"IT'S NOT JUST ABOUT GIVING THEM MONEY": CULTURAL REPRESENTATIONS OF FATHER INVOLVEMENT AMONG BLACK WEST INDIAN IMMIGRANTS IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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ABSTRACT

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The current project examined the meanings of father involvement among black West Indian immigrant males and females (19-55 years old) who are lawful/legal permanent residents living in the United States (U.S.). Subsequent investigations explored the role race/ethnicity and migration played in producing and reproducing cultural meanings and understandings of father involvement, as an aspect of the immigrants’ identity creation.

The issues of father involvement, especially among black migrant West Indians are important because work on Caribbean migration is feminized. Next, knowledge of black West Indian immigrant fathers and how they father in this new cultural space is not given much interest since all black fathers in the U.S. are seemingly placed into a preconceived racial category which carries very strong negative connotations. Lastly, black white dichotomization characterizes race relation in the U.S., but fails to take into consideration that blacks across the Diaspora are themselves a diverse group of people and as such, ethnic differences (West Indian immigrants and African Americans) and not across groups differences (black, white) need to be assessed.

Using racialogy and racial consciousness frameworks from Omi and Winant, and Roediger, I utilized survey responses and in-depth interviews from a diverse socio-economic group of West Indian immigrants at various sites across the U.S. to assess the issues of father involvement. I found that black West Indian migrants in the U.S. defined father involvement in holistic terms; financial provider, friend, educational instructor, life coach, and so on. The role of fathering was not limited to just childhood but continues until the father or child passed away.
Father involvement was not confined to a household and is understood as a community behavior. Migration and racial self-perception has profound effects on male immigrants’ perceptions of fathering and plays an integral role in how they create and recreate their identities as immigrants. Religious attitudes from the home country also influenced how West Indian immigrants defined father involvement. Examinations of generational status did not reveal significant differences in responses.
This project is dedicated to Noel James Gibbs and Louise Lawson Gibbs. Equal partners in fathering.
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INTRODUCTION.
FROM PERSONAL TO POLITICAL: UNDERSTANDING WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A BLACK FATHER IN THE U.S.

My interest in father involvement is motivated by two approaches. First, when I became a father, the issue of race became centralized in my consciousness; I am currently trying to navigate the nuances of being a black, relatively new father of two children, living in the United States of America (U.S.). Next, my motivation stems from my own research interests and observations on how fathers are viewed in the U.S. Both motivations are intertwined with each other. Being a black, transient, immigrant student from the West Indies, completing graduate work in a majority white university town in the U.S., I have concluded that father involvement in the U.S. is entrenched in racial ideologies. Incidents of blatant racism, from being called a “Nigger” and a “monkey”, to being told to go back to Africa, as I went on some of my daily evening runs or as I shopped for groceries around the town, were confirmations that there is a gap between my perception of self-identification and the characteristics that the American society at large use to identify someone like me. And so the meanings of being a black father in the U.S. takes its cue from general perceptions that society has of the black populace.

Within the realm of the personal, father involvement hinges on the father (biological or non-biological) taking an active role in the life or lives of his child/children which is usually played out in the private sphere, particularly within the family. I learned what father involvement meant in this context, through the father-child relationship with my own father. At roughly 6 feet and weighing over 200 pounds, my father to me is the quintessence of what an involved father should be. I have always said that the only other man better than Noel James Gibbs to walk the face of the earth was Jesus Christ. I think my father grabbing second place in this contest is not so bad after all. Though vague, I remember my early days in the rural parish of Trelawney in
Jamaica where my father was a pastor for a small church. Unbeknownst to me, he also worked with the government as a lands officer in the Ministry of Agriculture. Like most rural men, my father was always a farmer first. He also did well in construction. The numerous churches and the current home of my mother and himself are a testament to his versatility in these areas and helps to cement (no pun intended) his status as a man. Later on in life, my mother would let us know that after working during the week, on her alternate weekends off (she was a nurse in one of the government run hospitals), both my father and herself would gather the produce they planted around the yard and head off to the local market to sell the items to supplement their income.

But it was not all work and no play for my father. When my father was called to take over as senior pastor for the church denomination in the city of Kingston, I remember our frequent stops to get ice-cream after church services on Sundays. On weekends, we would all pile-up in the red Ford Cortina and head to the beach. Both he and my mother tried to teach us to swim. He also taught me to ride a bicycle as well as how to check that the engine oil, transmission fuel, and engine coolant in a car were at their proper levels. I also remember my father playing a game of cricket with my friends and I. When he was scheduled to preach at churches across the island, he would take at least one of my brothers or myself with him. Those long trips were some of the best moments with my father as we talked for most of the way about everything. That trend continues today with no topic really being out of bounds. More importantly, I got to see my father in his role as a preacher outside of our home church. The way he interacted with the people at each church spoke to me; it showed me how I should conduct myself when I am not in a familiar space so that persons would have the utmost respect for me when I am not around them.
How my brothers and I were to conduct ourselves was not only presented in our speech but in our attire. My father was a very smart dresser and he and my mother always told us that we should always be well dressed. Both my parents were adamant that we should be properly attired because people will judge us based on appearance. It is this sort of collective advice that made me aware that my father and mother were equal partners in the father involvement process. In that sense, the information I gathered from my own experience was that father involvement was a collaborative effort. For a father to be effectively involved, both partners need to at least have a cordial relationship. Again, my understanding is both partners do not have to be married or even living together. Notwithstanding their union status, the information I gleaned from my parents as it relates to the meaning of fathering was strictly linked to a heterosexual relationship.

I learnt from my mother and father that they laid out a routine whereby he would pay the major bills; electricity, water and gas, and she would take care of the grocery and any other household issues. He was also the one that gave us our lunch money every morning before we went off to school. When we were a bit older, my father would give us money for the week and told us that he was doing this so that we could learn to manage a set amount of money for each week. Of course, I benefitted from this opportunity that he provided me. When I was old enough to participate in gainful employment, I already had the foundation of how to work on a budget and manage a monthly income later on.

Learning responsibility was a collaborative effort as well and my brothers and I learned not just from my parents’ teachings, but also from seeing each other play assigned roles in the family. I distinctly remember that my older brother was given the responsibility to clean the backyard every Saturday. I was given the responsibility for the front yard, and my smaller brother had to sweep the garage. My father said that this would teach us to be industrious. He
also alluded to the point that as males we should ensure that the outside of the home was kept clean; that was our main domain. Every Christmas my father would paint the walls of the home; the re-painting of the home is something that is done across the Caribbean during this holiday period. My mother would put up nice, new curtains throughout the house. My father also ensured that the grass was always cut. I tried my best to follow him and took great pride in keeping the curb nicely manicured. I even went as far as to collect cow manure from the playing field close to my house where the stray cows roamed. I knew this was the best food for the grass because I learnt this from my father, the farmer.

My father also played an active role in domestic duties. First he fancied himself a chef. I remember my father cooking breakfast numerous times throughout my childhood. He loved to boil eggs, crack the top and sprinkle salt and have my brothers and I eat it. At one point when my mother was not home and it was just us men, my father bought a whole chicken for dinner. How he prepared it was to chop the chicken into four quarters, season and cook it. Never mind that my brothers and I were only young boys then; mommy is clearly the better cook!

It would be remiss of me if I did not mention that my father went back to school later on in his life and earned his doctoral degree. My mother also completed graduate work as a non-traditional student. Both he and my mother never let my brothers and I settle for any less when it came to our education. As boys we played competitive sports (soccer and basketball) and even thought that we would engage in said activities as careers. My parents always insisted that we go through with our education first and then pursue any other avenues we wanted to. My father stated numerous times that if any of us should have a career ending injury early in our athletic careers, we needed something to fall back on to take us through the rest of our lives. Of course
my smaller brother has a surgically repaired ankle as a result of playing collegiate soccer, but, he is completing his doctoral studies as I write this sentence. So my parents’ words did come to life.

Now that I am much older, the interest that my father has in my life has not wavered. Although he is in Jamaica, he calls as often as possible to ask how my studies and personal life are progressing. My father’s interest is so engaging that he make inquiries about my nutritional routine, always imploring me to take daily dose of vitamins because as a Jamaican my body is not “use to the cold,” he encourages me to exercise regularly, and asks about my spiritual health and my sleeping habits, amongst others things. These are just a few of the many things I have observed my father doing throughout my life, all of which have left an indelible impact. My father was all these things and more, breadwinner, friend, consultant, financier, husband, disciplinarian. My primary knowledge of father involvement stems from these personal observations of my own father.

To be fair I grew up in a middle class family and community and saw other fathers who were involved in the same activities my father was involved in. But, I had friends from a noticeably lower socio-economic status who resided both inside and outside the same community, and who would suggest their fathers did roughly the same things my father did. Therefore, I never got the impression that an involved father was one who could only provide financially for his children and household.

Ultimately, my father represents the ideal mold of an involved father, not just because of his ability to financially contribute to the household but also because of the interest he demonstrated in the lives of his children. He not only said he was interested, he showed it. His dedication to ensuring that we spent time doing our homework, helping us to create healthy financial habits and putting financial plans in place for the future is evidence of how his interest
played out in actions. He also told my brothers and I how proud he was of us and that he loved us. My mother would tell me how he boasted about his boys when they went out. When we were younger there were enough hugs to go around. As we got older, hugs were traded for fist bumps.

My father also led by example. His diligence to his secular job and to the church he was called to pastor was an example to my brothers and I on how to conduct our lives with fairness and fervor. I also understood from watching my father that being a benefit to your children and, by extension, your family, was not the end result of being an involved father. Being able to be of assistance to both children and adults alike with whom you came into contact on a day-to-day basis was a fundamental characteristic of an involved father. An involved father therefore meant that the material aspects of fathering go hand-in-hand with the emotional aspect and they are not limited to the immediate family setting.

Though my knowledge of my father as the ideal involved father stems from the father-son interaction, my observations do not render my understanding of father involvement as a gendered practice. Indeed my father took part in male-centered activities, but he also engaged in activities that are generally considered part of the feminine sphere. For example, his culinary skills were not linked to the cookout grill in the outdoors thereby recreating cooking as a masculine activity as I observe happening in the United States. It was, instead, done indoors, in the kitchen. He would also help us to complete domestic tasks around the house. Additionally, I had a female cousin who lived with us for a few years and I noticed that my father included her in all activities and treated her as if she was his daughter. My analyses of my father’s actions towards her are easily confirmed as she commented on numerous occasions when, even though her biological father is alive, my father was a father to her in every sense of the word, particularly because he did not treat her differently as a non-biological child in our household.
Though my understandings of father involvement emanated from observations of my own father, I would not classify the cultural production of fathering that my father displayed as being distinctly Jamaican, West Indian or even Caribbean in nature, as I am aware that these practices are common place not only across the Caribbean but within various societies as well. But neither is the observed cultural production of fathering from my father a universal cultural trait. However, there is enough difference to warrant separate scrutiny.¹ The meanings of father involvement are dependent on which discourses are being used to represent it. For the most part, father involvement was created in, and grew from, the sociological literature and so fathering from the sociological perspective will be defined and measured in sociological ways. But father involvement is steeped in the emotionally laden language of subjective experience that sociology, and other disciplines of the social sciences will not accurately capture; it is grossly unfair to try and fit father involvement into objective categories for statistical analysis, as is done in the social sciences.² From a cultural standpoint, the conceptualizations and measurements of fathering have to come from a culture studies grounding so that we can accurately define and measure fathering from the position of immigrant West Indian themselves.

Being a father in a racially diverse setting has shown me that father involvement is also rooted in the political sphere. Father involvement is culturally constructed within a racialized framework which views white fatherhood as the ideal. Within the U.S., notions of father involvement rest on the comparison between white fathers, who are frequently displayed and observed as the standard of fathering, and fathers of every other race/ethnicity. The discourse on father involvement is therefore projected through a white, European middle-class lens. The resulting assumption is that fathers from all other race/ethnicities have to match-up to white fathers to be viewed in a positive light. Since people of African descent are at the bottom of the
racial hierarchy in the U.S., black fathers are assumed to be the worst fathers. Through my examinations of fathering from the position of the white, middle-class ideal, it occurred to me that what I did not learn from my father was how to be a black father. Across the Caribbean, and especially in Jamaica where I am originally from, the racial majority of the population is of African descent; in Jamaica over 96 percent of the population is black. As such, learning to be a black father in the Caribbean is a very contradictory statement simply because race is not an issue in the majority of the island societies.

Purpose of the Study

What am I doing in this project? Building on the scenarios I previously presented (my father-child relationship, issues of being black, being a black father, being an immigrant), the overarching purpose of the following project is to use race as the vehicle to integrate the corpus of black family literature in America with the immigration literature in America. Even though there are distinct discourses on race/ethnicity, immigration and father involvement, and each concept is analyzed individually within each discourse, the concepts themselves are not mutually exclusive. So while my contributions can uniquely add to each discourse, it will simultaneously make contributions that cover all three areas validating my intentions to use race to pull the various discourses together. I fulfill the aforementioned purposes by utilizing original research questions and various interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary frameworks to deconstruct and analyze the understandings of fathering from the position of West Indian migrants.

Research on Caribbean immigrant fathers is sparse. What we do know is that there is research on the continuity of parenting practices from Caribbean immigrants in Canada and New York.\(^3\) And data from England demonstrate that Caribbean migrant men in that country utilize ethnic solidarity and extended social support to help in the fathering process.\(^4\) Even with the
generational or cultural dissonance between family structural arrangements and fathering in the home and host countries, there is work that highlights that authoritative, authoritative and permissive parenting styles are similar among Caribbean immigrant mothers and fathers in the New York area, but the data is ethnically mixed.\(^5\) Other studies on Indo-Caribbean immigrants suggest that fathers in this setting still held to conservative beliefs about fathering even after living in the U.S. for over a decade.\(^6\) What we do not know much about, is father involvement among black immigrant fathers from the West Indies living in the U.S. What is even rarer is knowledge of possible generational differences in the meanings of fathering among black West Indian immigrants living in the U.S. and the extent to which generational status plays a role in how migration and race/ethnicity impact those meanings.

So to bridge the gap in the discourses on immigration and the black family, the key point of the current scholarship investigates what father involvement means among West Indian migrants of African descent living in various sites across the U.S. An investigation into the meaning of father involvement may seem somewhat simplistic for a project of this magnitude, but it is essential. A deconstruction of the meaning of father involvement is necessary as I cannot take for granted that West Indian immigrants understand father involvement the same way they did before they migrated to the U.S. Neither do I take for granted that West Indian migrants in the U.S. automatically take on the meanings of father involvement that are circulating throughout the U.S society. By deconstructing the meanings of fathering, we can begin to understand the cultural complexities in how black West Indian migrants grapple with notions of fatherhood in new environments. Because father involvement in the U.S. is so culturally entrenched in race, there is a need to distinguish what father involvement means to a group of non-native people,
who are not accustomed to analyzing issues from a racialized stance, yet are expected to embrace a racialized societal ideal in the new cultural space in which they now live.

An additional key foci is exploring the roles migration and racial identity play in producing and reproducing cultural meanings and understandings of father involvement among West Indian migrants in the U.S. Intrinsically linked to the project’s major explorations is the investigation of how West Indian immigrant identities are created, destroyed in some aspects, and recreated, through the expression and process of father involvement. I use the term destroyed loosely as no identity is ever completely dissolved. To ensure authenticity on the part of who the views on father involvement are taken from, my investigation of black West Indian immigrant families in the U.S. hinges on the methodological paradigm that includes data collection methods that focus on the West Indian immigrant’s perceptions and attributions of the father involvement phenomenon.7

Migrants have always carried with them various meanings that are attached to a wide range of cultural practices in their home countries. Father involvement is no different. The meanings attached to various cultural practices are not necessarily similar to the ones that are promoted in the host country. Therefore, I try to explore the amalgam of meanings, perceptions, and social patterns connected to socio-economic issues – change in family structures (a decline in real wages for men, egalitarian household structure for women); favorable economic arrangements; the culture of the host country; the legal framework within the host country (pre-migration practices may be illegal) – that emerge among West Indian immigrants who try to navigate fathering in a new cultural milieu.8

Using father involvement as a cultural site of resistance, I explore ethnic differences between black West Indian and African American observations of father involvement where
West Indian immigrants use fatherhood as another maker of identity to separate themselves from African Americans. There is substantial research evidence showing inter-group differences between West Indian migrants and African Americans so we cannot treat blacks in the U.S. as if they are a homogeneous group. Because of the negative assumptions surrounding black fathers in the U.S., and, the comparative use of African Americans and West Indian migrants in prior works, my use of the two dominant black ethnic groups in the U.S. to examine fathering differences is warranted.

In the same vein, we ought not to treat blacks from different generations as if they are the same. My work verifies distinctions in meanings of father involvement between first-generation (children who were not born in the U.S. or to U.S. Citizens abroad and thus migrated to the U.S. as children, in most cases with their immigrant parents), generation 1.5 (foreign-born children with both immigrant parents) and second-generation (children of immigrants or children who are U.S.-born with one or both parents being foreign-born) West Indian migrants in the U.S. I follow prior work and group the 1.5 and second-generation immigrants together and refer to them both as second-generation immigrants.

The most important reason for examining inter-race differences between the two groups rests on the need to continue to highlight the gap that exists in the scholarship on race. Since the dynamics of slavery in the U.S. polarized the society on the basis of race and color, race relations in America have always been envisioned in terms of blacks and whites. The promotion of black/white race relations in research projects the idea that all blacks are ethnically similar (the same is assumed for whites as well). Because similarity is assumed among blacks in the U.S., the ways in which Diasporic blacks may or may not relate to one another has not received as much attention as black and white relationship issues. So while the black-white dichotomization does
confirm the very real, everyday lived experiences, of race relation in the U.S., it fails to take into consideration the diversity that distinguishes various groups of blacks across the U.S, for example, and for the purpose of this project, diverse ethnic differences between black West Indian immigrants and African Americans.\textsuperscript{14}

The lack of attention customarily given to ethnic differences within the black populace is a reflection of traditional scholarship on race and ethnicity in the United States which historically treat the black population as a monolithic group. These studies routinely ignore inter-group differences within the black community, offering a simplistic presentation of an undifferentiated black population bounded by common experience. This sort of analysis only offer a superficial “one-dimensional” view of blacks across the U.S. “To posit an undifferentiated collectivity, however, is to ignore how class, gender, and ethnic divisions within race may shape reality different for members of the group.”\textsuperscript{15} This project responds to these limitations in earlier studies and posits an inter-race comparative work between West Indians and African Americans as a purview into a more varied discourse on the immigrant and minority status within black communities.

Caribbean immigrants in America currently face a host of issues such as economic and occupational problems, familial difficulties, and educational troubles.\textsuperscript{16} Most of these issues have been focused on the economic disparities among the groups pointing to divisions among blacks across the U.S.\textsuperscript{17} The established links between work on inter-race immigrant comparisons and assimilation and life-span outcomes for Caribbean migrants and African Americans are reasons to believe that dissimilar results will be observed for the meanings of father involvement among West Indian immigrants as perceptions and changes of the phenomenon (real or perceived) evolve over time in the host culture.
The discussions on father involvement are embedded within the historical construction of race/ethnicity in the U.S. involving African Americans. Within these discussions is the discourse on race relations which shape the ways in which West Indians at home and abroad view themselves in comparison to the dominant race (whites) and the subaltern (African Americans) in the U.S. Additionally, unique cultural artifacts of West Indians (family, parenting, plantation slavery, migration, and so on) must be examined to fully comprehend how this group of migrants understands the fathering phenomenon.

For the purpose of this project, I use the term West Indian in reference to all persons of African descent from an English-speaking country in the Caribbean formally colonized by Britain – the West Indies – and the coastal South American country of Guyana (formerly British Guiana). I understand that my definition of West Indian is limited and masks prior and ongoing historical, dialectical and socio-cultural complexities that go into conceptualizing the term West Indian. Additionally, the term West Indian is not frequently used by West Indians themselves but is wrapped-up in the construct Caribbean. And so the term Caribbean is understood by the average Caribbean citizen to incorporate West Indians and is often used interchangeably. My project will follow that pattern and I will at times use the terms Caribbean and West Indians interchangeably, except in instances where I make clear distinctions regarding the concepts.

My work only examines West Indian immigrants who are from one of these territories; Antigua, Barbuda, the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, the Cayman Islands, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Montserrat, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname and the twin island republic of Trinidad and Tobago, who at the time when the study was conducted, were currently legally living in the United States. Albeit, findings informing this paper focus mainly on Jamaican migrants in the U.S. because they are the largest group of West Indian immigrants
to the U.S. and are also the main source of the black immigrant group to the U.S. Jamaicans account for roughly 29 percent of all documented immigrants from the Caribbean. Of course there are significant similarities that exist between English-speaking Caribbean territories and their Spanish-speaking and French-speaking neighbors, but the differences that exist are enough to warrant close scrutiny of West Indians as a group by themselves.

As one can already deduce, the black family does not denote the African American family; the African American family is just one racial/ethnic family group representing the Diaspora in the U.S. In the process, the socio-historical contexts are highlighted to demonstrate how the racialized discourses on father involvement are generated and reproduced. Because of the breadth of the overarching purpose of the project, descriptions of the major findings in areas of both the black family in America and the immigration literature are warranted.

The Importance of the Project

Why is this project important? First, Caribbean migration is synonymous with the feminization of immigration. With the focus on migrant men and women from the Caribbean in much broader social milieus, when research has pointed to the private sphere, work seems to focus in on women and the family relegating research and Caribbean migrant men in the private sphere to the periphery; research on childrearing is limited to the role mothers’ play in the childrearing process. Because childrearing centers mostly on women, Caribbean men are pushed to the margins. Black West Indian men are already deemed to be physically absent from the household, and then the current literature on migrant families relegates them to the bottom of any research examination, which makes them doubly invisible and doubly marginalized. I may not slow the current trend of feminized work on West Indian migrant families, but by making the
father-child relationship the focal variable in my research, my study distinctively places males, more specifically West Indian fathers, as the focus in the immigration literature.

Next, with the new era of globalization, the family as we know it has been restructured. Kinship networks rest at the heart of Caribbean social life both at home and abroad and the family behavioral patterns of Caribbean nationals has led West Indian migrants to bring into existence “international families”. International families are created by the cyclical movements of migrant populations and therefore cannot be examined by previous frameworks which observe migration as linear and uni-directional. Therefore, new frameworks have to be employed to assess the cultural understandings of fathering in these new family arrangements among black West Indian immigrants in the U.S.

Though international family networks are given form and content by women, my study argues that men figure prominently into the new family networks; they are immigrants who are involved in family life as well. English-speaking Caribbean immigrants are impacted by a new cultural space so it is important that these new family networks be deconstructed to ascertain what are the cultural processes (whether they are ones retained from the county of origin or ones that are incorporated from the host country) that help to define the role of the West Indian immigrant fathers in this new space. The cultural processes will help to define, redefine and re-measure father involvement according to the observations of the immigrants themselves.

Last but not least, the absence of evidence on Caribbean migrant men may be due in part to “the assumptions surrounding the absentee black father while at the same time illuminating the major roles women play in the immigration process.” Finding out who these immigrant fathers are and how they father in this new cultural space is not given much interest since all black
fathers in the U.S. are seemingly placed into a preconceived racial category which carries very strong negative connotations when fathering practices are referred to.

*Black Family Discourse*

The literature is rife with information on the meaning of fatherhood to African Americans, especially African American men. However, those meanings and understandings of fatherhood are not to be lumped wholesale and applied unto West Indians immigrants in America. As with much of scholarly research, writings on any subject matter develop within the larger social and political societal frameworks that ultimately determine the direction of the phenomena understudy “as well as the interpretation and application of the findings.” The black family is no different. In the context of the black family in the U.S., the history of 400 years of slavery; being used as pawns in the Civil War; residing under the Black Codes and Jim Crow era; years on segregation and marginalization from “continued intentional and unintentional racism” resulting in limited opportunities, to name a few issues, have helped to shape research on the African American family over time into what it is today.

The view of the black family in America is not a uniformed one and has been subject to much criticism. As a whole, the examination of the black family has mostly centered on its structure and how it has impacted the economic, social, and psychological well-being of the family members. The consensus on the outcome is that the African American family structure is a dysfunctional one as it is more likely than its white counterpart to be female-headed and extended in nature which has numerous negative impact on family members. Ultimately, what has historically developed in the literature on the black family can be placed under two major themes or two main ways of thinking and analyzing the African American family. The first
theme is termed the pathological-disorganization model or the cultural deviant model and the second theme is the resiliency-adaptive model.27

The main proponent of the pathological-disorganization model was Daniel P. Moynihan who argued that the institution of slavery was responsible for patterns of disorganization and instability observed in black families in America.28 I begin my review of what has been done in the literature with Moynihan’s piece since most research relating to a review of the black family in America use Moynihan’s report as the reference point when an examination is undertaken of the family’s pathological nature.

Moynihan depicted the black family as “tangle of pathology” spurred on by disproportionately high rates of single-parent female headed households. The black family was also viewed as poverty driven, welfare dependent and predisposed to criminal activity. There were examinations of issues of racism and economics as factors now prevalent among African American households and which could contribute to the family structure, but these factors were deemphasized while affirming that indeed it was the matriarchal structure of the black family that was responsible for the problems in the black community.

A number of reports similar to Moynihan’s report utilize the “culturally deviant” or “culturally equivalent” model. They argue that the African American family “functions at a deficit, lacks consistent and cohesive structure, is at risk, and moves in a constant state of turmoil.”29 The black family is observed by society as different from white families in very negative and destructive ways; black families are culturally deviant, or society may assume that black families are similar to white families; black families are culturally equivalent, if not for the socio-economic setbacks that seem to plague African Americans.30
The idea of the black family as a pathological and disorganized structure stems from a culturally ethnocentric approach. This race-based approach hinges on the idea that white the European-American middle-class norms regarding the family are indeed the norm. This assumption of normality lays the foundation for another powerful postulation; that is, America itself is a culturally homogenous society and universal norms exist for American cultural behavior to which all groups should and must conform. Consequently, any group operating outside of these ”norms” are deemed deviant in nature. Since normality cannot, and should not, be assumed for all groups existing in America, what the literature lacks is a detailed examination of what father involvement means to West Indian immigrants.

Traditionally, the nuclear family - consisting of a man and woman who are married with children and living under the same roof - is considered the ideal family form in the U.S. I am aware that the nuclear family does not mirror the reality of many African Americans, and even whites, and so what may be seen as a lack of cultural conformation permeates the black family, pushing them to the outside. Surprisingly, although based on reviews of the literature on the black family it should not have been much of a surprise, it is only the deviation of the black family from this assumed ideal type, and not those of white Americans, that has created and perpetuated myths and stereotypes regarding the African American family. Of course, in all of this, the pathological-disorganization model fails to explore the resilience of black families. Historical revisionists and social scientists have in the contemporary period begun to explore what can be termed the resilient-adaptive features of the black family in America. Such features rely on the strengths, resources and talents on individuals and families. To that end, there are some distinctive features of the African American family that makes it an exemplar of the resilient-adaptive model. These features include a strong kinship bond, a strong work
orientation, a strong achievement orientation, flexible family roles, and a strong religious orientation. It is argued that these proposed features have been culturally transmitted through African ancestry to black families.\textsuperscript{33}

Other counterarguments to the pathological-disorganization model, such as the “culturally variant” approach, assume that black family life is culturally distinctive, which comes as a result of the particular historical and socio-cultural context African Americans faced, and continue to face. The distinctions associated with this model are not value-riddled and does not view the differences in the black family as pathological. Another counterargument to the pathological model, the “cultural relativity school”, assumes that America is multicultural and, as such, no homogenous cultural norms exist. Any observed differences are then attributed to variations in cultural backgrounds and experiences of the various race/ethnicities present in the society. Proponents of cultural relativity agree that the origins of black cultural differences in the family can be traced to African cultural heritages with a focus on the strengths of the black family instead of their weaknesses. Notwithstanding, since Du Bois’ call to critically appraise African Americans based on the influence of historical, cultural, social, economic and political forces, a holistic framework for assessing black individuals and families have still not been heeded by mainstream scholars.\textsuperscript{34}

The stereotypes of the black family tend to have a trickle-down effect and serve to assess individuals within that structure as well, with black males bearing the brunt of these stereotypes. In contrast to the volume of work that focus on black women in the family as the strength and leader of the defunct black household, research on black men in America is noticeably neglected. Truth be told there is an excess of work on the black male in the family, yet I say it is noticeably neglected because the major trend is to center on the absentee black father, the negative effects
that blacks fathers have on their children’s lives. This creates a knowledge base that is unreliable and persistently portrays black men in families as peripheral to family life, lacking involvement as spouse and father.

Historically, the issues related to the absentee black father have always been at the forefront of scholarly research. There is a suggestion that one may think of the term “black fatherhood” as an oxymoron. Popular media representations and academia have all but stopped short of calling the black father dead. Black males are capable of having children but fathering them is a completely different tale. The crux of fathering is physical presence and most studies view African American fathers as being absent in body and mind; some may be physically present, but emotionally they are not there at all. For those black fathers who are present, their involvement seemingly diminishes over time. And so the cultural belief of the absentee black father is touted in the literature and through various media representations and is portrayed to the rest of the world as the norm.

Where the black father is assumed to play a role, it is seen as a minimal one compared to the role that the mother plays. The negative assumptions of the black male figure in the household are inexplicably linked to the role of the black female in the household. Earlier works such as Zora Neale Hurston’s tale, “Their Eyes Were Watching God” detail the physical and spiritual strength of black women during slavery as they held the family together during turbulent times. This mighty mother role still perpetuates present day literature and understandably, the role of the [black] father is historically tied to the role of the [black] mother.

To be fair, the idea of the black father being absent and uninvolved is exaggerated. There is work on social or fictive black fathers (fathers who are not the biological parent) which portray
the black fathers in a positive light. These step-fathers are equally involved in the lives of their children just like other low-income biological fathers who reside in a two parent home. Black step-fathers are said to help their children have significant positive outcomes. Step-fathers may be fathers themselves in another household which probably makes them absent in one household but present in another. These complexities in back must be taken into account in order to fully understand involvement and clarify existing misrepresentations. Let me point out here that father involvement takes place in many forms and styles but is heavily dependent not only on economics, but on the relationship that the father has with the mother and the type of family structure that the father is a part of.  

There is also the saliency of the provider role of black men in the family. Within that context, the socio-economic position of the father has a tremendous impact on the extent to which the father is able to live up to the ideal role of being the main breadwinner in the family. The socio-economic position of black males in general is below their white male counterparts. Where roughly 33 percent of black fathers have attained at least a college education, the numbers are almost at 69 percent for white fathers. Such a statistic has a profound effect on employment opportunities, unemployment and poverty rates, all of which serve to hamper black fathers to be at their optimum in the breadwinner role. 

The breadwinner role does not function by itself; the breadwinner role goes hand-in-hand with the relationship the father has with the mother. If the relationship between the father and mother is shaky, the father view themselves as just being a paycheck and since they are incapable of fulfilling this role in the manner dictated not by the child but by the mother, they are projected by the mother being a deadbeat dad.
We appreciate that the breadwinner role is not only important to the family but it is also central to how black fathers view themselves, which is why they try to be involved in other ways when they cannot match the ideal father-type. Due to financial constraints some black fathers are not able to fulfill the breadwinner role. But as a way of rebelling against the established negative stereotypes put on them by society, they become involved the best ways they know how, thereby creating a positive identity they can associate with. Black fathers get involved in non-traditional roles by way of being active in caretaking, visitation and in-kind support (support outside of formal child support). Their participation in these non-traditional involved roles actually ranks higher than other race/ethnicities who participate in them.

The idea of black fathers’ self-perception and subsequent identity creation is not made explicit in the literature. What the literature does make clear is the importance of an involved father, yet there is a dearth of work on the importance of this role to fathers themselves, and especially West Indian migrants in the U.S. Father involvement can be viewed as a possible signifier or marker of a West Indian identity due to the implications the behavior and actions have for the outcome of offspring and other family members. I must pause here to state that addressing issues of identity formation in my work is influenced by my own position as a West Indian academic living in the U.S. Issues of identity have always been at the forefront of Caribbean and West Indian scholarship which is largely a product of our colonial past. However, the identity agenda is not a focus for African American scholars and scholarship. As such, the contending foci between the two Diaspora academic groups have frequently led to antagonisms. I now turn my focus to the other area of research, that of immigration in the U.S., that I will link to the research on the black family in America.
Immigration Discourse

It has been repeatedly said that the history of America is the history of immigration. What is often omitted from this narrative is that immigration is a gendered experience. Historically, the migration scholarship has been skewed toward the male influence. This is partly due to the number of men that were migrants during the early history of migration. Notwithstanding, it is women who have dominated international migration since the early 1930s. Immigration scholarship on the United States follows a similar trend. But women in U.S. immigration literature are not focused on more because of their sheer numerical value. Women are more visible in the U.S. immigration literature because the immigration process in the U.S. is feminized. The reason the U.S. immigration process is feminized is largely due to the fact that the labor market itself is feminized. The feminization of U.S. immigration has carried over into the scholarly research on West Indian immigrants in the U.S. as well. Ultimately, the roles that migrant women play in the U.S. are scrutinized within the parameters of these two mutually dependent frameworks.

Traditionally, within the immigration process, men have dominated the migration sphere with women relegated to being appendages to men in the family reunion process. Since the 1960’s women have moved from just being family extensions in the migration process to major active participants in the international labor market. From late 1960s to the present, West Indian women are the overwhelming majority of immigrants from the Caribbean to the United States and did so independently as immigrant women and not as immigrant wives or dependents of men. This has placed them squarely at the forefront of the literature on West Indian migrants in the U.S.
Women in the labor market in Western societies have to be examined within the context of a post crises economy, booming industrialization and, most importantly, a change in how various sectors of the labor market gain workers; the “dislocation of vertically concentrated, unionized factories” to an increase in smaller “production units which locate their labor through informal networks”. Global capitalism has accelerated proletarianization of the world’s peasantry leading to a feminized labor market disadvantaging both immigrant women and U.S. women at home. How does this work?

Globalization forces companies to downsize to reduce employer cost. This move unreasonably affects women in the U.S. but is seen as an opportunity for poorer women around the world. Companies hire migrant workers over native-born workers as business leaders claim that unions have pushed the price too high for American labor limiting the competiveness of firms to maintain a workforce in the country. The result is young women across the Third World, which West Indian women are a part of, have become prime commodities in the manufacturing system as they are unable to ask for higher wages and better treatment because of lack of experience or alternatives.

As the majority of work in the U.S. during the late 70s and early 80s were comprised of service industry jobs, Caribbean women became a significant part of the American labor force. We have examples where more than one-third of Jamaican employed women worked in the health care industry in the U.S. during the 1970s and 1980s, and the English skills of others permitted them access to domestic employment through network hiring and referrals. Being one of the sources of cheap exploitable labor, West Indian women entered the nursing profession which was at that time extremely low paying (base salary about $20,000 a year). With few U.S. citizens going into that field, many women from Jamaica migrated to the U.S. to do this work.
It was simply a business practice on the employers’ part to hire individuals who were more than happy to be employed giving them the ability to earn more money than they otherwise would in their own country. The change in organization of work created a condition that made West Indian female immigrants a desirable labor supply.

But the idea of women being cheap labor is not the only reason the immigration literature is feminized. As service workers, Caribbean women were assigned the task of being cultural reproducers as well.⁵⁰ As cultural reproducers, women contribute to the cultural reproduction of the nation in two ways. With the large bulk of Caribbean migrants being female, these women migrated by themselves and left their children back home in island territories so that they would later send for them. Some migrant women were able to migrate with their children (most migrant men from the Caribbean during that period did not want to migrate because they would end up getting paid significantly less than they would be paid for similar jobs in the Caribbean. The same was not true for Caribbean women).

Caribbean women, more than Caribbean men, migrated with their children and so they were generally responsible for socializing children into cultural traditions and ideologies of the nation ensuring that society replicates itself. They also ensured that they socialized children into the traditions and ideologies of the home countries as well. So Caribbean women would accomplish the task of cultural reproduction through food preparation and the physical, social, intellectual, and emotional development of children.⁵¹ The foods women prepare and the manner in which they nurture children are typically specific to their class and ethnic (sub) cultures.⁵² By re-creating the gender order through nurturing activities, women typically also contribute to the re-creation of the class and ethnic (sub) cultures in which their families are embedded thereby reinforcing and re-creating gendered cultural expectations.
In addition, women exist as the symbolic boundary markers of the nation. Through “proper” clothing and “proper” behavior, women embody and perform the collective understanding of national gender identities. West Indian immigrant women in the United States of America ensured that they upheld British traditions when they arrived in the U.S. Never mind that they are cultural reproducers of a colonial system that served to repress the Afro-Caribbean population. But at the same time West Indian immigrant women in the U.S. are a paradox due to the fact that they are selective cultural producers. They have migrated to a society which is more egalitarian where they can break away from being appendages of patriarchy, but still they hold dear to other traditional Caribbean cultures that they are keen to pass on to subsequent generations. But how have West Indian immigrant women, as cultural reproducers, dominated the immigration research and subsequently pushed their male counterparts out of the literature?

As cultural reproducers, West Indian migrant women simultaneously question and try to change the un-egalitarian gender structure of childcare and child-rearing across the Caribbean. As cultural reproducers, West Indian migrant women also hold on to reproducing traditional culture, including its gender component; the two processes are not mutually exclusive. By rebelling against traditional cultural gender norms from their home countries when their husbands expect them to do the majority of household work, childrearing and work, West Indian immigrant women in the U.S. become cultural reproducers of the U.S. culture. This aspect of cultural reproduction takes place because of the change in labor market structure allows the migrant women to become economically independent. At the same time, the labor market ensures that women will spend more time away from the home pulling them away from traditional household practices.
The patriarchal family system that permeates West Indian societies is not tolerated by West Indian female migrants as it serves to constrain rather than liberate them as women. Because of the “opportunities” provided by the U.S. labor market, West Indian women as now able to strengthen themselves financially and become less dependent on West Indian migrant males which is in line with the culture of the egalitarian family in the U.S. society. However, males have also moved away from families in their island territories to locate employment so that they too can provide for their families. However, the results have not been the same. Whereas employment in the feminized industries represented an increase in wages increased for females, real wage declined for men leading to a fall in status. And so the international global market while it freed West Indian women, subjugated West Indian men. In a society that defines men’s identity by the provider role, West Indian men are forced to find ways and means to live up to this ideal.

But it is not just that West Indian migrant women are reproducing the family structure of the host country, they are becoming the head of the new family forms that are being created as well. The family as we know it has been restructured. Kinship networks which form the core of family behavioral patterns of Caribbean nationals has led West Indian migrants to bring into existence “international families”. These families get their form and content by women.

The immigration literature on West Indians in the U.S. may be feminized but that does not imply that every area of West Indian immigrant research surrounds women. Yet, what is pronounced is when issues pertaining to men are explored, they are examined in relation to women. On one hand there is the analysis of parenting practices as the behavior patterns of both mothers and fathers in the household are highlighted. An examination of West Indian immigrant men in the San Francisco Bay area, the migrant men were assessed in relation to the
relationship they had with their wives. Marriage was used as the tool to understand both West Indian and American identity and citizenship through gender role expectations in the family.58

There are cases where immigrant West Indian males are scrutinized in relation to their female companions to ascertain the women’s responses to an egalitarian family relationship in this new setting, male sexual exploits or combined role in parenting. In other cases, only the parenting practices of mothers are examined. This makes sense as most West Indian migrant households in the U.S. are headed by women reflecting the prevalence of the female-headed households in the Caribbean.59 One can find entire texts on the experience of West Indian immigrant women in the U.S., but no such study exists about the black West Indian immigrant male!60 At its worst, there is no scholarly work with a focus squarely on the black immigrant West Indian father in the U.S.

Now despite the unfair contextualization of black fathers in the U.S. and the lack of research on immigrant West Indian males in immigration studies, academic and mainstream literature in the U.S. on black fathers and cultural representations of fathers in the media portray black fathers as always absent. So being an immigrant black father in the U.S., albeit transient at the moment, I have to deal with the stereotype, real or perceived, which suggests that I am an uninvolved father and this I am painfully aware of! No matter the fact that I am not an American, I am perceived by the wider society as being black and so I am lumped into that racial category. In the end I constantly have the target on my back of potentially being one of the deadbeat dads the media so often speaks about. Stereotypes continue to drive the notions of the dead-beat black father61 albeit this generalization that is unwarranted.62

The history of immigration in the United States has been a history of race, both black and white.63 More importantly, most of those who have migrated to the United States since 1965
have been people of color so questions and issues on father involvement as a reflection of how immigrants of color interact within and with other racial groups, whether or not the interactions are based on perceptions or reality, whether they (the other racial groups) are considered marginalized or superior, need to be examined from race-based theoretical groundings.64

One of this study’s fundamental assumptions is that West Indian immigrants in the U.S. are knowledgeable of the stereotype attached to African American fathers and try their best to distance themselves from this identity. This assumption gives rise to two frameworks that I will use to situate the ensuing project. The first conceptual framework is linked to Michael Omi and Howard Winant’s work on racial formation.65 The second conceptual framework is hinged on David R. Roediger’s work on racial consciousness.66

Racial formation asserts that race is the primary framework within which to understand American social relations. The perspective includes material on the historical trajectory of race, the issue of racism, and the interconnectedness of race, class, and gender. Through these inclusions, an alternative definition of race is formed. “Race is a concept which signifies and symbolizes social conflicts and interests by referring to different types of human bodies.”67

Racial formation is broadly defined as “the socio-historical process by which racial categories are created, inhabited, transformed, and destroyed”, and its emphasis is on “the social nature of race, the absence of any essential racial characteristics, the historical flexibility of racial meanings and categories, the conflictual character of race at both the ‘micro-’ and ‘macro-social’ levels, and the irreducible political aspect of racial dynamics.” 68 Overall, their analysis of the state as racial (“the racial state”) and as having “racial projects” (policies with racial implications and consequences) suggests that consciously and unconsciously, various government
organizations, by their policies, create racial categories for the individuals who reside within the United States.

The primary contribution of racial formation is the assertion that race is a fundamental organizing principle of the social formation in the United States, functioning as “an autonomous field of social conflict, political organization, and cultural/ideological meaning.” Further, there is a need “to understand race as an unstable and “decentered” complex of social meanings constantly being transformed by political struggle.” My project sees the immigration arena as a cultural site where the meanings and ramifications of race continue to be formed and transformed based on the interactions among black West Indian migrants, African Americans and whites. And so for example, the U.S. government may use the term “black” to categorize individuals of African descent in the Americas, but for African Americans and West Indian immigrants the label “black” does more than just place them in a racial category. It gives harmful meanings to various behaviors and identities that attached to the label “black”; being a black father and the idea of black father involvement are assumed to be negative and non-existent.

From a racial consciousness viewpoint, in the 20th century Italian immigrants entering Chicago were either white on arrival (WOA) or white before coming (WBC). Before groups like the Southern Europeans migrated to the U.S., they understood the societal ramifications of the U.S racial structure. The worst thing an immigrant could be in the new land was “colored”. New immigrants like the Italians often heard the racial structure of the United States described as a ladder with African Americans on the very bottom and that their experiences in every sphere of society confirmed this view. Any enduring “nonwhite” alliance would almost certainly have proceeded from an awareness of exclusion from the benefits of citizenship. It was by working
hard and disassociating themselves from native born blacks that they were able to don the prestigious white category in the end, and so they became “white on arrival” (WOA).

The idea is that the Italians carried racism in the “cultural baggage” they brought with them when they migrated to the United States. Two important points have evolved from the racial consciousness thesis. First, before migrating to the U.S. the Italians had to have had prior knowledge of the race relations which existed in the U.S. and picked a side before entering their new land. An Italian laborer noted that Mussolini intended to “fix up black Americans as well as Ethiopians, breaking them of the habit of loud and crazy laughter and making them civilized.” His description suggests that Italian immigrants understood that blacks and white were more than different phenotypes. Both races were culturally different with white cultural values being superior to their black counterparts. Subsequently, being white is the U.S. is far more advantageous than being African American.

Next, entrenched in his arguments is the notion that the Italians, and others like them, had already developed patterns of race thinking which they applied to their new surrounding in the host country. These patterns helped to facilitate the learning process that the Italians encountered in upon living in the United States. Consequently, Southern Europeans learned racism faster in relation to a popular consciousness and aligned themselves with the dominant group (American whites) to fit in with mainstream society.

My proposal is West Indian migrants to the U.S. should be treated as being Black On Arrival (BOA) or Black Before Coming (BBC). Much like the Southern Europeans who earlier migrated to America, West Indian immigrants in America are privy of the racial hierarchy in place in the U.S. The knowledge of the racial structure is passed on to them through persons who have migrated before, regular visits to the U.S., popular media representations and academic
literature circulated from the West. West Indian immigrants are fully aware of the negative connotations aligned with being lumped into the “black” category. Included in those constructs is what it means to be an African American and an involved father. If racial consciousness holds true, identifying with a Caribbean ethnic identity will impact positive ideas of father involvement among West Indians migrants in the U.S. while at the same time denigrating African American fathers who are observed to shun their responsibilities as fathers and husbands. Because West try Indians do not want the African American identity of the deadbeat dad placed on them, they will embrace the dominant cultural norm of being involved fathers thus distinguishing themselves from African Americans.

It must be understood that West Indian migrants distance themselves from the “black” racial category, not out of negative affect for African pride, but out of fear that it will thwart social mobility. For West Indians, issues of race are central to economic survival in their new country; economic survival is the reason most West Indians migrate in the first place.

The biologically deterministic criteria for the term “black” and the assumption of being of African descent produces certain amount of inherent consciousness or perspective. When race is presented as a fixed category, the historical construction of race is obscured and at times ignored. In the end, the evolution of race and the role of politics and ideology in the creation of race are pushed aside. For just like how the notion of woman in problematized in black feminist thought, so too must the notion of being labeled as “black” and “man” be problematized for an accurate understanding of father involvement among West Indians.

From the black feminist perspective, any definition of father involvement “must avoid the idealist position that ideas can be elevated in isolation from the groups that create them.” Not everyone should be able to produce insights in order to develop any premise of father
involvement about black West Indian migrants living in the U.S. The idea is that if we want to understand what fathering means to black West Indian immigrants in the U.S., we should gather information on what this phenomenon means from the black West Indian immigrants! Even if one is a scholar who is entrenched in research on fathering and immigrants scholarship, the position of what fathering means from this ethnic migrant group should not be necessarily articulated from the said researcher because of sheer expertise. That being said, I am aware that even though I am a West Indian transient migrant, I still do not represent the category of the knower from within simply because of my elevated academic and socio-economic background.

Within the black/white dialectical discourse, though West Indian migrants are labeled as black in the U.S., their experiences are different from other Diaspora blacks living in the U.S. For sure there are some similarities (racism and discrimination are principal issues faced by people of African descent both citizen and non-citizens alike), but the differences that exist, whether by language, ethnic identification or socio-economic ranking, serve to set the tone for how West Indian migrants come to define, measure and partake in the act of fathering. It is these differences that are overlooked in the dominant literature on father involvement and in the end conceptions of who is an involved father, created by the traditional white academy, are used to define a group whose experiences before and after migration allows them to address fathering in a different light.

Even if the thought of involved fathering for West Indian immigrants are similar to both whites and African Americans, the cultural process of getting to that desired end are not the same and credibility must be given to these processes in the academic arena. Furthermore, developing a black feminist thought around father involvement suggests that the intersection of biological classification, the social construction of race and gender and the economical relations that bring
these groups together, ought to be at the front of any analysis of the framework. So then the experiences and ideas shared by West Indian men and women must be used to provide a perspective unique to them to evaluate the meanings and behaviors associated with being an involved father.

Investigative questions must also be linked to, but are not limited to, how immigrant groups assimilate, as opposed to reject particular cultural traits, how has the dominant culture sustained control in the immigration process and how ethnicity, which pervades the phenomenon of race and immigration in the United States, has been maintained. These questions are contextualized by hegemony.\(^77\) The connection of “society” and determination/domination to hegemony becomes apparent when comparing “a constitutive process expressed in political, economic, and cultural formations”; a complex interlocking of political, social, and cultural forces. Hegemony is a concept which at once includes and goes beyond two powerful earlier concepts: that of “culture” as a “whole social process,” in which men define and shape their whole lives, and that of “ideology,” in any of its Marxist senses, in which a system of meanings and values is the projection or projection of a particular class interest.\(^78\)

The particular way that Williams configures the connection of hegemony to domination (hegemony as a culture), hegemony can then be viewed as the lived dominance (whites) and subordination of particular class, in this case African Americans. Hegemony then can never be singular. Hegemony not only requires, but reinforces and maintains the division of culture into dominant, alternative and oppositional subcultures.\(^79\) And so African Americans and West Indian immigrants are divided even though they can be placed under one racial category, “black”. The hegemonic process detailed by the elite whites ensures that West Indian immigrant fathers do not
want to view themselves as African American fathers and will therefore do all they can to distant themselves from this group.

From its Marxist/socialist feminist roots, standpoint theory is linked to consciousness raising (not just identity) and suggests that one has to work towards standpoint; one has to give an account of their credited status as a standpoint feminist. Standpoint endeavors to develop a feminist epistemology, or theory of knowledge, that describes a method for constructing effective knowledge from the insights of women’s experiences. Standpoint epistemology goes beyond feminist empiricism in its account of knowledge creation. Weight is not only granted to experience but also to the epistemic roles played by both social location and political commitment; what it means to develop a politically engaged, critical identity. Standpoint epistemology "sets the relationship between knowledge and politics at the center of its account in the sense that is tries to explain the effects that different kinds of political arrangements have on the production of knowledge."80

Standpoint is unlike other perspectives in that its theoretical belief system incorporates some of the views held by members while rejecting others. The system expresses the group’s standpoint not because if reflects every detail of what members of the group believe, but because it presents issues of concern to them in ways that allow their objective interest to be revealed. There are certain positions in society from which it is possible to see systems of oppression clearly, and other positions of clear vision are impossible. This rests on the fact that subordinated groups (West Indian immigrants is this case) not only see the world from their location, which the dominant culture ignores, but they also have to know the dominant culture in order to survive in it (a racialized U.S. culture).
Individual members of subordinated groups do not have automatic knowledge of the structure of social reality. The simple claim is that occupying a certain social location may facilitate or block the achievement of certain insights. However, it is precisely the occupation of marginal social locations that facilitates recognition of certain insights while at the same time conceding that these locations are limited (insider-outsider claims are fallible). That being said, there are multiple ways of conceptualizing social reality, rationality and justification but this multiplicity does not necessarily entail cultural relativism. The same can be said of how West Indians on the periphery of a society that seems them as blacks and immigrants, have a unique insight into how fathering is related to them. West Indians present views of father involvement based on knowledge that is generated by them and not one that’s driven by the U.S. society.

Research Questions to be Answered

In light of the aforementioned insights, the project examines some pertinent questions currently not covered by the immigration literature or research on father involvement. My project addresses the first question: How is father involvement defined by West Indian migrants living in the United States? Subsidiary research questions ask: Have the perceptions that West Indian immigrants have of father involvement been shaped by their racial self-identification, and, have the perceptions that West Indian immigrants have of father involvement been shaped by the migration experience? Wrapped up in these questions is the notion that West Indian immigrant ethnic identities are created, recreated and affirmed through the practice and understanding of father involvement. I use the research questions to explore and articulate just how said identities are presented in the new cultural space. For the present discussion, father involvement, also termed fathering or fatherhood, is conceived in broad terms to include fathers’ levels of
engagement, accessibility and responsibility toward children, irrespective of the family form fathers find themselves in.82

I address my first original research question by asking West Indian immigrants across the United States how they define father involvement; what is the meaning of father involvement and possibly, the way father involvement is measured among West Indian migrants, from the position of West Indian migrants living in the U.S. It is suggested that responsible fathering can occur within a variety of family structures so it then stands to reason that West Indian immigrant families can be conceived of as a diverse family form within which father involvement takes place.83 Therefore, understanding what father involvement means to immigrants from the English speaking Caribbean living in the U.S. and understanding what activities are performed by fathers within the family, are integral to the scholarly definition and measurement of father involvement for this ethnic group. Understanding and having characteristics that actually measure what they purport to measure, as opposed to crude measures, creates accurate assumptions about how father involvement actually impacts other family members.84

The second and thirds original research questions are addressed by asking West Indian immigrants, if and how, migration and racial identity, have had any impact on their ideas of who an involved father is. Much like the first research question, the second research question is addressed by ascertaining if black West Indian migrants from the West Indies ascribe to particular beliefs about fathering because of the impact of migration. The third research question is addressed by determining if black West Indian migrants who identify with a Caribbean, ethnic or American identity incorporate differing meanings of father involvement based on their racial self-identification.
Methodology

Firstly, my methodology applies an ethnographical strategy to offer insight into what father involvement means among black West Indian migrants living in the U.S. Next, my data collection method derives from the understandings of West Indian identity in the American collective conscience; how black West Indians in the U.S. respond to the impact of race and the migratory process on their identity. Just as how blacks across the Diaspora are not a monolithic group, West Indians do not possess a uniformed identity. In addition, the geo-social spaces which West Indian migrants inhabit help to shape their identity leading to various ways in which father involvement is interpreted, produced/reproduced and practiced.

The structures of the data collection instruments were derived from my understanding of the role memory plays in the consciousness of the migrants’ formulation of father involvement. Using memories, the immigrants refer to prior knowledge of fatherhood and how men are presented in this light across the Caribbean to create their perceptions of how immigrant fathers should operate in the new space. Of course, all West Indian migrants have individual lived experiences from their home territories but these experiences are not created in a vacuum. Father involvement is experienced as a part of the Caribbean culture to which the individual belongs. Therefore, the memories that West Indian migrants have of fathering are recalled from the “intersection of collective influences”; the ideas of fathering that are projected in the U.S. are a combination of society’s notions of fathering.

The research data was compiled from primary data collection instruments; a self-developed survey questionnaire and a self-developed in-depth interview schedule. Both instruments explored the roles that meaning, migration and racial/ethnic self-identification play in shaping understandings of father involvement behaviors among West Indian migrants in the
U.S., especially as a medium of identity formation; affirming existing identities, creating new identities or recreating identities as immigrants in the U.S. Additional correlates of father involvement were also inferred from the survey responses.

As I previously indicated, issues surrounding identity creation are integral parts my study. I specifically ask respondents to state how they identify themselves as migrants in the U.S. and follow up by asking if the migration process has changed their perceptions of who they are; have their identifying markers remained, have they created new identity/identities or have they improved on existing identities since migrating to the U.S.\textsuperscript{87}

Because of the exploratory nature of the research questions, the sample selection technique of purposeful sampling and snowballing was used in order to obtain a diverse population and diverse perspectives on what it means to be an involved father from West Indian migrants.\textsuperscript{88} My self-created questionnaire is comprised of 41 questions and asks both males and females a range of items that qualitatively gauge the meaning, influences and changes attributed to father involvement. The constructions of fatherhood are not located in a cultural space habituated by only males. It is through the gendered relationship between males and females that father involvement in fashioned so an understanding of how females view this phenomenon has to be investigated as well. Additional questions cover respondents’ age, relationship status, religion, generational status, education and occupation.

My survey questionnaires and in-depth interviews were gathered both face-to-face and online through personal contacts. Data included 76 survey respondents consisting of 42 males and 34 females. The interviewees were face-to-face survey respondents who I asked if they would commit to participating in a taped interview and, so are a part of the total sample. Through my personal contacts, there were some individuals who had the surveys emailed to them. Upon
completion of the surveys these respondents would email the soft copies to me. Approximately 48 percent of the survey respondents are recipients of a college/university education. The bulk of the survey respondents (72 percent) were born in Jamaica with almost forty percent of the total number of respondents residing in the New York area. Tables 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3 provide an overview of some of the general characteristics of my sample. The sample however cannot be generalized to the wider West Indian immigrant population since the sample was not randomly chosen. Notwithstanding, the sample design still gives me the opportunity to have detailed insights into the interpretations of father involvement from a wide range of immigrants. More detailed characteristics of the sample population are found in the Appendix.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current area of Residence</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alabama</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Massachusetts</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virginia</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other areas</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>42</strong></td>
<td><strong>34</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: “Other areas” refers to respondents who implicitly and explicitly and did not want to state where they were currently residing.

Sixty-five of the survey respondents indicated that the U.S. was not their original place of birth making them first-generation immigrants. Over 78 percent of the respondents self-identified as Caribbean. The data had a diverse age group but the majority of the respondents (65.3 percent) were between ages 19 to 35.
Table 2  
Sample Characteristics of Respondents’ Country of Birth

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National country of origin</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Antigua</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barbados</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominica</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guyana</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jamaica</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trinidad</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other West Indies</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total 42 34

Note: “Other West Indies” refers to respondents who implicitly or explicitly refused to state their country of birth.

Table 3  
Sample Characteristics of Respondents’ Racial/Ethnic Self-Identification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Racial/Ethnic Identity</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caribbean</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Identities</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total 42 34

Note: “Other identities” refers to the self-identification of more than one racial/ethnic identity and an identity which was not racial or ethnic in nature.

My choice of the sites to gather both the surveys and interviews has to do with my personal connection with personal contacts who live in these communities that have relatively strong West Indian enclaves or organizations, or who have very close connections to migrants of West Indian descent. Close connections are easily developed through work environments, schools, group organizations and general leisure activities. My sites for respondent recruitment included Alabama, Connecticut, Florida, New York (the North Babylon township of Long Island, the boroughs of the Bronx, Brooklyn and Far Rockaway, Queens), Maryland, Massachusetts, the cities of Bowling Green, Dayton and Troy in Ohio and Blacksburg Virginia.
The sites in the Bronx, Queens, Connecticut, Long Island and Florida are high traffic West Indian migrant settlements with migrants falling diversely along the socio-economic ladder. Survey respondents in West Indian enclaves in the Co-op City area, Taylor Avenue and the surrounding environs in the Bronx, and Far Rockaway Queens, were accessed and I went there to talk to the possible respondents and help collect the surveys. In addition to completing a survey, my contact in the Co-op City area recruited respondents from the area whom he described as friends and close relatives. The Co-op City contact also gathered completed surveys from individuals at his place of employment and from West Indian migrants who worked and spent leisure time at a popular automotive shop in the area. Another of my Bronx contacts recruited respondents from migrants whom he knew lived in and around the Taylor Avenue community and at various places of employment.

Contacts in Connecticut, Long Island and Maryland helped to recruit respondents through email and word-of-mouth. Most of the respondents for these contacts already knew each other through various social gatherings such as dinner parties and bar-be-ques. Like other immigrant communities in the U.S., the Caribbean community is fairly close and so the word-of-mouth theme for possible recruits was to “help out a fellow Caribbean”. My contact at the data collection site of North Babylon, Long Island, gathered completed surveys for me from relatives and close friends in his community and employment institution which has a relatively high concentration of West Indian workers. I received numerous surveys from my Connecticut, Long Island and Maryland contacts through emails.

Surveys responses from one section of the Florida sites were gleaned from individuals who participated in religious services there. My contact in Virginia actually recruited respondents from that specific religious gathering in Florida as he had personal connections there.
as well. My contact in Virginia was also able to recruit possible respondents from a Caribbean organization with its base at a tertiary institution in Virginia. Another Florida contact gathered surveys from West Indian immigrants at her workplace and community and mailed them to me. Her place of employment is a branch of a business that has its head office in Jamaica and so it has a sizable West Indian migrant population working there.

I had two personal contacts in Massachusetts who helped to recruit respondents in the Worcester area and its surrounding environs. Even though one of my contacts moved to South Carolina, she was integral in recruiting respondents via email (she was sending messages to persons to respond and complete surveys up to a few minutes before my Human Subjects Review Board midnight deadline) from not only Massachusetts but New York and Alabama as well. Through her efforts I received seven surveys responses at the deadline.

Through one of my friends at school, I was able to make contact via telephone with two family members (a husband and wife) in the Troy area of Ohio. They lived almost a half an hour from my home so I drove out to them where they completed questionnaires and participated in interviews. I also went in person to the homes of respondents in Dayton, Ohio, where I received two surveys and conducted three interviews. I also conducted two interviews with two females in my own home in Ohio. I collected my questionnaires over the period of a year.

To ensure reliability and validity, I triangulated my methodology by conducting 10 in-depth oral interviews (5 males/ 5 females) with first and second generation West Indian immigrants. The interviewees were from the Bronx, Far Rockaway, Florida and Ohio covering a wide geographical space. The diversity was also represented in the perceptions of the interviewees whose ages ranged from the early twenties to eighty years old. Not only were background and biographical data collected, but, my interviewees went more in-depth into their
responses linked to my research questions providing me with richer details of father involvement perceptions. The in-depth interview schedule was comprised of 11 questions which mirrored the major questions in the survey questionnaire. Interview times ranged from 8 minutes to over an hour.

Analytical Strategy

Both the questionnaire and the oral interviews were analyzed and interpreted together. Data management methods included data reduction, transformation, correlation, comparison and integration.89 My original intent was to analyze the content of the interviews by uploading the digital recordings into the N’Vivo qualitative data analytical software package. However, the software did not work properly on my laptop so I reverted to transcribing each interview by hand, print, and doing a content analysis.

By copying down the transcripts verbatim, I was able to understand various meanings that were captured in the characteristics of verbal speech. My analyses of the oral interviews also entailed an exploration of the transcripts in relation to analyses of the topic of father involvement. For example, do immigrants in the U.S. understand father involvement the same way as natives? Therefore a secondary level analysis was done to scrutinize such differences.90

I generated a list of concepts from the qualitative questions of the surveys and the in-depth interviews that were frequently observed throughout the transcripts. Concepts comprised of, but were not limited to the following: father, involvement, communication, conflict, responsibility, fathering, financial, Caribbean, black. The concepts were then matched against the analogous paragraphs and phrases. Based on the review of the results, a second review of the transcripts was warranted. This two-stage process helped to identify distinct themes and patterns so that subsequent interpretation of the phenomenon under study could proceed.
Next, the quantitative data in the survey questionnaire was used to enrich the reports of the respondents. Respondents’ responses created numerical results based on age and gender. Thematic analysis can reduce the dimensionality of the qualitative data and the frequency of codes investigated so that the qualitative responses can be represented statistically. Projected results detailed ethnicity, age and gender differences. Additionally, content analysis of the transcripts was conducted to determine congruence and dissimilarities among the varying generations of West Indian immigrants. My interviewees are all given pseudonyms and are mentioned by these names throughout the analyses of the project. My survey respondents are cited as first or second-generation immigrant, male or female, with their respective self-identified racial identity.

To address what father involvement means, the question is asked on the questionnaire, what does father involvement mean? The same was true for exploring whether or not migration or race/ethnicity influenced perceptions of father involvement. However, various questions were created on the survey questionnaire to address the issue of influences on the perception of father involvement among West Indian migrants. The major areas of influence are identified as father characteristics, child characteristics and contextual sources. For males who are either biological fathers, step-fathers or social fathers, questions included are you an involved father, why do you think you are, or are not, an involved father and, what are the things that have influenced you to be an involved father. The final question in the previous sentence may seem to adequately address the possible influences that may occur, but, detailed reviews of my survey responses indicate that that was not so. Therefore to adequately address all three areas, and areas that may not fall within the purview of the determinants, other questions addressing possible influences were incorporated into the survey.
To address the child factors that may influence fatherhood, male respondents were asked two questions. The first question was if they thought that father involvement was gendered. This question was asked of both males who are fathers and those who were not fathers at the time of completing the survey. The next question asked fathers to describe the things they do with their children to be a part of their lives. The second question served a dual purpose; to check if their response on the idea of gendered fatherhood matched actual behavior and to see if child characteristics actually influenced father involvement.

The women were not left out of this important issue. Females in a current relationship that children are a part of were asked if the current partner was involved or uninvolved. The follow-up question asked them to tell why and how they think the partner is involved or uninvolved. Similar to the males, female respondents were asked if they thought father involvement is gendered and to give examples of the gendered process.

It is arguable that to understand the issues that affect a particular group of people, research should utilize data collection instruments to solicit information from the target population. Since only males can truly highlight those issues that may influence their behaviors, it is best to ask them. However, to ensure validity of the responses, the perceptions of female immigrants are solicited. Why was this necessary? The masculine nature of fatherhood is only possible because of its counterpart, motherhood and since they are in direct opposition to each other, I am aware that possible problems with the responses may arise. The female responses were injected in part to temper possible embellishments by male respondents who may try to inflate the things they actually do to be involved, which ultimately serves to affirm their status as fathers and as men.
There may also be tensions emanating from the motherhood/fatherhood dialectic including, but not limited to, public observations, current or past relationships may create the opposite effect; females may amplify the lack of involvement of males which by extension, raises the importance of women in the home sphere and subsequently, the parent-child relationship.96

Because of the highlighted importance of the influence that fathers have on male children ultimately becoming involved fathers themselves, and how female children view father involvement, the question was asked about the influence the respondents’ fathers had, or have, on their current perception of father involvement.97 Subsequent questions asked if the neighborhoods the respondents live in influence their perceptions of father involvement or if there are other persons, things or situations that have impacted said perceptions.98

*Plan of the Study*

The subsequent study will be outlined as such. Firstly, chapter one serves as the background to the study and examines what family is like in the Caribbean. Before I can present arguments regarding fathering or even father involvement in the West Indian family, I need to present information on the West Indian family itself because this is the structure in which fathering is created and defined. This chapter reflects on the West Indian family and the role that fathers play in this union. The first section demonstrates how the West Indian family has been, and continues to be defined, the frameworks that are used to theorize about the West Indian family and the links between the West Indian family and the African American family. The chapter also provides detail of the impact of African family forms, plantation slavery, colonialism and globalization on West Indian family forms. Finally I close the chapter with a review of father involvement within the Caribbean family.
Chapter 1 serves as the background to the project and details the definitions and frameworks that have been used to construct the family in a West Indian setting. It details the genesis of the theoretical understandings of the Caribbean family. Next it reviews the forms and functions of the Caribbean family. The chapter then issues linked to the post-colonial Caribbean family before it details what the Caribbean family looks like in the contemporary era. The chapter then focuses on father involvement across the Caribbean and ends with a review of the black West Indian immigrant family in the U.S.

Chapter two answers the first research question about the meaning of father involvement among West Indian immigrants. The chapter starts with a historical overview of father involvement. The next section presents the meanings of the term father involvement and details the genesis of father involvement and show how the concept has evolved over time during differing historical periods. I then present arguments of what my investigation of my first research question unearthed. Included in the findings is a review how father involvement is viewed in the West Indian context; how father involvement is defined, the factors that lead father involvement and how it is practiced by fathers and how it is perceived by the women, children and men in the various West Indian family forms. I also focus attention on how the term is defined in the new cultural space and the types of reformulation of the concept that are made to create and recreate another West Indian identity.

Chapter three examines how West Indian migrants in the U.S. construct their identity. The first section covers what is identity and details the characteristics of identity construction. Next, a review of Caribbean identity and identity construction is outlined. The next section reviews race relation between West Indians and other major racial ethnic groups in the U.S. with a critical focus on the West Indian/ African American race relation. The section also discusses
how West Indian migrants in the U.S. rest on an identity or identities in the mainstream culture of the host country. Finally I examine what identities my respondents identify with and the explanations they give for arriving at these identities.

Chapter four focuses on those things, persons, behaviors and events that positively or negatively influence perceptions of father involvement, as a result of migration. The first section examines the father characteristics, child characteristics and contextual situations that influence father involvement perceptions. The next section examines how the make-up of the migrant’s household and the household structure that the migrant is a part of, influences how West Indian immigrants view father involvement. Next I explore how tensions within the home and outside of the home contribute to fathering perceptions. Finally I close the chapter with the influence of generational fathering and religion on migrant’s current perceptions of father involvement. In my conclusion I summarize the findings from my project and my notes offer insights into the issues I had with various aspects of the research project. Included are also possible limitations of the study.

Chapter five examines how racial self-identification shape current thoughts of father involvement among black West Indian immigrants in the U.S. The chapter starts with a focus on African American fathers and what they do as opposed to what they are perceived to be doing, or not doing. Next I detail why fathering in the black community conjures a particular identity that West Indian migrants do not want to be associated with. The final section examines the reasons why and how racial self-identity impact black West Indians’ thoughts on father involvement.

The final chapter closes with an overview of the salient themes emanating from the project and the way forward. Additionally, the chapter concludes by examining implications for the impact of father involvement on various possible pertinent adolescent outcomes, not limited
to, marriage and fathering among offspring, educational attainment, employment achievement and identity formulation.
Afro-Caribbean fathers are just one ethnic group that makes up the fathers across the West Indies. Indo-Caribbean fathers are represented as well and unlike Afro-Caribbean fathers, Indo-Caribbean fathers take part in various aspects of the traditional patriarchal family that still exists in India. Pertaining to father involvement, Indo-Caribbean fathers are high on warmth, affection and behavioral control, compared to Afro-Caribbean men. Again, they are other measures of fathering between Indo-Caribbean fathers and Afro-Caribbean fathers that have no difference such as gendered physical punishment, feeding and cleaning young children.


Rousseau, Cécile, et al. “Prevalence and Correlates of Conduct Disorder and Problem Behavior


13 Jackson, Jennifer V., and Mary E. Cothran. “Black Versus Black: The Relationships Among

14 Ibid. 2003.


17 Ibid.163-165. 1993.


23 Ibid. 1993.


Furstenberg, Frank F., Theodore Hershberg, and John Modell (1975) claim that that the disadvantaged position of blacks in American is the root of the perceived plethora of female single-parent headed households and is not the consequence of them. Successive reviews of Moynihan’s findings by historical revisionists have unearthed evidence that African American families in the 19th century were overwhelmingly male-headed and nuclear in structure. Minor differences in structure did exist between white and black families, but, for the most part both racial groups exhibited similar family characteristics. See Wilson (1987) and Ruggles (1994) for similar expansive comments on the roles that socio-economic disadvantage has played in the family lives of African Americans.


36 Ibid. 1-6.


39 Ibid. 4.


Hinzten (2001) talks about the hostility directed towards him by African American faculty in his department at the university where he teaches. West Indian faculty are seen in African American studies departments as scholars that are diluting the focus of racial issues in the United States which was the core focus of African American studies when the study and subsequent departments were created. West Indian faculty are accused of redirecting the focus toward political economy and identity issues which African American scholars view as more relevant studies of the West Indies and Caribbean.

See Castles, and Miller (1998) for a review on the role migrant men played in the past labor migration movements and the refugee movements which helped to keep women somewhat out of the international migration discourse.


Ibid. 119.

Ibid. 121.


See Babb, F (1986) for detailed overview of the role that women play as cultural producers and reproducers.


63 See Roediger, David R. *Working Toward Whiteness: How America's Immigrants became White: The Strange Journey from Ellis Island to the Suburbs.* New York: Basic Books, 2005 for an examination of how becoming white was a long indirect process which hinged on what it meant to be black in the United States.


68 Ibid. 55 & 4.
69 Ibid. 48.
70 Ibid. 55.
76 Ibid. 342-343.
77 Williams, Raymond. Ed. “Culture,” “Hegemony,” “Dominant, Residual, and Emergent,”

78 Ibid. 1977.

79 Ibid. 1977.


81 Ibid. 2008.


Because of (a) the complexity associated with defining the construct, and (b) prior research with the West Indian immigrant group, I followed Gilkes (2007) survey instruments. He utilized a tripartite investigation of ethnic identity’s role in the immigrant experience. Each interviewee was asked to: describe his or her ethnic identity, and explain the significance of the chosen descriptor. At the 73rd Annual Convention of the Eastern Psychological Association (2002) Gilkes also showed that among West Indian immigrants, ethnic identity is both changeable and negotiable. Interviewees in his work were asked to discuss how his/her identity had changed or consolidated since immigration, and reasons for the changes.


95 Morris, M. “Telling Tails Explain the Discrepancy in Sexual Partner Reports.” Nature 365.6445 (1993): 437–440. Print. Clark, Shelley, Caroline Kabiru, and Eliya Zulu (2011) found that because male respondents are more likely to exaggerate the number of female sexual partners they have intercourse with, studies are mindful of the likelihood of over-reporting by males/ females surrounding issues that may allow them to look favorable in the eyes of researchers and society. The authors of this research project controlled for gender misreporting by using a matched-couples sample. While my questionnaire did not solicit responses from couples, reviewing responses from females who are in a relationship with a child and comparing them to males in a comparable setting will help to offset possible exaggerations on the part of the male respondents.

96 Smith, Carolyn A., et al. “African American Fathers Myths and Realities About Their


98 For Hintzen, Percy C. *West Indians in the West: Self-Representations in an Immigrant*
the idea of West Indian enclaves in the Bronx, Brooklyn or Queens neighborhoods have a profound impact on how West Indians who move to these neighborhoods formulate their “West Indianess”. More importantly these migrants use their West Indian identity to secure jobs or resources. The assumption can then be made that the neighborhoods West Indians become a part of impacts their perceptions of fatherhood as well. Likewise Karen Olwig. “New York as a Locality in a Global Family Network.” Islands in the City: West Indian Migration to New York. Ed. Nancy Foner. University of California Press. 2001 examines how the type of neighborhood West Indians lived in impacted how they (West Indian migrants) viewed themselves. New York is seen as the arena where West Indian migrants are seasoned into creating the immigrant identity. The identity however is one that can be borne out of assimilation or contention. Notwithstanding it is the neighborhood that motivates identity formation and therefore be assessed to do the same with father involvement.
CHAPTER I.
LIVING LIKE FAMILY: BACKGROUND TO THE MEANING OF FAMILY ACROSS THE CARIBBEAN

This chapter serves as the background to the project and details the definitions and frameworks that have been used to construct the family in a West Indian setting. The definitions and explanations will be linked to the Afro-Caribbean family as this is the largest racial/ethnic group represented across the West Indies. Any examination of father involvement presumes that one commences with a detail account of what a family denotes and the signifiers that are connected to the family in a particular society. After all, father involvement does not, and cannot, exist outside of the family kinship domain.

Christine Barrow notes that the early scholars who set down definitions and determinants of the Caribbean family were of the belief that the Christian monogamous nuclear family was natural, universal and essential and any family form that deviated from this was indeed deviant. Nearly all the founding fathers of Caribbean family studies were either anthropology or sociology scholars, or workers in the social welfare domain from either Britain or the United States.\(^1\) It then makes perfect sense that they had a Western-European understanding of what constituted a family and the role that the fathers within the family should play. Since the family was viewed as the building block of society, early scholars noted that it should consist of a man and woman who were married, living in a co-residential habitat with a clear division of labor between the husband and wife. The man must be the head of the family with the woman performing her wifely duties as mother, care-taker and homemaker. It must have then surprised the early scholars when they came to the Caribbean to discover that the family as they knew it in the West was not the designated norm across the Caribbean. Not only were the majority of the families across the Caribbean non-nuclear, the family forms were ever shifting.
The term *living like family* is used across the Caribbean to denote that the family is far reaching in terms of the individuals who occupy this structure. Unlike its U.S. counterpart, most Afro-Caribbean families across the Caribbean are extended in nature and female-headed. The Caribbean family is normally comprised of individuals who are related not only by blood, but by adoption (legal and informal) and friendship. In her monograph, Joycelin Messiah states that the question of “what constitutes a female-headed household is integrally linked with the particular definitions adopted for the concepts ‘household’ and ‘head of household’”. She argues that clear distinctions are made between what constitutes the term ‘household’ versus that of the ‘family’.² The term ‘household’ is defined around the complexities of domestic arrangements whereas any definitions of the ‘family’ are linked to kin relationships. However, the terms household and family are used interchangeably throughout the Caribbean family literature making the distinctions obscure. Upon recommendations from the United Nations procedures, the three most recent censuses of the Commonwealth Caribbean created the following definitions which suggest that:

A Private Household is defined as one or more persons voluntarily living together and sharing at least one daily meal. In general, a household comprises a father, mother, children, other relatives, as well as other persons sharing in their household arrangements…It is important to note, however, that a member of the household is not necessarily a member of the family, nor will all members of the family be members of the household. It is also important to note that a household may include more than one family.³

Messiah also suggests that another concept worthy of definition is ‘head of household’. Regional censuses define ‘head of household’ as “the person who is responsible for the upkeep
and maintenance of the household.” This person is usually the husband or common-law husband and where this male person is not observed as the head, or where no man lives in the household, “the person who claims the position or who is so regarded by other members of the household is treated as head.” So the obvious questions which Western and Caribbean scholars have since tried to answer are: What is the meaning of family in the Caribbean sense? What are the family forms which now exist across the Caribbean, and, what has helped to shape those family forms which have persevered and what has helped to shape those family forms that continue to change?

Barrow pointed out that the family in the Caribbean has been shaped primarily by two processes. The first process involves constructing concepts and typologies of the Caribbean family, while the second process involves providing explanations for the existence in the Caribbean of family structures other than that of the nuclear family based on marriage. The two main protagonists for the latter process are Melville Herskovits and Edward Franklin Frazier. Both Herskovits and Frazier have divergent views on how the [black] family came into being. Of note is the birth of the Caribbean family in academia owes its beginnings to work on the African American slave family whose central protagonists were Herskovits and Frazier.

The Forms and Functions of the Caribbean Family

Caribbean family systems have a large number of features in common but it is argued that the most important for an understanding of the functioning of these family systems are (1) a mating system characterized by marriage and consensual unions, and (2) households headed by persons of either sex. Due to the absence of a steady male partner within households across the West Indies, the characteristically large number of female-headed households is defined as matrifocal households.
The term matrifocality is difficult to define as it has evolved since its conception. The term has been used interchangeably with other concepts such as ‘mother-centered’, ‘female-centered’, ‘woman-centered’, ‘matriarchal’, ‘female-headed’ and ‘grandmother family’. A working definition of matrifocality is, the mother is structurally, culturally and effectively centered in the household and quite possibly there is the absence of an adult male who is romantically linked to the dominant female spouse or partner. What is important in the female-headed family household is that the dominant female assumes responsibility for the affairs of a household consisting of her children and/or grandchildren and herself and that all persons connected with that household recognize and admit her headship status. Another characteristic of matrifocality is that the household will be extended with most of the extended family being relatives of the mother than the father.

Barrow argued that early scholars outlined matrifocality as family structures in which the males avoided their responsibilities as fathers and conjugal partners, leaving the women in the relationship to socialize and financially support the household and family members. Nancie Gonzalez challenges the definition of matrifocality by the early scholars noting that their definitions were due to researcher bias. Notwithstanding, notions of matrifocality are fundamentally linked to the position and function of the male within the household and family structures.

Since the 1970s, subsequent investigations demonstrate that the possibility existed that black males were marginal in the household not out of outright neglect but because they were situated on the lowest rung of the societal ladder. A review on the black family in the Guyanese society showed that the black male’s inability to have exclusive control over land or any other means of family livelihood rendered him incapable of fulfilling the provider role attributed to
men across societies. If he (black male) is incapable of acquiring family livelihood and at the same time the female in the household is in a position to generate income to sustain the family foundation, then the man’s role becomes structurally marginal simultaneously enhancing that of the woman’s. Subsequently, the black father plays no part in defining the social status of members of his family or in the socialization of his children.

There are two main attempts to try and explain the dominance of the female domestic system. The first category is attached to the roles of European colonial slave conquest of the Caribbean and is detailed in the work of Herskovits and Herskovits and Frazier’s work on 18th century slave plantations. Herskovits and Frazier did differ on how patterns of the black family evolved in the New World, but there are some similarities in their assertions. Other notable determinants of the black family in the Caribbean include post-emancipation developments. These issues are important to our understanding of the forces that helped to shape black West Indian families today.

The second category hinges on functional explanations of Caribbean family systems which seek to find the things that help to create the family structure in the functioning of the social system. The prominence of the functional explanations are focal for understanding the lack of economic opportunity for men, the high incidence of male absenteeism, or the type of mating system. It is important to note that although dominant, the female-headed household is not viewed as the ideal for members of the Caribbean no matter their social class or economic status. Barrow presents a quote from Messiah’s work where an informant states that: I don’t like the idea of moving in with a man and having to move out, then moving in with another…I don’t believe in having children from different men.
Subsequently in the black household where the women is the head, the woman is usually the \textit{de facto} leader of the group with the husband/father, if present, being the \textit{de jure} head. Albeit, the male in this household organization is normally marginal in the sense that he has infrequent interactions with other members of the household, and is on the “fringe of the effective ties, which bind the group together.” An important conceptualization by Raymond Smith suggests that instead of trying to define matrifocality as female dominance and a distinct type of household structure, we should focus on matrifocality as a domestic relationship centered on the mother figure. Such a conceptualization views matrifocality as a final phase in the life cycle of the domestic group.\(^1\)

Therefore, the matrifocal quality of domestic relationships occurs independently of a male presence and is clearly distinguishable from female household headship. Barrow surmises that whether or not a husband/father is present, matrifocality is present and will increase as matrifocality is dependent not so much on the presence of either gender in the household but on the economic ties that are woven into the family structure.

However, Caribbean scholars are not uniformed in their explanations of female headed household phenomenon. Explanations ranged from matrifocality as an offshoot of African heritage to, matrifocality results from the inability of men to possess the necessary financial and occupational status to fulfill their husband and father roles. Additional explanations for matrifocality include the impact of plantation slavery, poverty and community organization. Barrow noted that the idea of matrifocality was pitted against the European nuclear family ideal and because matrifocality did not match-up, it was seen as a deviant family form.\(^2\)
The Post-colonial Caribbean Family

The institutional remoteness of the male is sometimes produced in many Caribbean areas by the fact that after slavery ended men migrated from their households when they were forced to leave their respective communities in search of gainful employment. Mariam Slater expressed that during this period a typology of the Caribbean family was formulated with marital status as the measuring stick for all other family forms. The first was the Christian family, next was faithful concubinage, then there was the compassionate family and then the disintegrate family.

Of course, just as the there is no homogenous ethnic group represented from the various African states where slaves were taken from, there is no one family typology that holds true across the Caribbean. A family typology indigenous to the Caribbean cannot hold true because of the “mixed criteria and nature and duration of the conjugal bonds” used to develop the typology. What appear to be separate household types are in reality stages in the development cycle of one kind of household, conjugal.

At the beginning of the cycle, after the birth of a child, the mother leaves her immediate family to form a conjugal union with the father of her child. At the end of the cycle, when the children are all grown (I say children and not offspring because disintegrate relationships may ensue which mean the men who pass through the households are not necessarily the biological fathers of the children) men become absent from the household; men are absent in the households at the beginning or at the end of the child-rearing cycle. It may simply mean that the women outlive the men in the households or the men become expendable during this period as women become more independent of the male figure in the household.
The idea that women more than men, should assume the role of nurturer in a household is a widely held view among men and women across the Caribbean in countries such as Jamaica, Guyana and Dominica. Where individuals differ on this belief could likely be a result of inter-ethnic and cultural differences in parental involvement practices that vary among Afro-Caribbean (black West Indians) populations and Indo-Caribbean (Indian) populations that occupy territories like Trinidad and Tobago. Indo-Caribbean families follow traditional Indian family patterns in India which are mostly nuclear family structures. These family structures differ from the large number of female single-headed households that characterize Afro-Caribbean families.

The Afro-Caribbean family has been heavily scrutinized and previous studies examining the high incidents of matrifocality, high incidences of children born outside of the married nuclear union (commenter’s such as Barrow have noted that nearly 70 percent of children in the Caribbean are born in non-legal unions) and having multiple partners overtime, have used the disruptive effects of slavery and African retention as the frameworks to better understand the functions of the Caribbean family.

The high incidents of non-marital childbearing has been in existence for over 150 years and may have its origins in slavery but is now argued that it perpetuated by societal adaptations to poor economic conditions and low educational attainment. These adaptations are being linked to the current economic system which the Caribbean was thrust into after the decolonization process ended. Caribbean family investigations conducted during the 1970s and beyond have now shifted from Herskovits’ and Frazier’s explanatory frameworks to one that embraces personal choice and adaptation on the part of the individuals who are integral in the formation of
Caribbean family structures. Accordingly, behavior and relationships within black, lower-class families are no longer perceived as social problems stemming from persistent ethnocentrism on the part of earlier scholars, but as “culturally appropriate solutions to the problems of living in socio-economic circumstances of deprivation and uncertainty.”

I note here that it is the rapid economic transformation associated with the modern global economy that now explains the presence, and the preponderance, of the female-headed household across the Caribbean. Matrifocality should not be viewed as a one-off instance nor should it be traced to any distinct ethnic/cultural traditions as research on internal and international migration have now shown us that:

It is the women among the poor, be it in Central and South America, in sub-Saharan and North Africa, in Asia, who are increasingly becoming the sole or main economic provider of their families.

The increase in female-headed households seems to correlate well with “processes of modernization arising from specific forms of economic-development strategies.” Caribbean data shows that compared to women in the general population, women who are heads of households are in a disadvantaged position.

In her study on ‘yards’ in metropolitan Kingston, Jamaica, Erna Brodber shows that the main source of emotional and economic support for the household comes from the communal life of the housing units within these yard. Yards are identified as geo-social entities; “a kind of residential arrangement for low-income Kingstonians in which women and children form stable units while men drift in and out as the women’s circumstances change.” These residential units are primarily rented by women from either the government or private individuals, many of whom
may have a semi-resident partner who financially contributes to the upkeep of the unit. Of note is that these semi-resident male partners may or may not actually sleep in the unit.

The primary role of the women in these yards has not changed much from that of their role during the plantation slavery era, and indeed from that of their role in family units in Africa. Brodber asserts that the woman’s roles in these household units include not only the housework and child care of their own offspring but the “feeding and clothing of dependents, disciplining the children, paying the rent and so on”. To aid in these responsibilities, the woman incorporates other women in the yard to facilitate in childcare activities, child-watching, sharing household chores, participating in informal credit associations, advise giving, making provisions for child sleep space, amongst other things. Overall, the women in these residential arrangements are able to exploit these same arrangements to their benefit as they go about their daily affairs.31

This is not a totally negative scenario for female-headed households for Messiah also noted that across the Caribbean, increasing economic opportunities for women outside of marriage and changing attitudes towards women’s roles in society have resulted in women opting out of their marital unions or just not marrying at all, increasing the rates of female-headed households.32

Alternatively, improvements in socio-economic conditions also create viable family organization alternatives for women across the Caribbean boosting the incidents of female-headed households. Women effectively choose to be household heads, as opposed to being household heads by default; women gain the household head status because the male in the household is not fulfilling his obligations as household head. One manifestation of this independence is to be found in the adoption of the non-residential sexual union as a socially acceptable option rather than a deviant alternative family structure.
A careful consideration of views of respondents points definitely to their position that this form of family accords them a degree of freedom and independence which they hold to be greatly to their advantage. Even from the standpoint of the support of their children and the family as a whole, they maintain that the absence of the partner is by no means a disaster. For economically they do not consider their position unduly difficult; such financial assistance as they receive from their partners has not to be spent in partial support of the latter, as would be the case in residential unions. Such funds serve solely for their own support and for the upkeep of their children.33

The aforementioned claims clearly suggest that the women in visiting unions perceive this union as an advantage to them. Improvements in socio-economic conditions also result in greater life chances. In Barbados, for example, the sex ratio evened out by 1990 (911 males to every 1000 females) after being imbalanced in the previous decades as a consequence of emigration. Yet the percentage of female-headed households has remained high at 43.5 percent. One explanation is that females live longer than males and with age at first marriage and the low remarriage rates among widowed women, though the gap has narrowed somewhat, the rate of matrifocality is projected to remain high.34 And so the result is what is identified as female-dominated kinship networks, often extending abroad to incorporate migrant ties.

Father Involvement across the Caribbean

Ralph LaRossa’s paradox of the culture of fatherhood versus the conduct of fatherhood; the cultural values, norms and beliefs surrounding fathering as opposed to what fathers actually do, is the model that I will use to explain father involvement in the Caribbean.35 Across the Caribbean father involvement is the result of the interconnectedness of colonialism, slavery and
indentureship. The dehumanizing effects of slavery laid the foundation for uninvolved fathers across the Caribbean today. Through these events which lasted for centuries, contemporary Caribbean families are now impacted by various social, political and economic influences brought on by different European powers. Within these structures, socio-cultural cues are created pertaining to father involvement.

Male economic inadequacy is the essential structural feature which explains a series of family characteristics including, but not limited to, male marginality and absenteeism, loose conjugal relationships and ‘marital shifting’, the importance of the role of the mother and patterns of moving children across various households. With males being unable to economically fulfill their provider role as husbands and as fathers, they lose authority and esteem in the family. Approval is sought in the company of other male peers or in relationships with other women.

Additionally, economic uncertainty and suspicions of infidelity puts a strain on any existing relationship that a male has with a female resulting in the development of visiting or common-law unions with sexual partner change or “marital-shifting” occurring frequently. Subsequent attitudes about the relationship are more casual with any separations viewed as the norm in the life cycle of the relationship. There is an increased likelihood that children will be conceived in a union in which the male in the household at the time of birth is not the biological father and because of frequent conjugal dissolutions the woman is left with the bulk of the responsibility for the children. Hyman Rodman offers that the solution to this problem is ‘child-shifting’.

Ultimately, black West Indians across the Caribbean create and explain notions of father involvement that are wrapped-up in the constructs of gender and masculinity. Gender production and preservation are inscribed within the individual as they interact with persons daily in various
behaviors, through communication and even ways of thinking. Of course, gender is also performative; the production and preservation are learnt through cultural practices. Masculinity can be described as a phenomenon that is performative and is practiced and constituted by men across varying societies. Of note is that masculinity is not stagnant and has manifested itself in varying degrees, within similar cultural contexts and across different periods in time. Even within a particular social milieu, masculinity can present itself in various options. This is important because as a representation of masculinity, father involvement in the Caribbean is not homogenous. Gender, masculinity and culture are not mutually exclusive concepts and play off each other to produce fathering practices. So Caribbean men do not simply engage in father involvement by themselves; they “do” father involvement!

An important cultural artifact that creates fathering practices across the Caribbean is religion. Confirmation of the separation of gender roles in domestic affairs and child-rearing are grounded in religious beliefs of either the Christian faith, Rastafari or Orisha practices. These religious beliefs are patriarchal in practice and so they serve the purpose of confirming masculinity. Scriptural authority grants males power in the home over women and children. This power is “ordained” by God. Even in a setting where a woman may earn more than a man in the household, he is still confirmed as the head. In keeping with African familial practices, the Rastafari movement being closely aligned to African ancestral practices helps to socialize women to accept the man’s headship role. Cultural ideals help to cement notions of manhood and father involvement already confirmed by religious practices.

Afro-Caribbean men are aware of other important elements of father involvement, for example, being a good role model, counseling and guiding children, but some Afro-Caribbean men simply do not have a great hold of father involvement. This may be as a result of maturity;
as Jamaican men become older, fatherhood takes on differing meanings. Because no one type of father involvement exists the father involvement that is donned at a particular time runs parallel to the cultural shift/s that occurs in the society. Included in these shifts are changes of a social, economic, political or even religious nature. Subsequently, Caribbean men can subscribe to different father involvements throughout their lives.

The high and relatively unvarying endorsement of fathering values points to the existence of core cultural elements which define, for example, fathering in Jamaica. Some of these core values involve male dominance and sexual prowess. One explanation of these behaviors is Caribbean men reinterpret manhood through sexual conquest when they are not able to fulfill the role of being a man through the economic provider ideal.

Although all social classes agreed that father involvement is paramount in the lives of children, there was consensus that economic hardship hampers many men in meeting the father role. The main thrust of father involvement is providing financially for one’s family and Caribbean men are deemed absent from this role, in part, because they cannot provide financially, owing mainly to poor job opportunities.

However, not being able to fulfill the provider role does not stop Afro-Caribbean men from being involved altogether. Afro-Caribbean men engage in feeding and cleaning their children as a part of being involved fathers. Further, these activities that the fathers have with their children are done in conjunction with multiple caregivers. So independent of being family men, black fathers across the Caribbean can be involved father. As I presented earlier, if the relationship that the father has with the mother ceases to exist, the level of involvement that the father is allowed to have is at the will of the mother. In a lot of cases, the father is presented as uninvolved.
Due to mate-shifting practices, many Caribbean men are not resident fathers. Many Caribbean men financially support their children but are involved in a visiting relationship with the mother. Other fathers may be co-residents and provide no economic support. As Caribbean men move on to new relationships, children may be shifted to other households losing contact with their biological fathers. Biological fathers may also be involved in the decision to shift children to other residences as well.

It is noteworthy that the presence of men in households does not mean that men are the head of their families, albeit they are expected to act as household heads. Caribbean women are the main wage earners and raise families in the absence of men. Roughly 25 percent of visiting unions comprise the mating relationships in the Caribbean so it is arguable that men in the Caribbean are introduced to father involvement in unstable relationship unions. Additionally, these men are predisposed to be less educated with low levels of employment which contributes to their lack of financial support to their children which further leads them to be less involved by way of financial contribution to their children. Similarities exist across generations and where men assessed the father involvement roles of their own fathers, economic strains was mentioned as the leading cause of their fathers’ failure to fulfill the economic provider role. Besides taking care of the financial necessitate of their children and taking care of children’s needs (feeding and cleaning), there are other ways that fathers are also involved.

As another aspect of fathering besides financial provision, communication plays an integral role in father involvement in the Caribbean as fathers seek to encourage their children to have a strong sense of honesty and responsibility for self. Of course the communication process is gendered with girls being taught to be ladylike while boys are taught to be tough. Jamaican
men stated that showing love, emotional support and responsibility were important elements of father involvement in addition to fathers “being there”.51

So despite the Afro-Caribbean male being realistically hampered in being involved in the traditional economic role, the prevailing cultural belief of both men and women throughout the Caribbean is that the main dimension of father involvement is bounded in the economic provision of the family (a very masculine behavior). Ninety-six percent of lower-class single-earner and 74 percent of lower-class dual-earner Jamaican fathers in common-law unions reported that father should be breadwinners and the head of the household. So it comes as no surprise that the provider role is influential in defining male identity. This is why even when men have a valid reason for not being able to fulfill this role (be it race, lack of employment, low socio-economic and educational status), both men and women still subscribe to the economic provider role and hold it as the standard for involvement.

My assessment is that the cultural norms override all other areas of socialization. Culture should not be seen as an external influence as suggested by Lupton & Barclay. Culture should be seen as that thing that shapes all other institutions.52 In this case culture shapes the institution of family, and by extension father involvement, through which individuals and society become socialized. The dominant culture practice is that Afro-Caribbean men are not tied to a single household or to a marriage or marriage-like union. Consequently, father involvement should not be viewed entirely within the constraints of a household, or, a union status. There are studies that examine fathering within families from other socio-economic classes, but they are limited. The reason most studies focus on the families in the female-headed, lower-class structure is because this structure accounts for almost 80 percent of the household structures across Afro-Caribbean family forms in the West Indies.
The Black West Indian Migrant Family in the U.S.

With respect to the transnational of West Indian families, I draw on Linda Basch and her colleagues’ designation of the family to explain the nature of black West Indian family forms in the U.S. Basch and her colleagues suggest that:

The [West Indian] family is a matrix from which a completely layered transnational social life is constructed and elaborated. The family facilitates the survival of its members, their class formation and mobility; and as the repository of cultural practices and ideology shaped in the home society, it mediates identity formation in the new setting as it socializes its members into a transnational way of life.53

It is noteworthy that the definition of family furnished by Basch and her colleagues incorporates the notion of the creation of an identity of its transnational members, a focal point of my research of which I will explore in chapter 3.

Historically, it has been the elite groups in the Caribbean who moved with ease between their islands of origin and their metropolitan center for education, work and pleasure.54 A majority of the early immigrants to the U.S. came from the urban areas of the Caribbean. They were educated professionals or skilled trades persons usually from the upper and middle classes. These individuals possessed the requisite social skills that facilitated adjustment to the U.S. The upper class tends to migrate to “metropolitan centers with which they have close cultural affinity, when their social or professional interests seemed better served there than in the Caribbean.”55 The key here is that there is a permanent departure of the family unit when upper-class Caribbean nationals decide to migrate. The exception arises when family members who are students are left behind to complete their education in the Caribbean.
The more recent immigrants hail from all socio-economic classes, with the majority from the rural Caribbean and the lower class. Because of their backgrounds, many recent Caribbean immigrants tend to be less equipped with the skills needed to function in the large U.S. urban cities (e.g., Boston, Miami, and New York City), in which they frequently settle. For many such immigrants, adjustment to the U.S. and its environs often is more difficult than for earlier immigrants. When persons from the lower echelons of Caribbean societies migrate it is in light of the idea that migration is seen as a temporary event in the life-cycle. For this group, it is the individual, rather than the family unit, that migrates.

Just as there are socio-economic differences in Caribbean migration patterns, gender dissimilarities exist as well. The differences however are not fixed over the different migration periods. The relative proportion of men or women in any particular migration phase can be explained by the selectivity of the available work at the destination. At times male labor is recruited for the construction, heavy industry or agriculture. At other times nurses and household domestic workers have been in demand. To date, more women than men, from the Caribbean have been migrating to the U.S. The relative increase in women’s migration participation, and increased numbers from the lower class, have helped to re-create family forms in the home country and family forms in the host country making kinship immigration the leading category in U.S. immigrant admissions.

The consequence of kinship-based immigration is that the women migrate from the family first more often than not leaving their children and partners behind; kinship networks are concentrated on the relationship between mother and child, especially mother and daughter. The children’s father are often absent with contact having been broken when they migrated. The successful female migrant restructures her network, balancing her obligations to the Caribbean
homeland territory with the resource input required to develop a supportive network in the U.S., in the process, “gradually reducing the former while building up the latter.”

The children will subsequently follow and then the partner. In most cases the likelihood that the partner migrates is based on whether or not the parents are married; married men follow their female partners after they have migrated and settled. But because most families across the Caribbean are matrifocal, when the female migrates, there is a limited likelihood that a male partner will follow. Notwithstanding, there are instances where men migrate with the family unit or men may migrate as individuals. For the women who migrate sans a male partner, the new family in the U.S. may consist of a male partner that is not the biological father of the children who eventually migrate.

In the U.S., as in the Caribbean, some West Indian migrant families are organized as nuclear units while others are not. Notwithstanding, they present themselves as a family, and are perceived as such by neighbors, friends, and relatives. Legally married or not, West Indian families are explicitly male dominant meaning even though women may make up the majority number of household heads, men are still viewed as the one who are the authority figures. However, regardless of their marital status in the U.S., most English-speaking Caribbean couples tend to adopt the prevailing gender stereotyped roles for men and women in the U.S. society. Generally, these roles are more egalitarian and less explicitly male dominant than in the Caribbean and allow women greater equality than is true in their native countries. Many black West Indian female immigrants are the family's only wage earner, while their husbands adjust and seek employment. Many such husbands tend to resent their wife's independence, the “temporary” role reversal, and their economic dependence upon their wife. For some husbands, the shift in spousal roles tends to be less bothersome if they are able to retain their dominance in
the family. Sustained by their new found independence, some wives assert their objections to their husbands' expectation that wives will perform all domestic chores in addition to being employed outside the home.62

Findings from my data indicated that almost 53 percent of my respondents are married with almost 60 percent of the males stating that they are the biological fathers in household they reside. Almost 74 percent of my respondents either graduated from a college or a university or had professional training beyond college or university. Again I am aware of the possible surveyor bias that may exist because I am an immigrant doctoral student from the West Indies and most of my personal contacts who helped to recruit my respondents are individuals who have completed, or are in the process of completing, graduate work. Therefore the bulk of the respondents they recruited for my surveys may not be a reflection of the West Indian immigrants that have migrated to the U.S. in the contemporary era.
Works Cited


3 Ibid., 1983.

4 Ibid., 1983.


7 Both Herskovits (1947) and Frazier (1948) agreed that what they termed then as “Negro families, were ‘maternal’ and extended, that common-law unions (‘keeper’ unions according to Herskovits and ‘irregular’ unions according to Frazier”) happened quite frequently resulting in high levels of children being born out of wedlock. This family form differed from the ‘normal’ co-residential nuclear units visible in the United States at that time. That is where the similarities ended for Herskovits was adamant that the Negro family could be explained by the survival of the African cultural heritage and the impact it has on the present black family structure whereas Frazier argued that it was the
disruptive effects of plantation slavery and the plantation system that led to the current arrangement of the black family in the New World.


The Herskovits’ (1947) position was that the dominance of the mother or female in the Caribbean family organization was a result of the Caribbean man now having the “institutionally remote, humanly somewhat secondary role that in Africa was his as the parent shared with the children of other mothers than one’s own”. His idea was that through ‘survivals’, some Africanisms in the Caribbean closely resemble the original African forms. Certain aspects of the original African culture survived by way of ‘syncretism’s’. An example is cited in the reinterpretation of the African practice of polygamy with its Caribbean counterpart ‘progressive monogamy’. Progressive monogamy includes successive rather than simultaneous plural matings and is the result of married couples entering into new conjugal relations without going through the legal process of obtaining a divorce. The argument is that as we move from survivals to reinterpretations, the African cultural practice becomes blurred. The looseness of the conjugal bonds, close mother-child relationships, kin network support and the tangential role of the father in the life of the child were seen by the Herskovits’ as reinterpretations of family practices linked to African customs and must not be observed as ‘pathological manifestations’ of the European family. Frazier (1939) was not so convinced of the influence or dominance of African practices on family forms in the New World. His assertion was that there was a ‘cultural vacuum’ left by the total annihilation of African family customs and practices. With no other alternatives sanctioned by the white plantocracy the slaves turned to only what was available to them. Through the seasoning process, the slaves eventually began accepting white planter ideologies to guide various areas of their lives. These areas included, but are not limited to, family, marriage and
sexual activities. Since plantation slavery totally destroyed African culture and no 
evidence seems to support the transfer, survival or retention of African family patterns, 
Frazier writes that examination should not surround the discovery of African survivals 
but the organization and role of the black family “in a changing society or in a new 
society which is coming into existence.” Slavery established a ‘low grade mentality’ 
which was carried forward by the slaves and then reinforced by the poor economic 
conditions and moral and social ills of the free plantation era. Matthews (1953) states 
family forms in the Caribbean now display a ‘random’ and ‘irresponsible’ concubinage. 
Just as how Herskovits left the door ajar with his claim that plantation slavery did play a 
minimal role in the creation of some African heritages that survived in the Caribbean; 
those eventually were reinterpreted under plantation conditions, Frazier suggests that 
some African heritages did indeed survive under the right conditions. In the Caribbean 
where larger slave concentration existed on a plantation, Frazier notes that African 
heritages might have existed. He made note that ‘even today’ in Jamaica, there is existing 
evidence of polygamy.

16 Salter, Mariam K. *The Caribbean Family: Legitimacy in Martinique*. New York: St. Martin’s 

17 Clark, Edith. *My Mother who Fathered Me. A Study of the Family in Three Selected 
Communities in Jamaica*. London: Ruskin House, 1957. Print. See also Smith, Raymond 
University College of the West Indies, 1957. 64. Print. See also Kunstadter, Peter. “A 
Survey of the Consanguine or Matrifocal Family.” *American Anthropologist* 65 (1963):


21 The widely held belief is that the post-colonial experience in the Commonwealth Caribbean (formerly the British West Indies) began in 1838 after the start of the full, legal emancipation of the slaves. However, it is arguable that the beginning of post-colonialism does not have a uniformed beginning and is staggered across the West Indies. Post-colonial rule is also said to have begun when each individual island nation gained independence from their respective European colonizers. So for example, post-colonialism would have begun for St. Lucia in 1979 with their independence from British rule whereas post-colonialism would have begun in Jamaica in 1962 when the island gained independence from Britain.

22 Salter, Mariam K. *The Caribbean Family: Legitimacy in Martinique*. New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1977 notes that the Christian family structure was based on the monogamous nuclear Christian marriage which included a patriarchal order that mirrored Christian families around the world. Faithful concubinage was also based on a patriarchal order but
possessed no legal status like that of the Christian marriage. This type of family structure was deemed to be an established structure enduring for at least three years. The compassionate family was more lose in its structure and members lived together for less than three years and for pure convenience. The disintegrate family was basically the female headed household and is the largest structure numerically as prior research show that sexual relationships which result in procreation are temporary and that the institution of marriage is an unstable one. The disintegrate family consists only of women and children and men simply visit occasionally.


26 Roberts, George W., and Sonja A. Sinclair. *Women in Jamaica: Patterns of Reproduction and


29 Ibid. 1978.


31 Ibid. 1975.


35 LaRossa, Ralph. The Modernization of Fatherhood: A Social and Political History. University
Upon arrival in the Caribbean, the practice was to brutally split family members from the continent of African who were from similar ethnic groups (Henke, 2001). The slave culture was directly controlled by the masters and helped to force Caribbean family forms into new shapes (Messiah, 1983). The plantation system rendered the survival of African family types impossible. Subsequently slavery established a pedestrian mentality which was reinforced by the poor economic conditions and moral and social ills of the free plantation era (Matthews, 1953). The deplorable economic conditions, especially connected to the lower-class, help to perpetuate the mate-shifting patterns of men and women. Today across the Caribbean, being able to produce offspring from early sexual relationships serve to increase men’s status in the community and makes a male a man creating the notion of uninolved fathers (Roopnarine, 2013). The tangential role of the father in the life of the child should be seen as reinterpretations of family practices linked to African customs and not as ‘pathological manifestations’ of the European family (Herskovits, 1958).


Ibid. p. 181.

Ibid. p. 183.


Ibid. 1997.


Ibid. 2007.


   Report submitted to the Planning Institute of Jamaica and the Office of the Principal,

52 Lupton, Deborah, and Lesley Barclay. *Constructing Fatherhood: Discourses and Experiences.*

53 Basch, Linda, Nina Glick Schiller, and Christina Szanton Blanc, eds. *Nations Unbound:*
   *Transnational Projects, Postcolonial Predicaments and Deterritorialized Nation-states.*


55 Ibid. 2002.

56 Squires, Stacey. *West Indian Women’s Experience in Los Angeles: The Impact of Politics*
   *and the Global Economy.* El Paso: LFB Scholarly Publishing LLC, 2012 recounts on
   pages 65-72 how the political process in the 1980s created a culture of poverty and
   violence in some Caribbean islands forcing a completely different category of immigrants
   to migrate to the U.S


58 Squires, Stacey. *West Indian Women’s Experience in Los Angeles: The Impact of Politics*


CHAPTER II.
WHAT IS THIS THING CALLED FATHER INVOLVEMENT? THE MEANINGS OF FATHER INVOLVEMENT AMONG BLACK WEST INDIAN IMMIGRANTS

An involved father is not only a person who takes care of their kids financially.
It’s not only about that. I mean you have to take time. Being a father, any decision in the child’s life, most time when they reach the cross road, they would think of their father. What would my father do? I think that’s the first thing that comes to any child that had grown up and reach a part in the road and wonder, which direction should I go? Should I go left, should I go right and to reflect what would their father would do. (Andy: 40 year old first-generation male immigrant from Jamaica living in Far Rockaway, Queens, self-identifies as Afro-Jamaican)

The quote from Andy indicates that for black West Indian immigrants in the U.S., being able to financially provide for a child does not necessarily demonstrate that positive fathering is taking place; financial provision is just one aspect of fathering. For the immigrants, the father child interactions that gauge father involvement are not only tied to the tangible things that a father may be able to provide for his child/children, but, the interactions are also tied to emotional and cognitive elements as well. A father should be so strongly involved in the life of his child that any time during the child’s life an issue should arise, the influence of the father is to be at the forefront of the child’s mind. The purpose of the following analysis in this chapter is to examine the first research question; what does father involvement mean among black West Indian immigrants living in the U.S. There is a need to deconstruct what father involvement connotes for this group because the immigrants already come to U.S. with their own cultural baggage and notions of what father involvement mean. We therefore cannot take for granted that the West Indian immigrants think about father involvement the same way the U.S. society does.
Neither do I take for granted that West Indian migrants in the U.S. automatically take on the meanings of father involvement that are circulating throughout the U.S. society. But, I am also aware that because of migration, at some point in time various aspects of fathering in the U.S. will be incorporated by the immigrants into their cultural behaviors.¹ I address that issue in chapter 4. The ensuing chapter will first outline how father involvement is examined in academic research. Next, an overview of pre-migration understandings of father involvement across the West Indies will be addressed. Finally, I will present findings on what father involvement means to black West Indian immigrants in the U.S.

Research on Father Involvement

Most of what is known about child rearing before 1930s comes from such sources as popular magazines, medical and religious books, journals, and biographies. These texts tended to exhort parents—almost always mothers—to behave in a particular way. As such, fathers and their involvement with their children within the household, was historically understudied. Though father involvement is subjected to academic rigors today, it (father involvement) is still examined within a matrix of cultural beliefs often widely accepted within the dominant population at large and within the scientific community.² Father involvement, fathering, or fatherhood, is a cultural construction and once formulated it has implications for the subsequent behavior of those who share the beliefs and assumptions defining that construction.³ Fatherhood is not stagnant and varies across countries, classes, occupations and over different historical periods. Yet it is difficult to distinguish across various historical and cultural periods whether the changing role of fathers influences the attitudes towards fathers or vice versa.⁴ It may be useful to think about it from a bidirectional standpoint with both roles and attitudes influencing each
other. Of course, to understand fully the cultural construction of father involvement, one must also understand its counterpoint, maternal involvement.

There are four major typologies of fathering that have characterized fathers across various historical periods but only the fourth typology is of interest to my study. The nurturing father typology was observed in society from the 1960s to the present. A nurturing father is invested in the well-being of his children and so he co-parents with his mate, as well as he is engaged in paid work. The nurturing father has to be there for his children all the time and some men tried to be there as much as they possibly could. This portrayal of the cultural conception of the ideal father is greatly oversimplified, of course, but it does contain important ideas that are widely shared by society. So much so that only today is father absenteeism so shaming, and declared a criminal, even criminal-producing behavior.

It is important to note that the changes in the cultures of fatherhood were accompanied by changes in the cultures of motherhood. Earlier, in the 1700s, the proclamation was made that a mother’s love will take care of all of society’s social problems. For more than 200 years, mother love was generally considered paramount in child development. Moreover, up until the first half of the 20th century, mothers were assumed to have nearly exclusive daily responsibility for the care of children. Men’s involvement in the home was important, but it seemed men extended this behavior toward women and children as part of a restructured conception of masculinity and parenthood. During the late 20th century, because of the restructuring of the economy, we see a growing trend in women seeking paid employment outside of the home. Women are now engaged in dual roles; that of mothering and employee. The mothering role is still seen by society as the woman’s domain even though men are involved in the father-child relationship.

It is noteworthy to show that one of the most, if not the most, enduring historical elements defining fatherhood has nothing to do with rearing children but deals with the
assumption that the major role of fathers within the family is as economic provider: the breadwinner.\textsuperscript{9}

Its obligations bind men across the boundaries of color and class and shape their sense of self, manhood, and gender. Supported by law, affirmed by history, sanctioned by every element in society, male breadwinning has been synonymous with maturity, respectability and masculinity.\textsuperscript{10}

Beginning with the advent of industrialization in the 19th century, many American men judged themselves (and were judged by others), judged their personal worth, and judged their success as husbands and fathers, in relation to their ability to provide economically for their families.\textsuperscript{11} Subsequently, breadwinning has remained the great unifying element in fathers’ lives. The idea that as a society we can create overarching characteristics to define an involved father suggests that we are failing to take into account the differences, whether they are race/ethnicity, socio-economic class, education, among men, and subsequently, among fathers in the United States.

For example, the structural barriers that undermined, and continue to undermine, father-child bonding were endemic to an economy in which increasing numbers of men earned wages and salaries outside the home.\textsuperscript{12} While white fathers could earn wages to support a family in the new wage economy, the same could not be said for black fathers. Of course structural barriers barring black men from being involved fathers existed long before the wage-earning era in the United States; such barriers began with the beginning of slavery, and so the fundamental difficulty of the black father being the dominant economic provider is not hard to understand today.\textsuperscript{13}
Notwithstanding the cultural shifts in father involvement across the U.S., fathers continued to be viewed as breadwinners and moral guides in the 1930s and into the 1940s. It is the economic and cultural events of the 1920s-1930s that fused the expectations of the existing stereotype of present-day father involvement institutionalizing father involvement in the American cultural psyche. These expectations started with the American middle-class and trickled down to the rest of the society. Before then, the different father involvements were taking prominent roles during different historical periods. The buddy, economic provider, role model and pal were all present, however, it was during the 1920s and 1930s that we see them all rolled into one to create the template of “America’s ideal” father involvement.14

It is noteworthy that contemporary research on father involvement excludes provision as characteristic of fathering due to the good provider role being an assumed responsibility. Economic provision is now inadequately conceptualized simply as earning money through work. Because of the invisible role, financial contribution to the family is not seen as much as an aspect of involvement, but a good or bad practice on the part of the father.15 In the end, America’s fascination (and often times sensationalization) over the good-dad, bad-dad dichotomy had led a history of unease surrounding the deadbeat father. The notions surrounding the deadbeat father is an indirect way of revealing the centrality of the role of economic provider to American fatherhood. The assumption is that men do not have a choice and are always expected to work outside the home and financially provide for the family.16

New cultural adaptations (fathers physical separation of home and work, rising divorce rates and larger number of female headed household across all race/ethnic group in the U.S.) and the rising concern about the status of American children, have focused the research on the father-child relationships among fathers who are not residents of the households in which their
child/children live. Since most of the research focuses on fathers outside the home, and most black fathers tend to be non-resident fathers, when black fathers are examined, the direction of research feeds into the stereotype, especially for black fathers, of the deadbeat dad.

As a part of social science research, the concept of father involvement has always lacked a clear and constant meaning. The absence of a constant definition of father involvement is due in part to the cultural changes in the economy, family, gender roles and academic assumptions, which have occurred over time, and have helped to alter how society has treated fatherhood from one time period to another. What the research on father involvement has unearthed is that the father’s role was always viewed as an “intrinsically ambiguous” one. Unlike the mother whose role is tied to the biological reproduction of offspring, which implies something internal, the role of the father is a prescriptive one which relies on cultural production. Fathering is then observed to be external and has to be taught. Father involvement can therefore be seen as a type of social invention and is passed on through cultural reproduction.

Nevertheless, there are some characteristics of father involvement that have persisted over time and have helped to generate a consensus, to some extent, as to what this concept means for us today. Father involvement can be defined and measured in multiple ways but is broadly conceived under the headings of “accessibility”, “engagement” and “responsibility”. Conceptualizations of accessibility refer to the father’s presence, interactions and availability with his children. Engagement is conceptualized as fathers’ experience on direct contact, caregiving and shared interactions with their children. Lastly, responsibility deals with how fathers engage in duties with their children, for example choosing a pediatrician, participating in parent-teachers meetings and carpooling. Depending on whom you may ask; the female partner, family members, the child/children or even the father themselves, there is a discrepancy
between what fathers believe and what fathers actually do in practice. Each heading was
generated from an overarching three-part process that could broadly incorporate all positive
father-child activities.

Additionally, the term father involvement is conceived of as those observable behavioral
and affective dimensions and cognitive elements of the positive father-child interactions. These
behaviors, affective and cognitive elements can be in direct or indirect forms and will vary across
different periods of the lives of the father, mother and child/children and take place under
varying conditions, including, but not limited to, family structure, race, ethnicity and age.

Most of what we know about father involvement comes from investigations of middle-
class men of European descent so an immigrant group like West Indians is clearly not
represented in the designation on fathering, but, society assumes that they will conform to its
definitions and behaviors. The existing headings of interaction, accessibility and responsibility
may be problematic ways to define father involvement for West Indian immigrant fathers in the
U.S. because as immigrants, West Indians in the U.S. straddle two worlds. They are
simultaneously tied to both their home territories and the host country and are cognizant that
there are ideas of fathering from both societies that help to generate their current perceptions of
fathering.

**What Father Involvement Means to Black West Indian Immigrants in the U.S.**

First, when I asked my respondents in my survey questionnaire what father involvement
meant, thematically, the majority of the responses alluded to fathering as a multi-dimensional
process. A male respondent, first generation immigrant who self-identified as black wrote that:

*An involved father actively participates in some meaningful way in every important event or*
activity influencing the development of his children. Another male respondent who is a first
generation immigrant and who self-identified as Caribbean noted that:

An involved father is someone who knows his child well and has developed a
positive nurturing relationship based on respect. He is active in the child’s life and
is a part of significant events in the life of his child or children (First-generation
immigrant, self-identified as Caribbean).

It means taking an active interest and role in your child’s development. This
requires constant dialogue and ongoing participation in a child’s life and affairs.
An involved father is keen on the progress of his child/children and stands ready
to assist or provide guidance. In addition to being a role model, an involved father
is always there in times of need, whether financial, emotional or psychological.
(First-generation male immigrant, self-identified as Caribbean)

An involved father is someone who supports you not only financially but
emotionally, to guide the child in the right path. (First-generation male immigrant,
self-identified as Caribbean)

An involved father is someone who knows his child well and has developed a
positive nurturing relationship based on respect. He is active in the child's live and
is a part of significant events in the life of his child or children. (First-generation
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is always there in times of need, whether financial, emotional or psychological.

(First-generation immigrant male, self-identified as Caribbean)

The theme from over 90 percent of the males was that father involvement entailed a holistic approach to how a father interacts with his child or children; an involved father is an active, total participant in every area of a child’s life. Father involvement is not just viewed as, or limited to, how best a father can financially provide for his children and so should not be viewed as the defining characteristic of fathering for this immigrant group. While important for most black West Indian immigrants, financial support was observed as part of a package deal in the construction of father involvement.26 It was stressed that the emotional development of a child, the physical development of a child, and the time spent in any father-child activity, is just as important as, or outweighs, being able to provide tangible items for the child and the family. There is the move away from looking at father involvement in the traditional role to one whereby a father seeks to infuse himself into areas of his child/children’s life/lives that were originally deemed off limits.27

The meanings presented by the respondents affirm that how father involvement is viewed by West Indian migrants is an artifact of the cultural space that they now occupy. Society dictates that the new type of fathering be engraved in nurturing every aspect of the child or children’s life. That contemporary nurturing dads or superdads must go above and beyond what society expects of them to show that they are participating in the lives of their children is not lost on West Indian migrants.28 The responses indicate that West Indian migrants readily incorporate the dominant cultural norm of defining fathering as a total package for fathers. By doing this they ensure that they are evidence to the host society that they are not inclined to accept the cultural stereotype of the deadbeat black father.
Presenting ideas of the dominant fatherhood discourse in the meaning of father involvement by West Indian immigrants is important, especially for male immigrants who ascribe to it. From an economic position, there are two points of contention to be aware of. First, we have to understand that West Indian males enter into a society where they will earn less, on average, than their female counterpart. To ensure that they actively participate in every area of their children’s lives will take considerable economic resources. And men who are not able to do so are seen as failures. For the majority of the respondents, especially men, to state that father involvement is defined by total involvement again shows the extent to which how West Indian migrants define fathering is aligned to the current culture of fathering that is perpetuated by the dominant class in the U.S. Next, fathering does not function as a result of social class for the migrants. Before migration, the respondents and interviewees all came from varying class backgrounds in the West Indies. As U.S. migrants they occupy different positions on the socio-economic ladder, yet, their perceptions of fatherhood are all similar.

There were no differences in how fathering was viewed by male or female black West Indian immigrants. Of the 34 female survey respondents, 31 of them echoed the exact sentiments of the males regarding the holistic definitional approach of father involvement.

Being an involved father means participating in the upbringing of the children, i.e., cooking for the family, helping with the cleaning as needed, helping with homework, attending school functions, disciplining, and engaging in social activities (including church attendance). In summary an involved father does more than just pay the bills but is an active participant in the family. (Female, first-generation immigrant, self-identified as Caribbean)
To be an involved father means that you actively plan for your children/child's future, it means that your present in the child's life and this does not mean caliphs present all the time, but through interaction and bonding the child is aware that you are their father and sees you as a role model. An active father knows everything that is happening with his child and endeavors to always be there for the child. An involved father takes part in the decision making process of all important decisions for the child and the child's well being, is his priority. An involved father supports his child financially, emotional, physically, intellectually, and socially. (Female, first-generation self-identified as Caribbean)

It means being there at all times that you can, graduations, school recitals, birthdays, sickness, and special events in a child’s life. It means being there in such a way that the relationship develops as the child matures to a point where you can feel comfortable talking to your father about anything even as an adult. Not just having the title as father/daddy/poppa is enough, being a part of the child’s life is crucial because as children age they may feel a separation and the other parent or family members or friends may have a bigger influence on their life than the father. (Female, first-generation immigrant, self-identified as Caribbean)

The quotes help us to understand that fathers and their involvement are important aspects of any child’s life. There is some contention in research and the wider society whether or not a father’s role is actually important outside of being the breadwinner. There is also the debate of the importance of the father’s role compared to the mother’s role. Black West Indian female migrants do not espouse one role over the other and suggest that fathers matter in the life of the
child beyond the procreating and financial role. This understanding of father involvement is different from the notions of fathering in the Caribbean.

The holistic meaning of father involvement is not the only characteristic that defines black West Indian immigrant notions of fathering in the new cultural space. West Indian migrants also define father involvement as an ongoing process. My in-depth interviews highlight the meanings behind the ongoing process of fathering. Marlon is a 27 year old immigrant male from Jamaica. He has been living in the U.S. for four years. He self-identifies as black and considers himself to be lower class because of his current financial status (he is a student and not gainfully employed).

Q: What does the term father involvement mean to you?
A: Remembering for me growing up, my dad and mom were married so marriage is an important thing in fatherhood. I believe in being there for your child before birth, coming up at birth, and your family. Motivating your child/children to work hard in school, directing them on their path of life, helping them or teaching them how to make the right choices or the right decisions; their spiritual guidance. An involved father to me is a dad who benefits that child holistically…from the birth of the child until the child, you know, sadly pass away. (Marlon. Personal interview)

It’s funny because I have three sons and I’m looking at, they’re all grown. My question to them is when does a parent cease to be a parent? I can’t get an answer for that question. Because you are a parent from the very moment conception takes place, you better be involved. That is how; I think that is the Christian way. I think God intended it to be so. So you are not relieved of any responsibilities ok.
You have to be involved. That doesn’t say they are going to comply at all stages. But they get to the age of responsibility and understanding they have to know that you are still the parent, yeah. And you have to be involved from day one all the way through because as I say you never cease to be a parent. Because it pains, it pains from the inside. Sometimes it is not visible by them but you are paining on the inside even more than they are paining. So it is a continuous process. (Mr. Brown. Personal interview)

Marlon and Mr. Brown note some good scenarios and bad scenarios that may take place throughout life and suggest that a father is instrumental along every step of the way. The understanding is that father involvement is holistic and an ongoing process over the life-span of the father-child relationship. But for the ongoing involvement process to take place, the father has to ensure that he is always involved. There is the assumption that father involvement is a natural process and that the children will understand, when they become mature, that that is what the father was doing all along. The child may not see or sense that fathering is taking place and therefore I deduce that at an early age, or stage, in the life of the child, trying to capture whether or not a father is involved would be somewhat pointless. Again, Mr. Brown points to the emotional aspect of fathering which is may not always be visible to the child/children, as an important element of father involvement.

There is also the understanding that for black West Indian immigrants fathering is contextual. The contemporary role of the nurturing father in the U.S. is being co-opted into the fathering cultural patterns of the migrants. The ongoing bond that characterizes fathering among West Indian migrants in the U.S. does differ from the cultural practice of fathering across
the Caribbean. The definition of fathering in the Caribbean relies heavily on procreation and protection, both of which are not conducive to father-child bonding.31

Another of my male interviewees lived in the Bronx, New York. Roy has been living in the U.S. for 26 years. He is 38 years old. When asked about his thoughts on what father involvement meant, his response was:

A: An involved father to me would be a father who is on it daily; he’s involved daily meaning he’s there you know. Homework, PTAs, doctor visits, play in the park. He’s interacting in every aspect of that particular child’s upbringing. That’s what to me is an involved father. (Roy. Personal interview)

Princess who was born in the U.S. to a Jamaican born father and an American born mother had similar sentiments about father involvement. Princess is 21 years old and lives in Detroit. She is an undergraduate student at a university. When asked what her thought were about the term father involvement, Princess stated that:

A: When I hear of father involvement I think of going to anything the child is doing like extracurricular. If it’s like ballet, tap dance or the sports games. I think of picking kids up from school. I think of just being there to talk to them. Just being there when they need you. Even if they don’t say it, just still being there. Most importantly being present most of the time. That’s like the big thing. Being present and actually making an impact. They’re some fathers who live in a house with their kids but it’s like they’re not even there. So being actually present in their life and making an impact and feeling like you made an impact some type of way. (Princess. Personal interview)
Just like similar accounts from my respondents, as interviewees, Roy and Princess suggest that father involvement is multifaceted and cannot be confined to a single or few characteristics. Additionally, the role the father plays in the father-child relationship is not limited the childhood, adolescence, or even adulthood. West Indian immigrants in the U.S. also incorporate the breadwinner role with other fathering practices that embody the new father involvement.32

Given prior observed differences in first and second generation West Indian immigrant in research, I was mindful that my responses from first and second generation immigrants may yield divergent responses.33 One might be tempted to think that the idea of continuous bonding, as an integral part of father involvement, is something that is proposed by second-generation West Indian migrants seeing that they are more likely to follow the trend of the wider population. However, first-generation black West Indians have prior knowledge of the culture of the U.S. society as well.34 West Indian migrants are not shocked by the racial situation in the U.S. because before they migrate as they have learned about racial issues from the media and persons who have migrated. A part of that knowledge involves how black fathers in the U.S. are perceived. The immigrants are therefore Black On Arrival (BOA) or Black Before Coming (BBC) because of their pre-migration understandings of the issues surrounding black fathers in the U.S.35 Against the backdrop of the negativities associated with black fathers in the U.S., migrants are wary that conceptions of fathering must be viewed in positive terms. The aforementioned responses from first generation West Indian migrants are similar to definitions of father involvement observed in second-generation black West Indian immigrants. As previously stated, Princess noted that father involvement encompassed going to anything the child is
involved in. A male respondent second-generation immigrant who identified as Caribbean stated that father involvement meant: *To be integrated positively & consistently in his child's life.*

There was one female survey respondent, a second-generation West Indian immigrant who identified herself as Caribbean, who seemed to suggest that the breadwinner role might not necessarily take precedence over all other fathering attributes, but, she is mindful of the cultural importance of the breadwinner role. She noted that: *An involved father is involved of every aspect of his child's life, from birth to death of the father. Even if he cannot support him financially he is still there for everything else.* Her statement that even if the father cannot provide financially signifies that financial provision is the first and most important form of involvement. There is the assumption that that is what an involved father should do. But because she is mindful that there are other ways to father as well she explains that the father should be involved in other ways if he is not able to fulfill the breadwinner role. A parallel response pertaining to significance of financial support over other father involvement characteristics came from only one male respondent as well. Not surprisingly he is a second-generation West Indian immigrant who self-identified as Black. He noted that:

*An involved father makes sure that his children have clothes, food, and a roof over their heads. An involved father also tries his best to ensure that his children have the skills to fend for themselves as adults.*

Such statements by second-generation West Indian immigrants point to the important role that economic provision still plays in the minds of U.S.-born West Indian immigrants (second-generation immigrants), as opposed to Caribbean-born West Indian immigrants (first-generation immigrants). Caribbean-born immigrant respondents’ view financial support as a part of being an involved father and do not view financial support as the determining factor of an involved father.
Compared to the responses of the U.S.-born West Indian immigrants, Caribbean-born West Indian immigrants do not seem to even the consideration that a father would not financially support his children and so there are no presentations of the superiority of financial support over other father involvement characteristics on their part.

These responses were the only two such responses of their kind out of the entire survey. All other responses which combined the financial aspect with all other fathering characteristics (being physically there, helping the child to develop emotionally and so on) were from self-identified Caribbean immigrants who were first-generation Caribbean-born.

It could be argued that as an immigrant male or female born and raised in the U.S. one is privy to the economic shortcomings of the Black male in the U.S. Therefore the two U.S.-born second generation West Indian immigrants that I previously referred to were keen to point out that even in such a case where a black male is economically disadvantaged, commonplace to black males in the U.S., a lack of financial support should not hinder a father from being involved.

As Mary Waters point out, the response from the second-generation U.S.-born West Indian immigrants demonstrate that second-generation West Indian immigrants think and act more like their African American counterparts than first-generation West Indian immigrants. Not only are native born blacks in the United States different from West Indian immigrants, so too are West Indian migrants born in the U.S. different compared to their Caribbean born brethren. Although a core experience such as black fathering links West Indian immigrants of both generations and African Americans, they do not respond to these experiences similarly.36

It is arguable that the ideas of father involvement from second-generation black West Indians in the U.S. are not made from the position of an outsider. Second-generation migrants are
more aligned to the African-American identity and so they view themselves as being a part of the African-American marginalized group. Therefore they can, and are able to, provide theoretical interpretations of black fathering realities in the United States because they live it. And so their assertions of financial provision being the most significant characteristic of father involvement comes from the insider observation of how economic resource, or the lack thereof, is used in the U.S. to define whether or not a black father is involved. So for Caribbean-born black West Indian immigrants, understanding what fathering means before being BBA or BOA is created by a different lived reality compared to their second-generation U.S.-born West Indian immigrant counterparts.

It is important to note that for black West Indian immigrants in the U.S., father involvement is not limited to the individual household nor is father involvement limited to the individuals within the household. In addition, father involvement is not only confined to biological offspring. A first-generation female immigrant who self identified as Caribbean stated that: *Basically all the things my father did. This can be achieved without living in the nuclear family structure (although that is how I lived my life).* A first generation migrant male who self-identified as Caribbean stated:

An involved father does not mean financial support and week end visits. It means caring for your child in ways that are meaningful and direct. It means not only ensuring that financial needs are met but instead focus is placed on the holistic development of your offspring. It means loving your child before loving yourself (First-generation migrant, self-identified as Caribbean).

An involved father means being active in your child’s development; someone who is there physically, financially and emotionally. An involved father does not have to be
married to the mother, but has an amicable and communicable relationship with each other. (First-generation immigrant male, self-identified as Caribbean)

West Indian immigrants expect fathers to be involved no matter the type of intimate relationship they are involved in. Even though the immigrants come from hetero-sexual nuclear families, single-parent households, or extended family settings, they all agree that household structure must not determine involvement. The idea is that father involvement lends itself to the community to anyone who is in need and helps to ensure the stability of society. Marvin (42 year old Jamaican born immigrant male) noted what father involvement meant to him.

A: It means everything to me. And I would like to frame it in the context of my own upbringing which drives or informs my own behavior at present. I think my own father and the way that he was involved with me and how great a job he did in terms of framing the person, or the man, I have become. I see fatherhood as a big driving force in terms of the way you embrace people, the way you see people, the way you see your child, the way you see other people’s children, the way you see your whole family. Simply because as a father, there is always to me equality in terms of what each parent contributes, but I believe that as father doing my own part is very important in terms of the way my child, or my children, if I should have more kids, would evolve in the community in terms of their own contribution. So it’s a big part to me of who I am being a father and being a good father who’s being supportive and who is willing to do what it takes to ensure that was passed on to me is subsequently passed on to them. That’s how I look at it. (Marvin. Personal interview)
Primrose is 40 years old first-generation immigrant who clings to a Caribbean identity. She has an 8 year old son with Marvin and considers herself and her husband to be “solid middle-class” citizens of the U.S.

Q: What does father involvement mean to you?
A: When I think of father involvement I don’t just think of a father figure or just having a person saying that’s my dad. I think of someone being integrally involved in the growth and the development of an individual…So father involvement for me is not just someone giving me a name or not just providing for me financially or economically. I believe father involvement is really impacting the whole life of children…And I don’t believe that father involvement should be limited only to biological children. I believe that father involvement should be a fundamental part of a societal development and a societal growth. Because not only did I idolize my father as my dad, I also looked to him as a strong male figure in the community. Because I saw where, because of his impact he really got a lot of people to believe in themself and their potential to excel. (Primrose. Personal interview)

Research may conceptualize fathering as activities that a father participates in with his children in the immediate family environment. However, black West Indian immigrants note that fathering extends beyond the immediate family. Because fatherhood is socially constructed, it impacts the ideas and behavior of Marvin and Primrose. Marvin adds that his involvement will impact the behavior of his son whom he argues he will socialize to engage in the same pattern of fathering when he gets older. Marvin is engaging in generational fathering, a point I will further highlight in chapter 4. Father involvement is a community based activity even though it stems from personal interactions within the household.
Primrose and Marvin are able to observe and comprehend the multifaceted and long-reaching arm of father involvement as situated knowers.\textsuperscript{39} Growing up in rural villages in Jamaica gives both individuals a unique position whereby they are able to challenge the white male dominated discourse that suggests that father involvement is linked to one’s individual household and the children within that household. Yet at the same time, from a contextual position, we understand that Marvin’s position growing up as a male in rural Jamaica gives him a unique insight into the type of fathering he would like to engage in, and project to his offspring whereas for Primrose, her contextual position enables her to know what type of fathering she is looking for.

As most oppressed groups, what Marvin and Primrose have done is to reclaim for themselves the value of their experiences as youths raised by an involved father in a small rural community in a Third World country and use those experiences to inform their current understanding of father involvement as immigrants in the U.S.\textsuperscript{40} Both Marvin and Primrose’s responses show that black West Indian immigrants deconstruct the Western value-laden ideal that being labeled middle-class is equivalent to father involvement.

Conclusion

The black West Indian immigrants in my surveys and interviews have noted that their ideas of what father involvement means hinge on a multi-faceted understanding of the concept. As an assumed natural state of parenting, they hold on to the notion that father involvement should take place from birth until death. Financial provision is not viewed as the defining characteristic of father involvement as all areas of a child’s life are equally important. No area is off limits and so the definitions blur the traditional fathering/mothering roles. Similar reasons explain why the definitions of father involvement are not gendered in nature as both male and
female immigrants define fathering in similar ways; fathers can be breadwinners and play with their daughters as well.

There seems to be the idea that if we are to try and measure fathering from the position of the immigrants, we are to use multiple sources and solicit responses at different life stages. Younger children will not understand the things that make up fathering and so will not present an accurate understanding of the concept if asked. Only as they mature will they eventually understand the various facets of fathering and how it impacts them. Until then, it is best to ask what father involvement means from the mature-minded or adult immigrant.

Black West Indian immigrant fathers ensure that they demonstrate to society that they are not the same as African American fathers and abhor the cultural stereotype of the black deadbeat father but openly displaying fathering practices to the wider society. As such, fathering which is very personal is impacted on by the political and is defined by both realms. However, a subtle generational difference exists in the meanings derived from the immigrants. Second-generation black West Indian immigrants note that the breadwinner role is a central focus of fathering even if the breadwinner role does not displace all other roles.
Works Cited


See Weiss, Robert S. *Staying the Course: The Emotional and Social Lives of Men Who Do Well at Work*. New York: Free Press, 1990 for a review on how the paternal dominance and evangelical authority that infused Calvinist visions of family life in the 17th century began to erode ushering new father involvement norms during the 18th century; a growing emphasis on mutuality, companionship and personal happiness

and children that ushered in the second fatherhood typology (the distant breadwinner) which covered the period of the early 19th to mid-20th century.

Norton, Mary Beth. *Liberty’s Daughters: The Revolutionary Experience of American Women, 1750-1800*. Boston: Little Brown, 1980 states that although the nature of the forces which ushered in the second typology are obscure, the Industrial Revolution is one such event that is credited with fostering the emergence of enlightened religious, political and economic ideals creating the foundation for an individualistic society. These changes in institutional philosophy during the Industrial Revolution ultimately played an integral role in refashioning family life during that period, but more importantly, shifting father involvement roles especially from the mid eighteenth century to the nineteenth century (1830s to the 1900s).

See Saracho, Olivia N., and Bernard Spodek. “Fathers: The ‘Invisible’ Parents.” *Early Child Development and Care* 178.7-8 (2008): 821-836 for discussions on the third fatherhood typology, the sex role model. This type of involved father was observed during the 1940-1965.

Pleck, Joseph H. “Paternal Involvement: Levels, Sources, and Consequences.” *The Role of the Father in Child Development*. 3rd ed. Ed. Michael E. Lamb. New York: Wiley, 1997. 66-103 noted that there was the belief that “excessively powerful mothers and passive, uninvolved fathers…produced homosexual sons” and 50s fathers had to ensure that their sons did not become a sissy or homosexual.

While there was a push for men to establish closer relationships with their children, the
structure of work and the ideology that legitimated it worked against such bonds. That is not to say that some men did not try. Analyses of some letters by men in the late 19th century found that fathers established compassionate relationships with their offspring. These fathers were involved by playing an active role in the rearing of their children, offering advice, caring for them when they are ill, following their development with loving attention, staying in contact and were not shy in expressing affection.


13 Gutman, Herbert G. *The Black Family in Slavery and in Freedom, 1750-1925*. New York: Vintage, 1977 shows that the percentage of black families headed by females in the late 19th century outstripped that of native-born and immigrant whites. The urban environment was hard on black families in both the North and South. Driven off the land
by the crop-lien system, low agricultural prices and crop failures, thousands of black men and women who moved to Southern and Northern cities were greeted by discrimination, segregation and under- or unemployment. In this environment fathers often found it necessary to leave their families to find work. During this period, black fathers were not necessarily uninvolved, they just did not match the involved status of their white counterparts.

14 A review of LaRossa’s (1997) work investigates how the fusion of the different types of fatherhood was reshaped and welded during the Machine Age.


24 Tamis-LeMonda, Catherine. S., and Natasha Cabrera, eds. *Handbook of Father Involvement:*


26 Townsend, Nicholas. Package Deal: Marriage, Work and Fatherhood in Men's Lives. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2010 discusses how fatherhood, marriage, employment and home ownership are four areas that make up the package deal for men in America which demonstrates that financial provision is just one characteristic of an involved father, yet the idea of financial provider still proves to be the dominant fathering characteristic as it ensure the stability of the other three areas.


31 Herbert Gayle (May 3, 2010) suggests that in Jamaica the lack of close bonds between fathers and their children is not rare but represents an extreme case. The absence of close father-child bonds in Jamaica is due largely in part to Jamaican men being relegated to the role of protectors and providers.


38 Doherty, William J., Edward F. Kouneski, and Martha F. Erickson. “Responsible Fathering:


CHAPTER III.
BLACK WEST INDIAN IMMIGRANT POST-MIGRATION IDENTITY FORMATION

I best identify with Caribbean because that is how I was raised by my parents and grandmother - with Caribbean pride. Also, growing up in the New York City area, it was important to maintain your identity outside of [New York] otherwise you would have none. (U.S. born second generation West Indian; self-identified as West Indian)

A Caribbean identity is one that an immigrant is socialized into whether by parents, grand-parents or the wider society. As an immigrant in a new cultural space, the quote from the respondent above indicates that it is important for black West Indians to separate themselves by way of an identity. What is not stated is that there is a hidden fear of being lost in the wave of identities that the society has ascribed for persons who are of African descent. As the melting pot of Caribbean peoples in the U.S., New York is seen as the place to hone and create your West Indian identity.

In this chapter I return to the question of identity. I examine how black West Indian migrants in the U.S. construct their identity. Just like Stuart Hall I am again attempting to re-conceptualize identity. However, I am specifically re-conceptualizing black West Indian identity within the immigration and black family discourses.¹ The reason for returning to identity is that I will use it in a later chapter to examine how through the fathering process, black West Indian migrants come to create and recreate a West Indian immigrant identity. West Indian migrants in the U.S. can use the identities they rest on to affirm or disavow the role of father involvement, or identity formation can play a role in formulating perceptions of father involvement.
My position is that official classifications do not necessarily capture the ethnic groups they are intended to characterize. The official classifications then are not acceptable characterizations according to the standards perceived by the ethnicities themselves. The differences that exist in the number of ethnically diverse blacks that are represented along the social and economic hierarchy is reason enough for investigators to be mindful of using even official statistics to generalize about Diaspora blacks in the United States.

The first section covers what is identity and demonstrates how identities are constructed. The next section will review race relation between West Indians and other major racial ethnic groups in the U.S. and discuss how West Indian migrants in the receiving country in the U.S. view themselves, how some West Indians create an American identity and how other West Indian immigrants reject any notion of a Caribbean identity. The final section shows my findings on West Indian immigrant self-identification.

**Identity Construction**

In “The Roots of Caribbean Identity: Language, Race and Ecology”, Peter Roberts argues that an individual’s identity can be specified by using a single criterion or a combination of characteristics. To be sure, these standards already have to be universally acceptable for them to be easily ascribed to an individual or a group. Examples of such criteria or standards include sex, age and race. Roberts continues by stressing that identity is so important that in the contemporary society in which we live, individuals are now readily identified by country of birth or place of residence. Percy Hintzen proposes a similar argument that the most glaring features of modernity are the “association between territoriality and identity and between territorial sovereignty and belonging.” Both authors are stressing that national territories have become a
makers by which individual identities are created. Yet individuals’ notions of belonging are not uniformed and this feeds into the construction of various identities.

Strongly tied to the criterion of place of residence is a particular type of identity; racial identity. Race is a determinant in identity creation yet it (race) is not such a simple concept. The universal “truth” once assumed that white meant European and black meant African. And whether real or imagined, for immigrants, universal “truths” help to place them in identifiable categories. These racial identities are “modified” and “reformatted” according to geographic locale and differentiated meanings are ascribed to the racialized individuals over time.

However, Hall mentions that the instability of the nation-state and national identities as points of reference have led to an erosion of collective social identity. Yet, we speak about a Caribbean identity as if they are all-encompassing homogenous identity. A collective identity from the Caribbean implies that there is uniformity within the island territories and among the island territories as it relates to how West Indians view themselves. The identities of the Caribbean have been formed and stabilized by various historical processes and to some degree this is what makes Caribbean identities similar. However, we must understand that inter-group differences do exist among black West Indians in relation to how they view themselves.

Mary Waters argues that an identity only becomes real when the identity is named and defined. I will go a step further and propose that in addition to the identity being named and defined, the identity in question has to be acted out by the individuals or group that the identity is assigned to, for the identity to become established. However, just like race, identity is not a simple conception. It is all three actions (naming, defining and acting) that affirm an individual or a group’s identity that will then resonate through public consciousness, in the end validating the proposed identity. We are reminded that the naming can be undertaken by the group or
individuals or by others. This implies that naming can emanate from the group or individuals belonging to a particular group as a reflection of the shared experiences among the individuals with a particular social space. On the other hand, naming can take place from the outside. Names can be projected unto a group of individuals from the outside by observers who agree that certain behaviors are characteristic of the group. The group being named by outsiders may or may not have had an identity before being named. Of course the naming process is one that is ever changing and depending on the relationship that takes place between those who are named and those who are creating the names, a particular name (or names) will prevail.8

Going back to Roberts’ assertions regarding the universality of identity criteria, for the public consciousness to internalize the names and definitions of a particular identity, the names and definitions have to already have been universally acceptable terms. So for example, an individual’s identity can be regarded as male or female, black or white, Christian or Muslim, because these criteria are already established in the public’s minds as being acceptable defining characteristics. The same can be said for the identities such as black or Caribbean. These terms are already acceptable criteria both within the Caribbean public consciousness and the U.S. public consciousness. However, the meanings behind each identity to the two groups can be entirely different.

Additionally, the universality of the names and definitions of individuals or groups suggests that there is some degree of similarity across the group of individuals. Yet at the same time, there is the assumption that there is a degree of difference between the individuals or groups and others. Universally ‘acceptable’ criteria have been used to identify immigrants living in the U.S., West Indian immigrants included, which is why these criteria have to be explored in order to fully understand the mechanisms behind creating and owning a West Indian ethnic
identity, or identities. The idea is that these criteria may not be a fair representation of the holders of the identity, in this case, black West Indians.⁹

Usually immigrant group identities are either defined in racial or ethnic terms both of which are socially constructed criteria. Because these identities are socially constructed, individuals are able to don several racial or ethnic identities at any one time. That being said, holders of particular identities are able to choose any identity that they want to identify with and are free to give any meaning to the identity they want to be attached to. Waters suggests that a historical examination of the power relations within the United States must be undertaken to see how racial and ethnic identities are created and shaped over time.¹⁰ “Racial” groups have generally been defined based on physical attributes, for example, the color of skin, hair texture or facial feature. Early racial identities were prescribed based on the generally assumed racial categories; one is identified as Caucasian, Negroid or Mongoloid. In modern society, individuals and groups are identified as Caucasian or non-Hispanic whites, African, African American, Caribbean of African ancestry, non-Hispanic black, Hispanic, Asian, Pacific Islander, to name a few. No matter the complexities involved in the creation of these racial categories, each of aforementioned categories are still structured along the established race gradation; whites are always at the top, browns are stacked in the middle and blacks are always the bottom.

Race and ethnicity are not mutually exclusive criterion. Roberts suggests that “the traditional construction of ethnic identity (European, Chinese, Indian, African) is inalienably tied to a historicity of race that evolved in the Old World.” Ethnic groups are named, defined and the individuals act as such, based on amongst other things, a shared language and cultural practices, for example, food preparation, child rearing and festivities of ancestral origins. Just as how racial
categories in the U.S. have evolved over time and are utilized by societies, ethnic groups have 
also evolved over time.\textsuperscript{11}

Due to the evolutionary process, ethnic groups have become so complex in nature that 
individuals can be holders of an identity, or multiple identities, at different times, in various 
geographically defined spaces. Just as Waters sees herself as American or Irish-American, I can 
view myself as Caribbean, West Indian or even Jamaican.\textsuperscript{12} I was stopped by a patron in an 
international food store looking for the “right” jerk seasoning to cook with and was asked if I 
was “from the islands”. I replied that I was “from the islands” because this is a term that I have 
heard before that is used to describe persons who have migrated from the Caribbean and are now 
living in the U.S. So I guess I will add that to my list of every evolving ethnic identities! That 
being said, not all people from the Caribbean seek to identify with being “from the islands” or 
any other ethnic markers that are associated with a West Indian migrant identity. So it is 
important to peel back the layers of identity construction in the host country to understand which 
ethnic markers are acceptable, or unacceptable, for West Indian migrants living in the U.S. 

\textit{Pre-migration West Indian Identity}

To fully comprehend how West Indians construct their identity in the U.S., an 
understanding of how and why Caribbean people construct their identity in their country of 
origin has to be explored. Learie B. Luke asserts that a framework for Caribbean identity can be 
fashioned from “collective group consciousness…” Ultimately this identity “produces a sense of 
belonging to a community of common descent and culture, and facilitates the solidarity vital for 
human existence.” The identity in question is constructed in contrast to the claims of other 
groups and at the same time with the vision that his/her identity is unique. This sense of 
belonging permits one to exclude some while simultaneously including others.\textsuperscript{13} A similar claim
is made by Roberts who notes that sameness/difference is one of the intrinsic connections to the issue of identity in human society; the other being the instinctiveness of man to be a social being. He argues that the perception of sameness “logically implies the perception of difference…”\textsuperscript{14}

When social groups are organized along the lines of sameness, conflict can arise.\textsuperscript{15} Since conflict happens between real individuals in the real world, conflict helps to further solidify the perception that identity is real to the individuals who create and participate in its diffusion and to the “others” who play a part in generating and giving life to these identities. In this case conflict arises when Caribbean migrants create identities that are in opposition to each other or even to African American identities. These identities confirm that there are differences that exist within individual from the Caribbean of between two groups of peoples that are largely observed to resemble each other.

Even as sameness is integral in the process of creating an identity or identities, so too is the concept of the “other” (difference). Identity is only produced when one group is pitted against an “other”. There is no “us” if there is no “other”. The “other” has to be different to affirm the “us”; to affirm our created identity. Subsequently, our identities are generated through the perception of the “other”. The sameness/other dichotomy then represents an ongoing relationship between individuals and “other identification” and reflects the meaning attached to the identities in question, each influencing the other.\textsuperscript{16} Hall projects a similar approach to conceptualizing identities. He contends that the ‘one’ and the ‘Other’ occur through splitting and helps to create an identity. This ‘doubleness of discourse’ is the notion that knowing one’s self is possible only through the gaze of the other.\textsuperscript{17} So how black West Indians create any type of identity/identities is done through a dialectical approach whereby an identity that is created is done in opposition to, or in the knowledge of, how others think about them. These others could
be individuals or the others could be as large as society. Notwithstanding, the identities that are created are done through an ‘us’ versus ‘them’ interaction.

Sameness and difference among human beings are judged by how people look, how they sound, where people are born, or even the way individuals behave, and leads to the idea that the similarity constructed by the observer is normal and the look, sound, place of birth and behavior of “the other’ is different. This association between normality and difference, more often than not, leads to ethnocentrism; the observer’s valuation regarding similarity and others like the observer (looks, speech, nationality and behavior) are normal and those regarded as different are not. The ethnocentric observer believes his characteristics are superior to the individuals he thinks are different and at times the group that is observed to be different concedes and adopt an inferior persona. This domination can be marked by openly antagonistic behavior or it can be marked by friendly behavior.18

Differential treatment whether in a mild form or riddled with conflict serves to establish a boundary, albeit a fluid one. The fluidity of the boundary in question is connected to a central thesis of Luke’s work, which Hintzen also alludes to; identity is constructed in the imagination of the individual and so notions of identity may not be similar across individuals, even those located within similar geographic locale.19 This is despite that fact that sameness in a population expressed in what Roberts calls the ‘genetic equilibrium’ may seem to promote a kind of wholesale similarity across a group in a specific geographic space.20 Though identity is constructed in the imagination, the needs and membership of the individuals linked to the identity converge in the public sphere “as real and practical events” giving life to that identity.

However there are various factors that contribute to the construction of a West Indian identity. Some factors are present in the everyday consciousness which dictate constant actions,
some are more primordial in nature, while others are associated with ideas of inclusion and exclusion. The more present factors include a shared sense of community while primordial factors include notions of homeland, historical memory, language and culture. A shared sense of community is hinged on various issues such as race, language, religion and even regional origin. Language is observed as the most crucial part of identity construction; “it constitutes the single most characteristic feature of separate ethnic identity.” For example, even though the Tobagonian dialect was associated with a lack of education and intelligence and so was never used as a point of unity, it makes Tobagonians distinct from Trinidadians because Tobagonians are able to communicate in a colloquial speech difficult for Trinidadians to understand notwithstanding the close proximity of the islands to each other. Yet, language is but a small part of a culture.21

Overall, the music, festivals, food and folklores, and so on, are culturally molded to shape identity and these activities can be forged based on race and ethnicity. For example, the majority of Tobagonians are comprised of people of African descent whereas in Trinidad the majority of the population is a mixture of Africans, East Indians, Chinese, Lebanese, Syrians, Europeans and people of mixed heritage.22 The music, folklore and festivals will mimic the racial/ethnic make-up of the islands in question. Tobago’s cultural traditions are connected to an extent to African cultural practices which include, but are not limited to, family practices, naming practices, cooperative work and communal production and religiosity.23 I focus here on Trinidad and Tobago as the twin-island republic is racially and ethnically unique compared to the other islands of the West Indies. Trinidad and Tobago has a sizable Afro-Caribbean and Indo-Caribbean population which makes for plausible racial and ethnic analysis.
It would seem that primordial factors are more important in creating a Caribbean identity than the present factors. If we look at homeland as a major primordial base, colonialism ensured that administrative powers barely went beyond the shoreline of each island colony. Through colonialism each island had little interaction with each other as all administrative matters went through Britain and was then diffused to the respective islands under her control. This bureaucracy produced insular identities and parochialism.²⁴

Within island differences are also observed as well. In Trinidad rural/urban relationship antagonisms exist. Using historical memory, the Trinidadian “feels he is superior” to the Tobagonian; Trinidadians exhibit an air of superiority in relation to all peoples of other Caribbean territories. He continues by suggesting that this superior attitude emanates from the assumption by Trinidadians that Tobago is largely a rural community. But this attitude emanated from the rural/urban dichotomy present within Trinidad.

Residents of the urban town of Port of Spain in Trinidad assert that they are superior to their counterparts in the rural town on Moruga. And Morugans feel that they are superior to the Tobagonians! This rural/urban dichotomy is not unique to Trinidad and Tobago and helps to fashion identity within and among islands all across the West Indies. Although the culture of Tobagonians has changed, the “rustic, idyllic honesty” observed among Tobagonians was not an identifying marker of Trinidadians. Conversely, the “cunning and crafty” image associated Trinidadians was not linked to Tobagonians. The honesty connected with Tobagonians may be a by-product of the island’s prolonged isolation from Trinidad which is only 20 nautical miles away, and the rest of the other West Indian territories.²⁵

Lastly, Caribbean identity is created through the we/they dynamic.²⁶ The idea that individuals feel a sense of belonging in their ethno-cultural groups is based on the inclusion of
members in a particular community while simultaneously excluding themselves and other from other communities. As stated before, this dynamic can be expressed from benign behaviors to hostile ones. So Tobagonians view themselves as the “we” whereby the “more industrially developed island of Trinidad, the multiracial people of Trinidad and the unsympathetic and inconsiderate government seated in Trinidad” was the “other”.

The Tobagonian identity should not be seen as a purely academic exercise with regard to something invented, or, viewed as the result of the unequal relationship between politicians and the masses with the former trying to manipulate the latter. Albeit, grievances with the central government probably did more than other factors to affirm Tobagonian identity. As was previously outlined, differences in identity between Trinidad and Tobago lay in the islands’ history as well as in their cultures and characters. The grievances that Tobagonians suffered, coupled with continual retelling of stories of Tobago’s prosperous and prod past before the union, played a critical role in the development Tobagonian identity.27

A press report in the 1964 edition of the Sunday Mirror cemented the differences in the identities of Trinidad and Tobago. In the paper, a visitor to Tobago commented on the “riotous exuberance of the flora and fauna and the amazing healthiness of the people.” The explanation given to him in regard to his observation was that the “wholesome air, sea and the abundance of food” and the lack of canned food consumption by the islanders, created the healthy environment for the residents of the island. Also, it did not hurt that there were limited numbers of automobiles on the island limiting the pollution levels on the island. Additional identity markers include family and kinship ties, industriousness, village cooperation and African cultural practices. By contrast, Trinidad, the more fast-moving society, was labeled as crude and disgusting with individuals exhibiting an “I-am-doing-you-a-favour” attitude. Subsequently, the
identity that West Indians hold true to, or disassociate themselves from, as immigrants in the U.S. are very much linked to notions of identities that are created in the individual islands states across the West Indies.28

Black West Indian Identity in the U.S.

Much has been said about the identities of West Indian immigrants living in the U.S. Black West Indians are very familiar with the racial categories and stereotypes of the U.S. before they even think of reaching their shores and so were aware of the types of identities that were present in the U.S. For second and third generation West Indians, they are mostly aligned to an African American identity so the ties to any type of Caribbeaness as an identity, or identities, are not necessarily close.29

The concerns surrounding identity have always been prominent in the minds of immigrants. Around the world identification determines how immigrants are categorized by citizens in the host country. In the end, immigrants’ identity, whether as an individual or a group, ultimately determines how the immigrants are treated by members of that society.30 But as an ethnic group, in the U.S., issues of ethnic [identity] have very different meanings and outcomes for foreign-born blacks than for other ethnic group. In the U.S. much has been made of within-group differences within the white race while blacks in America have been treated as if there are no within-group differences within that group.31 The lack of acknowledgement of within-group differences has left Caribbean blacks invisible lumping them into the catch-all category, “black” as if black was a monolithic group.32 Subsequently, issues of ethnic identity have always seemed to elude the black populace in America leaving blacks in that country in a constant struggle to show that they belong and that their culture and ancestral origins matter. So as foreign-born blacks, West Indian migrants’ identity in the U.S.:
...is a combination of individual, social, cultural, and spatial differences in racialized meanings. It is complicated by the choices made available from the myriad of alternative definitions of self. Individuals' self-definitions take their cues from the collective identities formed from the particularities of highly localized geosocial arenas and are combined with the person's own history and participatory experiences to form the basis for identity negotiation.33

Upon entering the U.S. as immigrants, blacks from the Caribbean are mindful that like African Americans, they are a marginalized group. Having their demands pushed to the side and living in a society that fails to observe ethnic differentiation within the black population leads to what may be termed “double invisibility”; black West Indians are marginalized because they are black and they are marginalized because they are immigrants, making blacks immigrants in the U.S. more marginalized than other ethnic immigrant groups.34

Because Caribbean blacks are closely linked to their regional and ethnic origins, American whites and African Americans may misread their close affiliation as a denial of their racial identity not understanding that the pride that immigrants from the Caribbean share as black people is not tied to a solidarity with African Americans.35 As a result, West Indian migrants in the U.S. may chose to identify ethnically, in addition to, or in place of, their racial identification, or they may try to create entirely new categories to name themselves. The subsequent identity, or identities, will be based on ongoing negotiations between West Indians and African Americans, whites and other ethnic minorities. But for the most part, final identification stems from the negotiations between West Indian immigrants and African Americans. A result of the negotiation for the most part is natives from the English-speaking Caribbean trying to create identities that will distance themselves from African Americans.
The core reasoning of this separation centers on West Indian migrants’ observation of their economic and educational success relative to that of African Americans which influences them to think of themselves as being higher than their African American counterparts. Overall, the supposed “overrepresentation” of West Indians among the successful black population in the U.S. may speak more to the important part they play in the ideology of race relations which becomes a part of the reference schema used to construct their identity in the U.S.36

Another reason for the separation lays in slave experience. For Caribbean migrants the slave experience was not one of sustained “inferiority complex pressure” as was the case for blacks in the U.S. Compared to their African American counterparts, self-confidence and educational attainment were strongly promoted among West Indians during the period of slavery. And even after slavery ended, the culture of the West Indies, compared to the U.S., was to motivate the indigenous black population to achieve academically leading Caribbean migrants to feel somewhat superior to American blacks.37 A part of adapting to a new culture is ensuring that you take on an identity that is favorable. Race plays a central role in the type of identity West Indian migrants take on.38

Nonetheless, in an effort to hurdle the obstacles associated with being a double invisible group, the question of how West Indians view themselves, whether ethnically or racially, has stirred the pot of scholarly inquiry. While West Indian immigrants share a racial minority status with their African American counterparts, they have the option of identifying as a racial group or “voluntary immigrants with a distinct ethnic identity.”39 So what is the process behind creating or recreating West Indian migrant identities?

I was born in the Caribbean, married a Caribbean man, and my closest friends and family are also of Caribbean descent. My food choices, music preference, values,
parenting styles are a result of a Caribbean heritage. (First-generation female, self-identified as Caribbean)

Almost 78 percent of my respondents chose “Caribbean” as their ethnic identifying marker. An overwhelming majority said they identified best with the term Caribbean because the people and culture around them were distinctly Caribbean. The patterns and agents of socialization all pointed to them ensuring that they identified as Caribbean. Cultures take their cues from foods, music, language, dress and so on, and help to identify different groups of people. So that by observation it is easy to identify one culture from the next. Black West Indian immigrants have used these standard measures of cultural markers from their home cultures to surround and immerse themselves in the U.S., to keep them closely tied to the Caribbean and by extension, confirm a Caribbean identity. They do hold on to intangible cultural markers that are distinctly Caribbean that help to confirm a Caribbean identity as well. The idea of marrying someone from the Caribbean, keeping Caribbean values and particular parenting styles, are not tangible cultural markers that would make them (West Indian immigrants) readily identifiable to the general populace. But the immigrants are aware that these markers exist in their lives and are aligned to a Caribbean identity.

Black West Indians are conscious of the importance of the intangible aspects of the Caribbean culture but it is hard to describe what they are at times. It seems to be something that cannot be touched or seen that pull migrants to an ethnic identifier rather than one that is ascribed by society.

Even though I am an America Citizen, I identify with being Caribbean. My culture has set some deep roots in me which I cannot deny. I love what being a
person from the Caribbean stands for. (First-generation female, self-identified as Caribbean)

The female respondent in the above vignette suggests that there is something about the Caribbean culture that is so ingrained in ones psyche that it cannot be removed, even after migration. In his interview Mr. Brown noted that: *The culture as itself is within me... I think the culture has that inner drive and you can’t get rid of it.* (Personal interview) Like the female respondent before, Mr. Brown is referring to an aspect of the Caribbean culture that cannot be measured at this point by researchers, but is essential to West Indians who try to tell you what their identity is and how the Caribbean culture has impacted their sense of identity.

With regard to the female in the previous paragraph, even as she has legally become an American citizen, the Caribbean culture still supersedes her new culture. One reason for the dominance of the Caribbean culture confirming a Caribbean identity in this case is that the immigrant in question spent most of her formative years in the Caribbean and so she is entrenched in the cultural identity that is offers. Also, she has not spent a lot of years in the U.S. to date and so while she has assimilated into the American culture, the assimilation does not strip her of her Caribbean identity.

Similar to Waters findings, most of my respondents and interviewees don several identities. Ascribing to multiple identities is not new and is a strategy used by West Indian immigrants either to confirm Caribbean solidarity or highlight ethnic differences. One female interviewee unconsciously described her multiple identities to me; the question I asked was for her to describe herself in racial terms.
A: I consider myself Caribbean. And I consider myself Caribbean because coming to the United States one of the biggest thing that was very shocking for me was race relations. When you come from a culture where there are so many different races and people are integrated and people mobilize; move up into society based on education. And then I came to the United States where there is a black and white divide and I cannot identify myself with the African American. I always love to speak for people to know who I am. Because typically when they see me they assume that I’m African American. As soon as I open my mouth they know that I’m from a different culture. And that makes me different even in the eyes of Americans. So for me it is very important for me to retain my Caribbean identity…I just love the fact that I’m Jamaican. And it is very important for me to share the value of the Jamaican culture with other people within the United States…I think it is because we have that will to survive where I look at different [Caribbean] islands people just settle for the status quo. We’re fighters. And I always tell folks no matter where I go that Bob Marley he said that emancipate yourself from mental slavery. That’s one of my mantra. That is something that I live on because I don’t believe that emancipation has to be based on race or color or creed. I also believe that it has to do with one’s aspirations. And as soon as you mobilize in society you have to emancipate yourself from even different things that you fight within yourself. So for me as a Jamaican woman, as a strong Jamaican woman, I believe that we advocate that emancipation of self. And that definitely would make me settle for loving who I am as a Jamaican woman and
want to be identified as a Jamaican woman more than anything else. (Primrose. Personal interview)

At the beginning of the response Primrose identified with a Caribbean identity. In the middle of her response she identifies as Jamaica. Towards the end of her response she alludes to being identified as a Jamaican woman. The fluidity of the black West Indian identity does not only happen in settings where different people are represented, or in the workplace or other social spaces, it can take place in even one-on-one interactions! 42 Even in a simple response, a West Indian immigrant is also able to don various identities. This is possible because West Indian immigrant identities are formulated in the immigrant’s consciousness and so they are free to create as much identities as they wish to represent themselves at any time. These identities will not necessarily be similar across individuals.43 The multiplicity and fluidity of the identities indicates that no one identity is an adequate depiction of black West Indian immigrants as a whole or even as individuals.44

My work diverges from Waters examinations as I am adding something new to our understanding of the process behind the creations of black West Indian immigrant multiple identities. The immigrants use multiple identities as a way to cement the individual self in a social space, real or imagined by grounding the self in a foundational identity. Subsequently, they have the platform on which to build all other possible identities. Below is the response from Andy a 40 year old male who is married with two children and has been living in the U.S. for 18 years. He tells me why he self-identifies as Afro-Jamaican.

A: Me I like to, not say glorify, but respect where I come from; I’m an African who went to Jamaica. Not me personally, but my fore-parents, [who were] brought to Jamaica. And I was born in Jamaica. So I regard myself as an Afro-
Jamaican. I would like to keep African in there. To some people they say African they have like a feeling or some opinion of people from Africa. But all of us came from there and in order to find out who you are as a person you have to find out where you’re coming from. Afro-Jamaican. I would love to keep the African in it. (Andy. Personal interview)

When I interviewed Monique, she noted that:

I guess just growing up, I would say I use to tell people I’m from the Caribbean. But technically my country is not in the Caribbean, it’s in South America so Bill [her husband] would make fun of me; you are not a Caribbean, you’re a South American (laughing). You’re not even a North American; you’re just an American somewhere. But to generalize with the accent because my country is the only English speaking country in South America. So we kind of draw on ourselves to the Caribbean because we don’t have any other countries around us that can relate to us really. So we draw on ourselves to the Caribbean because we kind of sound like the Trinidadians, we kind of sound like the Jamaicans, we kind of sound like the Haitians. But technically I’m a South American. Technically I’m a Caribbean but when I get deep into it, I’m really a South American. I’m surrounded by Spanish countries. I’m surrounded by the Dutch country. But I am a South American. We don’t really hear much about South Americans. When you ask someone from South America, hey where’re you from. I’m from Brazil, I’m Brazilian. You don’t hear I’m South American... Yes you hear a Caribbean accent but no I’m not Caribbean, I’m South American! (Monique. Personal interview)
The interviewee responses indicate that black West Indians use a foundational identity on which to create all other identities. Some may use the country of their birth as a foundational identity, but interestingly, most of my interviewees when asked to describe their racial self-identity began with identifying as Caribbean. The immigrants openly embraced a Caribbean identity and then used it to set the stage for me to understand the other identity/identities that they ultimately decided that they would settle on in their descriptions. At times there was still some contention as to which identity they should ultimately settle on. This could mean that black West Indian immigrants are not comfortable using one particular identity to identify themselves to others.

It is noteworthy that Monique stated that a Caribbean identifier was critical when she was younger because Guyana is the only English-speaking Caribbean country that is situated on the continent of South America. However, as she got older she began to identify more with the idea of an ethnicity that was in keeping with all other countries situated on the continent. A part of her wanting to internalize a South American identity has to do with expressing an identity that does not normally match with ideas within the popular consciousness of people from the Caribbean. Because of the geographical location of Guyana, most Americans do not talk about the country or think of it as they do other West Indian territories. Also, Monique notes that when people think of South Americans they normally think of Brazilians not Guineans. Affirming a South American identity creates and ensures that another unique ethnic marker is aligned to one’s country of birth. But just as with previous interviewees, Monique started with a Caribbean-based identity and subsequently built her other identities from it.

Another interesting finding was that when ideas of Africa are integrated into the immigrant’s racial self-identification, they are presented to create positive racial distinctions of what a black identity means to them. There is a sense of pride about Africa as a part of a black
West Indian racial identity that is not present in the discourse on how African Americans view Africa in relation to their ideas of self. So Marlon speaks of being identified as a Black person. *Because if you’re Jamaican black you’re still from Africa so is a black person…Black is black.* (Marlon. Personal interview) A male respondent noted that Because of my African ancestry and the color of my skin. (First-generation immigrant, self-identified as black). A female first-generation immigrant said of her self-identification: *My family is of African heritage* and that is why she identifies herself as black. Andy stated in the prior vignette that he respects where he came from; *I’m an African who went to Jamaica…So I regard myself as an Afro-Jamaican…I would love to keep the African in it.* (Andy. Personal interview) Like the other respondents, Andy thinks of Africa as the root of his identity, so even if he has to create another identity to suit the situation he finds himself in, he ensures that he keeps Africa in his stash of identities. Marvin incorporated notions of African pride in his description as well.

A: I see myself as black, Jamaican. I hold to those identities because number one,

I consider myself a black male. And seeing that Jamaica has people who are Jamaicans who are not necessarily black; Jamaican black could be mutually exclusive. But I’m black first from an ethnic point of view, but Jamaican. On balance, I’m black! That’s how I see myself. I see myself that way because of my African heritage. (Marvin. Personal interview)

In a Hallsian sense, what black West Indians are doing are taking the term black with all the negativity that is attached to it and rearticulating it in a way to be a positive marker not only for the individual in question, but for the public consciousness. For black West Indian immigrants who self-identify as black, black is not a term that is actually ascribed to the color of the migrants skin, black is a historical legacy that is grounded in Africa. This legacy is one that they
are proud of and are willing to keep as part of the identities that they create in the U.S. This re-articulation is a new process of identification and gives the migrants a mobilizing identity.

As Marvin tried to describe his identity, he was not settled on any one identity as he spoke to me. He was actually in a state of flux as he tried to settle on one identity that would justify his identity. Marvin’s response signify that Black West Indian immigrants are conscious that the racial identifiers that are ascribed by the host country will dominate any notions of self that the immigrants may have from their home countries, so they have to ensure that they make their identity clear. In this case, as in most cases, the identifiers are in opposition to the African American identity. Earlier Primrose made reference to perceptions of African Americans in the popular consciousness and distanced herself from such perceptions, while clarifying who she was in racial terms. Another interviewee, Rosemarie, did the same thing in reference to her identity:

A: Well I, and don’t be offended at this, but I don’t say that I’m Jamaican. Fear comes from differences. And when people see you as being different there’s some kind of apprehension. Now when they see you as being like them, oh she’s black but she doesn’t, you know, doesn’t fit into the stereotypical mold that they have [of someone who is black]. You are more accepted…you can assimilate better in the society…it’s obvious that I am black but I don’t act like the typical black person in my opinion. I don’t speak the way the typical black person might speak. But I am not ashamed of my color. (Rosemarie. Personal interview)

As regards identity, race affects the daily lives of black West Indian migrants. They understand that society has ideas about who are to be labeled as black and there is a conundrum when they do not act in a way to fit the stereotypical black mold because society may not know
how to indentify them. On the other hand because of the prior knowledge that West Indians have about being labeled black, they actively try to distance themselves from this label. They are not suggesting that they do not accept the fact that they are black, and they do celebrate blackness because they identity as black, yet they ensure that they articulate that how they view themselves by the label black is not how the wider society defines the term black. When someone defines West Indians as blacks because their physical features are similar to African Americans, the identity becomes real. However, when they speak, West Indians do not act in accordance with the black identity outlined by the American society and they (black West Indians) use language as a tool to ensure that they are not established as blacks, or African American, in the American psyche. Rosemarie and Primrose do not talk about racism and negative race relations directed at them; the negative perceptions of African Americans is the driving force behind their understandings identity and how they go about creating their own identities. So notions of being black as one type of black West Indian immigrant identity is recreated so that it does not match the current understandings of what it means to be black in the U.S.

While official statistics may give numerical meaning to variables, such as the term “black”, it is argued that “Racial and ethnic groups are not merely static entities, but also products of labeling and identification processes that change and evolve over time.” So as identities are constantly being created and recreated, Caribbean, Afro-Jamaican, Caribbean American, West Indian, South American, official classification systems may, or may not be, a true reflection of the individuals or groups they purport to categorize. If official classifications are not updated to reflect the changes in group identities in the U.S. then chances are the values that are being placed on these ethnicities are distorted. The inconsistencies and distortions of
ethnic origins in the U.S. in the U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census (1980) have also been reported by whites.49

There are cases whereby migrants are not pigeon-holed into a strict racial/ethnic schema. As I previously presented, in possible efforts to separate themselves and project a unique identity, Jamaican immigrants do not become exactly like American, black or white.50 For second generation immigrants, identity formation does not follow the same trajectory as their parents. So despite the income and educational disparity between West Indians and African Americans, we find that racial segregation places West Indian children in neighborhoods with other lower-income African Americans.51 Subsequently, characteristics such speaking English as a first language and obtaining higher degrees of education, which helped the parents of West Indian immigrant children to ascend into the emerging middle class in the 1970s and 80s, have now helped to discourage the formation of an ethnic enclave important for mobility needed for immigrants in the Miami region.

Consequently second generation West Indian immigrants are trapped between two worlds which ultimately impact how they construct their identity. They are basically forced to acknowledge the culture of their parents who were raised in the Caribbean and are forced to come to terms with the American society in which they were born and now reside in. They are bombarded with differential cultural values and try their best to untangle the pros and cons of each world to create an identity/identities which cause the least harm to them. Like native born blacks, West Indian parents try to instill the value of education, respect and hard work and a motivation to take on a West Indian identity in their offspring born in the U.S. Unlike their parents, second generation West Indian immigrants are not born and raised in a multiethnic
society where racism is less pronounced so they do not have a cultural reference schema with which to draw on to combat the racism they encounter.\textsuperscript{52}

Second generation West Indians develop their identity in the U.S. in three distinct ways. Firstly they may identify as strictly Americans. Self-identified Americans of the second generation are those who do not stress their immigrant or ethnic identities. They claim that they are American by virtue of being born in the U.S. and embrace many aspect of the black American culture. They are also less sympathetic to their parents who try to hold on to an ethnic identity and who fail to understand the American social system. The American-identified immigrants are seemingly unaware of the research that suggest that foreign-born blacks have higher social and educational status than American-born blacks. Yet, West Indian immigrants who identified as American claim that within their social milieu being American has higher social status than being ethnic. Second generation immigrants who came to the U.S. at a very young age consciously try to “pass” as American because of peer pressure. They indicate that they are made fun of because of their accent.\textsuperscript{53}

Next, second generation West Indians may identify as ethnic Americans with some distancing from blacks Americans. Those adhere to a strict ethnic identity are those children who agree with their parents, and also observe, that there are strong differences between themselves and African Americans. They observe the “lazy” attitude and “lack of respect for education” among African Americans. They stress that being black is not synonymous with being black American. They do not reject the culture or identities of their parents but rather the American cultural system which seeks to caste them in the same light as African Americans. They also seek to reject any identities paced upon them by whites and other ethnic groups who seek to create ethnic identity classifications for them.\textsuperscript{54}
For the second generation immigrants who are more recently arrived young people, they do not feel the pressure to choose between “identifying with or distancing from Black Americans”. This group identifies strongly with their own self-identification which is linked either to their national origin or their parents’ national origin. The issues of their nationality or their place of birth were the defining characteristics in how they constructed their identity. 55 Finally there are those West Indian immigrants who choose to identify as immigrants “in a way that does not reckon with American racial and ethnic categories.” 56

Being able to assimilate into the current culture is salient for the second generation. Second generation West Indian migrants suggest that whites would treat them better if they knew that they were not native blacks. 57 To support that claim, young people generally support new norms that give them greater freedom. 58 Second generation West Indian immigrants often lack the identifying features that have set their immigrant parents apart. More importantly, as the U.S. society increases its pressure to have rigid racial categories, second generation, and possibly third generation, West Indian immigrants are pressured to assimilate into the existing black category. 59 Upwardly mobile second generation youngsters are the ones that maintain ethnic ties to their parents’ national origins while poor inner city youngsters assimilate to black American peer culture. 60

It is true that some offspring of West Indian migrants may acknowledge their West Indian heritage but would prefer to be identified as African American “as they see little advantage to a West Indian identity.” This does not mean that the West Indian identity is not important to them it is just that the meaning of “West Indianess” differs from the popular conception of “West Indian success”. 61 Yet there are those middle-class West Indian immigrants who argue that they are similar to middle-class African Americans. They similarity is explained by West Indian
migrants who have the perception that the middle-class African Americans are second, third and even fourth generation West Indians. This could suggest an attachment to racial group identity based on class; middle-class and upper-class blacks more readily identify with a racial group identity that their lower-class counterparts. On the other hand, there are those middle-class West Indian immigrants who vehemently hold on to a West Indian identity. He asserts that the idea of having a West Indian identity is seemingly handed down through generations. Most authors indicate that socio-economic success is the link between West Indian achievement and West Indian identity.

Of the respondents who were second-generation immigrants, only two made note of an identity outside of Caribbean and other created identities. They chose to self-identify as black. In keeping with the majority of responses about choosing a Caribbean identity, they aligned themselves because of the role that the agents of socialization played in confirming a “black” on them.

Growing up my parents taught me that I was black. I have noticed that most Jamaicans would rather call themselves Jamaican that identify with the greater Caribbean community. Furthermore, my parents would never tell me that I was American or African American, but just black.”(Second-generation immigrant male, self-identified as black)

This is the group I was primarily raised around. I grew up with peers from this group as well and I believe I know this group best. I also believe that others would automatically identify as a Black woman so that is another reason I probably with this group. I believe society has a hand in shaping how a person
identifies themselves.” (Second-generation immigrant female, self-identified as black)

Because my sample size was not very large to begin with, and I did not have a representative sub-sample of second-generation immigrants, I assumed that all my second-generation respondents would at least nominate an African American identity. None of them did so. From my respondents at least, second-generation immigrants from the West Indies prefer a Caribbean identity than a black identity. Consistent with prior work, the respondents seemed to have been socialized into a culture that affirms Caribbean as one identity. For the two respondents who chose to be identified a black, there is the reasoning that black as an identifier separates them from African American but it recognized enough for inclusion. As the second respondent noted, taking on a black identity stems from the influence that the society has on you.

Princess who is a U.S.-born second-generation West Indian lives in Detroit. She is an undergraduate student at a university in Ohio. When I asked her how she would identify herself, she stated that:

I always say black. I never really thought to say like Caribbean-American. And I guess I should [be]cause my dad is really from, like I know that he actually came over [from the Caribbean]. So I guess that is how I should define it but I never do. I always say black. And the reason I don’t say African-American is because I don’t know anybody that came over [from Africa] personally so I guess I can’t identify with it directly. But you know everyone down the line has had people from Africa. But I just say black. I make it easy, I say black. (Princess. Personal interview)
Princess feels she needs to embrace the Caribbean side of her identity more; she doesn’t want to feel like she is leaving it out and counts herself lucky to have multiple sides to her identity. She expresses that she should present multiple identities as a reflection of her heritage. Princess has chosen an identity but she still grapples with the idea of which identity best suits her. To further compound the identity process, Princess acknowledges that she never really thought to create an identity to show her West Indian side (Caribbean-American) yet at the same time she ensures to stay clear of the African American identity. Her reasoning not to don the African American marker is that she does not know anyone directly in her family that came from Africa and so she cannot identify with the African aspect of the identity. Since it is a part of the African American identity, she does not identify with the African American label.

From a gendered position, females discuss being “American” within the parameters of the freedom they desired from strict parental controls. Reports indicate that West Indian parents are stricter than American parents and West Indian parents are even stricter with girls than with boys. Immigrant girls observe gender role changes for their mothers in the U.S. compared to what happened in the Caribbean. Such changes include greater personal independence and more secure employment outside of the home. From these observations it is assumed that different expectations of behaviors for boys and girls will take place in the U.S. as well. Girls who adopted an ethnic identity perceived their parents strictness as a positive thing whereas girls who identified as American criticized their parents’ strictness. American-identified immigrant girls definitely felt that the gender restrictions that were placed on them stemmed from their parents island backgrounds. For boys, “racial solidarity in the face of societal exclusion and disapproval” led to them identifying as black American. Overall, because girls faced less hostility and exclusion by mainstream society than boys, girls were more likely to adopt a black identity
which did not sharply deviate from the mainstream. Boys on the other hand adopted the African American identity which was more adversarial and oppositional in nature.65

There was no difference in how both genders adopted a Caribbean identity. Most of my respondent, males and female preferred to identify as Caribbean, at least for that moment when they were being interviewed. However, it was the females in my project who opted to identify with what I call an accommodating identity; it did not really matter to them how they were perceived by others. However persons on the outside chose to identify them as, they portrayed a tolerable attitude towards that identity. Mrs. Brown noted that *I’m not an American black. I don’t consider myself a Caribbean black... I’m black. It doesn’t really matter to me. Caribbean black, American black. I’m black* (Mrs. Brown. Personal interview) A respondent noted: “*Because as I have traveled and lived around the world, and most people approach me first based on what they see.*”(First-generation immigrant female, self-identified as black) Another response included:

This is the group I was primarily raised around. I grew up with peers from this group as well and I believe I know this group best. I also believe that others would automatically identify me as a Black woman so that is another reason I probably with this group. I believe society has a hand in shaping how a person identifies themselves.”(Second-generation immigrant, female)

The trend represented in the responses indicates that females incorporate an accommodating identity largely due to how society perceives them. They indicate if that is what people see them as and refer to them as, then that is what they are. Of note is that there is no indication that black is negative. Quite the contrary, it is seen as an important aspect of the identity because of its link to racial or ancestral history. The responses are also an indication that this new move by West Indian female to adopt an accommodating identity is no different across
generations as well. Princess whom I previously referred to also incorporates a black identity. Part of her reasons bear similarities to the survey responses. She notes that to make it easy she identifies as black. That goes hand-in-hand with the idea that what people see me as then that is what I am. Again, there is no indication of black being negative. And of course she highlights the importance of ancestry. However, African Americans are perceived as black but no one identifies as such. The issue here, as has always been the case, is the antagonisms between Caribbean immigrants and African American.

Conclusion

Creating identities is a part of the immigrant consciousness and the responses to my question on how black West Indian immigrants identify themselves racially indicate that the identities that West Indians create are really unique. Migrants are free to create their own identities to classify themselves and the responses are a reflection of the uniqueness and ease with which they formulate such identities. All identities that are created are sufficient representations of the migrant in question. Therefore, the reasons the identities are created are as varied as the identities themselves.

An overwhelming majority of black West Indian immigrants said they identified best with the term Caribbean because the people and culture around them were distinctly Caribbean. The patterns and agents of socialization all pointed to them ensuring that they identified as Caribbean. Even as bonafide citizens of the U.S., assimilation does not strip immigrants of their Caribbean identity. My analysis of black West Indian immigrants in the U.S. runs parallel to earlier work and suggests that, like all other Caribbean immigrants, West Indians don multiple identities. Additionally, no one identity is an adequate depiction of black West Indian immigrants as a whole or even as individuals. In creating, or recreating an identity, or identities,
black West Indians ground the individual self in a foundational identity. The grounding identity serves as the platform on which to build all other identities. Africa and Caribbean are the two most frequently used grounding identities as West Indian immigrants seek to explain their connection to a black identity via Africa.

In my sample, second-generation black West Indians prefer a Caribbean identity than a black identity. If they ascribe to a black identity, taking on a black identity stems from the influence that the society has on the immigrants. Therefore the mechanism through which second-generation West Indians create a black identity is different from the way first-generation West Indian immigrants create a black identity. There is no difference in how black West Indian immigrant males and females adopted a Caribbean identity, at least for that moment when they were being interviewed.
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42 Ibid. 64.


44 Ibid. 2001.


49 See Lieberson and Waters (1986) for an overview of how black, Hispanic and American Indian categories have shown evidence of flux and redefinition over time.


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CHAPTER IV.
THE INFLUENCE OF MIGRATION ON FATHER INVOLVEMENT

There is no limit to the things my husband will do for our child. From birth to present he has been very involved, from changing diapers to putting her to bed, he does it all. When it comes to raising our child, there is no job we see as a ‘woman’s job’ or a ‘man’s job’. He is my partner in raising our child and for that reason I am proud saying he is very, very, involved. (First-generation immigrant female, self-identified as Caribbean, Jamaican born)

The wife in the above quotation paints a picture of her husband being a very involved father. But, what makes him an involved father? The quote addresses that question by representing two salient issues that help us to understand those things that influence perceptions and behaviors of father involvement among black West Indian immigrants. First, the quote represents the idea that changes are taking place in fathering behaviors among black West Indian immigrants as a result of migration. The behaviors and attitudes toward father involvement of men “changing diapers” and both the husband and wife seeing no gender difference in how they raise their child are different from the views on fathering across the Caribbean; across the Caribbean fathers are not typically involved in daily child-care and the parenting culture has strict gender guidelines.¹ Next, the picture that is painted is that West Indian migrant women’s expectations of who an involved father is has changed, and to some extent the men are aware of the changes in the expectations. The wife confirms this position by stating that both her and her husband do not see aspects of raising their child as a ‘woman’s job’ or a ‘man’s job’. Such a declaration demonstrates that there is solidarity between migrant men and women on egalitarian parenting as West Indian migrant men have moved away from the gendered roles that characterize Caribbean parenting.²
The ensuing chapter explores my findings relating to changes in fathering perceptions due to migration, from the position of black West Indian migrants in the U.S. Because migration has an independent effect on various aspects of migrants’ lives, I will provide a brief overview of the link between migration and various aspects of the lives of Caribbean immigrants. But, migration also influences other areas in the lives of the migrants that ultimately impact their perceptions of father involvement. These areas include the relationships that the migrants have or had with their own fathers, prior attitudes and practices of black West Indian migrants towards child-rearing, the attitudes that migrant women have of migrant men towards father involvement, the gender of the child in the father-child relationship, biological versus non-biological children, fathering in non-nuclear households and dissolved relationships and tensions inside and outside of the household. These areas will be addressed next. Lastly I will examine some interesting findings on the impact of the respondents’ fathers on father involvement and the influence of religion on father involvement. Notwithstanding there are some perceptions about fathering from the Caribbean that have been retained by black West Indian immigrants in the U.S. I will provide my findings on these continuities first before I address the changes in my findings.

Migration

Any understandings of how migration can impact migrants’ perceptions of father involvement must be examined through the lens of the migration experience itself. Pre-migration cultural conceptions and social practices have a continued impact in the U.S. It is arguable that cultural practices across West Indian islands associated with father involvement may still serve as driving forces behind how West Indian immigrant fathers father in the U.S., and also how other West Indian migrants view practices and characteristics that are necessary for fathering in a migrant context. These conceptions and practices do not continue unchanged, of course. They are
restructured, redefined, and renegotiated in the new setting. Notwithstanding, West Indian immigrants continue to draw on pre-migration family experiences, norms, and cultural frameworks as a frame of reference as they navigate their lives in the U.S. To be sure, the cultures from which immigrants come are themselves the product of change so that it is misleading to assume a timeless past of fathering tradition.\(^3\)

Once more, the use of the migrants’ memory is important in attempting to understand how migration has impacted their thoughts on fatherhood. Because the unit of analysis can be the culture in which fathering takes place in the Caribbean, migrants pull on the general observations and understandings and not necessarily the ideas emanating from the household they come from, to come to decision as to which pre-migration cultural conceptions and social practices will be retained and those that will be refashioned. The same can be explained if the unit of analysis is the culture of the U.S. Migrants have to compare fathering from the society they have come from to general observations and understandings in the host country, to see which practices are created or re-created or have completely changed. By doing this, individual characteristics may not match the responses made.

There is evidence that migrant men have not found the migration experience rewarding in some respects since their earnings have decreased in relation to women increase, and subsequent autonomy as wage earners, on account of them moving from their birth country to a host country.\(^4\) Despite this, the migration experience is not uniformed and so it is incorrect to assume that the various experiences that West Indian immigrants have will result in similar impact on fathering behaviors. But there is evidence to suggest that migrant men will reclaim the dominant position they had before migration by reconfiguring cultural spaces to suit their needs for control.\(^5\)
Migration and Father Involvement – Continuities

The relationship with my father has shown me first and foremost, that I am blessed. I know so many people that grew up without their fathers in their lives, some of which turned out successful, some not as successful. Growing up with my father has shown me, that I can do no less for my children. That I have no excuse to provide the essential teachings and perspective that only a father can give.” (First-generation male, self-identified as Caribbean)

Overall, learning parenting behaviors from your father is associated with how you will father your own children. The quote above suggests that black West Indian immigrants can learn how to be involved fathers, or what to look for in involved fathers, from the father-child relationship that they were a part of, or are currently a part of. The respondent is also noting that father involvement is a gendered practice as it provides a unique position that only a father can provide. Also suggested is that due to the smaller proportion of black children who will spend time living with their fathers throughout their childhood, it is arguable that that household structure and relationships structures (possible father absenteeism) could contribute to the differential patterns of father involvement observed among adult black males and their children. Such differences will impact how these children perceive and participate in fathering in the future. Even though black West Indian immigrants are generally from households where the biological father is not always present, fathers were overwhelming positive influences in the lives of the respondents.

May father has had a very positive influence on my thinking as it relates to father involvement. While I do not have children of my own at present, I have learned so much which I could emulate should I take on such a responsibility. My father has
played a pivotal role in my personal growth and development, which I would seek to do on becoming a dad. (First-generation male, self-identified as Caribbean)

My dad has always played an integral part in my up-bringing. Our relationship has had a positive influence on my life because of how supportive he was towards me pursuing my dreams. Although we were not rich he instilled a lot of love and discipline. My dad made sure I had stability and people around me, my brothers and sisters could emulate. (First-generation male, self-identified as Caribbean)

Even in cases where it seems that the father did not do all that well as a father, the respondents noted that this pushed them to be involved fathers in their father-child relationship or in the father-child relationship when they have children. A male Guyanese respondent, first-generation immigrant who self-identified as African American said in response to the question that *I learned to do better for my child*. Another male respondent noted that *I wanted to be better than my father*. (First-generation immigrant, self-identified as Caribbean)

Over 50 percent of the female respondents wrote that their biological fathers are a positive influence on their lives, yet, they did not say how this positive influence played a role on how they currently conceive of father involvement. Step-fathers and social fathers have similar positive influence on the immigrant’s perception of father involvement for both males and females. A first-generation immigrant female from Jamaica who self-identified as Caribbean stated: *Growing up I never really had a father figure. I was raised around uncles and cousins. I learned never to leave my children’s side and to ensure they are wanting for nothing.* Another female respondent noted that:

- My biological father did not raise me. I was raised by my uncle. My uncle was caring, giving, and supportive. He demonstrated all the attributes stated in
question 28, i.e., cooking for the family, helping with the cleaning as needed, helping with homework, attending school functions, disciplining, and engaging in social activities (including church attendance). In summary an involved father does more than just pay the bills but is an active participant in the family. (First-generation immigrant, self-identified as Caribbean)

My uncle and my god-father were positive male role models for me growing up. They were respectful and involved in my life and my sisters. They taught us what good fathers should be. They disciplined as needed but they were also fair and honest. (First-generation female, self-identified as black and Caribbean)

Since father involvement is not static in nature and West Indian immigrants take on the perception or actual father involvement that is equivalent to the dominant cultural norms at that point in time, the times dictate that fathers be continually present in the lives of their children and that they even rearrange their lives to ensure that the needs of the children are always taken care of. Even though this may seem as a continuation of fathering because the immigrants are stating that they will engage in fathering practices that they observed while being raised in the Caribbean, it can also be viewed as a change because such fathering practices were not the dominant cultural fathering practices across the Caribbean as that time.

Migration & Father Involvement - Changes

To explore the subsidiary question of the impact of migration on black West Indian immigrants’ thoughts on father involvement, I asked, “How has migration shaped your thoughts on father involvement? The responses varied across the two methods of data collection and by gender. Of the females who completed my questionnaire, 66 percent of them stated that migration had no impact on their perceptions of father involvement whereas the majority of my
female interviewees indicated that migration has had impacts on their understandings of fatherhood. The explanations they presented why migration does not impact their perceptions on farther involvement are interesting.

One female respondent shed some light on how timing may be important to our understanding of how migration impacts black West Indian immigrants’ ideas of fathering. She suggested that ... *I haven’t been here [in the U.S.] long enough to feel that it has impacted my earlier position*... (First-generation immigrant, self-identified as Caribbean) Through migration, the American mainstream has created a type of creolized culture which takes time to develop. New social patterns, meanings and perceptions surrounding father involvement in the host country would need to take time to develop as well. As such, not all migrants will experience the impact of migration on fatherhood in the same way and at the same time. Cultural perceptions do change over time and it would be interesting to know, on average, the length of time that is needed for West Indian immigrants to develop a new awareness of fathering that is impacted on by migration.

As regards the survey respondents, their responses seem to specify that there is no difference in how they view fathering in the home and host country, or, migration really has had no impact whatsoever on how they currently view father involvement. Why would females give responses of that nature when it is impossible that a process such as migration could have no cultural impact on a behavior such as fathering? And the respondents gave no indication why this would be the case. A first generation female who identified as Caribbean stated that *It had no impact on my views*. While others simply noted, *It hasn’t*. When the question was asked of my interviewees, only one female respondent stated that migration had no impact. Mrs. Brown (the
wife of Mr. Brown mentioned earlier in the chapter) who has been living in U.S. since 1961 quite pointedly said No. (Mrs. Brown. Personal interview)

To understand this blatant gender difference, I propose that we examine issues of race and race relations in the U.S. Prior work shows that race and racism are tied up in the migration process, but the results of racism and race are felt differently by males and females. Females are less likely to feel the negative effects of racism which is observed to be synonymous with migration. In this sense, for females, migration would have less of an impact on father involvement, than for males. Because of the physical similarities between black West Indian migrant males and African American males, both groups receive racist treatments equally. However, black West Indian female immigrants do not receive any disparate treatment as a result of migration.

Another explanation for the gendered results on the influence of migration may be due to observations from female immigrants regarding the fathering practices of their male counterparts. Black West Indian immigrant fathers may be engaging in father involvement at the same levels as they would back home in the Caribbean, or as is observed, across the Caribbean. Therefore, migration would not affect how father involvement is perceived as the female migrants are observing similar fathering patterns and practices among the migrant men in the host country and the men in their home territories. For the remaining females who responded to my survey questionnaire, there were those who pointed out that fathering in the home and host countries were similar in nature. A respondent noted that Fathers in the USA and my country of birth are very similar. (First-generation female, self-identified as Caribbean) Another female who self-identified as Caribbean seem to signal that there are fathers who are not involved in her home country, Jamaica, and her host country, U.S.
Moving to the United States you see many fathers that have a different approach to fatherhood than you see in Jamaica. I’m not saying that Jamaica doesn't have "dead beat dads" but the ones that exist in the US are on another level!

However, she is of the mind that migration has shown her that there are different levels of noninvolvement. Specifically, the uninvolved fathers in the U.S. are worse than those in Jamaica. So even though she pointed to a similarity, she was mindful that there are different levels within the vein of being uninvolved.

On the other hand, a first generation immigrant female respondent who self-identified as Caribbean indicated that migration expanded her views on the different sides to father involvement. Chances are she was not exposed to that aspect in her home country and she is exposed to it here in the U.S. She wrote of migration that It introduced the emotional part of it (father involvement) [to me]. Her response confirms my prior findings that for black West Indian migrants, father involvement multi-faceted and does not only entail a tri-part model as is expressed in the social sciences. West Indian migrants are demonstrating that the various experiences they are exposed to throughout the migration process, a process that is continuous and evolving, may mean that we cannot fit fatherhood, for this group, into any definitive box or categories. At different points in the migration process, the impact of migration on fathering can mean something different or have added meanings. An excerpt from one of my interviewees, Primrose, affirmed this stance.

Q: How has your migration experience influenced how you think about father involvement?
A: …Father involvement can be an [egalitarian] relationship. Because in my culture I did not see evidence of the egalitarian, I see my father being the more dominant figure in the household and my mother being the submissive. I am married to a Jamaican man in the United States of America. The dynamics of our relationship is totally different, because I don’t believe it is possible for anybody to move to any society and not assimilate and get some of the very traits that are within that society… (Primrose. Personal interview)

The U.S. society affords female black West Indians the opportunity to be economically independent of male counterparts. Such independence does not necessarily cause frictions within the relationship as is the case in prior studies. Primrose alludes to the fact that her marriage, and the fathering practices of her husband, is essentially different from the one she was exposed to in Jamaica; her father was the dominant figure with her mother taking a secondary role. Migration has consciously, or subconsciously, caused her husband and herself to incorporate some cultural traits from the U.S. which in turn restructured their relationship along equal gender lines rendering her notions of father involvement as an equal gender process. Again, it is the exposure to another culture via migration that has re-shaped Primrose’s thoughts on fathering.

The male respondents had mixed reactions to the impact of migration of their perceptions of father involvement. By and large, the responses seem to indicate that migration has had a positive impact on how they view father involvement and so a recreation of fathering behavior was evident in their responses. Like the females, they made comparisons between their home country and host country to illustrate the role migration played in shaping their perceptions. A response from a survey respondent indicated:
Yes within the U.S. I have noticed that fathers hug their children a lot and often, will tell them openly “I love you”. This is very unusual within the Jamaican context. Even when the fathers are unable to provide for them physically, this level of involvement seems to be very impactful. (First-generation male; self-identified as Caribbean)

Cultural understandings about gender and gender roles impact the existing roles and status that it observed in adult immigrants. The same can be said for West Indian migrants living in the U.S. For this group of immigrants, father involvement is wrapped-up in prior notions of observed gender roles in family arrangements, fatherhood, manhood/masculinity and father involvement in the Caribbean. Though males in the Caribbean may not openly display signs of affection towards their children because of the cultural norms in the Caribbean, they are mindful that the norms are different in the U.S. and are open to changing their stance on masculinity to fulfill that role. It is worth noting that none of the male interviewees spoke about open display of affection as an aspect of father involvement in the U.S. Such specifications were only made by the females.

Another male respondent (a first generation immigrant born in Trinidad and Tobago and self-identified as Caribbean) suggested that father involvement is paramount to the migration process itself. He indicated that issues may arise during the migration period that can be countered by an involved father, he did not elaborate on what those issues may be.

It made me understand even how more important it is to have a strong and positive father to look up to. Moving to a new place can make you vulnerable to an environment that you and the people closest to you have
not fully grasped. A father that is involved especially during that integration process is key to staying the course.

The exposure that migration created to another way of fathering seemingly helped West Indian migrants, at least the males, to be aware of the positive side of fathering. Also, they are mindful that they can incorporate elements of some of those fathering behaviors into their own lives. As one male respondent who identified himself as Caribbean wrote, *Migrating exposed me to another culture and how they play their role as a father.* Marvin who I alluded to earlier in the chapter had a similar take on the how migration has helped him, and can help others, to affirm, and or, recreate behaviors of fathering that can help West Indian migrants.

That’s a great question and I’m going to answer that question in this way. Yes it has and the reason that it has is that no one, in my personal view, has a monopoly on the best way to be a father. And what you do, you can, or you should be able, to look at other approaches to fatherhood. And if you’re open-minded father, you should be one to say “Hey you know what I like that way that guy did that. It was awesome. I can pick up on that.” It doesn’t change your core belief. I haven’t seen anything that will change my core belief or my core value or the way I would grow up my son. But I’ve seen other people just do things in the way they relate to their kids in a different place like here in the United States and it kind of lets you do a little bit of introspection, a little bit of reflection if you will. And consequently you are able to say to yourself, “Hey, that’s not a bad idea.” or, “That’s a good idea.” Core beliefs stay the same but you look at other people and you look at what they do. I’m especially impressed here in the
United States with the degree of pride that parents, and since we’re talking about fathers, we have seen fathers, take in their children. There is more in terms of personal responsibility. Some of it is by imposition in terms of laws that require you to take care of your kids but in other circumstances it’s just part of what I believe nature versus nurture. The reality of America has allowed some people, or many people, to be socialized in such a way that they take more personal responsibility. So as a result of that some of it is driven by cultural norms. But yes, I’ve learned some things being here but the core is basically unshakable. (Marvin. Personal interview)

Now some former beliefs and social institutions persist, but may change, if only subtly, in form and function in the new environment. Marvin suggests that the cultural norms driving fathering activities in the U.S. can help black West Indian migrants see another angle to father involvement. As he stated, some ideas are “not bad” and can be co-opted alongside “core beliefs”. But there are core beliefs and actions about father involvement form the West Indies that will still be acted-out in the U.S. He did not say what these were.

In Caribbean communities, “parental behavioral, expectations of obedience, displays of respect and manners, educational competence, and sociability in young children have been established” irrespective of social class. Social exchanges between parents and children are not usually of an egalitarian nature and compared to European Americans, note that Caribbean immigrant parents reported using more control, harsh discipline, and less nurturance toward their children.
Such parent-child interactions are mainly as a result of the expectations (harsh discipline) embedded in Caribbean communities which have persisted in the U.S.\textsuperscript{13} Within Caribbean immigrant families where gender role socialization is stressed, mothers and fathers in the Caribbean see themselves as having very specific socialization responsibilities in their children’s lives and these views are evident among Caribbean immigrants in developed societies.\textsuperscript{14} Not surprisingly there are lower levels of physical care by fathers, compared to mothers, with fathers being primarily responsible for instilling discipline in matters of schooling and behavioral conduct.\textsuperscript{15}

West Indian immigrant fathers who do try to be involved in other ways are probably hampered by the economic realities of new environment in which they now live. These fathers may try to spend time with their children, but consistent engagement in shift work and multiple jobs increases the unsupervised time that is spent by their children. West Indian migrants in the U.S. unusually work long work hours or multiple hours and this may help to decrease father-child interactions.\textsuperscript{16} It is noteworthy that although prior work centers on child-rearing and discipline as a key focus of father involvement among West Indian migrants in the U.S., none of my sample referred to issues relating to either child-rearing or discipline in their responses. However, some of the responses seem to show that migration helps to create a gendered perception of how fathering is viewed among black West Indian immigrants in the U.S.

I think that it has impacted me; I would not want to put it in a box and say negatively or positively. I believe that I’ve seen good things in fathers in this culture and my migration has taught me that father involvement is more just someone being the patriarch or being the head of the household providing. Father involvement can be an [egalitarian] relationship.
Because in my culture I did not see evidence of the egalitarian, I see my father being the more dominant figure in the household and my mother being the submissive. I am married to a Jamaican man in the United States of America. The dynamics of our relationship is totally different. Because I don’t believe it is possible for anybody to move to any society and not assimilate and get some of the very traits that are within that society. And as parents of our son, I look at my husband and how he impacts our son’s life and the good that he has got from this American culture that has really impacted my son’s life so I see where they’re good things in the American culture. But on the other side I see too where they’re many absentee fathers and I see where society has to force men to face their responsibilities”. (Primrose. Personal interview)

For instance, I never saw a man push a vacuum. That’s not a man’s job. And when I came here I learned men can do everything. It wasn’t like men take out the garbage and that’s their job. Men can help in the house and I never saw that before, I never saw it. So when I came here it opened my eyes to what fathering can be. A father can be loving. A father can be caring. A father is not only a parent you know. And that was the difference I saw with there and here and the father involvement. A father can embrace a child; tell a child he loves them! I never saw it before, I never saw it and I was like wow. It really changed a lot for me. Definitely, definitely, definitely. And it’s not a feminine thing or demasculinate you to embrace a child or to show affection. A man does that! A real man can
hug his wife and embrace his kids. A real man can do that. It doesn’t make you less of a man to do those things. And back home [in the West Indies] I didn’t see those things. (Rosemarie. Personal Interview)

According to black West Indian migrants, father involvement in the U.S. cuts across that masculine-feminine divide that is observed in father involvement across the Caribbean. Rose was keen to point out that the patriarchal perceptions of father involvement that she observed growing up in Jamaica were not the same in the U.S. Adopting a feminist standpoint allows her to challenge those “truths” relating to father involvement across the Caribbean. She is able to change her once one-sided understandings of fathering as she is a cultural knower in both the Caribbean and the U.S. Through migration, Primrose understands that father involvement takes place both in a patriarchal and egalitarian setting. But more importantly, fathering in an egalitarian setting is observed as positive involvement. Primrose noted that her notions of father involvement across the Caribbean emanates from her personal examination of her own father. She did not suggest that he was a bad father and that he was not involved; quite the contrary. However, she suggests that migration to the U.S. highlights that there does not have to be that strict division of household labor and behavior for a father is be seen as involved.

It is arguable that because of migration West Indian immigrant fathers in the U.S. could be involved fathers with their child/children in unorthodox ways as well. The question was asked of the males who were fathers to tell me if they think they were not involved fathers, and if so, why they thought they were not involved fathers. No male respondent noted that that were uninvolved. Even though the survey was not a couple-based survey, to ensure reliability and validity of the instrument question, I asked the female respondents who were in a current
relationship to tell me if their partner was uninvolved and why they thought he was uninvolved. Only two female respondents noted that their current partner was uninvolved.

My husband has two sons in Jamaica he is involved in their life financially but to them he’s only a voice on the phone has he has never been back to Jamaica since he migrated. This is something he is working on changing this.” (First-generation female, self-identified as Caribbean)

I gathered from the response that he was involved in one household but uninvolved in another but his female partner wants him to be involved in both households. This may be problematic as both households are engaged in mate-shifting practices and migration. Children are moved around in mate-shifting, but in this case, they are left behind and separated by international borders. Mate-shifting practices may have debilitating effects, yet they are not seen as valid excuses for a lack of involvement. This points to changes in fathering expectations that women have as a result of migration. The female respondent notes that he [her husband] provides financially for his two sons yet this invokes ideas of partial involvement. Her reaction is that he should find some way to be involved in the lives of his other children.

Black West Indian Immigrant Father Characteristics and Father Involvement

Research has shown that there are three main areas that have an influence of father involvement. Fathers are influenced by their own personal characteristics (fathers’ positive personality and attitudes toward child rearing, the age of the father and possible father-child activities) and child characteristics (the temperament of the child, the age of the child and the gender of the). They are also influenced by contextual situations that may hamper or support father involvement (relationship interactions, social support networks and occupational/work experience).
To gauge as best as possible the changes that have taken place in fathering perceptions and behaviors since black West Indians’ emigrated to the U.S., and to assess those people, situations and things that have influenced their fathering perceptions since migrating, I asked my respondents and interviewees, why do you think you are involved with your children and what are the things that have influenced you to be an involved father? My findings demonstrate a general trend that suggests that black West Indian immigrant ideas of father involvement toward child-rearing hinges on educating children and being there for the children in various forms. One respondent noted that: *Financially he is not there, but he makes sure he spends time with his children; he tries to have a relationship with them. Whenever they call he always comes running.* (First-generation female, self-identified as black); *Everything!* (First generation female, self-identified as Caribbean). Another father indicated that he participates with them in sporting activities, trips, one-on-one time and group time (first generation immigrant living in Florida who self-identified as Caribbean). Yet another male first generation immigrant living in Florida and who identified as Caribbean stated that he goes *...to church, play, talk and do various things with them.* Other notable responses were:

I often read to my baby-girl, we have daddy-daughter time where it’s just me and her out and about. We play games, go out to the pool as a family, out to the park where she can be around other kids and interact in a social environment. (First-generation male, self-identified as Caribbean)

I do everything with my kids; go on outings, take them to the park, games, movies, attend school meetings (PTA), do homework. (Second-generation male, self-identified as Caribbean)
I play computer games with my kids. I also watch television with them frequently.

I also share an interest in photography and video production with my kids, so we often do small projects as a hobby. (First-generation male, self-identified as black)

Black West Indian immigrant males who are fathers are putting positive child-rearing attitudes into practice and they cover a breath of activities. Given that the immigrant males come from societies that take pride in affirming masculinity in fathering behaviors, they are not shy about engaging in father-child activities that are not viewed as masculine. There was no indication that the accommodating attitudes that the male respondents noted decreased with the age of the child or the father. I surmised that the activities that the fathers engaged in were age-appropriate and the fathers changed their involvement behaviors to suit the age of the children. The father above who shared an interest in photography and video production has children who are teens and so he could share in mature activities with them. The type of activities he mentions are different from the ones other respondents mention that are linked to toddlers and babies, for example, reading to the child or taking them to the park to play with other children. To ensure a balanced perception in how we view positive attitudes toward child-rearing, and to tap the independent effect of males’ child-rearing attitudes, responses were solicited from female respondents as well.20

The responses from the females mirrored that of the male respondents indicating that there was no bias in gender reporting. Also, both West Indian immigrant males and females observed positive child-rearing attitudes in the migrant males. Of the twenty-two female respondents who reported that they were in a current relationship and had children under their care, twenty of them (90.9 percent) wrote that they thought their current partner was an involved
father. A first generation immigrant female from Jamaica who self-identified as Caribbean noted that He spends time with his children, they play together, draw, watch television, do chores, etc. He attends sporting events, music recitals, and PTA meetings. Yet this type of positive attitude is not only observed in a biological father-child relationship. A female first generation immigrant who self-identified as Caribbean noted that: Though my son is not his biological son he takes part in his upbringing by helping with daily routines, activities, discipline and overall bonds well with child. Given that West Indian migrant males are likely to be a part of a relationship in which the children in the relationship are not their biological children, it is interesting to note that in this new cultural space, their father involvement still extends to children who are not their offspring.

West Indian migrants are mindful that they come from a culture that promotes masculinity based on the number of offspring a male is able to produce. Sexual prowess is already a re-interpretation of masculinity in the cases where Caribbean men are not able to fulfill the ideal economic provider role of father involvement and intrinsically tied to sexual prowess are notions of procreation and the importance of biological offspring. This negative view of masculinity is similar to the dominant view on African American fathers. It is arguable that migration creates yet another re-interpretation of masculinity for black West Indian males. Being in a household structure where they are the male father-figure for non-biological children is not new to black West Indian men as it is a common occurrence in households across the Caribbean due to the practice of mate-shifting or serial courtship. Notwithstanding, we see here that they do not seek affirmation of their masculinity in relationships with other women as was possibly the case in the Caribbean. As migrants they fully participate in the lives of the children that are attached to the household that they (immigrant fathers) are a part of. I note here that the practice of participating in activities with children who are not the biological offspring of the male in the
household is not a change in fathering behavior due to migration as some fathers in the
Caribbean are involved in this way. It is the reason for participating in such an activity, a re-
interpretation of masculinity, as a result of migration that constitutes change. A re-interpretation
of masculinity allows the male to be comfortable in a setting with the child, or children, who is
not his biological offspring and be an active participant. The comfort that he attains as a step-
father manifests itself in positive child-rearing attitudes.

Even when the relationships are dissolved, migrant black West Indian males are still
observed to be involved fathers.

He played with the children (checkers), provided monetarily for their education,
uniform and food, and helped them with their homework. He attended their school
functions and graduations. Once we were divorced, he had them every summer.
(First-generation female, self-identified as Caribbean)

The financial characteristic that defines father involvement is probably still assessed as
the paramount characteristic in father involvement. However, positive child-rearing attitudes are
not only manifested in the being the breadwinner. While it is acknowledged that the male in the
relationship may not be financially stable enough to be the effective breadwinner, it is suggested
here that as long as the father is participating in all other activities in the life of the child, he is
deemed involved. Of course this idea of being involved is a continuation of the involvement
behaviors that Afro-Caribbean men cling to across the Caribbean. To make this conclusion, the
female respondent would have to be able to pull on prior knowledge of various identity makers
of an involved father in the Caribbean.

The responses below indicate that there is possibly no generational difference in how
father positive child-rearing practices influence immigrant father involvement. There is possibly
no generational difference in observations of father involvement by females West Indian immigrants of their relationship partner as well.

He provides adequate financial support. Participates in child's daily up-bringing, pick up & drop off from school, homework help, sports and music practice. He attends teacher parent conferences. He plays with his child - build things, video games, watching TV. He disciplines him very well. (Second-generation female, self-identified as Caribbean)

He is an involved father because he is not just there for them financially; he is there for them emotionally. He is very much invested into their upbringing and to making sure their future.” (Second-generation female, self-identified as both Caribbean & American)

**Gender and Father Involvement**

Research on gender differences demonstrate that fathers are more inclined to be involved with their sons than their daughters. The gender preference is confirmed by sons’ who report that they have closer relationships with their fathers than daughters report with their fathers. If adolescent boys feel that they are understood by their fathers, time spent with him seems more pleasurable. Conversely, feelings of misunderstanding on the part of fathers account for conflict in the relationship where sons feel that father-adolescent child activities are forced and unwanted. Even fathers who do not reside in the household with their children enjoy longer, more frequent visits with their sons than they do with their daughters.

By all indications, West Indian migrants tend to think that the gender of the child plays a role in the father involvement process. But the notions of a gendered father involvement are not uniformed. For male immigrants, there was a tendency for them to fall on both sides of the
argument with fifty percent of the males stating that a child’s gender influenced father involvement. As one male respondent put it, *A father wouldn’t go to the hair salon with a female child but they would go to the barbershop with the male child.* (First-generation immigrant, self-identified as Caribbean). Another male respondent also noted that: *Yes sports with my boys and shopping with my girls.* On the other hand, 36 percent thought father involvement was not gendered. A respondent noted that: *No, I do nothing different. I have a 3 year old son and a 1 year old daughter.* (First-generation male, self-identified Caribbean).

For female respondents, the responses were skewed to the side of gendered involvement. Over 60 percent of West Indian migrant females felt that father involvement was indeed gendered.

I am not sure, but I would assume that they may be more gentle with the girls in terms of how they express care and interact and possible more tough "macho: with the boys, but I believe the level of love and expectations for discipline remain the same.” (First-generation, self-identified as Caribbean)

Yes I think it is because my husband has a daughter that is not my child and he plays with them differently, he tends to be more [rough] with my son than with her because he thinks boys should be [rough]. (First-generation, self-identified as black)

The responses were similar for female who were second-generation immigrants. One female respondent noted emphatically: *YES. Fathers raise boys to be men. Fathers raise daughters to stay a princess.* (Second-generation, self-identified as Caribbean).

Another female respondent stated: *Yes, because a father needs to show his son how to be*
a man. So he should take his son to do different activities that he would not show his daughter. (Second-generation, self-identified as Caribbean)

The culture of the Caribbean dictates that fathering is based on the gender of the child. As migrants in the U.S., a significant number of black West Indian males seem to move away from replicating father involvement according to the child’s gender, however, the overwhelming number of immigrant females stated that the type of fathering that takes place should be aligned to the gender of the child. Black West Indian migrant women are selective cultural reproducers whereas the males are integrating new forms of fathering into their immigrant culture. West Indian females espouse the idea of an egalitarian intimate relationship but still hold on to traditional parenting roles. This thought is contrary to the new ideas that migrant women have of fathering and the notions and practices of fathering that migrant males are involved in. There were emphatic yeses before the female respondents completed their sentences on the questionnaires and a majority of them ensured to write the word yes in all capitals. One could be tempted to assert that West Indian female immigrants are more invested as agents of gendered cultural replication than their male counterparts. Their strong emphasis is possibly explained as a process of the gender project; females are an integral part in the organization of gender practice and their responses should not be viewed as singular acts but as a part of the larger unit of analysis. Female immigrants are emphasizing the gender difference in father involvement as individuals who have been a part of the process themselves and as individuals who are entrusted as agents to culturally reproduce this phenomenon, albeit selective cultural reproduction, socializing children into cultural traditions and ideologies of the U.S.
Contextual Issues that Hamper or Support Father Involvement

The majority of changes in fathering perceptions and behaviors among black West Indian immigrants seemingly stem from contextual issues. Some trends that were highlighted were linked to the idea that the type of intimate relationship migrants are a part of (and the type of household structure the migrants are living in), are a source of influence on father involvement. Research has demonstrated that among individuals who are not married, living together or having a continuous romantic relationship can lead to greater levels of paternal involvement by the father. However, for West Indian immigrants, father involvement is not tied to relationship status or a particular household structure. I mentioned previously the female whose male partner had two sons in Jamaica whom she felt he could be more involved with, much more than just being there financially. This is important as a female member of a previous relationship can argue that due to the breakdown of the prior relationship, the male cannot be involved. Such a suggestion would link father involvement exclusively to a particular relationship, one that is amicable, and a particular household structure. Notwithstanding, in the Caribbean context, when the relationship breaks down, it is almost left entirely up to the female in the relationship to affirm or deny whether or not a father is involved, but here there is no such assertion. We have a context whereby the father is married to one woman and has children in that structure. However, he was previously romantically involved with another woman in a visiting relationship which produced offspring. Nonetheless, the current female partner is adamant that he must be totally involved in the lives of all children across both households. Other survey respondents in the study show in a concrete way how romantic relationship context is linked to father involvement:
An involved father does not mean financial support and weekend visits. It means caring for your child in ways that are meaningful and direct. It means not only ensuring that financial needs are met but instead focus is placed on the holistic development of your offspring… (First generation male, self-identified as Caribbean)

Another respondent (first-generation immigrant female who self-identifies as black) wrote that:

An involved father means a father whether living or not living in the home who is an active participant in the child’s life. Not just monetarily but physically present. One who spends time with the child is involved in all aspects of the child’s school and medical environment; a role model for the child.

The previous two statements support the idea that an involved father does not have to be tied to a particular household, which by extension suggests that the father does not have to be married to the mother of his children to be involved. For West Indian immigrants in the U.S., father involvement is not viewed entirely within the constraints of a household or union status and so does not carry the same weight of influence on fathering in the U.S. as it does in the Caribbean. As one female respondent aptly stated, Basically all the things my father did, this can be achieved without living in the nuclear family structure (although that is how I lived my life). (First-generation immigrant, self-identified as Caribbean)

Another theme that came out from the contextual situations that can hamper or support fathering is that on tensions inside and outside the home. Tensions within the home include financial stress, relationship conflict, and so on, that affect the father-child relationship. Then there are tensions outside the home; work, school and so on, that eventually impact father
involvement within the home. Closer examination of home tensions revealed that the issue of relationship conflict can either help to thwart or enhance father involvement.

Now regarding the negative influence that home tensions have on fathering, on average, fathers tend to be uninvolved when an “unstable or hostile mother-father relationship” exists and women engage in maternal gatekeeping. Maternal gatekeeping involves the mother in the relationship not wanting to relinquish any type of responsibility over family matters and therefore actively resists any move on the part of the father of the child, or children, to be involved by setting rigid standards. The mother will also insist on questioning the father’s competence and the amount of time he is involved with the children. As one male respondent (first-generation immigrant, self-identified as black) noted:

Well, there are cultural tensions relating to parenting techniques and strategies used in my native country and those allowed and normalized in the United States. I am unable to apply most of the same parenting techniques on which I was brought up. Also, one of my daughters is not with my wife, and so I frequently get challenges from my daughter’s biological mother on policy and decisions that I make that impacts my eldest daughter. There is also financial stress related to providing for my kids as a student.

Here the male respondent alludes to tensions both inside and outside the home that hampers his ability to be involved as he would like to be. First, the romantic relationship structures inside and outside of the home serves as a deterrent to fathering. The male suggests that he would like to continue the cultural practice of corporal punishment but his wife, who is a native of the U.S., does not think that he should indulge in this parenting practice. Because of migration, the differences in cultural norms of disciplining children create tensions within the
current relationship. What the male respondent is doing in this context is juggling between the
cultural practices associated with father involvement in the U.S. and those associated with his
native Caribbean home. It seems as though he wants to retain involvement aspects from his home
country. By not being able to practice corporal punishment practices from the Caribbean, which
is a major part of fathering, he is changing the way fathering is done in this traditional role. By
applying the parenting strategies “normalized” in the United States, he recreates and incorporates
new cultural norms of fathering. The differences in cultural norms also create the base for
maternal gatekeeping whereby his current wife is now setting new standards for how their
children are to be disciplined.

There is also tension stemming from his previous relationship. The respondent has a
daughter from a previous relationship and the biological mother of the daughter frequently
challenges decisions that he makes involving their daughter. From my reports, this is a rare case
whereby mothers who were previously involved in a romantic relationship actively hamper the
involvement of the child’s father, but, it demonstrates that relationship tensions do influence
fathering ideas and practices. The tensions resulting from conflict between the mother and father
relationship is so important that a respondent who did not have any children and was single
stated that The mother would be the source of tension facing fathers who are trying to be
involved.

It is important to point out that relationship conflict is also associated with a husband’s
increased involvement in father involvement. All the cussing I get from his mother. I try to
correct the errors along the way. (First-generation male, self-identified as Caribbean) Why does
negative relationship quality have a positive effect on father involvement similarly to positive
relationship quality? Well, some fathers may become involved with their children as a result of a
coercive exchange of negative marital interactions. Conflict between both parents highlights the lack of input that a father may have in the lives of his children and wanting to quell the relationship discord, he opts to become more involved.\textsuperscript{33} He pointed out to me that his relationship with his wife as Good and stable. I interpret his response as an affirmation that the negative exchanges between his wife and himself actually acts as motivation, and not criticism, as is the case with maternal gate-keeping. When parents are close and cooperate on various issues in the parental relationship, the father is likely to enhance the “level, consistency, and efficacy of his parenting efforts.”\textsuperscript{34} The existing conflict that he alluded to is offset by the positive emotions that consume the relationship prompting him to be more involved in the life of his offspring. In this case, it was the cussing from his wife that helped to turn this male respondent toward the path of being more involved with his child.

As regards outside tensions, work and school seem the most influential situation. ...\textit{There is also financial stress related to providing for my kids as a student.} (First-generation male, self-identified as black) \textit{Having two full time jobs and grad school full time is time consuming. So I’m not able to be involved as much as I would like to.} (First-generation male, self-identified as Caribbean). Other responses include:

I think it is very important to be in my daughter’s everyday life therefore I occupy every time with my family that is outside of work and classes. Being unavoidable because of work and classes is the only tensions faced as an involved father. (First-generation male, self-identified as Caribbean).

As a result of migration, perceived, or actual, non-involvement can be unintentional and multifaceted; the father may not just be an involved parent. There are tensions outside of the home that may compound tensions that are already within the home that impact fathering. In the
abovementioned responses, school and work are added to the stress of possible negative relationship exchanges, which help to push fathers away from being involved. At the time during my data collection, most of my respondents and interviewees were enrolled in a tertiary level educational institution. Having to go to school, and at the same time work to support a family, will have negative repercussions on fathering. Again, it does not seem that these fathers were uninvolved before and so the current change in their levels of involvement are as a result of the issues surrounding the migration process. With regard to the aforementioned respondent who stated that the “cussing” helped him to work on being more involved, he noted that he is aware that he is not as involved as he would like to be and this is a result of being employed in two jobs and being a graduate student. These two outside activities have taken away the time that probably would have been shared with his child. He is clearly not content with the idea of being uninvolved and by correcting the errors along the way, shows to us that migration forces fathering ideas practices to constantly change. For black West Indian migrants, father involvement is always evolving.

The idea that employment would be a major obstacle to father involvement among black West Indian immigrants would make sense as males who migrate are normally employed in multiple jobs. This works against them in two ways. First, being employed in multiples jobs takes time away from the home. Migrant men could be participating in activities with their children if they did not have to spend all that time across multiple employments. Second, migration can mean a loss of status as result of employment opportunities. Migration forces West Indian men to seek and accept multiple jobs that are often lower paying and lower status than the jobs their female counterparts are employed in. These lower status and lower paying jobs are also below the types of employment these men would engage in in their home country. Because
expectations are not met or maintained; immigrant women expect men to fulfill the economic provider role, and, men understand the economic expectations that women have of them and the repercussions for not fulfilling these expectations, not being able to fulfill the bread-winner role is observed as a negative change in fathering resulting in a demotion in the family hierarchy and a drop in the level of respect afforded to males.\(^{35}\)

For the women, their ideas of the tensions that immigrant men face in being involved were much different from what the men had to say. The women spoke about these tensions from the point of view of the male companions in their lives who were uninvolved. A female, first generation immigrant, who self-identified as Caribbean wrote that:

My husband has two sons in Jamaica he is involved in their life financially but to them he’s only a voice on the phone as he has never been back to Jamaica since he migrated. This is something he is working on to change.

Another female respondent (first generation) who self-identified as black noted that: \(\text{He has not been involved in any way, shape or form. He has been an absentee father for most of, if not her [his daughter’s] whole life.}\) Such sentiments suggest that absenteeism is the most noted tension that negatively impacts the father-child relationship. Absenteeism can result from migration whereby the father is not able to be in physical contact with the child/children often. As the aforementioned respondent noted, her husband’s two sons still live in Jamaica. Her response indicates that she is not the mother of the boys in question. However, she is mindful that the great physical distance between her husband and his sons should not relegate the father-child relationship to a voice on the telephone. With the improvements in technology, there are a host of options that are available to enhance the involvement process.\(^{36}\)
Religion and Fathering

There were two themes that emanated from my female data that were very interesting. The first theme centers on the influence of religion on the migrants’ current thoughts about father involvement. The second theme I refer to as father involvement by proxy. I will address the religious theme first. The following responses indicate that for West Indian immigrants, religion is used as a tool to formulate their ideas of fathering. Specifically, religion is used to confirm strict gender parenting roles and as the basis for the continued practice of gender specific roles.

Father involvement to me is the level of contribution a man makes to the betterment of his household. And that does not just include financial. It includes emotional support and all of that too. When I first heard the term, I quickly remembered that a father to me was never a friend; [a father] was a parent and I was a child. And father was never wrong, father was always right. So when I came here with a different church and they said God is my father. I didn’t want Him to be my father! I didn’t want Him to be my father because I couldn’t identity with God and father. They were two different things for me until I saw different men who were who were quote-unquote Christians, and I saw their behavior and I realized, wow, God is like that, He’s my father! (Rosemarie. Personal interview)

Religion has always played an important role in the formulation of cultural practices across the Caribbean. Its role in fathering behavior and practices are no different. As I noted in Chapter 3, ideas of masculinity and femininity, how gender roles are perceived and how Caribbean folk come to agreements on child-rearing practices and the running of the household, are based largely in part of affirmations from religious understandings. These religious beliefs
are patriarchal in practice and so they serve the purpose of confirming masculinity (and femininity) and traditional gender roles and practices. Scriptural authority “ordained” by God grants males power in the home over women and children. The economy is not suited for males to be the breadwinner in the household, and even in these homes he is still confirmed as the head.37

In keeping with African familial practices, the Rastafari movement helps to socialize women to accept the man’s headship role. Cultural ideals also help to cement notions of manhood and father involvement, already confirmed by religious practices.38 A large proportion of West Indians follow the Christian faith and the data I collected mirrored those outcomes. Almost 70 percent of my sample noted Christianity as their religious affiliation (see Appendix). And the overwhelming majority of my sample indicated that religion is very important to them. But when I asked “How has religion shaped your thoughts on father involvement”, for female who answered the question, only half of them thought that religion shaped their perceptions on father involvement. Some responses included: My religion has played a major part in my idea of a father because the bible states that a man should lead his household. (Second-generation female, self-identified as Caribbean) and Yes, the bible says the man is the provider and head of the household. (Second-generation female, self-identified as black). As one female respondent noted:

Many West Indians are influenced by religion. I am not personally influenced by traditional religion but rather to directly read the Bible and build one's own relationship with God. Here, an intimacy is born as fathers learn what God expects of them first as an individual, next as a father and how these spiritual
values are passed on to the children to help shape their values in life. (Self-identified as Caribbean)

Explanations for this move of holding on to traditional father involvement beliefs could be associated with the fact that black female West Indian immigrants in the U.S. are again to be viewed as selective cultural reproducers. The American society views heterosexual unions as egalitarian and of course West Indian migrant females fully ascribe to these new values. If nothing else, they provide a source of liberation from the patriarchal confines that religion places on gender roles and practices within the home in the Caribbean context. Yet half the female sample finds it practical to use religion, a tool of patriarchal affirmation used across the Caribbean, to explain why fathering and the running of the household is specifically to be the man’s domain, within the U.S. context. Given the explanation for the trend in female responses, it makes sense that all the male respondents, except one, thought that religion played an important role in how they viewed father involvement. Responses included:

I think my Christian beliefs have shaped my notions of what a father ought to be and my view of father involvement. The teachings of God as father had trained me to expect that a father will be there for you when you need it most; to provide, support and guidance. I think this Christian teaching of God the Father has greatly shaped my expectation of fathers and the meanings of father involvement. (First-generation male, self-identified as Caribbean)

Religion has shaped my views as it reinforces that we all have roles to fill and protocol to adhere to. It may be simply said that a mother cannot be a father and a father cannot be a mother. The Christian belief has taught me that in so many parables and stories. (Second-generation male, self-identified as Caribbean)
My religion has an equal effect on how positively involved I am as a father. Religion gives belief and hope when there are bad days which help overcome situations in life. I think religion has had an equal effect on me being the best dad I can. (First-generation male, self-identified as Caribbean)

No matter the structure of the household, West Indian families are dominated by males.\textsuperscript{40} Even though the majority of Afro-Caribbean households are female-headed, the belief is that any male that is attached to the household is the leader of the household and has the final authority in matters pertaining to the household occupants. In the U.S., most of the time the family's only wage earner in West Indian families is the female. Male partners in these settings will take exception to their partner’s independence because the role-reversal shifts the dominance of power within the household. Religion asserts that this axis of power remain with the man no matter the circumstance. The male is then able to create a fathering identity separate and apart from the breadwinner role which would normally strip him of a part of his identity and masculinity.

The common idea is that religion will make the respondent a better man, not a better person. Why? It cements their role as head of the household. Such a belief is not only religious but cultural (not that the two can be separated) and cultural norms from the Caribbean dictate that the head of household equates to masculinity, thus creating and affirming a status as man. I add here that there is a caveat. The head of the household must be the primary breadwinner to fully claim the masculinity status. This is why there is resentment when the female is the primary breadwinner. But holding to religious beliefs can override that particular disclaimer to achieve
masculinity status. Such a belief will continue to be favorable to West Indian migrant men, even as I have shown that they are willing to change their philosophies on father involvement.

Father Involvement by Proxy

In regards to the question about the influence of one’s father on fathering, for the female respondents who did argue how their fathers’ influenced current perceptions of father involvement, they noted that their fathers are instrumental in showing them what a possible mate should look like.

When I became a teenager he divorced my mother and remarried and it affected our family tremendously. We saw no flaws in our parents’ relationship so it was a shocker for us especially since we were preparing to migrate to the USA when he made his choice to marry another. Our chance to reunite as a family and to continue the development of my relationship with my father was marred. I then thought of him as abandoning us. Four years later my brother and I migrated to the USA and we only survived living with him and his new family about 4 months, we were given an ultimatum to leave or stay under their conditions, so we left. This added to the already strained relationship, now anger set in, what kind of father are you to choose your new wife over your children. My experiences influenced the meaning of father involvement positively in that I sought a mate who was brought up in a home where his father lived and he had a great relationship with his father. I wanted a man that had that type of relationship, who learned that from his father so that he would desire that type of relationship with his children. While I know the future is unsure, I trust God will help my husband
and I to stay together and that he will have a great relationship with his children.
(First-generation female, self-identified as Caribbean)

I was raised by my biological father and he played a big role in our lives. He was always working hard to provide for his family even when he migrated to the U.S., he was still making sure his family was doing well. This made me realize what I wanted to see in the person I chose to be my husband. (First-generation female immigrant, self-identified as Black)

My relationship with my father showed how important it is to have a male that you look up to and will guide you in your life. My father constantly teaches me the importance of the values of having a good man in your life. My father also exemplified the ideal man that would be for me. (Second-generation female, self-identified as Caribbean)

It would seem that a father’s influence on understanding what father involvement should look like would be the first response to such a direct question, yet, a significant number of my females respondents chose to state that their fathers fathering behaviors is aligned to a possible mate and the type of person he should be. Here I note that they are referring to mates in a marital setting. In a society where marital relationships are highly revered, yet hardly followed, mate selection is prized and so the type of mate one selects is instrumental in reaching this goal.41

Analyses of the in-depth interviews with female immigrants also confirmed the importance of father involvement by proxy. Primrose (40 year old, first-generation immigrant, self-identifies as Caribbean) was asked what father involvement meant and she used her father to define the concept.
A: I was blessed with a wonderful father. He was a phenomenal man and one of my greatest regrets was that he passed in 1991 before he got a chance to see how he changed my life, before I graduated from teacher’s college. And because of his involvement, because of the fact that he was such a significant part of my life as a young woman, I knew that wherever I go in life I would look for males or men who could represent that strength of character that my father embedded in my life… Because not only did I idolize my father as my dad, I also looked to him as a strong male figure in the community. Because I saw where, because of his impact he really got a lot of people to believe in themself and their potential to excel. (Primrose. Personal interview)

Monique is 32 years old and lives in Far Rockaway. She is a first generation immigrant from Guyana and has been living in the U.S. for 23 years noted that:

A: …and I feel that especially you need it [father involvement] as a boy. Yes. [Be]cause you always need a male role model in your life. But as girls, because it was all girls in our household, we knew what to now, now that we are older, look for in a partner. You know what I mean. We need the men that are going to be good to us like our dad is good to us. We need the men who wouldn’t mind doing the things like our dad did. Not saying that they would, but is sensitive, loving, genuine, caring. They may cuss a few words after, but they did it anyway because they care and we know what to look for. (Monique. Personal interview)

Positive mate selection indicates that the male mate in question is at least the ideal male. His (male mate) identity is formulated based largely in part on how closely his behavior is aligned to the respondent’s fathering behavior. Now the female respondents did not allude to
race being a basis for their assumptions but it is possible that the ideal type of mate is also a reflection of society’s ideal. As noted in the introduction, the ideal father is the opposite conceptualization of the dead-beat, absentee, black father.

Conclusion

Black West Indian immigrant fathers put positive child-rearing attitudes into practice and cover a breath of activities. Over 90 percent of my female respondents stated that their male partners were involved. The majority of my male respondents stated they were involved as well. The activities that the fathers engage in are not necessarily gender specific, but, they are age appropriate. The fathers will also change their activities as the children grow older. Female West Indian immigrants overwhelmingly state that father involvement is gender specific. Even though the financial aspect of fathering is not deemed to be the most important, West Indian immigrants always allude to the centrality of economic provision.

Disagreements between black West Indian male and female partners can consolidate the relationship and motivate the father to be involved, more involved, or not involved in some areas. On the other hand, disagreement can increase levels of involvement just as a means of placating the disagreements.

Two striking influences of migration on fatherhood are the impact of generational fathering and religion. If a father was involved, both male and female black West Indian immigrants noted that this was a motivating factor to be involved as well. However, in a number of cases, for the women, father involvement by their fathers served as a platform from which to seek out subsequent mates. These mates were not only to be involved like their own fathers, but be suitable mates in every other area as well. As selective cultural reproducers, women used religion to confirm males as the head of the household; both male and female immigrants
subscribed to this philosophy. It is interesting that they try to hold on to patriarchal values in fathering while assimilating into an egalitarian culture.
Works Cited


2 Ibid. 2001.


5 George, Sheba, M. *When Women Come First: Gender and Class in Transnational Migration*. University of California Press, 2005 demonstrates how men who came from a sending community in India lost social status in the immigration process as their wives became economically independent in the U.S. The men therefore tried to reclaim the dominance they once had by creating new roles for themselves in their church that set parameters for only patriarchal authority.


7 Brown, Janet, Patricia Anderson, and Alston Barrington Chevannes. *The Contribution of*


12 DeYoung, Yolanda, and Edward F. Zigler. “Machismo in Two Cultures: Relation to Punitive


20 To measure the independent effects that a father may have on father involvement, authors have used responses from both male and female parents. Harris, K. M., F. F. Furstenburg, Jr., and J. K. Marmer (1998) used a dataset with identical qualitative and quantitative measures of parental involvement. The dataset allowed them to compare and examine the independent effects of mother's and father's involvement on the father-child relationship during adolescence. The results affirmed the use of this methodology as they found beneficial effects for children of father's involvement in three domains; educational and economic attainment, delinquent behavior, and psychological well-being. I follow this method by asking similar involvement questions of both males and females. My data however does not have paired responses.


40 Ibid. 1997.

CHAPTER V.
THE INFLUENCE OF RACE ON FATHER INVOLVEMENT

Father involvement is particularly low in the black community [and] as a black man I have a better understanding of why a father has to be there for his children. (First-generation male, self-identified as black)

The quote suggests that black West Indian immigrants acknowledge that there is a lack of father involvement across all groups, but, specifically in the U.S. there is a widespread belief among the general public that very low levels exist in the black community, both locally (within and across Caribbean territories) and globally (Western states with large numbers of Diaspora blacks). So we understand that race dictates how father involvement is perceived and practiced by this West Indian immigrant respondent. The idea is that issues surrounding fathering are racialized throughout these communities; there are negative connotations associated with being a black father within and across Caribbean societies and so black West Indian immigrants have to dispel the myth of the global notions of the uninvolved black father. Through the racialization of fathering, black West Indians understand that father involvement means not only being there for your child as a father ought to be, but, being there for your child so that you will not be lumped into the pre-existing dead-beat, black father category. Underlying the understandings of a racialized father involvement is the awareness that black West Indian immigrants understand what it means to be black, and to be a black father, before entering the U.S. society. The quote also helps us to see that the racialization of father involvement forces changes in fathering behaviors and opinions of the part of the immigrants, yet, race will help to cement some fathering traits that the immigrants are socialized into from the Caribbean.
The following chapter highlights how racial self-identification impacts notions of fathering among black West Indian immigrants in the U.S. By openly challenging the negative perceptions of fathering in the black community in the U.S., West Indian immigrants yet again distance themselves from their African American counterparts and establish a fathering identity that fits them. The chapter begins with an overview of race and fathering. Next, I present findings on what black West Indian immigrants say about the influence of racial self-identity on fathering as it relates to continuities. I will then present findings on the changes in father involvement as a result of the impact of the immigrants’ racial self-identification.

**Race and Father Involvement**

Within the U.S., no matter how black West Indians immigrants identify themselves; Jamaican, Bajan, Trinidadian; generational status – first, second or third generation immigrant; or by gender (male or female), they are still lumped into a racial category created by the locale in which they now live; black. The stigma of being black carries negative connotations in almost every area of study and the role of the father within the black community carries negative stigmas as well. In the U.S. black fathers have been historically portrayed as ineffective and contributors to “a negative pathology or poor parenting” which has become a constant identifying marker.¹ Notwithstanding the unfounded findings pertaining to any persistent pathology of negative fathering among all people labeled as black, black West Indian immigrants are painfully aware that this negative label still persists.² A lot of the negative perceptions about African American fathers stem from inaccurate media portrayals coupled with literature aimed at examinations of lower-class black males who are not resident fathers within the households where their children are present.³
There are involved and uninvolved African-American fathers. So what good have African-American fathers done? African American fathers may not be able to financially support a family according to white middle-class standards, but they are involved in other ways. African American fathers are heavily invested in childcare as a type of involvement. In married African American families 40 percent of the fathers changed diapers, 77 percent played with the baby, 68 percent disciplined the children and 49 percent reported that they often took the children to the doctor or dentist.4

When it comes to their children’s education African American fathers help their children with their homework and provide cultural support and monitoring of the children under their care.5 As a measure of father involvement, the provision of cultural support has very positive outcomes for the children including, but not limited to, positively influencing their children’s educational outcomes, continuing the father role into and after college and concentrating on being a good role model.6

African American fathers are also more likely to be involved in teaching their children how to deal with the harsh unequal economic realities that they are currently facing, and will inevitably face throughout their lives. The fathers teach their children the nuances of their economic and social realities by helping them to understand the importance of building cultural capital to combat such negative realities.7 Despite the resiliency of the African American family, because West Indian migrants do not observe behaviors contrary to the stereotypes that are placed upon American native blacks, they tend to think that African American fathers are for the most part uninvolved.8

Literature on immigrant black fathers from the West Indies living in the U.S. is sparse. There is research on the continuity of parenting practices of Caribbean immigrants in New
York. \(^9\) There is work on generational or cultural dissonance between family structural arrangements and fathering in the home and host countries.\(^{10}\) There is also research that highlights that authoritative, authoritative and permissive parenting styles are similar among Caribbean immigrant mothers and fathers in the New York area, but most of the data is ethnically mixed or focuses on Indo-Caribbean West Indian migrants and none focus exclusively on father involvement among black West Indian immigrants.\(^{11}\) And when the fathers are assessed they are done so within the context of understanding the ideas and roles that immigrant women play within the household and within society.

To assess the impact of race on the immigrants’ perceptions of father involvement, I ask my respondents if their racial self-identification influences how they think about father involvement (they were asked in the questionnaire to state how they would identify themselves in racial terms). My assumption is that black West Indian immigrants utilize father involvement as another form of identity to separate themselves from African Americans, thereby creating another marker of identity. West Indian migrants are not shocked by the racial situation in the U.S. because before they migrate, they have learned about racial issues from the media and persons who have migrated.\(^{12}\) The only difference is that they are now experiencing it first-hand as it now dictates their day-to-day experiences. Roediger noted that Southern Europeans who migrated to the U.S. learned beforehand that in order to be classified as whites they had to participate in behaviors that separated themselves from native born blacks. They were categorized by Roediger as being White on Arrival (WOA) or White Before Coming (WBC) because of their understanding of how to become white before migrating to the U.S.\(^{13}\)

Turning Roediger on his head, I refer to black West Indian immigrants as being Black On Arrival (BOA) or Black Before Coming (BBC) because of their prior understanding of what it
means to be black in the U.S. and the active roles they play in trying to distance themselves from African Americans, specifically by using father involvement as a way of creating another separate identity.

Race and Father Involvement – Continuities

The question was asked about how the racial identity the respondents previously identified within the questionnaire shaped their thoughts on father involvement as immigrants. All male survey respondents stated that the racial identity they previously identified with in the questionnaire, played an integral role in how they perceived the issue of father involvement as immigrants. The findings point to some continuation of fathering practices or perceptions as a result of racial identification. As one second-generation, self-identified Caribbean male stated: 

_The way I was raised by my parents molded me into who I have been from the Caribbean..._

Another male respondent noted that: _Growing up I see the male from my race taking care of their children whether they were still involve with the mother or not._ (First-generation immigrant, self-identified as Caribbean). Another male respondent echoed similar sentiments.

_Not particularly my racial/ethnic identification, but I think there is a certain aura and sense of pride that Trinidadians possess. I think that this significantly contributed to my father’s passion for involvement that he wanted to come from no other but him. I carry that same passion._ (Second-generation male; self-identified as Caribbean)

First, the way the respondents presented arguments that racial self-identification played a role in shaping their thoughts on father involvement hinges on their racial pride as Caribbean folk. Such pride was either a major focus of their cultural experience being raised in the Caribbean, or, as children born in the U.S. and raised by Caribbean parents. For the respondents
who were a part of a family structure with an involved Caribbean father, the father was not just an involved parent. They are noting that the father was involved because he internalized encouraging Caribbean cultural values of fathering. We recognize that immigrant males hope to continue the positive trends they were exposed to in fathering due to the constructive views they have of their racial self-identities. Such constructive views were solidified in part due to the positive images they have of the males of Afro-Caribbean descent.

Race and Father Involvement – Changes

I think as a Caribbean male I see my views of father involvement being highly influenced by this context. A father must provide for and support his family regardless of his economic status. Being a role model, encouraging and training up the child to embrace values of respect for self and others, diligence and being ethical. (First-generation male, self-identified as Caribbean)

From the quote above, it is suggested that there is an economic aspect to fathering that still pervades the migrants’ notions of fathering and the economic aspect is closely tied to issues of race. The lack of being able to financially provide for the individuals within the family is a stigma on black fathers across the Caribbean. So when it is said that …as a black man I have a better understanding of why a father has to be there for his children (U.S.-born, second-generation male, self-identified as black), what is being suggested is that black West Indian males are aware of this perception of them and are trying to do things to change the perception. So a change is being made as migrant males are mindful that fathers can be involved in other ways, such as being good role models or teaching children self-respect. Race helps them to move
away from the negative stigmas and ideas attached to fathering, and they are able to change the way they father in the new cultural space.

Race also forces change in fathering due to some negative perceptions of blacks across the wider community. A self-identified Caribbean, first-generation male noted that some core influences on his fathering behaviors were *The high number of high school dropouts and teenage pregnancies*. Another first-generation male who self-identified as Caribbean noted that the *Levels of indiscipline among society’s youths have reached intolerable proportions* have persuaded him to be involved. Most notably, a first generation immigrant from Guyana who identifies himself as African American wrote that he is an involved father because he wanted his daughter to have more than he did. A male interviewee noted that:

I wish a lot more men [African Americans and some Caribbean men] would be involved in the rearing of their kids. It’s sad to see how fathers are pretty much sperm donors… It’s greater with the African American that with the Caribbean black. (First-generation male, self-identified as Caribbean)

And as parents of our son, I look at my husband and how he impacts our son’s life and the good that he has got from this American culture that has really impacted my son’s life so I see where they’re good things in the American culture. But on the other side I see too where they’re many absentee fathers and I see where society has to force men to face their responsibilities. And that is one of the things that bothers me because I see that happening so much. I work in a system where most of my students
are fatherless because I work in an urban environment. Most of their fathers are in jail. (Primrose. Personal interview)

These contextual sources all point to the knowledge that the migrant males and females have of blacks in the host country. Again, because immigrants are BOA or BBC, they are cognizant of the societal trends among African American youths and are trying to distance themselves from this group. Understandably, black West Indian males and females do not want their children to fall into the trap of becoming a negative statistic therefore the off-putting reports act as a push for them to be engaged in the lives of their children. Although it may seem intuitive, there must be a perception by them (West Indian migrants) that father involvement will help to deter their children from participating in harmful activities, why these environmental factors mean something to them.

We have a situation where the dominant discourse on the culture of fathering centers on how white fathers father. The oppositional subcultures, African American fatherhood and black West Indian fatherhood, are created and maintained by the overarching dictates of white fatherhood. The dominance of white fatherhood subconsciously forces black West Indians to create a fathering typology through their identity so that a distinct understanding of fathering can be stated and practiced by them which in the immigrant’s consciousness are qualitatively different from the fathering practices of African Americans. So when the immigrants previously mention that they understand that teenage pregnancy is high among African-American teens and the African-American fathers are seen as sperm donors and absentee fathers, they ensure that they create fathering behaviors and ideas that are racially grounded in oppositional cultural practices. Indeed the new fathering typology that the immigrants present has similar traits of white fatherhood and African American fatherhood; white fathers, African-American fathers and
black West Indian immigrant fathers are involved in similar ways at times, but in its Marxists sense, black West Indian immigrant father involvement represents the class interest of whites in the U.S. and so is created to be distinct from African Americans and closely resemble the fathering traits of whites.15 Black West Indian immigrants use the we/them dialectical language to separate their ideas of West Indian immigrant father from their African-American counterparts.

Of interest is that only one male respondent highlighted that racial identity heightened his sense of racial tensions within the U.S. society.

Yes, in the United States it has. I am a lot more anxious about the safety and comfort of my kids whenever they are away from home. I worry about their encounter with racism and discrimination and their ability to handle such attacks. (First-generation immigrant, self-identified as black)

By being BOA or BBC, black West Indian males understand what racism is like in the U.S. Both African Americans and West Indian immigrants face issues of racism because they are perceived as black by the general populace and racist attitudes and tensions still permeate the U.S. society. Any racist behavior that is meted out to an African American is similar in nature to those received by a West Indian immigrant. Like so much of his counterparts, this respondent is quick to provide security and a sense of calm to his children but his actions are based solely on the negative reactions they may encounter because of their race, and not due to issues relating to fathering. Additionally, West Indian male migrants are more likely to be racially harassed than female West Indian migrants. These experiences play into why race matters more for male migrants and this was expressed in the survey responses.
For female respondents, over half of them (53.85 percent) stated that their racial self-identification had no impact on their fathering perceptions. Black female West Indian immigrants are also BOA or BBC but they do not experience racism like their male counterparts which would explain the lack of influence of race on so many of them. Responses included *I don’t think my race or ethnicity has affected my thoughts.* (First-generation female, self-identified as Caribbean); *Not at all.* (First-generation female, self-identified as black); *It hasn’t because I know of people in all of these groups with varying degrees of father involvement.* (First-generation female, self-identified as Caribbean); *Not a question of race, a question of being a good human being.* (First-generation female, self-identified as Caribbean); *It doesn’t.* (First-generation female, self-identified as Caribbean); *It has not* (First-generation female, self-identified as Caribbean); *No impact.* (First-generation female, self-identified as black)

Racism is felt across the board, but, because of the stigma attached to black males in America, black West Indian migrant females are less likely to feel the brunt of racial prejudice. At the time of writing this paragraph, the Trayvon Martin case, the Walmart shooting and the Ferguson case and riots are prominent in the media. All the cases involve black males dying at the hands of white males. Such a gender discrepancy in the black-white divide can lead migrant West Indian females to feel more at ease and not view race as problematic, which therefore does less to impact their perceptions on various issues, father involvement being one of them.

A female respondent gives another insight into why racial identity may not influence female migrants at this point in time.

*I suppose I would think of the historical condition of the black [D]iaspora as a contributing factor to fluctuating perspectives on good fatherhood rather than migrating in the U.S. I haven’t been here long enough to feel*
that it has impacted upon my earlier position on [who I think is a] good
man-involved father. (First-generation female, self identified as
Caribbean)

For females, it is plausible that time becomes a factor for an issue such as racial self-
identification to have an impact on fathering perceptions. Male and female immigrants could
experience racial influences differently because of the length of time spent in the host country
just as how black male West Indian immigrants and their female counterparts experience racism
differently.

There is also the affirmation that the historical legacies of the race relationship between
blacks and whites and not necessarily inter-race nuances have impacted ideas of fatherhood. The
economic conditions that blacks had to endure, and in some cases are still enduring, are focal to
migrants in understanding how race impacts fatherhood. Another interesting point is though
research on race and migration can hardly be separated, I understand from the position of the
migrants there is the ability to separate the two and place one over the other. In this case, in the
migrant consciousness, racial issues take precedence over issues of migration, in explaining
fatherhood.

For the women who did state that racial-identity influenced their father perceptions, the
changes that they allude to were similar to the views in the U.S. society about the economic role
of fathering or the new nurturing father. A female respondent noted that: *It has molded me into
thinking that the main role of father involvement is providing financial support.* (First-generation
female, self-identified as Caribbean).
Definitely, definitely, definitely. And it’s not a feminine thing or
demasculinate you to embrace a child or to show affection. A man
does that! A real man can hug his wife and embrace his kids. A
real man can do that. It doesn’t make you less of a man to do those
things. And back home [in the West Indies] I didn’t see those
things. (Rosemarie. Personal interview)

For fathers, being able to financially provide for one’s family at a level satisfactory to society’s
conscience is frequently assumed to be the overarching characteristic of father involvement. The
response from the respondent above suggests that such a conceptualization of father involvement
was not the case where she comes from in her home country as she is now “molded” into a new
way of thinking. Such a response confirms two central points. First, the notions that female West
Indian immigrants have of father involvement encompasses more than just the bread-winner role.
Such ideas are a part of the female immigrant’s consciousness before migration. Second,
however, understandings of fathering in the U.S. have forced black West Indian females to start
thinking of fathering in terms of financial provision.¹⁸

Subsequently, the financial provider role is culturally exalted over other types of
involvements and is highlighted through the process of racial self-identification. The financial
provider role legitimizes patriarchy, the identity that is dominant in society. That most of the
male respondents or even the other female respondents did not allude to this in no way
diminishes the importance of this statement. Notwithstanding, through their descriptions of racial
or other identities, black West Indian immigrants do not view financial provision as the most
important part of the meanings of fatherhood. Observations of the changes in how black fathers
are defined in the U.S. does not go unnoticed among black West Indian female immigrants with
some moving away from just looking at fathering from a multi-dimensional approach to a uni-dimensional approach.

Findings also indicate that similar to male immigrants, for female immigrants, the impact of racial self-identification was based on the cultural values they placed on fathering in the home country. Again, these values were at times positive and at other times negative, but, they helped the women to formulate ideas of what father involvement was. A first generation female who identified as Caribbean wrote: *I can attest more to the ethnicity part of this question. Our cultural views on father involvement are very traditional with the strong influence of the Victorian era.* Another first generation immigrant female who also identified as Caribbean wrote that:

> Being from the Caribbean I am aware of the tendency of some men, especially those that are not married or involved with the mothers of their child/children, to see father involvement as a casual duty that they can take a vacation from and chip in here and there. However having a father that is the opposite of this and a good example of an involved father has shaped my views of how an involved father should behave and has made me not willingly to compromise on certain things.

Black West Indian female immigrants are cognizant that fathering across the Caribbean has strong cultural influences from both a white, middle-to-upper class European male culture, and a dominant black matrifocal culture. Father involvement influences are either racialized or steeped in ethnic nomenclatures which will similarly impact the notions that are created surrounding this phenomenon.
Conclusion

Black West Indian immigrants in the U.S. understand that there is a racialization of fatherhood. For black male West Indian immigrants, their racial self-identification played an integral role in how they perceived the issue of father involvement as immigrants. However, the roles they play are not the same. Racial identities either challenge black West Indian male migrants to do better than that of their African American counterparts when it come to fathering, or, follow the fathering patterns that they are connected to with pride. For female immigrants, here are also differences in how race is understood to impact fatherhood as well. Explanations range from the historical legacies of the dissimilar treatment of blacks across the Diaspora to contemporary understandings of negativity surrounding black fatherhood across the Caribbean. However, most female West Indian immigrants do not view the impact of race on fathering in the same way as the males.

Turning Roediger on his head we are able to assess that black West Indian immigrants are indeed Black On Arrival (BOA) and the prior knowledge of how the U.S. society identifies black fathers helps them to negotiate fathering perceptions. At the risk of being categorized as African American fathers, the immigrants actively try to change any fathering practice that is similar to the ones used linked to black fathers. We see that only the positive practices associated with the black population in the home country is continued in their new space.

On the other hand, most female immigrants from the West Indies do not think that their racial self-identification influences their ideas of fathering. There was some insight into why this is the case and Subsequent research should consider the influence of timing; how the length of time black West Indian immigrant males and females spend in the U.S. influences their racial identification impacts fathering perceptions.
Works Cited


12 Foner, Nancy. “West Indian Identity in the Diaspora: Comparative and Historical


17 Trayvon Martin, was a 17-year-old African-American high school student who lived in Miami Gardens, Florida with his mother Sybrina Fulton. In February 2012, Martin was visiting his father Tracy Martin in Sanford, Florida after receiving a ten-day suspension from Krop Senior High School. The suspension stemmed from the discovery of drug residue in Martin's book bag. George Zimmerman who is a neighborhood watch captain in Sanford call 911 to report “a suspicious person” in the neighborhood. He is instructed not to get out of his SUV or approach the person. Zimmerman disregards the instructions. Moments later, neighbors report hearing gunfire. Zimmerman acknowledges that he shot Martin, claiming it was in self-defense. Former neighborhood watch captain George Zimmerman was acquitted of the crime in July 2013.
On Aug. 5, 2014, two police officers responded to a 911 caller's report that a man with a rifle was pointing the weapon at shoppers inside a Beavercreek, Ohio Wal-Mart. Beavercreek Police later said that one of the officers shot 22-year-old John Crawford III after he failed to respond to calls to drop his weapon. Crawford III was later found to be carrying a pellet gun that he had picked up in the sporting goods section of the store, and surveillance video showed he was talking on his cellphone when the first shot hit him. On Sept. 27, a local grand jury voted not to indict the white officer who shot Crawford III. Immediately after the grand jury’s decision was made public, the Justice Department announced an investigation into Crawford III’s death.

Michael Brown was fatally shot on August 9, 2014, in Ferguson, Missouri (St. Louis). Brown, an 18-year-old black man, was fatally shot by Darren Wilson, a 28-year-old white police officer. Brown and his friend Dorian Johnson were walking down the middle of the street when Wilson drove up and ordered them to move to the sidewalk. Brown and Wilson struggled through the window of the police vehicle until Wilson's gun was fired, either intentionally or as a result of the struggle. Brown and Johnson then fled in different directions, with Wilson in pursuit of Brown. Wilson shot Brown six times, killing him. Witness reports differ as to whether and when Brown had his hands raised, and whether he was moving toward Wilson, when the final shots were fired. The shooting sparked protests and unrest in Ferguson in part due to the belief among many that Brown was surrendering as well as longstanding racial tensions between the majority-black community and the majority-white city government and police.

18 McAdoo, John Lewis. “Changing Perspectives on the Role of the Black Father.” *Fatherhood*

CHAPTER VI.
CONCLUDING REMARKS

What does this all mean?

My project examines some pertinent questions currently not covered by the immigration literature or research on father involvement. This research project addressed three main questions: first, it located how West Indian immigrants across the United States define father involvement. Subsidiary questions focused on the ways migration shaped West Indian migrants views on father involvement, and if migrants racial self-identification shaped their perceptions on father involvement. My research found that while many of the fathering practices from the West Indies continue in the United States, the meaning/definition of fatherhood had changed as a consequence of migration. Furthermore, the study states that racialization of migrants in the US, and being identified as black men, has impact on father involvement. Finally, my research suggests that fathering has emerged as an arena where West Indian immigrants are carving out an identity that separates them from being identified as African American.

Why is my project important?

My project is some ways is similar to those that have been done before, but, it is also very different. Similar to other works, I do explore the Caribbean family as an institution that is largely affected by the migratory process because of the importance of the family to Caribbean migration. Mary Chamberlain argues that the family accommodated, encouraged and often depended on migration so much so that migration itself, as well as the expectation to migrate, has become not only a component of the culture of Caribbean islands, but more importantly, migration has become a component of the family itself.¹
My project is different in that it focuses on the men within the black West Indian immigrant family in the U.S. To a large extent, the focus has been on women in the Caribbean migrant family. When examinations of men are done, they are viewed through the lens of the women in these households, or they are viewed as appendages to the women. My project gives men their own voice on an issue that is salient to them as immigrants. We must remember that men also migrate and the migration process may impact them differently from women, and independently from women. Through my project men are reclaimed in the immigration literature where they have been marginalized due the feminization of Caribbean migration to the U.S. But more importantly, my project allows men to be reclaimed in the black family literature, not as absentee, dead-beat fathers, but as men who are aware of the importance of the fathering role and actively participate in this phenomenon. I am mindful that project cannot generalize to all black men yet it solidifies that blacks are not a monolithic group and cannot be investigated as such.

What are my findings?

Immigrants carry their cultural practices, including those of what father involvement is. Fathers reported that similar to the Caribbean, they remain involved in various fathering practices such as infant care and communication. As is the case across the Caribbean, for most black West Indian immigrants, being an involved father mean that a father will participate in gender appropriate activities with his children. This position was endorsed by all females, as opposed to half of the males.

My project did unearth some interesting paradoxes that pertain to women’s views on fathers. Contrary to their egalitarians views, black West Indian immigrant females pulled on religious ideology to confirm strict gender parenting roles and as the basis for the continued practice of gender specific roles in the new cultural space. While advocating that migration
offers the freedom of an egalitarian relationship, it is interesting that most immigrant females stated that males should be the head of the households largely because this is one of the tenets of Christianity. Next, black West Indian immigrant females who stated that their fathers’ influenced current perceptions of father involvement, noted that their fathers are instrumental in showing them what a possible mate should look like; their fathers fathering behaviors is aligned to a possible mate and the type of person he should be. In a society where marital relationships are highly revered, yet hardly followed, mate selection is prized and so the type of mate one selects is instrumental in reaching this goal. The idea is that a father who is involved is a model for what an intimate partner should be. Wrapped-up in that idea is that he will also be an involved father.

Changes in the Meanings of Father Involvement

The research definitely points to changes emerging in the meaning of fatherhood as a consequence of migration. Over 90 percent of the immigrant males stated that father involvement entailed a holistic approach to how a father interacts with his child or children. Firstly, with regard to the changes in fathering behaviors and perceptions, being able to financially provide for a child does not necessarily demonstrate that positive fathering is taking place; financial provision is just one aspect of fathering. For the immigrants, the father child interactions that gauge father involvement are not only tied to the tangible things that a father may be able to provide for his child/children, but, the interactions are also tied to emotional and cognitive elements as well. Thematically, the majority of the responses alluded to fathering as a multi-dimensional process.

Secondly, Black West Indian immigrant males ascribe to the nurturing fathering. Immigrant males enter into a society where they will earn less, on average, than their female
counterpart. To ensure that they actively participate in every area of their children’s lives will take considerable economic resources. And men who are not able to do so are seen as failures. For the majority of the respondents, especially men, to state that father involvement is defined by total involvement again shows the extent to which how West Indian migrants define fathering is aligned to the current culture of fathering that is perpetuated by the dominant class in the U.S. Next, fathering does not function as a result of social class for the migrants. Before migration, the respondents and interviewees all came from varying class backgrounds in the West Indies. As U.S. migrants they occupy different positions on the socio-economic ladder, yet, their perceptions of fatherhood are all similar.

The emotional development of a child, the physical development of a child, and the time spent in any father-child activity, is just as important as, or outweighs, being able to provide tangible items for the child and the family. There is the move away from looking at father involvement in the traditional role to one whereby a father seeks to infuse himself into areas of his child/ children’s life/ lives that were originally deemed off limits.4 Fathering for black West Indian immigrants becomes an artifact of the cultural space they now occupy. Third, black West Indian migrants also define father involvement as an ongoing process over the life-span of the father-child relationship.

Fourth, father involvement is not limited to the individual household nor is father involvement limited to the individuals within the household. In addition, father involvement is not confined to the child, or children, that are linked to the male who is attached to a particular household. The idea is that father involvement lends itself to the community to anyone who is in need and helps to ensure the stability of society. So for black West Indian immigrants, father involvement carries a much broader understanding that the limited one that is attached to
fathering in the scholarship and in the U.S. As I previously stated, father involvement is an ever evolving phenomenon and West Indian immigrants are integral to the understanding of at least a part of that evolution.

*Changes Due to Migration*

There are changes that are taking place in fathering behaviors among black West Indian immigrants as a result of migration. Specifically, black West Indian migrant men have moved away from the gendered roles that characterize Caribbean parenting. Most black West Indian immigrants noted that their fathers influenced their fathering thoughts and behaviors. Just like in the Caribbean, whether or not the father-child relationship was negative or positive, West Indian migrants chose to use that relationship as a guide to how they should perceive father involvement as immigrants. In all cases the migrant’s father-child relationship pushed them to consider fathering in very positive terms and they continue these positive fathering perceptions and behaviors even in households where the male is not the biological father of the children that are present in the household.

Black West Indian immigrants can learn how to be involved fathers, or what to look for in involved fathers, from the father-child relationship that they were a part of, or are currently a part of. If the migrant’s relationship with their father was either positive or negative, they use it as a guide in how they perceive fathering as migrants. Since father involvement is not static in nature and West Indian immigrants take on the perception or actual father involvement that is equivalent to the dominant cultural norms at that point in time, the times dictate that fathers be continually present in the lives of their children and that they even rearrange their lives to ensure that the needs of the children are always taken care of. Even though this may seem as a continuation of fathering because the immigrants are stating that they will engage in fathering
practices that they observed while being raised in the Caribbean, it can also be viewed as a change because such fathering practices were not the dominant cultural fathering practices across the Caribbean as that time.

A large majority of my respondents (66 percent) stated that migration had no impact on their perceptions of father involvement whereas the majority of my female interviewees indicated that migration has had impacts on their understandings of fatherhood. I only had 5 female interviewees so I am not able to generalize from their responses and they could be a representation of the minority of female respondents who claimed that migration impacted their perceptions of fathering. The explanations they presented why migration does not impact their perceptions on farther involvement are interesting.

For those who did notice an impact, they argued that migration expanded their views on the different sides to father involvement. Migration allows migrants to obtain other views on fathering that they were not exposed to in their island territory and gives added meanings to how they previously perceived of father involvement. Some of these new views are observed as positive and are co-opted alongside those fathering behaviors and ideas that have been retained from the Caribbean.

Black West Indian immigrant males who are fathers are putting positive child-rearing attitudes into practice and they cover a breath of activities. Migration creates yet another re-interpretation of masculinity for black West Indian males. These immigrant males come from societies that take pride in affirming masculinity in fathering behaviors, and so pre-migration fathering is heavily gender-based. However, in the U.S. they are not shy about engaging in father-child activities that are not viewed as masculine. The women affirm that the migrant men are participating in numerous activities.
That women should expect, and in one case demand, that men should still participate in the lives of their children from a prior relationship while being involved in a current relationship with their own children demonstrates that migration helps to modify fathering expectations for immigrant females. It is possible that persons in the community know that the male has children from a previous relationship. In a society where the popular expression is that black fathers are uninvolved, migrant women are aware of this rhetoric and so as not to be embarrassed or they believe it is the appropriate thing to do, the women in the current relationship do not want persons on the outside to associate the current male intimate partner with being an uninvolved father and so they push for him to be involved across multiple households.

Tension both within the home and outside of the home work together, or separately, to impact fathering perceptions. There may be certain cultural practices that a migrant wants to continue but differential views by his/her mate may inhibit these practices. Such was the case with the immigrant male who wanted to use corporal punishment to discipline his child. But he also alluded to the fact that he was going to school as well and so this puts a strain on being able to father the way he would want to (most of my sample indicated that school was a significant reason for migration). School as an outside tension works in conjunction with problems within the relationship, to impact fathering. But tensions within the home can also push migrants to be involved. Migration may create issues that put a strain on the relationship. In addition to school, most of my male respondents indicated that work was a source of tension. Female immigrants may express that their partner is being as involved as they think they should. This may serve as a wake-up-call to the male in the relationship to try and be more involved.
Changes Due to Race

Racialization of father involvement forces changes in fathering behaviors and opinions of the part of the immigrants, yet, race will help to cement some fathering traits that the immigrants are socialized into from the Caribbean. The stigma of being black carries negative connotations in almost every area of study and the role of the father within the black community is no different. In the U.S. black fathers have been historically portrayed as uninvolved which has become a constant identifying marker.7 West Indian immigrants are painfully aware that this negative label still persists and demonstrate that the racial self-identification they create does help them to distinguish themselves from African Americans in the area of father involvement, but, it does allow us to understand how they perceive some fathering continuities as well.

Changes in Identity Formation

Immigrants take an active role in the creation of their identity as they enter a new society. The country of one’s birth places the most significant role in identity formation, yet this is problematic because national identities are not necessarily uniformed. So for black West Indians, a large part of why there is a lack of an uniformed identity has to do with the fact that identities are created in the individual’s consciousness.8

As regards racial self-identification, almost 78 percent of my respondents chose ‘Caribbean’ as their identifying marker.9 West Indian immigrants identified best with the term Caribbean because the people and culture around them were distinctly Caribbean and so they take their cultures cues from foods, music, language, dress and so on, which help to create and affirm a Caribbean identity even as migrants in the U.S. They do hold on to intangible cultural markers as well that are distinctly Caribbean that help to confirm a Caribbean identity.
Black West Indian immigrants who self-identified as Caribbean, Caribbean is used as their foundational identity and then they explain how the other identities they hold to emanate from the Caribbean identity. These identities could be Caribbean, black, Afro-Jamaican, Jamaican and even South American. That they are able to create their own identities lets us understand that no one identity is adequate enough for them to identify themselves as individuals or even as a group.

The label black is not a term that is actually ascribed to the color of the migrants’ skin; black is a historical legacy that is grounded in Africa. This legacy is one that they are proud of and are willing to keep as part of the identities that they create in the U.S. The re-articulation of the black label is a new process of identification and gives the migrants a mobilizing identity that celebrates Africa and things African.10

However, despite the re-articulation of the black label and a celebration of blackness, the prior knowledge that West Indians have about being labeled black also forces them to actively try and distance themselves from this label and by doing so distance themselves from African Americans.11 The transnational nature of the West Indian migrant identity creates the opportunity for West Indian migrants to adopt an ethnic or home country identity to combat racial obstacles in the U.S. At the same time it enables black West Indian migrants to distance themselves from native born blacks. So while West Indian immigrants use their racial or ethnic status to minimize black-white racial disparities, disparities which they view as temporary and can be overcome with hard work, African Americans view black-white racial disparities as systematic and entrenched in the U.S. society. The way in which both ethnic groups view racial inequalities in the U.S help to produce defining characteristics that West Indians use to separate both groups.
In the end, black West Indians are creating an ethnic identity of immigrants in the U.S. of black migrants. But they do not identify with or as African American which shows that African Americans. Black West Indian immigrants in the U.S. then create an identity, or identities, based on the ongoing negotiation between themselves and African Americans, whites and other ethnic minorities. But for the most part, their identification stems from the negotiations between themselves and African Americans. Negative identity characterizations are attached to African American fathers, so West Indians use the negative notions to help create positive father involvement perceptions. And so fatherhood becomes part of an arena to combat racism as well as to separate themselves from African Americans. The variations in the articulation of the black identity in the black Diaspora show that there is that need to highlight and study the within-race differences among blacks across the Diaspora.

On one hand, racial self-identification plays a role in shaping immigrants thoughts on father involvement based on their racial pride as Caribbean folk. Caribbean fathering was a positive experience for them and there were certain traits that emanated from this experience that they wish to continue as migrants and their identification brings this out.

On the other hand race helps black West Indian immigrants to move away from the negative stigmas and ideas attached to fathering, and they are able to change the way they father in the new cultural space. Race also forces change in fathering due to some negative perceptions of blacks across the wider community. Nancy Foner asserts that Caribbean people have detailed knowledge of the issues that take place in the U.S. before they migrate.12 Being Black On Arrival (BOA) or Black Before Coming (BBC), black West Indians are mindful of the negative stereotypes attached to blacks in general, and black fathers.13 The U.S. society views black fathers as uninvolved and so they ensure to create an identity that separates them from the dead-
beat stereotype through being involved fathers. Even in cases where they do not fulfill the fathering role the traditional way, they ensure that they father in other ways.

Again, the impact of racial self-identification is gendered. Most black West Indian female immigrants note that the racial identity they indentify with has not impact on their fathering perceptions. Racism is felt across the board, but, because of the stigma attached to black males in America, black West Indian migrant females are less likely to feel the brunt of racial prejudice which would explain why an issue such as race does not impact more of them.14

*Future Research*

A shortcoming of my project was that the sample size was relatively small negating any type of meaningful generalization. Additionally, the sample was characterized by mostly by college educated respondents which does not allow me to make comparable socio-economic class examinations. My project is also limited in that I did not do any comparable work between black West Indian immigrants and any other immigrant group represented in the U.S. to see if my findings would hold just for black West Indian immigrants, or, if indeed my findings are used by other ethnic immigrant groups. Notwithstanding the limitations, my study made a great contribution by adding black West Indian male voices to the literature.

My intension was to use race to merge the black family literature and the immigration literature. Race is an adequate tool to hone this project because for black West Indians, historically they have suffered under the hands of racial prejudice and have spent time in ‘restoring’ and ‘transvaluing’ their racial identities. Race has served to marginalize this ethnic group who has in turn used race to build complex identities that celebrate race. So we cannot call for a total abandonment of race as Paul Gilroy would suggest. By doing that we will fail to
understand the reference schema that has helped black West Indian immigrants in the U.S. to highlight the issues of fathering that are important to them.\textsuperscript{15}
Works Cited

http://migrationeducation.de/51.1.html?&rid=118&cHash=1eee12c0ae606f4e9240ee0a68336729


APPENDIX A.
SURVEY INSTRUMENT

“It’s not just about giving them money”:
Cultural representations of father involvement among West Indian immigrants in the U.S.
Survey Questionnaire

This survey questionnaire is part of a study on the perceptions of father involvement (fathering) from the point of view of West Indian immigrants living in the USA being conducted by an American Culture Studies doctoral student at Bowling Green State University as part of dissertation research. The survey intends to capture what father involvement means to a wide variety of West Indian migrants and to examine the things that have helped shape their thoughts on father involvement. The purpose of gathering information relating to West Indian migrants’ perceptions about father involvement is to first understand what father involvement means to this group of people; to hear what father involvement is in their own voice. The research intends to explore the issues that have shaped West Indian immigrants’ thoughts about fatherhood and how, if any, these thoughts have changed as a result of migration. All information will then be examined and written in a dissertation so everyone can have access to the study to help in future research on fathers in general and more specifically, black fathers in the Diaspora.
Depending on how you choose to complete the questionnaire (electronically or hand written), please type, circle, write or highlight the appropriate responses. Please skip questions not relevant to you.

**Demographic data**
1. Please identify your gender below
   - Male
   - Female

2. What is your age at last birthday?

3. a) Where you born in the United States? Yes/ No
   b) In which state do you currently live?

4. If you were not born in the United States, in which country were you born?

5. What year did you move to the United States?

**Parent Information**
6. a) Was your mother born in the United States? Yes/ No
   b) If your mother was not born in the United States, where was she born?

7. a) Was your father born in the United States? Yes/ No
   b) If your father was not born in the United States, where was he born?

**Education**
8. What is the highest level of education you have attained?
   (A) 8th grade or less
   (B) more than 8th grade, but did not graduate from high school
   (C) went to a business, trade, or vocational school instead of high school
   (D) high school graduate
   (E) completed a GED
   (F) went to a community college
   (G) went to a business, trade or vocational school after high school
   (H) went to college, but did not graduate
   (I) graduated from a college or university
   (J) professional training beyond a 4-year college or university
   (K) never went to school
Employment History

9. What is your main occupation?

10. As best as you can remember, please write the past five jobs that you were employed in starting with your most recent employment.
A.
B.
C.
D.
E.

Religion

11. What is your religious affiliation?

Race/Ethnicity

12. Which group below do you identify with best?
   (A) Caribbean (B) African American (C) Black (D) American Other: ____________________________

13. Why do you best identify with the group you answered in Question 12?
   __________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________

Family History

14. If you are a male, which role below best describes your current position in the household in which you live?
   A) Biological father
   B) Step-father
   C) Adoptive father
   D) Big uncle
   E) Father figure
   F) Foster father
   G) Son
   H) Grandfather
   I) If there is a role you play not listed here, please specify: ____________________________
15. If you are a female, which role below best describes your current position in the household in which you live?
   A) Biological mother
   B) Step-mother
   C) Adoptive mother
   D) Big auntie
   E) Mother figure
   F) Foster mother
   G) Sister
   H) Grandmother
   I) If there is a role you play not listed here, please specify: ________________________

16. How many children are/were in your care?

17. What is/are the age(s) of the child/children currently under your care?
   ___/___/___/___/___/___/___/___/___/___/___/___/___/___/___/___/___/___/___/___/___/___/___/___/___/___/___/___/___/___/___/

**Relationship**

18. What is your current relationship status?
   (A) Married (B) Single (C) Living with someone but not married (D) Divorced (E) Widowed

19. Is your current spouse/partner living in the United States? Yes/ No
   (If your answer is “Yes”, please go to Question 21)

20. If your answer is “No” to Question 19, in which country does your current spouse/partner live?
   __________________________________________________________________________

21. Is your current spouse/partner currently living with you? Yes/ No

22. Please describe what the quality of your relationship is like with your current spouse/partner?

(FEMALES PLEASE GO TO QUESTION 26)
This section (Question 23 to 25) is only for males who are fathers; fathers when you are finished with this section go to question go to question 31). All other males go to Question 31.

23. As a father, what things do you do with your children to be a part of their lives?

24. Is your father involvement gendered (whether or not you have a male and female child, do you do things differently with a male child than with a female child)? Please describe them here.

25. What tensions do you face in your role as an involved father (what are the things, persons or circumstances that might hinder you from being involved)?

[Females Only] Please answer what applies to you in question 26 to 30 then go to Question 31

26. Is your current spouse/partner an involved father? Yes/ No
   (If your answer is “No” please go to Question 28.)

27. Please tell me why you think he IS an involved father?

28. Please tell me why you think he is NOT an involved father?
29. What would you like him to do as a father?

30. Do you think father involvement is gendered (whether or not you have a male and female child, do fathers do things differently with a male child than with a female child)? Please describe them here.

**THIS SECTION IS ALL RESPONDENTS, BOTH MALE AND FEMALE**

The section asks for your ideas on the Meaning of Fatherhood (please write as much as you want to for questions 31 to 40 on the following pages)

31. As a child growing up, when you think about the man that raised you (biological father, step-father, adoptive father, big uncle, father figure, foster father etc), how has your relationship with him (whether it was a positive or negative relationship) shaped your ideas on father involvement? The ideas could be positive or negative.

32. What does it mean to you to be a man?
33. What does it mean to you to be a good man?

34. What does father involvement mean to you?

35. For males who are not fathers, do you think father involvement is gendered (whether or not you have a male and female child, do fathers do things differently with a male child than with a female child)? Please describe them here.

36. How have your ideas of father involvement changed over time?
37. How has religion shaped your thoughts on father involvement?

38. How has your neighborhood shaped your thoughts on father involvement?

39. How has migration shaped your thoughts on father involvement?

40. How has your race/ethnicity (Question 12) shaped your thoughts on father involvement?

41. What other persons, things, situations etc (whether positive or negative) have shaped your thoughts on father involvement?
Is there anything else that you would want me to know about father involvement? Please write/type below.

Thank you for completing this survey!
Informed Consent for West Indian immigrants in the U.S..

My name is Lance Gibbs and I am an American culture studies doctoral student at Bowling Green State University. My advisor is Dr. Vibha Bhalla (Associate Professor, Department of Ethnic Studies at Bowling Green State University). My research topic is titled “It’s not just about giving the money”: Cultural representations of father involvement among West Indian immigrants in the United States. You are being asked to participate in my research because you are a West Indian migrant living here in the United States.

The main purpose of my study is to capture what father involvement means to West Indian migrants living in the United States and to examine the factors that shape West Indian migrants’ thoughts on father involvement. My study will also ask if West Indian migrants’ views on father involvement changed as a result of the migration experience and what is the impact of ethnicity on their views on father involvement. There is no direct benefit to you the individual, but, the overall benefit of the research is that the study will help scholars, and society, to understand what father involvement means from the perspective of West Indian migrants themselves.

The main method of collecting data for this project is by you answering the questions on a survey questionnaire. You can access the questionnaire via the web link https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/98MCS53. The secondary method will be by participating in individual oral in-depth interviews. I may, or not, ask you to be an in-depth interview participant as my selection method for participants is purely random. Each survey questionnaire should last for roughly one hour. Each in-depth interview should last for an hour as well but be mindful that the interviews can last as long as you take to talk about issues relating to father involvement. The oral interviews will be audio taped with a digital audio recorder. Questions in the survey questionnaire will ask what you consider yourself to be regarding your race/ethnicity. Other questions will ask about basic demographic data regarding you, questions about your family, questions about your relationship, education, employment. The main part of the survey questionnaire will ask you to write about your views on father involvement. The in-depth oral interviews will ask you to talk about your migration experience in the USA, your views on father involvement from the Caribbean, your views on father involvement here in the USA and how migration has impacted your perceptions on father involvement.

Both the survey questionnaires and oral interviews will be administered to you by me at a time and location convenient to you. But, if you received the recruitment letter via email, the survey questionnaire will be emailed to you and you will complete the questionnaire electronically. The
questionnaire will be returned to me via email upon completion at lgibbs@bgsu.edu. The oral interviews will follow a basic pattern where I will ask you a question and you will respond verbally taking as much time as you deem applicable to adequately cover the question.

Your participation is completely voluntary. You are free to withdraw at any time. You may decide to skip questions or discontinue participation at any time without penalty. Deciding to participate or not will not affect your relationship with BGSU.

For confidentiality to be maintained, the data, consent forms and oral interview tapes will be stored in the American culture studies main office locked in a file cabinet housed at Bowling Green State University. The oral in-depth interviews will not have any names attached to them on the tapes or in the interviews. But the interviews will be face-to-face so to ensure confidentiality, I will use the term “Interviewee 1, Interviewee 2…” to link participants to tape responses. My advisor and I will be the only persons who have access to the data. The data and consent forms will be destroyed after the responses are copied to a word document.

The risk to you for participating in this study is no more than those experienced in everyday life. Minimal risks may occur if confidentiality is breached but I will safeguard against this by locking all consent forms in an office at Bowling Green State University. Next, no identifiers will be on the survey questionnaires so there is no way to match completed questionnaires to specific consent forms. After the study is completed all consent forms will be destroyed leaving no link between consent forms (you the individual) and completed surveys.

If you have any questions or concerns, I can be reached at (646) 579-1798 or lgibbs@bgsu.edu. My advisor can be reached at (419) 372-2796 or at vibha@bgsu.edu. You may also contact the Chair, Human Subjects Review Board at 419-372-7716 or hsrb@bgsu.edu, if you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this research. Thank you for participating in my research.

I have been informed of the purposes, procedures, risks and benefits of this study. I have had the opportunity to have all my questions answered and I have been informed that my participation is completely voluntary. I agree to participate in this research.

____________________________________
Participant Signature
DATE: June 30, 2014

TO: Lance Gibbs
FROM: Bowling Green State University Human Subjects Review Board

PROJECT TITLE: [479058-3] "It's not just about giving them money": Cultural representations of father involvement among West Indian immigrants in the U.S..

SUBMISSION TYPE: Continuing Review/Progress Report

ACTION: APPROVED

APPROVAL DATE: June 30, 2014

EXPIRATION DATE: June 29, 2015

REVIEW TYPE: Expedited Review

REVIEW CATEGORY: Expedited review category # 7

Thank you for your submission of Continuing Review/Progress Report materials for this project. The Bowling Green State University Human Subjects Review Board has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a project design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

Please note that you are responsible to conduct the study as approved by the HSRB. If you seek to make any changes in your project activities or procedures, those modifications must be approved by this committee prior to initiation. Please use the modification request form for this procedure.

All UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS involving risks to subjects or others and SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported promptly to this office. All NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this project must also be reported promptly to this office.

This approval expires on June 29, 2015. You will receive a continuing review notice before your project expires. If you wish to continue your work after the expiration date, your documentation for continuing review must be received with sufficient time for review and continued approval before the expiration date.

Good luck with your work. If you have any questions, please contact the Office of Research Compliance at 419-372-7716 or hsr@bgsu.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence regarding this project.

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within Bowling Green State University Human Subjects Review Board’s records.
APPENDIX D.
CHARACTERISTICS OF INTERVIEWEES

1. Mrs. Brown

Mrs. Brown in 71 years old, married to respondent number 2, Mr. Brown, and has been living in US since 1961 (52 years). She first migrated to the U.S to Alabama during the height of the civil rights movement. Both her parents were born in Jamaica. She has three adult sons, two of whom are currently married with children. Mrs. Brown can be considered middle-class. She lives in a rural mid-west township. Her home is a ranch-styled home with a two-car garage and has large farm lands all around the house. Her home is not a typical home where West Indian migrants would be observed living; West Indians immigrants are more likely to be living in apartments in the large cities in New York or Miami, or in homes with no farm land surrounding the house. Mrs. Brown served as the person who vetted my interview questions on her husband behalf. She was very pointed when answering my interview questions; she did not elaborate on her responses. Mrs. Brown states that she is black.

2. Mr. Brown

Mr. Brown is 81 years old and married to my first interviewee. He is short in stature and looks more like 40 years old than 80 years old. He has been living in the U.S. since 1967 (46 years). Both of his parents are Jamaican born. He completed graduate studies in the U.S. and has worked for his entire career in the educational system in the U.S. He migrated to the U.S and came straight to the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama during the height of the civil rights movement. He was very easy to talk to and was enthused about my project and engaged in lengthy discussions about my interview questions. Mr. Brown
does some farming around his home and plants crops that are indigenous to Jamaica (sorrel, calaloo and gungo peas) in addition to crops that are common to the rural Mid-West (eggplants, collard greens, tomatoes and corn). Mr. Brown identifies with being Jamaican.

3. **Marlon**

A 27 year old, single male, born in Jamaica to Jamaican born parents. He has been living in the U.S. for four years. The interview was completed in the home of interviewee number 4, Primrose (Primrose later granted me an interview). He is a graduate student completing his Masters degree and considers himself to be lower middle-class because of his current financial status as a student. Marlon was very clean-cut and well put together. He was also very composed in his speech. He was very pointed when answering the interview questions; he was not blunt, just to the point. Marlon states that he is black.

4. **Primrose**

Primrose is a 40 year old female who migrated to the U.S. in December 2002. She is married to Marvin and they have an eight year old son. Both her parents were born in Jamaica. She works in the education system in the city of Dayton, Ohio and was completing her doctoral degree at the time of the interview. She was very passionate about the topic of father involvement and talked at length about each interview question making sure to give me context about each response she was giving. Primrose was very comfortable talking about issues of race and parenting and comparing and contrasting those issues with the U.S. and Jamaica. Primrose considers her identity to be Caribbean, Jamaican and Jamaican woman.
5. **Rose**

Rose is a 45 year old single female who has lived in the U.S. for over 20 years. Both her parents are born in Jamaica. She is currently unemployed but has worked in the health field for most of her in the U.S. She was passionate talking about the role of the father and was very ardent about comparing what she observed a father ought to be based on what she observed in her home from her father, and mother, while growing in Jamaica, and what she observed from fathers here in the U.S. Rose states that she is black.

6. **Roy**

Roy is a single 38 year old male who lives in the Bronx. He has been living in the U.S. for over 26 years. His father currently lives in Jamaica whereas he currently lives with his mother. Roy works in the educational field with developmentally delayed individuals. He teaches them an array of activities from learning to brush their teeth to managing their money. He was comfortable talking about the issue of father involvement and grounded most of his responses in the experiences he had with his father. He completed some college education and considers himself to be alright as regards his socio-economic status. Roy identifies as Caribbean.

7. **Monique**

She is 32 years old, married with two children and lives in Far Rockaway, Queens. Monique has been living in the U.S. since 1990 (23 years). Both her parents were born in Guyana. She has some college education. Started her education experience in the U.S. in the fourth grade and it was a bad experience for her. She served in the U.S. military and stated that this has helped to shape her views on immigrant issues. Spoke passionately about her father and the influence he had, and currently has, on her life as a mother, wife
and in her seeking a life partner. Monique considers herself to be both Caribbean and South American.

8. Andy
He is a 40 year old married male who has been living in Far Rockaway, Queens for over 18 years. He has two children who are 15 and 16 years old from a previous marriage. Both his parents are Jamaican born. He graduated from high school and went to college for about a year in Jamaica but says he definitely has plans to go back to school. He works in the health delivery field (delivery of over-the-counter medication to hospitals) and is currently trying to work only one job so that he can stay home more with his children. He has his children on the weekend and some holidays so he is trying to maximize that time he has with them. He states that doing this will get him more involved in their lives and create a healthier family lifestyle for them all. Andy considers himself to be Afro-Jamaican.

9. Princess
Princess is a 21 years old, single female who lives in Detroit. She was born in the U.S. to a Jamaican born father and a U.S. born mother but they are not married (her mother is a single mother). She is an undergraduate student, not employed, and was on pace to complete her bachelor degree in May 2014. She considers herself to be in the middle-class. She feels she needs to embrace the Caribbean side of her identity more; she doesn’t want to feel like she is leaving out that side of her identity. She counts herself lucky to have multiple sides to her identity. Princess states that her identity is black.
10. Marvin

He is a 42 years old male, living in the U.S. 17 years now and married to Primrose. They have one son together. He completed high school in Jamaica and completed both his undergraduate and graduate degrees in the United States. Marin works as a professional in the auto industry as a general sales manager for a Nissan franchise in Dayton, Ohio. Because of his job and his wife’s profession, he considers himself to be in the middle-class. Marvin considers himself to be both black and Jamaican.
Collecting data can be problematic. My early forays into data collection in Jamaica for my Master’s thesis were difficult. I assumed that this was because of the sensitive nature of the project: my research topic dealt with people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA). I assumed that the stigma attached to PLWHA was the reason for the very small number of respondents, despite camping out all day at a HIV hospice sometimes because I was told by the caretaker that I would be granted an interview with a PLWHA; I was usually turned away in the evening.

I thought that my current research would not be so difficult since I was exploring an issue that has always been a hot topic in the immigrant community and does not conjure up images of stigma and discrimination as HIV/AIDS does (there are West Indians who would vehemently argue otherwise). I anticipated that I would get numerous responses to my surveys and solicitations for in-depth interviews. I was wrong! The current project had problems from getting persons to actually answer the survey when they said they would, to the lack of enthusiasm or motivation by West Indian immigrant males to participate in a study that was all about them, to respondents writing responses that did not actually address the question. Respondents would wait for weeks to complete the survey when they promised they would do so within a few days. I am mindful that if I am not physically there to oversee the completion of surveys that this type of problem can persist.

I resorted to my personal contacts to recruit survey participants. Most of my contacts were either recent PhDs who have just accepted faculty positions at universities or colleges, recent PhD graduates going out on the job market, or are doctoral candidates. Therefore, the responses I gathered from these contacts were skewed toward respondents who are currently
attending colleges, or have completed a college degree. A vast majority of my contacts are in areas with large West Indian enclaves; therefore a majority of my data is from New York and Florida. However, my project is still rounded as I was able to have contacts in the Southern and Mid-Western regions of the U.S. recruit respondents on my behalf. These areas are not known to have large West Indian immigrant communities.

Sending completed responses was also problematic and I had my personal contacts continually nudge possible respondents to ensure that they completed the surveys on time. I also contacted persons in Jamaica to see if they could gather respondents for me here in the U.S. This did not work out as I thought it would, but it did help to spread the word on my dissertation and I gained encouragement for my work. There were some persons who just did not want to participate in my survey or interview. One reason was persons were actually not comfortable doing any type of audio recording.

Once I received the questionnaires I noticed that many respondents wrote answers that were unrelated to the question asked. I found this to be more prevalent among the female respondents. For example, when I asked the question of the impact of the respondent’s own father’s influence on their current perceptions of father involvement, half of the female respondents who responded to the question chose to use this question to boast about their father. They would write very nice commendation on how wonderful he was, and still is, as an involved father. But then nothing was said about how the things they wrote about helped to influence their own thoughts on the matter. Because of this, a lot of responses to this question did not help to answer that specific question.

Collecting data entails high costs that are challenging for a foreign student completing a dissertation research project on graduate student stipend. In addition, it is more daunting for
foreign students who are married with children. I used the methods at my disposal to overcome the financial obstacles. It is costly to travel to all sites across the U.S. to oversee the completion of the surveys and conduct in-depth interviews. My family trips also became research trips. On two occasions, I flew from Dayton, Ohio to New York with my family to meet other family members and took the opportunity to conduct interviews and oversee the completion and collection of surveys at sites in the Bronx and Far Rockaway (Queens). To overcome the project costs, I also utilized technology. Some of my survey respondents completed the survey online and email the finished product back to me. By doing the survey electronically, they agreed to participate in the surveys. I also completed missed in-depth interview opportunities using multi-media technology.

The sample site selections chosen were done at random. In the Fall of 2012 I figured out what I wanted to do for my dissertation and the type of instruments I was going to use. Even before I constructed the instruments, I notified my contacts across the U.S. and let them know before-hand that I was going to need their help. I have close contacts in the usual areas where West Indian enclaves exist; the Bronx, Brooklyn, Long Island and Queens in the New York area. These areas are already noted in research to have strong West Indian influences, so I started there. I however wanted a rounded research so I reached out to my contacts in Virginia, Florida and Connecticut. My research snowballed to other sites across the U.S. such as South Carolina and Alabama.

The Mid-West is not known for a strong West Indian influence, but I was living and going to school in that region so it made sense to try and get respondents and interviews from the region. New formed friendships in the Dayton area with resident Caribbean families put me in touch with other West Indians in the area through cook-ins and cook-outs. It was through this
network that I was able to gather surveys and interviews in Ohio. Thus my project is regionally
diverse and offers keen insights into the impact that migration and race has on black West Indian
immigrants across the U.S. The project is in its nascent stage and serves as a springboard for
later work that I will cover on this immigrant group. In future I intend to locate a wide section of
respondents from all sections of the West Indian population in the US.
### Table 4.1 Gender, Age, Caribbean vs U.S. Born, and Education of Survey Respondents

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<td>(55.3%)</td>
<td>(44.7%)</td>
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*Note: In the following tables all respondents did not answer all sections of the questionnaire therefore the numbers for each table may vary.*

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<td>24</td>
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<td>Dhama</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pentecostal</td>
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<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revivalist</td>
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<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seventh Day</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DNR</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>42</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: DNR are those persons who did not note any type of religious affiliation*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Current Household Position</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biological father</td>
<td>22</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Step-father</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father figure</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Son</td>
<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grandfather</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sole member</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not identify</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biological mother</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step-mother</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother figure</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grandmother</td>
<td>1</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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<tr>
<td>Live alone</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sister</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spouse</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wife</td>
<td>2</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>37</td>
<td>38</td>
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Table 4.4 Number of Children under the Current Care of Respondents at the time of Survey

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<th>Characteristic</th>
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<td>Number of children under care</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>6</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
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<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Characteristic</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Married</strong></td>
<td>23</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Single</strong></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Living with someone but not married</strong></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Divorced</strong></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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<td>34</td>
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