Editorial

Changing Times

The Journal of the Department of Behavioural Sciences (JDBS) is an online, bi-annual, open-access, peer-reviewed journal. It is a medium through which the Department of Behavioural Sciences at the University of West Indies (UWI), St Augustine Campus, Trinidad and Tobago, can better disseminate its research and improve its connections with the wider public.

At heart, the university is a public institution. We are producers of common knowledge and culture; knowledge factories and culture industries if you will. In recent times as the neoliberal paradigm has spread across the world private corporations are increasingly becoming the gatekeepers of this knowledge and culture. Unfortunately, the values of many of these private corporations do not align well with certain intrinsic values of the university. The public role of the university in this situation for example has begun to suffer. Primarily this can be linked to the fact that much university research is now locked behind pay walls and common knowledge is becoming enclosed rather than shared.

In an effort to counter such a trend the JDBS embraces the online open-access (OA) journal model. Research done by Laakso, Welling, Bukvova, Nyman, Björk, et al. (2011) notes that:

OA journals are the growing trend in academic publishing. They exist alongside the pay-wall model that currently dominates in academic publishing and OA are growing in number year on year. It was estimated that there were around 19,500 articles published OA in 2000, while the number has grown to 191,850 articles in 2009. The journal count for the year 2000 is estimated to have been 740, and 4769 for 2009; numbers which show considerable growth.

One has only to look at the list of journals currently using open journal software to see that OA journals are an approach that is considered appropriate by many academics across the world and is growing in popularity with the public too. As such, the JDBS finds itself in good company. And as we grow and develop it is our hope that we will gain the support of our colleagues here at UWI and elsewhere in the continued production of knowledge and the dissemination of that knowledge.

In the 21st century the publishing paradigm is changing. New technologies, software development and website content management systems now align nicely with the skills academics have always had of editing, reviewing, writing and managing journals. The JDBS is part of this shift. The JDBS is an endeavour to reinvigorate the public role of the Department and the University. It is an opportunity for scholars both within the Department of Behavioural Sciences and outside it to reconnect and share their work with the wider general public and their fellow academics. In order to facilitate this move and promote high research standards the JDBS employs a double blind peer review system, staffed and managed free of charge by our editorial team. Without the time and effort of this team and also the labour of our contributors the journal would not be possible. With this in mind I would like to take the opportunity to thank all our peer reviewers and contributors for their hard work. I would also like to thank our two editorial
assistants Ms. Tanika Riley and Ms. Brionne Antoine for their hard work, and our web liaison at the Alma Jordan Library, Mr. Khemchandra Persad Singh, as well as Professor Ann Marie Bissessar and Dr. Ronald Marshall for their support in the conception, development and execution of this first issue.

The subject of this first issue is “Debating Multiculturalism”. Whether it is in local ethnic, intra-national or inter-national politics, in recent times, debating Multiculturalism has taken centre-stage both inside and outside the academy. Discussion on the ideology, psychology and policy implications of what is Multiculturalism and how, if at all, it should be implemented in various organizational, institutional and cultural contexts have been widespread. Much dialogue and dispute over and across both the philosophy and politics of Multiculturalism is on-going and it has been shown comparatively across various fields that Multiculturalism is not a single doctrine nor does it represent an already achieved state of affairs. As such, Multiculturalism can be said to encompass a continuum of political strategies and processes that range from the dangerous and conflict-inducing to the promotion of tolerance and the production of empathy. This reality has made it clear that just as there are different multicultural societies, so there are different multiculturals. In what follows in this first issue of JDBS we use the wide-ranging debates around the concept of ‘Multiculturalism’ and its various definitions to understand the various political, social, psychological and cultural issues of living in a world defined by difference and ask what is the role of Multiculturalism – empirically, philosophically and ideologically – in producing the worlds we all live in?

Dylan Kerrigan
Editor

REFERENCES


MULTICULTURALISM AND ITS DILEMMAS: A PROLOGUE

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Much of the debate on multiculturalism has so far been directed to the following themes – differences between ‘race’ and ‘culture’, a container view of the state, the disconnect between nation and state or to use Rex’s definition, in terms of nations and nationalism, the consequences of immigration, globalization and the displacement of traditional elites. It will emerge however, that on closer inspection, multiculturalism and how it is defined is a resource that groups employ to achieve their interests, however articulated.

A great deal of the debate has also focused on the issue of race and culture. It is accordingly important to recognize the importance of the difference between the two concepts. The idea of race has a lot to do with the earlier conception of race in terms of physical attributes, such as size of skull, nature of the hair, height and colour and size of the lips. In short visibility of individuals becomes an essential ingredient in the identification of ‘races’. The notion of culture, on the other hand, refers to the practices, customs and way of life of a group of people or of groups as they cope with the problems that confront them in a specific context.

One then has to agree with Van de Berghe (1967) that race is based on historical criteria while ethnicity has to do with cultural manifestations. In short, one is constant while the other is structural. In much of the earlier literature, particularly in cultural anthropology, and based on rather impressionistic data, there was a tendency towards what Gluckman and others have described as ‘reification’, that is a tendency to see customs and cultural forms as unchanging and static. Since most cultural groupings in most cases shared similar physical features there was a tendency to use race and culture interchangeably. It is important also to recognize that at times racially similar groups often have prejudices and resentment towards one another much like other groups have towards one another. Culture is therefore a critical factor in the relations between and among groups.

This would be the factor that gave visibility its importance in race relations studies. But as researchers were quick to point out, African-Americans were largely American in culture but were deemed to belong to a separate race in a way that Italian, Poles British, French and Spanish were not. For this reason research into race relations can safely be classified into an environment from a preoccupation with a ‘pure’ and ‘closed’ system into one that is moderately open, and ultimately into ‘open’ approaches stimulated no doubt by imperial expansion, explorations and discoveries and other forces of globalization as well as by the growth of the discipline itself. The ‘closed’ approach was clearly associated with writers such as Geertz, M.G. Smith, Van den Berghe, Shils and Weber whereas the relatively open was closer to the approaches of writer such as Cox, Miles, Kuper, A.D. Smith and Schermerhorn. The ‘open’ model on the other hand was clearly associated with Rex, Gordon, Baiton, Barthe, Park, Brass, Cohen and Hall.
It is important to appreciate also that the multiculturalism debate emerged during the seventies and eighties in countries as disparate as the U.K. and Canada, Australia and France, and in the context of differing circumstances. In Australia the problem was due to population whereas in the other countries the policy emerged in the aftermath of the break-up of Empires and in the attempt to establish new States. Indeed the Imperial powers – whether British, French, German, Spanish, Portuguese or Danish, all had to face the problem of a clash of cultures and how to deal with them. Generally, France had pursued a policy of assimilation but was forced to abandon it in favour of a policy of association to avoid becoming “a colony of her colonies” to use the words of one of the deputies in her legislative chamber. The British who concluded partly that the colonies were beyond the reach of English civilization and could not be ruled directly, opted for systems of ‘district administration’ and indirect rule through traditional institutions and delegated a great deal of power and initiative to ‘the man on the spot’.

This is the historical legacy that has bequeathed to multiculturalism in so many countries the dilemmas and problems that they now encounter. Yet it must also be recognized that under colonial rule, there were also problems associated with multiculturalism. In Trinidad and Tobago, while de facto policy was to assimilate both East Indians and other ethnic groups, the colonial state was also pledged to protect and respect East Indian culture.

There can be no doubt however, that race is a powerful unifying symbol. One has clearly to distinguish between predisposing and triggering factors. Although the experience reveals that a great deal depends on the mass of a country. Also racial appeal has to compare with other demands. In Trinidad and Tobago it is often claimed that Whites have a separate culture and that Indian and African cultures are the more authentic cultures that should be given due recognition. Yet it should be noted that the white category includes Spanish, English, Scottish, German, French and that each group has had to endure discrimination against its culture. In the case of Indian and African culture it was also clear, as Braithwaite’s study social stratification in Trinidad and Tobago made clear that substantial modification had taken place in the original cultures. New elites have emerged and contend for power. However as universal adult suffrage was introduced, contending cultures were created and appealed for recognition and ascendancy.

In countries such as Canada and Australia a similar tendency has been observed and has shown that the definition and demarcation of multiculturalism has altered and shifted according to the imperative of political and economic interest. In Australia however, the demographic ratio between different groupings has had an important influence on the shape of multiculturalism. Clearly political interests have been a driving force in some of these. One accordingly cannot agree with Rex when he observes that recent cultural expressions in Scotland, Wales and Ireland have no major political significance. Recent political developments in central-local relations clearly demonstrate otherwise. In the case of the U.S, M.G. Smith convincingly demonstrated that changing the policy on multiculturalism did have some surprising results (Smith in Premdas. 1993:27).

In that article, Smith demonstrated that the change in Federal Policy to award grants to all ethnic groups led to the resurrection of dying ones and the creation of some new ones. Such groups were thus able to attract financial support for its elites as well as its mass and also were invested with a potential for political capital. More importantly Smith had shown that scholars had
confused the entire issue by “the analytic handicaps and obfuscations that result from indiscriminately assimilation as one, phenomena of differing kind and basis” (1993:2). Importantly he points to the failure to distinguish ‘perduing’ features that are difficult to alter as against those related to situations such as dress, hairstyle or behavioural patterns.

This explains why political parties find it necessary to court some cultural groupings. It will be recalled in Trinidad as elsewhere, the theme of slavery and its associated discriminations was able to mobilize a potential among many ethnic groupings and catapult its political vehicles into power. By 1970 however, that theme was exhausted as new forces and groupings along with their elites had emerged. Thus it is clear that multiculturalism and its changing versions are intricately bounded up with the nature and emergence of the changing elites.

There can be no doubt too that the stage has been set by emigration and immigration as a result of the need to meet the demands of the various economies. The perennial labour shortage in the Americas and the Caribbean and elsewhere explains the coming together of a medley of peoples and cultures all competing for space and ascendancy. Undoubtedly the forces of globalization then as now also are having an impact on the cultural debates within countries and which finds expression in what are described as Diasporas. The importance of the Diasporas, of course, varies with the size, history and power of such ethnic groupings. The Jews have long been regarded as an important diasporic grouping. Recently in a number of emerging countries however there is renewed interest in overseas communities and their relations with the ‘home countries’. In some cases, dual and even multiple citizenship is allowed and even encouraged.

In this respect Steven Vertovec in his insightful paper has cogently brought together the various problems associated with multiculturalism and classified them into the conventional as against the new challenges it faces (Vertovec 2001). According to Vertovec, there is the policy aimed at correcting the shortcomings in the assimilation of disadvantaged ethnic groups in a number of areas. This may also involve institutional restructing as well. There is also ‘weak’ multiculturalism, allowing diversity in the private sphere, but insisting on a high degree of assimilation in the public domain. A stronger version exists where there is recognition in the public sphere and in political representation. Vertovec also quotes approvingly a section of the Parekh report in which the Commission wrote: - “The Communities today are neither sufficient nor fixed and stable. They are often porous formation. It is impossible to invest totally as the sole bearer of the legal rights to difference. Many individuals with a strong sense of belonging and loyalty towards their communities do not intend their personal freedom to be bound in perpetuity by communal Norms. (Vertovec 2001:8)

While one can agree with Vertovec that recognition of cultural identity ought also to involve multiple identities, for a variety of reasons having to do with voting rights or with security of the State, it might at times be necessary to distinguish between primary and secondary identities. The primary identity will always have the greater claim. (Paresk 2000:8) How such multiple identities and relations will square with appropriate diversity in public institutions Parekh does not say but if identities and boundaries are “porous” their allocations based on diversity will be accordingly quite fluid Vertovec (2001) is right to point out that policies of multiculturalism will not only have to face the challenges of transnational loyalties but also the very real phenomenon of the inability of the so-called ‘container state’ to administer policy within its own borders. The
age of the Internet and Facebook has certainly dramatized the limits of state power. In this respect, it should be noted that the state no longer has a monopoly as the agent of socialization.

In Trinidad and Tobago it will be remembered that Dr. Williams following the incidents of 1970 reminded his listeners that there could no ‘Mother Africa’ or ‘Mother India’ or ‘Europe’, forgetting that soon after independence there was the famous African Safari; forgetting as well that there would always be a ‘grandmother Africa’ or a ‘grandmother India’ or ‘Europe’ given the responsive and historical chords that they represent. For this reason in the U.S., Canada, South Africa, the Caribbean and Australia in one form or another, Diasporic Associations will always exert a major force on the social and political environment. In the U.S. at one time race relations theory argued that relations would follow a predictable trajectory namely conflict, accommodation, culminating in assimilation. History has been unkind to this prediction. What is clear though is that political calculations are critical for multicultural policies.

This is clearly revealed in Ang & Stratton’s paper on the Australian experience with multiculturalism (Ang & Stratton 1999). Following Canada, by the early 1990’s, Australia proudly declared that it was a multicultural nation. By 1996 however the Government fell because it was perceived that it had gone too far in that direction. A major opponent even called for the abolition of the policy in a country with 150 different cultures, 80 religions and 90 different languages. Yet as Ang and Stratton pointed out official representation of multiculturalism policy may not fit nicely with prevailing cultural realities.

Part of the problem in Australia was the constant need for population. In the words of one Minister the issue was “populate or perish”, a dilemma it should be noted faced by both Europe and the U.S. In the latter case though it is the shortage of specific skills and the age composition of the host population that is the problem. Some critics like Hanson contend however that some cultures are alien to the host society. What is clear though is that some interests in the broad sense fear that a particular interest would be endangered by demographic imbalances.

Factors such as these explain why in countries such as the Netherlands there has been a retreat from multiculturalism and a return to the policy of assimilation. Indeed in many countries this retreat is becoming more visible while in 2008 the Council of Europe declared that the policy had led to ‘Communal Segregation and mutual in comprehension”. Multiculturalism, it was argued in European circles, had culminated in the social isolation and ghettoization of immigrants, political radicalism and the fostering of illiberal practices among immigrant groups and to increased stereotyping among ethnic groups. Europeans societies were said to be “sleepwalking to segregation”. Not surprisingly these concerns have been imported into the debates in Canada as well as other Countries. Yet according to Will Kyminkca the evidence based on careful comparison does not bear out the various criticisms levelled against multiculturalism in Canada. It must be conceded though that anti-immigrant postures by political parties do have electoral appeal (Kyminkca n.d).

What is at issue then is a problem faced by colonial rulers and modern leaders alike namely the appropriate policy for highly visible minorities by the host Society. Various solutions have been devised over the years. They range from affirmative action, scholarships, incentives, and preferential treatment in appointments, quota systems, and expulsion or as a last resort genocide.
Some of these approaches have been criticized as being reverse discrimination. The source of the problem is clearly the distance in social and at times geographic distance between the centre and the periphery.

So far as Trinidad and Tobago is concerned it should be noted that some cultures are more easily integrated than others. Hindu Culture with its caste system is more resistant to assimilation than say Muslim culture. Yet the history of colonial rule and the aftermath of globalization reveal clearly that the forces of assimilation are now far more powerful than they were during the seventies and eighties. Bollywood is now a pale imitation of Hollywood, with almost all its drawbacks. There is now Hindi rap and many imitators of Michael Jackson. In Trinidad what passes for African and Indian culture is a highly modified and reconstructed version of what are essentially composite cultures. Once it is recognized that culture is not a reified template but a set of rules that enables groups to cope with their problems, that it involves adaptation and reconstruction it will become clear what Indian, White or African culture in Trinidad and Tobago really is. Our elites do not shop in New Delhi or Accra. Their destinations are usually Miami or New York.

Why then does culture have the capacity to influence politics in the ways that it does. The answer is to be sought in the nature of the society in which it plays out. Societies where foundations have been shaped largely and decisively by immigration or emigration are more prone to these problems. The demographic ratios of various groups under the system of universal adult suffrage are also a major factor as the differing political histories of Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago make clear. There is also the question of economic benefits for the various ethnic grouping involved. This is why the issue of reparations becomes enmeshed with that of multiculturalism. There is also the question of the attraction and retention of political support. Appeals to race and culture, it is important to note, resonate during periods of economic and political crisis. Finally there is the issue of the competing claims between the centre and the periphery. Public policy becomes more complicated and costly to administer when it has to be modified to suit a variety of disparate cultures. One solution that is increasingly being adopted is to have Equal Opportunity Commissions to filter and evaluate the various processes involved. Yet the powers conferred on such Commissions can be crucial since in many cases it involves the accountability of those who have the power to distribute the resources of the society. In this way, power, interest and resources are all locked together. The essays that follows address these and related themes.

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MANAGING THE MULTICULTURAL CHALLENGE IN THE PUBLIC SERVICES OF A SMALL, PLURAL SOCIETY

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This article examines the mechanisms introduced in the public sector of a small plural society, Trinidad and Tobago, to ensure that the diverse population employed within this sector are afforded equal opportunity. The article argues that while a number of institutions and procedures have been introduced to manage and contain issues relating to conflicts and charges of discrimination by the various groups, one major shortcoming has been the inability of the various governments overtime to confront the challenges of managing multiculturalism in a more structured way. Hence, to date there has been no stated policy with respect to managing diverse groups or structured approaches to allocate funds to the various groups within the society. The end result is that the institutions and procedures that have been introduced have merely addressed challenges as it relates to direct discrimination of persons rather than address challenges of the more fundamental issues of multiculturalism.

Introduction

Trinidad and Tobago is generally accepted as a classic example of a plural society. According to Furnival (1948) in a plural society, each group maintained its own religion, culture and language, their own ideas and ways and only met in the ‘market place.’ He argued that the dominance of one group by the other was the essential precondition for the maintenance of social and political order. Trinidad and Tobago is a small country with a population of approximately 1.3 million persons. The two majority groups within the country are East Indian descendants, the majority of whose ancestors were brought from India as indentured servants and an African descended population whose forebears were slaves who were imported to work on the plantations. It is well known that the seeds of discord among the two ethnic groups were partly sown by the British, who with their politics of divide and rule pitted these groups against each other. (Hitzen 1994, Brown 1999). In addition, factors including the historically developed complex of rules, routines and institutional arrangements were also influential in creating what over time became a ‘clash of culture’ between the two major groups. The East Indians who were an essentially agrarian group tended to settle in the rural areas while the Africans who were skilled and semi-skilled professionals settled in the urban areas. Apart from the occupational and settlement patterns, however, there were also major cultural differences between the two groups.

It was to be expected that there would always be mutual suspicion and distrust between both groups. However, these tensions were further exacerbated when both colonies prepared for independence in the 1960s. Indeed, as writers as Despres (1967) and Ryan (1972) were to point out, political mobilization for electoral purposes appealed to the primordial instincts of both groups. But, it must be noted, it was more than a fight for political power. Rather, it should be
recognized that those who controlled the state also would control the state purse and be able to
dispense patronage to their supporters. Thus, understandably, political rivalry between the two
groups was intense and as Brown (1999:6) appropriately describes it, became decisively rooted
in ethnic cleavages. Indeed, in Trinidad in 1961, the pre-independence elections were marred by
outbreaks of ethnic violence as the two majority groups fought for control of the state. The well
documented outcome was that the African-dominated party won the first General Elections and
went on to retain state control for approximately three decades. La Guerre (1993:18) observed,
though, that it was not merely an ethnic problem. Rather, he argued “instead of a problem of race
relations we had a problem of dominance and unequal incorporation.”

In the case of Trinidad, and in Guyana as well, it was found that over time membership in the
ruling parties provided a direct entry to key positions in the public services and state-owned
enterprises. While in the case of Guyana, many of the state policies with respect to appointment
of persons to the public sector and state enterprises was vehemently opposed by the East Indian
population and led to the establishment of a Commission of Enquiry, in the case of Trinidad and
Tobago, the claims by the East Indians went unheeded. Indeed, it was not until 1987 that one of
seven commissioners appointed under the Commission of Enquiry Act Chapter 19:01 to hold an
inquiry in public ‘to consider the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and to
make recommendations’ was rebuffed when he proposed that an Equal Opportunity Commission
be established. His justification for the establishment of such an institution was that certain
Associations such as the African Association of Trinidad and Tobago, the United National
Congress, the President of the Bar Association as well as individuals and organizations had been
vociferous in their call for such an institution. He argued then that “to ignore the demand is to
fail to come to grips with the forces which stimulate such a demand. Grievances, unless they are
channelled, investigated and dealt with are likely to explode in diffuse directions as happened in
1970.”

He further explained:

One might contend that the existing Constitution already provides protection against
discrimination on the grounds of sex or race, or that an Ombudsman exists to
investigate all cases of maladministration. The truth is, however, that constitutional
motions are beyond the reach of those of ordinary means; whilst the Ombudsman is
empowered to investigate only the public sector and is usually subject to a number of
limitations.”

The request for the establishment of an Equal Opportunity Commission was however struck
down by the other Commissioners who declared that while the proposal should be further
examined; there was no justification for including such a body in the Constitution of the country.
They justified their decision on the grounds that the fundamental human rights of equality before
the law and the protection of the law and equality of treatment from any public authority was
already secured to the citizen and duly entrenched in the Constitution of the country.

The claims of ethnic discrimination by the East Indian sector of the society were not seriously
addressed until 1991. In that year, under the People’s National Movement, a primarily Afro-
centric government, the Centre of Ethnic Studies was established under the ambit of the
University of the West Indies. In their report which was published and presented for public
viewing in 1994, the Directors of the Centre commented as it related to employment practices in the public sector:

The selection method of using competitive interviews has been criticized as being biased against Indo-Trinidadians and women in particular. The bias appears to exist in the composition of the interviewing panels, which in the past sometimes included only Afro- Trinidadians. Even if the greatest objectivity is maintained, the impression may be given, and unsuccessful Indo-Trinidadian candidates can claim that they were the victims of racial discrimination.\textsuperscript{vi}

The findings of the Report concluded that East Indians were generally under-represented at certain senior levels and in ministries, departments and boards. For instance, in 1970 in the ranges 60+ 20.7% of the employees were East Indians while in 1982 the percentage had increased to 35.6%. (p.93). A number of explanations including the historical assimilation of the groups along with the level of education attained by each population were advanced. In another report, the Centre for Ethnic Studies also found that East Indian applicants were often bypassed for scholarships. Indeed, a more recent report by the Equal Opportunity Commission also substantiated the earlier findings. On the 20\textsuperscript{th} October, 2011, The Attorney General of the country had this to say on the matter:

"The findings of the Commission raise a prima facie case of political and racial discrimination. The mysterious, secretive process used to grant assistance facilitated this unjustifiable discrimination. The lack of transparency and integrity in the distribution of public funds is a cause for grave concern. Such an inequitable and biased distribution of State resources contravenes both the spirit and letter of the constitutional right to equality of treatment" stated Ramlogan.

Ramlogan stated that there can be no greater injury to the public interest than the conceptualisation and execution of a scheme designed to use state funds so as bestow political patronage and then to seek to cover up this elaborate scheme by misleading both the commission and the parliament of Trinidad and Tobago.\textsuperscript{vii}

The conclusion was therefore that even as late as 2010 certain sectors of the population were not accorded equal opportunity. The perception of the East Indian sector was, understandably, because the African government, the People’s National Movement, had remained in power, from 1956-1986;1991-1995 and then from 2001-2010 the resources of the state with respect to employment opportunities, scholarships, housing and allocation of funds had been dispersed to the supporters of that party.

**Evaluating the Mechanisms to allow for equal opportunity of Groups in Trinidad and Tobago**

A number of institutions and procedures have been established overtime in the country of Trinidad and Tobago from as early as 1960. Indeed, it was suggested that one of the more powerful pieces of legislation that allowed for inclusion of all persons irrespective of race, class, age or gender was the Constitution of the country. In addition, however six main avenues of redress were introduced. These were:
(1) The Public Service Commissions;  
(2) The Public Service Appeal Board/Appellate Tribunal;  
(3) The Office of the Ombudsman;  
(4) Public Service Unions;  
(5) Judicial Review;  

Yet, as will be evident, all these institutions have so far achieved minimal success. The Public Service Commission, for instance, was introduced in 1950 under the Order in Council. It was closely modelled along the institution that was established in Britain in 1855. According to a Guyanese academic Collin (1967) the reasons for the introduction of the Public Service Commission and other Commissions which were introduced later in the 1960s were as follows:

(a) Political independence for the colonies would prove dangerous for the integrity of the public services;  
(b) The colonial administrators were concerned about the style and direction of radical nationalist agitation and they felt they had to protect public servants from the precipitate action of the politicians;  
(c) Service Commissions were necessary in order to maintain public service neutrality.

When Trinidad and Tobago attained independent status in 1962, the Public Service Commission became an executive agency and was vested with a number of powers. The powers of the Commission included the capacity to make appointments, promotions, acting appointments, discipline, and transfers throughout the public sector. They were also vested with the authority to regulate their own procedures and they promulgated regulations which set out the principles and guidelines to be followed in making appointments, promotions, transfers and the exercise of disciplinary procedures. The various Chairmen of these Commissions claimed that inherent in these regulations were considerations of equity, fairness and justice.

Later on, however, the Commissions were subject to a number of criticisms including that of inefficiency and of placing ‘square pegs in round holes.’ The system of appointment and promotion based on the criterion of seniority also ensured that the status quo was maintained. Indeed, it has been suggested by many that what the policy of maintaining the status quo might have done was to reinforce what is often referred to as ‘institutional racism.’ The phenomenon of institutional racism occurs where the institutions themselves become imbued with prejudices, conventions, biases and world views which inform their visions of groups and what group relations should be. In the course of implementing their responsibilities, institutions therefore end up practicing as much discrimination as individuals. By maintaining the principle of seniority therefore, the various Commissions ensured that those who first entered the public services would necessarily attain the top positions irrespective of their ability to lead or their capacity to function at the higher levels.

The Public Service Appeal Board, it has been suggested, also became a creature which promoted institutional racism. Because much of the powers of this Board was constrained to appeals relating specifically to disciplinary matters forwarded to it by the Public Service Commission, it was, some argue, a very ineffective mechanism to ensure that equality was maintained. The
Unions, too, have been criticised on a number of fronts. It is alleged, for instance, that the unions representing workers are vociferous only during wage bargaining and matters of discrimination are not given priority. In their defence, these unions claim that while sometimes they do investigate the matters, the final decisions are taken by the various service commissions. They argue, though, that many matters are forwarded to the Ministry of Labour or the Industrial Court and the costs of legal fees and other administrative expenses are defrayed by them. While this is true, some may argue that in a plural society such as Trinidad and Tobago, it is surprising that during the period 1962-2010, these unions have not submitted one case of ethnic discrimination. One may question, therefore, if incidents of ethnic discrimination do exist, or whether the unions are merely reluctant to address such claims.

Brown (1999) has asserted that the Public Services Association (PSA), the union representing public servants, steadfastly avoids issue pertaining to race and ethnicity, preferring inaction to taking sides. Yet, that is not quite true. In 1999, the PSA was quite vociferous in their allegations of racial discrimination. Their claim was that Indians were getting top positions at the Airport Authority. While it may be argued that this may have been an effort by the Union to maintain equity, counter to this may very well be the question of why, when the shoe is on the other foot, similar allegations were not made. It could well be due to the relationship between these unions and the political parties in the country.

A major institution that has been described by a number of writers as a toothless bulldog has been the Office of the Ombudsman. This institution, as elsewhere, has as its major aim to address complaints of maladministration and discrimination. Yet, investigations by these institutions have been stymied due to a number of challenges. Some of these challenges include:

(a) Limited financial and human resources;

(b) Lack of adequate record keeping by the ministries, departments;

(c) Inattention to rules, regulations and procedures within ministries and departments;

(d) The inability of the Ombudsman to sanction the ministries and departments.

However, a far more critical consideration has been the limitations imposed by this Office by the Constitution of the country. Section 93 of the Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago circumscribes the jurisdiction of the ombudsman limiting his investigations to decisions and recommendations made or acts done or omitted by government departments and authorities in the exercise of administrative functions. Also in the Third Schedule to the Constitution, some matters are not subject to investigation namely the conduct of civil or criminal proceedings in any court, action taken relating to contractual or other commercial transactions and actions taken in respect of appointments or removals, pay, discipline, superannuation or personnel matters. Yet as the Ombudsman in his 1998 report pointed out, the bulk of complaints were from public officers and employees of statutory and local authorities alleging discrimination in employment practices such as preferment of acting appointments and promotions, which, it was alleged, contravened the Public Service Regulations and departmental policies and procedures. These were procedures from which the Ombudsman and his Office were constitutionally debarred from investigating.

Prior to the year 2000, many public employees were unable to seek judicial review on matters deliberated by the Service Commissions. However, since then the courts have overturned many
of the decisions taken by the Commissions. The awards by the Courts to employees have been well accepted by employees both in the public as well as the private sectors. In addition to increasing the confidence in the judiciary, however, the intense scrutiny of the Commissions has led to improvements in the actual functioning of the ministries and departments.

When the Government, The United National Congress, an East Indian party came to power in 1995, it was to be expected that policies and mechanisms to address the issue of inclusion should be placed on the priority of the new government. A number of reports were accordingly commissioned including The International Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (Office of the Attorney General, 2000a), The International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination (Office of the Attorney General 2000b), and The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Office of the Attorney General 2000c). Legislation was also enacted including legislation which established joint select committees to investigate the workings of the administrative apparatus of the state (Joint Select Committees Act 29 of 1999).

In 1999 also the debate of whether it was necessary to introduce further legislation resulted in the drafting of Equal Opportunity Legislation (Equal Opportunity Bill 1999) and later the Act came into force in 2000 and which was amended in 2007. The Act was quite specific in that it sought to prohibit certain kinds of discrimination, to promote equality of opportunity between persons of different sex, colour, race, origin including geographical origin, religion and marital status or ability. The Commission established under this Act would not only have the power to investigate matters but would also have the authority to order or award the payment of compensation, damages or fines as it deemed fit. In other words, the Equal Opportunity Commission was empowered to address individual acts of discrimination directly. Unofficial reports indicate that from the inception of the Commission to the year ending 2010 a total of one hundred and seventy eight cases were received by the Commission. However, the majority of the cases were essentially issues relating to maladministration and very few cases of racial discrimination were submitted for action by the Commission.

Conclusion: The Challenges in Managing Diversity

It appears from the previous discussion, that many of the institutions that were established to allow for greater inclusiveness have had little or no real success. In the case of the more recent introduction, the Equal Opportunity Commission, racial inclusiveness has not emerged as a major consideration. Yet, complaints over the years have been real and ongoing.

Apart from issues of race, though, it should be recalled that the concept of diversity refers to the collective mixture of human differences and similarities along a given dimension. Wise and Tschirhart (2000) for instance, notes that dimensions of diversity among workforce members include race, culture, religion, gender, sexual preference, age, profession, organizational or team tenure, personality type, functional background, education level, political party and other demographic, socioeconomic, and psychographic characteristics. They note that the interpretations of the concept of managing for diversity may vary widely and is treated as a self-conscious programmatic approach affecting the policies, culture and structure of an organization. They argue that it is more than setting quotas for minority representation and avoiding discrimination or bias. Indeed, managing for diversity should focus on achieving positive outcomes from the interaction of individuals who vary in their degree of heterogeneity.
While there is no dearth on the issue of managing diversity, there have however been few suggestions that have been offered that can be actually adopted to assist the public manager to manage diverse groups within organisations. For instance, in the case of Trinidad and Tobago, how can one manage claims of the various racial, religious and other groups without perhaps impinging on the beliefs of others? It should be recalled, too, that in small plural societies such as these, the political and administrative spheres are closely interconnected. The greater challenge in the case of Trinidad and Tobago, however, is that the mechanisms that have been introduced overtime may be not directed to the management of diversity but actual borders on achieving the goals of equal opportunities which is often described in terms of social justice and of redressing past wrongs.

The goals of managing diversity as has been pointed out before, is far wider in scope. It involves treating people as individuals, recognizing that each employee has different needs and will need different kinds of assistance to succeed. The larger question involves making it possible within the organization for an individual to maximize their potential, which is different from the focus of the equal opportunity thrust of focusing on positive action and concentration on measuring the numbers employed in certain groupings.\(^x\)

It is no doubt true though that recommendations can be advanced and explored to allow not only for the greater inclusiveness of groups within the public sector and the wider society as a whole but also to allow for individuals within these sectors to maximize their full potential as well. In order for any proposed policy or recommendation to succeed, though, the major driver must come from the political directorate of the country. The idea of the need for a multi-cultural policy is long overdue within a country where there is a wide diversity in terms of racial, religious and other groupings. In other words, and in conclusion, it will be extremely problematic to offer recommendations for the managing of diversity in any sector if deliberations are not made at the highest level of any country.

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CULTURE CONTACT: TRINIDAD “PRE-HISTORY”, HISTORICAL REPRESENTATION AND MULTICULTURALISM

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The narrative of events in this paper connects Trinidadian “pre-history” to present discourses on multiculturalism. This narrative form is chosen to help conceptualise how social groupings are made textually, how people(s) become essentialised, named, represented and who has/had the power to do this. This descriptive method is chosen to aid understanding of the way historical work contributes to Western colonial stereotypes and erases alternative pictures of the past. The paper considers the question of whether multiculturalism is simply a term that comes into existence in the 1960s and 70s as a form of government policy in white settler nations such as Canada, the USA and Australia, or if indigenous, non-legislative forms of multiculturalism can be established in the pre-historical era of the Caribbean too.

Keywords: Culture, Multiculturalism, Pre-history, Trinidad.

Introduction

“The English word prehistory was first introduced in 1851 by Daniel Wilson in the title of his book The Prehistoric Annals of Scotland. The French préhistorique has been used since the 1830s to refer to the time before the appearance of writing. In the archaeological literature, the precolonal peoples of the New World are routinely labelled as prehistoric, with ‘prehistoric’ generally referring to the time before written history. However, the dichotomy of prehistory versus history is really a product of Western linear time conception and is therefore not entirely applicable to a study of native societies in the Caribbean. Hastrup correctly argued that the Western views of the past and of time are clearly different from ancient or non-Western societies, but are in no way superior to them” (Reid 2009: 2-3).

The simple and erroneous story of Trinidadian pre-history begins and centres on the tale of two and only two local groups: the Caribs (war-like cannibals) and the Arawaks (noble, peace-loving farmers). This “dichotomized schema of indigenous” cultures in Trinidad (Sand 2002:284) is similar to what other authors have found in much of the literature of indigenous groups from around the world. Vine Deloria, Jr. (1969) recounted a similar story when discussing the mainstream US narrative of Native-American Indians who were either described as noble savages or fierce scalpers; while Christophe Sand (2002) provides an example of the divide between Melanesian and Polynesian societies that has been maintained in much of the literature on the Pacific. The Polynesia/Melanesia dichotomy Sand discusses demonstrates how lighter
skinned Polynesians were often portrayed by early Europeans as noble savages with a higher socio-cultural development while darker-skinned Melanesians were invariably presented as more primitive with strong cannibalistic tendencies. Sand goes on to demonstrate that recent archaeological research in the Pacific refutes these Western colonial stereotypes.

For Peter Hulme writing in the 1980s a binary picture of social relations in the past is not something one should be surprised or naïve about. It is a common trope throughout Western colonialism and its representation of historical actualities to divide populations into groups (Williams 1962) and most specifically two groups – good and bad. That such binary logic appears in local narratives is evidence of Western cultural imperialism familiar to, and of, post-colonial studies1 (Chatterjee 1993). The binary tells of a cultural logic beset by “fear of difference,” and race, racism and the production of inequality; a narrative where those who are benevolent, easy to control and deemed to be potential allies are seen as noble savages, while those less passive and who understood the initial encounter with Europeans in indigenous cultural terms, resisting, and challenging this new worldview, cast as cannibalistic and violent; textually othered, but also enslaved and murdered too. Such “othering,” in addition to a simplification of difference puts colonial ideologies of race and ethnic hierarchy deep into the historical record. Such ideologies shape how the past is imagined, remaking potential forms of transculturation, ethnogenesis, multiculturalism, and the various strategies individuals used to cope with complex intercultural social situations, into tales of homogeneity, order and hierarchy (Moore 1994).

This paper does a similar job of refutation to Sand (2002) and Reid (2009), and aims to draw attention to recent archaeological fieldwork of the Caribbean and Trinidad that recasts local pre-history3. In particular, the paper considers the question of whether multiculturalism is simply a term that comes into existence in the 1960s and 70s as a form of government policy in white settler nations such as Canada, the USA and Australia, or if by taking a culture-historical approach (Reid 2009:12) forms of multiculturalism such as transculturation and ethnogenesis can be established in the pre-historical era too. A culture-historical approach entails reimagining the history of different human groups based on “detailed local sequences of artefacts and information about their geographic distribution” (Reid 2009:12) alongside certain paleodemographic information such as patterns of migration and ethnogenesis. In excavating the prehistory of Trinidad in this way this paper highlights that the cultural stereotypes imposed by white Europeans and incorporated into local culture and school curriculums is not supported by the archaeological record and suggests that forms of transculturation and multiculturalism are a more correct way of imagining the pre-historic past of Trinidad.

Key terms:

Ethnogenesis: Traditionally, studies in human biodiversity define populations in the context of typological racial models. Such racial models are imprecise generalizations and social constructs that fail to capture important local patterns of human biodiversity (Jackson 2008). An ethnogenetic perspective dissolves assumptions about racial groups. They can no-longer be “bounded biological entities that move about or stay put while maintaining their constitution over time. Biologically, there has been a constant flow of people and genes over such variously constructed ethno-linguistic boundaries” (Hornburg
2005). The anthropologist William Sturtevant coined the term ethnogenesis in 1971 to describe the continual process of change that cultural identities undergo as a result of interaction with ethnic others in situations of both social conflict and social cooperation. In a similar mode to non-legislative multiculturalism, ethnogenesis is a constant process of reinvention where the identity of a particular cultural group is negotiated and renegotiated in response to interaction and relationship with cultural others (Sperry 2007:9).

**Transculturation:** Transculturation was an improvement on the anthropological stalwart of the time, “acculturation,” and its one sided connotation of cultural change (Newson 1976:4). Transculturation, implied far more give and take, it is a concept of process, implying that when different bodies of knowledge, ways of life and experience meet, over time they build, whether consciously or not new forms of culture and ethno-genetic relations. The point to acknowledge here is that transculturation is a process of mixture with the onus placed on a varied dialogical process (Bakhtin 1984): “to express the highly varied phenomena that…come about…as a result of the extremely complex transmutations of culture…real history is the history of its intermeshed transculturations” (Ortiz 2003:98). For Ortiz then, transculturation was not about acquiring another culture, adapting and assimilating certain ways, but rather it was about mixture and everything changing, perhaps very slowly, under such interaction.

**Multiculturalism:** In the contemporary political sense Multiculturalism can refer to the legislative protection and equal rights of various cultural groups. These rights and protections ensure the State’s commitment to equality in national situations of multiple human differences and was a popular policy idea that moved from Canada in the early 1970s to Australia, Western Europe and elsewhere. Multiculturalism in this sense creates new forms of belonging to citizenship and country while protecting persons’ cultural origins and diasporas (Modood 2007:49). The basic premise of multicultural legislation and/or policy in white settler nations such as Canada, Australia and the USA is that all cultures and their members are entitled to equal rights and protections. It is important to note that as legislation multiculturalism is best understood as accommodation of different groups rather than the integration of different groups – and as such this definition is problematic for many people and in many places (Modood 2007:50). Not least, in a world where not all cultures and persons accept the idea that all peoples and cultures deserve equal respect legislative multiculturalism is a better idea in principle than practice (Okin 1999:4). It often creates more problems than it solves.

In light of the dysfunction of multicultural legislation another definition of multiculturalism – a non-legislative one – has emerged and is useful for this paper (Charles 2001). In this other sense of the term the idea “less culturalism, more multi” is useful. In Trinidad and Tobago, for example, many researchers and much ethnographic data have demonstrated a successful, non-legislative form of multiculturalism in existence already (Stoddard & Cornwell 2001:32, Taylor 1993, Khan 1993). While the state does not legislate a multicultural law as White Settler nations did, the idea of multiculturalism in Trinidad and Tobago is enshrined in its national anthem of “every creed and race will find an equal place” and on the national coat of arms – “Together We
Aspire, Together We Achieve”. While such symbols do not erase the inter-cultural tensions that exist in Trinidad and Tobago it is possible to describe a local form of multiculturalism outside of legislation where different cultural groups are treated with mutual respect by the State. In fact, as Premdas (1999) has pointed out ethnic conflict in Trinidad while apparent from time to time has never dissolved or erupted into ethnic violence. Rather, different cultural groups discuss, disagree and negotiate with each other to produce new forms of cultural identity and ethnicity. As Charles Tidwell points out “the most significant implication of Trinidad multiculturalism is the fact that it works” (2001). The negotiation demonstrates how multiculturalism in practice might best work – not as an accommodation of difference but as the creation of new entities. The ethnic label “dougla” – formerly a derogatory word for a person of East Indian and Afro-Creole descent – is a good example of this. The word is now used by people to self-identify and for many its negative connotations have been erased. It is this form of positive cultural interaction, multiculturalism and difference-making that this paper suggests has been erased by traditional historical descriptions of the Caribbean’s past.

Erasure

The common narrative of pre-history discussed by many people in much of Trinidad ends with erasure of the native population (Forte 2004). This is a simple story where all Amerindian influence has been assimilated or eroded from local consciousness by the peoples and cultures of first colonialism and then capitalism. Such story-telling grew from and was inscribed in various texts written from the 1600s into the late 20th century that were accepted as the authority on the matter of Amerindian survivals in the Eastern Caribbean. As anthropologist Maximilian Forte notes, such colonial narratives conditioned the ability of many scholars and locals “to even perceive Amerindian survival and adaptation” (Forte 2004:2). Instead, colonial and archaeological texts reduced “cultural change to cultural loss and miscegenation to extinction” (Forte 2004:2).

Thankfully, there are numerous examples of Amerindian culture and people alive and well in Trinidad today that we can submit as evidence contra the erroneous writing out of Amerindian presence. There is the annual Santa Rosa Festival – a month-long series of events orchestrated by the local Carib Community that celebrates its 208th anniversary in 2012. There is the existence of numerous Amerindian words and place names in everyday parlance, not to mention cultural practices like hammocks, animal masquerades, crops, and medicinal knowledge attributed to localised Amerindian forms. There is the archaeology centre at the University of West Indies that is engaged in Amerindian research and reports its discoveries of important archaeological finds in the media. Lastly, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago established an Amerindian Project Committee in 2006 to report on matters relating to Amerindian Culture in Trinidad, and October the 14th each year is earmarked as Amerindian Day.

Viewing the erasure of local Amerindian populations as a practice influenced by institutionalised colonial and post-colonial history implicates earlier anthropologists, historians and archaeologists in the textual reproduction of problematic representations of the past, and present, is useful for understanding the modern historiography of Trinidad. It also raises the question that if entire populations have been erased in text what else may have been mis-represented? In this
light it is worth bearing in mind the observation made by Chaterjee (1993) in reference to Indian history: If history is an imagined community whose imagination is it? And who gains from one particular version of events over another?

To address this question of what forms of social interaction have been erased from the historical record and who benefits, the narrative of pre-colonial Trinidad presented next demonstrates a greater degree of cultural diversity and interaction in pre-history than is typically imagined. This interpretation of events in the historical and archaeological record lends itself as evidence of socio-cultural mixture and multiculturalism that can be used to refute more traditional accounts of fixed social groupings in the pre-historical record and the extension of such thinking into colonial history (Wright 1998). This alternative narrative also helps the reader to understand that on European arrival Trinidad was more complicated and culturally mixed than many think. As archaeologist Samuel Wilson argues:

[In situations in which people with different ancestries and cultures live in close proximity and interact intensely, an individual or group gains little advantage by the strategy of clinging to old and conservative ways. Instead, invention and innovation is a better strategy for finding new solutions to problems and for attracting followers and allies. In looking at the modern situation, the cultural impact of the Caribbean on the world is far out of proportion to its size. With fewer than 40 million people (in 2003; Rand McNally World Atlas 2004), the entire population of the 30 or so Caribbean countries is less than that of Poland, Tanzania, or Colombia. But the region has disproportionate influence in terms of world music, art, literature, sports, and global cultural trends. I believe the explanation is that in multicultural situations there is more opportunity and indeed a great advantage to combining genres, styles, and ideas in new ways. This seems to have been the case in the prehistoric Caribbean just as it is in the region today (Wilson 2007:6).

This historical observation is important because it helps to frame and re-imagine the social history of multicultural Trinidad today as one that emerges from a legacy of cultural solidarity, differential acculturation (Crowley 1957) and transculturation (Ortiz 1993) between individuals and “social units”, rather than one that is strictly the result of the social relations of a plantation colony with a subservient coloured population run by white management, which in any case is not accurate either.

**Geostrategic Features**

For Amerindian migrants who have come to be labelled in cultural waves such as the “Archaic, Saladoid, Barrancoid, Arauquinoid and Mayoid peoples” (Boomert 2000) Trinidad’s geostrategic characteristics made it “an important ‘gateway community’” [italics mine]. For millennia Trinidad featured in the movement and migration, much of it circulatory, of various people from the South American mainland throughout the Caribbean archipelago and beyond (Curet 2005:27, Wilson 2007:1, Rouse 1986). Two specific features of the island’s location contribute to this fact. The first is Trinidad’s proximity to the South American continent to which it was once joined – today the island’s north-western tip is only seven miles away and its southern-western tip only thirteen miles away – meaning it is and was visible from the South American mainland. The second...
feature is a dense web of sea channels and rivers making southern Trinidad a part of the South American coastal zone and Orinoco delta (Boomert 2000:3).

These water passages and also the Northern Range of mountains (an outlier of the Andes mountains of Venezuela) acted as temporary barriers to population movement. Such features lend weight to the idea that a variety of distinct South and Central American social units that settled in the island were kept apart for long periods with little interaction and developed separately. At the same time, Trinidad’s proximity to the mainland and other islands meant it formed part of an extensive Amerindian interaction sphere (Boomert 2000:1). It is possible to imagine in this early period that there was a diffusion of culture on the island while the mountains also ensured differential development between Amerindian units settling there. As Curet notes:

The result was a rich mosaic of cultures and intercultural interactions between and among island groups, with the cultural fabric constantly renewed by new arrivals (or the departure of earlier settlers in back-migrations) and by ongoing changes among older, more settled groups (2005).

Ortoiroids’ (5000 – 200 B. C. E.)

The oldest archaeological remains found in Trinidad – a bifacial chipped, stemmed spearhead – can be placed in the period postdating the Paleo-Indian big game hunters of the El Jobo complex (Late Pleistocene to Early Holocene times – around 12,000 years ago) and are indication that lithic hunter-foragers occupied Trinidad (Boomert 2000:49) when evidence suggests the island was likely connected to the mainland and a peninsula of South America not an island of the West Indies (Boomert 2000:40-41). In anecdotal support of such a claim, the oral traditions of the Warao Indians of the Orinoco Delta who inhabited the Delta since at least the Early Holocene period still describe a time when – “the Serpent’s mouth was dry land and a land bridge existed between Trinidad and the continent” (Boomert 2000:44).

Pre-ceramic hunters, fishers and food collectors from the South American mainland probably settled Trinidad by around 7000 to 6000 years ago (Boomert 2000, Reid 2007, 2009, Curet 2005, Wilson 2007:1). Banwari Trace in southern Trinidad was until recently the oldest archaeological site in the West Indies and scientists determined its early inhabitants were actively engaged in “hunting, gathering, and shell (mollusc) collecting” (Reid 2009:7). Recent archaeological research has revealed that St John, also in south-western Trinidad is as old as Banwari Trace. In fact, shell samples from St John produced radiocarbon dates of approximately 5000 B. C. E. “Banwari Man,” is the oldest human remains found in the southern Caribbean and is the most substantive evidence of settlement in southern Trinidad. Discovered in 1969 (Harris 1978) the remains carbon-date to about 3,400 B. C. E. and under the imperfect classification system long established and used by Rouse for the entire Caribbean (Rouse 1992:31-3, 61) the site falls within a series called Ortoiroid.

The language, premises and epistemology of and inspired by Irving Rouse, a highly influential force in Caribbean archaeology, is impressive in its conclusions but lacks the theoretical nuance of the multiple dimensions of early migration that might speak to a situation of multiple groups
mixing socio-culturally as has been found to be the case with the La Hueca cultural group in Puerto Rico (Chanlatte Baik 1990, Curet 2005, Reid 2009, Wilson 2007). Thankfully, over the last few decades younger generations of Caribbean archaeologists such as William Keegan, Peter Sigel and Samuel Wilson have advanced alternative positions that emphasize a plurality of cultures and in the case of La Hueca have shown that at least two different cultural groups introduced the Ceramic age to Puerto Rico.

We can suggest that the majority of the earliest immigrant people of the Ortoiroid series likely came from similar environmental settings to Trinidad around the mouth of the Orinoco and what is today called Guyana (Boomert 2000). Rouse work went further geographically and using a range of linguistic, biological, cultural and archaeological evidence suggested the ancestry of Archaic settlers in the Caribbean can be traced to both Amazonian and Central American origins. With the former being the Ortoiroid that migrated to Trinidad and then northward and the Casimiroid being the latter, who probably migrated from west to east, possibly from Belize in the direction of Cuba (Reid 2009:14).

Defined as a singular culture by mid twentieth century archaeologists the Ortoiroid is said to have been a lithic culture defined by an absence of pottery and the presence of artefacts made of ground stone, shell and bones. Its various “social units” may have used wood, basketry, feathers, and other perishable materials. To colour objects and their skin people perhaps made rare decorative beads and ornaments by grinding and carving stone or shell and used red mineral pigment (red ochre). On arrival to Trinidad these people were semi-nomadic and pre-agricultural, their economy varying over time, shifting from gathering and hunting (Keegan 1994, Guarch-Delmonte 2007) to high dependency on marine-oriented subsistence, eating fish, shellfish, game, and wild plant foods (Harris 1973, 1978) to agriculture (Reid 2009:16).

These first settlers utilised bone projectile points as arrow tips and fish spears (Cruxent and Rouse 1969, Harris 1973:119), and animal teeth as fishhooks (Reid 2009, Boomert 2000). Given the proximity of many of their settlements to water and their ability to collect raw materials and foods from a vast variety of marine environments, archaeologists surmise that early in Trinidad’s history the canoe was in regular use (Wilson 2007) and contact with the mainland was not a difficult feat. Such a picture permits us to imagine on multiple levels – individual, cultural, group – regular socio-cultural contact between the “social units” of the mainland and the island during this early period of habitation. Such contact might be read as leaning toward interaction and ethno-genetic; disrupting the singular culture ideas of mid-twentieth century archaeologists. The following description by Boomert can be interpreted as evidence of such a multicultural situation:

The littoral subsistence orientation of the Bawari Trace people is consistent with the premise that the Early Archaic Mesoindians of Trinidad were skilled canoe-builders and competent navigators. Watercraft obviously formed an integral part of Banwarian society, as it did among most Archaic communities of the South American coastal zone and islands. This is illustrated by, for instance, petrographic analysis of the stone tools and unworked rock fragments found at Banwari Trace and St John middens, which shows that the Banwarian ground stone implements are manufactured of both Trinidadian and overseas rock material (Boomert 2000:67).
Radiocarbon chronology suggests the sea reached its present level 3000 years B.C.E. (Wilson 2007:56, Boomert 2000:57). It is possible by then that Trinidad had settlement, group differentiation, rudimentary trade relations and perhaps some type of “symbiotic” relationship from the interaction of hunter-gatherer and agriculturalist groups (Turnbull 1962). The period of settlement spanning from 4000 B.C.E. until 1000 B.C.E. are known as the Middle and Late Pre-Ceramic period or Late Archaic (Boomert 2000:75, Harris N.d.). It is noted for the presence of foreign stone implements indicating non-local groups spent time in the area (Harris N.d.) and for settlements in areas of sandy soil, where it is probable cashew trees, tobacco and other staple foods were grown indicating rudimentary social organisation. Sites found in east Trinidad for this period show residency patterns of long-lived settlement that lasted several generations.

Most interestingly the Archaic period has been defined by the absence of pottery. Recent studies, however, challenge this assumption by demonstrating evidence of pottery at least a thousand years before the arrival of another wave of what Rouse’s classificatory system defined as singular culture – the Saladoids. As Reid goes on to demonstrate multiple Saladoid groups is a more accurate picture than any singular culture (Reid 2009:16).

“Cultures do not migrate”

Generally, archaeologists of the Caribbean have dealt with issues of migration, cultural contact and social change in superficial ways, without engaging the complexity of the socio-cultural processes involved. Treated as “monochromatic” events (the “wave theory of migration”) rather than adaptation and non-uniform development, Euro-American theories of culture contact and migration speak of culture, language and populations migrating together when it is highly likely autonomous societies, kin groups and even individual households interacted with other groups independently from the rest of the community. As paleo-demographers Anthony (1990:908) and Curet (2005:33) point out “cultures’ do not migrate. It is often only a very narrowly defined, goal-oriented subgroup that migrates” and “the decision to migrate is made at a level lower than culture, such as the individual, household, community or descent-group level.”

In terms of migration as process and social phenomenon then, the archaeological evidence of both non-local groups, alongside long-lived residences and various temporary population movements, such as fishing or hunting trips, seasonal rounds and ritual peregrination can be read as indicative of socio-cultural dynamics that included transculturation, cultural diffusion, acculturation, alliances, ethno-genetic relations and multiculturalism (Curet 2005:33, Reid 2009:17). While much of the evidence of the Archaic period in Trinidad is circumstantial, it nonetheless, alongside the observation that population movements are complex phenomena, permits the belief that early in the island’s human history different cultural groups and individuals regularly came into contact and mixed not in a one off short burst between eras, but often and over a prolonged period of time complicating Rouse’s neat historical classifications and representations.
The Ceramic Age

From around 500 B.C.E. – 300 B.C.E. Rouse posits the Saladoid people arrived and settled in the island alongside Archaic culture (Rouse and Alegaria 1990; 63, Boomert 2000; 104, Reid 2009). The Saladoid may have been previous inhabitants of the flood plain of the Central Amazon before migrating to Venezuela (Newson 1976:15). This “wave” brought a distinct pottery sub series Rouse called the Cedrosan Saladoid. He named it after two sites, Saladero, on the Lower Orinoco where characteristic painted ware was found by itself, and Cedros in Trinidad where painted ware alongside zone-incised-cross hatched designs was found. This dual discovery in Trinidad of distinctive pottery styles can be interpreted as further evidence of transculturation, or at the least, interaction between different groups on the island (Reid 2009:17).

The Saladoid – traditionally understood as a singular group rather than the more recent groups Reid suggest (2004, 2009) – were manioc horticulturalists, who brought agricultural techniques and cultivation (Newson 1976:37), and probably existed alongside late Pre-Ceramic communities for at least 500 years. Rouse believed they displaced the late Pre-Ceramic groups gradually, by acculturation to Saladoid culture and their horticultural patterns of subsistence (Boomert 2003:152, Rouse 1986). The previous communities and households were absorbed and gradually replaced with new biological and linguistic contributions (Rouse 1986:103). Recasting this interaction in more culturally plural terms this initial situation could be described as a period of cohabitation and adaptation between various households and groups acting autonomously and independently to create mixed populations that over time mixed with other mixed populations in the creation of differently sized communities, villagesxv and egalitarian social organisation as indicated from burial sites which do not indicate difference in status amongst those interred (Reid 2009:21). Concurrently, the diverse habitation pattern of the Saladoid as indicated by the many settlement locations found on the islandxvi suggests the Saladoids were not monolithic but rather multiple local groups (Reid 2009:21), with a certain level of autonomy and we might assume a level of ethnic differentiation depending on, among many other things, availability of land and other resources (Wiley 1976).

The wide variety of artistic shapes, ceramics and pottery styles, frequently decorated with white and red painting or with sculpted clay forms introduced by the Saladoid is further evidence of multiple local groups. These hard, well-fired and relatively thin pieces of pottery display highly symbolic design motifs, further implicating connection to a stretch of South American coastline running from southern Suriname to the eastern border of Venezuela, also known as the Orinoco Valley region, as potential continental antecedents (Boomer 2000:127-145, Boomert 2003:153, Rouse 1986:10-11). Over the next 500 years however, this connection to the mainland appears to diminish and “geographically distinct cultural sub traditions crystallis[e] in Trinidad and the east Venezuelan costal zone, the Guianas and the Lesser Antilles, respectively” (Boomert 2003:162).

Rouse and Division

In terms of archaeological approach and method, from around 2000 years ago to European contact approximately 500 years ago distinct cultural periods and population groups found locally in Trinidad have been separated and subdivided on the basis of different ceramic styles and other cultural signs (abstract ideas that can be physically identified in the archaeological
record in a structure called “modes”) in a method conceived by Rouse (1986). Based on material culture not present in the islands before the Saladoid migration these ceramics styles are the main marker of Caribbean migrational periods. While these series, sub series and styles are a necessity for pre-historians to mark meaningful periods of change and innovation they are not ideal for consideration of how cultural identity was defined and negotiated in day-to-day interaction. For example, Rouse believed each spatiotemporal combination ought to contain a different people and culture (1986:7). Furthermore, in relation to the interaction between the Saladoid and the Archaic groups Rouse’s use of ceramics tells us very little about transculturation, ethno-genetic relations, differential acculturation and multiculturalism.

In order to produce a bounded entity then, Rouse’s divisionary model essentialised culture and implied homogeneity over a large area. This simplification erased the more likely scenario – based on Trinidad’s location as an important hub in a large and established interaction sphere that has seen many different groups come and go long before the island’s contact with the West – of ethno-genetic relations and cultural intermixture i.e. adaptation, non-confictual interaction and cultural change (Guarch-Delmonte 2007:100). As Moore illustrates in his work on Native American groups of Montana, cultural groups change through their interaction and relationships with other groups through time. “Survival and persistence depended upon their ability to accommodate and incorporate the social, economic and political changes they experienced through interaction with cultural others” (Perry 2007:10). This definition is not unlike the non-legislative definition of multiculturalism in the present and recent past discussed by many authors (Regis 1999, Eriksen 1990, St Bernard 1999, McCree 1999, Charles 2001, Walcott 1998, Khan 1993).

Rouse’s idea is problematic because it implies only one culture can be present in one region at one time. In ignoring population dynamics such as size, fertility, mortality, political strategies, the variability of resources, availability of labour and ancient political economies that would have occurred in communities across the island and produced variations in socio-cultural and political outcomes the hegemonic narrative of Trinidad’s pre-history erases a situation where groups may not be eradicated or acculturated but instead settle and develop alongside and in combination with each other in multicultural ways.

Another problem recognised with Rouse’s position stems from making each era appear as though it develops out of the previous one (Allaire 2003). As many note (Boomert 2003:145, Curet 2005) it is far more likely various periods have ancestries separate from the former traditions. These distinct ancestries trace throughout the central Colombian Andes and the Amazon basin including as far west as modern-day Peru and as far south as lower modern-day Brazil. The organisational contingency of Rouse’s position also erases the identification of Trinidad throughout its pre-history, and particularly its late pre-history, as a site and corridor for various individuals, ethnicities, ideas, goods and cultural institutions that frequently adapted to one another (Pantel 2007). In sum, Rouse’s tradition blocks the more likely situation that the Saladoids were not simply a monolithic bloc from South America but a multicultural society that developed on islands, and across the Caribbean, from 500 B. C. E. to 600 C. E. (Reid 2009:27). Boomert considers the tail end of this period as a scenario called the Saladoid/Barrancoid interaction sphere (2000:217).
Neoindian Period (ca. 1 C. E. – 1500 C. E.)

After 250 C. E. archaeologists of the Caribbean believe the Barrancoid people (Osgood and Howard 1943, Reid 2009; 29) of the Lower Orinoco, who perhaps centuries earlier encroached on the Saladoid xiii (Newson 1976:15), migrated down river toward the sea and crossed the body of water today called the ‘Serpent’s Mouth,’ then settled in southern Trinidad (Boomert 2000:100-123, 217-221). Their appearance and further encroachment on the already developing Saladoid group settlements appears to begin at Erin Bay on the south coast where Barrancoid pottery has been found in Saladoid settlements. The constant evidence of encroachment, suggests from a paleo-demographic perspective that there was constant interaction between the Saladoid and the Barrancoid populations at least in a form of trade and differential acculturation (Reid 2009:30) and perhaps that elements of the Barrancoid population went to live in Saladoid villages. Boomert also suggest this in arguing pottery remains for the period of 250 C. E. – 750 C. E. show, “trade, intermarriage and other forms of dense interaction between both islands [Trinidad and Tobago] as well as the Lower Orinoco Valley” (1996:24). This viewpoint imagines sustained sociable interaction through the centuries possibly as a result of common ethnic or linguistic origin (Allaire 1997, Boomert 2003:162, Boomert 2000:253-267) and certainly indicates intense cultural contact.

Along the Orinoco between 400 C. E. and 800 C. E. Barrancoid communities faded or merged (Hornberg 2005; Reid 2009:32) and evidence points to expansion by a new group characterised as Arauquinoid. Elements of this population specifically ‘the Macapaima,’ whose pottery is known as Guayabitoid (Saunders 2005), and ‘Nepoyo,’ whose pottery is known as Mayoid, moved along the Orinoco river to the coast before crossing to settle first in Icacos and Guayaguayare, sites on the southwest and southeast of the island respectively (Allaire 2003) before dispersal both across and off the island. Over the next few centuries Arauquinoid settlement intensified and distinctly local exchanges and communication lines between the mainland and other islands established, developing the complexity and interconnection of Amerindian society in the region (Kipfer 2000, Delpuech and Hofman 2004).

At this time it is known much regional trading xiv is taking place on the South American mainland between many groups (Boomert 2000:491) while at the same time precise stylistic similarities with the mainland as might be evidenced in stone specimens, pottery and designs disappear (Alliare 2003). This period in Trinidad’s past is referred to as one of ‘insularity and regionalisation’. Between 600 C. E. and 1200 C. E. the exchange and communication networks allow the consolidation of independent local village polities across the Lesser Antilles, including Trinidad, and populations grow. Further evidence of population growth in Trinidad can be noted by a multiplication of sites, compared to previous eras. These are:

 Identified by the presence of middens, the variation in the depth and extent of the deposit indicating the temporary or permanent nature of the settlement…the archaeological evidence seems to suggest that sites in Trinidad were occupied continuously for long periods, although the sites of individual houses within the settlement may have been moved (Newson 1976:33)

This growth in population implies stability, non-conflictual cohabitation and adaptation between local groups.
Boomert notes this period sees the emergence of Taino cacicazgos, or chiefdoms, of the Greater Antilles and on the mainland (2000:219). A similar hierarchical system may or may not have emerged amongst Amerindians in Trinidad as discussions vary. Alliare states this is because the prehistory of the island occurs in situ, “first in relative isolation following the initial period of colonisation which led to its…justification as a centre. Evidence then suggests that the Lesser Antilles, as their geographic positions exposed them, became peripheral to developing centres of more advanced cultures and societies in the Greater Antilles and coastal Venezuela” (2003).

This evidence can be interpreted as various forms of localised culture indigenous to Trinidad existed apart from groups on other islands. In this late period of Trinidad’s pre-history, these native Amerindian groups related to one of three linguistic families Arawakan, Cariban and Waraoan, and form part of large regional island-to-island and island-to-mainland trading networks. We know for example that the Warao of Venezuela were frequent visitors (Highfield 1997). There is also physical evidence of cultural interaction between not only various groups in Trinidad and the mainland, but also across islands with intensified cultural ties between those in Trinidad and the Amerindians of Grenada, St. Vincent and Tobago (Boomert 2000:24).

Around 1300 C. E. a new group appears to have settled in Trinidad, and has been described as a population demonstrating the ability to absorb cultural influences from various directions (Alliare 2003:222). This reading can be interpreted in two ways; as already existent tribes involved in transculturation and adaptation, or the arrival and existence of a variety of groups with distinct cultural traits; both interpretations indicate cultural mixture. While this “new” group’s pottery is related to the pottery of the Lokono (Arawakan speakers) and the Kalinago (Carib speakers) Europeans called this late group the Island Caribs. It is more accurate to describe ‘Island Caribs’ as the umbrella term used by Columbus for all the many different tribes he encounters. Columbus probably met a far more multicultural society than history would have us imagine.

To summarise the situation post 1000 C. E. : in the period immediately prior to contact with the Europeans, archaeological evidence, paleo-demographic theory and anthropological imagination posits there were three overlapping and related cultural and linguistic groups present in Trinidad showing increasingly structured social organization, with signs of more elaborate religious rituals and of elite class formation (Harris 1973, 1978):

1) those with a painted pottery tradition with origins in the central Orinoco region [Arauquinoid]; 2) those with pottery showing fine-line incised decorations, possibly originating from the Colombian coast or the Central Amazon [Saladoid]; and, 3) those using broad-lined incised and modelled pottery originating from the neck of the Orinoco delta, ‘a strong centre with wide influence’ according to Harris [Lokono, Kalinago and others] (Forte 2005)

This rigid picture can be also described with added emphasis on cultural combination:

At the time of discovery both Trinidad and the Lower Orinoco Valley formed multilingual and multi-ethnic conglomerates of indigenous societies of varying
Complexity, i.e. ranging from bands of hunters/fishers/collectors to typically tribally organised horticultural ‘local groups,’ often ‘big-man collectivities, and, perhaps, nascent chiefdoms. Ethnic and linguistic fragmentation seems to be characteristic of the South Caribbean in early historic times…Clearly the socio-political, ethnic and linguistic fragmentation suggested by ethnohistorical sources, is not reflected in a similar cultural segmentation, at least not as concerns ceramics (Boomert 2000:493).

Summary

This paper has rethought the dominant archaeological narratives of ethnic separation, monochromatic migration and lack of cultural mixture in Caribbean pre-history. In many ways just as the Trinidad and Tobago state can be implicated in the erasure of Amerindian heritage in the present through a lack of census category for persons of Amerindian descent, the work of well-intentioned archaeologists of the 20th century can be classed as neo-colonial in the sense of producing clear racial and ethnic divisions where a situation of prolonged and constant differential acculturation and interaction was more likely. To paraphrase Susan Stryker in a discussion of social power, archaeologists have the social power to determine what is considered primitive and advanced, normal or savage or noble – “and thus to transform potentially neutral forms of human difference into unjust and oppressive social hierarchies” (2008:36). As such, it is important to rethink the established narrative; question what such thinking might be indicative of; and consider what is its legacy in terms of accounts produced by scholars on later periods? Is ethnic and racial division the only way to imagine and reconstruct the past? Is it a mode of thought best suited to the imaginations of Euro-American thinking and colonialism as seen through the eyes of the coloniser?

In the “colonial encounter” (Hulme 1986) mechanisms of difference-making, regardless of the presence of ethnic self-ascription are, as Forte has called it, the “original act of engineering” (2005:46). As Hulme notes of the power inherent in the colonial encounter: “colonial discourse may misrecognise, but it also has the power to call its categories into being” (1986:213). One group’s definition runs through time while social variability is often lost to time as the colonial view of group boundaries and dynamics manufactured from the past becomes accepted locally.

This reproduction of colonial worldviews, replicates the power dynamics of colonialism maintaining them as forms of symbolic violence and neo-colonialism well into the modern era (Thomas and Clarke 2006). It is an intrinsic part and conduit of the discursive process that relates colonialism to capitalism – sustaining the relationship of domination and subordination. This myth or ‘positivistic perspective’ (Curet 2005:28) contaminates investigations of the continuity of transculturation, cultural mixture and the processual nature of migration, colonisation and cultural change, not just in pre-ceramic time but in modern ones too. It can also be viewed as a form of ideological racial-boundary policing that protects the integrity of a fabricated ‘whiteness’ and its essentialised ‘superiority’ (Robinson 1983) over discussion of cultural mixture, interaction and change. Recent attempts at re-engineering indigeniety into the island’s history according to Forte (2005:215) do little to instil faith in historical accuracy. Forte notes a meeting of neoliberal dynamics and local politics (state patronage and capital accumulation for coherent cultural groups). Things should not be so neat. In and of itself such simplicity is an alarm bell for anyone seeking to better understand a modern multicultural society.
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i As Sharpe notes, we should recognise that post-colonial studies itself is a part of the colonial encounter and that Fanon and other anti-colonial writers, such as C L R James and Aime Cesaire, “were geographically and historically removed from the institutional development of postcolonial studies. Unlike the literature of decolonisation, which was bound up with Third World national liberation movements of the sixties and seventies, postcolonial studies is primarily a First World academic discourse of the eighties and nineties” (Sharpe 2000:114)

ii “Analysis of mitochondrial aDNA has been carried out and is ongoing on precolonial populations from several islands…This research is aimed at determining place of origin, affiliation, and migratory routes of people and more generally to identify the ancestors of…indigenous Caribbean peoples, as well as their routes of migrations and settlement” (Hoogland, and van Gijn 2008:14). See also Torres, doura, Keita and Kittles (2012) – ‘Y Chromosome Lineages in Men of West African Descent’.

iii “I understand that Chatterjee’s purpose of asking “Whose imagined community?” was to disrupt the interpretations of normalised processes of nationalism in the modern world. What was at stake of course, was assessing whose imagination was being considered in the making of the nation” – Chaturvedi (2007:3)

iv Following Curet (2005) and Anthony (1990) a ‘social unit’ covers a majority of instances including the individual, household, community, descent-group and culture

v In the Lesser Antilles the Archaic-age people (those who only used stone, shell, bone and wood tools) are called the Ortoiroids

vi Today archaeologists rely less on tools left by big game hunters as substantive evidence for dating so this initial period is anecdotal.

vii Recent preliminary investigations of the Banwari remains indicated that the famous Banwari man could in fact be a woman” (Reid 2009:9) of between twenty five to thirty years old.

viii Even as we assert Rouse’s broad classificatory approach we need to be mindful that within this broad stroke several local groups emerged

ix Evidence of continued and improved used of the canoe can be found in what are called Columbus’ notes themselves, when he writes on his first glimpse of the island of Trinidad, sighting a large canoe with twenty-four ‘Indios’ in it (Columbus diary cited in Williams 1962:4). While Martyr in another translation of Columbus’ diary says “On the morrow a canoe was seen in the distance carrying eighty men” (Curet 2005:6).

x “Migration of relatively large populations as a unitary, one-way event with a termination and an endpoint, to be followed some time later by another unitary, one-way event, in each case involving the resumption of the migration” (Curet 2005:6).

xi “Trinidad and Tobago, one of the first migratory stops for many Saladoid communities en route to the rest of the Caribbean, has approximately forty Saladoid sites, many of which are middens [see map pg 28 Reid]. Located in north Trinidad, the 2-ha (5-a) site of Marianne Estate in Blanchisseuse is generally considered as one of the largest
Saladoid sites on the island. The site has also been subjected to sporadic archaeological research from 1959 to 2008...Shovel test pits in 1999 suggested the presence of a village community centred around a central plaza at Blanchisseuse, which is typical of Saladoid village layouts throughout the Caribbean” (Reid 2009:27)

xii Thirty-seven Saladoid sites have been identified in Trinidad, and are located all over the island.

xiii The Saladoid and Barrancoid are social groupings derived from the pottery styles associated with the sites of Saladero and Barrancas. The labels essentialise and homogenise what were perhaps many different small groups into larger classification, which serves to cover epochs.

xiv “Ethnographic examples indicate that trade and exchange are often combined with the communication of news, and, more importantly, the passing of songs and rituals as well as the transfer of myths, tales, dances, shamanic incantations and secret spells” (Boomert: 2000:492).

xv While such a theory has its critics (Hassen 2000, Deleuze & Guattari 1983, Foucault 1978) it is a heuristic able to conceptualise transcendent violence and suggest violence’s constitutive role in the foundation of society. Violence it can then be said is embodied in language, subsequently institutionalised in laws (Anderson 1991) and political institutions (Habermas 1983:180), and ultimately manifest in armies, deep lying structures of power (Bourgois 2001), everyday practices (Bourdieu 1977) and the knowledge system and spectacle that governs and allows society to function. As Kleinman (2001:238) makes clear “hierarchy and inequality, which are so fundamental to social structures, normalise violence.”
NEGOTIATIONS OF MULTICULTURALISM THROUGH MIMICRY AND HYBRIDITY

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Multiculturalism, as the fundamental condition of Caribbean life, has been at the centre of deliberations in the Indo-Caribbean literary text. Indeed, one can read the entire continuum of positions on multiculturalisms through the very earliest representations of Seepersad Naipaul and Samuel Selvon. Not only do these two writers confront multiculturalism as ideology, they also address it as an intrinsic socio-psychological conundrum in the quest for belonging in the Caribbean place. This article explores the ways the two writers present these issues and discusses the ongoing relevance of their representations in light of contemporary debates on multiculturalism as official policy.

Key words – Caribbean Hinduism, hybridity, multiculturalism, race, Samuel Selvon, Seepersad Naipaul

Introduction: Some Parameters of the Multiculturalism Debates in Trinidad and Tobago

Trinidad and Tobago is indisputably multicultural, comprising as it does many socio-cultural groups, each characterised by distinct cultural practices, beliefs, values and experiences. Discussions about culture in Trinidad and Tobago are therefore inevitably discussions of multiculturalism, particularly if the term is understood via Earl Lovelace’s complex formulation:

People [in Trinidad and Tobago] are not now and have not been one homogenous mass but are differently related to each other, and, in broad terms, people are also races and classes and religions and creeds, people are those who have been abused and those who have abused, those who are landed and those who are landless, those who are privileged and those who are exploited. (Lovelace 2003:198-199)

Recently however, debates about multiculturalism have become urgent following Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar’s declaration of the government’s embrace of the highly contested idea of multiculturalism-as-official policy. Whereas the population is seemingly comfortable with its multicultural status, there is significant concern about “the ‘-ism’ convert[ing] ‘multiculturalism’ into a political doctrine” (Hall 2000: 210).
Nonetheless, the purpose of espousing multiculturalism as policy is usually recognition of cultural diversity, as well as public affirmation and respect for differences. This understanding seemed to inform the Prime Minister’s and other Ministers’ statements about the matter.
large extent, subsequent debates then centred on the reconciliation of difference with political, social and national cohesion.

This is the angle from which Selwyn Cudjoe, Trinidadian cultural and literary critic, political activist, and professor of Africana Studies at Wellesley College, as well as many who responded to him, entered the popular debates, recalling in many instances Homi Bhabha’s question: “Must we always polarize in order to polemicize?” (Bhabha 1994:280). In “Multiculturalism and its Challenges,” Cudjoe argues that multiculturalism as policy is already an aspect of the ideology that guided Trinidad and Tobago to independence and underpinned its postcolonial development from 1962 to the present. Referring to the ‘no-Mother’ component of History of the People of Trinidad and Tobago, which the first Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, Eric Williams, wrote for Independence, he calls on it as “a transcendent national cultural policy.” The invocation of the nationalist ideology of the People’s National Movement (PNM, the political party established by Williams) captured in the text betrays the tension inherent to the twin features of unity and diversity that underwrite the conceptualisation of nationalist ideologies in almost every nation today. This is marked in the Trinidad and Tobago case not only in Williams’ text but also in the potential undermining of the acceptance of diversity hymned in the national anthem: “Here every creed and race find an equal place” by the demand for unity in the national motto: “Together we aspire; together we achieve.” In these foundational texts of the nation, the quandary is an either/or binary opposition which continues to tell on cultural dialogue in Trinidad and Tobago, as can be seen for example in Selwyn Ryan’s The Jhandi and the Cross in which cultural concerns are expressed via the dichotomy of “unrestrained conflict” or a new, homogeneous, hybrid culture (Ryan 1999:253). The predicament thus revealed is that of imagining the seemingly impossible presence of an absent one in many and imposing in its stead a metaphysical, transcendent centre of hybridity, or creolisation as hybridity has come to be known in the Caribbean.

The dilemma is perhaps of colonial provenance and overcoming it is arguably a post-colonial task that involves the kind of mental and psychological decolonization for which Ngugi wa Thiong’o argues (1986). Williams’ text and Cudjoe’s appeal to it demonstrate moreover the relevance of Bhabha’s assertion that, “the political unity of the nation consists in a continual displacement of the anxiety of its irredeemably plural modern space – representing the nation’s territoriality is turned into the archaic, atavistic temporality of Traditionalism.” In this instance, the “Traditionalism” to which Bhabha alludes inheres in the entrenchment of Williams’ writing in the linear historical narrative articulated by the imperial powers, especially its basis in categorizing imperatives. Indeed in one statement, Williams adopts the words of Governor Harris when the enslaved were ostensibly emancipated to describe the situation at independence: “The task facing the people of Trinidad and Tobago after their Independence is to create a nation out of the discordant elements and antagonistic principles and competing faiths and rival colours which have produced the amalgam that is today the approximately 875,000 people of Trinidad and Tobago.” Out of that approach he not surprisingly concludes: “two races have been freed, but a society has not been formed” (Williams 1963:273).

This implicitly continues racist colonial practices of discursively constructing groups and thereby enmeshes the nation in racial politics. Therefore, regardless of the enormity of Williams’ accomplishment in taking the nation to independence and the value of his theses in History of the
People, it is pertinent to remember Hall’s assertion in “New Ethnicities” that racism “operates by constructing impassable symbolic boundaries between racially constituted categories…[so that race] constantly marks and attempts to fix and naturalize the difference between belongingness and otherness” (Hall 1996:445). Williams, following Harris, constructs the same kind of boundaries as the colonial authorities, thus facilitating the continued celebration or derision of supposedly ‘racial’ distinctiveness and exacerbation of xenophobic divisions. Williams’ anti-colonial and nationalist efforts are usefully understood therefore as arising, to use Benedict Anderson’s words, out of “the large cultural system that preceded it, out of which – as well as against which – it came into being” (Anderson 1983:19). It also points to the historian Gyan Prakash’s argument in another context that conventional historiography is usually colonial debris, a troubling mode of conception in need of urgent revision.

Out of that cognitive framework, two primary – Indian and African – and many secondary monolithic imaginary constructs, which come to occupy positions of hegemonic truth in the popular imaginary, are established. This enables arguments against multiculturalism such as Cudjoe makes in response to the remark of Minister of Arts and Multiculturalism, Winston Peters, that multiculturalism as policy would address the fact that “a large portion of the citizenry feels itself alienated from sharing in the development of the nation.” Cudjoe argues:

When one announces that our nation’s cultural policy is intended to assuage the alienation and exclusion East Indians feel, I wonder if we are starting out this policy with a false premise…how can we base a cultural policy on the alienation that one group says it feels when the very argument made in favour of East Indians is that they have maintained their culture (cited as the reason for their advantages in the society). On the other hand, that the Africans have lost their cultural heritage is advanced as one reason why so much antisocial behaviour occurs in the black community.7

It is evident that the framework permits a significant duplicity for Peters did not say “the alienation and exclusion East Indians feel.” If it is valid to make this interpretation, then his remark could as easily be read as addressing the “Africans [who] have lost their cultural heritage.” It is thus clear that the oppositional binary pits one supposed ‘race’ against the other, and perhaps makes unwitting racists of those imbued in its perspective. But, it is the other generated by the formula that is seen as racist for refusing the transcendent hybridity proffered as alternative. One wonders therefore: what exactly are the false premises?

Moreover, what is elided in binary constructions is the historicity of the processes which generate them. For example, as Immanuel Wallerstein contends, in capitalist systems, such as the plantation in which the constructs of “African and Indian” have their origin, “racism [is] constant in form and in venom, but somewhat flexible in boundary lines. Niggers…are always there and always ranked hierarchically, but they are not always exactly the same” (Wallerstein 1993:34). In those Caribbean territories to which people from the Indian sub-continent were brought, they were the new “niggers.” The extent to which their experiences differed from the old “niggers,” a difference established by the work of anthropologists and the Presbyterian church, is thus certainly an area requiring investigation (Klass 1988, Nieoff and Nieoff 1960, Morton 1916). Arguably, this may not be sufficiently addressed because neo-colonial assumptions of knowledge
have precluded its consideration. In addition, whether “they have maintained their culture” or invented new hybrid postcolonial forms not unlike that developed by the enslaved is also an area for urgent research.

Regardless of these historical dimensions of the Trinidad and Tobago experience Cudjoe argues for his “transcendent national cultural policy” by positing that “[w]e should not take our national unity for granted” even as he takes it “for granted” and thus refuses examination of the notion’s validity. He asserts, in addition, that “[i]t is something that we must work on constantly if we wish to preserve our union.” The idea of “work on constantly” indicates the applicability of Bhabha’s speculation that the “[t]erms of cultural engagement, whether antagonistic or affiliative, are produced performatively” (Bhabha 1994:2) and one may add repetitively. While by no means in disagreement with the idea that policies of multiculturalism must be formulated with extreme caution, it is into the scenario of repeat performances around metaphysical, transcendent centres that this article is inserted. It is intended as an intervention into the ‘same old, same old’ and an extension of the debates via an exploration of alternative ways of addressing multiculturalism through another kind of hybridity and mimicry inscribed in the “unsettling adventure in difference” of Seepersad Naipaul’s and Samuel Selvon’s fiction (Said 2004:55). After all, as David Theo Goldberg reminds us: “Hybridities are the modalities in and through which multicultural conditions get lived out, and renewed” (Goldberg 1994:10).

The Literary Terrain

“Indo-Caribbean imaginative writing…begun with Seepersad Naipaul in 1943…took off with [Samuel] Selvon in 1952,” according to Frank Birbalsingh (2000:xxviii). These writers thus inaugurate what is now considered a unique literary field and from inception to the present one of its most outstanding characteristics is its negotiation of Caribbean diversity. As the popular debates reveal, multiculturalism often functions as a euphemism for race relations. In the selected texts by these writers, the same holds true, in interesting ways. Indeed, this context is implicit in the line of the Robert Burns’ poem that Naipaul uses as the epigraph to Gurudeva and other Indian Tales: “To see ourselves as others see us.” Aisha Khan argues that this form of self-awareness “has more than a hundred-year history…. If it ever was an unconscious habit, the propensity to see themselves through a Western, Christian gaze was punctuated by Indo-Trinidadians’ self-searching concerns about who they were becoming (Khan 2004:140). Arguably, the proclivity to self-identify through others’ perceptions is related to the exclusion that the indentured labourers encountered as the new “niggers” in the society. In fact, if as Henri Tajfel argues, social identity is embedded in the context of attitudes toward one’s group, then this consciousness may well be related to a structure of prejudice and intergroup conflict (Tajfel 1978). This is palpable coincidentally in Chas Espinet’s introduction to the 1943 edition of Naipaul’s collection of stories:

Mr Naipaul’s effort may not be considered truly West Indian. There is something exotic about it until you realize that his settings are local…Mr Naipaul tells…of the queer religious beliefs and simple habits of Trinidad’s illiterate Indian workers whose lives are centred around [sic] the estates…To those who would like to have a peep into the Indian’s tapia hut and get into what goes on behind [sic] the Indian’s
mind and about life in the village which one has passed sprawling along the motor-road, there can be no better guide.\textsuperscript{12}

That the charge of illiteracy is relevant only in relation to the English language and given that scholarship demonstrates that the indentured labourers and/or their descendants had been engaged at many levels of public life, the remarks are an imposition of alienness on the group conceived homogeneously.\textsuperscript{13} They are in fact an interpretation of homogenized difference as minority group deficit. The remarks are mainly in praise of the author’s work and may not be maliciously intended. They do reflect however that the ex-indentured’s coolie status is general knowledge – without source or centre – accepted public knowledge in other words. To borrow Rey Chow’s words, their coolieness, or “new niggerness” after Wallerstein, “designates foreignness… understood as social inferiority” (Chow 2002:33). Espinet’s remarks also recall Abdul JanMohamed’s argument that “minority individuals are always treated and forced to see themselves generically” (1990:10). But, ‘minority’ in this instance does not refer to population size; it indicates circumscriptions on the power to self-define.\textsuperscript{14}

As the literary texts demonstrate, these constraints were by no means only a result of prejudices against those designated coolie/East Indian/Indian by those not so designated. They were in fact also a result of internalized prejudices that created a significant self-policing force. An argument, such as Lloyd Best’s, that there are not ‘two races’ but many ethnic groups in Trinidad and Tobago is apropos. Best identifies “an Afro-Saxon, a Garveyite Black Power, a ‘Grenadian’ working class in the oilfields, the Tobagonians, the Caroni Hindu, the Muslim, the Presbyterian Indian, the French Creoles, and a mixed community” (Meighoo 2008:106-108). If his classification is taken into account then Trinidad and Tobago’s multiculturalism is not commensurate with its supposed ‘racial’ composition. People of Indian origin do not comprise one group but four as do people of African origin. Khan’s informants reveal an awareness of such distinctions in the ‘Indian’ designation. For example, ‘Ali’ is described as “a wealthy and urban young man who had no direct experience with the agricultural regions.” Ali claims, “I never knew I was Indian, I grew up thinking I was a Muslim and a Trinidadian. Anything Indian, food, music, was like them, that was Caroni…Christianity and Islam are very similar. We’re westernized, civilized, not like the backward, rural Indian. That Indianness, that was backwardness.” They are “the nouveau riche Indians running out of Caroni. We [in contrast] are not about flash, we are about education, solid values, and contributions to the community…‘Town’ means that you’re accepted into the mainstream, it means leadership” (2004:70-71).

The ‘Indian’ thus seems to be prone to what Chow calls “postcolonial ethnic ressentiment, a kind of self-contempt that is historically generated by the unequal and often humiliating contact with the white world but ends up, ironically, being directed against those who, ethnically speaking, are closest to one” (Chow 2002:ix). In this case, however, it is with the Creole world encountered upon arrival in Trinidad and Tobago. The most intense conflict generated thereby is not between groups, but within, as part of the competition to be of the ‘right’ class (Modood 1994:5). Khan contends moreover that the informants’ “analysis of the relationship between social class and Indian culture…was a hegemonic discourse” that crossed “generational, gender, religious and ethnic differences” (2004:75).
The “Caroni Hindu” is thus excluded from all quarters and imagined as the ultimate Other, a fearsome, alien entity. Furthermore, the “hegemonic discourse” transmitted across the generations continues with full power still. Indeed, the popular debates indicate its vitality in the general population, evident for example in Cudjoe’s expression of fear in “one wonders whether the term “multiculturalism,” as used by the People’s Partnership (PP), is not directed at promoting Hindu culture at the expense of the other cultures.”

This condition of feared Otherness informs Selvon’s and Naipaul’s writing in, respectively, *A Brighter Sun* and *Turn Again, Tiger* and *Gurudeva and other Indian Tales*, (later reproduced as *The Adventures of Gurudeva and Other Stories* (1975) and *The Adventures of Gurudeva* (1995). Moreover, they deploy the tools of hybridity and mimicry in their confrontation with the situation of the “Caroni Hindu” who they deliberately select to represent. Selvon for example asserts that Tiger is based on a “real” person, who “symbolizes to me the young Indian peasant” (Fabre 1988:69). This is an innovative move since the so-called ‘Indians’ themselves display a certain complex kind of hybridity about which Shalini Puri sounds a cautionary note with regard to celebrations of hybridity by reference to Ella Shohat’s argument that “among the diverse modalities of hybridity” there are those like “forced assimilation, internalized self-rejection, political co-optation, social conformism [and] cultural mimicry” (Puri 2004:4).

**Seepersad Naipaul’s Contribution**

Naipaul begins by dismantling ideas like “the very argument made in favour of East Indians is that they have maintained their culture.” He embeds Trinidad and Tobago’s multiculturalism in fact in economic factors and political power through figures like Bhakiranji, a traditional leader, the village master “mounter of sticks” for “the art of gatka” or stick fighting:

…not so much…a man as…a huge morocoy. For Bhakiranji was a crumpled, wheezy, sagging old man – more sick than old…[who] did not have enough backbone to enable him to sit up. He was all in a recumbent heap on a bed of stripped bois canoe, overlaid with dry tapia grass and sugar bags and flour sacks. Only his head moved now and then in the manner of a morocoy’s.

Naipaul thus establishes the consequent demand for attention to the economic and political disadvantages that people suffer as a result of their minority status. It is Bhakiranji’s social positioning, not his cultural identity that is highlighted. Thus for Naipaul the immediate task of nationalism would be to address structural as much as cultural injustice.

With regard to cultural injustice, the attention Naipaul calls to Hindu culture is reminiscent of Frantz Fanon’s view of culture. For Fanon, culture encompasses all the practices of a group, which are always in a state of dynamic change. In *Wretched of the Earth*, he contends that the evil of colonial domination lies in the withering of processes of change. He claims that:

By the time a century or two of exploitation has passed there comes about a veritable emaciation of the stock of national culture. It becomes a set of automatic habits, some traditions of dress and a few broken-down institutions. Little movement can be discerned in such remnants of culture; there is no real creativity and no overflowing
life…we find a culture which is rigid in the extreme, or rather what we find are the
dregs of culture, its mineral strata (1985:191).

This is also Naipaul’s view of cultural practices in the post-indentureship communities. On the
one hand, he illustrates “dregs – automatic habits and broken-down institutions” as for example
in the debacles to which belief in karma leads and in the subjectification of women in stories
such as “The Beating of Ratni.” On the other hand, he resists the unconscious hybridization he
records and embraces conscious hybridity.17 His perspective may well be viewed as a response to
the burgeoning of identity politics among people of Indian origin at the time of the writing,
which sought to erase the effects of the indentureship experience on cultural patterns and deny
the inevitable hybridity that had ensured cultural survival. Naipaul’s interrogation of these post-
indenture developments is consolidated in the character, Gurudeva. Gurudeva’s tales may well
be seen in fact as an interrogation of the eventual formation of the Sanatan Dharma Maha Sabha
in 1952 under the leadership of Bhadase Sagan Maraj, with Gurudeva’s development being
representative of such persons’ early experiences.

As is well known Maraj was eventually the recipient of Williams’ ire. This situation arose
primarily because after the experiences of 1952, Maraj was able to exercise his leadership skills,
which unsurprisingly involved a significant level of aggression and vociferousness to become
leader of the Democratic Labour Party (DLP) in 1953. He formed the party by bringing together
persons who would have previously run independently as political candidates. In addition, Kirk
Meighoo points out that, “[t]he Democratic Labour Party was formed from the initial ethnically
oriented group put together by Maraj but it was a response to the visit of Bustamente of Jamaica
to form a Trinidad branch of Jamaica’s DLP for the purpose of contesting Federal Elections”
(Meighoo 2003:27). Another side of these developments is that, as Eric Duke asserts: “federation
was also a diasporic, black nation-building endeavour intricately connected to notions of racial
unity, racial uplift, and black self-determination [and] [r]acialized conceptualizations of a British
Caribbean federation were prominent in the early twentieth century.” Duke adds moreover
“[w]ithin the British Caribbean, federation became a cornerstone of burgeoning West Indian
nationalist movements” (Duke 2009:220). The Trinidad and Tobago DLP factor however
complicated that straightforward agenda by making it hybrid, which in turn invigorated racial
conflict. In 1956, Williams founded the PNM. Meighoo argues “the post-1956 election was a
period of intense constitutional debates with the Colonial Office supporting the DLP’s plans
rather than the PNM’s.” The DLP’s greater support from the Colonial Office and William’s
defeat in the post-1956 municipal elections led to “an unrestrained attack against the backward,
rural, Indian ‘wave of illiteracy’ swamping the PNM urban strongholds.” The subsequent pre-
independence political campaigns were violent and “DLP meetings were broken up by PNM
supporters” (Meighoo 2003:49).

Duke argues however that overlaid on this base of racial conflict was a “creole multiracial
nationalism,” which:

…focused on, among other things, island or regional development, with little overt
attention to matters of race. In fact, this strand of nationalism implicitly sought to
portray either specific islands or the entire region through a transracial image that
suggested they were “beyond” conventional racial ideologies and politics (Duke 2009:230).

This was the dominant face that nationalism eventually presented in Trinidad and Tobago but the underlying racial bases have not been entirely erased from the political unconscious.

These political issues are not however the areas of Seepersad Naipaul’s greatest concerns. He turns his attention rather to how the Gurudeva aggressive-type subjectivity would have developed. The reader’s first encounter with Gurudeva is when his father takes him out of school at fourteen to be married. His Hinduism makes him a laughing stock, an event led by the Presbyterian convert who is his schoolmaster. Gurudeva’s attempts to escape that denigrated position and to gain public recognition comprise his adventures. The narrator’s perspective is the means by which his choices are interrogated and other means of accessing public recognition proposed.

As Khan asserts, “religion has been Indo-Trinidadians’ alterity; that is, the marked category largely definitive of the Indian ‘race’” (2004:14) But, it is religion that Gurudeva grasps to gain public recognition because it is his only capital. Naipaul directs his attention to this conundrum in a manner which comfortably conforms to what Bhabha calls the “assimilation of contraries” at the “the cutting edge of translation and negotiation” (1994:168). His stories are in fact an act of “cultural mimicry.” “Mimicry is,” Bhabha argues, “the sign of a double articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation and discipline, which ‘appropriates’ the other as it visualizes power” (1994:122). One example of such a deployment of mimicry is the narrator’s assertion that Gurudeva’s father, Jaimungal, “was regarded by everybody in the village as a staunch Hindu [although] he was not one who could read and write well enough to understand the subtleties of the Shastras.”20 Jaimungal would most probably not have been able to read and write English. The reading and writing skills referred to are skills in Hindi, Urdu and Sanskrit that some possessed and tried to maintain and propagate through pathshalas and madrasas. The assertion that the skills are not adequate for the purpose of understanding Shastric ‘subtleties’ is an expression of concern that Hindus in the Caribbean cannot re-new traditions because they lack knowledge of the language of the texts which makes them incapable of the task and urging of the pursuit of hybrid modes of being. The emphasis on a double literacy also reveals that skills in English are of critical importance in translating knowledge of the books to others. Khan’s assertion that, “[t]he substance of knowledge is important, but the idea of knowledge – as cultural capital to be possessed and mastered – is equally so” is therefore pertinent. (Khan 2004:103). Naipaul’s intention is clearly a “double articulation” intended to move the group towards gaining skills that would bring empowerment. Gurudeva is represented as never developing this capacity for “double articulation.” Instead the cultural rigidity he professes makes him increasingly aggressive, a bully in fact, and a perpetrator of domestic violence against his young bride. The adventures to which this leads, including a stint in prison, are depicted as inimical to his subsequent embrace of a leadership role.

The later collection of stories in Adventures expresses deep concern in fact for the future of Hinduism and the leadership of Hindus in the Caribbean in the portrait of Gurudeva as the subject who rises to the group’s and the religion’s defence and adopts the role of political representation. Indeed, much of what Gurudeva does as a leader demonstrates, like his father’s
action in taking him out of school, Vinay Lal’s argument that a “reification of Indian tradition” occurs in the diaspora over a substrata of unconscious hybridity inevitably developed because of the absence of change and growth that characterise a living culture. Naipaul’s concerns in this regard are perhaps prescient especially if one considers that figures for those identifying as Hindu have dwindled slowly but surely from more than 90% of the indentured to 56.19% in 2000. However, the problem of a lack of other techniques for self-empowerment underwrites the representation. Naipaul’s representation thus recalls Bhabha’s argument that:

It is in the emergence of the interstices – the overlap and displacement of domains of difference – that the intersubjective and collective experiences of nationness, community interest, or cultural value are negotiated…The representation of difference must not be hastily read as the reflection of pre-given ethnic or cultural traits set in the fixed tablet of tradition. The social articulation of difference, from the minority perspective, is a complex, on-going negotiation that seeks to authorize cultural hybridities that emerge in moments of historical transformation.

Samuel Selvon’s Vision

Likewise, in Selvon’s writing, the “on-going negotiation that seeks to authorize cultural hybridities” is apparent. Selvon negotiates by bringing Tiger into conflict with himself through the situation that forces him to say, “I am not an Indian.” While Naipaul worries over the rise of the domineering, aggressive, English-illiterate subject in Trinidad’s politics, Selvon is concerned about the group’s alienation in the society in this regard and addresses it by confronting what Fanon calls the “epidermal schema” of racist thinking (Fanon 1952:112). Tiger’s “Indian” identity is therefore depicted in terms that George Lamming uses to describe the individual’s traumatic clash with an imposed identity. His “Indianness:”

…travels with him as a necessary guide for the Other’s regard…He is a reluctant part of the conspiracy which identifies him with that condition which the Other has created for them both. He does not emerge as an existence which must be confronted as an unknown dimension; for he is not simple there. He is there in a certain way.

In Bhabha’s analysis of Fanon he argues that the “Other’s regard” is in fact an irreducible aspect of “the ambivalent identification of the racist world…[which] turns on the idea of man as his alienated image; not Self and Other but the otherness of the Self inscribed in the perverse palimpsest of colonial identity” (Bhabha 1994:122).

Selvon demonstrates that the ‘palimpsest’ is repeatedly re-inscribed in the interactions between people of African and those of Indian origin in the Caribbean, and exists not only in political contestations but also in everyday interactions between ordinary people. This is shown in the depiction of the relationship between the main characters in the novels, Joe and his wife Rita, of African origin, and Tiger and his wife Urmilla, of Indian origin. For example, in one episode in A Brighter Sun, in response to Rita’s desire to help Urmilla in her developing hybridity by loaning her some household items so that she would not be uncomfortable with a white guest, Joe says “So wat de arse we have to do wid dat? Dem Indian people does have plenty money hide away” (1952:39). Joe reads Tiger through stereotypical understanding of his ‘race.’
perception is obviously belied by the vivid depiction of Tiger and Urmilla’s poverty. In *Turn Again, Tiger*, on the other hand, Tiger claims “when I come a man…I want to possess myself…I can’t justify my own actions by what other people do.” In this, Tiger attempts to articulate a concept of personhood. Joe reduces the attempt however to a problem of racial alterity. His response is “[m]aybe is because you is a Indian, you does think that way. If so, I can’t help you at all. I can’t put myself in your place” (1958:211). Thus, Joe creates a racial barrier where there is none. He thus unconsciously refuses to see Tiger as an individual. This is by no means confined to the way Joe encounters the Other. Tiger’s parents also refuse to see Joe and Rita as individuals.

On another occasion, in *A Brighter Sun*, in a state of elation brought about by his good relations with his non-Indian neighbours, Tiger declares his patriotism by asserting a desire to become involved in local politics. However, in response to his “Boy, one day I go become a politician. Is politics that build a country,” Joe replies, “Why you don’t think about going back to India?” (1952:194). Joe thus effectively tells Tiger that he does not belong and his response reveals the tension between the ‘Indian’s’ desire to belong to the nation and the possibility of unfulfillment of that desire because of an enveloping racial consciousness about ‘Indian’ identity. Tiger’s reply is, “I never grow up as Indian, you know” (1952:195). Tiger’s response begs for Joe’s acceptance but it also reflects his ambivalent position in the nation – the “split screen” of himself-as-Trinidadian and himself-as-Indian stranger which causes him anxiety because it denies him a defined concrete space for identity formation (Bhabha 1994:175). It pushes him to choose between one and the other, a push that he has to learn to resist. Like Foster, in *An Island is a World*, Tiger’s problem is: how do I identify myself so as not to betray my desire for freedom from categorical impositions while meeting others’ desire to identify me? Selvon posits that the subject resists the external identitarian impulse by grasping the right to idiosyncratically self-identify since individual agency for self-definition is resistant to definition by exterior, often hegemonic views.

Tiger’s statement “I never grow up as Indian” is obviously contradicted by an ‘Indianness’ that he himself does not recognize and which he must struggle to intuitively recover; for it is knowledge, which remains hidden in an aura of silence since it is without societal value and therefore ignored as a source of self-construction. In the societal ethos that shapes the knowledge that is valued and articulated, Tiger’s ‘Indianness’ is not valued, nor is his desire to understand himself a valued trait. Denied self-knowledge, Tiger is driven to access the knowledge on which his environment places a high value and this creates unbearable dissonance until he learns how to accord the relevant degree of value to both, how in fact to be hybrid in his own way. Thus, Tiger’s statement “I never grow up as Indian” betrays an ontological conflict as well as the power configurations in the society. Tiger is trying to find common ground between himself and Joe and power lies beyond both, perhaps in the hegemonic ideologies of “creole multiracial nationalism” that promulgates the idea that to belong is to be ‘creolised,’ which means to be acculturated and willing to live only in the present moment. In Joe it is correlated with an unwillingness to question the status quo. More significantly neither Tiger nor Joe is aware that the hybrid identities each is constructing in their encounters are less substantive than relational.

*Turn Again, Tiger* addresses Tiger’s subsequent self-alienation by having him understand his past. As Sandra Pouchet Paquet observes, “*Turn Again, Tiger* emphasizes Tiger’s need to
reconcile himself with his peasant roots.” She argues moreover that this constitutes “a vital and necessary grounding, if the process of creolisation is not to lead to a crisis of disconnection and directionlessness” (Paquet 1988:197). That peasant past is a place where “memories are all of defeated manhood, humiliations endured, exploitation suffered…people victimized and abused because of their indentureship to the cane industry and the hierarchy of the estate village.”

Memories are of how “[t]he white overseer screwed the young Indian girls in the cane, and nobody could do anything about it. They were short-paid…but no one said anything. Everybody grumbled, but they still worked, because not to work was to starve” (1958:47). As Pouchet Paquet argues their continuing social neglect is “reflected in the underdevelopment of their village; there is no school, no running water, no electricity, no public transport, no real representation at government level, and their voicelessness is tied to their illiteracy” (Paquet 1988:198).

Like Naipaul therefore, Selvon posits that the national task is to address the economic and political disadvantages that people suffer as a result of their minority status. Thus, whereas Tiger’s political ambitions in *A Brighter Sun* had been motivated by his desire to build Trinidad’s cosmopolitanism, in *Turn Again, Tiger*, they become the complex desire to preserve Trinidad’s cosmopolitanism, in *Turn Again, Tiger*, they become the complex desire to preserve the ability to live with differences while concurrently improving the conditions under which people must earn a daily living.

Selvon and Naipaul thus re-construct the notion of hybridity or creolisation endemic to Caribbean life and in their repetition of the discourse of the dominant culture disrupt it and to use Bhabha’s words, open “up a space of negotiation where power is unequal but its articulation may be equivocal. Such negotiation is neither assimilation nor collaboration” (Bhabha 1994:58). They therefore implicitly pose a threat to the dominant culture because their voices are then no longer the voices of the alien Other; they are the voices of hybridity itself which mainstream culture claims as its own defining characteristic. The kind of conscious hybridity they propose can moreover be described via Bhabha in terms of the supplement that “suggests that adding ‘to’ need not ‘add up’ but may disturb the calculation” (Bhabha 1994:155). Selvon and Naipaul perhaps thereby reveal why hybridity and creolisation are words which are seldom associated with people of Indian origin because to do so is to upset the status quo.

Naipaul and Selvon thus construct a space through their narratives where the individual can reject extreme forms of traditionalism as well as those of creolisation. This space enables a self-conception that is different to the Other to which history, societal norms and tradition threaten to reduce them. Its construction involves resistance to predefined categories whether of race or nation and appropriation of agency for self-construction and movement beyond those categories. These writers thus suggest that the individual’s task is to creatively come to terms with new identities that transgress the boundaries set by others, which dismantle the logic of either/or and embrace a different logic, the logic of neither/both.

**Conclusion: Some Considerations for a Policy of Multiculturalism**

Bhabha argues that multicultural policies “entertain and encourage…cultural diversity [while] containing it [because] [a] transparent norm is constituted, a norm given by the host society or dominant culture, which says that these other cultures are fine, but we must be able to locate them within our own grid” (Bhabha 1990:208). The type of hegemonic norm he discusses is definitely apparent in Trinidad and Tobago in the debates that have occurred since the
announcement of the possibility of formulating such a policy but it is most certainly not a result of multicultural policy. Interestingly, it is promulgated through the norm of creolisation or hybridity that informed the imagining of a national culture! That norm has sought to control and sanitise cultural difference through amalgamation to a new homogeneity, an act which intrinsically generates power hierarchies and oppositions of us and them, margin and centre, insider and outsider from which discourses of racism draw strength. Thus, in the Caribbean to use Pnina Werbner remarks, “the current fascination with cultural hybridity masks an elusive paradox” (Werbner 1997:1). Her point is usefully expanded in Bart Moore Gilbert’s assertion that “the most hybridized portion of the subject culture, the national bourgeoisie, was the one to which control was relinquished at the beginning of the (neo-) colonial period, and serves as another warning that ‘hybridity’ can be as oppressive as the supposedly monocultural systems it opposes” (Moore-Gilbert 1997:195).

There are however other ways of conceiving hybridity. As the literary texts reveal the dichotomous African-Indian construct is untenable in Trinidad and Tobago, even if one accepts Best’s more extensive system of classification. Even in the so-called “Caroni Hindu” subgroup, culture is indubitably hybrid and uncontainable. In fact, efforts of containment of hybridity are portrayed as deleterious to cultural survival in these narratives. This paper has not examined the situation for the diverse other groups comprising the nation and this is vitally necessary for a full image of Trinidad and Tobago multiculturalism. It is unlikely though that the whole picture would contradict the notion of culture’s excess depicted by Naipaul and Selvon since they substantiate Hall’s observation that “[i]n diasporic conditions people are often obliged to adopt shifting, multiple or hyphenated positions of identification” (Hall 2000:227). On the other hand, the inherent racism underscoring the colonial and postcolonial African-Indian dichotomy revealed in the literary text as much as in the popular debates suggests that a policy of multiculturalism could be a timely intervention in this deeply entrenched problem of the modern Caribbean. It must however on the evidence of the literature be a policy that avoids ideas of cultural boundedness that can become a frame for hiding racism. In addition, Tariq Modood’s argument that multiculturalism is not “a political philosophy in its own right, if by that is meant a comprehensive theory of politics” could also qualify the process of policy formulation (Modood 2007:7). Although Modood states, following Bhiku Parekh in Rethinking Multiculturalism that “all the functions of the state have to be reconceived in light of it, for they are currently conceived within the idea that the state represents national and cultural homogeneity,” he also adds that while “multiculturalism presupposes the matrix of principles, institutions and political norms that are central to contemporary liberal democracies; [it is]…also a challenge to some of these norms, institutions and principles” (Modood 2007:7).

The cultural diversity that characterises Trinidad and Tobago society occasions many social challenges that have important implications for everyone in the nation. Policies of multiculturalism that encourage linguistic and cultural recognition of minority communities and seek to encourage their participation as citizens in public discourse, which have become standard in territories that have wrestled with the recent influx of immigrants thrown up by globalisation, have never been developed in Trinidad and Tobago (Taylor 1994). Because of this, people of Indian origin who arrived as indentured labourers experienced at first a laissez-faire attitude to their cultural inclinations and later their descendants experienced pressure to conform to a hegemonic discourse which called on them to declare non-Indianness. This has generated a
convoluted situation of “postcolonial ethnic ressentiment” as well as unnecessary and
unproductive defensive aggression and “reification of culture.” This may well be because the
attention to making structural changes to ensure economic and political security that would
facilitate an environment in which an organic hybridity would develop out of the responsive
changes of a living culture for which the literary texts call has not been forthcoming.

It must be borne in mind also that the cultural situation described in this article is a recurrent one,
having occurred first with the Amerindians on the encomiendas, then the enslaved Africans as
well as with those of Indian origin among others. The transformation of what are now established
cultural practices is thus not by any means going to be an easy process. Transformation will
require much more than adoption of a new policy framework. In fact it would require a long and
concerted process of re-socialization and the development of new ways of thinking especially
about the troublesome legacy of the colonial concept of race and the identity politics that have
ensued. The dialogues and symposia toward the formation of a policy are thus a fair start but
only, of course, if they are pursued. They could indeed function as an example of
multiculturalism in action if as Modood argues in Multiculturalism: A Civic Idea:
multiculturalism is about civility, belonging, political reform, and equal citizenship.

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in Obeisance: Hinduism in Select Texts of V.S. Naipaul” in Made in the West Indies edited by
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Notes

1 These debates have a significant history and were an aspect of the earlier popular discussions on constitutional reform. See for example Stephen Kangal’s “Multiculturalism: The Key to Managing Ethno-Cultural Diversity and the Integration of Trinidad and Tobago” in the online Trinidad and Tobago News at: http://www.trinidadandtobagonews.com/selfnews/viewnews.cgi?newsid1105548417,28840,.shtml Accessed 17 July 2011. This is also one of the more interesting places for examining the current debates.

2 The text of the first public announcement at the Indian Arrival Day celebrations on May 28 2010, four days after the election victory of the People’s Partnership, reveals as much. See the Trinidad Guardian online at http://www.guardian.co.tt Accessed 17 July 2011. See also comments made by the Minister of Arts and Multiculturalism, Winston (Gypsy) Peters at the symposium entitled “Towards A Multiculturalism Policy,” at the Centre of Excellence on October 13, 2010, at Rovanel’s Resort on March 13, 2011 and later in Tobago, reported in the Trinidad and Tobago newspapers. Available at http://www.newsday.co.tt/sunday_special_report/0,139818.html and http://test.guardian.co.tt/?q=news/general/2010/10/14/peters-govt-looking-cultural-policy Accessed 17 July 2011.

3 The articles consulted span the period June 10th 2010 to March 9th 2011 and include “Indian (Hindu)Time Ah Come,” “Mother Trinidad and Tobago,” “The Limitations of Multiculturalism” Parts I, II, and III and “Multiculturalism and its Challenges in Trinidad and Tobago.” They are available at http://www.trinicenter.com/Cudjoe/ and are reproduced with responses that generate their own text at http://www.trinidadandtobagonews.com Accessed 17 July 2011.

4 Referenced hereafter as Location. The polarisation of which Bhabha speaks informed much of the popular debates. On December 13 2010, Kian, for example, in a response to Cudjoe’s “Indian Time ah Come,” writes “The other thing is his [referring to Sat Maharaj, the Secretary General of the Hindu organisation, the Sanatan Dharma Maha Sabha (SDMS)] insistence on using the word “multicultural” as opposed to “cultural” [sic] the strategy here is “cultural” connotes a coming together to create a ‘oneness’ while “multicultural” while appearing to tolerate differences, [sic] it also encourage [sic] the groups to “maintain” and therefore separate us more than if we ever were to think of ourselves as working towards some form of cultural consciousness.” http://www.trinidadandtobagonews.com/blog/?tag=multiculturalism Accessed 17 July 2011.

5 See Bhabha Location, 213. Despite the deficiencies of the examples Bhabha uses to illustrate his theoretical propositions, the propositions themselves are useful for our purposes. See for example Marjorie Perloff, “Cultural Liminality/Aesthetic Closure?: The “Interstitial Perspective” of Homi Bhabha,” Literary Imagination (1999): 109-125.

6 Cudjoe’s article is itself embedded in that narrative as he explains his assertion that “Indian Time Ah Come” as a culmination of: “T&T has gone through many stages in its history. If we begin with 1797 when the British took over from the Spanish we can define our history into four brief eras: 1797-1850 when William Burnley and the English ruled the society; 1850-1900 when L. A. de Verteuil and the French Creoles reigned supreme; 1900-1956 when we saw the rise of the working people embodied in the Water Riots (1903) and the activities of Cipriani, Butler and Rienzi. 1956-2010 saw the political dominance of the Africans in the society.” http://www.trinidadandtobagonews.com/blog/?tag=multiculturalism Accessed 17 July 2011.

7 Cudjoe, “Multiculturalism and its Challenges.”


9 Cudjoe, “Multiculturalism and its Challenges.”

10 Seeepersad Naipaul’s stories are available in three collections: Gurudeva and other Indian Tales (1943), The Adventures of Gurudeva and Other Stories (1975) and a modified version of the second which excludes the other stories, The Adventures of Gurudeva (1995). The first two are used in this study and will be referenced as Gurudeva and Adventures for the first and second respectively.

11 Hereafter referenced as Callaloo.

12 Chas S. Espinet was news editor for the Trinidad Publishing Company and the author’s colleague.

13 A number of studies have established this involvement in public life. They include Rosabelle Seesaran, From Caste to Class: The Social Mobility of the Indo-Trinidadian Community 1870-1917. (Trinidad: Rosaac, 2002), Bridget Brereton A History of Modern Trinidad, 1783-1962 (Kingston: Heinemann, 1981) and Bridget Brereton and

14 The group comprised around the time represented approximately 33% of the population. See for example the *Census of the Colony of Trinidad and Tobago* 1923 and 1948.

15 Cudjoe, “Multiculturalism and its Challenges.”

16 Seepersad Naipaul *Gurudeva*, 21.

17 While the claim that the idea is a transmission from father to son cannot be indisputably made, V. S. Naipaul’s contention that “[i]mmigrants are people on their own. They cannot be judged by the standards of their older culture. Culture is like language, ever developing. There is no right and wrong, no purity from which there is decline. Usage sanctions everything,” is very much the underlying philosophical position of Seepersad Naipaul’s stories. See ‘East Indian’ in *Literary Occasions* (New York: Knopf, 2003), 41.

18 Khan, *Callaloo* 14. Sometimes the manifestation of that perception of alterity can be extreme. In one of the responses to Cudjoe’s article for example, someone identifying himself as Keith says on December 14, 2010 “I applaud your tolerance in attempting to talk sense to those whose perspective is shaped by centuries of caste preference beliefs. You have to understand that these people are nurtured in a difference (sic) concept of normal, balanced, fairness etc. In that context, explaining things to them from the concept of the Beatitudes is like speaking english to a fowl and expecting it to understand what you are saying.” [http://www.trinidadandtobagonews.com/blog/?tag=multiculturalism](http://www.trinidadandtobagonews.com/blog/?tag=multiculturalism) Accessed 17 July 2011.

19 He further develops the notion in his essay, “Signs Taken for Wonders.”


22 In 1990, there were 267,040 Hindus in Trinidad and Tobago, comprising 23.7 per cent of the country’s total population and 58.9 per cent of people of Indian origin (Central Statistical Office 1994: xiv–xv). According to Census 2000, the population of Hindus in Trinidad and Tobago was 250,760 and they formed 22.49 per cent of the country’s population and 56.19 per cent of the people of Indian origin (http://www.cso.gov.tt/census2000).

23 Bhabha, *Location*, 2.


25 Ibid, 199.
THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES AND PARENTING STYLES IN TRINIDAD.

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This paper demonstrates how culture impinges on the relationship between demographic variables, parenting styles, and behavioural outcomes in multicultural Trinidad. Specifically, the variables of age, gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and parenting styles, have been conceptualized as social constructs in an attempt to more fully understand the underlying factors behind psychological phenomena within the Trinidadian setting. Social Constructionism (or Social Construction theory) as described by Derry (1999) emphasizes the significance of culture and context in understanding the events that occur in society, and constructs knowledge based on this. I use Social Constructionism to understand how individuals actively employ the guidelines and scripts that various cultures establish and how this in turn influences behaviour. In Trinidad for example, Indo-Trinidadian culture has been perceived as being more collectivistic than Afro-Trinidadian culture, which is perceived as being more individualistic. This paper provides a comprehensive discussion of these two cultural groups.

**Keywords** – age, gender, ethnicity, parenting styles, social constructionism, socio-economic, Trinidad,

**Introduction**

According to Rosado (1997, p. 2),

“Multiculturalism is a system of beliefs and behaviours that recognizes and respects the presence of all diverse groups in an organization or society, acknowledges and values their socio-cultural differences, and encourages and enables their continued contribution within an inclusive cultural context which empowers all within the organization or society”.

Trinidad is known to be one of the most multicultural societies in the Caribbean region. Charles (2001) argued that multiculturalism pervades the Trinidadian society and inherent of this multicultural society is a melting pot of several cultures-African, Indian, Spanish Syrian, Chinese and Portuguese. The multi-ethnic nature of Trinidad is maintained by its historical background and cultural systems. Hofstede (2001) posited that the notions of individualism-collectivism may be the most significant basis of cultural differences, and argued that a mixture of individualism and collectivism categorizes the Trinidadian society. Social Constructionism attempts to provide a framework for the understanding of psychological behaviour, on the basis of the individualistic-collectivistic cultural divide that exists in Trinidad.
Social Constructionism (or social construction theory), influenced by Berger and Luckmann (1966), posits that all knowledge originates from and is maintained through social interaction. This suggests that through social interaction, there is an understanding that the perceptions of reality are related and, as individuals in a society act upon this understanding, their common knowledge of reality is reinforced and maintained. The two main ethnic groups in Trinidad, the Indo- and Afro-Trinidadians, each have their own set of values, customs, traditions and practices. While these two ethnic groups have distinct cultures, it is not uncommon for Afro-Trinidadians to practice some of the traditions and customs of the Indo-Trinidadians and for the Indo-Trinidadians to practice that of the Afro-Trinidadians. For instance, the entire population in Trinidad consumes and practices the Indo-Trinidadian cuisine of ‘curry and roti’. Therefore, although diversity exists in Trinidad, through social interaction, there are still some common shared values.

Researchers in the field of Psychology often use socio-demographic variables as background variables in an attempt to understand the influence of individuals’ own characteristics on behaviour. These variables are not true independent variables and are commonly referred to as subject variables, and as such, cannot be manipulated. They are the characteristics of individuals and include age, gender, ethnicity and socioeconomic status (SES). However, while subject variables are utilized in many of these studies, psychological researchers have been unable to fully conceptualize such variables based on a society’s social context. Therefore, it is important to conceptualize socio-demographic variables within the framework of social constructionism in an effort to provide explanations based on age, gender, ethnicity and socioeconomic status differences. In addition to the subject variables, the psychological construct of parenting style varies cross culturally. In order to present a rigorous understanding of the effects of parenting styles, one must also take into account the social and cultural factors that may impact on parenting style. In this paper, specific reference will be made to the behavioural problem of aggression. Aggression is a learnt behaviour. Thus, the social construction of factors related to aggression, would present a more rigorous discussion of how these variables interact within the socio-cultural context of Trinidad.

Age as a Social Construct

Age refers to the biological and social processes that bring about inevitable behavioural and physical changes. According to Bergman and Magnunsson (1990), age is perceived as the fundamental marker of development in biological and psychological research based on developmental phenomena. Age is not simply a biological category, but rather a social construct that is shaped by cultural norms and values of a specific society. Age, as a social construct is subject to change as it is affected by societies’ norms attached to different age categories. As a consequence, age as a social construct varies across cultures and within multicultural national settings.

Age is commonly classified into developmental categories. Oftentimes, these form the basis for the categories of childhood, adolescence and adulthood in psychological research. These categories are not fixed entities, and therefore occur at different ages, dependent on a particular society. The biological categories of age differ from the social categories. Uprichard (2008:303)
proposes, “….. the ‘being’ child is seen as a social actor actively constructing childhood, the becoming child is seen as an adult that he/ she will become”. This alludes to the socially constructed differences between childhood and adulthood. Furthermore, Corsaro (1997) posits that the images of childhood do not arise from nature, but the ideas of childhood are inextricably linked to a society’s culture and organization. Based on Corsaro’s (1997) postulation, it is evident that biological growth alone cannot fully explain childhood. Rather, the notion of childhood has evolved throughout history and culture, based on the beliefs and values of a specific society. According to Newman (2006), many historians argue that it was not until the 17th Century that Western culture considered childhood as a distinct and unique phase of development. During that time children were considered to be economic assets and regarded as property (Newman 2006). However, such economic notions of childhood diminished by the mid 20th century and as a result, Western culture began to recognize the emotional value of children. Clearly, this supports the view that there are social and cultural meanings attached to childhood.

The transition from childhood into adolescence constitutes physical bodily changes, accompanied by secondary sex characteristics. Erikson (1963) posits that adolescence is a period that is different from childhood because of the onset of puberty, which includes the rapid increase in bodily growth, and the addition of genital maturity. However, biological changes are not the only factors that mark this transition. In many societies, there are cultural customs in the form of rituals or ceremonies associated with these biological changes of puberty. Barry and Schlegel (1980) posit that biological changes are accompanied by changes in social roles. There are some societies that have elaborate rituals or rites of passage declaring that the child is now an adult (Newman & Grauerholz 2002). Many of these rituals also emphasize sex differentiation and may be separate for boys and girls. This means that there is a cultural focus on the inception of menstruation in girls and ejaculation in boys. For example, the beginning of menstruation in girls among the Asante of Ghana is marked by a distinctive ritual in which they sit under an umbrella awaiting gifts as a form of honour. After this ceremony, they are now eligible for marriage. This initiation ceremony involves cultural attributes that only exist in the Asante society.

Although such elaborate rites of passage or rituals are present in some tribal societies, no significant rituals tend to exist within the Caribbean social context, to mark the transition from childhood into adolescence. Carrim (2000) supports this argument and posits that, rituals marking puberty tend to be lacking in the Caribbean. However, what appears to be evident during this transition is the emphasis placed on gender socialization. The onset of puberty is associated with learning of new roles and behaviours. The activities of girls are sharply curtailed to prevent pregnancy, while the activities for boys incorporate freedom. This transition represents a new stage of life, which yields maturity. Therefore, the differences in training for boys and girls prepare them for their differential sex role as adults.

While the transition from childhood into adolescence is not characterized by any special rituals, rituals or ceremonies, involving some sort of religious affiliation, mark the transition from adolescence into adulthood. In Latin America (e.g. Mexico, Columbia), a traditional Christian celebration of life known as the ‘Quinceanera’ marks the entry into adulthood for a young Hispanic woman. The ‘Quinceanera’ acknowledges the capabilities of the young woman in handling additional responsibility as an adult and is seeking God’s guidance for this
achievement. More specifically, in Trinidad, the sacrament of confirmation parallels the ‘Quinceanera’. Unlike the ‘Quinceanera’, Confirmation is not only unique to females but involves both sexes. The sacrament is bounded to the Catholic and Anglican religions. Confirmation provides special blessings as the adolescent enters into adulthood and is now obligated to spread and defend his/her faith as a Catholic or Anglican adult. Furthermore, there are special ceremonies that signify the ‘coming of age’ (transition into adulthood) for both males and females among the Indo-Trinidadians of Hindu faith. For females, this ceremony involves dressing with a ‘sari’, then declaring their maturity to the public. For males, the coming of age marks their ability to perform religious ceremonies. This transition signifies their level of maturity to perform different roles in society. These rituals are deeply embedded in the historical legacy of Trinidad. Consequently, these rituals have survived the historical periods of indentureship and continue to be part of the Trinadian social context. It is evident that rituals differ across societies and are an indication that age is socially constructed.

Moreover, the laws of a country dictate age specific boundaries and these vary across cultures. According to UNICEF (2001:8) “Perceptions of children and adolescents and the ways their rights are protected are rooted in cultural and political realities that vary from country to country.” In Trinidad, a child under the age of 18 is considered a minor; one who is protected by the law. The laws inform the legal age to be held liable for a criminal offence or to obtain a driver’s permit. Embedded in the laws of a country, are the cultural norms. Under the law, cultural norms prescribe the behaviours that are normative for children. For example, in a Jamaican sample of school children ages 9-17, perceptions of normative behaviour were analysed (Gardner, Powell, Thomas, & Millard 2003). Although the study did not specifically find significant age differences as it relates to normative behaviour, 53% of students thought it was ‘okay to hit a dog’, 40% thought it was ‘all right to hit a cat’. Also, if someone was hit first by another student, 39% indicated that it was acceptable to hit a boy while 41% stated that it was okay to hit a girl. The data demonstrates that aggression tends to be more of an acceptable behaviour during childhood. Under the law, when adults display similar behaviours, it is likely that the individual is held accountable for these offenses.

The aforementioned suggests that certain behaviours are age specific. For instance, aggression tends to be more normative for younger children than for older ones (Patterson 1982, Tremblay 2000). This also demonstrates how cultural norms govern age expectations of aggression among children. More specifically, within the Trinadian context, younger aged children both males and females tend to be treated similarly. However, as children enter the school system, gender differentials become more evident, where the treatment for boys differs from that of girls (Bailey 2003). For example, until the recent abolishment of corporal punishment within the educational system, the use of the rod was more often used for boys than for girls as a disciplinary technique. Clearly, differences in disciplinary techniques as it relates to aggression will inevitably lead to cross-cultural differences in age.

In conclusion, age, conceptualized as a social construct accounts for the differences that underlie the development of the categories of childhood, adolescence, and adulthood. Age categories are marked by rites of passage, rituals or ceremonies embedded in societal culture and ideology. These rituals or ceremonies are not only helpful for the explanation of age appropriate behaviours and expectations, but for a more rigorous interpretation of age differences. Also,
norms and laws set the standard for age appropriate behaviours and vary across culture. Such a reality presents further cross-cultural dilemmas in multicultural settings such as Trinidad.

Gender as a social construct

The terms “sex” and “gender” have been used increasingly interchangeably. The body of research has oftentimes substituted the terms ‘gender’ for ‘sex’ in an attempt to illustrate the differences in male and female behaviour across cultures. The term gender in this section takes its definition from Stoller (1968:9), “Gender is a term that has psychological and cultural connotations, if the proper terms for sex are ‘male’ and ‘female’, the corresponding terms for gender are ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine; these latter might be independent of (biological) sex”. Stoller (1968) argued that sex should be restricted to one’s biological maleness and femaleness, while gender should relate to femininity and masculinity. In light of this statement, one should not assume that being male means having masculine characteristics or that being female means behaving in a feminine manner. Unlike sex, one’s gender is determined socially. Gender encompasses a set of expected behaviours and qualities that construe differences between males and females in a given society. Through social experiences, within the current cultural context, boys learn the behaviours that are perceived as masculine, while girls learn behaviours that are viewed as feminine. Simone de Beauvoir (1953:252) posited, “One is not born but rather becomes a woman...; it is civilization alone that produces this creature…which is described as feminine”. Clearly, there are cultural connotations attached to the notions of masculinity and femininity. This paper therefore, emphasizes the need to conceptualize gender, not only as a socio-demographic variable but also as a social construct and a cross-cultural variant rather than a biological determinant.

Psychological researchers have attempted to tease out gender differences with regard to behaviour. However, rigorous explanation and interpretation of these gender differences are still lacking in psychological research. This limitation warrants the need to present a more analytical review and interpretation of gender differences based on a society’s socio-cultural context. It is also evident that that psychological research tends to focus on male issues. Bjorkqvist & Niemela (1992) contend that over the years, studies on aggression have concentrated on male physical aggression, assuming that female aggression is not worth the trouble studying. Therefore, it may be argued that this male bias persisted as a result of the failure to account for gender socialization and a lack of accurate measurements of aggression. The literature on gender differences in aggression suggests that males tend to behave more aggressively than their female counterparts (e.g. Archer 2004, Hudley 1993). Bjorkqvist & Niemela (1992) further argued that such findings should not be the rationale for a male perspective of aggression. Bjorkqvist and Niemela (1992:6), postulate, “the characteristic male perspective has greatly biased aggression research. Male researchers have not only usually chosen male subjects, but their operationalization of aggression have favoured typically male forms even when the research object has been female aggression.” It is only recently that female aggression has received some attention. Current studies on gender differences in aggression have focused on the quality (type) rather than the quantity (levels) of aggression. Thus, gender as conceptualized socially explains how societal norms and beliefs influence the ways in which males and females differ in relation to, not only level but also the type of aggression.
The nature versus nurture debate has been used to explain gender differences in behaviour. While gender is conceived as a social construct, one should not ignore the notion that sex impinges upon gender, whereby the biological differences between men and women such as chromosomes, hormones, physical features impact on the roles they acquire in society. Regarding biology, there seem to be cultural overlay that explains gender differentials on behaviour. According to Bandura (2002), biology provides many potentialities in that it permits a broad range of cultural possibilities. For example, biological differences between men and women reinforce the notions of patriarchy (male domination of society). Ortner (1974) argues that there is a traditional view that women’s reproductive system is responsible for their subordination, thus maintaining the notion of patriarchy. The ideology of patriarchy, has given men dominance over women. This also suggests that under patriarchy, males have a behavioural advantage, which maintains their masculine role of power and authority.

Essentially, gender constitutes a set of norms and values relating to appropriate behaviours that determine roles and attributes. Gender reproduces a set of customs and beliefs to facilitate these norms and social rules. Caribbean feminists have also argued that gender roles during the time of colonialism have filtered down to subsequent generations (Bailey 2003, Barriteau 1995). For example, using a post-modern feminist approach, Barriteau (1995) postulated that men and women are equally embroiled in gender construction. Barriteau (1995) also posited that women are defined by the social construction of gender, which is not associated with being ‘non-male’ but based on the ways in which society interacts with and influences women. Bailey (2003) presented a review on gender socialization based on studies that have pointed to distinct gender identities among boys and girls. The report highlighted the work of Caribbean researchers (Bailey, Branche, McGarrity & Stewart 1996) who conducted a study on gender socialization in Jamaica, Barbados and Grenada. The study revealed that boys were more outwardly directed in their socialization when compared to girls who were more inwardly directed. Boys were allowed more freedom and often found roaming the streets, allowing them to be more exposed to violence. For boys, toughness and physical strength were encouraged, thus maintaining their masculinity. Furthermore, these researchers added that by age 10, boys began to recognize their masculine traits, whereby physical dominance was a significant marker of masculinity. Conversely, girls have been encouraged to be passive and to remain indoors, thus maintaining their femininity. A report by UNICEF (2005) substantiated this argument on gender socialization. This report suggested that boys tend to be more violent than girls. For them, violent behaviours are perceived as normative behaviour for boys and fundamental to their role and subsequent construction of masculinity. These differences in gender identity sought to have significant effects on behaviour. Such evidence has clarified the notions of gender socialization in the Caribbean indicating that gender roles generate expectancies about gendered characteristics, leading to different patterns of behaviour that persists throughout future generations. Essentially, socialization is an effective force as this process continuously directs gender-appropriate behaviours for men and women.

In conclusion, the salience of gender as a social construct has shaped the behaviour of children. Ideally, gender is an elusive concept. The social construction of the masculine gender has allowed aggression to be normative behaviour for males. In contrast, the construction of femininity has not only encouraged females to be less aggressive than males but has given them the tendency to hide or to create alternative forms of aggression. Thus, the social construction of...
gender provides a deeper insight into the complexity of the interaction between gender and aggression.

Ethnicity as a social construct

Like age and gender, ethnicity may be conceptualized as a social construct. Similar to the two concepts of sex and gender, researchers have argued that race should not be used synonymously with ethnicity (Hahn & Stroup 1994, McKenney & Bennett 1994, Senior & Bhopal 1994). Race and ethnicity are different concepts and must be distinguished from each other. Race is biologically determined and entails genetic predispositions while, ethnicity is commonly referred to as a social construct, whereby there is a collective culture, including shared religion, origin, language and cultural traditions (Chaturvedi & McTeigue 1994, Freeman 1998). This definition suggests that ethnicity is a broader concept than race. An understanding of ethnicity as a social construct connotes that ethnic groups are social categories (Waters 2002). Furthermore, Waters (2002) argued that the construction of ethnic categories is a reflection of society’s shared social meanings. Ethnicity and culture are interrelated and this explains how cultural traits are transmitted across different ethnic groups.

Multi-ethnic Trinidad

Culture plays an integral role in shaping the lives and adaptation of individuals. As aforementioned, Trinidad has been described as a multicultural or multi-ethnic Caribbean society. Therefore, it is necessary to understand the different ethnic groups that exist in this society. The demography of Trinidad comprises of two main ethnic groups of Indo-Trinidadians and Afro-Trinidadians and the remainder consists of Mixed-Trinidadians (Wilde 2008). Singh (1996) asserted that there is little doubt that the Indo-Caribbean people share with other groups some of the dominant societal values and mixture. More specifically, Nevadomsky (1982) contended that Indo-Trinidadians identify with the dominant social values and are part of the common patterns of status. With the conception of creolisation, there is some elimination of certain elements of the indigenous culture. Singh (1996) postulated that all ethnic groups in Caribbean societies have embraced the features of creolisation. In Trinidad, there exists a central core of culture in which all races participate (Hodge 1996).

However, Hodge (1996) further contends that, “history has not succeeded in melting the peoples entirely, - either culturally or genetically-into a homogeneous block…” (p. 1). Researchers have also argued that it is difficult to envisage the Trinidadian society as being characterised by common set values (Smith 1970, Kuper & Smith 1971). It should therefore be noted that while social change is taking place in contemporary Trinidad, the Indo-Trinidadians are still characterised as having a set of customs and values peculiar to them (Singh 1996). Therefore, colour, language, religion and culture become the basis for ethnic identities within a multi-cultural society. Each ethnic group forms its own set of beliefs and values to which individuals are exposed. These different ethnic groups arrived in Trinidad under different circumstances and came for different reasons to perform different roles. As such, these ethnic groups continue to differ from each other in several ways.
With respect to the Africans, the circumstances under which they left their ancestral land and were brought to Trinidad made cultural continuity very difficult. Although the Africans regained some of their culture, some was replaced by the European culture. The perception of the Afro-Trinidadians to their ancestral culture was one of rejection, and through assimilation, the Afro-Trinidadians viewed the Europeans’ culture as the approved culture (Hodge 1996). On the other hand, under indentureship, the Indians had maintained most of their ancestral culture as they were allowed to retain their culture. Thus, there is a continuity of the Indian culture among the Indo-Trinidadians. The continuity of the Indian culture is not simply maintained by practicing the culture of the Indian ancestors but by maintaining an emotional relationship with their ancestral land (Hodge, 1996). With respect to the mixed population in Trinidad, Hodge (1996) posits that there are several people of mixed decent that do not form a separate group of people because they are culturally black Trinidadians. Moreover, Hodge (1996) suggested that there is a distinct group of brown Trinidadians (Mixed-Trinidadians) who have been perceived as a group that form the middle class. Clearly, this is an indication of how ethnicity and class are intimately related. In this view, ethnicity is socially constructed, as it has shaped patterns of social mobility.

The cultural system that maintains the multicultural society of Trinidad is the balance between individualism and collectivism. Although, Trinidad may be viewed as a collectivist society, there are several predictors of individualism. According to Charles (2001), Trinidad as compared to many other Caribbean nations has a very large middle class and an education system that is available to a vast majority. Based on Hofstede’s (2001) work on cultural dimensions, this is indicative of an individualist society. Charles (2001) also posits that there are some predictors of collectivism, particularly among the Indo-Trinidadian population. The extended family structure is still a feature among the Indo-Trinidadians. This family type usually consists of two or more generations living together in the same house, sharing basic facilities and pooling their incomes together for collective spending. It should also be noted that this family type was more prevalent before the mid-nineties. In contemporary Trinidad, although the extended family type is still a feature of the Indo-Trinidadian family, there is a gradual shift from the traditional extended family type to the nuclear family. This may be attributed to factors, such as the move towards Modernisation and Westernisation, due to the expansion in the economy.

In spite of the move towards Modernisation and Westernisation it may therefore be deduced that the Indo-Trinidadians still maintain their collectivistic cultures given the manner in which their ancestors were brought to Trinidad and their treatment during indentureship. Conversely, the Afro-Trinidadians may have adopted a more individualist culture, since the Africans who were the ancestors of the Afro-Trinidadians were stripped of the collectivist cultural identity and were forced to adopt a more individualist European culture (Stewart 2004). Consequently, it may be argued that because of this cultural divide between the Indo- and Afro-Trinidadians, differences in behaviours are expected.

Aggression in a Multicultural Society

In a study on aggression among the youth in Trinidad, Descartes (2010) contended that the social construction of ethnicity within the Trinidadian cultural context might account for the observed ethnic differences in aggression. Given that the study revealed that Afro-Trinidadians displayed higher levels of aggression when compared to Indo-Trinidadians, Descartes (2010) argued that
ethnic differences in aggression might be related to the unique cultural differences that exist between Afro- and Indo-Trinidadians. Therefore, the observed ethnic differences may be related to the differentials in socialisation that operate within the collectivist/individualist orientation. In collectivist cultures, adolescents are more likely to endorse appropriate codes of conduct and behaviour, and tend to follow the conventional norms of that society (Le & Stockdale 2005). This suggests that in collectivist societies, individuals would be less likely to display high levels of aggression. On the other hand, in individualist societies, the cultural values encourage adolescents to engage in risk-taking to explore their identity and allow them to be more assertive and to express themselves as distinct individuals, separate from their family (Le & Stockdale 2005). Consequently, Afro-Trinidadians who adopted the individualistic European culture may be more likely to be aggressive. The impact of cultural and historical factors and their direct relationship with the notions of collectivism/individualism may have accounted for Afro-Trinidadians displaying the highest levels of aggression when compared to their Indo and Mixed counterparts. On the other hand, the alignment with collectivistic values for Indo-Trinidadians resulted in them endorsing the lowest levels of aggression. These findings seem to suggest that culture may be the underlying factor responsible for these ethnic differences in aggression.

It should also be noted that the family structure in the Caribbean is highly influenced by its historical legacy. Researchers contend that parenting practices that are effective within one specific culture may not be as adaptive in another cultural context that does not share the same meaning system (Kagitcibasi 1996, Ogbu 1994). Thus, different cultural dimensions or patterns may influence the relationship between parental behaviour and thus, outcomes in children. As a result of the differences in culture between the Afro-Trinidadians and Indo-Trinidadians, parenting style and practices would differ between the two ethnic groups. In conclusion, it is evident that the different ethnic groups in Trinidad have distinct cultural traits. However, while there are major disparities among the different ethnic groups, there is a growing knowledge of shared cultural traits. Cultural borrowing or shared culture has helped shaped the culture of contemporary Trinidad. This makes it possible for persons belonging to different ethnic groups to coexist with little ethnic antagonism. These features are indicative of a functioning multicultural society.

**Socio-economic Status (SES) as a social construct**

Though it is a complicated socio-demographic variable, SES has been conceptualized as a social construct. SES denotes the relative position of individuals, families or groups into stratified social systems (Grusky 1993, Smith & Graham 1995). According to Green (1971) socio-economic status is an index that reflects the balance or net effect of social, environmental, situational, educational, financial and other forces in an individual’s world. Therefore, SES is determined by one’s social and economic position in society. Each socio-economic status group shares a similar lifestyle and identity (Haralambos & Holborn 2000).

The conceptualization of SES as a social construct is based on the Marxist and Weberian perspectives of social class. Both schools of thought suggest that society consists of a number of discrete social class groups. According to the notions of Marxism, social classes are formed based on one’s ownership or non-ownership of resources. With regard to the Weberian perspective, social classes are formed based on one’s market relations (Goldthorpe 1980). A
third approach is that, SES is associated with social stratification. With this approach, indices of SES have been established. Parsons (1940) argued that stratification is a necessary element of social organization and is evident in all societies.

Within the Caribbean social context, SES is regarded as a form of social stratification, based on social differentiation in which social classes are set apart with respect to statuses within hierarchically structured social order (Braithwaite 1975). Stone (1973) posited that it is important to conceptualize social groups in society by its period of social history. Like ethnicity, the experiences of colonialism have influenced the way in which SES levels have been formed. Other social factors such as colour and gender influence SES in the Caribbean (Stone 1973). Therefore, to fully understand the importance of SES as a social construct (similar to age, gender and ethnicity) one must envision the Caribbean society based on the interplay of race, class and gender. It may be argued that the stratification of contemporary Trinidad may be considered heterogeneous in nature. According to this, the social system is likely to be categorized into three (3) major classes: low, middle and upper. Each social class is marked by differences in culture in terms of access to social resources (Braithwaite 2001). In Trinidad, members of each social class or level would share similar set values and lifestyles.

Social classes feature their own lifestyles and values. As a result, parents in each social class have distinct ways of socializing their children (Lloyd, Meeker & Eells 1949, Maas 1951). For example, Maas (1951) claimed that the parent-child relationship tend to be rigid and hierarchical among the lower classes while the middle classes have a more egalitarian and flexible parent-child relationship. However, the middle class parents often use strict rules outside the home setting, and supervise their children in order to maintain the moral standards and value patterns that categorize their class. Although discipline exists in the lower classes, it is always accompanied by harshness and limited supervision. However, with respect to outside activities, parents from the lower classes tend to be more permissive when compared to parents from the upper classes (Maas 1951). Given that parents of different social classes socialize their children differently, these class differentials may have an effect on the personality of children and in turn their behaviours.

Moreover, research suggests that children from families with low socio-economic status often lack the financial, social and educational support (Loeber & Stouthamer-Loeber 1998, Skinner, Elder & Conger 1992). Furthermore, families with low socio-economic status may have limited and insufficient access to community resources and would impact negatively on the development of children (McLoyd 1998). Consequently, children from families with low socio-economic status may be at greater risk of having behavioural problems than their peers from the middle or high socio-economic status.

It is evident that socio-economic status is a very complex variable. Thus, it is a difficult demographic variable to define and measure. Presently, the Central Statistical Office in Trinidad has no available data on how to measure SES within the Trinidadian multicultural context. It may be argued that this is partly due to the intricacy in arriving at a composite score of SES. Many researchers have used indicators of income, occupation and education level to obtain a single score for SES (e.g. Winkleby, Jatulis, Frank and Fortmann 1992). Winkleby et al. (1992) have used the indicators of income, occupation and education individually and also as a
Duncan and Magnuson (2002) contend that the components of SES do not act in concert to affect the lives of children, but each has distinct effects and is not interchangeable with each other. Furthermore, Duncan and Magnuson (2002) argued that it is unsafe to combine the indicators of SES only when researchers have better understood their individual effects. It must also be noted that, these indicators tend to be inconsistent and heterogeneous in nature, hence making it difficult to obtain a composite measurement of SES based on the socio-cultural context of Trinidad. Furthermore, given the cultural diversity that exists in Trinidad, researchers must be cautious when developing or even adopting a standardized measure, as they must make every effort to capture the true nature of socioeconomic statuses between the Afro- and Indo-Trinidadians.

In conclusion, SES, like gender, is a social construct based on society’s historical and cultural milieu. Within the Trinidadian socio-cultural context, SES is a form of social stratification whereby each socio-economic status group is differentiated from one another, a concept grounded in pluralism. It must also be noted that SES as a social construct is a complicated variable which is difficult to measure. However, in spite of being a complicated socio-demographic variable, SES plays a key role in developmental research and has implications for behavioural outcomes, life expectancies and available opportunities (Bornstein & Bradley 2003, Bradley & Corwyn 2002).

Parenting Styles in a Multicultural Society

Parenting styles have been greatly influenced by the cultural milieu of the society. Sprott (1994) asserted that the cultural context is of great importance to parenting research. The values and norms of a culture are transmitted from one generation to the next through child rearing practices (Keshavarz & Baharudin 2009). Cultural differences in ideals and values based on the notions of individualism and collectivism provides an explanation for the interpretation and of parenting styles across cultures (Triandis 1994). Thus, understanding the cultural context of a society can help predict the differences in parenting styles that predominate in that society and to account for such differences (Keshavarz & Baharudin 2009). This clearly suggests that parenting styles are socially constructed and are not universal typologies as suggested by Baumrind (1971). In order to conceptualise parenting styles as a social construct, it is important to first outline Baumrind’s classification of parenting styles. Thereafter, it is useful to demonstrate how the concept of Baumrind’s parenting styles is a product of the cultural context and as such, may not always generalise to other cultures.

Baumrind (1971) investigated parenting styles using a North American sample and classified parenting styles in three categories: permissive authoritarian and authoritative. Permissive parents are very responsive, nurturing and affectively warm but place little demands on their children, allowing them the freedom to do as they wish. This type of parenting was found to be associated with negative outcomes in children such as poor academic achievement (Diaz 2005). The authoritarian parents are extremely controlling, demanding and emotionally cold. These parents set strict rules and guidelines in which their children are expected to follow. Children are not encouraged to negotiate these absolute rules and standards. When children do not abide by their rules, authoritarian parents use punitive and harsh measures of discipline. Authoritarian parents are also less likely to praise and reward their children as a means of motivation. In
addition, past research showed that the authoritarian parenting style is associated with negative behavioural outcomes in children, such as low self-esteem, aggression and poor academic achievement (e.g. Colpan, Hastings, Lalace-Seguin & Moulton 2002). In contrast, the authoritative parenting style is characterised by warmth, responsiveness and control. While authoritative parents set high standards for their children, they are also encouraged to exercise independence. Their children’s viewpoints are highly respected. This type of parenting is linked to positive behavioural outcomes in children and is considered to be most effective in fostering high self-esteem, confidence and academic success.

To reiterate, the individualistic/collectivist orientation has provided an explanation for the differences in the conceptualisation of parenting styles across cultures. Collectivist cultures place strong emphasis on interdependent relationships with others. These societies are represented by key factors such as sociability, security, harmony, integrity and family. Conversely, individualistic cultures place more emphasis on independence from others. Such cultures are represented by important factors of emotional autonomy, assertiveness, and the need for privacy when there is an invasion of this sort (Hofstede 2001). While in most societies there seem to be a coexistence of individualistic or collectivistic values, each one differs in its own way (Niles 1998). It is noteworthy that a society’s historical and ethnic background would contribute to the notions of collectivism and individualism.

Given that differences exist between these two cultural orientations, it is perceived that parenting practices would differ across cultures. In collectivist societies parents tend to promote certain values such as helpfulness, conformity, and interdependence within the family and those in their in-group (Greenfield & Suzuki 1998). Such qualities characterize the authoritarian parenting style based on Baumrind’s typology. In collectivist cultures, this form of parenting appears to be more appropriate than that of other cultures. Chao (1994) also argued that the concept of parenting styles does not capture the essence of authoritarian behaviours of Asian parents and the characteristics of control and demandingness are more common among such families, but however reflect a distinct set of underlying beliefs compared to European-American parenting. For instance, behavioural control, a characteristic of authoritarian parenting is related to positive outcomes in Asian children and is perceived as parental warmth and acceptance while it is viewed as a negative characteristic of parenting among European American children (Kim 2005). Moreover, Chao (1994) asserts that demandingness is deeply embedded in the notions of training, which encompasses parental control, parent-child interactions and support. The concept of training underlines obedience, self-discipline and academic success. This provides a possible explanation for why authoritarian parenting fosters positive behavioural outcomes in children in collectivist societies.

As mentioned earlier, variations in historical and ethnic backgrounds of different cultures are key factors contributing to the differences that exist in collectivist/individualistic cultures. Trinidad is a multicultural society comprising mainly of Afro- and Indo-Trinidadians, who are the descendants of collectivist cultures of Africans and Indians respectively (Kumaraguru & Cranor 2005, Lapinski & Levine 2000). Similar to that of other collectivist cultures, the authoritarian parenting style seems to be the most dominant type of parenting in the Caribbean. Deater-Deckard, Dodge, Bates and Petit (1996) assert the authoritarian parenting style employed by Caribbean parents is a characterised by a “no nonsense” parenting behaviours and is associated
with positive child outcomes. These meanings attached to the authoritarian parenting style are perceived of as normative parenting control and not reflective of a lack of care and warmth towards children.

It is also important to note that the ancestors of the Indo and Afro-Trinidadians, came from different roots, came for different reasons and came to different roles (Hodge 1996). As mentioned earlier, the conditions under which these main ethnic groups entered Trinidad, led to the differences that may still exist between the Afro- and Indo-Trinidadians and this in turn will affect parenting practices of each ethnic group. The Africans came to Trinidad as slaves while the Indians came as indentured labourers. This led to the some erosion of the African’s cultural identity and the acceptance of the European culture. As a result of this ethnic cleansing, the Afro-Trinidadians today demonstrate a blend of European and African cultural values and child rearing practices. Therefore, this may have led to the Afro-Trinidadians adopting a more individualistic way of thinking and as a result, it is more likely that the Baumrind’s typology of parenting may be applied to this ethnic group. Unlike the Africans, the Indians were permitted to retain their ancestral and traditional identity. It may therefore be argued that the Indo-Trinidadians held to their collectivist culture and thus similar to Asian societies, the authoritarian parenting style may be more appropriate and ideal for Indo-Trinidadian parents.

However, while a large number of Indo-Trinidadians still follow their traditional values of their Indian ancestors, Singh (1996) argued that the American culture has impacted on the Indo-Trinidadian culture. According to Singh (1996), the Indo-Trinidadians have accepted some Western values as a result of Modernisation and Creolisation and this led to changes in attitudes toward family, marriage and divorce. For example, Singh (1996) further posits that among the Indo-Trinidadian community, the growing acceptance of western values may be responsible for the transition of the family structure. Today, the family structure of the Indo-Trinidadian community is shifting from the extended type family to a nuclear family type. These two family types have different value systems in which the former is based on collectivist principles of interdependence while the latter on individualist principles of autonomy and independence. This transition in the family structure has major implications for changes in the family lifestyles, values and aspiration (Singh, 1996). Moreover, the impact of the European and American cultures on that of the Afro- and Indo-Trinidadians respectively made allowances for both the collectivist and individualist orientation between these two major ethnic groups. For example, in a study on self-esteem conducted in Trinidad, Rollocks, Dass, Mohammed and Seepersad (2007) suggested that the observed differences in self-esteem might be one of culture-specific features related to the collectivism/individualistic orientation for Indo- and Afro-Trinidadians.

Parenting style conceptualized as a social construct is interpreted based on the notions of collectivism and individualism. Every culture develops set patterns of child rearing practices and that what is perceived to be good parenting in one culture may be regarded as maladaptive in another culture. Parenting styles developed from samples of western cultures cannot simply be transferred to other cultures. Thus, parenting behaviours would have diverse consequences for children’s development across cultures. As a result of critical cultural and historical factors, Trinidadian parents, particularly Indo-Trinidadians have mainly accepted collectivist values and consequently the authoritarian parenting appears to be the most dominant style of parenting used. In addition, owing to factors of Modernization and Westernization, there was a gradual shift
towards the acceptance of individualist values among Indo-Trinidadians and more so Afro-Trinidadians. The individualist/collectivist divide that exists in Trinidad, has also made it difficult to fully conceptualize parenting styles between Indo- and Afro-Trinidadians. Therefore, this warrants the need to further explore this area of research.

Conclusion

The variables of age, gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status and parenting styles were conceptualized as social constructs within the multicultural society of Trinidad. Oftentimes, these variables have been used to demonstrate differences in relation to behaviour, without first acknowledging the impact of culture on these relationships. When compared to parenting styles, it may be easier to conceptualise the socio-demographic variables as social constructs, given the nature of these variables. Although parenting style is defined psychologically, it varies across cultures. The cultural diversity of parenting style has made allowances for its conceptualisation as a social construct. Therefore, psychological researchers need to be cautious in the application of parenting styles, particularly in a multicultural society. By using Social Constructionism as the framework for this discussion, several arguments based on the collectivist/individualist were put forward in an attempt to understand the relationships between the socio-demographic variables, parenting styles and behaviour.

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KITAB BHAII: A CASE STUDY OF MULTICULTURAL SCHOOLING IN TRINIDAD

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Educators have, since the 1970s, focused on the importance of studies in multicultural experiences in the classroom. These studies examine how multicultural issues may impact on children’s learning in their formative years and how best to improve tolerance for diversity amongst students. Studies have shown that numerically derived minority status in schools is an especially fertile context for the creation of inferior behaviour. The widely accepted consensus within the literature suggests that a directed program of study into multicultural appreciation needs to be taught to all children. This paper focuses on the social interactions of two six-year-old minority (East Indian) girls attending separate primary schools where their classmates were children of a majority (African) group. It seeks to find out whether in their day-to-day social interaction the minority group of children experienced or demonstrated behaviours that could be linked to their minority status at school. Findings based on a 16-month data collection period were that there were no negative cultural effects caused by their minority status. The study suggests that multicultural acceptance, in these case studies, was an innate aspect of development for the students. In fact if taken in a larger context the study further suggests that contrary to international trends no directed multicultural program may be necessary for Trinidad primary schools.

Keywords – African, East Indian, multicultural, school, young children,

Introduction

The population of the Caribbean twin island Republic of Trinidad and Tobago is made up of many different races, religions and cultures. It is a diverse society which has traditionally prided itself on the belief of its national anthem that “…here every creed and race finds an equal place”. However despite this motto one notes that throughout the Republic’s history, race and cultural issues continuously arose between the two equally divided ethnic groups in the population: the Africans and East Indians. Stemming from its colonial origins as a sugar colony the nation experienced importations of firstly, West African and secondly Indian labour between 1789 and 1917. Other diverse ethnic groups were also brought in to supplement the labour scene but these were never in large quantities (Look Lai 1993). Since the Indian labourers were brought in as potential strike breakers to the newly freed African labourers and as scab labour to ensure that wages remained low, the stage was set for antagonistic relations between the two groups. As one historian summed up the relationship, “Creoles [Africans] of all colours despised Indians…But we can feel fairly sure that the contempt was mutual” (Brereton 1979:188).

Following the attainment of the twin island’s Republican status in 1976 and even before, concerted efforts were made to ensure that the colonial legacy of racial antagonism based on cultural differences would be eliminated. To this end the government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago outlined a national cultural policy that focused on the aim of “unity in diversity”. This policy was in sync with the goals established for its education syllabi that expected schools to contribute to national development, employment and upward mobility for all of its citizens. To attain this mobility for all its citizens a level playing field was necessary in which all students had equal access to resources and were not discriminated against in any way. Cultural issues and understandings were central to this level playing field especially so in the multicultural society of Trinidad. Multicultural in this context is being used to refer to the many different kinds of cultures existing within the society (Giugni 2007).

The national standards developed for regulating early childhood services (Trinidad and Tobago, Ministry of Education, 2004) mandated the provision of equal opportunities for all children in early learning environments. This standard insisted that all members of staff treat the children they teach and their families with concern. They should respect the religion, culture and linguistic background as well as the gender and ability of all children. (10)
This local standard was based on international good practice which argues that a child’s culture is related to his or her ethnicity which is also linked to the cultural background of the child’s parents and family members (Derman-Sparks & Edwards 2010). There are two provisos to this argument however. The first being that within a cultural group a family may not necessarily practice or believe all aspects that the larger cultural group subscribes to. As a consequence practices in a person’s daily life may not necessarily reflect the norm for that person’s culture. The second proviso emerges from the nature of the establishment of the dominant culture. This culture refers to the culture of the majority and may be the group who holds social, political and economic power in a society or institution. In an institution such as a school, the dominant culture could therefore refer to the culture of the majority who may be the teachers and students. The point being that in this case within the school there can be created a dominant culture quite apart from the student’s family or cultural practices of the group he/she belongs to outside the school.

While the country’s Ministry of Education emphasized a multicultural approach much of the actual interpretation and implementation of this approach was left to the teachers and the classroom interaction they fostered amongst pupils. This interaction was especially important within the field of early childhood education focused on the developmental needs of young children in their formative years. It is important then that young children learn how to understand and respect the cultural diversity within their peer groups. It is within this context that this study was based on two children who held a minority status in schools dominated by a larger majority group of children. The study was aimed towards identifying instances of discrimination initiated by the students and teachers against the minority group of children. This discrimination was interrogated in the context of the focus groups not having the experience of a structured multicultural curriculum and who therefore may not have been adequately prepared to accommodate children from a cultural background that was different from their own.

More specifically, the purpose of the study was to examine ways in which two six-year-old girls of East Indian descent experienced multicultural exchanges with their peers of African descent. In its methodology the study identified all incidences of bias observed and analysed them to determine the cause and the effect on the case study children. It also looked at the supports for learning, which the children of minority status received to determine the source of support, and if there was any significant factor linked to their minority status.

The following research study questions therefore guided the investigation:

1. How can incidences of bias that involved the children of East Indian descent and their classmates of African descent be interpreted?

2. Did the cultural differences affect the learning potential of the minority students?

Conceptual Framework and Context

Two theories formed the basis of this paper. The first revolved around the understanding of Evans (2001) who argued that Multicultural interactions have the potential to negatively impact on the self-concept of Caribbean children. His argument is based on the legacy of colonialism and the negative self-imaging it left based on race, attitudes and on Eurocentric values (19). The second is based on Vygotsky’s socio-cultural constructivism as explained in Follari (2007). This theory expressed the view that even though knowledge is constructed through active mental processes it is still influenced by the learner’s social and cultural environment, prior experiences, people and beliefs.

Taken collectively these two theories established the working assumptions on which the study was based. They also determined the methodological design and the method of analysis. That is a qualitative study was preferred since guided by the recommendation of Hatch (1995) qualitative methods are better suited for answering questions in early childhood settings. Also through the inductive analysis process that is characteristic of the qualitative paradigm the thick, rich descriptions that I sought to explain the phenomenon under study could be derived from interview and observation data. Other important concepts related to multicultural learning and which were considered within the study revolved around issues of bias. Psychologists believe that bias is usually expressed automatically in an unconscious, subtle and indirect form. Few
persons demonstrate blatant bias that results in acts of aggression and hate crimes. Subtle bias therefore seems to be the type more likely to be found in a primary school setting. This type of bias leads to acts of discrimination where persons find comfort in their own member group and exclude and avoid those who do not belong to their group (Fiske 2002:123). It arises out of internal conflict with cultural ideals and cultural biases. It can lead to cognitive, social and behavioural responses. A dominant group can dislike a minority group and as a result justify social exclusion of its members.

It is also noteworthy that children are influenced by identities, culture, language and bias from an early age. From birth they begin to understand their racial identities in relation to that of their parents and how social groups are defined by society (Derman-Sparks & Edwards 2010). One study showed that infants under age one became less interested when shown photographs of similar faces. However their interest level picked up when they were shown a picture of a face with a different skin colour. This suggests that children notice differences in skin colour from an early age. Additionally, all children are subjected to an externally defined identity that is imposed. Further members of one cultural group can choose to identify with aspects of culture from another group. These understandings help children to form their identity and are likely to be observed in multicultural interactions at school. As a consequence Derman-Sparks & Edwards (2010:11) have recommended that issues of prejudice and diversity be addressed in anti-bias curriculum to help children develop a positive self-image and respect for others who may be ethnically different.

Methodology

This qualitative, case study explored the phenomenon of multicultural expressions among young Caribbean children in their second year at primary school. The main objective was to describe incidences of bias that involved the two cases studied- one six-year-old girl at each school. The study also aimed to identify the supports for learning which each child received. I wanted to accurately capture any incidence of bias that may have resulted when an East Indian child was the only ethnically different pupil in a class of African students. At Hilltop Government Primary School (six years old) was purposefully selected for the study from a class of 29 boys and girls. Chandra was selected from a class of 24 children because she was the only East Indian child in the second year class studied at St. David’s Primary School.

Since the research aimed to provide data on children from disadvantaged situations the two schools were selected in one sub-urban community that serve mainly children from poor and underprivileged families. The majority of the community members were Africans with a minority of East Indian residents. This ethnic mix was represented in the two classrooms studied. The schools though both mixed (serving boys and girls) also represented a possible difference in social experiences. Parents perceived St David’s Primary to be the better school in terms of academic outcomes and dedication to teaching and learning. Also the class teacher at Hilltop had 31 years experience and had Certificate training in early education while the teacher at St David’s was teaching for four years and had a Diploma in Education. The issue of generalizability in qualitative research was thus addressed by purposively selecting sites that share similarities and yet have differences with each other.

Data were collected through unobtrusive observations of pupil/ teacher and pupil/ pupil interactions during formal class time and also during informal break periods like daily recess. These observations were undertaken throughout the 16 months of the study and field notes on observed behaviour were recorded. Activities in two classrooms were observed for 2 half- day sessions each week for the first term. Thereafter the observation method was modified to include a mid-term observation period of 6 weeks during which time 3 consecutive whole day sessions were spent at each school. This allowed the researcher to better understand the school context and gain a broader view of the social interactions at each setting. It also provided the time needed to do member checks to clarify observations made and to triangulate data. There were also additional follow up visits to clarify findings.

Data were also collected from taped interviews with the school principals, teachers, children and parents. These were later transcribed, coded and categories of similar data that emerged were classified under theme headings used to organize the analysis. Strict ethical standards were observed. For example all respondents- principals, teachers, parents and children were given a
guarantee of anonymity. As a result throughout this report pseudonyms have been used for school names and individuals mentioned.

Findings of the Study

First of all no overt incidences of bias associated with the minority status of the two East Indian girls were observed during the study. A closer analysis identified subtle bias. I found that there was bias by all children regardless of ethnicity against any boy or girl whose behaviour was inappropriate. Further there were instances when the East Indian children mentioned skin colour in a negative way. These utterances were however always mentioned in anger and linked to the inappropriate behaviour of “black boys” (the label children used) who were being unkind to other children. It was interesting that this mention was made at both schools and in each instance African children also made the same references. This seemed to indicate that even though skin colour was mentioned in a negative light by the case study children the trigger was the inappropriate behaviour of others (usually boys) and not ethnic bias. Additionally the children expressed a disapproval of bullies. It was noteworthy that the teachers also labelled children whose behaviours were inappropriate and the students were merely repeating the established categories.

Bias against inappropriate child behaviours not linked to ethnic differences was therefore the major theme that consistently informed the first research study question. Four categories emerged within the theme. They were: General bias against inappropriate peer behaviour; stereotyping of “black”, male and bad behaved; dislike for bullies and teacher labelling of children with inappropriate school related skills. The following analyses incidences of bias that occurred.

Bias against Inappropriate Peer Behaviour

At both schools incidences of bias observed that involved the case study children were linked to inappropriate behaviours by classmates. For example when Sita commented to a playmate during recess break, “me nah like he” referring to Damien her classmate, she also gave the reason. She said that he was greedy. He had snatched a piece of her sandwich and eaten it. On another occasion Sita shared her breakfast sandwich with Damien her seatmate. She then came to me and complained, “Miss Damien greedy! He snatch the bread from mih hand and put it in his mouth.” When I questioned Damien’s teacher to clarify my understanding of the behaviour Sita described, she said that Damien would “raff” (snatch) things he wanted like food or a pencil or crayon from children during class time.

I observed Damien snatching snacks from children as they walked in the playground on two occasions during the morning recess break. As he ran off the victim shouted an angry remark at him. Thus I concluded that Sita’s expression of dislike for Damian seemed to have been linked to his aggressive behaviour regarding snatching whatever item he wanted from children. There was no evidence to support a link between Sita’s expression of dislike for Damian and his ethnic difference. Also Damien did not single her out as a victim because she was the only East Indian in the class. Instead Sita did not like Damien because he behaved inappropriately and snatched things he wanted from children instead of asking.

There were instances too when Sita and Chandra, though at different schools, each expressed dislike for “a black boy”. One such negative reference to skin colour occurred while Sita was playing with three friends at recess time and was teased by an approaching peer, who after calling the name of a boy in another class said, “Sita love a boy in first year but he black like a pitch boy”. Sita replied, “Me nah like him!” The peer continued to laugh and tease. Sita continued, “Yes, he black like a pitch boy! He black like a board [black chalkboard]”. The group of four friends all laughed.

On another occasion Chandra complained to me, “Miss de black boy push me.” She was walking with a friend at recess time when a boy ran between them and accidentally pushed her. Two points were noteworthy from examining the contexts in which the dislike expressed occurred. First of all the dislike was usually linked to the inappropriate behaviour of ‘black boys’. Secondly the dislike for ‘black boys’ was not confined to the children of East Indian descent. For example on one occasion a child from the majority group expressed her dislike for a
black boy whom she and her two friends did not like because she said, “The black boy lie and throw down people and make we get licks.”

Incidences like these seem to suggest that the children were demonstrating their awareness of differences in skin colour rather than racial differences. Also a culture of stereotyping dark skinned boys and linking their skin colour to “bad behaviour” existed among the children regardless of their ethnicity. As a consequence at both schools there were instances when such a boy was labelled, disliked and shunned by the children. It is quite likely that boys who were dark in complexion were disliked and expected to be ‘bad behaved’ by the children. This awareness of differences in skin colour can be related to the views of Derman- Sparks & Edwards (2010) who noted that from birth children begin to understand differences in racial identities and also how social groups are defined by society. Additionally Day (2010) in Washington and Andrews (2010) expressed the view that in society “blackness is responded to negatively” (67).

The reference to skin colour by the children however appeared to be incidental. The main trigger for the response was the inappropriate behaviour. As a consequence, the problem appears to be best analysed as a child development issue. Rejected boys Ladd (2005:111) noted act in ways that reflect the reputation they develop among their classmates. It seems quite likely that the dislike of “black boys” was linked to the rejection they received from their peers. Adult intervention was probably needed to break the cycle and assist children to desist from equating boys and dark skin with “bad behaviour”.

Another issue was Chandra’s expressed fear of being bullied. Miss Johnson, Chandra’s class teacher said that Chandra often arrived at school anxious and in an unpleasant mood. Her mother related Chandra’s anxiety on arrival at school to her fear of being bullied. Chandra had been a victim of bullying and was therefore afraid. When she started school a classmate brought her elder brother to “beat her up”. Although the matter was reported to the principal and it was handled to the satisfaction of the parents, Chandra remained afraid and anxious about school. In her child interview Chandra stated, “I don’t like Keysha because she did bring she big brother to beat me an I didn do notin. He slap me up.” She developed a fear for and dislike of children who bullied her. Sita however was not bullied and had no fear.

To investigate the cause of the bullying Chandra experienced I interviewed her mother. I asked what she felt was the reason why her daughter was a victim of bullying and generally how the other children related to Chandra at school. Her response was,

“Well they are normal children. I’ll ask her, anybody fight today in school? (She will reply) No mamie. Because sometimes you know children they take away one another pencil. But I don’t really dig up too much in it because they does fight and come back good. She does come and complain and I will tell the teacher or her father will tell the teacher and they will deal with it.”

Chandra’s parents also confirmed that by nature their daughter got anxious quite easily. After the incident Chandra’s mother put measures in place to safeguard her daughter from possible attacks before school started on mornings. Chandra’s mother said, “If I drop her most of the time she does be with me until the bell ring and she go on line and then I will leave her there… When the father or grandfather drop her they will wait too.”

What seemed to be emerging was a picture of a school culture in which some children bullied weaker peers. When complaints were made to the teacher the bullies were reprimanded. Chandra was a victim not because she was from a minority group but because she appeared to have been an easy target. She had no friends or elder siblings. The other minority student, Sita had a different situation and experience. Sita was assertive, made friends quite easily and had an elder sister at school who visited her at recess and lunch breaks with friends, to “check on” her younger sister. Ladd (2005:269) review of research on causes for peer victimization revealed that multiple causes such as child, peer and family factors determine risk. The same factors can also be protective factors for some children.

This research seemed to be applicable to Chandra’s experience. Bullying did not appear therefore to be related to a child’s minority status at school but rather to a typical bully-victim situation where personality and a support structure could serve as mitigating factors. By the end of the school year however, there was a slight reduction in Chandra’s anxiety level and she made two friends. Chandra said of her friendship, “I like Kelly because she does play with meh.” It can be
surmised that bullying was a problem for one of the two East Indian girls because of her personality type and the supports available at school for her protection at the time of the incident. Bullying did not persist and was not found to be related to the student’s minority status.

Teacher Labelling of Inappropriate Child Behaviours

At both schools teachers sometimes used labels with negative connotations to describe the case study children. Although Chandra’s teacher referred to her as “a good reader” and a “hard worker” Chandra was also labelled as “babyish” and “pampered”. Sita’s teacher called her a “nice child” but also labelled her as being “bold face” when she expressed her opinion on matters that arose without the teacher’s invitation to comment. For the purpose of this study incidents of negative labelling by the teacher was further investigated to identify teacher intent and the possibility of cultural bias. The negative labels were not however found to be confined to the East Indian children. Within the culture of the school any child could receive a label from the teacher. Children of African descent were also labelled. For example Tania was “brilliant” but more often referred to as being “frontish”. Dana had a “wrench up face”. Teachers seemed to have been labelling behaviours they wished children would change. Since labelling by teachers was therefore not directed at the East Indian children only, it can be concluded that labelling by the teachers was not racially motivated.

Miss Johnson for example explained that she wished Chandra would not fear school because it made her moody and negatively affected how she did her schoolwork. However she expressed her dislike of Chandra’s behaviour by saying, “She wants to go home if the teacher is not there but she’s O.K. if Miss is there.” She further attributed the source of Chandra’s problem to the fact that she was an only child whom she believed was pampered at home by her parents. Since at school a quiet, non-disruptive child was seen as a good student by the teacher labels were used to let the students know that their behaviours were inappropriate. These interpretations of good and bad behaviour could be linked to behaviour expectations from the island’s colonial past where masters demanded a docile, non-disruptive worker.

The teacher did not interpret children’s behaviour as being caused by stress. Kyriacou (2003) referred to the negative emotions pupils display as a result of experiences at school, as pupil stress. Evans (2001) is of the view however that in the Caribbean, the physical appearance and behaviour of the child such as being well mannered can influence how the teacher reacts to the child. Chandra was most probably labelled because her teacher’s cultural understanding allowed her to view Chandra’s crying as inappropriate behaviour. She hoped to change the behaviour by criticizing the child though labelling. A more appropriate response Katz and McClellan (1997) suggested was to clearly state the desired behaviour rather than call a child “babyish” for example (81).

The second research question was:

2. Did the cultural differences affect the learning potential of the minority students?

Two major themes emerged to inform the possible influence of cultural differences on the learning potential of the case study children.

They were - Child Attributes and Behaviours and Parent Involvement in the Programme.

Child Attributes and Behaviours

Individual child attributes influenced how children were viewed by their teachers and friends and the supports they received in their day-to-day interactions. For example during the first week of the second term at school Chandra continued to cry when she was dropped off to school. She spoke to few classmates but she had no real friend. As time progressed however the teacher said, “She stayed much better.” In class she soon started to finish her schoolwork quickly and over time became more focused and relaxed. She always paid attention to what was being taught by the teacher. She eventually got two friends.

Chandra was a Typical Child. Typical Children according to Abdul-Majied (2009) experienced some problems at times but were generally willing and able to conform to school rules. Out of class they played with friends with minimal conflict. They needed help at times and depended on the teacher or an adult to provide that assistance. There were times when some children in this
category deviated from the norm temporarily often when influenced by another child. Chandra had the attributes and behaviour of a *Typical Child*.

Though she was more assertive than Chandra, Sita was also classified as a *Typical Child*. At the start of the school year she did not express her wishes and wants. The teacher said that at first Sita would send a classmate to say what she wanted. However later on she approached the teacher and said whatever “came to her head.” The teacher referred to her developing behaviour in a negative way as she said Sita was becoming “Bold Face”. It is noteworthy that some of the other children who were not East Indians shared similar behaviours and were similarly labelled. Generally however her teacher said that she liked Sita.

Sita was loving and never angry her teacher said. All the children liked her. The girls liked her hair. Children invited her to play in their group and often she held hands with her friends to go and play. On one occasion she ran to me and hugged me as I arrived. Her friends followed. Sita shared and exchanged food with her friends. She did however say that she liked to walk on the bench if the teacher was absent.

Sita’s parents seemed to have taught her the learning related social skills that help children to adjust to school. Bronson cited in Entwisle and Alexander (1998) included among those learning-related skills, listening, following directions and organizing work materials. Alexander, Entwisle and Dauber (1993) noted that social/behavioural characteristics such as interpersonal skills were also needed to assist children to adjust to schools. Sita had both the work related skills and the interpersonal skills that helped to support her interactions at school.

The ways in which family was involved in the school programme also influenced the support the children received at school. Chandra’s parents and grandfather were very involved in the school programme. They ensured that she was punctual and regular at school and that all her school supplies were provided. They dropped her off to school on mornings and waited until the bell rang for the start of school. They also gave her extra exercises to do at home. Her mother said, “I give her some on her own to do and she will do it… Her grandfather helps with homework too. He was a teacher.” Chandra’s mother said that her daughter liked school and enjoyed doing schoolwork. She said, “As she gets home she goes behind the reading book I tell her to wait a minute, cool out first but she so persistent. She want me to pick up the reading one time.”

Additionally, both parents attended Parent Teacher (PTA) Meetings. Her grandfather assisted in taking her to school and helping with her homework and other school related matters. The following entry in her teacher’s Class Log of Significant Events supports the fact that her parents tried to ensure that the teacher understood Chandra’s need. The log report said, “Chandra’s grandfather wrote a letter informing me of her urinary infection so she has to go to use the toilet frequently.”

While Sita did not have a parent who dropped her to school or to inform the teacher about special situations, her elder sister who also attended the same school provided that support as it was needed. Sita walked to school with her older sibling and went to her class. She did not have any problem with being left on her own in class. At recess time her sister often visited to ensure that she had a pencil to write with and that generally she was all right. Her mother provided Sita with all her school supplies and attended PTA meetings.

Parent and family support provided a communication link between the home and school that is a necessary part of young children’s education. Chandra’s school principal acknowledged this when he said, “Children who tend to give problems most of the times are those pupils whose parents have not been a part of the programme.” The principal’s statement referred to the children in his school in general. There was no distinction in the types of supports children needed and received that could be attributed to ethnic differences. Both students were A-students as they performed among the top 10 children academically. Trinidad and Tobago. Ministry of Education, (2004) acknowledges that parents have a critical role to play in their children’s education since they are the first line of interaction with their children (8).

**Conclusion**

Though different instances of bias were observed in this study, they could all be linked to children’s inappropriate behaviours rather than to racial discrimination. There was no instance of bias that could be attributed to discrimination against the two East Indian girls who were in the
minority to the African children in the schools under review. Similarly no negative reference to race was recorded from the East Indian children against their African classmates. In fact, there was no acknowledgement of racial differences observed. The data also demonstrated that cultural differences were not the main factor affecting educational achievement for the minority students. Based on teacher feedback and the records of the students of both groups it seemed that parent support in general, rather than specific ethnic differences was the deciding factor for student performance.

The findings seem to further suggest that contrary to the prevailing literature on multiculturalism, some young children base their social interactions on factors “other than” ethnic differences. From the study it was demonstrated that the way students were treated by their peers and teachers was primarily due to their learned social behaviour and not their minority status. This was an especially important observation in the schools, as they had no planned multicultural curriculum in effect. Since no discrimination was observed against the two East Indian children there seemed to be no need for using an Anti-bias curriculum to teach goals like being aware of social identities, being comfortable with diversity and understanding unfairness and how to act against discrimination. These directed goals while being appropriate for the North American setting was not a problem for the Caribbean children in this study.

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CURRICULUM INCLUSIVENESS CHALLENGE: RESPONDING TO MULTICULTURALISM AMONG WORKFORCE EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT (WED) GRADUATE STUDENTS – A MIXED METHODS STUDY

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The U.S. society is generally promoted as a “melting pot” of peoples and cultures. But to what extent is such multiculturalism reflected in its curriculum content for a graduate workforce education and development (WED) program at a Mid-Western university? This descriptive study used a mixed methods design to examine graduate students’ perceptions of curriculum inclusiveness for the WED program’s course content. Study findings revealed that U.S. minority and international student groups (Mdn = 4.0) found that WED content was quite often aligned to the interests of the dominant group (U.S. Caucasians), while the dominant group found this phenomenon occurred sometimes (Mdn = 3.0). Responding to multiculturalism among WED graduate students appeared to present a challenge for a Midwestern university, and by extension, subjected students to much cultural and intellectual bondage. Students’ suggestions for improving multiculturalism responsiveness included diversifying/internationalizing WED curriculum content, which is in keeping with multicultural education.

Key Words: Multiculturalism, Curriculum Inclusiveness, Multicultural Education, and Cultural Bondage

Introduction

The customary metaphor of a melting pot to describe the U.S. society is interpreted to mean the assimilation of its people from many different lands into one U.S. culture. Recent research reveals an ongoing shift from assimilation to multiculturalism now symbolized as a mosaic or salad bowl containing “... mixtures of various ingredients that keep their individual characteristics... not being blended together in one "pot"...” (Millet 2009). In the previous “melting pot” metaphor, U.S. tertiary institutions employed multicultural education (ME) to prepare the culturally diverse student population for assimilation into U.S. culture. However, in exploring how ME evolved over four decades, prolific diversity author, Gay (2004) observed that the multicultural curriculum is given greater breadth and depth. Curriculum content moved beyond the race specific issue of African Americans to include other minority groups such as Mexicans, Native Americans, Latinos, and Asians. According to Gay (2004) a future challenge of ME is ‘to keep pace with the changing demographic demands of the society and schools it was created to represent and serve’ (215). This challenge is addressed in the current study as it asks the question: To what extent is the curriculum content inclusive of the multiculturalism represented in the U.S. society and its students in a graduate workforce education and development (WED) program?
Workforce Education and Development

Workforce education and development (WED) is a U.S. term for a field that has its foundation in vocational education (VE). One of the earliest forms of VE in the U.S. brought by British colonists in the 17th Century was the custom of apprenticeship. Employing a strictly work-based curriculum, apprentices were allowed to learn a trade under the supervision of a master craftsman in exchange for work. Enhancements became necessary to the VE curriculum to include theory and labs along with manual work to meet the labor market needs of the industrialized society of the 1800s (Barlow 1967, Wonacott 2003, Gordon 2003). The passing of the landmark Smith Hughes Act of 1917 in the U.S. prompted the isolation of VE from the academic curriculum, defining it as the “preparation for occupations requiring other than a baccalaureate or advanced degree” (Gordon 2003:15). By 1998, the flagship organization – American Vocational Association (AVA) found in a survey that the term “vocational” was perceived by its members as negative, outdated, and non-academic. Consequently, AVA was changed to ACTE – Association of Career and Technical Education (Gordon 2003).

Subsequent Career and Technical Education (CTE) legislation increasingly required the integration of CTE with academic curricula in developing a highly skilled U.S. workforce for competing in today’s global market (U.S. Department of Education 2006). Southern Illinois University Carbondale (SIUC) in the U.S. was among the firsts to change the name of its Vocational Educational Studies department to Workforce Education and Development (WED) in the 1990s (Waugh and Ruppel 2004) to reflect the ongoing focus on workforce development echoed in the new legislation and the move away from the “vocational” stigma. SIUC’s WED department’s mission includes to ‘help create a world-class professional and technical workforce based on values and respect for occupational competence, the dignity of work, equal education opportunity, and life-long learning (SIUC 2008). Graduates of the WED program hold such positions as training specialists, human resource and development or workforce development specialists. Preparation for a world-class workforce requires awareness of diverse cultures and perspectives which the current study explores in the WED graduate curriculum.

Growing Student Diversity

Expectations for growing student diversity on U.S. campuses show an increase by 19 percent or to 16 million students by 2015 with the following ethnic breakdown: Hispanics will increase from 10% to 15% and African Americans from 12.8% to 13.2%. But Caucasians will decline from 71% to 63% (Chronicle of Higher Education, 2000). International students enrolling in U.S. universities and colleges have increased by 32% over the past decade. An increase of 5% to 723,277 international students is reported for the academic year 2010/2011 with China being the leading sending country. The other countries following after China include India, South Korea, Canada, Taiwan, Saudi Arabia, Nigeria, and Venezuela (Open Doors 2011).

At the time of conducting this research at an accredited U.S. Midwestern university, diversity was a core value in achieving its educational mission, which included hosting campus-wide diversity seminars and workshops to enhance faculty cultural competence (Trevino 2007). Known for enrolling the largest number of African American students among the “big five” Illinois national universities (U.S. News and World Report 2007b), the University also has a
large student international student population representing over 100 countries. A breakdown of the University’s race/ethnic student enrollment for 2007-2008 was as follows: White (Caucasian) – 14,559 (69.3%); Black (African American) – 3,132 (14.9%); Hispanic – 653 (3.1%); Asian – 432 (2%); and other (includes international students) – 2,227 (10.6%) (SIUC 2007).

Of greater importance to this study is student ethnicity for the WED master’s and doctoral programs (2007-2008) at a U.S. Midwestern university. A breakdown of the ethnic diversity of its WED master’s program was as follows: Black (African American) – 55 (25%); White (Caucasian) – 126 (58%); Hispanic – 8 (3%); Asian – 3 (1%); Foreign – 11 (5%); Unknown – 11 (5%) with a total of 214 students. A similar breakdown for WED doctoral students was as follows: Black – 3 (5%); Whites – 41(75%); Foreign – 8 (14%); Unknown – 2 (3%) giving a total of 54 students (SIUC 2007). Ironically, the campus wide Instructor-Course-Evaluation (ICE) did not capture data by student ethnicity, so with such wide disparities in student race/ethnicity numbers, using evaluation data for course improvements could result in the following: the aggregate majority responses (obviously from Caucasians), by default, would be used to effect program changes in favor of the majority group, undermining diversity as core value in accommodating for multiculturalism among the campus student population. Thus, this study specifically examined student perceptions by student groups (majority, minority, and international) of the inclusiveness of curriculum content in responding to their diverse cultural backgrounds. Cultural diversity includes differences in race/ethnicity, language, values, customs, attitudes, geographic location, and religious persuasion (Sahin 2003). By extension, multiculturalism in this study’s educational context refers to students’ diverse cultural backgrounds.

**Theoretical Underpinnings**

Theoretical frameworks used in analyzing issues concerning educational inequity for culturally and internationally diverse students include ethnocentrism, melting pot theory, critical race theory, critical education theory, and multicultural education. Walker-Tileston (2004) explained that *ethnocentrism* ‘is the belief that one’s own ethnicity is superior to others’ (70). Such a belief is one of the biggest barriers to culturally responsive teaching, especially for minority students like African Americans, Latinos, Native Americans, and Asians (Gay 2000). The dominance of U.S. centric and Euro-American curricula in U.S. schools and colleges promote a knowledge hierarchy reflective of the ethnocentrism or superiority of western Caucasian culture to that of culturally and internationally diverse students (Mehra and Bishop 2007, Yoso 2002). Guiffrida (2005) found empirical evidence to affirm that ‘faculty have also been perceived by students of color as culturally insensitive when they fail to acknowledge or incorporate culturally diverse perspectives into their curricula’ (18). In the application of theory to practice, ethnocentrism is not conducive to accommodating responsive curricula for culturally and internationally diverse students.

In contrast to ethnocentrism, the melting-pot theory is based on the assumption that American immigrants from diverse cultures should assimilate and blend into the dominant Western European culture (Walker-Tileston 2004). Yet, in practice, the melting pot theory stifles the
cultural identity of minority students (e.g., African Americans, Hispanics, Asians, American Indians, Middle Easterners, and Africans). Instead, minority students within the United States should maintain their different cultural identities which help to transform the U.S. into a truly multicultural mosaic or landscape (Millet 2009). Such a mosaic adds cultural currency to U.S. campuses and redounds in benefits for both students and faculty. For instance, a diversified curriculum can help to bridge misunderstandings of students’ diverse cultural backgrounds between the dominant majority group and minority student groups (Diamond 1998). In particular, learning transfer would be enhanced from exposure to Non-U.S. settings in curriculum materials for international students. Both near learning transfer (U.S. classroom testing) and far learning transfer (Shrunk 2004) of newly acquired skills and knowledge to their home country work settings would be enhanced. Faculty can develop cultural competence in accommodating for the multiculturalism represented in a diverse student body. Both students and faculty can develop their critical thinking and problem-solving skills in having to consider a non-U.S. perspective in their teaching and learning (Smith and Schonfeld 2000). The latter prepares them for the cultural diversity in the 21st Century global workforce.

Critical education theory (CET), critical race theory (CRT), and multicultural education (ME) have also dominated research discourses in unmasking the role of racism and culture bias in U.S. education. Critical education theorists help to unveil the hidden curriculum with its unintended outcomes resulting in, among other things, acceptable mediocrity for minorities (McLaren 2003). Also very critical to their work is unmasking “how descriptions, discussions, and representations in textbooks, curriculum materials, course content, and social relations embodied in classroom practices benefit dominant groups and exclude subordinate ones” (McLaren 2003, 212). The relegating of ethnic minorities to lower-level occupational skills (e.g., hair-dressing and cosmetology) in early U.S. vocational education (late 1800s) is likened to CET (Gordon 2003). With an emphasis on the racial discrimination, CRT unmasking the existence of racism in education and provides strategies for eliminating it in all its forms from the curriculum Yoso 2000).

Notions of CRT include whiteness as a standard of normalcy which only helps to further stereotype minority students in predominantly white schools (DeCuir and Dixson 2004). Bartlett and Brayboy (2006) used CRT to unmask the experiences of specific racial groups. For example, TribalCrit examines educational issues ‘resulting not only from the contemporary, liminal positioning of American Indians but also from hundreds of years of abusive relationships between mainstream educational institutions and American Indian communities’ (367). As ME was previously discussed in the opening paragraphs, only a look at its role in teacher education is done here. ME attempts to address such inequities in U.S. higher education through teacher education with a current focus on instructor quality. For example, improvements in ME show an emphasis on inclusion of evidence of plans for inclusion of multicultural education in curricula and hands-on practice in culturally diverse classrooms for teacher education (Ladson-Billings 1999). In mirroring this standard, Diamond (1998) in assessing curricula asks the following questions: ‘... Whose voices are you listening to? What authorities? Are they only white? Are they only male and European? Or are they multicultural and diverse?’ (209 – 210). Inclusive answers to these questions can redound to several benefits for both teachers and students to
include cultural sensitivity and critical thinking (Smith and Schonfeld 2000). Keeping a research pulse on multiculturalism responsiveness of graduate curriculum content so as to avoid the pitfalls of cultural insensitivity and ethnocentrism are implicit in the current study by asking similar questions.

**Curriculum Inclusiveness**

In keeping with the study context, curriculum inclusiveness is a concerted effort to eliminate cultural bias in higher education curriculum (Diamond 1998). Historically, efforts to achieve curriculum inclusiveness have shown some progress. For instance, a shocking discovery by one history professor at a renowned U.S. University that students believed Africans made no contributions to civilization led to an approval of a campus-wide diversity initiative (Diamond 1998). University administrators, in mandating the approval, required that diversity be made a major curriculum goal in its higher education thrust and that all faculties must present multicultural perspectives in all courses (e.g., literature, art, nursing, business, and economics). Diversity issues included gender, age, social class, race, ethnicity, and disability in the curriculum to help bridge gaps in understanding between students (both young and mature) and faculty of diverse backgrounds. This all inclusive approach had a positive impact on curriculum transformation, and by extension, students’ readiness for working in today’s diverse workplace (Diamond 1998). Similar success stories are well documented in the New Jersey Project of the 1980s that created an all-inclusive college curriculum for the growing diversity in the student population (Friedman, Kolmar, Flint, and Rothenberg 1996).

Attention to culture bias in curriculum materials was highlighted in a study focused on Preparing Future Faculty (PPF) conducted by Pruitt-Logan and Gaff (1999). The PFF program engaged more mature graduate students with higher education career pursuits in preparatory activities for their future various roles such as researcher, teacher, and academic professional. One PFF doctoral student commented on the benefit of the PFF experience and acknowledged “how valuable it was for her to have had the opportunity to examine curricula, syllabi, and text materials with her teaching mentor and revise these materials to eliminate biases” (Pruitt-Logan & Gaff, Fall, 1999:2). Evidently, finding content material that give diverse perspectives aligned to students’ diverse cultural background is not difficult but rather takes a more concerted effort to achieve. Similarly, Rehm (2008) study findings of practicing CTE teachers in diverse classrooms of more than 25 different cultures included the following: among the most useful teaching strategies in diverse classrooms were to include content examples representative of diverse student cultures and assign small group tasks to build a sense of community in allowing students from different backgrounds to work together.

Nevertheless, an understanding of curriculum content misrepresenting or avoiding the perspectives of minority groups is important for reversing such trends (Gay 2000, Capella-Santana 2003), especially among the younger students. In an empirical study involving black students’ experiences in the Toronto school system, Gumbs-Fleming (2001) reported that ‘they [black students] prefer to see characters that are heroes and victors instead of the usual image of Blacks as slaves, servants and “bad people”’ (10). On the other hand, a historical review (early
17th to 20th Centuries) of British colonial school curricula and its effects on the learning experiences of students in West Africa revealed that African learners were not “learning or acquiring skills of immediate relevance to the community, and curricula were aligned with the interests of missionaries and British colonial government as in all colonies in Africa, North and South America, Asia, or the Caribbean” (Ofori-Attah 2006 412). Failing to critically evaluate curricula materials in preparation for culturally diverse classrooms negatively impact students’ interest and motivation to learn especially when they are portrayed as negative or inferior characters or presented with irrelevant perspectives in curriculum content. Recent inroads in multicultural education as pointed out in the introduction help to address these issues of inequity in curriculum content, but continuing research such as this study would reveal to what extent such equity exists for culturally diverse students.

A key barrier to curriculum inclusiveness is the issue of US-centric learning material. Results from Mehra and Bishop’s (2007) case study of international doctoral students (usually more mature than undergraduate students) in a library and information science (LIS) program revealed their invisibility in curriculum content, despite the fact that most international students pay almost three times the tuition cost of a U.S. student (SIUC 2009). Significant findings from this qualitative study included that LIS international students (10) found the U.S. literature was too “US-centric”, ignoring international perspectives that were readily available; and that the nature of LIS called for more collaboration with international counterparts in learning global perspectives, which did not form an integral part of their learning experiences. The latter gives relevance to the current study that examines the curriculum content responsiveness for accommodating graduate students’ diverse cultural or multicultural backgrounds in a WED program. Like many authors on the topic of curriculum inclusiveness, Mestenhauser and Ellingboe (1998) recommend infusing the U.S. higher education curriculum as needed with relevant scholarly study material from other minority cultures and international countries, ensuring that international authors are used as far as possible instead of U.S. authors writing about international topics. To this end, the researchers noted the remarks on one U.S. professor: “I became aware of a wide variety of quality global education materials being produced in Great Britain to which I had absolutely no access in the United States due to copyright conventions or lack of an American partner publishing house” (Mestenhauser and Ellingboe 1998:108). However, the rapid pace of globalization fuelled by the Internet makes it’s a lot easier to access relevant international materials such as journal articles and books for accommodating international perspectives in curriculum content.

The researcher’s experience as an international student pursuing a doctoral degree in Workforce Education and Development (WED) at a Mid-Western University resonates with much of the research discourse in this study’s literature review. Moreover, questions on the responsiveness of the higher education curriculum content to multiculturalism among students were quite relevant to a Mid-Western University “diversity” thrust. Finding answers to such questions would help to identify any multicultural gaps in WED curriculum content and suggest improvements for closing these gaps. To this end, the purpose of this study was to examine graduate students’ perceptions of the inclusiveness of curriculum content for a WED program in responding to multiculturalism among students at a Mid-Western university.
Method

This descriptive study employed a mixed methods design to examine and interpret students’ perceptions on WED curriculum content inclusiveness. The mixed methods design consisted of a combination of the following: the Follow-Up Explanations model that only allows for quantitative data collection in phase one (Creswell and Plano Clark 2007) and the Within-Stage Mixed Method Model design that allow both the collection of closed and open-ended responses simultaneously on the same survey. As such, a combination of these two mixed methods models facilitated concurrent collection of quantitative (closed-ended survey questions) and qualitative (open-ended survey questions) data (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie 2004). The Follow-up Explanations model was continued in phase two in collecting additional qualitative data in focus groups for explaining the survey quantitative results. The pluralistic approach of using not one but a combination of two mixed methods model is supported by the overarching pragmatic paradigm used here mixed methods research (Creswell and Plano Clark 2007). Relevant peer-reviewed journals, dissertations, scholarly books, professional websites, and Ebsco Host Research online databases were searched using such descriptors like multiculturalism, curriculum inclusiveness, multicultural education, critical race theory, critical education theory, and cultural bondage.

Study Population

Study population comprised all WED graduate students (master’s and doctoral) with at least one year of continuous enrollment in the WED program, allowing for adequate exposure to the WED curriculum content for answering survey items. A total of 162 students met these criteria for participating in the study according to information requested and supplied by the University’s WED department and Student Information System (SIS). No sampling was done but instead a census of the study population to afford the best opportunity to capture the few under-represented culturally diverse groups (e.g., internationals and Hispanic students) in the WED program. Six deductions from this list of 162 students accounted for one exemption (the researcher) and five students used in initially pilot testing the study instrument, bringing the final total of the study population to 157. The ethnic/racial breakdown of the 157 students comprising the study population was as follows: 30 African Americans (19.1%); 11 international students (7%) who represent Asia, Africa, Europe, Middle East, Latin America, and the Caribbean; 3 unknowns (1.9%), 5 Hispanics (3.18%), 1 Asian American (.64%); and 107 Caucasians (68%).

Instrumentation

Participants were given a self-reported WED Curriculum Responsiveness survey developed from reviewing studies in the literature that measured related constructs such as learning styles, internationalization, and cultural responsiveness. However, no one instrument from these studies measured the exact constructs of interests in the study. As a result, a new self-reported survey was developed from scratch, comprising three separate curriculum responsiveness scales, one of
which was curriculum inclusiveness. Three subject-matter experts (African American, Asian, and Hispanic) reviewed the draft survey for content validity and revisions were made accordingly. In addition, two survey pilot tests were conducted. Firstly, one pilot test was done with a volunteer group outside the study population comprising eight culturally and internationally diverse graduate students who fell just short of being one year in the WED program. Slight inconsistencies in the returning student responses led to a revision in the wording for some survey items. A second pilot test of the revised survey was conducted with the five students extracted from the study population initially and responses were much more consistent when compared to the first pilot test. Taking time to conduct these pilot tests of the study survey, as recommended by Best and Khan (2003), helped to increase its overall reliability.

The Midwestern University’s Human Subjects Committee gave approval and permission for accessing student e-mails from the university’s student information system. The fillable PDF survey consisting of 26 items included demographic information on ethnic/national origin, gender, graduate status (master’s or doctoral), and three separate curriculum responsiveness scales, one of which was curriculum inclusiveness. Participants were required to rank WED curriculum inclusiveness items on a 5-point verbal frequency scale with 1 being ‘don’t know’ and 5 being ‘nearly always’ on the following aspects:

- Ethnic groups are equitably represented as far as possible in WED content
- Scholarly works of people of color are included
- Perspectives of minority groups are fairly represented
- WED content is diversified, as needed, to facilitate learning transfer to Non-U.S settings
- WED content is aligned to the interests of the dominant majority group (U.S. Caucasians)

Three open ended questions on suggestions for improvements included improving cultural diversity in WED curriculum content were also included at the end of the survey. The Cronbach’s alpha for the survey’s three curriculum responsiveness scales one of which was Curriculum Inclusiveness resulted in a high internal consistency rating of .850.

The first official administration of the survey sent via e-mail contained a cover letter notifying participants of voluntary participation and assuring confidentiality in data collection. A low response rate on the e-mail survey prompted its conversion to a paper survey for hand distribution in WED courses once students agreed and instructors permitted it. Of the total 157 students surveyed, one student (Hispanic) opted to withdraw, one e-mail was undeliverable, and one e-mail survey was returned blank. The overall response rate was 44% (69 out of 154), which is above the 35% acceptance response rate for survey research (Best and Khan 2003). In controlling for non-response error, a comparison was done on geographic/ethnic origin demographics for respondents and non-respondents.
In keeping with the mixed methods Follow-Up Explanations model, participants from the survey pool were asked to volunteer for follow-up focus groups to collect qualitative data for further explaining survey results (Creswell and Plano Clark 2007). A total of 13 participants volunteered representing diverse ethnic backgrounds to include African American, Asian, African, and Caucasian. A minimum for four persons is required for conducting a focus group (Stokes 2003); hence, the composition of the three groups consisted of four, four, and five participants. The researcher moderated the focus groups, having a solid WED background. Consent forms were disseminated for participants’ signatures and included a focus group consent statement, purpose of the focus group, assurance of confidentiality/anonymity, and other instructions. The researcher followed an interview protocol using five trigger questions that were previously pilot tested and emerged from the survey findings that needed further explanation. Each focus group lasted approximately 90 minutes. Recorded field notes from three observers and verbatim transcription of the video-taped focus groups (each placed in separate folders) reflected pseudo names (e.g., Speaker 1) for participants to maintain anonymity and confidentiality. These procedures meet ethical guidelines required for conducting focus groups (Lindlof and Taylor 2002).

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were mainly used to analyze the survey quantitative data for frequency distributions and measures of central tendencies for student demographics and graduate students’ perceptions of WED curriculum content inclusiveness. Measures of variability were not done as follow-up focus groups were conducted to further explain emerging differences and similarities in the survey data. No parametric tests were used as the study survey consisted of a census of all study population and not a sample of it, resulting in the study data not being normally distributed (Best and Khan 2003). In this instance, the median was used as it is not affected by extreme values and recommended as the better average to use for the study’s ordinal data (Alreck and Settle 1995). Content analysis was used to analyse the open-ended survey responses on suggestions for improvements and the focus group data. Open coding was used initially in reading and underlining chunks of text that show coherent meaning relevant to the open-ended questions. An example of an underlined chunk was the following: include more class discussion. Simultaneously, in vivo codes grounded in “what was said” in the underlined text were affixed to arrive at emerging patterns, themes, and/or categories in the data. In order to ensure that in vivo codes were mutually exclusive, a constant comparison to previous ones was done to avoid overlapping.

The final emerging patterns and themes by respondents’ ethnicities from these qualitative data were observed and a quantified summary of trends was done by the researcher. Member-checking of focus group summaries and survey open-ended responses with participants did not reflect any disparities, thus helping to verify the accuracy of these findings and improving the validity and reliability of the study results. Like other cross-cultural studies using the Follow-Up Explanations Model, “the present study led to a multi-method approach to allow triangulation of the methods and cross-validation of the data” (Aldridge et al 1999:220). Cross-checking and further explaining the quantitative survey data with qualitative data (triangulation) help to
increase the reliability and validity of the survey findings as confirmed by Best and Khan (2003).

Results

Demographics

The census survey of the 157 participants resulted in one request for withdrawal bringing the final total population to 156 of which one survey was returned blank. A total of 69 students completed the survey comprising 39 (56%) females and 30 (44%) males with a graduate status showing 41 (59%) master’s and 28 (41%) doctoral students. All respondents had one or more years of continuous enrollment at the Midwestern University’s WED program. A further breakdown of 69 respondents by student groups showed the following: 11 (100%) or all international students; 41 (38%) U.S. majority group (mainly Caucasians); and 17 (44%) from the U.S. minority student group. The international students’ geographic origins were as follows: Asia, Africa, Europe, Middle East, Latin America, and the Caribbean. The U.S. minority student population group comprised 15 (50%) African Americans, one (100%) Asian American, and one “Other” or Unknown (33%). Available data on survey non-respondents show 66 (62%) from the majority group (mainly Caucasians) and 19 (56%) from the minority group (mainly African Americans). A comparison of student demographic ethnic/geographic origin for respondents was done to control non-response bias. No international non-respondents occurred and no substantial differences appeared among U.S. majority and minority respondents and non-respondents for ethnic/geographic origin, thus controlling for non-response error among these student groups.

Research Question and Survey

Table 1: Graduate Students’ Frequency Ratings on WED Curriculum Inclusiveness (N=69)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WED Curriculum Aspects</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mdn</th>
<th>NA</th>
<th>QO</th>
<th>ST</th>
<th>AN</th>
<th>DK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic groups are equitably represented as far as possible in WED content.</td>
<td>MAJ</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MIN</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>INT</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scholarly works of people of color are included.</td>
<td>MAJ</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MIN</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>INT</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perspectives of minority groups are fairly represented.</td>
<td>MAJ</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MIN</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The primary research study question was as follows: To what extent is the WED curriculum content inclusive of the multiculturalism represented in U.S. society and students in a graduate workforce education and development (WED) program? Multiculturalism is likened to students’ diverse cultures backgrounds that should be accommodated by inclusive curriculum content. Students’ culturally and internationally diverse backgrounds appeared, as a whole, to have influenced their responses. The median value in Table 1 includes all the don’t know responses which mostly came from the majority group. As a whole, U.S. majority students found the aspect of perspectives of minority groups being fairly represented to occur quite often (Mdn = 4) in WED content, whereas U.S. minority and international students found this to occur sometimes (Mdn = 3) as shown in Table 1. The latter indicate that sometimes perspectives of minority groups are not fairly represented in WED content.

Again, international and minority student groups reflected similar perceptions on the level of frequency with which WED content was diversified, as needed, to facilitate learning transfer to Non-U.S. settings as depicted in Table 1. However, U.S. majority students found this to occur sometimes (Mdn = 3.0) with the highest number of students (12) responding don’t know, while U.S. minority students felt this happened quite often. In contrast, U.S. minority and international student groups found the inclusiveness aspect of WED content being aligned to the interests of the dominant majority group happened quite often (Mdn = 4.0), while U.S. majority students found this to occur sometimes (Mdn = 3.0) with the largest number of majority students (10) indicating they did not know. The divergence in students’ perspectives for this inclusiveness aspect suggests that a gap exists for the equitable representation of interests of the U.S. minority and international students but not for the U.S. majority student group. Notably, none of the student groups found any aspect of curriculum inclusiveness occurred nearly always (“5” ranking) in WED content as shown in Table 1. All three student groups found that scholarly
works of people of color were included in WED curriculum content sometimes, but the largest number of majority students (12) did not know if this was so.

Content analysis of students’ open-ended responses to the survey question on how WED curriculum content could be improved to reflect the cultural diversity of the population in the U.S. included one common theme. All three student groups felt that WED curriculum content should be diversified to become inclusive of the ethnic groups represented in the U.S. society and student population. Students suggested three main ways in which curriculum diversification can be achieved: (1) include more inclusive/diverse content (23 students responding); (2) include more cultural diversity courses (7 students responding); and (3) include more HRD courses (3 students responding). Sample responses shared much similarity across student groups, often described as ‘more diverse content.’

One U.S. majority student asked and answered the question in caps to make a point: ‘… WHAT IS THE WHITE TO NON-WHITE RATIO FOR PROFESSORS? NO ASIANS, NO HISPANICS… AND MOSTLY OLD (60+). CURRICULUM IS DIRECTLY INFLUENCED BY THE INSTRUCTOR. DIVERSE FACULTY = DIVERSE CURRICULUM.’ One U.S. minority student highlighted the need for more diversity courses in stating, ‘… to me Caucasians [sic] instructors only deal with safe topics and don’t open up to discuss content that’s prevalent to minority students.’ An international student felt that “…the contributions of local Black, Asian, and Hispanic scholars among others should be given proper recognition.’ Yet, another international student felt that inclusion of HRD courses could be achieved if ‘they [administrators]… introduce cultural related topics specifically in the HR courses.’ These sample responses echo the overall perceptions expressed by the students responding to the question on improving cultural diversity in WED curriculum content in the study survey. Evidently, the main improvement suggested that WED curriculum content should be diversified supports the quantitative survey finding that WED content was mostly aligned to the interest of the majority group (U.S. Caucasians).

Follow-Up Focus Group

In keeping with the mixed methods Follow-up Explanations model used in the research design for this study, several distinguishing and non-distinguishing survey results were identified for follow-up in focus groups to gain a deeper insight into these results. In addition, the focus group data also helped to cross-check the suggestions for improvements for bias as these were included on the same survey and not as a separate semi-structured one. A total of 13 participants volunteered representing multicultural backgrounds to include African American, Asian, African, and Caucasian. The composition of the three groups consisted of four, four, and five participants that included at least one international student, one minority student, and one majority student in each of the three groups. Students’ specific ethnic/geographic origin is not mentioned to protect their identities given the sensitive nature of the research topic. The researcher moderated the focus groups, having a solid WED background.
WED content was found to be aligned to the interests of the dominant majority group quite often ($Mdn = 4.0$), according to the U.S. minority and international student groups’ survey results. Several comments on the open-ended survey responses suggested that diversifying the faculty would improve curriculum inclusiveness. These results indicated that students perceived diverse faculty as being more readily able to improve curriculum inclusiveness than U.S. majority faculty. Lack of inclusiveness in curriculum content affects culturally and internationally diverse students’ motivation to learn as revealed in the literature (Asher 2007, Gay 2004, Mehra and Bishop 2007). Further insight into students’ learning experiences in this context can help to better understand their need for more diverse faculty and curriculum.

Given the sensitivity of the topic, students were not asked outright why they wanted more diverse faculty in initiating focus group discussions, but rather in a more general way were asked: Judging from your exposure to the WED curriculum, how would you characterize or describe WED curriculum inclusiveness? Curriculum inclusiveness means a concerted effort to eliminate cultural bias in higher education curriculum. Other questions emerging from the flow of focus group discussion included the following: If there’s much not diversity, what is there [in the curriculum content]? Does the culture bias affect your ability to master the content? In responding to the latter question, an international student indicated that the culture bias affected her motivation to contribute to the in-class discussion as she felt that the majority of Caucasians students may not have been interested in listening but nevertheless, she shared her views to get rid of some baggage. Overall, participants’ suggestions for improvements in the focus group discussions parallel those found in the survey results. The focus group suggestions for improvements helped to cross-check the open-ended responses for same on the survey results in verifying that no apparent biases existed between the two, increasing the reliability and validity for the results on suggestions for WED curricular improvements.

In most instances, students included the solution for increasing international perspectives in their focus group contributions on curriculum inclusiveness. This sample response from a U.S. majority student echoed a common view on diversifying curriculum content to improve its inclusiveness as highlighted in the survey findings:

I don’t see a lot of reflection [on international perspectives] …. Since this is a global economy, I think we would benefit … [in having] guest speakers or things like that in the curriculum that came [sic] and taught us about different styles of workforce education and development in different countries, different cultures.

In shifting the discussion toward the instructor, an international student felt that ‘… the ethnicity of the instructor is important because … [the instructor] can share his or her own experience and even give us a little insight about what’s going on for this group of people …’ One U.S. majority student’s contribution help to possibly explain the high number of don’t know responses among majority student group in sharing a similar unawareness among majority faculty:

I’m just theorizing here, it may be that the instructor is not capable of incorporating multiple cultures because they’ve [sic] never been exposed to it; they don’t know what questions to ask; … if you’re relying on the instructor to deliver that kind of
content; develop that kind of curriculum. I just don’t see that as [sic], as going to happen (shaking head in agreement).

This sample response from a U.S. minority student reflected the view of a few other students: ‘There’s not much diversity in course content, except for the diversity class, …. The theorists are … Caucasian. I don’t remember any other ethnic theories in any other classes; outside the diversity class (nodding to emphasize the point).’ Students’ verbal reports in calling for more diverse faculty to create diverse curriculum appear to rest with majority faculty passivity and perceived lack of international and cultural exposures. The latter help to explain why students perceived U.S. majority faculty as not being equipped to make curriculum diversification possible.

Discussion

The purpose of this research study was to examine graduate students’ perceptions of the inclusiveness of curriculum content for a WED program in responding to multiculturalism among students at a Mid-Western university. The key overarching question asked was as follows: To what extent is the curriculum content inclusive of the multiculturalism (diverse cultural backgrounds) represented in U.S. society and students in a graduate workforce education and development (WED) program? Empirical evidence from study findings at this snapshot in time suggest that WED curriculum inclusiveness is inadequate in reflecting the multiculturalism or cultural plurality in U.S. society and graduate students in a Mid-Western State University’s WED program. Survey results (see Table 1) show that unlike the U.S. majority group, U.S. minority and international students found WED curriculum content to be aligned to the interests of the dominant majority group quite often ($Mdn = 4.0$). In addition, international students found international authors and global views from developing countries are almost never ($Mdn = 2$) used in WED content. Of importance to the overall results is the high number of don’t know responses in the majority group as compared to the small numbers among the minority and international student groups as shown in Table 1. This finding suggests that the majority student group is not engaged in the issue of inclusiveness in curriculum content despite efforts to embrace “diversity” as a core value at their university.

Further, survey open-ended responses on improvement suggestions support the quantitative results in students’ clarion call for curriculum diversification to include international and minority perspectives in WED curriculum content. These findings suggest that students experience considerable intellectual and cultural bondage in their graduate studies that do not adequately prepare them for the rapidly growing global marketplace. The latter detracts from the Midwestern University’s diversity initiative (Trevino 2007) and its WED department’s mission of producing world-class graduates (SIUC 2008). In addition, focus group results help to explain students’ call for more diversified faculty and curriculum content. The latter is in keeping with the dominant mixed methods Follow-Up Explanation model and pragmatic paradigm used in this research study. The level of continuity across students’ focus group comments in using words/phrases like ‘not much’, ‘more’, ‘we’, and ‘us’ help to paint a collective picture of the multicultural deficits, and by extension, lack of inclusiveness in WED curriculum content. These
deficits articulated in the focus group discussions included limited international and minority perspectives in WED content, majority faculty lack of international and cultural exposures for teaching students with diverse cultural backgrounds, and lack of diverse faculty.

The survey and focus group results have several implications for multicultural responsiveness in WED curriculum content for its culturally diverse graduate students and university “diversity” initiative. Notably, students’ almost unanimous suggestion to diversify and internationalize WED curriculum content resonates with findings in the literature on creating more inclusive curriculum in higher education (Diamond 1998, Friedman et al 1996, Mestenhauser and Ellingboe 1998). The implication here would be a reduction in ethnocentric view and the intellectual bondage students’ experience with the existing curriculum at the time of this study, and strongly validates the theoretical underpinnings for critical education theory, critical race theory, and multicultural education in the literature (Ladson-Billings 1999, DeCuir and Dixon 2004, McLaren 2003, Walker-Tileston 2004). Moreover, minority students’ interests and motivation to learn would be enhanced with more inclusive curriculum content, increasing their potential to successfully achieve their educational goals (Gay 2000). A bigger implication for lack of international perspectives in WED content for international students is the risk of limited far learning transfer (Schunk 2004) to their home settings as indicated in the literature. If left unnoticed, this lack of global knowledge in the WED curriculum may deter future international enrollment, which would result in a substantial decline in tuition revenue for this Midwestern State University. International students pay more than twice the tuition cost of a U.S. student for seated classes (SIUC 2009).

Hiring more diverse faculty as a common suggestion by students for improving curriculum inclusiveness has proven to be effective in the literature (Ladson-Billings 1999). Still, special attention to preparing existing majority faculty to teach culturally diverse students is needed as this appeared to be a major concern from focus group comments. These findings are all in keeping with the shift in the multicultural education literature from curriculum content to instructor quality (Gay 2004). An alternative to hiring diverse faculty as reported in the literature would be to make diversity a major curriculum goal campus-wide, requiring faculty to present multicultural perspectives in all courses (Diamond, 1998). This alternative has potential for implementation as the Midwestern University already has a commitment to diversity as a core value in its mission and vision (Trevino 2007). Such an initiative would have a very positive impact on increasing the multicultural responsiveness of the WED curriculum and result in potential benefits such as developing cultural competence, high levels of creativity, critical thinking, and problem solving skills for both teachers and learners (Smith and Schonfeld 2000). The latter would require ongoing evaluation to measure the impact of diversity initiative which should definitely include a revision of the Mid-Western University’s campus wide instructor-course evaluation forms to include students’ ethnic diversity and instructor cultural competence.

Limitations evident in this study include using a self-reported WED Curriculum Responsiveness Survey, which is prone to personal bias. Findings are restricted to mostly the Caucasians, African Americans, and international students who participated in the study and cannot be generalized (no random sampling done) to other populations, but workforce educators in similar settings can
relate to the results accordingly. Nevertheless, study findings do add to the multiculturalism debate in supporting more inclusiveness for workforce education curriculum content. For future research, this study should be replicated to include a larger dataset and other regions in the U.S. to address the limitations identified.

**Author Bio:** Debra Ferdinand pursued tertiary education (from Associates to Doctoral degree) at three different U.S. institutions in three different states. Her experience as an international student prompted this research into the challenge of responding to multiculturalism among graduate students, but she has also written other articles on this theme: Cultural Sensitivity, Cultural Awareness in Multimedia, Cultural Differences, Cross Cultural Elements.

**REFERENCES**


MULTICULTURALISM AND THE POLITICAL PROCESS IN TRINIDAD: A CASE STUDY

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This paper assesses the formal introduction of multiculturalism into the politics of Trinidad. It argues that while the notion of multiculturalism presents a perspective on our diverse culture its official introduction into the politics through a Ministry of Multiculturalism when the acknowledgement of its failure as an official political policy in several countries is evident, has primarily been undertaken as a strategy to gain political capital. This is so, since the practice of religious and cultural traditions is routinely normal in Trinidad without any threat to national cohesion or to any single religious, ethnic or cultural community. Multiculturalism as it is now being emphasised particularly when the country’s politics has been gradually moving beyond race and class is not tangibly valuable for the society. It will negate the continual development of the kind of cosmopolitan cultural identity we should be working towards and foster a situation which would promote much more pronounced singular cultural group identities by placing each group into culturally or religiously determined ethnic categories. The paper thus suggests that in the pursuit of nation building, it is much better to acknowledge cultural diversity as a valuable resource and try to establish a framework for building a national cultural identity inclusive of and around those differences outside of an official multicultural policy. If multiculturalism is brought into the dialogue it should be informally introduced as an acknowledgement of the cultural expressions and contributions of groups all working to build a national community.

Key words – Cultural Diversity, Ethnicity, Multiculturalism, National Identity, Political Process,

Introduction

The all embracing concept of multiculturalism is perhaps best understood as a perspective on the human condition primarily addressing concerns about immigrant minorities in the developed countries. When multiculturalism was adopted as an official policy by countries such as Canada and Australia, countries which the government of Trinidad says it has modelled its policy after, it was essentially a normative response to a situation engendered by the fact that in those societies there was a need to officially recognise the growing numbers of non-English speaking immigrants and the resulting racial, ethnic or cultural diversity that developed. Trinidad’s official proclamation of its multicultural policy was done as a spontaneous response to a call for its adoption by the Sanatan Dharma Maha Sabha, a Hindu based organisation, at an Indian Arrival Day dinner. The Prime Minister Persad-Bissessar, announced that the Ministry responsible for culture would be thereafter referred to as the Ministry of Arts and Multiculturalism “to give
greater voice to the diverse cultural expressions of our common desires for individual and national identity and to promote a realignment of policies including resource allocation, to allow for a more equitable recognition and fulfilment of the needs of the diverse proponents of our culture. This is the Government’s commitment to ensure that every creed and race finds an equal place in this land of ours” (Persad-Bissessar 2010:1). This announcement marked the implementation of an official multicultural policy of Trinidad and Tobago.

Theoretical arguments of multiculturalism adopt either a positive evaluation of the notion (Miller and Walzer 1995, Taylor 1994, Parekh 2000, Kymlicka 2008) or a critique of the theories based on the existing values of a liberal society which are threatened by multiculturalism (Barry 2001, Levy 2000). The model that is used to promote multiculturalism according to Inglis (1996:14) “...envisages that individuals and groups should be fully incorporated into the society without either losing their distinctiveness or being denied full participation.” The adoption of multiculturalism must therefore be seen as a policy which is driven by a desire to deal with the issue of how to integrate immigrant ethnic minorities in the society or perhaps more precisely as a distinct reaction to eliminate any threat to the political and cultural climate of the society with the presence of a growing number of ethnic minority groups. Multiculturalism therefore, should not be adopted by countries in which there are ethnic or cultural communities which have settled there for over one hundred years and have developed an open, relaxed and easy going style of life with the singular problem being fierce competition for political power every five years. In countries which adopted an official policy of multiculturalism, it was done against the background of the growing racial, ethnic and cultural divide and the pre-occupation with identity and difference. It was therefore primarily undertaken to remove barriers facing immigrant minorities to participation in social and political life.

When Canada, for example, adopted its official policy of multiculturalism in 1971, the initial focus was to remove the threat posed by the desire of the French speaking group in Quebec to secede from the federal union and to preserve the cultural identity of the growing immigrant groups as part of the country’s national identity; eventually, there was a gradual shift to concerns about equality, social participation and national unity (Dorais, Foster and Stockley 1994:375). Similarly in Australia, the policy of multiculturalism evolved in a very specific manner, shifting in focus from highlighting and protecting cultural identity of immigrant minority groups to addressing issues of inequality, community relations and racism faced by these immigrant minorities (Castles 1992, Dorais, Foster and Stockley 1994). Multiculturalism in Australia was placed on a ‘National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia,’ an agenda which, given the country’s growing ethnic minority groups, sought to promote all Australian’s right to cultural identity, the right to social justice and the utilisation of the skills and talents of all Australians to be part of the economic development of the country (Inglis 1996).

What was very noticeable in both Canada and Australia was the presence of a number of minority ethnic groups from a non-English speaking background. In 1991 twenty (20) years after Canada officially adopted its multicultural policy given the distinct ethnic composition of the immigrant population and the rationale for an official multicultural policy; one could justifiably lend some support to the government’s decision (See Table 1). This situation was a major factor driving the adoption of multiculturalism as the model for managing cultural diversity and it clearly highlights why the model was used to design the official response to cultivate some
common sense of belonging to a new society with language and institutional differences. What was also important was that within the established framework to support the policy of multiculturalism, programmes had to be developed to facilitate and accommodate language difference in schools.

**Table 1**  
Canada's Population by ethnic Origin: 1991 Census

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic Group</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Multiple Origin</td>
<td>7,794,250</td>
<td>28.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single Origin</td>
<td>19,199,790</td>
<td>71.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>6,146,600</td>
<td>22.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German</td>
<td>911,560</td>
<td>3.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scottish</td>
<td>893,124</td>
<td>3.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>750,055</td>
<td>2.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irish</td>
<td>725,660</td>
<td>2.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>586,645</td>
<td>2.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukranian</td>
<td>406,645</td>
<td>1.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N. American Indian</td>
<td>365,375</td>
<td>1.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dutch</td>
<td>358,180</td>
<td>1.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Asian</td>
<td>324,840</td>
<td>1.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polish</td>
<td>272,810</td>
<td>1.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish</td>
<td>245,840</td>
<td>0.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scandinavian</td>
<td>174,370</td>
<td>0.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metis</td>
<td>75,150</td>
<td>0.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inuit</td>
<td>30,085</td>
<td>0.11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Statistics Canada: [http://www.unesco.org/most/pp4.htm](http://www.unesco.org/most/pp4.htm)*

Multiculturalism put in its proper context therefore, highlights “...an awareness of the need for policies which promote ethnic and cultural minority groups participation in the society while maintaining the unity of the country” (Inglis 1996:4). Inglis (1996) contends that all of civil society must of necessity be fully engaged in the multiculturalism debate before it is adopted. This debate can be undertaken on three fronts, each based on a particular distinctive 'referent' of multiculturalism; either the demographic-descriptive multicultural usage which identifies ethnically or diverse segments of the society and then discusses solutions; the programmatic-political usage where the concept refers to programmes and policy initiatives designed to respond to and manage the diversity after debate and discussion or the ideological normative stage where the concept will be used as a slogan and model for political action or in some cases simply to gain political capital.

Any discussion on the official policy of multiculturalism in Trinidad has to be undertaken within the framework of ideological normative usage where the concept has essentially been used to
gain political capital. In Trinidad there was absolutely no honest and robust debate, which, given the country’s social and political history and the state of social and political relations, was mandatory. It is the argument of this paper that the multiculturalism policy in Trinidad was adopted in response to repeated calls from a single religious community through the National Council of Indian Culture. When it was announced as the government’s official policy at an Indian Arrival Day function it was done prior to any form of national discussion. In this context, the paper suggests that without the necessary debate involving all of civil society, prior to the announcement, multiculturalism as it has been adopted is simply a slogan and cannot be described as a model for political action but one espoused as a tool for political capital without the sentiments of other cultural communities being considered.

Early Multicultural Trinidad

One can perhaps rightly argue that given the plurality of Trinidad the label of multiculturalism could easily be applied to refer to the country’s diverse culture. This plural character and resulting ‘multicultural identity’ of Trinidad draws upon the fact that the country experienced imperial conquest, decades of slavery, indentureship and colonial rule which brought a mix of people to the region from Europe, Africa and Asia to settle in areas already occupied by the indigenous Amerindians. After the end of slavery, the society was divided by race, ethnicity, skin colour, class, culture and religion (Yelvington 1993). It was during the period of colonial rule however, by which time the Amerindian population was already decimated, the rigid social relations that came to characterise the post independence period and which continue up to today had its genesis. The social structure during the colonial order was characterised by a dominant white upper class below which stood the coloured middle class and at the bottom the ex-slaves and the Indian and Chinese indentured labourers (Ryan 1972). The Africans and the East Indians formed the largest majority of the population but according to Ryan (1972), the relations between the freed Africans and the Indians were never cordial. Conflict developed as the Africans considered the Indians to be a threat to their newly won freedom while the Indians feared contact with the Africans would be polluting and in this context the Indians were determined to preserve the purity of their race (Ryan 1972).

These ideas clearly influenced the political process in the pre independence period. What this suggests is that there was very little hope of arriving at a consensus on the practice of politics and on the structure and functions of governmental institutions. Once the period of indentureship came to an end in 1917 the East Indians, who Sudama (2006) noted were initially regarded as transients, were no longer looking to return to India. They were forced to come to terms with the reality of having to settle in a society in which Euro-Centric African cultural practices were firmly taking root and which they clearly did not feel a part of. They thus openly resisted full representative electoral politics at a time when there was a growing demand for representative government throughout the British West Indies, opting instead for a much more divisive communal representative system fearing domination by the African masses choosing to remain outside the emerging national community.

The position of the East Indian National Congress at the time was that the Indian community should be considered as a single political unit and should be given separate representation as a race (Ryan 1972:31). Even though some of the more radical East Indians speaking through the
Young Indian Party sought to promote class identity rather than racial identity the general feeling among the majority of the East Indians was that their welfare was not in any way linked to the Africans struggle for democratic constitutional reform (Ryan 1972:32) and therefore, it was in their interest to promote sectional politics on the basis of ethnicity to ensure that the community would get a piece of the national pie (Munasinghe, 2001:22). This separatism was further reinforced with the claim by the East Indian community that they “had been denied the benefits of education and could not maximise the possibilities of the democratic politic method” (Ryan 1972:31). This marked the beginning of the dissatisfaction and alienation that was expressed among the East Indian community until 1995 when for the first time the country had an East Indian Prime Minister.

The Challenge of Independence

When Trinidad became independent in 1962, the society was one within which there was a great degree of ignorance by the Africans about the social character of the East Indians and similarly ignorance by the East Indians about the Africans, the two dominant groups that coloured the demographic landscape. It is this kind of ignorance, promoted by the unwillingness of individuals to tolerate cultural practices different from their own, when it is in its infancy and not when the society is on its way to full maturity, that the architectural design of multiculturalism seeks to address through an official political policy. What is noticeable however, was that even then, Trinidad did not have the kind of population characteristics of Canada or Australia at the time when those countries introduced an official policy of multiculturalism. In 1960 in Trinidad for example, the country’s population distribution showed 43.5 percent Africans, 36.5 percent East Indians about 2 percent European and 1 percent Chinese and a mixed population of about 17 percent (Ryan 1972:3).

This ignorance at the time of independence about social and cultural character contributed to the development of racial stereotypes and led to the promotion of explanations of behaviour and images of the two main ethnic groups, the Africans and the East Indians, by each other, which heightened tensions and threatened to destabilise the social arrangements for years. In addition there developed a high degree of racial exclusivity in racial concentration of the population in communities and in broader geographical areas with very little intermingling among the people (Hintzen 1989). Against this background of social divide, Williams in his capacity as Prime Minister just prior to independence attempted to set in motion efforts to engender a national identity and official policy on cultural diversity. His clearly stated position on citizens’ patriotism and loyalty to Trinidad and Tobago given our diversity was that:

There can be no Mother India...there can be no Mother Africa...there can be no Mother England...there can be no Mother China...no mother Syria or no Mother Lebanon. A nation, like an individual, can have only one mother. The only mother we recognise is Mother Trinidad and Tobago and a mother cannot discriminate between her children; all must be equal in her eyes (Williams 1962:281).

This declaration obviously promoted a well articulated vision for a non-racial nationalistic ideal for the country. His assertion highlighted the need to promote a non-racial ethos in an emergent nation with different cultures and ethnic groups all hoping to find their way in the social maze
and could have been used to build a formal framework for national consensus on the way forward. Part of the problem however, was that Williams was of the view that the Indian population should be completely integrated into the national community and that this integration could only be achieved through the efforts of his party the Peoples National Movement (PNM). This of course could not be easily achieved as Williams perceived since by 1962, “...the population of East Indians in Trinidad essentially came to form a mutually agreed upon life, system of social relationship and set of cultural institutions” (Vertovec 1992:92) outside of any national matrix and the norms of the developing Trinidad society with a nationalistic outlook. This situation together with Williams’ blinkered view on building national consensus strengthened the process of the East Indians alienating themselves from the Trinidadian community and in the wake of such circumstances, what developed was a Trinidad society within which there was a preoccupation with cultural identity by both Blacks and Indians and a steepening of ethnic rivalries.

Yelvington (1993) argues that by 1956 when elections took place, Trinidad was a shattered society and thus independence in 1962 meant very little to the East Indian community. The state was so deeply divided that even if the Democratic Labour Party (DLP) the Hindu based party had won the election in 1961, it would have had the same problems that the PNM faced, problems created by the intractable views of both the Africans and the East Indians about each other (Yelvington 1993). The 1961 election and the struggle over the 1962 independence constitution highlighted the deep racial divide that existed in the country. According to Ryan, (1996) prior to the 1961 election, the country was seemingly poised on the brink of war which prompted the declaration of a state of emergency as a precautionary measure in several areas but in the final analysis the contending racial rivals hesitated at the brink. In a similar manner, the fight between the PNM and the DLP over the 1962 independence constitution served notice that already heightened racial tensions could become explosive. In the end better judgment prevailed and consensus was achieved on the constitutional arrangements.

Following independence, the PNM continued to occupy the seat of power while the DLP sat in the opposition benches in an environment characterised by a fragile co-existence between the two contending ethnic groups, the PNM Africans and the DLP East Indians. In 1970 however, even though there were some unsettling disturbances in the form of the ‘Black Power Revolution,’ there was some indication of the possibility of change. The PNM was under attack by young black radical elements who bitterly complained about the existing racial and class discrimination in the society and demanded ‘social justice and equality’ under the umbrella of the ‘Black Power Movement.’ There was an appeal for African East-Indian solidarity to challenge the existing ‘oligarchic racial and class structure’ but this was rejected by the East Indian community on the grounds that it could not identify with the struggle of the Black Power Movement (Gosine 1986).

Participation level of East Indians was therefore expectedly non-existent because Black Power, as the East-Indians saw it was much more part of a worldwide struggle for African people to return to their cultural roots, to reject both white domination and that of the black political elite, and to seize political power through revolutionary struggle (Gosine, 1986). Gosine (1986) contends that the East Indians non-involvement in the Black Power Movement may have prevented Williams’ fall from political office and in recognition of this and as a good will
gesture to the community he made a number of social, cultural and economic concessions to the East Indian community (Gosine, 1986: 237). Even though this did not sever the passion and the yearning for closer ties to ‘Mother India,’ to a large extent it contributed to a higher level of participation by East Indian in the developing nation-state of Trinidad and Tobago. To quote Gosine:

Many East Indians indicated that in such areas as education, employment, culture and economy, they are now being given a more equitable share. Their children are now rewarded with more governmental scholarships than ever in the past and employment avenues are not blocked as they once were. East Indians also pointed out that their most significant strides since the demise of the Movement have taken place within the cultural arena...their current identification with India is now stronger than it ever was; celebrations of religious and cultural festivals are now carried out on a more massive scale than ever before...East Indian programmes such as “Mastana Bahar” and “The Indian Cultural Hour” have emerged promoting folklore, music and culture. ...Moreover, such religious holidays as Divali and Holi or Phagwa are now celebrated on a scale unheard of before (Gosine, 1986: 237)

On the face of it, taking into account the strained racial relations in the society and the demands of the East Indians these new concessions which seemed to be aimed at promoting greater inclusion of the group into the national community inclusive of their cultural traditions and ‘Mother India’ sentiments were welcomed. Civil unrest and bloodshed which could have taken place if the East Indians had joined forces with the Africans had been avoided and it was the East Indians who as a community that played a major role in securing a peaceful Trinidad and Tobago. Implementing a formal race relations policy would have provided a platform for initially securing a modicum of peaceful co-existence and for dealing with the cultural dynamics of a confused ignorant populace. Unfortunately, Williams did not implement any official multicultural policy but he recognised the need to be much more accommodating towards the East Indians.

While the concessions made by Williams were gratefully accepted this did not mean that the East Indians were willing to support Williams and the PNM and thus they continued to challenge the stronghold the PNM had over the political decision making process. They were able to use whatever gains they made to further solidify their position as a cohesive group within the national community cutting across religious differences to continue the struggle to be much more involved in the political decision making process (Gosine, 1986). After the Black Power Revolution therefore, the dream of the East Indian community was now being translated into inclusion into the Trinidad cultural identity but essentially on their terms. On the other hand, while Williams remained in control cracks appeared within the PNM, a once seemingly impregnable well organised political party. In addition a “yawning credibility gap” developed between the black elite and the black masses on whose behalf Williams was supposed to be governing (Ryan 1972:367) which created further fissures within the African community quite unlike what was happening within the strong cohesive East Indian community.

In the context of the slow social and political transformation taking place, it was evident that the country was beginning to accept and celebrate its cultural diversity. The communication between
the Africans and East Indians improved and it was Williams and the PNM that became the target of attack from both Africans and East Indians. In 1976, when the United Labour Front (ULF) emerged as the party to challenge to the PNM, even though there were several birth pangs associated with the party, there was a lessening of racial tension celebrated by a much more inclusive concept of ‘class consciousness’. According to Basdeo Panday who had emerged as a major voice for the East Indian workers, “there has been a long stretch and racial feelings have subsided. During this time class consciousness had begun to develop...racial antagonism has fallen to an all time low and it will take a tremendous effort to drive it up to a peak in 1976” (quoted in Ryan 1996:70-71).

What is of importance here is the fact that the East Indians were becoming more and more a part of the national community with the legitimate right to continue in the practice of their cultural traditions. They were never legally excluded from the Trinidad identity but for a very long time chose to operate within a communal framework where they felt much more secure. With societal maturity however, and in the face of all the growing economic pains of the nation, their gradual inclusion was quite noticeable. The East Indians could no longer be even considered as ‘a hostile and recalcitrant minority’ even if they opted for a tossed salad analogy of the country’s culture over that of a callaloo (Munasinghe 2001). The ideals that animated their earlier fixed disposition on nationalism as an African sponsored domination of them in the society were gradually being eroded and as they became emboldened some of their leaders verbally expressed a willingness to consider the integrationist ideal.

A New Beginning

In 1986, the PNM was out of power for the first time since winning the election in 1956. Outside of the national economic issues that raised questions about the leadership’s ability to manage the economy, the party was weakened for two reasons. Firstly the founding leader Eric Williams was dead and secondly, the transition of leadership to George Chambers bypassing two East Indian deputy leaders suggested that the African element was not yet ready to accept an East Indian Prime Minister and this only served to further alienate the relatively small group of East Indian members within the party. The party that replaced the PNM, the National Alliance for Reconstruction (NAR) was in essence a true rainbow coalition and its success at the polls symbolised a complete rejection of the PNM, and finally lurking on the horizon, some measure of acceptance of the ideal of assimilation by all groups in the society. In similar fashion to the new People’s Partnership (PP) government led by Bissessar, the NAR party “…promised a new era in race and ethnic relations because it ushered in a government that was in fact a coalition of the African and Indian segments…the rhetoric proclaimed it as a dream of Afro-Indian solidarity come true” (La Guerre 2001:221). It was an example which undoubtedly did not reflect the need for any official policy on multiculturalism.

The problem however, was that the Afro-Indian solidarity did not come out of the dream phase. The NAR split down the middle along racial lines in record time exposing the fractured skeletal frame on which the party coalesced. Panday, the leader of the East Indian community for over ten (10) years bitterly complained about continued dominance by African elements with their bureaucratic monopoly, which given the size of the East Indian community was way out of proportion (La Guerre 2001). What this revealed was that race relations remained on edge in
spite of the projection of ‘one love’ inclusive of the African and Indian elements in the NAR. Panday began to position himself and his new political organisation CLUB 88 to launch a much more determined challenge on what he perceived to be complete African domination of the political process. In the face of all this one has to recognise the difficulty that was involved in building trust in a culturally diverse society. Yet one of the striking features of the whole arrangement was the initial commitment to develop and legitimise a true Trinidad identity without threatening existing cultural traditions.

**Coming out of the Shadows**

Even though the PNM was returned to office in 1991 primarily as a direct result of the split in the NAR, by 1995 the society had matured enough to have a transition in leadership which for the first time saw an East Indian Prime Minister being appointed in Trinidad. Ryan (1996) points to several factors that may have been responsible for the elevation of Panday to Prime Minister outside of the support from Robinson iii but what was perhaps most telling was the improved state of race relations during the period 1991 to 1995. The Manning administration (1991-1995) officially acknowledged that race relations needed to be addressed and established a Centre for Ethnic Studies at the University of the West Indies, St Augustine to inquire into race related problems and make recommendations (La Guerre 2001:221). When Panday took office in 1995, the multiculturalist model adopted in countries such as Canada and Australia built around the growing immigrant ethnic minority groups was not applicable given the fact that the East Indians were able to retain their cultural identity without being denied in any way full participation in the social, political and economic affairs of the country. There was no expressed desire in the form of any official policy to address concerns about discrimination in spite of the fact that previously several concerns had been raised by East Indians particularly the Hindu community, about discrimination in relation to representation in the public service (Ryan 1996).

One can therefore argue that the slow transformation process of our multi-ethnic, multi cultural, multi-religious society which began in earnest after the ‘Black Power Revolution’ without any unsettling violence and conflict had reached a position in 1995 from which issues related to race relations could be dealt with in a much more open and comprehensive manner. With the change in government from a predominantly African based PNM to a predominantly East Indian based UNC there was the perception of perceived racial bias in how state resources were being distributed by the UNC among some members within the African community but whatever antagonisms were borne out of that the country overcame them and moved on. The problem of alienation and marginalisation articulated by the Prime Minister in relation to how he perceived the treatment of the East Indians by the former government was being addressed with the establishment of an Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC) to bring the balance that was being demanded by all constituents.

In 2000 the UNC won the scheduled election and once again took office which to a large extent contradicted any argument that Trinidad with its cultural diversity and all its political and socially disquieting issues was not a mature democratic state. The problems that developed the following year within the government that forced the Prime Minister to call an election reflects a much more mature society operating within the framework of the country’s republican constitution. Panday’s UNC and the opposition PNM each won 18 seats after the general
election, posing a seemingly constitutional crisis. The question was which party should form the
government. Power sharing in the form of a government of national unity was rejected by the
PNM leader Patrick Manning. There was an agreement however, that under the Constitution
President Robinson was authorized to appoint a new Prime Minister. President Robinson chose
Manning to be the next Prime Minister and two days later the UNC pulled out of the political
pact that had resolved the elections tie refusing to accept the President’s decision. In many
societies this would have led to very violent upheavals but the fact that the country was able to
manage the crisis, within the framework of the constitution, in the face of all legal wrangling and
pointed disagreements about the decision, overshadowed any view that Trinidad lacked the level
of tolerance and discipline to resolve conflict that the multiculturalism model was designed to
resolve.

The New Politics of the Multiculturalism

During the period 2002 and 2010 there was some measure of political tension primarily from the
fallout due to Robinson’s decision to appoint Manning as Prime Minister in 2001. To some
extent this spilled over into the social and cultural relations and even though the country
continued to maintain some measure of tolerance and willingness to accept the richness of its
cultural diversity there were calls for the implementation of a formal multicultural policy through
the voice of the Maha Saba. This was understandable given the growing apprehension about the
PNM’s position on promoting a much more nationalistic oriented culture. The Ministry of
Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs which was established in 1991\textsuperscript{v}
was at the time involved in developing the Vision 2020 Policy National Strategic Plan \textsuperscript{v}
of the
government in relation to culture through it representation on the Sub-Committees, for
Community Development and Culture. The importance of culture in the development process
was thus placed within the framework of the overall National Strategic Plan. However, the
Vision 2020 National Strategic Plan was challenged at a forum held by the National Council for
Indian Culture as a “…disruptive unofficial policy of ethno-nationalism,” promoted in a
“…politically motivated Vision 2020 economic model,” which did not have any place in the
society (Kangal 2004:2).

The Vision 2020 Policy National Strategic Plan nevertheless, was quite clear in its recognition of
the cultural diversity and creativity of all the people which it argued should be “…valued and
nurtured”. \textsuperscript{vi} It went on to state that:

The importance of culture to our ambitions cannot be overstated. We see culture
as all-embracing, impacting each and every developmental effort… each of us
must be prepared to stand by Trinidad and Tobago, respecting the collective
effort to build a better nation through many changes, large and small. Our pursuit
of development will not be at the expense of our uniqueness and cultural
heritage. We are a people rich in diversity, and we have exported aspects of our
culture around the world. Our creative minds have lit up the world stage at
Olympic ceremonies and our musical artistes travel the globe entertaining the
world. Stories of our past cultural achievements must have a place in our present,
and anchor the ambitions of our future. Cultural awareness must be a part of the
school experience for the young, and business and the society at large must
embrace the uniqueness of our heritage. We must be proud of our history, of who
we are, even as we seek to stand alongside the developed nations of the world. It is our uniqueness that will shape our competitiveness.

Such views recognise and respect the rich cultural diversity and perhaps more importantly openly acknowledges the validity of the expressions and contributions of all cultural groups. The problem however, was that claims of racial discrimination which have always been part of the political discourse based on the perceptions of some group and community leaders that resources are not fairly allocated in the society particularly between the two main contending groups the Africans and the East Indians would not go away. The Hindu community, for example, has always held the view that an African based PNM led government would always discriminate against East Indians in the society, and similarly, some members of the black community hold the view that any East Indian led government will engage in similar practices.

An Equal Opportunity Commission was established in 2000 to address this unease in the society with the mandate to “...prohibit certain kinds of discrimination, to promote equality of opportunity between all persons of different status” (Equal Opportunity Act, 2000). This effort to address issues related to discrimination practices clearly did not fully meet the demands of the National Council of Indian Culture which continued to lay claims of unfairness and inequity against the PNM led African based party which held the reins of government from 2002 to 2010 about the distribution of state resources. Sudama makes the point that “the African presence and cultural practices took root as firmly indigenous despite the migration and settlement of peoples from many lands and cultures…” (Sudama 2006:1) and perhaps it was this thinking that influenced the non-acceptance of anything less than a formal multicultural policy by the National Council of Indian Culture.

It was not surprising therefore that the impetus for the eventual implementation of the very political policy on multiculturalism gained momentum at the seminar organised by the National Council of Indian Culture in October 2004 specifically to promote the idea of an official state multicultural policy. Kangal in presenting his discussion paper presented a case for the eventual adoption of an official policy on multiculturalism by Trinidad suggesting that it was necessary, “…to manage our ethno-cultural diversity and /or our prevailing racial cultural ethos” (Kangal 2004:2). He was of the view that a very unambiguous state multicultural policy should find its way into the constitution of the country. In his view the cultural policy that the Vision 2020 National Strategic Plan emphasised was not the best for a multi ethnic society as Trinidad and Tobago and suggested that what was needed was the implementation of an official policy to shape the future of ‘cosmopolitan Trinbago’ within a new constitution on the grounds of normative conventional wisdom and the ‘cross cultural navigation ethic’ in the Koran (Kangal 2004). He also provided support for his argument by pointing out that “…progressive societies have adhered to the tenets of multiculturalism... which was motivated by a sense of social justice based on moral, ethical and social responsibilities to improve the conditions of racio-ethnic and gender minorities” (Kangal 2004:11).

While nothing was wrong in making such a forceful argument for the adoption of an official political policy on multiculturalism outside of the established cultural framework and the proposed Vision 2020 Plan, what was missing from his argument was a perspective on the
historical analysis of the social relations in Trinidad. Such an analysis should frame any discourse and would be necessary to highlight the difficulty in managing and exploiting the rich ethno-cultural diversity in Trinidad. Arguably, in 2004, Trinidad had reached a point in its historical journey in regard to social relations and political stability which the adoption of an official multiculturalism policy could erase. The political and social relations in Trinidad did not fit within the framework that was used as a design to establish multiculturalism in Canada, Australia or Sweden or any other country that promoted the idea of multiculturalism which was primarily to gain a comparative advantage in the integration of a growing immigrant population and in the case of Canada the threat posed to the country by Quebec’s desire to secede.

This normative argument came at a time when multiculturalism as an official policy was being discussed as a failure and being questioned about its political correctness in relation to the variety of ills that the policy was thought to have caused (Barry 2001 and Levy 2000). Critics argued that multiculturalism as an official political policy was based on a “...naive and indeed pernicious ideology which assumed that it was somehow natural that society should be divided into separate and disconnected ethnic groups, each with its own tribal spaces, political values and cultural traditions” (Kymlicka 2008a:5) while at the same time expecting barriers to participation in national life to be effectively removed. Levy (2000) argues that diversity could be taken as an inevitable fact of life but not a goal to be furthered by means of state policy. He further noted that difference-conscious policies and not an emphasis on multiculturalism was the best way to deal with a culturally and ethnically diverse reality and that “a programme of recognising difference as a matter of right, rather than dealing with it pragmatically would not only contradict the public-order-oriented way in which states accommodated such claims but it would also be theoretically inconsistent as it is premised on the normative assumption that one’s pre-existing culture includes the resources for judging others in the world” (Levy 2000:32).

Evidently therefore, there had to be some other yet very significant enough reason for the continued call for ‘state multiculturalism’ to be established as an official policy in Trinidad at that time, yet no convincing evidence or argument could be found outside of the old view that the East Indian population felt separated and apart from dominant ‘creole culture’. All that was presented were old arguments related to the adoption of multiculturalism in societies in which the dominant narrative about multiculturalism was focused on its failure and the social consequences of that failure with particular questions being raised about the political correctness of the policy. In this context, one could perhaps agree with Joppke (2004:243) that “multiculturalism recognition is perhaps an adequate demand for a domestic group that has been historically wronged like indigenous groups or the descendants of African slaves in European settler societies...or for satisfaction of the cultural needs of the non-European, non English speaking migrant population that moved to Europe and North America for all kinds of reasons”.

Whatever we accept should be based on the view that what is desired is unity in diversity. How a country manages its ethnic and cultural diversity presents the major challenge. In the case of Trinidad, the setback to achieving that arrangement could be found in the early resistance of the East Indians to constitutional change which sought to introduce representative government and their support for communal representation. This of course was thrown out as impractical and improbable, the argument being that:
Communal representation, apart from the objection that this arrangement would be opposed by the chief advocates of constitutional change, there would be great difficulty in deciding what the constituencies were to be and moreover it would accentuate and perpetuate the differences which in order to produce a homogenous community, it should be the object of statesmanship to remove. The East Indians are an important element in the community and it would be a great misfortune if they were encouraged to stand aside from the main current of political life instead of sharing in it and assisting to guide its course. Finally if a concession of this kind were granted to the East Indians, there would be no logical reason for withholding it from persons of French, Spanish or Chinese descent, a situation which would become impossible.” (Wood Commission Report, quoted in Williams, 1962:220)

This was in essence a rejection by the East Indian community of any nationalist ideas that dominated among the African community throughout the British West Indies in their fight for representative government. It was, as Ryan (1996) suggests, an unwillingness to identify with symbols such as self-determination and socialism and delaying as long as possible the transfer of power to native elements so as to ensure that ethnic interests would be safeguarded and promoted. This of course did not stop the explosion of nationalist feeling among the African element and the continued struggle for adult suffrage. What it did was to simply highlight the social and political divide in the country in the face of the impending inevitable implementation of full representative and responsible government in the not too distant future. When this was eventually granted the PNM emerged as the political party in control of the state. Williams, the party leader, was of the view that Trinidad needed a genuine multi-racial party to lay the foundation for the kind of cohesive force that a segmented society such as that in Trinidad needed to go forward. Williams however, was soon forced to recognise that given the social and political environment of the day, one which was characterised by fear and suspicion brought on by the early social relations between the Africans and the East Indians, he would be only speaking on behalf of the African element and perhaps, the very few East Indians who joined his party.

In 1956 there was certainly no dominant culture. There was however, cultural diversity emphasised by the multi-ethnic condition of the country. What was evident nevertheless, was that as the British authorities withdrew, one ethnic segment, the blacks, retained the legal authority to control the state and the decision making process and it was this situation that posed a major problem. The issues surrounding this could have only been resolved by engaging in dialogue and discourse. This did not happen primarily because the terms and conditions for such an engagement could not be agreed upon. Some would argue that in Trinidad at that time, there was a creeping ‘hegemonic unitary creole culture’ which was manifested in carnival, steel-pan and calypso and which would eventually absorb all other cultural elements and eradicate all other cultural communities. This certainly was not the case because since the 1970’s the culture of the East Indians began to take root in the society and today the cultural festivities have become a major part of the national cultural landscape. There continue to be some intractable problems given the general hostility and mistrust that traditionally existed but they are not beyond resolution in an open forum highlighting both national and communal concerns.
The conflation of the people’s lived experience as the society evolved from the tenuous state of its cultural and religious tolerance from the period just after the Black Power Revolution in 1970 to what it was in 2010 questions the implementation of an official political policy of multiculturalism which could be highly invidious. The implementation of a failed multicultural model to address perceived rather than real problems does not logically follow when one considers the social and political changes since 1986. Having newcomers in the society was the basis for implementing an official political policy of multiculturalism in Canada, Australia and several European countries but Trinidad certainly does not have any newcomers in its borders, not even new to the political process; those who promote the idea of multiculturalism have ancestral roots over one hundred (100) years old. While it is important for individuals to know and appreciate their roots to avoid becoming deracinated, one would have thought that with our sense of national identity contained within our cultural diversity and political processes that our political leaders would forge ahead in continuing to build bridges rather than going back to officially compartmentalise the population into cultural and ethnic categories once again. The implementation of the official policy on multiculturalism outside of the view that we simply need it to distribute state resources equally is therefore particularly questionable, more so given the fact that what dominates the narrative on multiculturalism is the retreat from multiculturalism in several countries which are still struggling with ethnic and racial diversity (Kymlicka 2008a).

Arguably, Canada has had some measure of success with its multicultural policy and rigorously continues to defend its implementation, (Kymlicka 2008a), yet questions are raised about whether or not the diversity policies are enough to treat with the distinct historical legacies and current needs of Canada’s diverse groups. Speaking about his country’s adoption of multiculturalism as an official policy, the British Prime Minister David Cameron referred to it as a failure and being responsible for fostering extremism. He argued that “under the doctrine of multiculturalism, we have encouraged different cultures to live separate lives, apart from each other and apart from the mainstream. We have failed to provide a vision of society to which they feel they want to belong” (quoted in Kern 2011:1). In his examination of the retreat from official multiculturalism policies by states such as Australia, Netherlands and Britain which were prominently committed to the policies, Joppke (2004) identifies several causes for the decisions to pull back. These include; the lack of public support for official multiculturalism policies without the necessary healthy debate, the inherent shortcomings and failures especially with respect to socio-economic marginalisation and the new assertiveness of the liberal state in imposing at least minimum liberal values on its dissenters (Joppke 2004:244). If over the years the PNM, the UNC and the NAR all failed to provide a vision of society to which all citizens feel they want to belong this could be best dealt with through discourse and dialogue rather than instituting an official state multicultural policy without the any input from the wider society.

There are several questions in relation to the adoption of an official multicultural policy in Trinidad and Tobago; what essentially is the agenda for a multicultural Trinidad and Tobago? is there public support garnered through debate and discussion for the policy or is it designed to please one or perhaps two segments within the society? how can the policy address socio-economic marginalisation outside of the already existing Equal Opportunities Act? would it be acceptable if specific communities demand that they be allowed to engage in practices based on values which may be outside mainstream societal values? What it seems is that the official multicultural policy of Trinidad and Tobago is designed to correct imbalances in the distribution
of state resources and to address issues related to cultural events in the country. This means that it was never well thought out prior to its implementation. Prime Minister Bissessar in responding to questions, based her decision to implement an official policy on multiculturalism primarily to satisfy the call from the Maha Saba for a multicultural ministry and to give Indian culture its “now enjoyed special status in the Trinidad government” (quoted in Kaufman 2010:3). The Prime Minister claimed that the previous PNM regime did not pay much attention to the Hindu population and therefore she would like to create a ‘new national mind’ based on values of respect and understanding with Trinidad shining as the best example of unity in diversity. viii In support, Ramlogan argued that “people think of Trinidad as a predominantly African country. We want to rectify this mis-perception. The majority is of East Indian descent. Previously there was discrimination manifest in subtle ways, one of which was the allocation of state funding” (quoted in Kaufman 2010:3).

If these are the reasons for adopting the policy of multiculturalism clearly the government started off with the wrong premise about the rationale for a multicultural policy. More importantly, it has been adopted when the consensus on multiculturalism in most countries is that it is time to move beyond multiculturalism. Multiculturalism is not about representing and pursuing the interests of a particular community outside of an honest and robust debate about where the country is at the moment in its ethnic and cultural relations, why the country is there at this present juncture and more importantly how to address the demands of all the groups in the society as the county pursues the ideal of what it is to be a true citizen of Trinidad and Tobago. What if a Muslim community wants constitutional support for men to have several wives? What the government has done is tiptoed around the very important historical perspectives on the sensitive issues of race, religion and culture by placing blame for dissatisfaction and alienation felt by the Hindu community squarely on the shoulders of the PNM when the history of race relations over the last fifty (50) years clearly suggests many other factors must be considered in any candid deliberation such as the distorted perceptions held by groups about one another at the time of independence which continue to persist outside of any national discourse on it.

The irony of adopting an official state multicultural policy as part of the political process in 2010 is that it undermines much of the gains the society has made and takes the country back to the point where emphasis on ethnic and cultural identity distinctly compartmentalises the groups. The state multicultural policy adopted by the government is primarily founded on equity in the allocation of financial resources according to cultural and religious groupings and this is not the basis for any multicultural policy. A multicultural policy should not be adopted to correct a wrong perception that Trinidad has more Africans than East Indians but to position immigrant ethnic minorities in mainstream of the society. If the government was so concerned with ensuring equity in the allocation of state resources why then was the policy not shaped through a thorough process of discussions and negotiations involving all concerned? There was a one day symposium “Towards a Multicultural Policy” organised by the Ministry of Multiculturalism which sought to address concerns after the decision was taken. Such action after the fact cannot establish the necessary mandate between the state on whose behalf the government exercises authority and civil society whom it represents.
Conclusion

In conclusion, it is intended that this paper should be firstly seen as an attempt to assess the implementation of an official multicultural policy in Trinidad and Tobago in the context of the historical evolution of race relations in the country, and secondly, in the absence any robust national debate or discussion about the policy as an attempt to explain what led to the actual implementation of the policy. While we understand that transforming multi-ethnic, multicultural societies into cohesive national entities with or without open conflict in a manner beneficial to all will always provide a major challenge, it is most important for all elements in civil society to be involved in the transformation process. This paper argues that the Bissessar government, rather than acknowledge the genesis of the difficulties faced in the past and the true reasons for them and then accept the challenge building a harmonious nation with all its cultural richness through vigorous dialogue with all of civil society has chosen to adopt a policy at the behest of a singular community which will only promote much more fierce competitive pursuit of state resources and raise further questions about equity. The policy evidently overlooked the uniqueness of the country’s historical context and more specifically, why after fifty (50) years some people still feels marginalised in the society. Multiculturalism was designed as a model to give all immigrant people the right to their ethnic and cultural identity without transcending the state’s sovereignty and no community under Trinidad’s Republican constitution has been denied that right. If that exists, there are other reasons for the condition. More compelling is the fact that Trinidad does not qualify in regard to immigrant minority population that multiculturalism seeks to address.

Multiculturalism in Trinidad now creates zones of contest among contending communities and long-winded debates about the allocation of state resources under the banner of political correctness. More importantly, it negates all the hard work undertaken since the 1970s to build a nationalistic ideal of citizenship which tries at best to emphasise the society’s commonalities and rich diverse culture rather than highlight the differences by putting people into specified ethnic categories in order to divide state resources. Unfortunately in Trinidad what multiculturalism will continue to do is reinforce the racial conformation of politics and cause more problems than provide solutions to race relations. It is important for the people to respect and appreciate the country’s diversity and differences but also to understand how history has shaped present social relations. Multiculturalism used as part of the political process in Trinidad ignores the fact that the country’s cultural diversity has been an ongoing lived experience. Adopting an official multiculturalism policy, which is the product of a demand from the Hindu community places people in ‘ethnic boxes’ with labels bearing specific cultural identities as they fight each other for a greater allocation of state funding. The official political policy of multiculturalism in Trinidad therefore, encourages groups to assert their cultural differences and fails to highlight the value of the cultural richness that diversity brings and how that diversity can be used to produce a nationalistic cultural ideal.

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1 All the discussions about multiculturalism prior to its implementation were promoted by the National Council for Indian Culture, which did not involve most of the other groups in the society.
Williams labelled the East Indians a hostile and recalcitrant minority when the PNM lost the Federal elections. To some it was an indictment of those with whom he disagreed but to many it was an indictment of the entire East Indian community which did not forget the remarks.

There was no clear cut winner in the elections in 1995. Both the PNM and Panday’s party the United National Congress (UNC) each won 17 seats. It was left to Robinson who won the two Tobago seats to determine which party he would throw his support behind. He chose Panday’s UNC citing the fact that the electorate had essentially rejected the PNM.

It was synthesized from differing Divisions and precursor Units, and remained together in this configuration until 1995.

In 1997 the Women's Affairs Division was changed to the Gender Affairs Division, in keeping with International recommendations. It was established within the guidelines of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and governed by several pieces of legislation.

Vision 2020 Draft National Strategic Plan was a 15 year plan designed by the Manning government to respond to the changing global economic, social and political landscape. Vision 2020 Draft National Strategic Plan.


This is in reference to the twin island state of Trinidad and Tobago.

THE RELEVANCE OF POSTMODERN EPISTEMOLOGIES IN MULTICULTURAL STUDIES IN THE CARIBBEAN

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This article is a critical appraisal of Anne Phillips’ book titled “Multiculturalism without culture”. The author uses a number of works and practical examples of ethnic, gender and class identities to debunk the myth that there is homogeneity of culture within groups accorded the same cultural status. There are interesting and sometimes insightful reviews of the concepts of culture, race and gender which force the reader to cogitate about the fallacies of modernism as a scientific paradigm in the study of social life (issues and problems).

Key Words: Multiculturalism, postmodern, culture, epistemology

Introduction

The book implies (implicitly at that) that the employment of postmodern epistemologies in the investigation of social issues in order to provide for a full ventilation of the true nature of social life. In other words, we cannot expect to adequately explicate social phenomena by mere metacognition and the production of meta-narratives and meta-theories. In some sense the author reminds us of the usefulness of creolisation theory which has been advanced by some Caribbean scholars for explicating cultural blending and mixing.

However, the main drawback of this book is its rather benign linguistic genre which obfuscates the reader’s perception of social equality by offering some hope that social equality may be achievable in the not too distant future.

Multiculturalism without culture?

The text focuses on the necessity for examining multiculturalism without considerations of culture. The major rationale for this radical shift in the study of multiculturalism arises out of the negative consequences of labelling and stereotyping which the focus of culture dissimilarity produces in intergroup relationships. This assumption rests on the belief that culture as a social construct has been misunderstood and misconstrued to such an extent that people are lumped into discrete categories and treated in accordance to societal expectations of their cultural group.

Phillips (2007) believes that culture has been reified, that is treated as a thing devoid of dynamic energy. Furthermore she postulates that this is an unacceptable position to adopt given the cultural variations both between and within cultural groups. For example, in his study of West Indian lifestyles in Bristol Pryce (1993) found that there were four distinct adaptations to British society. These were as follows: the saints, proletarian respectables, expressive disreputable and
the hustlers. Each group responds in its own way either by taking to religion, manual jobs, criminal behaviour or informal sector activity respectively. Phillips’ critique of the reification of culture is easily defended by anthropological studies such as this which show that within culture people respond differently to the same (social) stimuli- language and employment practices for instance.

Her proposed solution for this dilemma is placing individuals (not culture or cultural difference) at the centre of analysis. In this way cultural differences which give rise to claims of inequality in housing, education and health, for example, would become less problematic. Put another way Phillips opines that once people become the focus of attention (without regard to culture) then cries of ethnic and racial discrimination would be greatly minimized.

In addition, a multidisciplinary perspective from a cross section of the social sciences is proffered in this case. This would ensure that we take account of a number of perspectives from the social sciences (e.g. sociology, psychology and politics etc.) in cultural discourse.

Her critique of multiculturalism finds some support from at least two European leaders (the UK and Germany) who denounce multiculturalism as a failed state project. For instance German Prime Minister, Merkel blames the policy of multiculturalism for the rise of attacks against Islam. (Cudjoe 2011) Furthermore Cudjoe (2011) himself berates the Government of Trinidad and Tobago (GOVTT) for its establishment of a Ministry of Multiculturalism. Cudjoe (2011) quips that it is inconceivable that the pursuit of multicultural goals will not be inimical to the development of the very thing which it seeks to attain-the assimilation of diverse cultural segments into a society based on mutual respect for one another. In fact it may accentuate group difference rather than promote social consensus and inter-ethnic/group cohesion.

While the other five chapters reinforce the main issue, it is the first chapter which perhaps is the most significant in cementing the reader’s perception of the inappropriateness of previous studies which make the foible of over concretizing culture. The chief exegesis of this text is, in some way, its stark resemblance to the notion of creolisation propounded by Brathwaite (1971). In particular the feature of interculturalation, that is, the development of a Creole culture as a result of the inter-penetration of two major cultural systems (of European and African heritages) is well worth noting. In all fairness to Phillips (2007) we cannot say that her arguments are directly congruent with those of Brathwaite (1971). However, she makes a point which creolisation theory has long since made that culture has been objectified to the extent that it makes for the categorization of cultural groups into hard categories which seem to be at odds with one another.

One feature of this text is that it is written in large part from a feminist perspective despite its reliance on a wide range of theories (anthropological, political and law) outside its ideological remit.

However, the reader is not over convinced that this theoretical triangulation and multiple etiological approach has done enough to detract readers opposed to feminism from attacking Phillips’ (2007) stand on equality. Her optimism is commendable but remains a utopian dogma as much as Marx’s communist utopia has. Phillips (2007) makes equality seem palpable and achievable. However, many do not share this optimism given the failure of capitalist modes of production to promote systems of governance compatible with different variations of socialism
far less communism.

An examination of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) is a case in point. The fact that in 2000 many smaller countries (after centuries of global capitalism) still experienced widening income gaps between their rich and poor, high infant and maternal mortality, relatively low literacy rates (less than 80 percent) is adequate testimony to the fact that equality for all may be difficult to attain. Functionalist pessimism of the inevitability of inequality must be acquiesced here. The ensuing quote is a fitting example of this argument:

> Discussions have begun on replacing the millennium development goals (MDGs), the world's framework for fighting poverty. But that fight has not been going as well as it should. Global poverty statistics can be deployed in all kinds of ways, but the essential story of the last 15 years has two elements. Hundreds of millions have been lifted out of poverty. Yet more people – about a billion – live in extreme hunger than ever before. We are entering a new age of inequality, especially within countries and especially in the emerging powers. (Guardian, 2011)

The case of cooperative socialism in Guyana is a fitting example of the failure of equality policy especially if they are not implemented with the greatest sincerity. Hope (1973) claims that the basic principle of Burnham’s cooperative socialism of 1970 was equitable income distribution and participation in decision making. Despite the significant economic and social differences between Guyana and developed societies in North America and Europe, the point cannot be underestimated that equality is attainable for all groups in all societies.

With respect to gender equality in the US Faludi (1991) identifies a number of ways in which women’s employment and familial advancements are countered by male antagonism and deep personal suffering in the form of neuroses and trembling hands and depression.

One significant analytical tool emergent from Phillips’ (2007) work on multiculturalism without culture is its implication of a useful framework of postmodern trajectory for analysing cultural and racial diversity in Caribbean societies such as Trinidad and Guyana. Based on M.G. Smith’s (1974) work it is argued that these are plural societies since they comprise a medley of peoples who mingle and mix but do not combine. (Furnivall 1948). While everyone (Stone 1973; Leon and Leons 1977) does not support Smith (1974) the relevance of issues of multiculturalism to sociological theorizing in societies such as these (Trinidad and Guyana) must be acknowledged. In favour of Brathwaite’s (1975) cultural pluralism which sees the gradual adoption of achievement universalistic model in Trinidad, we advocate that social relations in multicultural societies can be studied using a postmodernist paradigm. This would enable the deconstruction of ethnic relations in society without recourse to meta-cognition. In other words, hypothetically speaking people will be understood as individuals within their own rights devoid of the cultural and theoretical flippancy which lumps groups of individuals together in the name of grand theorization. For instance in the US the term minority is applied some segments (Hispanics, Latinos and Blacks) who are not culturally homogeneous. In Trinidad and Tobago for instance Mustapha (2007) suggests that because of syncretism all Afro-Trinidadians are not the same in terms of religious practices; there are Christians, Shango Baptist and Shouter Baptist divisions among them. For this reason Phillips’ suggestion (the disbanding of multicultural policies and
practices) is worth scrutinizing.

At first glance the title of the book Multiculturalism without culture draws the reader into an a priori falsity that the writer is attempting to go too far in her discourse by taking culture out of multiculturalism. In effect the only way to arrive at a conclusion about Phillips’ (2007) intent is to read the book which will clarify any initial misconception.

In her critique of multiculturalism Phillips (2007) goes about it in a rather academic but creative manner. However there is need for her to step back and adopt a stance that is slightly more pragmatic as is suggested in the ensuing statement:

> However, there is a considerable degree of confusion about 'multiculturalism,' because official government definitions have been changed regularly to portray the policy as being 'all things for all people.' Initially, multiculturalism highlighted the 'rights' of ethnic Australians. It has also come to be associated with affirmative action policies in favor of ethnic minorities and been used to describe cultural and ethnic diversity. (Rimmer 1992; 1)

Rimmer (1992) is not as pessimistic about the fate of multiculturalism as is Phillips. However, he emphasises, more than she does, the idea that it is the manner of its conceptualisation and implementation that may be causally related to all the problems which (especially) tend to depict minorities as inferior to “mainstream” cultural groups such as middle class whites in white based societies. Despite my criticism of Phillips’ view of multiculturalism I may have gone too far in saying this for she perceived it as capable of promoting ideal ends for women and minorities once carefully managed.

While her point is well taken that groups of people in modern times ought to be treated equally the issue of equity must also be included in her discursive appraisal of the two aspects of multiculturalism: the theoretical and the practical. The notion that equality is desirable above all is a fallacy and must be subsumed by the philosophy of giving every one opportunity commensurate with their position in life. Much depends on the society in which cultural differences determine people’s access to limited resources. By contrast in Trinidad multiculturalism is promoted as an ideal entity since it is believed to promote the ideology of an equal place for everyone in terms of education, employment, housing, and health and in general life chances on the whole.

I am rather loath to add to the chorus of dissenting voices of Caribbean critics who ascribe labels such as Eurocentric to works constructed by white or European based writers. This is unnecessary since Phillips (for the most part) appears to be culturally relative or neutral in her treatise of the subject. Upon reading the book it became quite clear that it provided ample opportunity to evaluate the state of social theorising in the Caribbean (especially the more culturally diverse ones such as Trinidad and Guyana). Phillips has brought me to muse deeply about the true nature of Caribbean social structure as to whether there are one or multiple structures owing to culturally diversity.
I conclude that Multiculturalism without culture is an excellent text that makes for interesting reading and should be a great resource for teachers and all other persons interested in the study of culture and cultural anthropology.

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