective action and mobility around particular identities and identifications. The National Council of Black Ethnicity (El Consejo Nacional de la Etnia Negra), created by executive order in 2007²⁷, in particular helps examine the direct relationship between the “Black” community and the state. It is the only official Black government organization.

²⁷ The President in 2007 who created the National Council of Black Ethnicity was Martin Torrijos, son of dictator Omar Torrijos

As ethnographic research methods keep pace with technological advances and the ways in which technology facilitates communication, participant observation is no longer confined to physical space. The bi-nationality of the Panama Canal Zone until 1999 has created various and overlapping spaces of communication between and among Zonians and non-Zonian Panamanians who remain in Panama, Zonians who went or returned to the United States, and Panamanians who now reside in the United States. In addition to being physically present in Panama, I have also observed various cyberspaces and subscribed to online or viral newsletters. CZbrats.com is a space created in 1997 that caters to U.S. Zonians who returned to the United States. It offers places to reflect on the old Zone and provides stories, and pictures, as well as contemporary news stories in Panama. TheSilverPeopleChronicle.com, which recently created a Facebook page, is an English language blog that provides historical information about people of West Indian descent in Panama and offers space for comments and questions at the end of each post. The Afro-PanaVisions Newsletter is a free English language which describes itself and mission as an “on-line visual community and cultural center to serve the two Afro-Panamanian communities in the U.S. and Panama, we seek to educate, create, provide and disseminate the undeniable facts of our history.” It is distributed via email through an electronic listserv. The Village News Magazine, distributed through electronic listserv, is also free and in English. Rainbow City²⁸ Alumni Association publishes the Village News Magazine, which serves as a supplement to Afro-PanaVisions. The Panama Cyber News is an online publication whose annual subscription costs \$30. It too serves as a

²⁸ Rainbow City is the name for the former community called Silver City, a predominately West Indian Zonian neighborhood on the Atlantic side of the Panama Canal Zone, right outside of Colón city.

bridge between Panamanians, primarily of West Indian descent, in Panama and the United States. Unlike the others, the Panama Cyber News offers content in both Spanish and English and contains personal updates, individual announcements, jokes, and local happenings rather than academic articles and news stories, as is the case of the Afro-PanaVisions publications. These are some of the popular and prominent sites and newsletters that not only maintain personal and academic bridges between communities in the United States and in Panama, but also connect people of shared identity or interests to preserve particular histories and memories in public online spaces.

Archival Research

I supplemented the interview data with insights obtained through participant observation with archival research. Much of the literature and materials about the Canal Zone now reside in the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. because it was an U.S. territory. During my 11 months in Panama, I regularly read the newspapers, made various visits to the National Library, the University library, SAMAAP's library, the library inside the U.S. Embassy, the Canal Zone Library and museum at Balboa Heights, and the National Archives in Panama City. These reviews of primary and secondary sources such as academic journals, newspapers, and government records help situate my work in a broader bi-national context.

Positionality as a Researcher

The second time I went to see the Panama Canal at the Miraflores Observation Center, I took a friend visiting from the U.S. One of the tour guides remembered me from

our Central America Fulbright group visit²⁹ more than two months earlier. He insisted on calling me “Miss Panama”, claimed that I spoke better Spanish than he did (untrue), and told me that since I am a Panamanian, I should just stay forever and never return to the U.S. As the only museum/observation center for the Canal, I was surprised that he still remembered me at first sight. That is how I felt Panamanians treated me, warm and welcoming.

During and after the data collection process, ethnographic positionality forces the researcher to acknowledge, “our power, privilege, and biases as subjects in relation to and within the power structures that surround our subjects” (Madison 2005, 7, 9). This reflexive analysis was not always part of anthropological methods or qualitative research in general, but rather emerged from a growing ‘methodical self-consciousness’ which countered the normalized process of creating a static unchanging foreign “Other” via omniscient cultureless data gathers. In their major text, *Writing Culture* (1986), Clifford and Marcus’ critique of ethnographic writing pushed qualitative researchers to place themselves within their narratives, thus making reflexivity part of methodological thought and analysis (Seale 1999, 160 in Finlay and Gough 2003, 4). Reflexivity not only physically positions the researcher within the dialogical research space, but also acknowledges the alteration of the space by the very presence of a researcher. Wertz (1984 in Finlay and Gough 2003, 114) argued for researchers to reflect on the ways in which their presence can alter and influence data collection. For example, in observation

²⁹ Fulbright hosts annual regional meetings called Enhancement Seminars for the student scholars around the globe. Panama served as host for the 2010 Central American regional meeting. All Fulbright scholars in Central America gathered in Panama from March 15-19, 2010. One of the group activities was a tour of the Miraflores locks at the Panama Canal and a guided tour of the canal museum, which is also located at the Miraflores locks.

and during interviews, the fact that I am a Black female, that I am Panamanian and/or that I am American could influence the information given, or withheld (Wertz 1984, 39).

Carefully within this reflection, with particular regard to data collection, researchers grapple with striking a balance between self-awareness and self-importance.

Related to the concern that anthropological discourse produced a colonizing discourse of the “Other” in which the Other is interpreted through the eyes of culture standards of Western (read: White) researchers (Denzin and Lincoln 2000, 32), contemporary anthropology obliges anthropologists, particularly those of color, to situate themselves intellectually within our work (Gilliam and Gilliam 1999). We the researchers, along with those we study, are products of culture. This study not only addresses the encounters and circulations of Blackness within the country and people of Panama, but also of disciplinary significance, the research was carried out by a Black female anthropologist with familial roots in the Republic of Panama and the Anglophone Caribbean. In the ongoing discussions about reflective ethnography and the intimate relationship between intellectual production and personal experiences, this research acknowledges that these investigated products of Blackness and Panamanian-ness are situated within Black and Panamanian spaces of investigation. Qualitative research is co-constituted – a joint product of the participants, researcher, and their relationships (Finlay and Gough 2003, 5). My very presence in the field circulates constructions and perceptions of Blackness and what it is to be of West Indian heritage, Panamanian, and American. I accept that how I identify myself may not always correspond with how I am and was, in turn, identified. And further, I acknowledge the ways in which I was identified differed in various contexts.

While in Panama, I was constantly asked in both English and Spanish, “Are you Panamanian?” I chose to answer that my father is Panamanian and allowed the inquisitor to form his or her own conclusions. My mother is African-American from Brooklyn, New York and my father was born in Panama City but raised mostly in Queens, New York. My first trip to Panama was in 2005 for preliminary dissertation research.

Although Bunzl argues that native anthropologists do not exist, “minimally because she operates as an anthropologist seeking to represent other people, more generally because she inhabits multiple identities that confound an essentialization of native status” (2004, 436), this belief does not negate the perception and treatment of an anthropologist as a native. My frequently being identified as Panamanian and speaking Spanish, and definitively my being a Black woman, greatly influenced my fieldwork and relationships with my research populations. No one questioned the origins of my name; however, my Spanish first name and English surname perhaps placed me within the “Panamanian” identity, and further, within West Indian heritage. More often than not, I was considered part of the native “us”, rather than the researcher “them”, where native could mean non-White, Black, Panamanian, of West Indian descent, or any combination thereof.

Language factored heavily into my identity perception and acceptance. I certainly mentioned that my father is Panamanian and that my family lives in Panama whenever it was appropriate, particularly to questions about why I learned to speak Spanish. Even though my father was born in Panama, he does not speak Spanish anymore. I learned Spanish in school and elevated my skills through travel, particularly in Cuba. Although I speak Spanish more slowly than I speak English and with an occasional U.S. accent, I never felt like an “outsider” much less like a “colonizer” anthropologist. Best articulated

by anthropologist John Gwaltney, “Sometimes, because of minority status, the native anthropologist is less of an outsider even in a totally foreign native enclave” (1976, 240). Sometimes people guessed that I was born and raised in Panama, but had lived too long in the U.S. Some thought I was born in Panama, raised in the United States. Others speculated that I was born and raised in Panama, but to English speaking parents, or at least one English-speaking parent. In the middle of our Spanish language conversation, one taxi driver angrily asked me, in reference to my accent, “What are you?! Half American?!” In fact, I am. Although he raised the question, my affirmative response still surprised him. He chuckled, and we continued speaking. The warmth I received from scholars, interviewees, taxi drivers, and family members underlined research relationships with personal ones due to my acceptance as either a Panamanian or member of a greater Panamanian community.

Being Panamanian or “Panamanian” with the quotation marks, facilitated relationships with my primary interview group especially. One interviewee explicitly said he only spoke to me because I am Black and speak Spanish. Most, if not all, interviewees, referenced me as part of the Panamanian “us” after learning that my father is Panamanian and, even better, that a large part of my family still lives in Panama. On the other hand, when people read Panamanian as a primary identity marker, they often assumed I knew more about Panamanian society – names, scandals, events— than I really did. Rather than go into detail as they might for someone perceived as “foreign,” they would say, “Oh, you are Panamanian. You understand,” and proceed to a new idea. Further, the invitations extended to other U.S. researchers for holidays, dinners, and excursions were not often

extended to me. I spent holidays – November’s Fiestas Patrias³⁰, Thanksgiving³¹, Christmas, New Year, Semana Santa³² and Easter —with my Panamanian family. Although they were part of my research demographic, my family took the online survey, but chose not to be interviewed. The time spent with them is indelible within my participant observation as well as the explicit and invaluable support, insights, and information they provided.

Since I relied in part on snowball sampling for participant recruitment, some of my interviewees knew of each other’s participation. After one interview, the referent humorously recounted to me her conversation with her friend. He called her and asked, “Why did you tell me Ariana is a *gringa*³³? She is Panamanian. Mostly.” Outside of my primary research group, many saw American as my primary identity marker. I never hid or denied either side of my parentage or U.S. citizenship from anyone. My Americanness, though, seemed more notably important for my non-primary research population, especially other Americans. Even knowing that my father is Panamanian, most U.S. citizens never asked if my family belonged to the demographic of my primary research group. They spoke plainly about their experiences, both positive and negative in Panama

³⁰ Fiestas Patrias means National Holidays and refers to the multiple celebrations in the month of November. November 2 is Dia de los Difuntos [Day of the Dead/Saints]. November 3 is Panama’s independence from Colombia. November 4 is Flag Day. November 5 is Colón Day. November 10 is the first call for independence of Los Santos province. November 28 is independence from Spain

³¹ Thanksgiving is not a recognized Panamanian holiday. It is not a day off from work. One of my father’s cousins lived and worked for many years in the United States. She enjoys the holiday. She is retired now and hosts a Thanksgiving dinner annually. Due to the long relationship with the United States, other Panamanians may celebrate it on the weekend or to a smaller degree on the actual holiday.

³² Semana Santa means Holy Week. It is the week before Easter.

³³ Gringo is a Spanish word for an English-speaking foreigner, usually someone from the U.S., but occasionally British people also. The term is arguably pejorative. It is popularly used in Panama to refer to Americans.

and with Panamanian people. Whether or not they saw me as a *gringa*, I was categorically someone born and raised in the United States. In their eyes my only culture and allegiance was to the U.S.

My funding source became yet another layer of identification. Anthropology is not a major at the University of Panama and those who knew of the discipline assumed my project to be rooted in Indigenous communities, not West Indian and certainly not urban. Fulbright, however, is a well-known name of academic and cultural exchange. Interestingly, this did not highlight my Americanness or even my foreignness to any particular group. Being a U.S. Fulbright scholar in Panama not only gave me direct access to the U.S. Embassy and past Fulbright scholars (both Panamanian scholars who studied in the U.S. and other U.S. based scholars who traveled to Panama) but also an instantly recognizable entrance into the Panamanian academic community around the country. On multiple occasions I was introduced as “Ariana, the young Fulbright,” without reference to my project, discipline, institution or even a nationality.

CHAPTER 4

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND RESEARCH CONTEXT

“The defining thing I would say is the Panama Canal. What else? That is all. We can’t even go any further! (laughing). That is like the bark on the tree and there are of course, more branches coming out of it” (Personal interview, 2005).

Even before the canal existed, Panama’s strategic geographic location characterized the isthmus a busy thoroughway, earning it the motto, *punte del mundo*, *corazón del universo* [bridge of the world, heart of the universe]. During the colonial era, the Atlantic cities of Nombre de Dios and Portobelo in the province of Colón were critical Spanish ports for riches traveling from the Incan Empire to Spain (Lipski 1986, 411), and thus the first areas of Panamanian settlement³⁴. The Spaniards traveled the path called El Camino Real, or the King’s Highway, to transport goods from the Atlantic coast through the narrow land of the isthmus to the Pacific coastal city of Panama City. British pirates attacked Panama various times during the 17th and 18th centuries until Spain finally abandoned the isthmus in 1821 when Panama gained independence (Parker 2007, 7-11). It immediately joined Gran Colombia³⁵, which later dissolved and Panama remained part of Colombia.

³⁴ These settlements on the coast of the province of Colón during colonial times gave the name “coloniales” to Blacks who settled there. Areas in Colón province maintain what is generally called an “Afro-Hispanic” and “Afro-Costeño” culture, referring to that of *coloniales* and separate from West Indian culture. Coastal areas of Colón province are also home to an African based religion know as Congo (Lipski 1986; Mack 2010), which hosts an annual festival in Portobelo in March.

³⁵ Gran Colombia included parts of Colombia, Panamá, Guyana, Ecuador, Venezuela, Peru, and Brazil

The discovery of gold in 1848 at Sutter's Mill in California revitalized the global significance of isthmus. The Panama route was the most expensive yet fastest passage from the east to west coasts (Parker 2007, 22). U.S. businesspersons, foreseeing the geographic importance of the isthmus, which at the time was still part of Colombia, had previously purchased the rights to construct a railroad. Laborers arrived from all over the world, including Africa, China, Europe, and India. Disease, namely yellow fever and malaria, coupled with overwork quickly killed the majority. In 1855, The Railroad Company brought roughly 10,000 males from the British colony of Jamaica, more than the total population of Panama City at the time, to build the Panama Railroad (Daley, 1990, 98). Historian Matthew Parker (2007) details the arduous travel conditions and struggles of the railroad laborers. Approximately 12,000 men died during the whole construction process, a figure that excludes those who died of "Panama Fever" in route to the California gold. When completed, however, the Panama Railroad provided a huge profit for the American financiers. Panama Railroad stock was unhurt by the competing route established by Vanderbilt in Nicaragua and at one point, was the highest priced stock on the New York Stock Exchange (Parker 2007, 34).

Following the boom of the California gold rush, the demand for local Panamanian services died, even as the American railroad flourished. More than transporting gold-seeking Americans, the construction of the Panama Railroad created two terminal cities in Panama City on the Pacific coast and Colón on the Atlantic. Because of the railroad's success, people of diverse languages, customs, and attitudes inundated Panama's two new urban centers. This heightened both Panamanian nativism and American xenophobia (Daley 1990, 98). Parker (2007), like Biesanz and Smith (1951, 10) compared the U.S.-

controlled conditions in Panama to a U.S. company town which, backed by the U.S. Navy, wholly excluded Panamanian goods, and financial or political interests.

Panama *was* the railroad. The Company kept for itself the arrangement of accommodations and food for its employees, and everything was imported just as all the expertise, labor, capital, materials, and tools for the railway construction had been. In effect, local (Panamanian) businessmen lost their control...and the entire transit zone came under the control and ownership of British or American interests. In the same way the New Grenadian authorities found themselves outmanned and outgunned by the railway's men, and deferred to foreigners. The dollar replaced the peso as the common currency and English became almost as common as Spanish (Parker 2007, 35).

The popularity of the Panama Railroad and the profit gained by U.S. businessmen set the context for the construction of a Panama Canal. Not only was the idea of transoceanic waterway palpable, but foreign control of such a passage was all but certain. The two-tiered influx of foreigners that resulted from railroad construction — U.S. businessmen and Black West Indian laborers — would continue to play major roles in Panamanian history.

The Right of Passage: A Land Divided, the World United

“The people of the world have a right of passage through the Isthmus of Panama that no government can impede” — Oscar Strauss in Espino 2001, 158.

For about four hundred years, the idea of a canal cutting through Central America to join the two oceans was a very expensive dream. In 1879, Frenchman Ferdinand de Lesseps, architect of the sea-level Suez Canal, tried and failed, to make that dream a reality (McCullough 1977, 124-241). Disease, cost, and miscalculation killed the project along with roughly 20,000 workers. “*Que Panamá!*” became a French expression meaning what a mess! In France, the mere word “Panama” was associated with scandal (Espino 2001, 12). De Lesseps’ failure swung open the door of opportunity for the United

States. The U.S. had an interest in building a canal since the California Gold Rush. The absence of an existing in-country body of water combined with the problems experienced by the French in Panama, however, led the U.S. to favor building a canal in Nicaragua, joining existing lakes Lake Managua and Lake Nicaragua. Over time, a strong Panama lobby, not coincidentally financed by the same Americans who owned the Panama Railroad, exposed, or exaggerated, the volcanic threat of Nicaragua (McCullough 1977, 283-285; Parker 2007, 209). With the rights to the failed French project up for sale, the U.S. government and businessmen began to seriously contemplate a Panama Canal. The United States felt that a canal was not only an American dream, but as articulated by Strauss, a birthright of all peoples of the world (Espino 2001). Panama, with its “natural monopoly over the transit route” (Gandasegui 1993, 17) and desire for independence created a favorable location.

Ovidio Diaz Espino, a Panamanian Wall Street lawyer educated in the U.S. and England, explored of the U.S. government’s role and Wall Street money behind the 1903 Panamanian Revolution for independence in *How Wall Street Created a Nation* (2001). The United States began negotiations with Colombia since, despite over seventy years and attempts to win independence in 1826, 1830, 1831, and 1840 (Mendez 1980), Panama remained part of New Granada and thus a Colombian province (Daley 1990, 92). Colombian recalcitrance in their demanded sum of payment for a canal through Panama caused the U.S. to pursue another route (Major 1993, 33-63; Parker 2007, 220-226). Panama longed for independence, with the canal as a huge incentive to breakaway for the last time. Such were the motives of U.S. businessmen who sought profit, the U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt who wanted a canal, Panamanian political leaders who

desired independence, and Frenchmen who wanted to recuperate their financial losses (McCullough 1977, 245-269). In the fall of 1903, U.S. newspapers published rumors of U.S. involvement in a possible Panamanian Revolution, even giving the date November 3 (Parker 2007, 225). Not coincidentally, on November 3, 1903, Panama declared its independence. The bloodless Panamanian revolution of 1903 was less of a revolution and more of a political conspiracy and series of bribes between Panamanian elites, U.S. business executives, the U.S. government, the U.S. military, the Panama Railroad, Colombian soldiers, and the bankrupt French Canal Company, *Compagnie Universelle Por le Canal Interoceanic* [Universal Company for the Interoceanic Canal]. Canal construction was the central political bargaining chip (Espino 2001). The actual connections between these actors are blurred and speculative, but the U.S. political, economic, and military involvement was well recognized on a global scale. The *Compagnie Universelle Por le Canal Interoceanic* received an unparalleled sum of \$50,000,000—more than what the United States paid for Louisiana, Alaska, and the Philippines combined (Espino 2001, 163). Further linking the two nations, Panama's national currency has been the U.S. dollar since 1904³⁶.

The United States of America recognized Panamanian sovereignty an unprecedented three days after their declaration of independence. Through the dubious tactics of Secretary of State John Hay and Frenchman Phillip Bunau-Varilla, the acting foreign minister of Panama, the 1903 Panama Canal Treaty was negotiated and signed before the delegation of the new Panamanian government arrived in Washington D.C.

³⁶ Although called a Balboa, Panamanian paper currency in the U.S. dollar. Panama does create its own coins with national leaders and symbols in the same denominations, size, and weight as U.S. coins. Panamanian merchants and vending machines equally accept both U.S. and Panamanian coins.

(Espino 2001, 136; McCullough 1977, 384-395; Parker 2007, 244). Considered onerous and controversial at best, the 1903 Panama Canal Treaty was nonetheless legal. The most contentious clause was Article III, which granted an area thirty miles long and five miles wide on each side of the incipient Canal.

The Republic of Panama grants to the United States all the rights, power and authority within the zone...which the United States would possess and exercise if it were the sovereign of the territory... to the entire exclusion of the exercise by the Republic of Panama of any such sovereign rights, power, or authority (Espino 2001, 146; McCullough 1977, 393).

This area of land became the Panama Canal Zone. This clause ceded the land entirely and “in perpetuity” to U.S. jurisdiction for the purpose of construction, operation, maintenance and defense of the Canal. It allowed the United States to impose their will, even at the expense of both Panamanians and West Indians in the Canal Zone, and consequently, in the Republic. The United States’ influence in the Western Hemisphere grew after the Spanish-American War in 1898.³⁷ Thus, the desire to create an inter-oceanic canal and resultant treaty met little formal international resistance.³⁸ And so began U.S. colonial hegemony in Panama, whose structures of oppression favored overt discrimination and transmittable racism.

Making the Dirt Fly: Canal Construction

The construction of the U.S. Panama Canal took ten years to complete. The undertaking was so dangerous and ambitious that works about the canal construction,

³⁷ The Spanish American War was a beginning to U.S. hegemony in Latin America. From this war, the U.S. acquired Puerto Rico, the Philippines, and inserted the Platt Amendment into the Cuban constitution (Polychroniu 1995)

³⁸ This is not to say that Panamanians and others around the world, including the United States, did not object to the treaty, but the technical legality of the document, the rescindable recognition of Panama’s sovereignty and commitment to a Panama Canal left little room for objection.

canal workers, and their stories continue to emerge (Conniff 1985; Diggers PBS 1985; Greene 2009; Parker 2007). To others in Latin America, the Canal was a visible and tangible erection of U.S. hegemony—the achieved promise of the Roosevelt corollary. The United States now owned and operated the “big stick” with which they would monitor the Western hemisphere. The U.S. took such a prominent role in this project, Teddy Roosevelt’s 1906 trip to Panama was the first time that a U.S. President traveled out of the country while in office (McCullough 1977, 492).

The processes of construction were romanticized into a heroic era of sacrifice, camaraderie, and history making (Conniff 1985, 24). However, historians have well detailed the arduous conditions, high death toll, blatant racism, scientific breakthroughs, and engineering genius that made this multi-level locks systems canal possible (Conniff 1985; Greene 2009; McCullough 1977; Parker 2007). Without a natural waterway to connect to, the largest number of lives was lost in the creation of the Culebra Cut, dangerous digging to traverse the rocky isthmus and connect the two coasts. One West Indian man remembered, “The flesh of men flew in the air like birds many days” (McCullough 1977, 546). The PBS documentary *Diggers* (1985) estimates that from 1881 through 1914, 100,000 Black West Indians traveled to Panama to build the Canal. By the time the canal opened in 1914, roughly 30,000 had died.

West Indians, although a numerical strength in the scarcely populated country of Panama (Westerman 1960, 344), were irrefutably a marginalized group, forced to adhere to oppressive Panamanian and/or American society (Conniff 1985). When West Indian laborers traveled to Panama, not all planned to stay permanently. Some took advantage of repatriation offers, some stayed to build the new futures they sought when they left their

islands, and others remained simply because they had no other choice. Mrs. Cox, born in Barbados in 1901, wished her sister had never sent for her. She was sorry she “ever left in the first place. I was here with my sister, my husband, and my children and I had no money to take them all back.” For those who stayed, they planted roots in Panama, both inside and outside of the Canal Zone.

Segregated Paradise: The Canal Zone

The fundamental problem facing the Americans is that of disposing of the increasing number of Negroes on the Canal, and, although a great number of Negro employees live in the Republic of Panama, just outside of the Zone, the question is already very serious —Grenfell Price 1935, 10

The U.S. controlled Canal Zone was truly a self-sufficient and exclusive territory, exempt from Panamanian laws and taxes as detailed in the 1903 Hay- Bunau-Varilla Treaty. Only civilian employees of the Panama Canal, U.S. military, and their families could live in the Zone, in quarters built, rented, and maintained by the U.S. government (McCullough 1977, 558). Only they could patronize its commissary, department stores, belong to the social clubs, and utilize the recreational facilities. Only they were allowed to be taught in its schools, treated in its hospitals, and buried in its cemeteries (Bryce LaPorte 1998, 102). All of this was done, however, with heavy intervention of the American state.

Access to these Zone amenities was conditional and segregated, mirroring the U.S. laws of the time. The sovereignty of the Zone allowed for unconcealed inequity. Rank and nationality structured the social order of the Zone. When U.S. canal construction began in 1904, the canal administration adopted the Panama Railroad’s payroll policy- gold roll for U.S. citizens and silver roll for non-U.S. citizens (Conniff

1985, 31-36; Parker 2007, 381-384). Until 1909, silver rates were half those of gold. Although based on a two-tiered color/nationality split, the divide was not definite and the two rolls started to muddle. President Taft issues an order in 1908 to retain unequivocal American privilege and labor hierarchy. The gold roll was for White U.S. citizens only, although not applied retroactively (Conniff 1985, 40). Colonel George Goethals, chief engineer and chairman of the Isthmian Canal Commission, sidestepped the issue of racial privilege, highlighting “citizenship more than color. We cannot very well draw a color line, but we can limit the employment of engineers to American citizens” (Conniff 1985, 33). Thus, citizenship was the ostensible primary marker of difference, not race. However, as expressed by historian Julie Greene (2009), it was not the only important factor. She writes that, the Canal Zone represented “boundaries that granted or denied privileges according to current understandings of race, gender, citizenship, and skill” (121). The most palpable and lasting manifestation of discrimination took shape through race and citizenship via the gold and silver rolls, which lasted through the 1960s.

Safeguarding engineer jobs also helped lower the high American labor turnover. During canal construction, the average American worked in Panama for only one year before returning to the United States. Once the canal and accompanying Canal Zone were fully functioning, the privileges afforded to Americans were an attractive incentive to stay. For example, a young engineer with two or three years experience could start at \$250, roughly \$25 more than he would make in the U.S. Higher wages were combined with free housing, free health care, job security, lower cost of goods, and forty-two days paid vacation as compared to the fourteen-day standard in the U.S. (McCullough 1977, 560). Further, upon marriage, which was heavily encouraged, the benefits rose and the

size of the home increased. American “Zonians” as residents of the Canal Zone were called, made the Zone their home for consecutive generations. Predictably, they retained their jobs and privilege for themselves, their families, and other Americans arriving from the U.S. (Biensanz and Smith 1951, 11). Generations of Americans grew up in the Canal Zone without ever learning Spanish, or ever needing to on a daily functional level.

Supermarkets, barbershops, golf courses, restaurants, and even post offices all lay within this U.S. territory (Perkins 2004). For U.S. citizens, life in the Canal Zone, luxurious and government subsidized, was better than their possibilities in the United States.

West Indian and other silver roll workers did not fare as well. Their working and living conditions ranged from difficult to awful (Conniff 1985, 29). Some describe the Canal Zone as a socialist society because of the single employer and state-supported benefits. An American Canal Zone policeman Harry Franck (1913), however, more accurately likened the Zone to caste system. Although Taft modified his executive order to theoretically allow Panamanians access to the gold roll, West Indian laborers were often preferred to Panamanians not only because of unfettered opportunities for wage exploitation, but also because most spoke English as their native language, as opposed to Spanish (Conniff 1985, 33). Because of color, masked by citizenship, they were denied higher technical education to safeguard the American ranks in the Zone. Silver roll police officers were allowed to serve on the Zone police force, but received lower wages and were prohibited from arresting a U.S. citizen. Some West Indians lived in the Zone’s segregated cities, shopped in the segregated commissaries, drank from “silver roll only” fountains, and generally received lesser services, especially housing (Conniff 1985, 124-127). Colón and Panama City were terminal railroad cities and thus well populated sites

of commerce and bustle. West Indians populated these cities before canal construction. During construction, Colón was the landing point as workers either stayed or continued the journey to the capital city of Panama City (McCullough 1977, 175). After construction, Panama City and Colón, physically bordering the Canal Zone, remained densely populated with West Indian families. Although the majority in Colón, many West Indian families in Panama City, on the other hand, lived together in particular neighborhoods. Most families rented one-room tenements in the Panama City and Colón, just outside the Zone's borders (Bryce-Laporte 1998, 102). Differential access within the Zone led directly to social inequality outside of it.

George Westerman, a first-generation Panamanian scholar of West Indian descent, argues that it was easier for West Indians to adapt to American culture than Panamanian mainly because of language—they both spoke English—but also due to cultural similarity stemming from British influence. Speaking specifically of West Indians traveling to Panama to build the Railroad then the Canal, U.S. controlled projects helped facilitate the “loss of social heritage when he came to the Isthmus” (1961, 342). Westerman used the term “cultural adjustment” to illustrate the West Indian dilemma in the face of double hegemony—labor under U.S. rule within the boundaries of the Republic of Panama. The initial adjustment was made toward the hegemonic U.S. culture. Westerman (1961) argues that West Indians reshaped their basic needs and habits according to the North Americans, to the dismay of Panamanians. Some Panamanians questioned West Indian national allegiance. They charged, “West Indians are British by loyalty, Americans by economic necessity, and Panamanians for expediency” (Biensanz 1949, 778). Most strongly after independence while Panama was still shaping their

national identity, these behaviors made West Indians “cultural deviants” and “undesirable aliens” in the eyes of Panamanians who feared West Indian culture in collusion with Americans would de-Hispanicize the isthmus (Westerman 1961, 350).

Outside the Zone: Panamanian Politics
and West Indian Exclusion

Outside of the Zone, West Indians’ political status was tenuous, specifically during the 1930s and 40s. In 1930, Panama’s National Assembly outlawed the naturalization of persons from “prohibited immigration,” the main target being people of West Indian descent (Conniff 1985, 80). Behind his slogan of *Panameñismo* (Panamanianism) Dr. Arnulfo Arias, a Harvard educated physician and Axis sympathizer, came from a political family. He served as minister of health during his brother Harmonio’s presidency, during which time he sterilized West Indian males without their consent until another doctor protested (Barrera 2008). He later founded the Panameñista party and won the presidency in 1940. His inaugural address emphasized Panama for Panamanians and asserted the need to assimilate only the “desirable foreigners.” He believed West Indians, on the other hand, were undesirable and constituted “a grave ethical problem” (Conniff 1985, 89-90). While his constitution of 1941 granted female suffrage, it also disenfranchised non-Spanish speaking immigrants and their families (Conniff 1985, 99; O’Reggio 2006, 105). As one of the largest non-Spanish speaking immigrant groups, West Indians outside of the Canal Zone no longer enjoyed Panamanian citizenship. Many used the black market to fabricate Panamanian birth certificates and retain citizenship, and thus basic rights and status, like Robert Alleyene’s

father. As he completed my optional biographical information form, Robert looked at the questions about parental birthplace and passionately declared,

My dad was really born in Jamaica. *Up to this day* he will not admit he was born in Jamaica. But my cousin told me and I know by fact he was born in Jamaica. Ok? So. To bridge this (drawing a line between Jamaica and Panama on the map he made on the backside of the consent form), because this is home for him, he paid off a public official to get a document to say anything. They went to the church where he was baptized. And he was in fact baptized at that church [in Panama]. And using that baptism, they took it to the register and they said, there you go. You're Panamanian. But he was really born in Jamaica (Personal interview, 2009).

Not all those affected had the money or connections to forge the required documents.

Others, like Egbert Wetherborne's Spanish speaking Chinese grandfather, drew on their long history in Panama and simply changed their last names. A Chinese man with the last name Caceres, if he spoke Spanish, did not draw attention, he explained (Personal interview, 2009). An unknown number of West Indians did the same, erasing a visible cultural marker and removing themselves from the greater West Indian community. The Canal migrations for the U.S. canal were not the only waves of West Indian immigration, although they were the largest. West Indians helped build the Panama Railroad as well as the failed French canal project (Westerman 1961). Like the Chinese (Cohen 1971; Siu 2007), West Indians, too, had a long history in Panama. Further, a smaller population of non-West Indian Blacks, called *coloniales*, was exempt from this law. *Coloniales* is the name given to Blacks who arrived in Panama with the Spanish during colonial times (Lipski 1986). Although also Black, they were not foreign born, of West Indian heritage or English speakers. Therefore, changing an English surname to a Spanish one and ceasing to speak English or teach English to younger generations in an attempt to "Hispanicize" (Conniff 1985, 137) was a plausible route to avoid suspicion. Eunice

Mason said that when it happened, West Indians believed it was directed at them. Born in Panama of Jamaican parents, she previously felt her primary identity marker to be Panamanian. That changed. “The law as I saw it, it was children of foreign parents, whether you were Chinese, Japanese. So I think that, for me, that was the great awakening. I mean if you institutionalize something, it permeates the very fabric of the clothes you wear” (Personal interview, 2010). Although Arnulfo Arias was overthrown and the 1941 constitution revoked in 1946, his political party continued and their slogan, *Por Un Panamá Mejor* (For a Better Panama) carried overtones of purposeful exclusion and nativism. Despite the de-institutionalization of disenfranchisement, some West Indians retained their fabricated documents, Spanish last names, and even encouraged their children to speak Spanish exclusively, not English, in order to more seamlessly integrate into Panamanian society.

Selective Racial Integration and Language Transitions

“No discriminarán a unos niños en las escuelas zoneítas” [They will no longer discrimination against children in zone schools] read the headlines of the Panamanian newspaper *Panamá America* on May 19, 1954, just two days after the landmark Brown versus the Board of Education of Topeka decision. Buried in the bottom left corner of the front page, it explained that children of U.S. citizens who are not White can now, for the first time, attend the schools designated for White children starting the next school year. Until then, the Canal Zone practiced the same racial segregation that existed in the U.S. proper (Westerman 1954). White American children attended school separately from everyone else. In the Zone, however, race and citizenship mingled. Non-White children

of U.S. citizens, Black Americans for example, attended school with children of non-U.S. citizen parents (Cook 1938). Many West Indian families did not object to this practice because most of the teachers in the non-White schools were West Indian (Sackett 1932), and consequently, their children received “a good West Indian education.” After 1954, however, everything changed. All children of U.S. citizens, both Black and White, could now attend the previously White only schools. Rather than racially integrate the Canal Zone school system, the administration decided to segregate based on citizenship, mirroring the gold roll and silver roll payment criterion, but further, added a linguistic difference. The Non-White schools changed from English to Spanish instruction, which changed the socialization of the students (Conniff 1985, 122). Their instructional orientation changed from U.S.-centric to Panama centric. Many of the new Spanish-speaking teachers did not speak English, the former language of instruction. Conversely, not all of the predominately West Indian teachers were sufficiently proficient in Spanish. Most importantly, nearly all of the students lacked proficiency in Spanish, their new language of scholastic instruction (Conniff 1985, 122-124; Personal interviews 2009, 2010). A high ranking official of the ACP³⁹ who grew up in Rainbow City in the Canal Zone, remembers attending school in the Zone during this transition, specifically the confusions created between the actual laws, proficiency of the teachers, and the language of the teaching materials themselves.

³⁹ Autoridad del Canal de Panamá, Panamá Canal Authority is the non-government organization that runs the Panamá Canal. According to its website it has “exclusive charge of the operation, administration, management, preservation, maintenance, and modernization of the Canal, as well as its activities and related services, pursuant to legal and constitutional regulations in force, so that the Canal may operate in a safe, continuous, efficient, and profitable manner.” ACP has been fully Panamanian without U.S. Board members since 1997.

We had teachers coming in that were Spanish-speaking teachers. Some of the classes they would give, in addition to Spanish class, you could probably get a history class and it was taught by a Spanish-speaking teacher. You would actually get your class in Spanish even though the curriculum required that your classes be given in English, not in Spanish. If you had a math class, the math books, in many cases, now we had some math books in Spanish, but the math teachers I can remember were West Indians so we got our classes in English. So there was this sort of mix where you began to develop both languages but always our strength was in English (Personal interview, 2009).

Whenever possible, students during this era were forced to learn in Spanish, a foreign tongue for many. Like their students, West Indian teachers had to learn Spanish, raise their formal levels of education, or lose their jobs. The change in language cost some West Indian teachers their jobs, and consequently their housing and Zone privileges, which in turn changed the demographics of the Zone. Brown versus the Board of Education not only changed the language of instruction and character of the Canal Zone's school system, it shifted the boundaries of privilege within the Zone. Although White Americans and Black West Indians formed the poles of the Canal Zone system, there were also U.S. Blacks, various Europeans, non-West Indian Panamanians, and non-Black West Indians (Conniff 1985, 35). Educational segregation stopped centering on race; that was now illegal. Citizenship was the new division, resulting in an educational linguistic muddle for all non-U.S. citizens. Starting with the gold and silver rolls and fifty years later continuing with education law, language and citizenship emerged as important distinctions of privilege and group boundaries.

The Beginning of the End for the Canal Zone

Some argue that the first physical U.S. - Panama confrontation occurred on April 15, 1856 after American Jack Oliver refused to pay for the piece of watermelon he took, then discarded half eaten, from Panamanian Manuel Luna's fruit stand. One of Oliver's

friends eventually paid, but in a related scuffle with another Panamanian, a shot was fired and chaos ensued. An angry mob of armed Panamanians confronted a defensive group of armed Americans. When the riots ended hours later, several bodies lay dead and wounded. In the conflict, people destroyed railroad tracks, railroad stations, and cut telegraph cables. Not yet a nation, but already an important thruway invaded by foreign interests, Mercedes Chen Daley (1990) argues that the Panamanian “violent collective behavior was a cultural means of defending violated rights, a means of resisting change, and a means of expressing grievances” (90). During my interviews and conversations, many pointed to this event, called The Watermelon Riots, or *la Tajada de Sandia* (slice of watermelon) in Spanish, as the first U.S.- Panamanian clash, paving the way for the 1964 flag riots and the inevitable renegotiation of the Panama Canal Treaties.

1964 Flag Riots

The Canal Zone, a U.S. territory embedded in the country of Panama was always a point of contention. The 1959 Cuban Revolution stirred the entire Western Hemisphere. On Panamanian Independence Day, 1959, a group of Panamanians attempted to march into the Canal Zone and raise the Panamanian flag (Langley 1970, 350). U.S. troops turned them away. On January 9th 1964, a group of 200 Panamanian students from Instituto Nacional crossed Fourth of July Avenue, marched to the recently de-segregated American Balboa High School in the Canal Zone, and tried to again to raise the Panamanian flag in the Zone, as was their legal right. U.S. Zonian students and Canal Zone police met them, pushed them back, and the Panamanian flag was torn in the process. Fighting broke out, police open fired and word spread. U.S. military, Canal Zone

police, Zonians, and Panamanians alike came to the scene and fed the riots on both the Panama City and Colón sides of the Zone. Twenty-one Panamanians and four U.S. soldiers died, more than 500 people were wounded and parts of Panama City were burned to the ground, including the Pan-Am building and Tivoli Hotel (Koster and Sanchez 1990; 177-178; Langley 1970 357-359; McPherson 2002, 395). In the wake of the riots, despite the large U.S. military and civilian presence in the center of the country, Panama temporarily broke diplomatic relations with the United States. Fourth of July Avenue, the street that literally separated the Republic of Panama from the Canal Zone, was renamed to Avenida de los Martires, Avenue of the Martyrs (Sanchez 2007, 66). January 9th is a national holiday, a day of mourning in which no alcohol is sold throughout the country. Although most Panamanians politically opposed the U.S. Canal Zone, West Indians literally found themselves living and working on both sides of the fence. The change in socialization for non-U.S. citizens in the Canal Zone schools started to produce generations of students oriented to a life in Spanish speaking Panama. The political affront that the Zone represented began to outweigh the personal privileges enjoyed. On one hand, the Canal Zone was an English language based source of livelihood. On the other, by the 1960s, most people of West Indian descent were Panamanian born and Panamanian citizens.

The Canal Treaties Renegotiated

Following World War II, the world saw processes of decolonization and it was harder for the U.S. to justify its presence in Panama (Strong 1991, 270). The 1964 flag riots highlighted the fact that the U.S. controlled Panama Canal Zone was now a global

aberration (Conniff 1985, 3). Through pleas on the world stage, speeches at the United Nations and to various Latin American nations, Panama voiced their outrage at the anachronistic U.S. civilian and military existence (Sanchez 2007, 69; Strong 1991, 270). Panama's charismatic dictator, General Omar Torrijos, and U.S. president Jimmy Carter reached an agreement. Many West Indian males worked for the U.S. government via the Panama Canal and many West Indian women depended on American Zone families for domestic employment. Despite popular Panamanian belief that West Indians always sided with the U.S., and despite the reality that their livelihood was rooted in the American Canal and Canal Zone systems, most believed the Zone was unjust. Panamanians voted to ratify the new treaties in the 1977 national plebiscite. Just barely passing in the U.S. Senate by a two-vote margin, the new Panama Canal Treaties signed in 1977 abrogated the litigious treaty of 1903 in which a U.S. Secretary of State and a Frenchman created the controversial Panama Canal Zone and secured Panamanian independence (Kausch 1978, 452; Strong 1991, 281). On October 1, 1979, the treaties went into effect. The Canal Zone as a U.S. entity ceased to exist and on December 31, 1999, the United States military and civilian populations withdrew completely. The large-scale military invasion in the middle of the transition, however, caused Panamanians to wonder if the U.S. would in fact fully withdraw in 1999.

Operation Just Cause: the 1989 Invasion

Yvelisse Langton was living in the Canal Zone in 1989 and remembered, “un fuerte ruido me despertó. Cuando mire por la ventana vi el cielo naranja, rojo.” [A loud noise woke me up. When I looked out the window, I saw an orange and red sky].

December 20, 1989 marks the first time since 1945 that the U.S. used military force unrelated to the Cold War (Gilboa 1995, 539), the most violent event in Panamanian history and the most traumatic for those who remember it or were directly affected by it (Lindsay-Poland 2003, 118). Alex was a member of the military band in 1989. When the invasion began, he was held by U.S. military for days at a Panamanian military base. His family thought he was dead. He did not want to talk about what happened during those days, but admitted that he still has nightmares and continues to see a psychiatrist. 2009 marked the first time in nineteen years that he stayed outside to watch the holiday fireworks. He confessed, “It affected me a lot. I didn't let anyone know, but I would be inside of my room. You know, like post-trauma” (Personal interview, 2009). It is a night most Panamanians will never forget.

Popular dictator Omar Torrijos mysteriously died in a plane crash in 1981, setting off a period of unstable dictatorship controlled by Manuel Antonio Noriega (Gandasegui 1993, 7). Despite the official presidencies of various leaders, Manuel Noriega⁴⁰, the U.S. ally turned enemy, took unofficial power in 1983. His relationship with the United States, tumultuous at best during its prime, quickly turned sour. In 1987, the United States government under Reagan imposed economic sanctions on Panama, severely crippling the national economy (Millett 1990, 3). The Panamanian National treasury was depleted without U.S. deposits, namely the canal profits. Unable to withdraw money from their own bank accounts or cash business or personal checks, Panamanians who did not work

⁴⁰ This dissertation scarcely addresses the complexity of the Noriega regime or the U.S. invasion. For more information about the dictatorship under Noriega see: Buckley 1991; Dinges 1991; Guevara Mann 1996; Kempe 1990; Koster and Sanchez 1991; Noriega and Eisner 1997; Murillo 1995; Scranton 1991. For more information about Operation Just Cause see: Donnelly 1991; Franklin 1990; Lindsay-Poland 2003

in the Zone survived those years on rations, paper IOUs for salaries, bartering whatever they had with others who held complementary goods. They also relied heavily on friends and family who worked in the Zone and thus received salary from a U.S. payroll without interruption. Cash was coveted and immediately spendable since the U.S. and Panama share a currency. Aleida Ramos, whose parents were part of the Noriega resistance movements in the countryside of Ocú, recalls 1988 as the beginning of the end and interestingly, 1989 as a new beginning. “[1988] Salió Noriega en la televisión con un machete gritando que, que Dios estaba en los cuarteles y que él le declaraba la guerra a los Estados Unidos y gracias a Dios que el 20 de diciembre hubo la invasión. [In 1988, Noriega came out on television with a machete, yelling that God was in the barracks and he declared war on the United States. And thank God, December 20th was the invasion]” (Personal interview, 2010). Despite the change of sovereignty in progress, life in the Canal Zone, especially economic life, was relatively unaffected by the economic sanctions and political violence outside of its borders.

The May 1989 elections exposed Noriega’s political fraud on an international scale (Gandasegui 1993, 13). When the opposition’s candidate, Guillermo Endara, clearly won the election, Noriega nullified the results and used his control of the armed forces to repress all opposition. The image of vice presidential candidate Guillermo “Billy” Ford, his white guayabera⁴¹ bloodied from beatings by Noriega’s men (Koster and Sanchez 1990, 323), plastered the covers of *Newsweek*, *Time* and *U.S. News* magazines. The new U.S. President, George Bush, Sr. decided to invade Panama right before Christmas, 1989,

⁴¹ A guayabera, also called a panabrisa in Panama, is a men’s button-down shirt popular in Latin America and the Caribbean. It is usually made of cotton or linen and has vertical rows of pleats in the front and back and front pockets. It can be short sleeved or long sleeved.

through a mission named Operation Just Cause. Panamanians joke that the real name was Operation Just (be)Cause. In 1989, Noriega had a small number of supporters; however, a large-scale U.S. military intervention had even fewer. The number of victims varies greatly, depending on the source. The 1992 Academy Award winning documentary *The Panama Deception* and John Lindsay-Poland's *Emperors in the Jungle* (2003) criticize the motives of the U.S., the advanced weaponry used, and the downplay of victims as reported by the U.S. media. To this day, Panamanians remain divided over their support for the invasion, although perhaps united in their opposition of Noriega, the dictatorship, or simply the absence of democracy. A strong Latin American opposition emerged after the U.S. invasion of Panama. Venezuelan President Carlos Andres Perez, although anti-Noriega, called the invasion an "ancient and objectionable" solution to the "shameless Panamanian regime" (FBIS-LAT 1990h, 67 in Millett 1990, 4). With such a strong U.S. military presence already in Panama⁴², one Panamanian woman of West Indian descent shared the Venezuelan president's anger and bewilderment. Starting her story in English, as she became more upset, she switched to Spanish mid-thought, her preferred language to express strong sentiments.

I didn't accept and I never will understand why the United States erupt into Panama like that. Then when I, when daylight and I got the news of so many people, people that I knew died. I really was really hurt. Y me sentí impotente porque tenía mis hijos y no podía salir a hacer absolutamente nada. Yo no creí nunca que los Estados Unidos tenían ninguna buena intención al entrar a Panamá. A ellos no les importaba el pueblo panameño. [And I felt helpless because I had my children and could not go out or do absolutely anything. I did not believe that the U.S. ever had any good intentions when they invaded. They do not care about the Panamanian people] (Personal interview, 2009).

⁴²The U.S. began military presence in Panama in 1903. Panama was the headquarters for The U.S Southern Command until it relocated to Miami in 1997 in accordance with the 1977 Panama Canal Treaties.

Others believed the invasion, objectionable as it may have been, was a necessary evil to move beyond the dark Noriega years toward a better future for all Panamanians. The U.S. military response was unquestionably excessive, but it responded to an increasingly precarious situation that did not have a projected end date. A University of Pittsburgh Public Opinion Project found that twenty-six percent and forty-one percent of elites “strongly approved” and “somewhat approved” of the invasion respectively. The “masses,” however, showed extreme divergence. Thirty-three percent “Strongly approved” and thirty-one percent “strong disapproved” (Perez 1999, 11). One man from Colón expressed his mixed support about the invasion in saying,

I believe that what we are living today [development, democracy] is a result of that invasion...I did not condemn it then. I do not condemn it today. I feel that we were at a desperate moment in time... We were living times that were only going to get worse. And I don't know what that worse would have meant for so many of us. So I think it was, it was (pause) rough, but I think it was necessary (Personal interview, 2010).

Despite the large literature about the invasion (Gilboa 1995; Millett 1990; Ropp 1993; Weeks and Zimbalist 1989), Manuel Noriega and the 1989 U.S. invasion are conspicuously absent from official didactic Panamanian textbooks. They show the signing of the Panama Canal Treaties in 1977 and fast forward to the complete reversion in 1999. Following the return to democracy⁴³ and the close relationship between the new Panamanian administration and the United States, some of my research participants admitted to wondering if somehow, the Canal Treaties would be nullified or revoked, and the Americans would never leave. On the contrary, it resumed according to plan.

⁴³ The return to democracy was also the return of power from the military back to the Panamanian elites, the *rabiblanco*s (Millett 1996)

When I asked, “What do you think the biggest problem Panama faces today?” the majority of my respondents answered some form of “security”, “violence”, “safety”, or “crime” attributed to post-invasion Panama. The public collected the guns that belonged to Noriega’s Dignity Battalions and unprotected arms storages in the city. Gated communities and bars, or *rajas*, are common and barbed wire adorns the top of most houses’ outer gates and fences. After our first interview session, Lloyd O’Meally walked me around the exterior of his home in the San Francisco neighborhood of Panama City. Built in 1970, he showed me his beautiful plants and landscaping but also the slow additions of bars and gates over the years. The documentary *One Dollar Panama: El Precio de la Vida/The Price of Life* (2002) explores the daily life of gang violence in Panamanian slums. A woman featured in the film links the violence directly to the U.S. invasion; an invasion she believes was unfounded and has resulted in escalated and random violence.

This violence began with the gangs, which are a direct consequence of the invasion. Since the gringos came with their bullshit invasion, everyone has a gun. Even the people you’d least expect. Before, if you wanted a gun you needed money to buy it and a permit. Now you don’t need money or a permit.

Beyond just a loss of a personal sense of security, the increased violence in Panama has caused Panamanians to leave their lifelong homes. Darnell Campbell became emotional while discussing the effects of the invasion on his life. He felt he had abandoned his predominantly Black community of Chorillo⁴⁴, an area heavily bombed during the invasion and devastated by violence in the aftermath, in order to save his family.

⁴⁴ Noriega moved his official headquarters to the area next to Chorillo. The U.S. targeted that area for bombing and military attacks during the invasion

Yo me crié en Chorrillo. Me encanta Chorrillo. Pero después de la invasión que tenía que dejar. Para la seguridad de mi familia tuve que dejar. Todas estas bandas, las drogas, las armas. No podía criar a mi familia allí. La gente en las calles tiene mejor armas que la policía. Eso es lo que la invasión hizo. Cambió mi casa. Yo soy de la base! soy basista. pero tuve que salir (Personal interview, 2010).

[I grew up in Chorrillo. I love Chorrillo. But after the invasion, I had to leave. For my family's safety, I had to leave. All of these gangs, the drugs, the guns. I could not raise my family there anymore. People in the streets have better guns than the police. That is what the invasion did. It changed my home. Yo soy de la base! soy basista. But I had to leave.]

Although the government frequently sponsors a “turn in your guns for food” program that guarantees immunity at the time of transaction, violence and gangs in Panama continue to escalate. Some Panamanians actually expressed nostalgia for the Noriega years, when, although there were other problems, “at least he controlled the drugs, guns, and violence in the country,” a female Panamanian U.S. Embassy worker confessed to me. The U.S. invasion of Panama represents the regional shift in Latin American policy from the protection against the spread of communism, even through dictators, to the war on drugs.

La Antigua Zona (the former Zone): Reversion Complete

The documentary film, *El Último Soldado* [The Last Soldier] (2010), follows the closing of U.S. military bases and the changed lives of Zonian families. The twenty-year transition greatly affected both U.S. Zonians and Panamanian lives, with particular consequences for West Indian descendants who served as the linguistic and labor bridge between the Zone and the Republic of Panama. Forced retirements, voluntary retirements, changeover of bank accounts, national labor quotas, national pay scales, real estate prices, and benefit retention were just some of the messy issues related to the twenty-year

reversion. Zonians either purchased or left their homes grudgingly, many electing to stay in Panama and not live in the U.S.. Panamanians eagerly anticipated their long awaited national trajectory post-U.S. control.

Throughout my interviews, a recurring theme emerged as illustrative of American Zonian restriction and haughtiness compared to Panamanian desire and denial: mangos. “You couldn’t even pick up a mango from the street (in the Canal Zone)!” “You could be arrested for picking mangos in the Zone! Ridiculous!” “Todo era de ellos hasta los mangos en la calle!” (Everything was theirs, down to the mangos in the street). “They would rather let the mangos rot on the ground in the Zone than let a Panamanian child have it.” Marcelo Hardwick, too, understood mangoes as a symbol of access and ownership in the Canal Zone. He was born in Panama to a Jamaican father and Cuban mother, voted for the treaty, but was unsure whether Panamanians would maintain the high standards of Canal operation. He was even more uncertain how the change in sovereignty would affect his job as a pilot⁴⁵. Nevertheless, he was excited. He was raised in Silver City/Rainbow City on the Atlantic side of the Canal Zone, recollected both the pride and uncertainty he felt on December 31, 1999 as he watched the reversion celebration, which included speeches and concerts symbolically in front of the U.S. Administration Building in Balboa, live on television.

And I remember sitting at the television set and watching the ceremony here in Amador. Watching Torrijos walking around and watching all of the movements and folks...the reporters going into the areas now that were now ours and I am saying, I am sitting here saying, geez. I wonder if this is going to be for the best. I wonder if it will be for the best. I voted for it. I believe it should, but I wonder if

⁴⁵ Pilot refers to the dictionary definition as a person who steers a ship; a person duly qualified to steer a ship. Canal pilots guides ships through the canal. The term has no connection to airplanes.

this will be for the best. And the reporter was interviewing folks. And I was kind of just oh geez. What is this person going to say? And they would ask, “What do you feel?” You know the common question. How do you feel about this and how do you feel about that? You know, I feel great! It’s great this, it’s great that. But there is nothing that really hits me about anything that has been said. Then, he turned to a boy. A little child. Maybe about 7 or 8 years old. And I am thinking, what is he going to ask this child?! What can a child say about this? So he says to the child, “What does this day mean for you?” And I am thinking what can this child say. And he said, “It means from this day on, it means I can get all of the mangos I feel. All of the mangos I want.” I was sitting in my chair and I jumped and I shouted yes! Yes! Because that is really what I wanted the treaty to represent. It meant you could now come in and you could be a part of this is yours, and you are going to get a benefit for it (Personal interview, 2009).

The geographic space now called the former Canal Zone, *la antigua Zona*, belongs to the Republic of Panama, including the mango trees; however, it retains its literal fences as well as distinct political, social, and economic complexities. And despite— or perhaps because of— the fences, the political, social, and economic complexities, the people who lived through it all now too fully belong to the Republic of Panama.

Research Context: Panama Today

Panama is the link between Central and South America, located between Costa Rica and Colombia. The total population of Panama rests just below 3.5 million inhabitants (Census 2010) in a country roughly the size of South Carolina. The national currency is the U.S. dollar, just one example of the close relationship that Panama has maintained with the United States. Unlike other countries in Central America, Panama’s elite has always been an urban elite business class, rather than a land-holding oligarchy (Ropp 1993, 191). Until the 1968 military coup, this small elite business class predominantly of European descent called *rabiblancos* (white tails), controlled the economy and politics (Millett 1996). They saw Panama’s geographic position as its

natural resource, making it the perfect throughway for global trade starting as a critical colonial port, then a railroad, and finally an inter-oceanic canal.

Panama's economy is strong and growing. A construction boom that fueled growth for years has been replaced by canal expansion. According to the World Bank's Global Economic Prospects 2012, Panama will have the highest growth rate in Latin America, due in part to the canal. With seventy-nine percent of voters in favor of the 2006 referendum (Associated Press 2006), the canal is in the midst of a \$5.25 billion expansion that will double its capacity when completed in 2014, that 100th anniversary of the Panama Canal inauguration. The largest element of the expansion project is the construction new locks by an international consortium. Labor rights, however, are a recurring issue. In January 2012, about 6000 workers on the Panama Canal expansion project went on a six-day strike, withheld wages as just one of their complaints (Associated Press 2012).

The current Panamanian president, Ricardo Martinelli, is the son of Italian immigrants. The multi-millionaire owner of one of the largest supermarket chains in the country, Super 99, served as chairman of the Panama Canal's board of directors and Minister of Canal Affairs during the 2006 expansion referendum (Labrut and Padgett 2009). He campaigned for the presidency on the idea of "Cambio" (Change) and is, in fact, changing Panama City. Early in my fieldwork, his administration mandated that taxicabs changed from their random assortment of colors to a standardized yellow. The

diablos rojos or Red Devils, the graffiti adorned public busses⁴⁶ are being replaced by a Metro bus system that went into effect December 28, 2010. Plans are underway to create a subway system, the first in Central America, by 2013. Martinelli wants the new transportation system to propel Panama City into a “first world city” and be the “flagship” of his administration (Rogers 2009). Part of this “first world city” mentality is the renovation of Panama City. A construction boom has remodeled Panama City, particularly the waterfront areas, leading promoters to call Panama City the Miami of Central America and the next South Beach (Brass 2008; Connolly 2007). Trump Ocean Club, which includes more than 600 luxury condominiums priced from \$500,000 to \$12 million, is credited with boosting prices around the city. From 2006 to 2008, the average price for a tower apartment doubled per square foot, about \$140 a square foot to \$280 (Brass 2008). Panama City has four “American style” malls, meaning indoor malls with air conditioning, food courts, and most also have movie theaters. Construction and immigration typify the problems in Panama City. The New York Times touted Panama City as a place “where high rises sprout one after the next and immigrants arrive daily from around the world” (2012). Increased development and population mean increased movement and modes of transportation. “Tranque,” or traffic, is one of the first words non-Spanish speakers learn in Panama City. The increased construction and development not only augments the population but changes and worsens the already congested traffic patterns in a city of sprawl that lacks intentional residential urban planning.

⁴⁶ Diablos Rojos or Red Devils are a common symbol of Panama. For more about the art behind the busses, utility of the public bus system and plan to remove the busses from circulation, see Rogers 2009

The other area of high development in Panama is the former Canal Zone. The modern makeover includes a large mall on the previous site of the Albrook Air Force Base, a National transportation center, open roads formerly off limits to regular Panamanian traffic, a large academic and research area called La Ciudad de Saber (City of Knowledge)⁴⁷, swanky neighborhoods, and overpriced housing. The U.S. Embassy moved from a central and accessible location on Balboa Avenue to a gated, elevated, and multi-building complex in the former Canal Zone⁴⁸, which my cousin refers to as “the fortress.” Not everything, however, has changed in the former Canal Zone. In 1993, President Martin Torrijos, son of populist dictator Omar Torrijos, created La Autoridad Regional Interoceánico (ARI), to plan and execute a strategic plan for the Canal Zone real estate. ARI decided which lands would be commercial, academic, residential, or retained by the government. Although the function of the lands changed dramatically, Albrook, Howard, Davis, Paraíso, Balboa, and all other former bases and neighbors have retained their American-given names and, by extension, their Canal Zone status and history.

American fast food in Panama is ubiquitous. KFC, McDonalds, Popeye’s, Dunkin Donuts, Pizza Hut, Cinnabun, Taco Bell, Subway, Wendy’s, Burger King, and even other chains including Bennigans, TGIFridays, and On the Run gas stations seemed to be

⁴⁷ For more information about Ciudad de Saber, see the website which is available in both English and Spanish: <http://www.ciudaddelsaber.org>

⁴⁸ During my mandatory Fulbright security briefing at the U.S. embassy in October 2009, I experienced a forced lock-down due to a protest outside of the embassy. No one could enter or leave the grounds. I looked out the window of the library where I was told to remain, but the protestors were so far away due to the distance between the gates and the buildings that I could not make out who they were or what their message was. Because of this intentional distance, some protests in Panama City take place in front of the former U.S. Embassy on the more accessible and main street of Balboa Avenue. The building remains unoccupied. Spray paint from past protests are visible on the former embassy’s outer walls.

everywhere. Everywhere except Colón. Interestingly, one man from Colón spoke of McDonald's, so common in Panama City and the former Canal Zone, as a harbinger for positive changes in his city.

McDonalds had been in Panama for some 30 years previous to that. And nobody had ventured to bring a McDonald's to Colón. There just— there was no McDonalds in Colón. And suddenly McDonalds came. And McDonald's— the first McDonalds that was erected, it's there in 13th street... it was built so quickly, as if in a rush we had to get it done. And it became a boom. I know it's, I am sure they are still doing well, but that was very significant. It meant that suddenly that folks that had refused to look at this city were starting to say— seeing a vision that there was something that was gonna happen better down the road. And so, while there is still so much you want to see happening in infrastructure in a city, I am looking at the fact that people are willing to invest (Personal interview, 2010).

Colón, both the city and the province, exemplifies the Black Atlantic, geographically positioned on the Atlantic Coast of Panama and home to the largest self-identified percentage of African descendants at 29.0 percent for the province (Census 2010). When asked about growing up in Colón, Alicia Thorpe exclaimed, “Colón had the best everything!” Colón today, however, lay outside of Panama's economic boom. All of my research participants agreed that Colón used to be beautiful, a real sight to behold. Anthropologist and university professor Francisco Herrera (2003) wrote an article about his 2003 trip to Colón, describing the experience as “una experiencia desagradable sino dolorosa para quienes la conocieron en otras épocas” (an unpleasant, no painful experience for those who knew the city before). While the Panama City side of the Zone is now the site for rich neighborhoods, the national transportation hub, La Ciudad de Saber, and the inter-country airfield among other developments, some buildings on the

Atlantic side of the Zone are neglected and condemned. I sat in ARI⁴⁹'s offices in 2005 and flipped through the books of development plans. Other than the Zona Libre, no development plan existed for Colón. Michael Conniff (1985) too wrote about Colón's former glory and identified the 1950s the time of economic shift in Panama, as the start of Colón's decline.

The deterioration of Colón symbolized the weakening of West Indian culture in Panama. In the late 1930s and early 1940s Colón had vibrated with tourism, music, culture and business. When tourists disembarked in one port, crossed the isthmus by train, and re-embarked in the other, Colón got much of the business. Residents of Panama traveled to Colón for artistic event or shopping. Musical groups on the Caribbean circuit regularly played at Colón. The biggest and most prosperous benevolent societies operated there, with branches in Panama Yet, but the 1950s, all of that changed because political and economic power migrated to Panama, the national and economic capital (136-137).

Although the Free Trade Zone and busy ports anchor the economy of Colón, despite the cruise ship port Colón 2000, unemployment hampers the city. The Colón of today has dilapidated buildings and high unemployment juxtaposed with a dynamic wealthy sector in a small urban space (World Bank 1999). The poverty and damage of the city is striking when compared to the bustling commerce of the ports and Free Trade Zone. Herrera asserts that this contrast, “no deja lugar a dudas acerca de la importancia concedida a los puertos y su desarrollo, mientras que el resto de la ciudad parece una ruina, si es que no lo es ya” [leaves no doubt about the importance attached to ports and development, while the rest of the city looks like a ruin, if not one already]. The November 5⁵⁰, 2011 edition of La Prensa, a daily Panamanian newspaper, quotes President Martinelli as claiming,

⁴⁹ La Autoridad de la Region Interoceánico was created in 1993 to administer the reverted areas of the Canal Zone. It dissolved into the Ministry of Economics and Finance in 2006.

⁵⁰ November 5 is “Colón Day” in Panama

“We are doing a lot for Colón.” His project for improvement outlined the construction of 5,000 new housing units, a plan to paint the greatly deteriorating building, the elimination of wastewaters, and expansion of one of Colón’s ports, Manzanillo. The simplicity of these plans, paint and construction, are quite different from the status of development in Panama City, like the Trump Ocean Towers, and also from the international intellectual space and National transportation center of the former Canal Zone.

The neglect of Colón illustrates the sites of national economic priority in the post-1999 national plan. While Panama’s economy is strong and growing, the wealth disparity in this small country is also strong and growing. Panama is on par with Brazil and right below South Africa as one of the most unequal economies in the world (World Bank 2009). Thirty seven percent of the population lives in poverty (World Bank 2009) and over one quarter of the country’s population lives in the capital city (Census 2010). How people remember their past is, in part, influenced by the reality of their present. Panama today is politically, economically, and socially different from the Panama in which my research participants grew up. These changes are significant in their intensity and disparity.

CHAPTER 5

ZONING WEST INDIAN BLACKNESS:

BORDERS AND BELONGING

Rogelio: I was coming from living in Gatun (Canal Zone). I had been living in Sabanitas and I had already, I think, over the period of time that I lived in Cativa and I lived in Sabanitas,⁵¹ I had given up on that Canal Zone link. I, in fact, was becoming more and more Panamanian I think in my thoughts, in my way of being.

AC: What do you mean by that?

Rogelio: Not feeling (pause) so (pause) I was losing that vision, that everyone else would have had, that the hopes was in the U.S. So I started seeing potential. And I started looking for us to develop options over here. And hoping for the government to really make things work (Personal interview, 2009).

The Panama Canal Zone was a space of American privilege. The Panama Canal Zone provided specific opportunities for the Panamanian citizens who lived there. The Panama Canal Zone was a political affront to many Panamanians. The Panama Canal Zone practiced racial segregation. The Panama Canal Zone was a space of West Indian cultural preservation. That each of these statements is true illustrates the complicated web of privilege and belonging that existed in the U.S. controlled Panama Canal Zone from its beginning in 1903 until the complete American withdrawal in 1999. Although the space is fully Panamanian, the complications for group identity and identifications of Panamanians of West Indian descent persist.

⁵¹ Cativa and Sabanitas are cities in the province of Colón outside of the City of Colón. Cativa is about 8 miles outside of Colón. Sabanitas is about 13 miles from Colón.

I posit Panama after 1999 as a post-colonial nation; however, the period before 1999, in particular the twenty-year transition from U.S. to Panamanian control, continues to influence boundaries of belonging for people of West Indian descent. Asymmetrical political and cultural relationships between the United States territory and the Republic of Panama characterized the period before 1999. The vast cultural and physical U.S. presence, career opportunity hoarding, as well as the various modifications to the Canal Treaties between Panama and the United States had significant influence on the identity, identifications, rights, and opportunities for people of West Indian descent both inside and outside of the Canal Zone. Despite shared Panamanian citizenship— and in many cases direct familial ties—Panamanians of West Indian heritage inside and outside of the Zone did not consider themselves one “community.”

Shared cultural heritage and citizenship did not necessitate group belonging. English language scholarship uses the term “Zonian” solely to refer to the group of predominantly White U.S. citizens living in the Canal Zone (Conniff 1985; Donoghue 2007; Knapp 1984); however, Panamanians use that same term to also refer to the non-U.S. citizens, mostly Black Panamanians of West Indian heritage, that also lived in that space. During American control, space-based “Zonian” belonging, which included both Americans and Panamanians, trumped the Panamanian citizenship shared by Panamanians of West Indians heritage across borders. Ironically, the political protests of Panamanians outside of the Zone aided the mobility of the Panamanian Zonians inside. The change in sovereignty of the Panama Canal Zone took place over a twenty-year period, 1979 to 1999. During that transition, the porous identity borders and community boundaries that had existed previously, shifted. After 1999, Zonian space turned into

Panamanian real estate, which dislocated the space-based Zonian identity and reconstituted the boundaries, social positioning, opportunities, and privileges within newly Panamanian spaces. The change in sovereignty of the Canal Zone from U.S. to Panamanian control altered the land ownership thus the characteristics of the Canal Zone, but it did not dissolve the borders of identity and belonging for the Panamanians of West Indian heritage who grew up before and during the transition.

Citizenship and Belonging

A primary framework for understanding the availability of resources and individual and group rights is citizenship. When combined with race and place as dominant lenses for identity surveying, citizenship adds the unequivocal yet shifting role of the state in shaping identity. Citizenship focuses on the constructions of difference and furthers identity and identifications to explore the processes and agents in the construction of difference, both historical and present, and the relationships between time, space, and the state. Often, theorists of society and culture underestimate the centrality of law as an agent of social change (Nader 2002, 10). Explicitly addressing citizenship exposes identity and identification as processes of Othering by individuals and groups, but also within the context of the state.

Space-based citizenship authors remind us that socially constructed identities are created in charged contexts, or public spheres. As Jane Jacobs (1996,1) notes, “expressions and negotiations of imperialism do not just occur *in* space. This is a politics of identity and power that articulates itself *through* space and is, fundamentally *about* space” (in Gregory 2007, 49. Emphasis in Gregory). The public sphere is “a reflection of

intentional, recognizable political engagement and, hence, a matter of political agency as well as political space” (Garber 2000, 256) in which individuals do not have the sole authority to name their own identities. It is important to note how and when the state shows itself in people’s lives and influences their relationships with other states. Rather than viewing community and belonging as individual choice, the state, and in this case states plural, are also responsible for the erection of cultural, racial, and other identity labels (Malik 1996, 253; Young 1990, 9). The change in sovereignty of the Canal Zone following the 1977 Canal Treaties has distorted the importance of place-based and legally defined identity both historically and in modern times. Although the vital link between identity and space goes well beyond ideological space to include physical terrain or the land itself, law, via the nation-state, has always been a central creator in establishing the rights and responsibilities of all those who live within and around its borders. One often-overlooked feature of citizenship is its construction through relationship with other states. I argue that citizenship does not just delineate the rights of individuals in one particular space of belonging; it also influences access to rights and privileges in other states. The Panamanian citizens in the U.S. Canal Zone were marginalized on one hand, but over time, and particularly during and after the transition to Panamanian sovereignty, gained advantages over other Panamanian citizens because of their relationship with the U.S. state in the Zone.

The label “Panamanian,” particularly when used within conversations about the Canal Zone, raises specific academic inquiries into the framing of belonging and identity concerning citizenship. While my research names “people of West Indian descent” as the primary research group, attention to citizenship and city/area of origin complicates the

processes of identity creation and also led to incongruous identifications. In Panama, two systems of citizenship overlapped from 1903 until 1999. Consequently, issues of individual and group rights and belonging also overlapped. The elastic nature of both citizenship and rights has significant consequences on identity creation and opportunities, especially when the boundaries of each might expand, contract, or change nation-states altogether. Changes in sovereignty over time differently affected the identity framework and opportunities for Black West Indians who consistently traversed these political boundaries. Exploring the links between space and belonging exposes the disparate understandings and shifting boundaries of group membership.

The U.S. run Canal Zone as a space of colonialism contained both U.S. and Panamanian citizens. Legal segregation and wage differentials reinforced the differences in citizenship and race, and consequently created a hierarchical society where U.S. citizens occupied the upper echelons. Panamanian anthropologist Roy Bryce LaPorte (1998) argues that through the Panama Canal Zone,

The Americans created an exclusive and closed system in which their imported culture became the official norm system. This system was reinforced by a rigid asymmetrical power structure, race relations, and stratification system... The American majority, while imposing its laws, minimized and eventually eliminated all opportunities for active political and legal participant of the West Indian minority (107).

Although the second half of this argument is irrefutable- U.S. law unilaterally ruled over the Canal Zone – the first part is not completely accurate. The Canal Zone was selective, but not exclusive. It was not a closed system, but instead a permeable system through which people, and therefore beliefs and ideas, constantly circulated. “Zonians” included more than just Americans; they were also Panamanians. Even though the U.S. Canal

Zone influence spilled outside of its legal boundaries, a separate and sovereign Panamanian state existed concurrently, adjacently, and independently of the U.S. controlled Zone and its laws. Official boundaries defined who belonged and who did not (Anderson 1991, 161) and in the context of nation states, belonging translated into legislation about what rights people possessed or not in their own lands and others. These boundaries mattered not only for implications of spatially or demographically bound identities, but also for unambiguous privileges and restrictions. Further, the American culture of the Zone, although the norm, was not an American “import.” In the relationships between culture and identity, the resources that assist their creation are as important as the product. Culture is a constant practice of transformative meaning making (Bakhtin 1981); thus, the culture of the Canal Zone, with its unique actors and positioning, was not identical to anything that existed in the U.S.

American Zonian culture existed next to, within, in contrast to, and with influence from the West Indian culture of its residents as well as Panamanian culture in which it was geographically enveloped. The Zone’s stable political boundaries carried flexible spheres of influence. With its cross section of citizenships and widely spread influence, the “Canal Zone” was more than just a U.S. territory within the Republic of Panama. The Zone was an imagined geography (Said 1978). As an object of perception, the way in which the Zone, and consequently Zonians, is imagined can change over time and depends on context. In this study of Panama, the issue of identity, identification, and belonging rested between two legal systems. The Panamanian citizens that lived in either nation understood, and continue to understand, their identities and identification in different and important ways, and with relation to their privileges and restriction within

United States as the Land of Opportunity

Like Rogelio, Clarence believed that his best opportunity for personal and economic advancement was to leave Panama for the U.S. Until the 1950s, Panamanian Zonians pledged allegiance to the American flag (Conniff 1985, 146). Unlike Rogelio, however, Clarence did not grow up in the U.S. Canal Zone. He grew up in the city of Colón on the Atlantic coast of Panama. His parents worked in the Canal Zone so he often passed between these two spaces. Despite living in the Republic of Panama, he described his “loyalty” as partly with the U.S. “I knew more about the U.S. legal system and U.S. history than I did about Panama because I grew up around that, you know?” (Personal interview, 2010). Beyond a U.S. social framework, his parents’ Canal Zone employment provided an economic benefit as well. In his own words, they earned “a little more funds” than they would have earned if they worked in Panama. Beginning in 1958, the Canal Zone officially paid all workers, regardless of citizenship, according to U.S. rate (Conniff 1985, 119), which was higher than the local Panamanian pay scale. Many English speaking West Indians who lived in the city of Colón worked, in some capacity, in the American Canal Zone. The “draw, the mystique” that Clarence described, even in the Panamanian city of Colón, was to emigrate to the U.S. They knew firsthand the lack of opportunities for West Indians in Panama and the limited spaces available, at the time, in the Canal Zone. Americans reserved and passed down through generations the lucrative jobs in the Zone. That made the competition for the remaining positions intense. West Indians, although dominant in the city of Colón, faced discrimination and a language barrier outside of the 16 avenues of Colón city in which they were a majority. The prospect of creating an economically rewarding life in Panama seemed improbable. The

United States, despite its reputation for racism against Blacks, held higher esteem in his mind, greater opportunities, and a social structure more akin to that of which he was accustomed. The uncertainty of life in the United States was a better gamble to Clarence than life in the country where he was born and raised.

Even though you really didn't know what the States was, you figure the streets were full of – but compared to Panama, it really was. There was opportunity. There were a lot of kids coming out of high school, and there were just so many jobs in the Canal Zone. And if you go to Panama, you're not getting any wages at all. And if you do get any wages at all, the laws were such that they could fire you in a minute. So going to the States, there was order, there was law, and we grew up in that (Personal interview, 2010).

The “we” Clarence referred to as having “grown up in that” is West Indians and Panamanian children of West Indian descent. His use of the collective pronoun assumes a shared experience of law and order within the West Indian community, irrespective of residence. Hannah Ardent deftly uses a round table as a metaphor for the framing conditions of collective identity practice. She writes, “to live together in the world means essentially that a world of things is between those who have it in common as a table is located between those who sit around it; the world, like every in-between, relates and separates at the same time” (in Yaeger 1996,10). Although raised in different spaces – Rogelio in the Canal Zone and Clarence in Colón – there is an assumption of parallel upbringing that was characteristic of West Indian households. This also implied that Panamanian society lacked this order and law. Consequently, these men, like many others of West Indian descent, grew up believing that their best opportunities existed in the United States. At the time, their Panamanian citizenship offered only a prospect, not assurance, to make a quality life.

As a Panamanian born non-U.S. citizen in the Zone, Rogelio's legal citizenship was Panamanian; however, his English-language schooling via U.S. textbooks and having grown up in the U.S.-run Canal Zone constructed a socialization and orientation toward the U.S. rather than Panama. Clarence felt the pull toward the U.S. due to his familiarity with the American Canal Zone, a lack of job opportunities in Panama, and the "order and law" to which he was accustomed. Other Panamanians of West Indian descent simply knew nothing about Panama, including the Spanish language. "It was like a foreign country," a Panamanian Zonian confessed to me. He did not know the "language or history. We learned U.S. history. Of course we all wanted to go to the U.S.! That's what we knew." Rogelio's understanding of becoming "more and more Panamanian" was first, a break from what was considered normal for West Indians, and second, had little to do with his legal citizenship status, but rather his engagement in Panamanian spaces of belonging. His claiming the government of Panama as his own, wanting "us" to make things happen "here," and choosing Panama as a feasible location for his future, despite having grown up in the Zone, was his right.

Rather than theorizing citizenship as a set of rights for people within a specific geographic space, it is more useful to describe rights as institutionally defined relationships (Young 1990, 25) and citizenship as "a social process through which individuals and social groups engage in claiming, expanding, or losing rights" (Isin 2000, 5). Although unspoken, Rogelio's understanding of self and belonging is directly related to the legality of his claiming Panamanian identity in this space. Re-evaluating citizenship as a territorial based social process for the struggle for rights and responsibilities acknowledges the flexibility of identity, but more importantly the

flexibility of the state to expand and contract, thus influencing the frameworks that shape identity. Rogelio's Panamanian citizenship in an American space during the transition to Panamanian control afforded him opportunities that were not open to U.S. citizens and only selectively available to Panamanians outside of the Canal Zone. After the 1977 Torrijos-Carter Treaties, the Canal Zone stopped being a space of U.S. privilege, and facilitated opportunities for Panamanian citizens specifically in a post-colonial Republic of Panama devoid of U.S. control. Legally, the Zone ceased to exist in 1979; however, because of the twenty-year transition from U.S. to Panamanian ownership, December 31, 1999 is celebrated as the end of U.S. colonialism and the beginning of Panamanian sovereignty in the Zone. The twenty-year transition of the Canal and Canal Zone from U.S. to Panamanian control earmarked certain professional opportunities solely for Panamanian citizens. Panamanian Zonians, and others who had close relationships with the Zone, possessed the physical proximity and cultural socialization to take advantage of these opportunities.

As a direct result of the change in sovereignty, Panamanian Zonians, particularly males who worked for the Canal, advanced professional, economically, and socially in a ways unavailable to previous or later generations of Panamanians of West Indian descent. Without the international pressure and domestic political protests, Panamanian Zonians would have never capitalized on the opportunities that arose due to the U.S. departure. These opportunities were only available to the recipients because they were Panamanian citizens. Due to the different socialization of Panamanian Zonians and their special access to opportunities for advancement, the identity boundaries between Zonians and non-Zonians solidified over time and did not revolutionize in 1999. Only the technical

boundaries of the Canal Zone dissipated that year. The identity borders between Panamanians of West Indian heritage remain.

Lived Zone Experience: Reflections from Inside

The United States carved out the territory comprising the Panama Canal Zone at Panama's 1903 inception. By the time the United States withdrew completely from Panama in 1999, the rest of the world had long since decolonized. Part of the global uproar against the Panama Canal Zone, the loudest protests coming from other Latin American nations, was that it represented a model of overt colonialism that was out of political fashion. The Zone bisected the Republic of Panama physically, economically, and psychologically (Donoghue 2007, 277), creating distinct Zonian identities within its borders and oppositional Panamanian identities outside of them. West Indian identities existed on both sides.

For Panamanians in the Republic of Panama, the Zone represented a political affront, even if some reaped personal and economic benefits. The U.S. enclave in the middle of their country excluded most Panamanians and those that lived and/or worked in the Zone experienced discrimination. Alex, who grew up in the Panamanian interior away from the city, recalled "fear" as his most vivid emotion in his limited encounters with the Canal Zone. In my interviews with Panamanians of West Indian descent who grew up in the Zone, "Zonians", I expected to hear stories of discrimination and discontent, of injustices, racism, anger, and feelings of exclusion. I did not. Most Zonians acknowledged discrepancies based on race and/or citizenship. However, the focus of their narratives was privilege and opportunity. My first experience with this narrative was in

2005 when I met Giselle, a Panamanian woman of Black West Indian descent who resides in Washington, D.C. We spoke privately in her office, located in downtown D.C., close to the Gallery Place metro station. She was completely engaging and gave direct responses to my initial questions in a Caribbean-tinged accent. When I asked about her upbringing, however, she paused and looked nostalgically at a blank space on the wall as she recounted,

I had a happy growing up with my maternal grandparents. I can tell you, to think of it now makes me cry. The Canal Zone was a place that, although all that has occurred, and let me tell you a little bit about what occurred that I know. If you wanted to live there, in the Canal Zone, you had to put in a wish, you know, a request. And you had to have certain amount of children to get a certain type of place to live in terms of houses to live. And I am just bubbling because it was a good place to live at that time when I was growing up. And I saw everything beautiful. In church, in school, communities working together. It was really a good time. I cannot put it anyway else, how it was before 1999. Because everyone was very loving. There was extreme respect from the young people to their elders—very much so. And we looked out for one another. And indeed, education was important. And I want to get outside of the Canal Zone a bit, it was very important even outside of the Canal Zone that the children are educated...Now we aren't talking about people going to college or anything. We are talking about elementary, high school, secondary high school...Coming back to the Canal Zone, it was almost like a curse in buying articles in the Commissary. We had a commissary in the Canal Zone. And of course, the things were cheaper...And like anything beautiful, you had a drastic change. Not just 1999 but even before (Personal interview, 2005).

Giselle spoke of a tight-knit, multigenerational, albeit it selective, community where people had to meet certain criteria in order to live there. The people were educated. Goods were “cheaper”, an unspoken comparison to Panamanian prices. Above all, it was “beautiful”, a word she used repeatedly to describe the Zone. At the time, I assumed her nostalgia stemmed from her being in the United States for over 30 years, and my questions were transporting her back in time and space to her home country, or home U.S. enclave as the case was. Hearing parallel narratives from multiple respondents years

later, however, led me to believe that her nostalgia is not just for Panama, but extends further to a community she loved that effectively no longer exists.

Like their U.S. Zonian counterparts, most Panamanian Zonians of West Indian descent that I interviewed felt lucky and fortunate to have grown up in the Zone. Ricardo Henry, who now lives in the U.S., laughed that his neighborhood was “in the middle of the jungle and fools had the nerve to call it Paradise.” Even still, he expressed having had the “best childhood” growing up in Paraíso, the Spanish word for paradise. He had an allowance where other children were on public assistance and spoke of exposure to different types of food, especially French, due to his mother’s domestic work for an American family. Never confusing his privilege for full equality, he remembered her advice as, “You are Black, but you don’t have to ordinary.” He was fully aware of his racial difference and the disparity between his life and that of White U.S. Zonians, a reality of discrimination unaddressed by Giselle’s memory. Ricardo recounted the uneven quality of food and service in the segregated commissaries and the separate gold and silver roll water fountains that existed through the 1960s. Despite the segregation, however, there was a pride in having grown up in the Zone.

Regardless of which neighborhood of origin, former Zonians repeatedly used certain statements to describe life there. “There was no garbage on the street.” “We all knew each other.” “The bus ran on schedule and it was clean.” “The grass was always cut.” These statements of togetherness, cleanliness, and order are constructed in opposition to the life they interpreted outside of the Zone. It was also an impetus to continue this quality of life in the United States, particularly with regard to a perceived lower quality of life in Panama.

Lloyd O'Meally grew up in the Canal Zone but did not leave for the U.S. He was born to Jamaican parents, lived the first fifteen years of his life on the Atlantic side of the Canal Zone in Camp Beird, which he described as "a typical silver roll community," and attended school in Silver City before moving to Panama City, where he currently resides. His wife, a woman also of Jamaican parents, was born and raised in Panama City. His sister-in-law, Eunice, told me, before I had even met him, that his way of thinking is different "because he grew up in the Zone." The Zone, she explained, while rolling her eyes, "often bragged about being separate but equal," a play on the racial doctrine used to uphold legal racial segregation in the United States. Eunice expressed offense and hurt that Zonians were "uppity" and "didn't want their sons with us because we were from Calidonia⁵² and they were from these big houses in Red Tank and Paraíso⁵³" (Personal interview, 2010). Eunice made direct reference to housing differences and perceived class difference between Zonians and non-Zonian. This struck me as interesting since O'Meally, a Zonian, married Eunice's older sister, a non-Zonian, thus nullifying a hard line between Zonian and non-Zonian fraternization. When I questioned him about this "different" way of thinking, he replied, very simply, that in his opinion, his Zonian upbringing was better than hers in Panama was.

I always thought it was better living on the Canal Zone than living in the areas that I knew in Colón and Panama City. There might've been better apartments, but I lived in an area that was open. I was not cooped up in any special area. I could go out on the street, play with the kids and with my companions, lots of activities. There was more freedom where I lived, and at the time there was a gold

⁵² Calidonia is a neighborhood in Panama City. It was densely populated by West Indian immigrants and the current site of the West Indian museum. According to the 2010 Census, 14.9 percent of the population in Calidonia self-identifies as Black or of African-descent

⁵³ Red Tank and Paraíso were silver roll neighborhoods on the Pacific Side of the Canal Zone

roll, silver roll thing and that was a problem. We went to silver roll schools, but I felt that we got a good education and we even got medical treatment, which wasn't being done in Panama schools. So I am not a hater of the gold roll, silver roll because it caused me harm. I didn't like it because of the discrimination, the segregation, but I also felt that I had access to a good commissary, good stuff, low prices, and good schooling... What we had in the Zone was better than what they had in Panama (Personal interview, 2010).

In this excerpt, O'Meally valued the "openness" and "freedom" of the Canal Zone as opposed to the various West Indian enclaves that existed in Panama City, a situation he describes as "cooped". His living quarters may not have been as nice as what he could have outside of the Zone since no privately owned homes were allowed in the Zone (O'Reggio 2006, 94). Nevertheless, he could freely play with friends, enjoying "lots of activities." The ideas of space and freedom, as well as the perception of housing were contrary to Eunice Mason's version of the Zone. Her mother felt that the Canal Zone was a "prison," although she did not explain what that signified. O'Meally acknowledged the injustice and discrimination of the gold and silver rolls, but also noted that it did not personally cause him "harm." The Canal Zone included its own police force, judicial and prison systems, commissaries, but most importantly, its own citizens and citizen making mechanisms that shared physical terrain, but decidedly excluded Panamanians of West Indian descent. He quickly listed the advantages despite the segregation, particularly medical treatment and commissary privileges. Most importantly, he placed himself comparatively with other Panamanians. He recognized that he had fewer privileges than those of gold roll U.S. citizens in the same Canal Zone space, but firmly believed that his less-than-American experience was better than what his fellow Panamanians enjoyed outside of the Zone's borders.

Despite deep-seated injustices and legal racial segregation that existed through the 1960s, the overlapping themes of space and citizenship convolute identification within the Canal Zone. Many West Indian immigrants preferred the segregated schools in the Canal Zone to the public school in Panama because the instruction was in English, their native tongue and, because of segregation, the teachers and students were largely West Indian. One woman from Barbados commented that she *wanted* her children to attend segregated Canal Zone schools because she “wanted them to have a strong West Indian education.” Residents were willing to accept a lower quality of life in the Zone as compared to (White) U.S. citizens because they felt it was higher than the quality of life of other Panamanian citizens outside of the Zone. Many preferred their English language West Indian-centered lives in the Canal Zone to an uncertain and oppressive situation in Panama. Unlike the racial binary in the United States, Blacks of West Indian descent had another social layer by which they measured their experiences.

Zonians, regardless of citizenship or race, believed the Zone was a privileged way of life. This unified belief in Zone privilege despite injustices and segregation illustrates the concept of governmentality, the state’s project of moral regulation, which gives unifying expressions to differential group experiences within society (Corrigan and Sayer define 1985, 4-5). Governmentality is “a project of normalizing, rendering natural, taken for granted...what are in fact ontological and epistemological premises of a particular and historical form of social order (Corrigan and Sayer 1985, 4). Interestingly, in the Canal Zone, the moral regulation of the U.S. state extended beyond its citizenry to include non-citizen residents, or rather, the moral regulation of the U.S. state served Zonians irrespective of color or citizenship. Residents of the Zone, and even some Panamanians

outside of it, embraced the social norms of differential group experiences, including segregation. This manner of acceptance and embrace exemplifies Antonio Gramsci's notion of cultural hegemony, which asserts that once that state infiltrates people's heads, they willingly follow with their hearts, mind, and actions (1971, 417). The protests against the Zone, global struggles for equality, nor the Civil Right movement in the U.S. sparked similar civil unrest *within* the Canal Zone. There were labor disputes and strikes (Conniff 1985), but no protests based on civil rights or non-labor equity. Non-White Zonians actually saw their personal privileges increase even if their inequality continued. Gramsci makes no direct reference about the power of the state over its citizens, perhaps because colonial relationships inconsistently offered rights to citizens and residents. Rogelio articulated the belief of his Zonian contemporaries, that the goal for Zonians and those with direct access to the Zone, was to emigrate to the United States. Like other Panamanian Zonians, he did not despise, but instead valued, his upbringing in this space, regardless of the segregation. His wanting to stay in Panama, his belief in the potential of Panama, and feeling represented by the Panamanian government was not only unusual for a Zonian, but it consequently made him "more and more Panamanian" even though he, and his Zonian counterparts, were always Panamanian, not U.S., citizens.

Perceptions of the Zonians from Outside

The relationship between the U.S. state and the Panamanian state was not an archetypal colonial one; however, the colonial model serves as a relevant framework for analyzing the relationship between borders and rights. Rights are not only institutionally defined, but they are also territorially based. They can differently apply to anyone within

a specific territory, regardless of citizenship. Like identity, political categories are dynamic. They take on different meanings and functions as they are embraced and deployed (Creed 1999, 225). That West Indian populations lived on both sides of this political divide complicated the structures of identity creation during the Canal Zone's existence and erected issues of belonging and exclusion after its 1999 dissolution. While Zonians felt "lucky" to live in such a "beautiful" place, Panamanians of West Indian descent on the outside did not think so highly of the Zone or Zonians.

Darnell Campbell's parents lived and worked in Panama. His aunt, his mother's sister, worked in the Canal Zone and therefore her children, his first cousins, grew up in the Zone. He grew up in the predominantly West Indian neighborhood of Chorillo in Panama City. Although they were all of the same family and all Panamanian citizens, they lived in two completely different societies. His reflection on the Canal Zone centered on his distaste for his Zonian cousins' belittling what he knew as his and as Panamanian, in opposition to their non-Panamanian Zonian norms. Bitterly, remembered his cousins criticizing everything in Panama during their many visits. He imitated a high-pitched nagging voice as he mimicked them. "Mira esa bandera tan chiquita. La de nosotros es grande. Mira esa patrulla destartalada! [Look at that tiny flag. Ours is bigger. Look at that rickety police patrol car!]" Further, he remembered how he felt about it. "Yo *odibaba* eso! [I *hated* that!]" (Personal interview, 2010). The borders of the Zone cut through family association, despite shared citizenship. Darnell's cousins, Panamanian by citizenship and Zonian by residence, used the pronoun "our" to differentiate their Zonian norm from "that" which is Panamanian. Consequently, shared rights in a shared, albeit segregated, space can become a marker of identity and group membership. Darnell and

his Zonian cousins did not self-identify the same way, nor did they identify each other as alike. He, as a “Panamanian,” resented the attitude of his “Zonian” cousins. The geographic dichotomy of the Canal Zone and the Republic of Panama created various strains of Otherness, even within families, well beyond a national identity binary.

Negative feelings about Zonians of West Indian descent extended beyond family squabbles. Many of the people I interviewed who did not grow up in the Zone had negative things to say about Zonians of West Indian descent, especially the legal racial segregation in which they lived and a perceived attitude of superiority toward other West Indian Blacks. Most agreed that the relationship between Zonians and non-Zonians was more fluid and sociable on the Atlantic side near the city of Colón. The city of Colón was a predominantly West Indian city and was, in many opinions, more developed than Panama City at the time. Although living under the same set of laws as the rest of the country, context mattered. Because West Indians were the majority, residents of Colón did not face the same anti-West Indian or anti-Black sentiment as their counterparts in Panama City. They did live in “special areas” as articulated by Lloyd O’Meally, who experienced life in Panama City firsthand. Nevertheless, Zonians of West Indian descent as a whole held an uncomplimentary position in the everyday discourse of other Panamanians of West Indians heritage, despite individual friendships and relationships. My interview with Alicia Thorpe best captured the emotion with which people discuss Panamanian Zonian identity.

My family emergency interrupted our first interview. As I was leaving her apartment, Alicia began to speak negatively of “the Zonians.” This was relatively unprompted, so it piqued my interest and I wanted to start our second interview right

where we left off. Weeks later, I entered her apartment in the San Francisco neighborhood of Panama City for the second time, taking in the view of the convention center and the city landscape outside her balcony doors. Alicia hurriedly opened the door and introduced me to her manicurist, Pinky, who was in the middle painting her nails. “No, no it’s fine,” she assured me and we set up our interview space in the middle of Pinky’s makeshift dining room nail salon. Although it was awkward for my interviewee to have her nails painted during the interview and a third person in the conversation, Alicia insisted and thus, we resumed. Immediately, I asked her if she remembered talking about the Zonians.

Alicia: Oh lord! My husband was inside here listening. And when you were gone he was totally ticked off! We all talk about Zonians! The Zonians are just regular West Indian people. Had settled on the Canal Zone and because they live in the Canal Zone and they were living like mostly under the American government, they all thought they were better than the other Blacks. The other West Indians, the ones that weren’t living in the Canal Zone. Canal Zone people always thought they were IT. Cream of the crop. But the difference is, in Colón, the Zonians in Colón, yes they had one or two of them that could have acted like that, but they Zonians in Colón acted completely different than the Zonians in Panama. Until today, especially if they come from Parrisssssó. Everyone. No. they did not say Paraíso. Pariisssssssó. Everyone comes from Parrisssssó. They think that they are something special. That is why they have the bunch of class reunions and things. I don’t go to it. I went to a couple of them because my brother in law is from Parrisssssó. So like one day at the class reunion, you go to patronize him because he sell tickets and whatnot. But I don’t like to go to their stuff. I don’t like to be around them! I don’t like to be— even though I have a lot of friends that are from the Canal Zone, but when they all get together, it is like you are an outcast. You are an outsider. You are not a Zonian. You are not from Parrisssssó especially.

AC: Pinky, do you feel that too?

Alicia: She’s not from Parrisssó.

AC: But she is kind of smiling

Alicia: Because she knows that is what they do, right? She knows that is how they go on. Because if you come from the Canal Zone ugh! You should hear them

when they get to together. Oh my god (said in disgust). They do even not act like they are Panamanians. They act like they are (pause) Americans! (Personal interview, 2010).

Alicia spoke just as passionately and disparagingly the second time about the Panamanian Zonians as when I left her apartment weeks earlier. Interestingly, she started by telling me her husband's admonishing reaction to our previous conversation. I spoke on occasion to her husband about increased immigration in Panama and various other topics, making conversation, but he declined a formal interview for my project. Alicia's husband was raised in Panama City, Alicia in Colón. Neither Alicia nor her husband has ever lived in the Canal Zone. They did not know each other in Panama at all. They met and married when they were both living in New York through the strong Panamanian community that resides there, in Brooklyn specifically. Therefore, when she defensively asserted that they "all talk about the Zonians," she implied that these conversation or exchanges of opinions are common among non-Zonians. Zonian versus non-Zonian is the first division she articulated. She not only did not attend "their stuff" but further, did "not like to be around them."

Alicia reaffirmed, however, a distinction between Zonians on the Atlantic Coast near Colón, and the Zonians on the Pacific side near Panama City. Despite the bad family memory, Darnell, too, felt the relationships between Zonians on the Atlantic side and people in Colón "eran como más natural, más representativos de nuestros ancestros" [were more natural, more representative of our ancestors]. Darnell's comment implied that Zonians from Panama City are not characteristic of West Indian people. These same Zonians from the Panama City side received Alicia's full wrath, especially those from Paraíso. She used their "bunch of class reunions and things" as evidence of their

snobbery and feelings of superiority toward “other Blacks”, even though the events were not exclusive since she herself had attended in the past. On an individual and personal level, she has “friends that are Zonians”. Nevertheless, Alicia felt that Zonians purposely made her into an outsider, “even today”, when the Canal Zone as a system no longer exists.

My use of snowball sampling to recruit interview participants further exposed patterns of segregated social networks based on area of origin. People from Colón recommended others from Colón. Zonians recommended other Zonians. Geographic origins, regardless of where people live now, still inform contemporary personal and professional networks within post-colonial Panamanian society. This segregation did not go unnoticed. The true offense for Alicia was the perceived disconnection between people of shared heritage and citizenship. It was not that they lived in the Zone or even that they were exclusive when they got together that bothered her most about Zonians. It was the combination of their being “regular West Indian people” like any other and her final sentence, that rather than share a West Indian identity or even a Panamanian identity, they acted “like they were Americans.” *That* created the divide.

The U.S. position in the Canal Zone, and consequently in the country of Panama, was one of privilege. Geographic origins alone did not separate West Indians; but rather, the absence of group cohesion across shared citizenship and similar circumstances.

Political scientist Ronald Beiner (1995) argues that the mobility of identities causes a fundamental dislocation of citizenship, an idea that is conceptualized as being decisively territorial. Citizenship *can* have geographic boundaries, but not all people within those boundaries are citizens nor are citizens confined to those boundaries. Other

geographically constructed identities, Zonian for example, can transcend racial or national identification. How people define group membership is not always in agreement with how it is perceived by others. Communities are distinguished by the method by which they are imagined, not by official or political boundaries (Anderson 1991, 6). It is not important if perceived differences are factual. I personally have never heard someone from Paraíso say Parissssssoó. Nevertheless, people perceive these differences to be true, salient, and create hostile divisions among people of West Indian descent today. Whereas O'Meally felt that his quality of life was better than what he would have experienced in Panama, he did not make any direct reference to his economic situation in the way others did. Clarence explicitly stated that his parents made more money working in the Zone than they would have made in Panama and Giselle acknowledged that the goods in the commissary were "cheaper."

Later in our interview, Alicia expressed offense to a misrepresentation of Zonian economic status and subsequent social superiority. "They acted like they were so uppity. And they were just as poor as we were." Alicia drew similarities based on shared West Indian history and culture, similar economic disadvantage and, above all, Panamanian citizenship. My research showed, however, that people who were raised in Panama City, and to an extent in Colón, believe that Zonians of West Indian descent deny these basic likenesses in favor of a perceive superiority and most offensive, of Americanness. This circles back to Rogelio who, too, felt that the U.S. was the norm for all Zonians, regardless of citizenship. The complicated and overlapping relationship between markers of citizenship and group belonging – Zonian, Panamanian, American—have led to fractures in spite of perceived and actual commonality. Current segregations are justified

by historical myths. This perceived absence of common socialization despite shared West Indian heritage continues to influence how, when, and where people of West Indian descent interact even today when the territory of the Canal Zone, like the population of West Indian heritage, is completely Panamanian.

Blending Blackness and Nation:
A Community in Transition

People organize their individual and group memberships in various ways. Geography based identities like “Zonian” create fissures in-group relationships based on citizenship. Nevertheless, the differences in opportunities for West Indians in the U.S. Canal Zone and the Republic of Panama guided social and political mobility. Through narratives, an underlying current of the Zone-Colón relationship as being less tense than the Zone-Panama City relationship emerged. However, transitional moments in Panamanian history dramatically affected the demographics of the Zone. The political opposition to the existence of the Canal Zone forced various treaty revisions before finally achieving sovereignty in 1979. Because of the opposition outside of the Zone, Panamanians of West Indian descent within the Zone advanced.

Rogelio grew up in Silver City in the Canal Zone on the Atlantic side. He went to Canal Zone schools and even attended Canal Zone College, a privilege not extended to Black West Indians until 1954, even though non-West Indian (read: non-Black) Panamanians were able to attend since 1933 (O’Reggio 2006, 136). First and second generation Zonians of West Indian descent, like Rogelio, had completely different experiences than their parents or grandparents. Like Mrs. Cox from Barbados who candidly said she “wasted her life coming to Panama,” other immigrants had negative

feelings and experiences in both Panama and the Canal Zone. Ms. Sara Thomas, born in Jamaica, left home at 18 years of age to travel to Panama. She knew nothing about the country and left behind her parents and siblings to join her husband. Although she worked for years as a domestic in the Canal Zone and felt she was financially able to make a good life for herself and her children, one of whom lives in the U.S., she felt her parents lived a better life in Jamaica than she ever did in Panama. If she were to do it again, she “would have gone to Cuba instead.” Mrs. Taylor, born in 1890 in Antigua, joined her father in Panama in the early years of canal construction in 1906. She remembered her father leaving his work in the Canal Zone, frustrated with the constant emphasis on color and the disadvantages because of his Blackness. Eunice Mason’s Jamaican father did not leave his job voluntarily, but rather was fired from his Canal Zone position after participating in a labor strike.

In stark contrast to immigrant narratives that call Panamanians “a damn set of jackasses,” “gente rara [weird people]”, “worth nothing” and refer to White Zonians as “the cruellest bunch of people I ever seen,” Rogelio positioned his professional experience in relation, not in contrast, to that of his grandfather. He alluded to opportunity differences not only generationally, but also because of changes in citizenship, rights, and the politically charged events between the U.S. and Panama during the 1950s and 60s. During our interview he recalled,

When I started working, I was working as an electrician, as an apprentice. I worked in the same areas that my grandfather worked in...the industrial division in Colón. And he retired from the Canal in 1959, went back to Jamaica, lived for several years. And he came back to visit when I was working about 1970? So it’s 11 years later...And when he left there were no Panamanian Black electricians. There were no Panamanian Black machinists. There were no Panamanian anything. They were all helpers. So as I took him on the tour inside the industrial

division and he stood and he looked around and he saw my workshop and he saw what I was doing and he saw the machines I was handling. He stood up and he cried. He cried. He couldn't believe that these changes had taken place in that short a period of time. He had not even envisioned any of these things happening (Personal interview, 2009).

This poignant memory made Rogelio emotional, even in the retelling. The excerpt illustrates the power of qualitative research's dialogical ability to capture this story – one of professional mobility, family relationships, and emotional connection to place—as a complement to the larger state level changes happening simultaneously. Rogelio grew up in the Canal Zone, attended segregated Canal Zone schools, including the Canal Zone College, secured an apprenticeship, and is now a high-ranking and well paid official in the Autoridad de Canal de Panama⁵⁴ (ACP). These experiences are related.

Initially, I was struck by Rogelio's identifications of Black and Panamanian in contrast to his grandfather's Jamaican-ness. His participation in my research was voluntary, but demonstrated that he considers himself of West Indian descent, although never verbally claiming such an affiliation. Further, he wanted to stay and make his life in Panama whereas his grandfather's experience was so negative, he left Panama and returned to live in Jamaica. Family ties were ostensibly his grandfather's motivation to return to Panama and the changes he saw over these eleven years, particularly through Rogelio's work, were unforeseeable and incredible. The changes literally brought him to tears. More than just a story of self-identification, this excerpt exemplifies the processes and timing that allowed Rogelio to not only make explicit claim to his Panamanian

⁵⁴ The Autoridad de Canal de Panama, or ACP, is the name of the non-government organization that runs the Panama Canal under Panamanian control beginning in 1999. Until 1979, it was under full U.S. control and called the Panama Canal Company. From 1979-1999 it was the Panama Canal Commission and under joint U.S. - Panama control.

citizenship, but advance because of it. He spoke first of race and nation, implying the racism and separations of citizenship that he experienced. “There were no Panamanian Black electricians. No Panamanian Black machinists.” He concluded, however, only with a marker of citizenship in asserting, “There were no *Panamanian* anything.” His change of oppositional identity framework from one of racial difference to one based on nationality reflects the political changes of the time. The Canal Zone did not open opportunities to Black Panamanians of West Indian descent as a result of racial desegregation. Opportunities opened because of state- level changes between the United States and Panama that mandated Panamanian inclusion. The outlines for these changes were citizenship, irrespective of race.

In the years leading toward the 1977 Torrijos-Carter Treaties, professional opportunities formerly hoarded by U.S. citizens were slowly opening to Panamanian citizens because of international political pressures and domestic protests. For decades, segregation in the Canal Zone promoted White Americans over everyone else. The landmark *Brown vs. the Board of Education* decision in 1954 enforced *racial* integration, the paramount civil struggle within the geographic boundaries of the United States. In the outlying territories where citizenship and nationality also created differences, racial integration only leveled the opportunity for Black and White Americans.⁵⁵ Panamanian Zonians remained segregated from their Black and White American counterparts in school and housing (Conniff 1985; Westerman 1954), with some exceptions including the Canal Zone College. Citizenship, not race, was the primary marker of difference, and

⁵⁵ For more details about the effects of racial integration in the Panama Canal Zone, see Chapter 4

thus exposed the Panama Canal Zone to the global political activity of the 1950s and 1960s against colonization and for civil rights.

External Pressure, Internal Change

The changes in 1936 and 1955 to the contentious 1903 Canal Treaties (see Table 6) sought to act as a pressure valve to relieve the increased domestic and international protests to improve the relationship between the Canal Zone and the Republic of Panama. The Remon-Eisenhower Treaties of 1955 were particularly representative of the shift in political momentum from a colonial state of trade to a sovereign entity with economic and political power. Because of the treaties, Panama was more than just the host country to a strategic canal. It demanded economic retribution for the canal, as well as economic and political participation from its citizens, including those in the Zone. More than any other treaty, it limited the Zone privileges of Panamanians who worked in the Zone, but lived in the Republic of Panama by revoking their coveted commissary privileges, consequently forcing them to patronize Panamanian businesses. Further, West Indians who had failed to secure Panamanian citizenship, although legal Panamanian residents, lost their official relationship with the Canal Zone. West Indians who never became naturalized Panamanian citizens lost their jobs with the Canal Zone, jobs now earmarked for Panamanian citizens and enforceable by the Panamanian state. Accordingly, they also lost their Zonian residences. This treaty caused a mass departure of Black West Indians from the Canal Zone into the Republic of Panama or, if they chose, back to their Caribbean islands of origin (O'Reggio 2006).

Table 6. Relevant Outcomes of Panama Canal Treaties

1903 Hay-Bunau Villa ^a	1936 Hull-Alfaro ^b	1955 Remon-Eisenhower ^c	1977 Torrijos-Carter ^d
The U.S. has, in perpetuity, the use, occupation, authority, and control of the Canal Zone	End Panamanian protectorate status	The U.S. builds a bridge over the canal (Bridge of the Americas completed in 1962)	The Panama Canal Zone ceases to exist as a U.S. territory
Payment of \$10,000,000 and established annuity of \$250,000	Increase annuity from \$250,000 to \$436,000	Raises annuity from \$436,000 to \$1,930,000	Panama assumes assume full control of canal operations on December 31, 1999
U.S. has a monopoly in perpetuity for the construction, maintenance and operation of any canal or railroad across its territory.	Uphold the right for Panamanian citizens to transit across the Canal Zone	Panama can charge taxes to Panamanian residents and citizens working in the canal and railroads operating inside the Zone as well as outside of it.	Panama becomes primarily responsible for canal defense on December 31, 1999
Allow immigration and access to Canal employment for people of any nationality	Abrogate the right for the U.S. to intervene in Panama City and Colón	U.S. relinquishes certain areas of land to Panama and redefines boundaries between the Zone and Panama	Move the School of the Americas from Panama to the U.S. beginning in 1983
	Recognize joint commitment to canal defense	Beginning in 1957, Commissary no longer sells goods to non-U.S. citizens who do not live in the Canal Zone	U.S. retains the permanent right to defend the canal against any infringements upon the canal's neutrality

^a Data from http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/pan001.asp#art2^b Data from Langley 1968^c Data from Langley 1970^d Data from Strong 1991

In 1958, three years after the Remon-Eisenhower treaty revisions, all Zone workers, regardless of citizenship, fell under the U.S. pay scale (Conniff 1985, 119). All Panamanians who worked in the Zone officially made more money than their local counterparts did, but only Zonians retained their access to cheaper goods. Until the commissaries closed, there was an active black market in Panama for commissary contraband. Limiting physical access to the commissary did not eliminate demand or access to commissary goods. After 1955, Zonians (and military) held exclusive rights as the black market demand for commissary goods increased. Since its creation in 1903, the Panama Canal Zone was a site for political opposition. However, as personal benefits diminished for non-Zonian Panamanians and global politics shifted, domestic and international opposition to the Canal Zone intensified.

The nationalization of the Suez Canal in 1956 and the Cuban Revolution of 1959 placed considerable attention on the issue of Canal Zone sovereignty and the U.S.'s role in Latin America. The Canal Zone flag riots of 1959 (Langley 1970, 350) were a precursor to the more serious riots of 1964, which, in the three-day struggle for autonomy via raising a Panamanian flag in the Zone, left parts of Panama City in ashes, 22 students dead and over 500 hundred injured. Despite the large U.S. military presence in Panama, Panamanian President Roberto Chiari broke diplomatic relations with the United States following the riots. The riots elevated the ideological struggle to one marked by violence, death, and broken political relationships. Although diplomatic relations were restored in 1964, Panama continued to seek a new legislative relationship between the two nations. In 1973, the military dictator Omar Torrijos appealed to the United Nations to pressure the U.S. into a new treaty. Finally, in 1977 the Torrijos-Carter Treaties were signed and

put into effect on October 20, 1979. The 1977 treaties ended the existence of the Canal Zone. While the American Zonians prepared to leave, Panamanian Zonians, and others with direct access to Zone labor, experienced elevated status.

Panamanian Zonians, the majority of which were of West Indian descent, held the physical, educational, and cultural advantages to access these coveted positions, earmarked specifically for “Panamanians” because of the treaties. Above all, Rogelio benefitted professionally, and consequently personally and economically, because he was a male of Panamanian citizenship with familiarity and access to the Canal Zone and Canal-centered occupations during the change in sovereignty of the Zone and the Canal. Echoing Rogelio, Clarence, a Panamanian citizen from Colón who also worked for the Canal, knew that he was able to advance in ways previously unavailable. “Before, in general terms, Panamanians wouldn’t be a manager. You don’t become big time supervisors. Now, the U.S. is gone, so you got that back.” The aperture of professional opportunity after the passage of the 1977 Torrijos-Carter Treaties provided an opportunity for Zonians of West Indian descent to, perhaps for the first time, imagine a future in Panama. The fight of Panamanians outside of the Zone to reclaim the Zone’s sovereignty made these changes possible. People of West Indian descent initially benefitted from these struggles, particularly those who lived in the Canal Zone, because of their West Indian heritage and resulting English language socialization. Most of all, they benefitted from their Panamanian citizenship. Although already Panamanian citizens, the feasible opportunity to advance their quality of life in their country of birth made them “more and more Panamanian”, despite the social distance expressed by their fellow citizens of West Indian descent.

A Community in Flux: Transitions in the Zone

In spite of political camaraderie around expelling the U.S. from the Canal Zone, opportunities in Panama were uncertain. Many lacked faith in Panama's ability to administrate the Canal and the Zone, and still, a strong orientation toward the U.S. existed. Not everyone shared Rogelio's optimism about Panama's future or his or her place in it. In the 1950s, hundreds of Panamanians of West Indian heritage obtained naturalization preferences by joining the U.S. military (Conniff 1985, 124; O'Reggio 2006, 137). After the Torrijos-Carter Treaties, for those unable or unwilling to envision a future in Panama, the Panama Canal Act of 1979 facilitated the U.S. immigration of Panamanian nationals who were U.S. government, Canal Zone government, and Panama Canal Company employees, their spouses and children.⁵⁶ So large was the exodus, Panama had the largest percentage (26.7%) and number of immigrants to the United States during the 1960s and 1970s of any Central American nation. As treaty negotiations became imminent, the number of Panamanian immigrants more than tripled between 1970 and 1980 (Gibson and Lennon 1999). While Panamanian males were poised to take over Canal jobs, Panamanian women were able to capitalize on U.S. immigration through their domestic work with U.S. families. Domestic employees are common in Panama. Many American families took their domestic employees to the U.S. with them and under law, the employees could later send for their families. Lisa Jenkins spent years in Panama

⁵⁶ Public Law 96-70 (Act of 9/27/79) established categories of special immigrants: 1) certain former employees of the Panama Canal Company or Canal Zone Government, their spouses and accompanying children; 2) certain former employees of the U.S. Government in the Panama Canal Zone who are Panamanian nationals, their spouses and children; and 3) certain former employees of the Panama Canal Company or Canal Zone Government on April 1, 1979, their spouses and children. The Act provided for admission of a maximum of 15,000 immigrants, and no more than 5,000 each year.

under her grandfather's care until her mother, who emigrated with the U.S. family she worked for, was able to send for her. Shortly after her arrival in the U.S., her mother, fluent in English from her British West Indian roots, left her employer in search for a better life for her own family in the United States.

Changing Property, Changing Culture

Following the 1977 Torrijos-Carter Canal Treaties, my researched showed that men with access to the Canal jobs with Panamanian quotas stepped into lucrative and well-connected professional networks, were offered reverted land at cheaper prices, and enjoyed higher rates of professional advancement than other Zonians. Even still, all Zonians were able to benefit in various other ways. Homeownership, for example, transformed the culture of the Canal Zone.

Land ownership, a condition previously unavailable for any Zonian, became an option for all residents. Any time a Zonian lost his or her job in the Canal Zone, they had to leave the Zone. U.S. citizens went to the United States. Panamanians citizens like those of West Indian descent were forced to move into the Spanish-speaking Republic of Panama, which was a linguistic, cultural, and social adjustment. After 1977, the Panamanian state created various options for residents to purchase their Canal Zone homes. Not only was this the first time individuals could own (multiple) homes in the Zone, but also the Zone was a space of planned national development. It was an up-and-coming area of the country, a blank canvas for Panama to design its own post-American identity. The revered land of the Canal Zone was not just state property, but rather real estate. The ability to own land in the former Canal Zone dislocated the personal Zonian

identity based on space, not land, and also revolutionized the relationship between the Canal Zone and Panama. Where people live in the former Zone is no longer dictated by color or occupation, but rather by networks and economics. The neighborhoods have retained their original names and implications of privilege, but the residences themselves are occupied by whoever can afford the property plus the cost to change the identical exteriors into personalized homes. The uniform rows of all white standard government houses have given way to lavishly decorated family homes.

The ability to purchase property related to employment and wealth. Ricardo Henry already lived in the U.S. when his father received his purchase option. Although he grew up in the Canal Zone and left for the U.S., he speaks critically of the long-term economic plan of West Indians. His father wanted specifically to know “how much money is in it for me?” Ricardo argues that because Zonians grew up in easygoing society with a “U.S baby bottle and pushed it right in our mouth, we failed to develop how to think on a long term basis.” Ultimately, he asked his father to sign over the option to purchase the house to him. His father did not want to spend the money on “a gamble,” his description of home ownership (Personal interview, 2010). Housing options were also offered to Canal workers who did not live in the Zone. Their base salaries were higher, and thus, the neighborhoods in which they were offered property carried higher land values and higher rental rates. Clarence, who in his childhood could not imagine making enough money to want to live in Panama, had sufficient funds through Canal employment and a large enough discounted rate to purchase multiple homes after the Canal Treaties of 1977. He could have bought a “much bigger” house for only \$40,000 and rented it out, but just “did not have the foresight” they way many of his friends did. His wife “still

kicks him to this day!” Instead, he lives in a small, but comfortable home in Albrook, one of the formerly White and prestigious American neighborhoods on the Pacific side of the Zone.

In my interview with Giselle in 2005, I knew that I wanted to explore the generational differences for Panamanians of West Indian heritage, but I did not yet know that the Canal Zone would form a central component of my project. During our conversation, she often pinpointed 1999 as a turning point without my prodding, so I asked what that meant for her and her understanding of the changes in the Canal Zone.

AC: So what changed after 1999?

Giselle: Something went down. After you live on the Canal Zone, after you retired, you have to move out from the Canal Zone. You could move out and get a little bungalow in the suburbs of Rainbow City. Now this day and age you can buy those houses. My sister is buying a house where my father lived and all sorts of inconsistencies. Sometimes you lease it. Even when I was growing up. And it changes. Different people are coming in that don't give a hoot about how the place is kept. It's a different feeling. The changes are such so that you don't feel that closeness anymore even though people are close in terms of proximity. Things are more closed. You don't see that joyousness that you used to see. At all. The families all together might have a cookout, and that is good. With the neighbors and so forth it is almost like new, but like a graveyard. That's what we see now (Personal interview, 2005).

This whole segment of our interview, about the Canal Zone, was an emotional one for her. She began her story of Canal Zone transitions with the changes in property rights. Previously, if you lost your job or retired, you had to leave the Zone. Now, not only could you buy your home, a family member also had the right to buy your home. Ricardo felt that was a smart family investment. For Giselle, it felt “inconsistent”. The next change, related to property, was the demographic change that has given a “different feeling” to the Zone. Perhaps because no one previously owned property in the Zone, the space

seemingly and equally belonged to everyone. Property is more than a land issue. It entails complex meanings about persons, community, and kinship. More than person to thing, it is about social relations among persons rather than between persons and things. It is about self and definitions of selfhood and about the boundaries between self and nonself, where self is not necessarily individual, but also collective (Verdery 1999, 65, 75). The new residents did not “give a hoot” about how the Zone is kept, a considerable observation for an area that was previously characterized by order, cleanliness, and openness. The loss of space that Giselle mentioned is not physical, but rather emotional. The “closeness” and “joyousness” are so far gone that despite the changes to the homes that make it look “like new”, she likened the post-American Zone, which is now the Panamanian Zone or former Zone, to a “graveyard.” For her, and many others, the Canal Zone was dead.

West Indian Preservation: Looking Forward to the Past

While Zonians and Canal employees received priority purchasing, the Panamanian state sold the former-Zone residential real estate to the highest bidder. The lop-sided state-led development in Panama promoted Panama City to flourish and neglected Colón into a steep decline. In-country migration patterns were no longer in-and-out of the Canal Zone. People traveled, in large numbers, to Panama City to capitalize on the creation of job opportunities. According to the 2010 census, one third of the country’s 3.4 million people live in the capital city. The new property rights in Panama worked within old relations to produce new social dynamics (Burawoy and Verdery 1999, 8) As demographics of the (former) Zone and Panama City changed, the

hubs of West Indian identity and community became more diverse and lost their geographic centers.

Imani Manning, who self identified as being of West Indian descent, grew up in the West Indian neighborhood of Calidonia in Panama City. Although she understands English, she prefers speaking in Spanish. O'Reggio (2006) argued that, "beginning in 1946, Black West Indians started an irreversible trend in acquiring Hispanic values, customs, and cultural mores with ease," (123). I wanted to understand how Imani, as a predominately-Spanish speaking Panamanian of West Indian descent, born in 1950, active in various organizations that address race, education, and women's rights, viewed contemporary West Indian identity in Panama.

AC: ¿Cómo puede describir la comunidad antillana que existe en Panamá?

Imani: La comunidad antillana que existe en Panamá creo que ya se han perdido mucho de la práctica de lo que es la comunidad. Y lo que han tratado un poquito de hacer algo y como que mantener ese espíritu es SAMAAP. Pero también es un poco cerrado. Porque SAMAAP (long pause) hay muchos (long pause) exZonians que tienen otro... (laughing).. que vivieron en otro mundo. Que vivieron en un apartheid. (laughing) Ellos tenían su propio apartheid allí. Y yo siento que realmente ellos nunca entendieron lo que era vivir acá en Panamá. Y algunos que viven en Panamá, todavía tienen su mentalidad lo que era la Zona, y la Zona del Canal, y eso era como otro mundo (Personal interview, 2010).

[**AC:** How would you describe the West Indian community in Panamá?

Imani: The West Indian community that exists in Panama I believe is losing a lot of the community practices. And those who have tried a little to do something and maintain this spirit is SAMAAP (Sociedad de Amigos del Museo Afro-Antillano de Panama). But that group is a little closed. Because SAMAAP (long pause) there are a lot of (long pause) ex-Zonians that have another (laughing), that lived in another world. That lived in an apartheid (laughing). They had their own apartheid there. And I feel that really they never understood what it was to live here in Panama. And some that live in Panama still have their Zonian mentality and that was like another world.]

There is one small museum, a converted church in the Calidonia neighborhood of Panama City dedicated to preserving the history of West Indian immigrants to Panama. Opened in 1980, it, like other Panamanian museums, falls under INAC (*Instituto Nacional de Cultura* or National Institute of Culture). Although the text of this excerpt is loaded with implications about the composition of Black organizations in Panama, Imani's nonchalant and dismissive attitude toward Zonians was much more surprising. My interview with Imani was the first time I had heard a Panamanian refer to other Panamanians as "Zonians." Previously, I had only heard and seen that label linked to Americans in the Canal Zone. While other non-Zonian interviewees expressed confusion or anger about the Zonian acceptance of the racial segregation in the Zone, Imani is the only one who laughed as she described her perception of their racially segregated world. The issue of racial segregation, "apartheid" as she calls it, is the primary criticism of non-Zonians to Zonians. She not only perceived a different mentality, but even further, felt so disconnected from their upbringing and that she called it "another world." Most importantly, she expressed that the leaders of a well-known cultural organization who work to preserve a museum as well as West Indian identity practice in Panama, an organization of which her family member was a past president, did not actually know what life was like in Panama at all. They did not know in the past and still do not today.

In a perspective of shifting contexts, the interpretations of the past can take on ambiguous and complicated meanings, both positive and negative. What results, however, is not a reproduction of the past but instead a contemporary product that is recreated in light of current circumstance (Creed 1999, 224-225). People's sense of identity and personhood required an "us" and "them" (Verdery 1996, 94). After the

change in sovereignty of the Canal Zone, the migrations and dislocations of people blurred the geographic boundaries between “us” and “them” for Panamanians of West Indian descent. Everyone was Panamanian, like before, but now “Zonians” referred to an identity whose physical base no longer existed. Before the Canal Treaties changed the sovereignty of the Zone, the West Indian community was divided over what it meant to be “Panamanian” and how far citizenship extends into group belonging. Even still, there was a sense of shared fate. Transitions have the potential to unite the past to the future through processes of transforming old identities and creating new connections. Theories of transition, however, often remain rooted in an unyielding past (Burawoy and Verdery 1999, 4). Despite a sovereign Zone and the physical blending of people of West Indian descent, the borders of the identity rooted in an unyielding past continue to cut through West Indian group identity.

CHAPTER 6
REDEFINING PANAMANIAN BLACKNESS
THROUGH THE 2010 CENSUS

After reading my consent form— an academic protection that does not exist in Panama— and consequently better understanding that my project centered around Panamanians of West Indian heritage, a professor from Colón quickly told me before we began our interview that although he speaks some English, “Yo no soy *chombo*! Soy *comecoco*,” meaning he is not of West Indian descent; he is colonial Black⁵⁷. My research focused on people of West Indian descent, but the reality of a two-tiered Panamanian Blackness with its perceived separate and culturally distinct parts, was a salient identity marker for many informants. This difference was particularly voiced by people, such as this professor from Colón, who consider themselves Black and/or of African descent, but decidedly *not* of West Indian descent. They wanted this distinction to be unequivocal.

Black inclusion and exclusion – the inclusion of Spanish speaking *coloniales* and the exclusion of English speaking West Indians— were part of Panama’s national identity building. That the United States carved its own territory in the middle of the country, the Panama Canal Zone, made it easier to construct a complementary and oppositional

⁵⁷ Colonial Black refers to Blacks who arrived in Panama with the Spanish during colonial times and have no acknowledged connection to the waves of West Indian immigrants during and after the construction of the Panama Railroad and later the Panama Canal.

Panamanian national identity to that which existed in the U.S. territory. However, having a diverse Black population among the Panamanian citizenry complicated not only national “Black” identity but also in later years, the idea of a mixed nation, the label *mestizaje*, and what defined “afro-descendiente” or African descendant in the May 2010 census.

The State and the Construction of Difference

Modern notions of difference are rooted in colonialism/imperialism where national identity seemed central, but the concept of racial difference was a larger factor. The social and political processes of European/U.S. nation building was simultaneous with the creation of a racialized national identity, constructed in opposition to the identities of colonized peoples (Said 1978). Attempts have been made to construct post-modern models of alternative place-based citizenship, such as urban citizenship (Beauregard and Bounds 2000; Garber 2000; Isin 2000; Sassen 2000) or transnational citizenship (Smith 1999). However, nation-states themselves have developed into sites of cultural heterogeneity (Inda and Rosaldo 2001, 20) that bind identities in various ways, but usually within specific geographic spaces. The concept of cultural citizenship speaks directly to the role of the nation-state in the construction and constriction of identities that may transcend racial, but not geographic, boundaries. It helps examine how subordinated groups struggle for national inclusion (Flores and Benmayor 1997; Ong 1996).

Panama complicates racial discussion in various ways. In 1903 with the help of the United States, Panama separated from Colombia and became an independent nation, though under U.S. colonization/imperialism. The U.S. run Canal Zone was created in

1903, simultaneous with Panamanian independence, and existed as a U.S. territory under U.S. laws until 1979. Between 1904 and 1914, approximately 200,000 Black West Indians arrived to build the Canal in Panama, adding to the existing population of Black West Indians who helped build the Panama Railroad in the 19th century. The United States did not colonize the entire country of Panama, but rather carved out a bisecting stretch of land. Although the ramifications affected Panamanian society as a whole, as well as Panama's governing bodies, the United States technically held jurisdiction only within the narrow confines of the Panama Canal Zone itself. The idea of a binary Black and White U.S. racial classification system existed not just in ideological contrast to Panama's Latin Americanist construction of *mestizaje*, but also in direct physical contact. The Canal Zone system juxtaposed a binary Black-White racial/citizenship system with the idea of a racially mixed nation. Human mobility, however, defies borders. Many English speaking Black West Indians worked for English speaking Americans, but language and country of residence divided the group and consequently shaped rights. Some lived in the U.S. controlled Panama Canal Zone, while others resided in the Spanish speaking Republic of Panama (See Chapter Five). These distinct ideologies constantly collided through the porous borders. Neither the colonizer/colonized nor Black/White binaries fit in Panama because there was no singular or cohesive Black identity in Panama and the struggle for belonging played out on various borders during various historical periods (Craft 2008, 125).

Political theorist David T. Goldberg (2002) contends that central to the constitution of the modern state is "the power to exclude and by extension include in a racially ordered terms, to dominate through power and to categorize differentially and

hierarchically, to set aside by setting apart” (9 in Craft 2008, 125). Such was the case of both the U.S. and Panamanian states. The Americans unjustly compensated Black West Indians from a “silver roll” while White Americans were paid from the “gold roll” (See Chapter 4). Also, because the Zone was the United States, legal racial segregation persisted well beyond the 1954 *Brown vs. Board of Education* decision due to a lack of enforcement, thus enabling harshly unequal social conditions for Black West Indians living and working in the U.S. territory. Striking workers who protested the racism, unfair pay scale, and/or working conditions were fired, evicted from the Zone, and often blackballed from further Zone-related employment (Conniff 1985). As Canal Zone pay rates, albeit asymmetrical, were better than Panamanian wages, any sign of social or occupational dissent carried negative economic and residential repercussions. Things were similarly difficult for West Indians who lived outside of the Zone in Panama. “They were determined to get us out of their country, back to where we came from. It was like there were two countries. One was Panama and the other was the Canal Zone” (Gonzalez 2000, 152). The Panamanian government revoked, limited, and reinstated West Indian citizenship during the 1940s, which directly affected access to economic and social resources in Panama for roughly 50,000 people left without a legal national identity (Conniff 1985, 99; O’Reggio 2006, 103). Although the Panamanian government did not enforce this law via deportations, it created fear and mistrust between the Black West Indian community and the state, and also between the Black West Indian community and “Panamanians” or “Latins,” the label many interviewees used to refer to non West Indian Panamanians. The state influences who belongs and who does, but the very boundaries of belonging can change over time.

As described by Renee Craft (2008), during Panama's twentieth century national identity building, Panamanian Blackness evolved through a tug-of-war between "West Indian and Latino ethnoracial politics"(125). This struggle is what Arlene Torres and Norman Whitten (1998) would describe as *negritude* versus *mestizaje* forms of nationalism (Craft 2008, 125). More than just a Latin American concept of *mestizaje*, Panama's racial classifications were also influenced by the internationalization of Jim Crow and the U.S.'s imperialistic relationship with Panama. The United States significantly contributed to the processes of race and nationalism in the republic (Craft 2008, 125). Panama's national identity is shaped in part by its geographic and ideological border with the United States via the Panama Canal Zone. States—in this case both the Panamanian state and the U.S. state — exert a timeless flexibility to expand and contract identity-based rights and responsibilities. Thus, the modern conception of national identity is not only institutionally defined and racially elastic, but also territorially based. Its boundaries and borders, while contingent and flexible, create human inclusions and exclusions.

Mestizaje as National Identity

Scholarly concern with *mestizaje* as ideology has tended to privilege two assumptions: first, that nationalist ideologies of *mestizaje* are essentially about the creation of a homogenous *mestizo*, or mixed, future, as opposed to subaltern construction of the nation as racially and culturally diverse. Second, it assumes that *mestizaje* as a nationalist ideology is an inclusive process in which everyone is eligible to become *mestizo*. In reality, it is in fact exclusive because it marginalizes Blackness and

Indigenusness, while valuing Whiteness (Wade 2005, 240). Despite the over arching rhetoric of *mestizaje*, Blackness is still something separate from the mainstream and, further, it is splintered. My research participants, the official census forms, and discussions organized by el Consejo Nacional de la Etnia Negra [National Council of Black Ethnicity] spoke clearly of two distinct Black identities: *antillanos*/West Indians/*chombos* as people of West Indian descent, and *costeños/coloniales/comecocos* as Spanish speaking Panamanian Blacks unassociated with West Indians immigration.

In an interview with a woman who is not of West Indian descent, Aleida, I asked about her family history and specifically, what she thought of the question on the upcoming May 2010 census: “¿Alguna persona de este hogar se considera negro (a) o afrodescendiente? [Does anyone in this home consider himself Black or of African descent?] In our multiple interactions, she often commented that her skin is darker than mine, but because she has straight “chola” hair and is from the interior, I could be Black but she is not. Through my question, she was thinking aloud, describing how she would answer the census question, and where she fit into this larger conversation of Blackness and Panamanian identity. She began this section remembering words of an unidentified politician. She recalled, “Un político dijo hace mucho años que en Panamá nadie puede tener discriminación racial porque todos llevamos su negro por dentro [Many years ago, a politician said that no one can claim racial discrimination in Panamá because we all have some Black in us]. Our subsequent conversation raised layers of issues about physical Blackness versus social definitions, *mestizaje*, and national identity, all through this lens of the census question, which relates the conversation back to the role of the state in identity making and the claiming of cultural and rights.

AC: Pero si es verdad lo que dijo ese político que todo tiene un poco de negro... Porque la pregunta dice si alguien en ese hogar es negro o afro descendiente. No cree que hay gente que dice ah pues. No soy negro pero soy afro descendiente, entonces: Sí. O cree que la gente va a decir no soy negro entonces: no.

Aleida: No soy negro pero probablemente en mi familia hay negros. Porque yo no soy afro descendiente pero en mi familia por parte de mi papa, hay negros. No son afroantillanos pero son negros.

AC: La pregunta dice negro o afro descendiente. Y cuando la gente diga que sí, hay otra pregunta por decir africano, antillano, colonial—

Aleida: Ay bueno. En este caso sí. Exacto. En mi caso muy particular, yo creo que sí. Negros coloniales.

AC: Ok bueno. Pero cuando le toque su puerta para decir esa pregunta, ¿usted va a decir que sí soy afro descendiente o va a decir que no?

Aleida: Ehhhhhh. Afro descendiente, sí? (answers slowly and raises voice like a question). Sí soy afro descendiente. Porque si se observa mis características físicas... (voice trails off)

AC: Pero es auto—esa es la cosa porque la persona que está haciendo el censo no puede decir, no. Sí! Usted (Aleida laughing) usted es afro descendiente! yo lo voy a cambiar!

Aleida: Sí. No. En el caso personal le voy a decir que sí soy afro descendiente porque visiblemente se ve que yo no tengo facciones de blanca ni de indígena. Mis facciones son negras. Yo no puedo decir no, yo no soy afro. Sí soy afro descendiente. La familia de mi padre es negra. Sí yo sí soy afro descendiente. Sí (said in a questioning, uncertain tone). Realmente sí.

AC: Vamos a ver que salga porque yo creo, y es mi opinión personal que más gente va a decir que no.

Aleida: Pero es que aquí en Panamá nadie puede decir que no. Es que todo tiene—es que nadie tiene establecido de donde viene. En mi caso muy particular, mis tías son rubias con ojos azules. Las hermanas de mi mama. Pero en el caso de mi papa, su familia es negra, totalmente negra con el cabello liso. Y yo que soy una mezcla de todos ellos.. nadie puede decir no soy porque si somos! Tenemos algo de negro, algo de indígena, y desafortunadamente, algo de español. Pero si lo tenemos todos. Todos. La nariz, los ojos, el cabello, o lo que sea, pero todo lo tenemos. Hasta las personas que a veces son muy muy blancas, al final tiende terminar que tiene parientes negros. Entonces nadie puede decir no, yo no soy. Pero no sé. Ojala que la gente sea suficientemente inteligente para no dejarse llevar por si eres negro, eres blanco o sea no? Simplemente hablen de nuestra

tradición y de nuestra herencia. Yo creo que a lo largo es importante. Lo que somos realmente es ésta. Una mezcla.

[**AC:** But if it's true what that politician said that everyone has a little Black ... Because the question asks if anyone in this household is Black or African descent. Do you believe that some people say ah. I'm not Black but I am of African descent, then: Yes Or think people will say I am not Black then: no.

Aleida: I am not Black but probably there are Blacks in my family. I'm not of African descent but in my family by my father, there are Blacks. They are not West Indian but they are Black.

AC: The question says Black or African descent. And when people say yes, that's another question for the African, Caribbean, colonial-

Aleida: Oh good. In this case, yes. Exactly. In my very particular case, I think so. Colonial Black.

AC: Ok good. But when they knock on your door, are you going to say yes I am of African descent or will you say no?

Aleida: EHHHHHH. African descent, yes? (Slowly answers and raises a question like voice). I am of African descent. Because if you look at my physical ... (voice trails off)

AC: But that's the thing because the person doing the census cannot say no. Yes! You (Aleida laughing) you are of African descent! I'm going to change your answer!

Aleida: Yes No. I will say yes because I am visibly of African descent in that I have no factions in White or Indian. My face is Black. I cannot say no, I'm not African. Yes, I am of African descent. The family of my father is Black. Yes I really am of African descent. Yes (said in a questioning, Uncertain tone). Actually yes.

AC: Let's see what happens because I think, and it is my personal opinion that more people will say no.

Aleida: But here in Panama is that nobody can say no. Everyone has everything-it's that no one has established roots. In my case, my aunts are blond with blue eyes, the sisters of my mother. But in the case of my dad, his family is Black, completely Black with straight hair. And I am a mixture of all of them....Nobody can say I'm not because yes we are! We have some Black, some Indian, and unfortunately, some Spanish. But yes we have it all. Everyone. The nose, eyes, hair, or whatever, I have it all. Even people who are sometimes very very White, tend to have Black relatives somewhere. Then nobody can say no, I'm not. I do

not know. Hopefully people are smart enough not to get carried away if you're Black, you're White or not? Just talk about our tradition and our heritage. In the long run, I think that really is important. What it is we really are. A mixture.

This small excerpt from our interview gave a lot to unpack. Aleida began by saying, “I am not Black but *probably* there are Blacks in my family. I'm not of African descent but in my family by my father, there are Blacks.” Here, she distanced herself from being Black or of African descent while simultaneously acknowledging Blacks in her family on her father's side. Her separation first of self and family, and then of Blacks and African descent is interesting given that her initial quotation of reference stated that all Panamanians have some Black in them. While she did not confirm or deny her agreement with the politician, in this part of our conversation, she initially did not associate *having* Black family members with *being* Black or of African descent. This changed when the conversation moved from abstract national identity to individual genealogy. In Panama, there is no single Black community and despite rhetoric of racial mixing (*mestizaje*), there is no palpable concept of shared African heritage among or between cultural groups. Aleida continued by making a clarification as to the type of Blackness in her family. She asserted, “They are not West Indian but they are Black.” In a December 2009 meeting in Colón, a province where 29% of the population identified as Black or of African descent (2010 census), to discuss the most widely desirable wording of the census question, the Colón resident attendees were strongly in favor of including the word “Negro,” although admitting that many in Panama shun that word. To be “Black”, for many Panamanians, is synonymous with being of West Indian descent, which both contradicts and reinforces the theoretical concept of *mestizaje*. Whereas most interviewees described “chombo” as meaning Blacks of West Indian descent, Aleida

defined the term by language and employment. To her, “chombo” means “morenos que hablan inglés y trabajan de la zona de canal [dark skinned people who speak English and work in the Canal Zone]. She implies, but never states, that she is talking about a “West Indian” experience and makes no direct reference to Blackness at all. Soon thereafter, however, she talked about her physical appearance as placing her within Blackness because she has physical traits that are not White or Indigenous. Genealogy did not make her Black, but rather externally identifiable physical traits. She did not identify herself as Black initially, despite having Black family members, but changed her mind after she considered how anonymous others could possibly identify her. When I suggested that most people would answer “no” to the census question and deny any African heritage, Aleida took a more assertive tone and preached a message that not only contradicted her initial response, but also is illustrative of a particular and common understanding – and confusion— of mestizaje as a homogenous national racial identity.

In the final portion of the excerpt, she returned to the idea of the politician, that everyone has some Black in his/her person. She did not use this in the original context of racial discrimination or the role of institutions, but instead to insert Blackness as an element of what is Panamanian. Rather than simply discuss herself as an individual, she used the pronoun “our”. Using the inclusive plural, she evoked a homogenizing racially inclusive embodied sense of mestizaje in which all Panamanians have everything inside of them and that is what makes up “our” culture and heritage, and consequently, our national identity.

Peter Wade (2005) points out that many Latin Americanist scholars, including anthropologists, tend toward viewing mestizaje as a nation-building ideology rather than

a lived process (242). This body of literature exists in contrast to studies about the U.S. and other non-Latin American nations where *mestizaje* was not adopted as a nation-building trope. On the contrary, the U.S. was, and to an extent still is, discussed in binary racial terms of Black and White as the national ideological foundation. The recent literature about mixed-race people indicates a change in focus toward a lived individual and group experience of mixed-ness but does not occupy the space of *national* identity foundation as it does in Latin American scholarship (Wade 2005).

The trope of *crisol de razas*, or melting pot in English, is a popular metaphor for Panamanian *mestizaje*, despite academic works that painstakingly prove the contrary (Porrás 2005). Aleida's assertion is informed by Panamanian national racial discourse. On November 19, 2011, *La Prensa*, a popular Panamanian newspaper, ran an article entitled "Panamá, tercer país con más jóvenes afrodescendientes en América Latina [Panama, country with the third most youth of African descent in Latin America]." Using reported census data, the article placed Panama (9%), behind Brazil (43.7%) and Colombia (11.1%) as having the largest youth populations of African descent. Costa Rica (2.2%) claimed fourth place (Garrido A. 2011). While some readers' comments, located directly below the article, questioned the exclusion of Caribbean countries such as The Dominican Republic and Cuba, others debated the inclusion of the non-Spanish speaking Caribbean nations, whose percentages of African descent populations are much higher, within the Latin American discourse. One comment, however, echoed and mirrored the tens of comments I read during the census campaigns. Over the course of several months, I read articles and the related commentary about the (then) upcoming census question of African descent. Comments ranged from anger at highlighting Blacks

from everyone else in the nation, confusion about why only African descendants and not the other groups that also reside in Panama —Chinese in particular—, to dismissive wondering what is the point of counting African descendants. Mostly though, comments invoked the melting pot metaphor of an all-inclusive embodied national identity based on the regionally accepted idea of *mestizaje*. This response to *La Prensa*'s November 19, 2011 article is succinctly emblematic of that attitude.

El Sr. Weeks debiera comprender que lo que caracteriza a América Latina es el mestizaje. Un afrodescendiente puede ser, y de hecho frecuentemente es, un eurodescendiente, y/o amerindio. ¿Por qué habrían esos individuos de calificarse como uno u otro? Me parece que el empeño en catalogar a ciudadanos por grupo étnico es una costumbre alienígena importada de Estados Unidos que resulta impráctica, divisiva e imposible de aplicar en sociedades que como la nuestra, son verdaderos crisoles de razas.

[Mr. Weeks should understand that what characterizes Latin America is miscegenation. An African descendant can be, and indeed often is, a European descendant and / or Amerindian. Why would these individuals want to identify themselves as one or the other? I think the effort to categorize people by ethnicity is an alien custom imported from the United States that is impractical, divisive and unenforceable in societies, like ours, which are true melting pots]

The respondent first addressed the comment in the article made by the secretary of the National Council of Black Ethnicity, Ricardo Weeks. In the article, Mr. Weeks commented that 9% is low for Panama and he believed there are pressures for youth *not* to identify as afro descendientes, including discrimination. The respondent continued, noting that being of African descent does not mean no other heritage is present and questioned why someone of mixed heritage would *want* to identify himself/herself as any one part of this mixture. In the melting pot theory of Panamanian identity, the idea that Black identities have been and continue to be marginalized as identity components and even more so as final products, is literally foreign. This respondent attributed

categorization as an imported idea from the United States, not something native to Panama, and reinforced that Panamanian society is a “true melting pot.” The respondent implies that once melded, cultural identities cannot be singularly extracted.

Despite efforts such as those of Aleida and the anonymous commenter, mestizaje cannot and is not simply a “melting pot” process of racial identities. Scholarly expressions of mestizaje identity actually harbor within themselves a tension between sameness and difference, rather than being homogenizing expressions as articulated by Aleida. The very idea of mixture depends on separate parts. Mestizaje relies fundamentally not only on the idea of a normalized Whiteness, but also on separate notions of Blackness and Indigenusness (Wade 1993, 24, 64). The idea of a mestizo nation needs the image of the Others, most often Blacks or Indigenous. The concept of mestizaje as an all inclusive ideology of exclusion recognizes this to some extent in the possibility of inclusion. You first have to be different in order to be potentially included. However, it fails to recognize the dependence of the ideology on the excluded other (Wade 2005, 243).

For this reason, it is important to understand the state as a series of compromises and negotiations with moving parts, rather than a monolith. Who belongs and does not belong within a national context of identity and citizenship changes over time. The state is able, through the politics of difference, to marginalize and homogenize communities differently, but to the same end—selective inclusion and exclusion, just like the concept of mestizaje itself. No identity, neither group nor individual, is static. What it means to be Black in Panama has been contingent not only on historically available identities and the spaces and contexts in which identities are created, but also on state sanctions and the

shifting boundaries of citizenship. In Panama, the concept of Blackness altered at the country's very inception. It continues to shape interactions and identifications today.

Blackness within Panamanian Mestizaje

I attended a May 2010 mass to commemorate Black Ethnicity Month [El Mes de la Etnia Negra] in la iglesia de la piedra [Church made of stones], located in the Rio Abajo section of Panama City. Two women behind me were talking about the meaning behind the month and how it tries to incorporate the various Black ethnicities, even though the mass was located in a historically West Indian neighborhood. As members of the sponsoring organization, la Fundación Bayano, walked down the aisle in their kente vests, white shirts, Black pants, and hats and bow ties for the men, one woman remarked to another, “oh yo soy negra latina. Ellos son de hablan inglés. [I am Latin Black. They are the kind who speaks English.] This divide of Blackness along lines of Hispanic culture in opposition to English language dictates boundaries of cultural citizenship.

The flood of Black Anglophone laborers from the West Indies added a linguistic layer to the politics of difference within Panamanian national boundaries. Whereas “colonial” Blacks before 1903 were not seen as part of Panamanian mestizaje, the influx of English speaking Black men immediately thrust coloniales not only into the scheme and ideas of racial mixing, but indeed into the myth of the nation building processes. Group identity is elastic and historically contingent. Once this large Anglophone Black population arrived in numbers, coupled with the White Americans who set up the Canal Zone, you no longer had to claim Whiteness or mixedness to be considered Panamanian. Because they were involved in the ideological process of mestizaje, even if not an

embodied process, “the state viewed Afro-Hispanics as willing to assimilate and as a result, they were not considered a threat to nation-building project” (Watson 2009, 234). Their inclusion created a Panamanian-born solidarity with non-Black Panamanians. A second tier of Blackness, of Caribbean English speaking foreign Blackness, elevated the status of Spanish speaking Blacks. Also at Panama’s 1903 independence, the United States carved out the Panama Canal Zone which cut through the middle of the country. That these White Americans and Black West Indians spoke English stood in direct contrast to the Spanish-speaking citizens of all races who lived in the Republic of Panama. Laws on both sides of the Canal Zone reinforced these differences in the Black populations. Most notably in Panama, the 1941 Panamanian constitution stripped English speaking West Indians and their children of their Panamanian citizenship. In the Canal Zone, in the 1950s, the U.S. government decided to change English language Black schools in the U.S. Canal Zone to Spanish-language Latin American Schools rather than racially integrate non-U.S. citizens. The 2010 census campaign has exposed some of the challenges of maintaining a foreign-based Black identity in a “mixed” nation.

The idea that there are distinct Black populations in Panama after over 100 years of existence, corroborated by the labels on the census form, both contradict the point that Blacks are and have always been included in Panamanian *mestizaje*, but also feed and reinforce the exclusionary point of *mestizaje*. Only because there has been a retention of Black populations and Black identity do we know that they were not included in this alleged national mixing project. They have not mixed seamlessly into a racially homogenous Panama. During my interviews with people of West Indian descent, most defined *mestizo* as a mixture of Spanish and Indigenous, few included “colonial” Blacks,

but none included West Indians in their definition of a mestizo. Neither group of Blacks is in fact represented in “mainstream” mixed Panamanian identity.

Watson (2009) argues that “Afro-Hispanics” in Panama reflect the process of mestizaje and are culturally a part of the Panamanian nation. As a result, their racial and ethnic differences were de-emphasized and their allegiance to the nation was stressed. For them, nationality, mainly language, trumped their Blackness. Paul Gilroy (1993) agrees by noting, “The emphasis on culture allows nation and race to fuse. Nationalism and racism became so closely identified that to speak of the nation is to speak automatically in racially exclusive terms” (27). Therefore, the mestizaje discourse emphasized cultural affiliations and, by extension, a sense of nationality that superseded any specific racial identity (Watson 2009, 235). To be culturally Panamanian did not include any racial exclusivity. To be Black, however, was to be West Indian.

These groups of Blacks were not included in this national racial mixing project as evidence by their seeing themselves as distinct. Neither form of Blackness is part of mainstream Panamanian mestizo identity, but further, they have not melded into a singular Panamanian Blackness. The re-creation of Blackness in a nationalist discourse of inclusion and exclusion is necessary to maintain hierarchical distinctions of race (or class or region). These cultural or racial distinctions would disappear if the process of mestizaje were really to reach its ideological goal of embodied racial or cultural homogenization. These distinctions are the foundation for exclusionary racism, but, as identities are constantly shifting with historical contexts, they also theoretically represent possibilities of inclusion (Wade 2005, 245). The possibility to be included can only exist if first you are excluded.

Benedict Anderson reminds us that communities are not distinguished by their falsity or authenticity or even their geographic boundaries, but by the method by which they are imagined (1991, 6). The United Nations imagines a global African descent population and set out to count the self-identified members of this diasporic community, through national censuses administered by various nation states. Every census, though, occurs in a specific context with its own histories and historically contingent identities, as well as a political space (Hillygus et al. 2006, 30).

Social identities, such as race and national identity, are unstable points of identification because they are not created in neutral spaces and they are not static. They are contingently positioned within discourses of history and culture (Garber 2000; Hall 1990, 395; Malik 1996; Young 1990) and maintained through an Althusserian notion of governmentality in which society consents to its own subjugation (1971). For example, the one-drop rule in the United States adds its own governmentality to Blackness, working with the consent of both Blacks and non-Blacks together. Society can identify an individual as Black, and treat them accordingly, despite that individual's self-identification, illustrating again that group identity, chosen or imposed, precludes individual association (Young 1990, 9). Aleida's audible thought process—first identifying herself as not Black then changing her mind based on how people might identify her—is an example. The Panamanian census of May 2010, through the financial support of the UN, attempted to count individuals within an imposed group identification, through third (the Panamanian state) and fourth (census enumerators) parties. The campaign for the Panamanian census did not address the processes of the state or

historical events that led to perceived difference between and among “afro-descendientes.”

Although the workshops and talks given by members of the National Council of Black Ethnicity felt like Panamanian history lessons, they too often spoke of the different histories of West Indians and coloniales. Because these two identities, antillanos and colonial, resonate with people, Cecilia Moreno, a member of the National Council of Black Ethnicity and President of El Centro de la Mujer Panameña [Panamanian Women’s Center] foresaw this issue of individual identification with Blackness amid mixing without explicit reference to shared diasporic history. During our interview she did not object to the question that specifies Black ethnicity. She, instead, expressed dissent toward the word “Negro” in the first question, “Alguna persona de este hogar se considera negro (a) o afrodescendiente?” Using biological and cultural arguments she explains:

Creo que el término negro, no es el término que mejor te identifica con tu identidad, porque nosotros hemos perdido a través del— si tú dices ‘yo soy negra’ eso no te remite a ti a tu pasado, no te da una historia de dónde tu vienes, no te da una relación con una herencia cultural y una herencia biológica, una descendencia biológica. Que lo que más se acercaba a eso era el concepto de afro descendiente, porque nos relacionaba con un origen geográfico histórico que era África y con una población muy particular, étnicamente particular que es la población africana. Entonces, el término general debía ser afro descendiente.

[I believe that the term Black is not the term that best identifies you with your identity, because we have lost through— if you say ‘I am Black’ that does not refer to your past, does not give you history of where you come, does not give a relationship with a cultural heritage and biological inheritance, biological offspring. What speaks more to that is the concept of African descent, because we are associated with a historic geographic origin was Africa with a specific population, ethnically particular to the African population. Therefore, the general term should be African descent]

One of Cecilia's main objections was the use of "Black" in the question. She was not alone. In public meetings regarding how Panama's census question should read, the use of "Black" became controversial. "Yo nací negro y negro voy a morir!"

[I was born Black and I am going to die Black!] fervently yelled one attendee. The meeting organizers, however, recognized the importance of context. The province of Colón, where the meeting was taking place has an African descendant population of 29% (Census 2010), more than three times the national average. Not only is Colón perceived as a "Black" province; the city itself was perceived as a West Indian dominated city. The professor that was so adamant to not be mistaken for West Indian recalled that he had to learn English to better function in Colón city. "...la influencia recae sobre cada uno de nosotros porque antes la ciudad fue West Indian. fue (laughing). *Fue* (speaker's emphasis). [The influence rests with each one of us because before the city was West Indian. Was (laughing). *Was* (speaker's emphasis)] (Personal interview, 2010). As such, for some participants of this meeting, the word "negro" or "Black" is part of daily vernacular in ways unfamiliar to other parts of the country. Despite the passion of the colonenses⁵⁸ present, the census question had to resonate with all of Panama. And the larger context of the census question was a country that expresses confusion about who is Black and what that means.

Beyond questions of how African ancestry translates into being a contemporary person of African descent, as expressed by Aleida, the word Black carries a negative association. Another participant in the census workshop argued to exclude the term.

⁵⁸ Colonense is a person from Colón

Using a mixture of English and Spanish, he exclaimed, “No one wants to be ‘Negro’ because it associates with *chombería*⁵⁹ y la vaina esa. [stereotypical negative Black activity and that crap]” Cecilia too feared that the use of “Black” would invoke negativity in most Panamanians, but further, she wanted to include some framing or definition of the term *afrodescendiente*. Although used in academic literature and familiar to those who understood the international scope of the UN campaign, a definition would help delineate the experience that the census wanted to capture.

Unlike Panama, Argentina is known to have a small African descendent population. However, like Panama, Argentina did not previously include questions of race or ethnicity on their regular census forms. Perhaps because of their particular history, which generally excludes national discourse about Afro-Argentina or race mixing in favor of a history that emphasizes European immigration, they executed their census question more toward Cecilia’s orientation. Chronologically after Panama, their question asked, “Are you or anyone in this home of African descent or have ancestors of African descent (father, mother, grandparents, great grandparents)” as shown in Illustration 3. The inclusion of grandparents and great grandparents reflects an interpretation of and gives value to the popular Spanish phrase “Y tu abuela, dónde está? [And your grandmother, where is she?], or as Henry Louis Gates interpreted it in his *Black in Latin America* series (2011) “The Black Grandmother in the Closet.” The phrase originates from a 1983 poem by Puerto Rican author Fernando Forunato Vizcarrondo, written as

⁵⁹ Chomberia is the adjective form of the noun *chombo*, a term, sometimes pejorative, used to refer to English speaking Blacks or arguably any Black person.

colloquial Spanish would be spoken, entitled “¿Y tu agüela aonde ejtá⁶⁰? The poem is a critique of people who may not phenotypically “look Black”, but know they have African ancestry and hide their phenotypically Black family members from the public eye in an act of denial. The Argentine census question subtly, but explicitly addressed the possible existence of African heritage in families that publicly claim none. It also addresses the issue of self-identification, which for delicate issues such as racial composition in Latin America, can turn into issues of “admission” of African heritage rather than a proud identification. The answer choices to Argentina’s detailed question, which appears in Illustration 3, were simply: Yes (indicate the number of people), No, and Ignored. Not only did Argentina exclude the word “Black” and explicitly define what they considered “being of African descent” to mean, they also provided an option for the respondent to decline to answer. Panama did not provide such an option. Argentina framed their census question the way Cecilia believed Panama should have, acknowledging national public discourse and creating a framework to discuss what it is to be of African descent. She wanted to use the census as a way to create relationships not toward a divisive history of Black Panama, but rather to speak directly to the broader concept of African descent through lineage and across national borders as the U.N. conceived it.

6 ¿Ud. o alguna persona de este hogar es afrodescendiente o tiene antepasados de origen afrodescendiente o africano (padre, madre, abuelos/as, bisabuelos/as)?

☐ Si Indique el N° de persona:

☐ No

☐ Ignorado

Illustration 3. Question #6 of the 2010 Argentina National Census

⁶⁰ See Appendix B for full poem and English translation

The December 2009 workshop in Colón decided the official wording of the Panamanian census question and accompanying campaign slogan. Although the official slogan was “Orgullosamente Afrodescendiente,” ultimately, the first question used both “Black” and “African descent” and the second question divided Blackness into categories. These perceived differences may not seem noteworthy to the larger group identification that the UN sought; however, the lack of cohesion and absence of shared history they create matter significantly within a Panamanian context. Difference has not only been constructed by the dominant or colonizing ruling classes, but also embraced by those who proudly brand themselves as different.

For example, Yvelisse Langton grew up between Bocas del Toro and the city of Colón. She now lives in the former Canal Zone near Colón and in her mix of English and Spanish, described the taunting she received from non West Indian Blacks.

The *chombos* and then the *costeños* which is the afro colonials. They will call us chumecos .They can't say Jamaican. They say chumecos. Y para mí me dicen chomba no lo tomo como una ofensa sino lo que me hace es reforzar eso. Eso es que decir me identifico. Ya saben que soy orgullosamente panameña pero de descendencia afro antillana

[The *chombos* and then the *costeños* which is the afro colonials they will call us *chumecos* they can't say Jamaican they say *chumecos* and me, they call me *chomba*. I do not take offense, but instead it strengthens me. That is to say, I identify myself that way and they know I am proudly Panamanian, but of Black West Indian heritage]

She distinguished between the two groups of Blacks, *chombos* and *costeños*, and alluded to tension and animosity between them. “They” called her *chumeco* and *chomba*. Her story implies the terms were intended as pejoratives because she chose to not get upset. In articulating that choice, she insinuated that another person might have gotten upset or even that she was upset by such name-calling in the past. Thus, names were regularly

used not as innocuous labels of difference, but rather disparaging and offensive remarks. She chose to embrace this external acknowledgement of her West Indian heritage. She advances this perceived difference to include West Indian heritage, and consequently herself, within the national boundaries of identity by calling herself Panamanian as a primary identity label, despite linguistic hybrid attempts to exclude her. She claimed her right to that particular national identity, one shared by her accusers. In this sense, she claims her space of cultural citizenship, based in her West Indian heritage, within the national paradigm. Further, it illustrates mestizaje as a project of nation building is a space of struggle and contest. It is a site of struggle to see what and who will be included and excluded, and in what way; to see to what extent existing hierarchies can be disrupted and how (Wade 2005, 255).

The acceptance of difference through antagonistic relationships was mutual within Panamanian Blackness. Many of my West Indian descendent interviewees connected their Blackness to the Anglophone Caribbean. They did not acknowledge a shared history of African descent or of slavery with *coloniales*, and, at times, spoke disparagingly of them for having been slaves of Spaniards, an “uncultured” people in comparison to the British. That they shared this diasporic identity based in a trans-Atlantic slave trade never came up. In further denial of a shared history, that *coloniales* do not know they are Black, was a common thread. Some older generations take cultural difference a step further toward cultural hierarchy.

Hugo Wood, grandson of Barbadian immigrants and former Panamanian ambassador to Jamaica, offered his personal opinions of non West Indian Blacks.

They are still learning of their racial identity...They don't call themselves Black. They use evasive terms: *Moreno*, *trigueño* and that nonsense. And they are hybrids, many of them. But they just don't want to be called Black because according to them, they married the Spaniards, from when they came here as slaves and gave them the impression that to be Black is to be offensive. And up to this day they have that... Black women of West Indian heritage they are creative in hair dos, food, whatever. The *comecocos* are traditional. An inferior product. Food, conduct, everything. They have not created anything!

Others share the same hostility that Hugo Wood feels. Darnell Campbell articulated a similar antagonism between the two communities. “Los coloniales sienten que ellos son de mejor categoría. Ellos siempre han pensado que nosotros eran esclavos de ellos. [The coloniales feel they are in a better category. They have always thought that we were their slaves] (Personal interview, 2010). Both men expressed tensions of perceived superiority—Hugo Wood felt that West Indians are superior to coloniales whereas Darnell Campbell felt that colonials think they are superior to West Indians. These statements of enmity are rooted in Panama's history of West Indian exclusion in the face of a mestizaje that ostensibly included other Blacks. Sonja Watson (2009) discusses this sentiment with respect to well-known Panamanian literature. Although two of Carlos Wilson's novels, *Chombo* (1981) and *The Grandchildren of Felicidad Dolores* (1991) both written in Spanish, end by highlighting the shared diasporic heritage of African descendants in Panama, Watson notes that in Wilson's novels, the lack of group cohesion is perpetuated by the non-West Indians. The non West Indian Black characters are hampered by a prejudice that prevents them from fully embracing West Indian populations. The problem, as expressed in the works of Carlos Wilson and my interview with Hugo Wood, is not one of mutual disapproval. The problem rests within the non-West Indian Blacks. In Panama, this societal prejudice towards Blacks stems from a

national rhetoric of nation-building that deemed Panama contradictorily a mestizo, non Black nation (Watson 2009, 240).

To set this struggle in a larger context, however, is essential to understanding mestizaje or, in the case of the Panamanian census, the politics of Blackness within a national framework. While mestizaje itself may not be solely a nation-building concept, the idea of a socially constructed and shared perception of a nation is important to understand the origins of this tension between inclusion and exclusion, the parameters of difference, and how those categories change. Stuart Hall deftly points out that cultural identity is not timeless, but rather historically situated and changes over time as identities become “historically available” (1990, 398). They are created and affirmed in a politically charged public space through interaction with people and other markers of identity (Abu-Lughod 1991, 145). Through interaction boundaries shift and bend, but remain boundaries nonetheless.

The 2010 Panamanian Census

Every member country of the United Nations made a pledge in 2000 to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)⁶¹ by 2015. Latin American and Caribbean countries, however, wanted to unambiguously link these goals to race in a way the U.N. had failed to do. Through the World Conference against Racism, these countries set out to close social gaps caused by racial discrimination, particularly issues pertaining to education, health, access to water, and infant mortality (Telles 2007). Understanding the

⁶¹ Some of the MDGs include cutting in half the persons living on less than one dollar a day, universal primary education, lowering child and maternal mortality rates, and cutting in half the number of people without consistent access to safe drinking water (Telles 2007)

lack of official data regarding Blackness and race in Latin America, in 2010, the United Nations sponsored the initiative to count Afro-descendent populations. The problem, however, is that it did not specify or regulate *how*.

In a public meeting in the fall of 2009 in Hotel Roma Plaza in Panama City, representatives from various Black organizations in Panama and around Latin America—without any official representation from the offices of the Comptroller Generals—discussed census campaign successes and problems. Organizers administered an informal paper survey in Spanish⁶², but it was indistinguishable who created the survey, what the results would mean, or how it related to the census specifically. According to a December 2009 census-planning meeting in the city of Colón, the additional of the question of African descent, “no es para resolver el problema de afro descendiente es para resolver el problema nacional!” [It is not to resolve the problem of African descendants. It’s to resolve the national problem!] The census, a state process of naming and counting populations, explicitly decides which groups will be labeled and how. It creates and standardized the historically available identity of which Stuart Hall references.

People can only “auto-identify” based on available identities in particular contexts and only want to identify based, in part, on the political space in which the counting is taking place. A census is a snapshot of residents, not citizens. Everyone can be counted, but one common fear is that the information will somehow highlight them or worse, expose them to government attention, the precise thing many try to avoid (Hillygus et al., 2006, 17). The last Panamanian census that explicitly ask for race was 1940. The next

⁶² See Appendix C for text of this Spanish language survey

year, the constitution of 1941 revoked the citizenship of non-Spanish speaking “undesirable” immigrants and their offspring. One of the largest population groups stripped of their citizenship was Black English speaking West-Indians. Although their citizenship was reinstated in 1946, many of West Indian descent, especially elders, were suspicious of the origins of this new census question. Every census since 1950 has asked if a person considers himself/herself Indigenous. There are no other racial or ethnic identification questions asked. Panama, like other Latin American countries such as Peru and Uruguay, lacks systematic data collection about their African descendent populations, so much so that in 2007, the Inter-American Dialogue estimated the percentage to be between 14 and 77% (Telles 2007 in Hooker 2009, 141).

In May 2010, due to the international project and financial support of the United Nations, data collection regarding African heritage became a reality. The 2010 Panamanian census did not ask about any other heritage, group, identity, affiliation, nor did the national campaign from the Office of the Comptroller General promote this question as part of the larger census campaign. The official census motto, “*Mientras el canal ampliamos, en el 2010 nos contamos* [While we expand the canal, in 2010 we count ourselves]”, accompanied the image of a ship passing through a set of locks, with facial profiles in pink, purple, and blue in a white space outside of the locks. The expansion project promises to exponentially increase canal revenue, which the government will re-invest into improving the country as a whole. The Panama Canal, more than anything else, is the national symbol of wealth, promise, and opportunity. The official census brochure expanded on symbols of national identity to include a Diablito, a popular symbol from the province of Colón, as well as normalized national symbols of

Panama including a sombrero pintado, tembleque, and tambor. Because the official census material did not specifically mention the additional question of African heritage, the Orgullosamente Afrodescendiente campaign created and distributed its own materials.

In a pre-census workshop, one critique of Colombia's census campaign, whose results were also contested as showing lower than expected numbers of afrodescendientes, was that everyone was "negro en su máximo expresión." As a result, Panama was cautious to show a mix. The Orgullosamente Afrodescendiente campaign's official logo used images of various shades of brown faces in the shape outline of the country of Panama. Whereas the national campaign showed ambiguous profiles, the Orgullosamente Afrodescendiente campaign chose red, yellow, and green figures with fists in the air to represent their campaign message. Unequivocally, the color choices and raised fists invoke "Black power", Africa, or at the very least, Blackness without actually using any Black figures. The *molibarios*⁶³ scattered around the country displayed people of various ages, hair textures, and skin hues read, "Reconozco y valoro mi afro descendencia. !Porque es importante y cuenta! [I recognize and value my African heritage. Because it is important and matters/counts]" Banners reminded people to "identifícate [identify yourselves]" and "Necesitamos saber cuantos somos y como estamos [We need to know how many we are and how we are fairing]."

In Panama, people do not fill out their own census forms or mail them back. There is an national census day, an official state holiday, during which everyone is required to stay in his/her home until visited by the state trained census taker. Panama executes a

⁶³ Mobiliarios are vertical advertisement spaces that are erected on popular pedestrian routes alongside the sidewalks and in other open spaces.

national census every 10 years, but in 1940, changed the census structure from three months to only one day. Beginning in 1950, the census covered both population and housing. In 2010, national census day was May 16. The May 16 2010 census consisted of a 12-page booklet. Although sample booklets were sent out in hardcopy and via email to familiarize Panamanian residents with the questions and format, no one is allowed to fill out the form in advance. Only census enumerators have the official forms and are required to ask all questions, as well as fill in the spaces provided with their own observations of the household. Once a household has been counted, every person receives a paper note card, which they must carry around when they leave their residence to prove to any questioning officer that they did, in fact, participate in the census. Further, when the census taker leaves, he/she places a bright pink sticker on the outer door, houses and apartments alike, to signify that the household has been counted. Although Panama took note from other country's census campaigns, the format for question of Black identity was controversially asked two parts. The first question displayed in Illustration 4, was located in section IV of the booklet and asked "¿Alguna persona de este hogar se considera negro(a) o afrodescendiente? [Does any person in this home consider himself/herself Black or African descendant?]

APRENDA? ☐ 3
 ☐ 4
 ☐ 5
 ☐ 6
 ☐ 7
 ☐ 8

SALUD...
 SI NO
 ¿es para sordera, ☐ 1 ☐ 2
 ☐ 1 ☐ 2
 ¿tiene dificultad ☐ 1 ☐ 2
 ☐ 1 ☐ 2
 ¿tiene dificultad ☐ 1 ☐ 2
 ☐ 1 ☐ 2
 ¿tiene dificultad ☐ 1 ☐ 2
 ☐ 1 ☐ 2

Haga esta pregunta si en la lista de ocupantes del hogar (cap. IV), el nombre de la persona tiene marcado el círculo 1 (si) en la pregunta 6 (negro(a) o afrodescendiente). En caso contrario, marque el círculo 5, ninguno.

9. ¿SE CONSIDERA USTED...
 Lea: ☐ 1
 Negro(a) colonial? ☐ 1
 Negro(a) antillano(a)? ☐ 2
 Negro(a)? ☐ 3
 Otro? (especifique) ☐ 4
 Ninguna ☐ 5

Illustration 4. Section IV, Question 6 of May 16, 2010 Panamanian Census

An affirmative answer to the first question led, albeit it not consecutively, to a second question, which spoke directly to the two tiered Panamanian Blackness while leaving space for other responses. The second question asks if you consider yourself: Black Colonial; Black West Indian; Black; Other (specify); None [se considera: Lea Negro(a) colonial; Negro (a) antillanos; Negro(a); Otros (especifique); Ninguna.] Illustration 5 displays the second part of the question, which appears in section V of the booklet following the questions about Indigenous group identification.

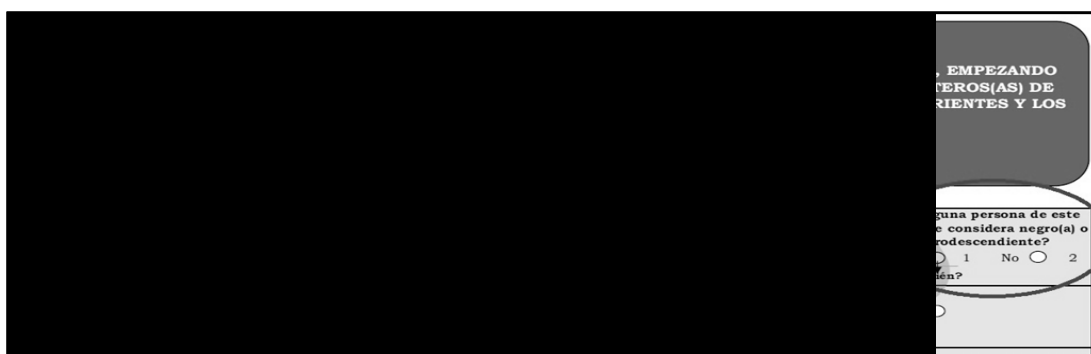


Illustration 5. Section V, Question 9 of May 16, 2010 Panamanian Census

The data collection process of the 2010 census yielded to observer-identification through which volunteer census enumerators made judgments about the Blackness of individuals (Skerry 2000, 49). Official census materials created by the Office of the Comptroller General did not mention the question of African ancestry or its campaign. Members of the Orgullosamente Afrodescendiente campaign argue that the Comptroller General did not take the question seriously and thus, did not properly educate or train the census enumerators about this additional question. There was no option to decline to answer. The first question mandated an affirmative or negative response, and the second required more information about the specificity of African heritage. In a context of confusion

about what Afrodescendiente means, why the government is asking, and why Panama should care about who is Black or not, the inconsistency of census enumerators was a problem and major critique from Black ethnicity groups immediately following the census. Some enumerators asked people if they were Black or afro-descendiente and some did not. Some enumerators never asked the question and decided the answer for themselves. Some never asked and left it blank. Others asked the first question and not the second. The same day, May 16, 2010, the Orgullosamente Afrodescendiente campaign denounced the census results both in the news and online through YouTube videos. Less than a week after the census, an email from Alberto Barrow's list serve contended, "6 out of 10 people were not asked about their African ancestry."

People who knew about the question and how it should be asked could challenge their enumerator and demand to be counted. However, the census usually only asks about Indigenous identity and the campaign for the Afrodescendiente question started after January, only five months before the census, and mostly touched Black spaces. Any event I attended during Black Ethnicity Month (May 2010) either referenced the census question or distributed flyers. Eunice Menses, executive secretary for the National Coordination of Black Panamanian Organizations [Coordinadora Nacional de las Organizaciones Negras Panameñas], gave a PowerPoint presentation during a public SAMAAP meeting to explain the format and goals of the question. Mobilarios, mobile posters that adorn city sidewalks, and banners with the logo and motto of the campaign were scattered around the city. However, even in interviews with people of West Indian descent in the months leading up to the May 2010 census, people without direct personal links to Black Panamanian organizations felt unaware and/or uneducated about the

purpose, origins, and desired results of such a question. News coverage about the additional question was met with accusations of divisiveness and affirmations of an all-inclusive Panamanian *mestizaje*. The campaign for this question did not have the reach that the national organizations imagined. The education during the meetings reinforced differences between Panamanian Black populations.

The United Nation's project of counting African descendants through state led census projects assumed the existence of a shared diasporic identity across national states. This assumption crashed into a Panamanian belief in an inclusive/exclusive national *mestizaje*. The UN speciously operated under false notion of cultural or diasporic citizenship and Gramscian notion of hegemony, which negates difference and constricts identities by alleging a shared whole (Hall 1990, 401). According to census results, the number and percentage of people who self-identified as Afro-colonial outnumbered the number of people who self-identified as afro-antillano (see Illustration 6). More importantly, only 9.2% of the Panamanian population identified as Black or of African descent, with the largest percentage identifying as "Afro-Panamanian" without distinction. These results support the state's project of national cohesion. All residents are required to stay in their homes and report, unafraid, to the enumerators because citizenship and residential legality are not questioned. Thus, based on the questions explicitly asked, the options given for response, and the absence of citizenship inquiry, "Afro-Panamanian" is an invalid result from the May 2010 census, as it is neither an option in any of the multiple-choice questions, nor can citizenship be derived from the questions themselves. The "Other" category is represented in the official results, however, no explanation is given for the existence of the "Afro-Panamanian" category. It

is possible, although never stated, that it grew from the requested specification of the “Other” option. Nevertheless, according to official census reports, 4.17% of the population reported themselves as Afro-Panamanian⁶⁴. A portion of the January 2011 report is displayed in Illustration 6 below.

Cuadro 32. POBLACIÓN TOTAL Y AFRODESCENDIENTE EN LA REPÚBLICA, POR GRUPO AL QUE PERTENECE, SEGÚN PROVINCIA, COMARCA INDÍGENA, DISTRITO Y CORREGIMIENTO: CENSO 2010

Provincia, comarca indígena, distrito y corregimiento	Población							Porcentaje población afrodescendiente
	Total	Grupo afrodescendiente al que pertenece						
		Total	Afro-colonial	Afro-antillano(a)	Afro-panameño(a)	Otro	No declarado	
TOTAL.....	3,405,813	313,289	77,908	65,113	142,003	15,527	12,738	9.2

Illustration 6. Total Population and African Descendants in the Republic, by Group to which They Belong.

From Exclusion to Inclusion: Shifting Boundaries of National Belonging

Eunice, a 75 year old woman born and raised in Panama City, was shopping at a small fruit market on her way home when the guard, an older Black gentleman, stopped to ask her, “Where are you from? I am having this debate with this guy here. He thinks you are from the United States, but I told him no. You aren’t from there. No you aren’t from the U.S. You are from here, right? Usted es chomba blanca, no [You are chomba blanca, right?]?” She answered in Spanish, “Yes, I am from here. I am Panamanian.” “I knew it!” he shouted.

⁶⁴ I first accessed this report in January of 2011 and I copied the section displayed in Illustration 6. I accessed this report again in February of 2012 and the categorical results had since been modified. The numbers in each category remain the same; however, the report no longer reads “Afro-panameño (a)” but rather “Negro” which directly corresponds to the manner in which the question was phrased on the census form, and without reference to nationality or citizenship.

She hates the term *chomba*, a derogatory word used to describe English speaking Blacks of West Indian descent. Because of her light skin, green eyes, and Jamaican parents, she was referred to as a *chomba blanca*, a White *chomba*. She recognizes this story as the first time the term, directed at her, did not upset her or offend her. I hear that story as the first time she heard it as a label of national inclusion rather than derogatory exclusion. In her retelling, “you are from here” is a statement, not a question. The certainty in the man’s voice included her in the national identity of Panama. In her childhood, people used this label to her to make her feel less Black than other Black West Indians by adding the “*blanca*” to the end, and certainly to feel outside of the *Latinidad* of Panama with the use of “*chomba*”. The man spoke to her completely in Spanish, perhaps he doesn’t speak English, but even his choice of words to call her *chomba blanca* assumed a certain level of colloquial literacy. This used to be a term of exclusion for West Indians during Eunice’s childhood, marking them as a group outside of Panamanianity. In a contemporary context, it is still a marker of West Indian identity, but is used as a term of Panamanian inclusion rather than exclusion. “You are from here. You are *chomba blanca*, no?” For the guard, a person who is *chomba blanca* is not a U.S. immigrant, but rather a native Panamanian and, for Eunice and perhaps the guard, a Panamanian of West Indian descent.

While *chombo* and *comecoco* may be distinct groups with their own histories, each history is, in fact, rooted within the Republic of Panama. The differences that were exacerbated and reinforced by Panamanian laws against West Indians profoundly influenced my primary research group. Today, however, their age brackets comprise about 10 percent of the population (2010 census). The median age in Panama is 27.

Younger Panamanians were not alive for the signing of the 1977 Canal Treaties and were only teenagers when the U.S. withdrew completely in 1999. For their entire lives, people of West Indian decent have been citizens of Panama. Chombo, come coco, mestizo—it does not matter. Everyone is Panamanian. Only 9.2% of the population identified themselves as Black or of African descent, with the largest number identifying, albeit it inexplicably, as Afro-Panamanian. As this anecdote illustrates, West Indians remain an Other with regards to Panamanian mestizaje, but have evolved as a cultural element within a larger Panamanian paradigm. One of the largest oppositional identities in urban Panama today is Colombian. Colombian financial investments and labor have flooded Panama and consequently reinforced a nationality paradigm of identity. The production of national difference aligns with contemporary globalizing tendencies (Mauer 1997). This Panamanian national identity, corroborated by census data, eclipses but does not erase the historical differences in Blackness (Guerrón-Montero 2006, 224).

Edmund Gordon and Mark Anderson (1999) argue for a shift in focus that does not concentrate so much on essential features common to various peoples of African descent, but rather on the various processes through which communities and individuals identify with one another. This new focus would highlight the central importance of race—racial constrictions, racial oppressions, racial identification – and culture in the making and remaking of Diaspora (284). They call for ethnographic attention to the process of diasporic identification, citing the “lack of studies that attend to the ways particular communities and individuals draw cultural and political inspiration from one another to imagine themselves as ‘Black’ or African. Rather than assigning identity and positing how people should participate in the making and remaking of Diaspora, we must

investigate how they actually do” (284). Place dialectically shapes individual and group understandings of identity. In Panama, constructions of Blackness varies between different Black populations. Panama’s racial paradigms have been influenced by the collision of Latin American mestizaje with a Black and White U.S. racial binary. While Panama privileges mestizaje, both systems marginalize Blackness in all its forms.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

Interestingly, what “top down” histories have done—through their emphases on North Americans’ role in canal construction—is define spaces where oppositional Panama narratives can take root. Traditional approaches become more valuable as they dialogue with other types of isthmian narratives. Such a conversation broadens the view of the canal project and the contributions of all its participants. — Rhonda D. Frederick 2005, 35

Summary of Results

The rapid changes in Panama directly affected West Indians and Panamanians of West Indian descent in unique ways. Surveying the lived practice of identity helps us better understand issues of cohesion and divergence within a self or externally perceived collective identity. This study addresses the ways that Panamanians of West Indian heritage have claimed their spaces within the Republic of Panama. Identity is dynamic. As the Republic of Panama has changed, so have the tenets and boundaries of West Indian identity and identity practice. Of all the many ways in which the Republic of Panama has transformed in the last 50 years, this study specifically addresses the role of the U.S. state via the Panama Canal Zone and the role of the Panamanian state in the construction and perception of West Indian identity and identification. These differences in state governance and the dissolution of the Panama Canal Zone jarred the realities of Panamanians of West Indian heritage differently based on place.

In the case of Panama and the former Canal Zone, the differential access and socialization that existed created deep emotional divides between individuals and even

families of shared cultural and racial background. The existence of the U.S. state and its asymmetrical privileges based on citizenship and place facilitated these disparate relationships. During the time of the U.S.-run Canal Zone, Panamanians of West Indian descent lived on both sides of the border. They experienced racial segregation in the Zone and discrimination outside of it. Divided between political and cultural systems, their socialization and orientation toward Panama, the U.S., and toward each other varied with their historical context and location. Locations of origin shaped concepts of justice, community, and politics, and continue to guide interactions among Panamanians of West Indian descent. In the Zone, West Indian Blackness existed in opposition to American Whiteness. In Panama, West Indian identity opposed everything else including both American and Panamanian Zonians. As political boundaries changed and the American Canal Zone dissolved, Panamanian Zonians and others with access to the Canal Zone received priority consideration for immigration to the U.S. Those who stayed enjoyed well paying jobs, coveted real estate at low cost, and consequently developed higher qualities of life than Panamanians of West Indian descent outside of the Zone.

This study reveals that disparate constructions of West Indian identity formed in separate locations did not merged with turnover of the Zone. Within West Indian identity, political context and geographic origins— despite shared citizenship — created oppositional identity, and continue to influence professional and social networks today. Only by unpacking the academically assigned identity of “West Indian” can we begin to understand the complications of belonging and group identity in contemporary urban Panama. Panama as an emerging market has the opposite problem of other countries in Latin America; people are going to Panama, not the reverse. In the face of rapid political,

demographic, and economic shifts in a small country, preferred tenets of national identity are exposed and reinforced. This paradoxically includes the history of West Indians as a uniquely Panamanian experience while at the same time diminishing a contemporary West Indian presence in favor of a racially mixed panoramic Panamanian. As a result, although Panamanians of West Indian heritage identify each other differently based on perceived differences in where, and consequently how, they were raised, the absence of a divisive U.S. territory and the influx of foreign immigration has moved African-descent populations toward a shared nation-based racial identity.

The discourse of race mixture in Latin America often subsumes the investigation of Blackness as a cultural ingredient in racial hybridity. This study not only focuses on construction of Blackness specifically, but also nuances the discussion by situating contemporary analysis on perceived historical difference within this race label. Blackness is not a singular identity. Understanding historical migrations, such as the African Diaspora, provide a broader foundation to examine this multi-sited race-based identity. What it means to be Black and how Blackness is constructed varies among and between individuals and groups that self-identify and are externally identified as Black or minimally as being of African descent. In Panama, “Black Ethnicity” is an umbrella for two main categories: English-speaking Blacks of West Indian descent that arrived from multiple voluntary labor migrations and Spanish speaking Blacks that arrived in Panama during colonial times. Despite the decades, or in the case of *coloniales* the centuries, that have passed, these cultural distinctions continue to resonate and generate hostility, exclusion, and division. The political sanctions that reinforced these differences directly affected my research population. This study exposes both the confines of *mestizaje* as a

national identity as well as individual resistance to new identity labels. The 2010 census data, in particular the emergence of a large self-identified “Afro-Panamanian” or “Black” identity without further cultural specificity, suggest that a nation-based identification is becoming more important than the divisions between Black cultural identities.

This research demonstrates the complications of lived experiences for people of shared heritage when we survey, rather than assume, boundaries of identity and identification over time and geographic spaces. This study illustrates the different ways imagined communities have been constructed. It investigates how people identify themselves, have been identified by others, and how the irregular contexts of political and overlapping nation-states have shifted and affected not only the processes of identity, but also the constructions of self and group over generations, time, and space amid national and global processes of politics and development.

Significance and Impact

This research is significant for multiple reasons, namely because it places marginalized populations at the center of the research in a defined national context and within regional discourse. This study isolates and investigates Blackness in a geographic area that has traditionally promoted race mixture as the paradoxical norm. Isolated research of this nature is common in a U.S. context, but not in Latin America. Further, although Afro-Latin American identity has received increased international attention, namely from the United Nations, the homogeneity of Black identity in the Latin America region, much less at a national level, has gone unchallenged. Even with acknowledged shared Diasporic origins, different contexts breed identity distinctions across regional and

within national borders. Changes in sovereignty and government affect not only access to political rights, but also social, economic, and cultural identities. This research nuances identity construction within a nation-state with regard to political change and oppositional identity constructions. This work helps connect economic and social indicators with the historical and political circumstances that helped create them for a specific race-based population. It also exposes the role of international organizations in temporarily framing a race-centered regional agenda, but without attention to social processes, direct links to policy change, or a long-range strategy.

This study also explicitly addresses the role of the state in identity constructions. People do not define themselves in a political vacuum. Political borders, access to citizenship, and forms of government, among other state controlled entities, affect how people identify and are identified. These identifications matter between individual, groups, nations, and for international attention as well. This study examines the role of the state, and shifts in the state, in the construction of marginalized identities. It also links official state processes, such as a national census, to the reification of identities and maintenance of identity labels and perceived divisions.

This research also makes important contributions to immigration studies. In a narrow view, it updates academic works about West Indian immigrants in Panama that centered on U.S. canal construction by focusing on first and second generations. These generations claim both West Indian and Panamanian identities. This research also advances works about West Indians in Panama by addressing the ways in which political changes in areas densely populated by generations of West Indian heritage have affected this specific group. More broadly, it expands the regional focus. Multi-generational

works on Black immigrant groups in Latin America are scarce. While works about canal construction, Panamanian military regimes, political transitions, and the U.S. invasion in Panama exist, each body of work exists separately. This study centers the inquiry on a non-Spanish speaking immigrant group and its first and second generations with consideration for the labor, military, political, and violent circumstances through which they lived and live. This approach helps to understand how immigrants and their subsequent generations differently create opportunities within a particular national context. Latin America participates in global circulations of people as both a sender and receiver. This research fills a void in the academic literature to include first and second-generation narratives and the processes of national integration.

Opportunities for Future Research

My time in the field was rich and many interesting themes emerged that landed beyond the scope of this dissertation. This research can grow in multiple directions that will contribute to the greater academic body of literature.

One large component that is missing from this study is a gender analysis. The normalcy of domestic help in Panama, the male-dominated Canal employment, and the vast presence of young, single, males in the U.S. military, created a multitude of gender divisions and interactions by race, citizenship, and status inside, outside, and on the borders of the Canal Zone. These complexities are yet unexplored.

Additionally, research for this study would benefit from a class analysis. Political shifts and forms of government influenced access to wealth and economic opportunities in the Canal Zone, but also in the Republic of Panama. Although White Americans held

privilege positions within the Canal Zone, Zonians and military personnel were segregated from each other within the Zone. Rank and class difference were institutionalized in the Zone, determining salary, residence, and employment opportunities. Outside of the Canal Zone Panama has its own oligarchy that shaped the political context before, to an extent during, and after the military dictatorship. Former political and social structures influence contemporary economic status.

The complicated and interconnected segregations in the Panama Canal Zone offer exciting opportunities for research on the Canal Zone as a site of political and economic transition. Within this geographic space, one label, Zonian, spanned two citizenries. Existing works about the Zone are from an American perspective (Frank 1913; Knapp 1984). As articulated by Rhonda Frederick (2005), one-sided tales create spaces for “other types of isthmian narratives” to take root (35). The transition of the Panama Canal and Canal Zone, unpopular in the United States, required careful consideration of quotas, salaries, pensions, retirements, immigration allowances, property relations, and other state-level negotiations that shaped the futures of two citizenries. Race and citizenship lie at the center of that transition.

This dissertation also excludes the meaningful exploration and complicated existence of the U.S. military in the Panama Canal Zone. The military also represented age, racial, ethnic, geographic, and class diversity far beyond that of Zonian populations. Although much more transitional than American Zonians, the military personnel too had a long-standing relationship with the Republic of Panama and influenced the culture of Panama City and Colón in positive and negative ways.

Research on West Indians in Panama also lends itself to deeper exploration of the ties within this contemporary transnational community. Not only has the U.S. based community demanded political rights in Panama, but U.S. politics have also infiltrated Panamanian communities. “The Obama Boys,” a group of Panamanians that spent varying amounts of years in the U.S., threw a party for U.S. President Barack Obama’s inauguration, which included “Obama Boys” shirts and hats. The fact that some Panamanian citizens refer to Obama as “my president” raises interesting questions about transnational identity and belonging, pan-Blackness, and transnational political identifications. The global financial crisis has also increased the number of “relocators”. Many of the Panamanians who left Panama to live a number of years in the U.S., have returned and started businesses, organizations, or otherwise re-inserted themselves in Panamanian society. The relocater population has been met with both welcome and resistance by other Panamanians.

In focusing on the relationships created, maintained, and dissolved with regard to the U.S. and Panamanian states, I did not give attention to markers of cultural practice and maintenance, such as religion, language, music, and food. Language in particular is an interesting subject of investigation, as English is a marker of difference for both West Indian identity as well as U.S. identity. Language is an undercurrent for this study, but was not addressed explicitly. The ways in which participants code-switch, how language is lost, passed down, and/or acquired can help explore the associations between language, identity, and belonging. For example, Imani felt most comfortable in Spanish. However, when she reminisced about Sunday family dinner she recalled, “en los domingos comimos chicken and chops y rice and peas” [on Sundays, we ate chicken and chops and

rice and peas]. Despite her preference for Spanish, certain ideas were best communicated in English. Based on my interviews and participant observation, others employ similar linguistic patterns.

The United Nations project of counting African descendants through national census campaigns provides a unique opportunity to examine not only the national results of the census, but also the census campaigns in each nation and the continuing discussions about Blackness, Diaspora, the African Diaspora, and diasporic identities in Latin America. Additional research on this topic can explore the different phraseology of census questions in various nation-states, media campaigning, organizational involvement—both national and transnational — the reporting of results, as well as the local, national, diasporic, and transnational implications and policy changes generated by an international organization counting and celebrating African descendants.

Finally, there is an opportunity to explore the political nature of Black identity in Panama and beyond. This study addresses state level politics, but not political participation, constructions, or existence of Black politics. This study also focuses on Panamanians of West Indian heritage. It addresses their identifications of coloniales, but not the self-identity or identity constructions of coloniales themselves. According to 2010 census data, more Panamanians identify as colonial than as West Indian, with the majority of self-reported African descendants electing “afro-panameño” or “negro”, without ethnic distinction. In light of the documented convergence of Black ethnic identities into an Afro-Panamanian identity, further research can explore the connections between an Afro- identity and the emergent fight against racism and the political construction of Black identities in Latin America.

Beyond the specific offshoot projects based on this dissertation, the broad themes that structure this study also offer rich sites for further investigation. The history of the U.S.'s involvement in Latin America can, in many ways, be read through the history of the Republic of Panama. Roosevelt's big-stick diplomacy led to the creation of an inter-oceanic canal. The sizeable U.S. military presence in Panama extended from the late 1800s through 1999. It continues on a smaller scale today through the ongoing and transnational war on drugs. In the 1950s and 60s, left-leaning movements around the world, protests for civil rights, and global decolonization sparked political activity in Panama, which was suppressed not with force, but rather diplomacy. The initial support for the military dictatorships ended with the Cold War and an invasion under the auspices of a new War on Drugs. While drug taskforces continue and military cooperation exists for that explicit purpose, the U.S. presence has turned from military force to economic investment, but with the legal right to defend the canal if necessary. Closer investigation into any one or combination of the events that anchored my life history interviews would significantly contribute to larger the academic community. Although this work rightly places Panama within the literature about political change and marginalized identities in Latin America and the African Diaspora, the Republic of Panama, with its densely complicated history and present, remains greatly understudied.

APPENDIX A

PANAMÁ NO ERA ASI AS SUNG BY MANUEL BARNES⁶⁵

El número que voy a cantar son cosas que están sucediendo ahora mismo aquí en el país.
[The number I am going to sing is about things happening right now here in the country]

Yo tengo una preocupación
Por la situación en la nación
Muchas casas condenao's
(¿ a bajo vive la'o a la'o?)
Aguas negras en el callejón
Los peleítas llenos de infección

I am worried
About the situation in the nation
Many condemned houses
(low living side to side?)
Sewage in the alleys
mosquitos full of infection

Cuando vas al hospital,
El servicio es igual
La doctora me da veinte recetas
Para que vayas a la botica
Pero cómo tú vas a la botica?
Si en tu bolsillo no hay plata

When you go to the hospital
The service is the same
The doctor gives me twenty prescriptions
So that you can go to the pharmacy
But how can you go to the pharmany
If you have no money in your pocket?

[Coro]
Panamá no era así
Panamá tiene que progresar
Eso es lo que me preocupa a mí
Panamá tiene que progresar
Mira cómo andan por ahí
Panamá tiene que progresar
Después no va a la ----- poco para mí
Panamá tiene que progresar

[Chorus]
Panamá was not like this
Panamá has to advance
That is something that worries me
Panamá has to advance
Look how they are walking around
Panamá has to advance
After not going to the ---- Little for me
Panamá has to advance

La gente no tiene compasión
Perdieron su consideración
Esposa peleando con esposo
Amigo acuchillando amigo

People do not have any compassion
They lost their consideration
Wife fighting with her husband
Friend stabbing friend

⁶⁵ Recorded by author with permission at the Four Points Sheraton Martes Culturales event on May 25, 2010

Están cogidos con el odio
 Eso te lo digo yo
 Están domina'o por el demonio
 Y hermano matando a su hermano

They are caught with hate
 That is what I am telling you
 They are dominated by evil
 And brother killing brother

[Coro]
 Panamá no era así
 Panamá tiene que progresar
 Si estás de acuerdo, dime que sí
 Panamá tiene que progresar
 Después no va la ----poco para mí
 Panamá tiene que progresar

[Chorus]
 Panamá wasn't like this
 Panamá has to advance
 If you agree, tell me so
 Panamá has to advance
 After not going to the – little for me
 Panamá tiene que progresar

Ahora no hay trabajo
 Ni aumento de sueldo
 El alto costo de la vida
 No tenemos una buena vivienda
 Y si seguimos viviendo así
 Seguro nos vamo' a morir
 Y sin un punto de vacilón⁶⁶
 La gente rebuscando en el vagón

Right now there are no jobs
 Nor increase in salary
 The high cost of living
 We don't have good housing
 And if we continue living like this
 For sure we are going to die
 And without a pressure valve
 People searching in the wagon

[Coro]
 Panamá no era así
 Panamá tiene que progresar
 Si estás de acuerdo dime que si
 Panamá tiene que progresar
 Después no --- la vida poco para mí
 Panamá tiene que progresar
 Porque yo nací aquí
 Panamá tiene que progresar

[Chorus]
 Panamá wasn't like this
 Panamá has to advance
 If you agree, tell me so
 Panamá has to advance
 After not -- life little for me
 Panamá has to advance
 Because I was born here
 Panamá has to advance

Vamos a hablar de educación
 Aquí en Panamá no hay fundación
 Maestra con mini falda en el salón
 En mi opinión eso es provocación
 Demasiado demente
 Profesor enamorando estudiante
 Eso hay que acabar
 Cosas así hay que terminar

Let's talk about education
 Here in Panamá there is no foundation
 Teachers with mini-skirts in class
 In my opinión, that is provocation
 Too much madness
 Professors in love with students
 This has to stop
 These types of things have to end

⁶⁶ *un punto de vacilón* literally means a point of joking or teasing. I translated the phrase to mean pressure valve, but wanted to acknowledge that the intent is more of a fun-loving release from the severity of the situation that the authors describes.

[Coro]

Panamá no era así
Panamá tiene que progresar
Eso es lo que me preocupa a mí
Panamá tiene que progresar
Mira cómo andan por ahí
Panamá tiene que progresar

Esa generación atrás de nosotros
Son atrevidos y peligrosos
Son juveniles delincuentes
No respetan gobierno ni pariente
Un niño de doce años
Caminando con revólver en su mano
Y si tú tratas de aconsejar
Seguro, seguro te va a matar

[Coro]

Panamá no era así
Panamá tiene que progresar
Si estás de acuerdo dime que si
Panamá tiene que progresar
Mira, mira cómo andan ahí
Panamá tiene que progresar
(suavemente)
Panamá tiene que progresar
Muchas gracias para la gente
Panamá tiene que progresar

Gracias

[Chorus]

Panamá wasn't like this
Panamá has to advance
This is something that worries me
Panamá has to advance
Look how they walk around
Panamá has to advance

That generation after us
They are bold and dangerous
They are juvenile delinquents
That don't respect the government or family
A 12 year old kid
Walking around with a gun in his hand
And if you try to counsel him
For sure, for sure he will kill you

[Chorus]

Panamá wasn't like this
Panamá has to advance
If you agree, tell me so
Panamá has to advance
Look how they are walking around
Panamá has to advance
(softly)
Panamá has to advance
Thank you so much everyone
Panamá has to advance

Thank you

APPENDIX B

DINGA Y MANDINGA BY FERNANDO

FORTUNATO VIZCARRONDO

¿Y tu agüela, aonde ejtá?	And your grandma, where is she? ⁶⁷
Ayé me dijite negro Y hoy te boy a contejtá: Mi mai se sienta en la sala. ¿Y tu agüela, aonde ejtá?	Yesterday you called me Negro, And today I will respond to thee: My mom sits in the living room, And your grandma, where is she?
Yo tengo el pelo'e caíyo: El tuyo ej seda namá; Tu pai lo tiene bien lasio, ¿Y tu agüela, aonde ejtá?	My hair is kinky, Yours is like silk, Your father's hair is straight, And your grandma, where is she?
Tu coló te salió blanco Y la mejiya rosá; Loj lábioj loj tiénej finoj ¿Y tu agüela, aonde ejtá?	Your color came out white, And your cheeks are pink; Your lips are thin, And your grandma, where is she?
¿Disej que mi bamba ej grande Y mi pasa colorá? Pero dijme, por la binge, ¿Y tu agüela, aonde ejtá?	You say that my lips are big And they're always red? But tell me, in the name of the Virgin, And your grandma, where is she?
Como tu nena ej blanquita La sacaj mucho a pasiá Y yo con ganae grítate ¿Y tu agüela, aonde ejtá?	Since your girl is white You take her out a lot And I feel like yelling to you: And your grandma, where is she?
A ti te gujta el fojtrote, Y a mi brujca maniguá.	You like Foxtrot, And I like 'Bruca Manigua'

⁶⁷ English translation from: <http://www.puertorico.com/forums/open-board/21500-dinka-o-mandinka.html>. Accessed February 15, 2012

Tú te laj tiraj de blanco
¿Y tu agüela, aonde ejtá?

Erej blanquito enchapao
Que dentraj en sosiedá,
Temiendo que se conojca
La mamá de tu mamá.

Aquí el que no tiene dinga
Tiene mandinga ¡ja, ja!
Por eso yo te pregunto
¿Y tu agüela, aonde ejtá?

Ayé me dijite negro
Queriéndome abochoná.
Mi agüela sale a la sala,
Y la tuya oculta ajtá.

La pobre se ejtá muriendo
Al belse tan maltratá.
Que hajta tu perro le ladra
Si acaso a la sala bá.

¡Y bien que yo la conojco!
Se ñama siña Tatá
Tu la ejconde en la cosina,
Po'que ej prieta de a beldá.

You display yourself as White
And your grandma, where is she?

You are white on the outside
and got into High Society
Fearing that someone may get to know
The mother of your own mami.

Here, who does not have Dinga has
Mandinga ha ha!
So again, I ask you,
And your grandma, where is she?

Yesterday you called me Negro,
Wanting to embarrass me.
My grandma steps out to the living room,
And yours hidden from everybody

The poor woman is dying
Seeing herself so abused.
Even your dog barks at her
If she ever steps out to the living room.

And I know her very well!
Her name is Mrs. Tata
You hide her in the kitchen,
Because Negro is really she.

APPENDIX C

QUESTIONNAIRE FROM HOTEL ROMA CENSUS EVENT

ENCUESTA

Este es un cuestionario en una investigación sobre Medios de Comunicación y población Afrodescendiente en Panamá que desarrolla el Programa de Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo (PNUD). Queremos agradecer su colaboración en llenar el formulario con respuestas lo más objetivas posible con la finalidad de conocer alguna información sobre la cultura de esta comunidad panameña.

1. Su niñez transcurrió en el barrio _____, corregimiento de _____ en el distrito de _____
2. Realizo estudios primarios Sí/___/ No /___/
3. En caso de contestar sí, diga el nombre de la escuela primaria a la que acudió

4. Su escuela estaba ubicada en el corregimiento de _____ del distrito de _____, provincia de _____.
5. Nacionalidad de su padre _____
6. Su padre nació en (país) _____
7. Nacionalidad de su madre _____
8. Su madre nació en (país) _____
9. ¿Alguno de sus abuelos nació en otro país? Sí/___/ No/___/ No Sabe /___/
10. En caso de contestar sí diga en qué país abuelo _____ abuela _____
11. Cuáles eran las formas más comunes de comunicación de su familia para mantener vínculos con la comunidad Afrodescendiente. (Escoger hasta tres y marcar)
Reuniones familiares/___/ fiestas/___/ iglesia/___/ visitas/___/ carnavales/___/
Pascua florida/___/ actividades culturales/___/ otra/___/ ¿Cuál? _____
12. ¿Cuál era el idioma principal en que se comunicaba su familia?
13. Además de ese ¿existía un segundo idioma en que se comunicaba su familia
Sí/___/ No/___/ En caso de contestar sí, ¿cuál? _____
14. ¿Hubo alguna personalidad destacada que era reconocida por su familia
Sí/___/ No/___/ En caso de contestar sí ¿Nombre? _____
15. ¿Siente usted que en su familia se estimulaban los valores de la comunidad Afrodescendiente? Sí/___/ No/___/
16. En caso de contestar sí, diga de qué manera _____

17. Su familia asistía principalmente al siguiente tipo de culto religioso (Escoger solo una opción)

Iglesia católica/___/ iglesia protestante/___/ iglesia evangélica/___/

Iglesia anglicana/___/ iglesia bautista/___/ iglesia luterana/___/

18. ¿Qué tipo de medios de comunicación eran utilizados por la familia para enterarse de las noticias sobre la comunidad Afrodescendiente?

Cartas/___/ teléfonos /___/ periódico/___/ radio/___/ revistas/___/ conversaciones con amigos(as)/___/ en el vecindario/___/ otra/___/ ¿cuál? _____

19. ¿Recuerda el nombre de un periódico o revista en que se reflejaba de alguna manera a la población Afrodescendiente?

Sí/___/ No/___/ Nombre de esa publicación _____

20. ¿Se ha sentido alguna vez discriminado en alguno de estos lugares

En la escuela sí/___/ No/___/ en la comunidad sí/___/ No/___/

En el trabajo sí/___/ No/___/ en la calle sí/___/ No/___/

Medios de comunicación/___/ otro/___/ ¿cuál? _____

21. En caso de contestar sí en alguna de las opciones ¿Puedes decir cómo se has manifestado esa discriminación? _____

22. Su edad está entre los siguientes grupos

De 20 a 29 años /___/ De 30 a 59 años /___/ De 60 en adelante/___/

23. sexo masculino/___/ femenino/___/

TRANSLATION

SURVEY

This is a questionnaire for research on Modes of Communication and Afro-descendant population in Panama developed by the United Nations Development Program. We thank you for filling out this form as objectively as possible in order to know more information about the culture of this community in Panama.

1. Your childhood was spent in the neighborhood _____, region _____ in the district of _____

2. You completed primary school Yes / ___ / No / ___ /

3. If you answered yes, which school _____

4. Your school was located in the region of _____ district of _____, in the province of _____.

5. Your father's nationality _____

6. Your father was born in (country) _____

7. Your mother's nationality _____

8. Your mother was born in (country) _____

9. Were any of your grandparents born in another country? Yes / ___ / No / ___ / Do not know / ___ /

10. If your answer says which country grandfather _____ grandmother _____

11. What were the most common forms of communication to keep family ties to the Afro-descendant community (mark up to three)

Family Reunions / ☐ / parties / ☐ / church / ☐ / visits / ☐ / carnivals / ☐ /

Easter Sunday / ☐ / cultural activities / ☐ / other _____

12. What was the primary language in which you spoke with your family?

13. Besides that, is there a second language you spoke with your family

Yes / ☐ / No / ☐ / If you answer yes, which? _____

14. Was there any prominent person who was recognized by your family

Yes / ☐ / No / ☐ / If you answer yes Name? _____

15. Do you feel that your family encouraged the values of Afro-descendant community? Yes / ☐ / No / ☐ /

16. If you answer yes, say how _____

17. Your family mainly attended which type of worship (Choose only one)

Catholic Church / ☐ / Protestant church / ☐ / Evangelical / ☐ /

Anglican Church / ☐ / Baptist Church / ☐ / Lutheran Church / ☐ /

18. What kind of media did your family use to keep abreast on news about the Afro-descendant community?

Cards / ☐ / phone / ☐ / newspaper / ☐ / radio / ☐ / magazines / ☐ / conversations with friends / ☐ / neighborhood / ☐ / other / ☐ / which? _____

19. Remember the name of a newspaper or magazine that was reflected in some way to people of African descent? Yes / ☐ / No / ☐ / Name of the publication _____

20. Have you ever felt discriminated against in any of these places

school Yes / ☐ / No / ☐ / community Yes / ☐ / No / ☐ /

work Yes / ☐ / No / ☐ / In the Street Yes / ☐ / No / ☐ /

Media / ☐ / other / ☐ / which? _____

21. If you answer yes to any of the options Can you explain what happened _____

22. Your age is between the following groups

20 to 29 years / ☐ / 30 to 59 years / ☐ / From 60 onwards / ☐ /

23. male / ☐ / female / ☐ /

APPENDIX D

CONSENT FORMS ENGLISH AND SPANISH⁶⁸

Formulario de Consentimiento Informado y Autorización para Participar En Una Investigación: Reconstruyendo la identidad urbana en la época post-colonial en Panamá

Investigadora Principal: Ariana A. Curtis

Consejero de la facultad: Dr. Brett Williams

Número de celular en Panamá: 6541-4420

Correo electrónico: bwillia@american.edu

Número de celular en US: 703-795-2556

Número telefónico de oficina US: 202-885-1836

Correo electrónico: ac4934a@student.american.edu

Se le invita a participar en un estudio de investigación realizado por Ariana A. Curtis, una candidata de doctorado (Ph.D.) en American University en Washington, D.C., EEUU. Su decisión de participar o no en este estudio es completamente voluntaria (de su libre voluntad).

Este formulario de consentimiento/autorización incluye información sobre el estudio. El proyecto incluye entrevistas y observaciones con hombres y mujeres que viven/vivían en la ciudad de Panamá, la antigua Zona del Canal, y/o en la ciudad de Colón. Si decide participar, usted será uno de las aproximadamente 55 personas en el estudio.

El propósito del estudio es comprender mejor como los residentes de la urbe metropolitana de Panamá entienden los cambios sociales en relación a algunos momentos claves en la historia Panameña: los disturbios de 1964; El Tratado del canal de 1977; la invasión militar de los estados unidos en 1989; y el retiro de los estados unidos en 1999.

Los resultados del estudio serán usados para comprender mejor como afectan el desarrollo y la migración a la urbe metropolitana de Panamá a los residentes en Colón, la ciudad de Panamá, y la antigua Zona del Canal, específicamente los residentes de ascendencia antillana.

El estudio será conducido en forma de una encuesta y una serie de entrevistas. Todas las entrevistas serán conducidas por la señorita Curtis. Si decide participar en el estudio, su participación se supondrá de una entrevista, que se llevará a cabo durante de aproximadamente dos horas, con la posibilidad de siguientes entrevistas. Todas las entrevistas serán grabadas. Algunas de las preguntas pueden hacerlo sentir incómodo.

⁶⁸ In the field, I formatted both consent forms to fit on the single side of one page.

Usted no tiene que responder a estas preguntas o puede pedir un reposo en cualquier momento. **Si usted decide tomar parte en el estudio, podrá dejar de participar en cualquier momento sin penalización.**

No hay ningunos riesgo físicos asociado con el estudio. Sin embargo, existe el posible riesgo de violación de la confidencialidad. Intentaremos mantener esta información de manera confidencial. Todos los nombres serán cambiados. Los archivos serán protegidos con códigos privados y serán mantenidos en gabinetes con cerradura.

Cualquier información privada obtenida en relación con el estudio será guardada de acuerdo con las leyes estatales y federales concernientes a la privacidad y confidencialidad. Cuando los datos de este estudio sean presentados en reportes, artículos, ó lecturas, no nombraremos las personas entrevistadas en el estudio, a menos que el participante específicamente pida el uso de su nombre. Esta petición tiene que ser escrita en otra hoja de papel. Es posible que la información obtenida sea usada por la señorita Curtis en publicaciones futuras. La misma protección de la confidencialidad continuará y usted tiene derecho obtener todas las publicaciones basados en esta entrevista.

Usted no recibirá remuneración para su participación en el estudio ni tampoco recibirá ningún beneficio directo del estudio. Su participación puede mejorar las vidas de los hombres y las mujeres quienes viven en Panamá, en particular los de ascendencia Antillana. Si usted desea, puede recibir una copia del reporte final. **Recibirá una copia de este formulario para sus archivos.**

SU FIRMA INDICA QUE LE EXPLICAMOS LAS EXPECTATIVAS, BENEFICIOS POSIBLES, Y RIESGOS Y QUE USTED DECIDE PARTICIPAR EN EL ESTUDIO. Si Usted tiene alguna duda, pregunta o comentario sobre sus derechos, el estudio, o de la Senorita Curtis, también puede comunicarse directamente con American University a: IRB@american.edu o por teléfono 202-885-3347

Yo, (Nombre del participante) _____
firmo este formulario de consentimiento de forma libre y voluntaria.

Firma: _____

Fecha: _____

¿Quisiera una copia de cualquier publicación basada en esta entrevista? ____SI____NO

Nombre y Firma del testigo (si es aplicable):

Nombre y Firma de la persona obteniendo
consentimiento: _____

Research Consent Form

Reconstructing urban identity in postcolonial Panama

Principal Investigator: Ariana A. Curtis Faculty advisor: Dr. Brett Williams
 US cell phone number: 703-795-2556 US office phone number: 202-885-1836
 Panama cell phone number: 6 541-4420 Email address: bwillia@american.edu
 Email address: ac4934a@student.american.edu

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Ariana A. Curtis, a Ph.D. candidate at the American University located in Washington, D.C., USA. Taking part in this research study is completely voluntary.

You are being asked to take part in this study because this project involves interviews and observations with men and women who were formerly or are currently residents of Panama City, the former Canal Zone, and/or the city of Colón. If you agree to participate, you will be one of approximately 55 people asked to take part in this study.

The purpose of this study is to better understand how residents of urban Panama understand the current social changes with regards to key moments in Panamanian history: the 1964 riots; 1977 Canal Treaties; 1989 U.S. military invasion; and 1999 U.S. withdrawal. Findings from this study will be used to better understand how development in and migration to urban Panama affect residents of Colón, Panama City, and the former Canal Zone, specifically residents of West Indian heritage.

The research will be conducted through a survey and series of interviews. All interviews will be conducted by Ms. Curtis. If you choose to take part in this study, there will be one survey, then later an interview, approximately two hours in length, with the possibility for follow-up interviews. All interviews will be recorded with a voice recorder. Some of the questions might make you feel uncomfortable. You may refuse to answer any of the questions or take a break at any time. **Even if you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time without penalty.**

There are no physical risks associated with this study. There is, however, the possible risk of loss of confidentiality. Every effort will be made to maintain privacy. All names will be changed. Files will be password protected and kept in locked cabinets. Any personal information that is obtained in connection with this study will remain private and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. When results are presented in reports, articles, lectures, or talks, the people interviewed for the study will not be identified or named unless they have specifically requested their names to be used. This request must be made on a separate piece of paper. This data may be used by Ms. Curtis for future publications. All confidentiality precautions will continue. You have the right to obtain a copy of any publications based on this interview.

You will not be paid for participating in this study nor will you directly benefit from this study. Your participation might help improve the lives of men and women who live in

urban Panama, particularly those of West Indian heritage. You may receive a copy of the final report if you wish.

You will be given a copy of this form to keep.

YOU ARE MAKING A DECISION WHETHER OR NOT TO PARTICIPATE. YOUR SIGNATURE INDICATES THAT EXPECTATIONS, POSSIBLE BENEFITS, AND RISKS HAVE BEEN EXPLAINED AND YOU HAVE DECIDED TO PARTICIPATE. If you have any doubts, questions, or comments about your rights in this study, the study itself, or Ms. Curtis, you may also contact American University directly: irb@american.edu or by telephone at 202-885-3447.

I, (Participant's Name print)_____sign
this consent form freely and voluntarily.

Signature:_____

date:_____

I would like a copy of any publications based on this interview: ____YES ____NO

Name and signature of witness (if applicable):

Name and Signature of interviewer obtaining
consent:_____

APPENDIX E

BASIC INFORMATION INTAKE SHEET

Intake Form/ Formulario de información básica Reconstructing urban identity in postcolonial Panama

Principal Investigator: Ariana A. Curtis Faculty advisor: Dr. Brett Williams
US cell phone number: 703-795-2556 US office phone number: 202-885-1836
Panama cell phone number: 6541-4420 Email address: bwillia@american.edu
Email address: ac4934a@student.american.edu

Please check all that apply:

- ☐ I am of West Indian descent
Soy de ascendencia antillana
- ☐ I am a Panamanian citizen who changed residential locations between 1989 and 2001
Soy un ciudadano panameño que cambió de lugar residencial entre 1989 y 2001
- ☐ I am a Panamanian citizen who changed jobs as a result of the Carter-Torrijos Treaties
Soy un ciudadano panameño que cambió de trabajo como resultado de los Tratados Torrijos-Carter
- ☐ I am a Panamanian citizen/resident who purchased privatized residential or commercial property in the Canal Zone
Soy un ciudadano panameño o residente que compró propiedades recién privatizadas residenciales o comerciales en la antigua Zona del Canal
- ☐ I am a Panamanian citizen or resident who has lived in the same neighborhood since (at least) 1989
Soy un ciudadano panameño o residente que ha vivido en el mismo barrio desde (al menos) 1989

Complete name (print):
Nombre completo:

Age/Edad

Date of birth/Fecha de nacimiento:

Civil status/Estado civil:

Place of birth (city, province, and country):
Lugar de nacimiento (ciudad, provincial y país)

Mother's place of birth
Lugar de nacimiento de su madre

Father's place of birth
Lugar de nacimiento de su padre:

Current address (add nearest intersection):
Dirección (incluya la intersección más cerca)

House phone/Número telefónico de su casa:

Cellular phone/Número celular:

Email address/Correo electrónico:

APPENDIX F

IDENTITY AND OPINION SURVEY QUESTIONS

IN ENGLISH AND SPANISH

Date of Birth:
Fecha de nacimiento:

Place of Birth (city, country)
Lugar de nacimiento (ciudad, país)

City of residence:
Ciudad de residencia:

Citizenship:
Ciudadanía:

Father's nationality:
Nacionalidad y/o ciudadanía de padre:

Mother's nationality:
Nacionalidad y/o ciudadanía de madre:

Length of time in Panamá?
Por cuánto tiempo ha estado en Panamá:

Languages spoken:
Idiomas que habla Ud.:

I describe my race or ethnicity as:
Como se describe su etnia o raza:

I describe my father's race or ethnicity as:
Como se describe la etnicidad o raza de parte padre:

I describe my mother's race or ethnicity as:
Como se describe la etnicidad o raza de parte madre:

Mestizo means:
Cómo se describe 'mestizo' con respecto a Panamá?

To be Panamanian means:
¿Cómo es 'lo panameño'?

The biggest problema in Panamá is:
El problema más grande en Panamá es:

The best thing about Panamá is:
Lo que me gusta más sobre Panamá es:

The worst thing about Panamá is:
Lo que menos me gusta sobre Panamá es:

Strength of answer [not sure, do not agree, somewhat agree, agree, strongly agree, choose not to answer]

Panama is fair for all racial and ethnicities
Panamá es un país justo para todas las razas y etnias.

I am glad the U.S. military is gone from Panama
Me encanta que las fuerzas armadas de los Estados Unidos retiraron de Panamá

All people deserve equal treatment under the law
Todos merecen igualdad de trato en virtud de la ley

My race has never negatively affected my social life
Mi raza nunca ha afectado negativamente mi vida social

Colon has advanced a lot since 1999
Colón ha avanzado mucho desde 1999

Poverty is a problem in urban Panamá
La pobreza es un problema serio en las ciudades de Panamá

I earn enough to own my own home
Gano lo suficiente para ser dueño de mi propio hogar

The land from the Canal Zone transfer was used equitably
Los bienes revertidos de la Zona del Canal fueron utilizados equitativamente

Not all Panamanians have benefited from the turnover of the canal
No todos los panameños han beneficiado de la devolución del canal

Foreign-born Panamanian residents should have the same rights as Panamanian citizens

Residentes panameños nacidos en el extranjero deben tener los mismos derechos como los ciudadanos panameños

Immigration is a problem in Panama today
Hoy en día, la inmigración es un problema en las ciudades de Panamá

In Panama, racial minorities have the same chances as everyone else
En Panamá, las minorías raciales tienen las mismas posibilidades como todos los demás

The Panamanian government represents my interests
El Gobierno de Panamá representa mis intereses

The U.S. government provided good jobs for Panamanians
El Gobierno de los Estados Unidos proporcionó buenos empleos para la gente panameña

Americans continue to negatively influence contemporary Panama
Los norteamericanos siguen influir negativamente en Panamá contemporáneo

Panamanians now control the Canal and Canal Zone without foreign influence
Panameños controlan el canal y la zona del canal sin influencia extranjera

I vote in most local and national elections
Yo voto en la mayoría de las elecciones locales y nacionales

West Indians have contributed a lot to urban Panama
Los Antillanos han contribuido mucho a Panamá urbana

I have felt discriminated against because of my race or ethnicity
Me he sentido discriminado debido de mi raza o etnia

I have been able to invest in newly privatized property
He sido capaz de invertir en los bienes recién privatizados

I enjoy the influx of immigration to urban Panama
Me gusta la afluencia de la inmigración a Panamá urbana

Panama City has advanced a lot since 1999
La ciudad de Panamá ha avanzado mucho desde 1999

I support the changes that have happened in the Canal Zone since 1999
Apoyo a los cambios que han ocurrido en la zona del canal desde 1999

The Canal is the most important resource in Panama
El canal es el recurso más importante en Panamá

I frequently visit the former Canal Zone
 Utilizo con frecuencia la zona del canal

Panama used to suffer from racial discrimination
 Panamá sufría de discriminación racial en el pasado

Panama still suffers from racial discrimination
 Panamá sigue sufriendo de discriminación racial

I have always felt like an important part of this country
 Siempre he sentido como una parte importante de este país

I dislike the number of foreigners who now live in Panama
 No gusta la cantidad de extranjeros que ahora viven en Panamá urbana

My race has no affect on how people treat me
 Mi raza no ha afectado como la gente me trata

Panamanians benefit most from the turnover of the Canal Zone
 Panameños benefician más de la devolución de la zona del canal

Blacks in Panama continue to be discriminated against
 Los negros en Panamá siguen siendo discriminados

Yes or No

I am a Panamanian citizen who changed residential locations between 1989 and 2001
 Yo soy un ciudadano panameño que cambió mi lugar residencial entre 1989 y 2001

I am a Panamanian citizen who changed jobs as a result of the Carter-Torrijos Treaties
 Yo soy un ciudadano panameño que cambió el trabajo como resultado de los Tratados Torrijos-Carter

I am a Panamanian resident who purchased newly privatized residential or commercial property in the Canal Zone
 Yo soy un residente panameño que adquirió bienes recién privatizados residencial o comercial en la zona del canal

I am of West Indian heritage
 Soy de ascendencia antillana

I would like to be contacted for an interview
 Quisiera ser contactado para una entrevista

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