

“Gwan ah Foreign”

Multicultural Education and the Schooling of the West-Indian Transnational

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Ed 400: Senior Research Project
Educational Studies Program
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Purpose of this project

- 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)
- Dual Frame of Reference –Lopez (2003)
- *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, Douglah, 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

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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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- ◉ Prof. Leslie Desmangles (evaluator)
- ◉ Gertrude Desmangles
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