“Gwan ah Foreign”
Multicultural Education and the Schooling of the West-Indian Transnational

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To understand the unique experience of West Indian immigrants in Hartford public schools

- What makes them successful?
- What are some challenges they face?
- What role does schooling play in their academic careers?
- What/who are some key change agents in their quest for success?
Participants

- Paul, 24, Kingston/St. Mary, Jamaica
- Dawn, 27, Christ Church, Barbados
- Sean, 22, Portmore, Jamaica
- Cassandra, 22, Portmore, Jamaica
- Ronald, 25, Port Antonio, Jamaica
- Allison, 25, La Horquetta, Trinidad
- Kim, 19, Castries, St. Lucia
What makes West Indians a unique immigrant group?

- Currently West Indian immigrants make up a little less than 10% of Hartford’s population. The majority of them reside in the North End of Hartford in the Blue Hills, Asylum Hill, and Albany communities.
- The majority of them come here as English speakers with a patois dialect.
What have others said?

- Cultural Ecological Theory – Ogbu (1978)
- “Education as a means of adopting American culture” – Olneck (2009)
- Essentialization – Morgan (2010)
My findings...
Identity

- “I didn’t know I was Black until I came here.”—Paul
- Racialization—Lee (2005)
- In-group vs. Others – Waters (1999)
- West-Indian American vs. African-American
- Gender matters
“In Trinidad everybody is mixed up. So you can be Black, White, Douglahe, Indian, Chinese, Syrian, or Spanish. We don’t just have Black and White; and a lot of people are everything mixed up in one, not one specific thing. That is why when I fill out forms I will check other”

-Allison
Identity

“I didn’t know I was Black until I came here.”—Paul

Racialization—Lee (2005)

In-group vs. Others—Waters (1999)

West-Indian American vs. African-American

Gender matters
Success

- Definition
  - The American Dream
  - The success of family and community

- Measurement
  - The failure of others
  - The improvement of life
  - Dual-frame of reference
“Yes I would say that I am successful because I am 27-years-old and I am happily married with a beautiful son and I live in a beautiful house in West Hartford. I’m not gonna say that it was easy, but I came here from a one-roof house in Christ Church to a three-bedroom house in the suburbs and I accomplished everything I wanted to.”

--Dawn
Schooling

- Schools abroad
  - Technical/Vocational training
  - Gender-based curriculum
  - Multicultural curriculum
Schooling Continued...

- Hartford Public Schools
  - Transition
  - Racial and Ethnic Micro-aggressions
  - Lost in translation
  - Ahead of the game
  - Parental involvement
  - Learning disabilities
Change Agents

- The New Arrival Resource Center aka
  The West Indian Program
  - Mission
  - Accomplishments
  - Obstacles
What does this all mean?

- The West Indian experience is unique and needs special attention
- Ogbu’s theory is more grey than it is black and white
- Resource centers need to be reopened to prevent students from falling between the cracks
THANK YOU!

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