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“COMING TO THIS CARIBBEAN MECCA”:
THE ROLE OF PLACE IN KNOWLEDGE CONSTRUCTION AMONG
TRINBAGONIAN MIGRANTS IN BROOKLYN

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Adult Education

and

Comparative International Education

By

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ABSTRACT

The journeys of African Caribbean migrants from the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago in Brooklyn, New York frame this study. I structured a critical placed-based pedagogical (CPBP) inquiry through a cultural-historical ethnographic snapshot (Janzen, 2005) to analyze how migrants used place between Trinidad and Tobago and Brooklyn to construct knowledge and reinvent place. I collected data as I lived as an insider-researcher in the Caribbean neighborhood of Lefferts Gardens in Brooklyn. Qualitative analysis included examining data through narrative methods (Riesmann, 1993) and conducting grounded thought-by-thought coding (Charmaz, 2008) of data to build phenomenological thematic data structures to unearth activities in participants’ migrant experiences. From these, the outcomes of constructing knowledge using a cultural, historical activity theoretical framework (CHAT) are cast as experiences in place that occur as the subject works to achieve an evolving motive-object.

In this study, the main motive-object of participants was reinventing Trinbagonian culture in Brooklyn. Participants reported significant place dissonance once in Brooklyn, which signaled the first signs of tensions in constructing knowledge. Their experiences specified various motive-objects that participants deemed important to navigating their new lives in Brooklyn. From the analysis of these motive-objects, nine activities emerged across data: Reconciling Skin Color and Race, Being Trinbagonian in Brooklyn, Traveling Between Countries, Cooking Cultural Foods, Hosting Fetes, Maintaining Local Limes, Navigating Marital and Spousal Changes, Caribbean Business Ownership, and Carnival Participation.

The main findings are that Trinbagonians use tools from Trinidad and Tobago in Brooklyn to first prove personhood and authenticate culture in the process of reinventing place in Brooklyn. Second, the vital life knowledge of “marginalized” cultural groups can be unearthed using a critical place-based cultural, historical approach that is observable and understandable.
Third, informal critical place-based adult learning approaches must centralize the perspective of subjects to appropriately understand related activities. Accordingly, the significance of perspective was reinforced throughout the study to preserve subject perspective as central in adult learning and adult.

The study concludes that the work of transferring and transposing information through transnational and translocal (relating to connections between global neighborhoods) places constitutes a fundamental place-based pedagogy. This place-based pedagogy can be consciously and geographically located from the perspective of participants in any place where knowledge people construct knowledge. Cultural historical activity as pedagogical practice is different from formal pedagogies that, while valuable, restrict knowing and knowledge to the structures of schooling and training. Formal learning structures in a society privilege the gaze and perspective of the dominant culture for affirmation and validation, consequently teaching subjects to do the same. Thus facilitators of informal, incidental knowledge construction in various settings must incorporate critical place-based informal adult learning and knowledge construction inquiries in quotidian practice. These inquiries honor the perspective of subjects as central to living successfully in translocational (Brown, 2007) and transnational places and provide the appropriate framework and tools to evaluate knowledge experiences.
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Awake, my soul, and with the sun
Thy daily stage of duty run;
Shake off dull sloth, and joyful rise,
To pay thy morning sacrifice.

Direct, control, suggest, this day,
All I design, or do, or say,
That all my powers, with all their might,
In Thy sole glory may unite.

Praise God, from Whom all blessings flow;
Praise Him, all creatures here below;
Praise Him above, ye heavenly host;
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

Thomas Ken, 1674

To my ancestors; on the wings of your legacy, I take flight.
To my intellectual family; without your guidance I would have gone astray.
To my mentors and advisers; without your support I would not have finished this journey.
To my best friends; without your acceptance I would not have flourished.
To my family here and abroad; without your life stories this work would not exist.

To my amazing Brothers and Sister; the song in your hearts keeps my life full.
We sing out of happiness; we sing out in freedom.
His love brought us together—at last; that is the reason why we sing.

To My Love; you walk beside me and cheer me on. Your happiness knows no end.
When I could not believe, you never stop believing. You delight in life and I delight in you.

To my loving, courageous Mother; without your immeasurable life sacrifice I would not be here.
You are the source of my inspiration and everything that I have always wanted to be.
You are everlasting hope, compassion, and grace expressed through Divine Love.
I cherish you more than I am ever able to express.
I live as a testament to your triumphant fearlessness through unbridled tribulation.
You are every woman.
I dedicate this work to you as a symbol of my love, honor, and admiration.
Chapter 1

Introduction

Chapter 1 outlines the contextual information concerning the people, culture, places, and notions of knowledge construction and adult learning used to conceptualize this study. In this chapter I describe the timeline and direction of the study, why I chose this line of inquiry, how I arrived at the topic, and my familial connections to the main idea. I then present the problem statement, research questions, purpose, and rationale of this study. Finally, I provide an outline that gives an overview of the subsequent chapters of this thesis.

Coming to the Question

Investigating the role of place in constructing knowledge among Trinbagonian migrants in Brooklyn roused my research interests because of my experiences in this area from 2001 to 2008. Trinbagonian migrants are of further interest because of my heritage and the demographic composition of my previous Brooklyn neighborhood. During my time there, I saw how migrants from Trinidad and Tobago lived every day as they went to work, shopped for groceries, and frequented the stoops of beautiful sandstone homes on the block with friends. I experienced how they played dominoes, emitted lively island beats from their businesses and cars, and proudly displayed the vibrant colors of their beautiful country flags. They certainly weren’t in Trinidad and Tobago anymore—as anyone could tell—but they had molded themselves to the places around them in a particular way that signaled “Trinbagonian-ness.”

But there is a curious silence within places of living in Trinbagonian neighborhoods and surrounding areas concerning the construction, production, use, and contributions of knowledge
by a cultural group that makes up a significant portion of the Central Brooklyn population. Gruenewald (2003) stated “place-based pedagogies are needed so that the education of citizens might have some direct bearing on the well-being of the social and ecological places people actually inhabit” (p. 15). In this research, I model ideas presented in Gruenewald’s quote by creating a process for uncovering knowledge construction and adult learning that is place-based and from the perspective of participants. I cultivate this approach from their two places of experiences—Brooklyn and in Trinidad and Tobago (hereafter Trinbago, where appropriate).

![Map of Brooklyn with Caribbean population saturation](Brooklyn.com, 2012)

*Figure 1-1. Saturation of Caribbean population in Central Brooklyn, (Brooklyn.com, 2012)*

The act of migrants from Trinidad and Tobago (hereafter Trinbagonians, where appropriate) creating Trinbagonian-ness is central to the act of determining the role of place in constructing knowledge. Many migrants who come to the United States from Trinbago arrive with very different conceptions of place that are disassembled and rearranged upon arrival to the United States (Butterfield, 2004). Consequently, migrants base knowledge of Brooklyn on knowledge of the cultural essence, historical significance, and body of knowledge migrants used to understanding of the places they inhabited in Trinbago.
Comparatively, this means that both countries necessitated examination through a medium that pertains to the significance of the place, culture and history. To this end, I first studied the construct of Trinbagonian Carnival in both Brooklyn and Trinidad as the anchoring activities for this research. Consequently, emerging activities are introduced and evaluated as participants bring them to the surface in their narratives. The investigation of Carnival in both countries forms the basis of understanding the reformation of knowledge and reinvention of place for Trinbagonian migrants. The international bases—of Brooklyn and Trinbago—presented in this study also provide an opportunity for exploring how constructing knowledge happens for this group of migrants transnationally and translocally (pertaining to global connections between local entities). Transnationally there is a body of knowledge that migrants understand about Trinbago and the United States that make each country internationally distinct. Consequently there is also a trans located body of knowledge that arises as Trinbagonians reinvent meanings of place in their new local dwelling places in Brooklyn.

The yearly production of Carnival is historically and culturally imperative to the study of place-based knowledge construction because of the primary struggle and victory in place for place represented by this celebration. Carnival arose from the Canboulay Riots in Trinbago in the 1800s. These riots were a fight for the right of freedom for slaves in Trinbago (Martin, 2011). During the riots, the ritualistic burning of sugarcane that took place as part of the harvesting process—to rid the cane fields of snakes and other pests—was used as a signal of revolt by the slaves against masters, the government, and law enforcement. The riots involved immense struggle with the police, but in the end the African people of Trinbago were victorious. Trinbago Carnival finds its roots in this display of struggle and resistance in physical, constructed, and imagined place for power and freedom (Crowley, 1960). With these historical groundings, Trinbagonian migrants in Brooklyn approach reinventing place and culture with the spirit of
independence reminiscent of the ancestral fight for freedom to create and express culture and
establish personhood.

**Statement of the Problem**

Across literatures, information and research concerning the role of place as an instrument in constructing knowledge is intriguingly absent and rarely provides even a cursory glance at how knowledge construction is connected to place. However, some research does discuss how people act in the nuanced places of their everyday lives in regards to successfully navigating place and recasting aspects of culture (Hamilton & Hummer, 2011; Hamilton, 2012; Hipp, Fairs, & Boessen 2012; Hirschman, Kasinitz, & Devin, 2009). Conceptions of place are theorized and re-assembled by inhabitants, actively shaping migration policy and solidifying national perceptions of what people are and what they do with the places they are connected to. The influence of place is layered and obfuscated in literature that explores individual and collective efforts of knowledge construction and adult learning in various places (Allison & Garringe, 2006; Baptiste, Hardy, & Lewis, 1997; Bates, 2006; Bruch & Mare, 2006). However, the presence of place discussions in the literature, despite limitation and obfuscation, indicate the palpable importance of place for all people who live, work, and socialize in various places daily. For this work, the role of place in constructing knowledge among Trinbagonian migrants is important because of the bodies of knowledge they possess that are anchored in place and used to reconstruct life.

How do the old and new neighborhoods these migrants occupy, which also occupy them (Appadurai, 1996), shape their experiences? Emergent scholarship introduces informal adult knowledge construction as an essential part of understanding immigrants’ transnational and translocational experiences (e.g., Ilksander, Rordian, & Lowe, 2012; Monkman, 1999). This work has begun illustrate how researchers can uncover aspects of experience that migrants deem
essential by connecting interdisciplinary theoretical models. In addition to explaining that knowledge construction occurred, researchers also uncover how learners achieve this construction by addressing the unrealized analytical potential of migrant perspectives on place that is physical, constructed and imagined.

**Purpose of the Study**

The research questions that arose examined what role the physical and imagined “backdrop” of Trinbagonian migrants’ native countries, neighborhoods, histories, and cultures play in how knowledge is constructed and used in transnational and translocational migratory experiences. This study explored the relationship between the cultural-historical aspects of a place and extemporaneous knowledge construction among Trinbagonian migrants to Brooklyn. These contexts coincide with work, social environments, and enduring racial and socio-economic difficulties. The physical, psychological, imagined and emotional ingress of place is the initial point of investigation into the informal knowledge construction and adult learning activities of Trinbagonian migrants. A place-based cultural-historical examination of knowledge construction can reveal the activities that inform translocational cultural formations (Brown, 2007) and transnational evolution of individual and collective bodies of knowledge. The place-based aspect of knowledge construction is most pronounced and is of utmost relevance because of the transnational and translocational knowledge of this group embedded in place.

I aimed to unearth what knowledge Trinbagonians bring to Brooklyn and how it changes as they live in a new neighborhood. How Trinbagonian migrant residents construct knowledge and deal with a place in their Trinbagonian neighborhood of origin and the central Brooklyn area is fundamental to this study. Thus, I explore how Trinbagonians live, work and persist in the new territory, country and neighborhood, through the evolving constant of place.
By studying one particular group of immigrant residents in one culture, this study offers a textured understanding of some of the layers of information and activities that constitute informal knowledge construction. The texture of the knowledge construction unearthed in this study may offer points of transference for other cultural groups that cross international boundaries to start a new chapter of life in the United States (Akowoya, 2012; Butterfield, 2004; McCabe, 2011; Waters, 1999). However, this study does not extrapolate to all migrants from other countries to the United States. I choose to focus on the Trinbagonian migrant group because of the historical trajectory of migration laws, the history and state of independence of Trinbagonians, and the historical parallels to other cultural groups already in the United States that were subject to historical issues of colonialism and imperialism. As such, this study addresses the following research questions:

1) What is the role of place in knowledge construction among Trinbagonian migrants to Brooklyn?
2) What knowledge do Trinbagonian migrants recognize, discard, construct, and maintain from the neighborhoods of their home country to the new Brooklyn neighborhood?
3) What do Trinbagonian migrants do that leads to changes in their body of knowledge in place?

With these questions, I was able to gather information that directly and indirectly addressed place-based knowledge construction for this cultural group. Chapter two explores terms used to construct these questions as a segment of the survey of the literature conducted for this study.

Overview of Study

In describing day-to-day and long-term adult learning and knowledge construction experiences—experiences that practitioners and researchers currently explain from acculturation or assimilation theories—I use Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) to show that these
activities illuminate knowledge construction challenges and successes for this cultural group that is bound to place. To approach transition and adaptation from a more appropriate perspective, I unpack the role of place in the production of knowledge, as de Carteret (2009) and Tuan (1977) suggested by making the unknowable knowable. This alludes to the potentially large body of migrant knowledge that is evolving almost entirely undetected in acculturation and assimilation literature.

To make the unknowable things about a place knowable requires a reassessment of what is accepted as true about place through a critical place-based assessment (Gruenewald, 2003). Unknowing represents the critical eye with which the researcher must understand the migration and other experiences for Trinbagonian migrants as they entered a place that had little meaning to them. Trinbagonian migrant knowledge of the place, to this point, includes what they understood from limited interaction with place through media, family, or friends who had formerly traversed international borders. Deconstructing Trinbagonians’ place-based knowledge centers as new information enters the cultural and historical understandings of migrants concerning place and society contributes to this unknowing and then, the recasting and remaking of place for life success. Together, along with assimilative and acculturative theories, these bodies of knowledge and connected activities represent and explain the place aspect of knowledge construction and adult learning in transnational movement and translocation.

This study incorporates data collection methods from ethnography (Baron, 2006; Pane & Rocco, 2009), collection of GIS (graphic information systems) data (Banyopadhyay, 2011), and photographic data collection (Shrum, Duque, & Brown, 2005) to form an ethnographic snapshot (Pink, 2001; Schwartz 1989; Tobin & Hsueh, 2008). I chose data collection methods that elicit and captures meaningful events and oral histories from the perspective of participants as they reexamine their experiences of settling in the areas of Crown Heights, Lefferts Gardens, Flatbush and East Flatbush in Brooklyn. Data sources include one to
two semi-structured interviews per participant to capture oral histories and information on the importance of traditions in Trinbago and Brooklyn. I reconsider how migrants conceptualize space, along with knowledge construction within non-formal and informal spaces (Safran, 2009; Somerville, 2003). I used mainstream theories of assimilation and acculturation to frame how scholars contextualize transition and adaptation for Caribbean migrants (Bonnet, 2009; Jung, 2009).

**Organization of the Study**

Chapter two makes a case for a place as an instrument. First I discuss the place as a manipulator and also how people manipulate place that creates an instrument or a tool for use in constructing knowledge. Then I use research in social geography to discuss the meaning of several concepts of place. Chapter two lays the groundwork for an interdisciplinary theoretical approach for understanding the role of place in knowledge construction among of Trinbagonian migrants to Brooklyn. I also discuss the information presented from the literature on place-based knowledge construction and the need for a framework to address that knowledge construction. I then introduce Cultural Historical Activity Theory as a framework for this study combined with critical place-based pedagogy.

Chapter three discusses the theoretical frame for this study, which combines tenets of cultural historical activity theory (CHAT) with critical place-based pedagogy. I combine these two frameworks to keep the cultural and historical aspects of activity theory at the forefront of inquiry. Consciously placing culture and history in a CHAT investigation at the helm of inquiry allowed me as the participant-researcher to construct a strong foundation for investigating the role of places as a learning instrument among Trinbagonians.
Chapter four provides an overview and short history of the data collection sites in Brooklyn to situate and reinforce the importance of place in this study. Additionally an overview of migration from Trinbago to Brooklyn is provided. This chapter answers the question: Why is Trinbagonian migration to the United States important to this study? And what are the important factors that led to Trinbagonian migration to the United States? This chapter leads into understanding how I design the methodological framework for research in these sites, which keeps the entity of place as the prominent unit of analysis.

Chapter five discusses the methodology and design using a set of phases that overlap and asynchronous. The methodological framework is a critical ethnographic snapshot that lays out why and how I collected phenomenological, observational, GIS, and visual data for analysis of the role of place in knowledge construction and adult learning. The unit of observation is human activities in place. The methods of observation are personal narratives through interviews and discussions recorded and unrecorded, GIS data, culture walks, photographs, and information gathered from the Flatbush Avenue Lime (FAL) group through field notes and memos.

Chapter six presents the findings of the study. I examined the data gathered from my methodological approach through the lens of narrative analysis, grounded theory analysis, and cultural historical activity systems framework analysis. Next I present the findings of the data analysis process that form the emerging activity systems network of placed-based knowledge construction among Trinbagonian migrants and the nine activities that comprise this network. These activities are: Reconciling Skin Color and Culture, Being Trinbagonian in Brooklyn, Traveling Between Countries, Cooking Cultural Foods, Hosting Fetes, Maintaining a Local Lime, Caribbean Business, Ownership, Navigating Marriage and Spousal Changes, and Participating in Carnival.

Chapter seven opens this research up to a discussion on the significance of comparative international critical place-based knowledge as framed in a cultural historical activity theoretical
perspective. This chapter also addresses the appropriateness of tools used to understanding cultural knowledge formation, through first centralizing the perspective of subjects. I also present the conclusions of this work and implications for further research based on the methodological design and the findings.
Chapter 2

Literature Review

This chapter reviews the literature on place in knowledge construction that pertains to using place as a mediating instrument in learning. The literature reviewed from this chapter comes from adult education, comparative education, geography, sociology, acculturation and assimilation literature, as well as social and human geography. I use these disciplines first to demonstrate the wide placement of place and knowledge construction throughout the academic literature, and to show the interdisciplinary nature of the effects of place. In this literature place is everywhere all at once, and, therefore, subsumed to the background of most work that attempts to deal directly with issues concerning place.

Place in the Literature

It is important to stress that place research shapes place conception over a variety of fields and that not all conceptions of place apply to this line of inquiry. To begin, I discuss concepts of place that view the body as central in place making. I move away from the anthropomorphic characterization of a place in constructing knowledge as conceptualized through the five senses toward the acts of place as a mediating instrument in constructing knowledge. This chapter also confronts the conflation of place as both a collectively conscious culture and a grounded boundaried entity. Lastly, to make a case for a place as a critical pedagogical instrument, I discuss cultural historical activity theory to demonstrate how place satisfies the requirement of acting as a mediating artifact and instrument. The second part of this chapter then introduces the theoretical framework of the study based on the critique of the literature presented on places. Theorists present Cultural historical activity theory (Engström, 1999; Leontiev, 1983).
and critical place-based pedagogy (Gruenewald, 2003) as interdisciplinary theoretical frameworks used to investigate the mediating nature of a place in knowledge construction.

Adult education researchers infuse the literature with notions of how adults construct knowledge in places, neighborhoods and localities (Allison & Garringe, 2006; de Carteret, 2008; Safran, 2009; Smith, 2002). Adult education research situates constructing knowledge in place using the foundations of the following theories to shape understanding: situated knowledge construction (Lave, 1988), community of practice (Wenger, 2006), and other informal adult learning theoretical ideas (e.g., Hager & Halliday, 2006; Smith, 2002).

Researchers define knowledge construction as a socially and culturally created process with outcomes that happen as people interact with each other and place over time (Foot, 2001; Helsinki, 2004). Often a place is implied in processes for constructing knowledge but this is not clearly stated and located. Evidence of place obscurity in community of practice literature, where culture plays the dual role of implied, static, grounded location and a set of connections and knowledge construction goals among a group of people (de Carteret, 2008; Ife & Tesoriero, 2003; Safran, 2009; Wenger, 2006). The use community of practice theory to explain how constructing knowledge works for a group in place leaves place grossly under-explored. In a qualitative study conducted with a group of mothers who homeschool their children, a place of a neighborhood is used to organize and anchor the group to explore how constructing knowledge happens as these mothers move in and out of the community of practice (Safran, 2009). Although neighborhood knowledge construction is central to Safran’s study, neighborhood as a physical entity—and its role in constructing knowledge—are only given a cursory examination.

In this article Safran (2009) presented three “home education neighborhood groups” as examples of knowledge construction happening for adults. She used Wenger’s (1998) community of practice framework to shape her research. Wenger’s (2006) asserts “communities of practice are formed by people who engage in a process of collective knowledge construction in a shared
Thusly Safran applied this lens to the groups of home educators who gather around the common goal of learning how to teach their children at home.

Safran explores the neighborhood groups’ knowledge construction through these formed communities and the movement of participants in and out of the groups. Safran stated:

This [Wenger’s theory] is helpful in understanding the role of home education neighborhood group [sic] because it helps explain how these groups are formed, how newcomers learn to be a part of the group, how groups continue to adapt and change in order to meet their members’ needs and importantly how the neighborhood home education groups help parents learn to be home educators. (p. 16)

Safran asserted that knowledge construction is situated in:

...communities of practices which he [Wenger] suggests are all around us in life are diverse and can be made up of any number of people. Each of us belongs to several communities of practice although we may not be conscious of it. (p. 24)

Safran applies this concept to the neighborhood home education groups by explicitly stating that these are not the usual communities of practice:

Unlike other areas where this analysis has been applied, it is not an institution such as an office, hospital, or school with general well known structures. In the neighborhood home education group there is no defined structure, no formal obligations, no agreed way to do things and their joint enterprise may not even be made explicit. (p. 25)

Safran’s work brings community of practice outside of the usual edifices and out into the unknown “structures” of knowledge construction in the neighborhood, which is a critical move toward advancing how adult education researchers understand knowledge that is constructed by place. Safran takes previously unconscious places where she believes knowledge construction resides and strives to bring these places to the forefront.
However, even as communities of practices are extracted from the usual conscious places and placed in newly conscious learning places found in neighborhoods, they are still confined to peer-to-peer movements that do not account for the geographically bounded location of a place. Her work is more about the group than the neighborhood that the group is in. Safran also repudiated any hierarchal structures (among the women in the group) that could be present in communities of practice, while simultaneously noting the movement of various participants in and out of the groups at different times, with different levels of knowledge. Safran alluded to some level of a hierarchy that she cannot accommodate with her application of the community of practice model. While Safran offered deference to the changes of the group over time and place, these elements are not interrogated to explain how knowledge is formed by parent participants, much less is the neighborhood structure interrogated for its bearing on knowledge.

Communities of Practice in Place

Community of practice theory and its application in adult education literature on locality and knowledge construction implicitly rely upon the geographically grounded and bounded information of the group to talk about knowledge construction and production. However, this theory makes no explicit attempt to explain how neighborhood location affects knowledge construction for community of practice members. I posit that this lack of focus on a particular place is due to the ambiguity in the notion of the “communities” discussed in a “communities of practice” model and whether or not the places they represent anchor communities. The nature community ambiguity leaves room for an analysis of knowledge construction that intersects culture, place, locality, and history.

Academic literature exploring construction of knowledge in communities routinely relegates physical locations to simple containers of people (Delaney, 2005; Simon & Simon,
Researchers intermittently interrogate how members of a community of practice connect the natural and the constructed landscapes of the physical location to knowledge production (Barnett, Jones, Bennett, Iverson, & Bonney, 2013; Kirkman; Cordery, Mathieu, Rosen, & Kukenberger, 2013). Relegating place as the static backdrop to knowledge construction may stem from the ambiguity in the notion of the “communities” as discussed in “communities of practice” (Wenger, 2006), and whether the members of community anchor the space by the physical place they are inherently connected to (Ife & Tesoriero, 2006).

Can ambiguity in notions of culture (whether material or immaterial) be recognized in migrant populations’ transitions to the United States? A common issue for migrants who participate in voluntary or involuntary migration (Bonnet, 2009) is how to construct a life in a new neighborhood. Migrants must first figure out if or how they can become connected and belong to a culture or neighborhood. This significant life-shifting process is happening as they search for different professional and educational opportunities than those offered in their home countries, where they had established material and immaterial ideas on neighborhood and culture (Bonnet, 2009).

Understanding the role of place in informal knowledge construction for Trinbagonian migrants from their perspectives can illuminate transnational and translocational experiences as more than a linear move from one place to another. The historical and cultural underpinning of place give way to relationships, emotions, and meanings that affect how and why migrants make choices about places. Understanding how migrants make choices about places may clarify findings of some assimilation and acculturation research that do not explicitly discuss how constructing knowledge arises from the activities described as assimilative or acculturative (Carlin, 2009; Hackshaw, 2006; Rong & Brown, 2002). This dissertation contributes to understanding how Trinbagonian migrants (one group among many from the African Caribbean Diaspora) use place, lose place, and extemporaneously transform their body of knowledge.
surrounding place to live in Brooklyn. This project shows how relationships in neighborhood and meanings of how Trinbagonian migrants use and understand neighborhoods are inextricably connected to how this cultural group constructs knowledge emerging from a place.

In addition, I explore the role of neighborhood in the lives of Trinbagonian migrants to illuminate the acts of place upon this cultural group that marks them as inhabitants of their new dwelling spaces in Brooklyn and those that had marked them as former inhabitants of their living places in Trinbago. Additionally, I explore the acts of inhabitants in place to preserve meaning and culture that originate in their hometowns in Trinbago, which they may potentially reenact in their new Brooklyn neighborhood (Appaduarai, 1996, Chapter 9; Freire, 1970, p. 109). This information provides insight into how Trinbagonian migrants use this knowledge in their life activities and experiences to deal with misperceptions, misinformation, and sublimation of their transnational and translocational culture and personhood as they navigate various pathways created by their involvement in those life activities.

**Acculturation and Assimilation in Place**

The literature on transnational and translocal relocation for immigrants emphasizes variations of acculturation and assimilation theories (e.g., Feliciano, 2009; Ferguson, 2008; Friedberg, 2000; Greemman & Xie, 2006; Hamilton & Hummer, 2011; Ivana, 2010; Padilla & Perez, 2003; Saint-Jean, Devieux, Malow, Tammara, & Carney, 2011). These theories contain implicit and explicit knowledge construction ideas that are evident in the processes that migrants go through to build lives in their new place. Assimilation and acculturation theories give insight into how scholars frame migrant efforts to contextualize, transition, and adapt from place to place internationally (Bonnet, 2009; Jung, 2009). There is a nominal focus on informal, incidental knowledge construction (e.g., Monkman, 2009). A thorough investigation of assimilation and
acculturation literature shows that there is an implicit understanding and application of informal and incidental knowledge constructs for migrants as they assimilate to a new culture and place and perform acculturative activities over time that rearrange their place-based understanding of culture and personhood. However, references to “knowledge construction” in this literature are cursory and ill-defined and privilege the notion of migrant knowledge construction as a burden (Jung, 2009; Lopez-Class, Castro, & Ramirez, 2011; Srinivasan & Pyati, 2007). This burden is elucidated, for example, by the difficulty of adapting to an American accent versus a Caribbean accent, getting your “papers,” gaining employment, blending culturally with Americans, and coping with the stress of these changes. In some cases, migrants’ native cultures become a withdrawn but undeniable backdrop to the platform of their lives (e.g., Duleep & Regets, 1999; Duncan & Waldorff, 2009; Flemming, 2009; Friedberg, 2000; Gratton, Guttmann, & Scop, 2007; Gregory & Meng, 2005; Hamilton, 2012). However, this experience changes as the scope of the term immigrant is sharpened to focus on Caribbean immigrants to New York City, particularly migrants from Trinbago and their experiences through the lenses of assimilation and acculturation to United States culture and customs.

To situate this dissertation, I discuss how researchers conceptualize place as inextricably linked to being human and carrying on life activities first from adult education literature (Ife & Tesoriero, 2006; Safran 2009). Place also serves as the bedrock of knowledge, appropriated in quotidian cultural practices (Johnson, 2012). A review of places from the work of adult education and sociological scholars introduced in this chapter and how they conceptualize knowledge construction within non-formal and informal spaces is fundamental because of the scattered nature of place and knowledge construction literature (Safran, 2009; Somerville, 2003). From the beginning, I want to bring the natural, imagined, and constructed elements of place to the forefront of knowledge construction to elucidate its role (Dawkings, Reibel, & Wong, 2007; de Carteret, 2008; Elwood & Leitner, 2003; Greenburg, 2003; Tuan, 1977).
Assimilation and acculturation literature and other writings on Caribbean culture distinctly cover how these largely voluntary immigrants to the United States come and blend into the culture with African Americans (Murell, 2013). However, there is some literature that has started to realize the nuanced issues with being “Black” and sharing neighborhood and cultural spaces with African Americans and its impact on how different Black cultures are perceived and interacted with (Akowoya, 2012; Butterfield, 2004). I draw on the literature written about place to show that different textures of culture and meanings of neighborhood and place are subsumed in literature on Caribbean immigrants, unaccounted for when lumped together. Most of the literature I cite discusses the changes and experiences of migrant groups from the perspective of immigrants inserting themselves into the environment and “getting used to” being in the country. Migrants get used to the new place by either completely shedding their former cultural identities (assimilation) or constructing knowledge on how to psychologically adapt and blend their cultural identities with the new environment (acculturation). In some cases this happens by creating a “third cultural identity” (Moore & Barker, 2011) or segregated cultural enclaves (Duncan & Waldorff, 2009) that preserves the first culture in concert with the changes and disruptions experienced from the new culture migrants enter. I propose that in any of these processes there is a portrait of cultural knowledge situated in place that is slowly developing, as informal knowledge construction in place is further investigated (Monkman, 1999).

Assimilation and acculturation literature demonstrate that most researchers talk about knowledge construction, but not as an operationalized expression (Iksander, Rordian, & Lowe, 2012; Iverson, 2011; Jung, 2009). The literature presents adult learning as unproblematic and uncontested processes and ideas, although there is disagreement across literatures and researchers concerning what formal, informal, non-formal and incidental learning entails. As such, I use Blackler’s definition of informal learning, which embeds informal learning within human activities to bring knowledge construction to the level of doing along with the material and
immaterial artifacts that result from doing (Blackler, 1996). Learning, therefore, is a product of human activities that, when examined, can show how each part of an activity comes together to give structure to how knowledge is constructed and used in place.

In juxtaposition to the theoretical perspectives identified throughout assimilation and acculturation theories, I endeavor to use place as the instrument that exposes how knowledge construction happens, instead of focusing on the bodily instrument of the person in knowledge construction in place. While the two relate and do not exist without the other, it is possible to identify the role of place in knowledge construction in addition to what we know about the role of the body to explain the shaping of persons by place. These are knowledge construction outcomes that need further investigation to understand better how to serve populations, particularly migrant populations that dominant cultures often marginalize because their ways of knowledge construction and transference within their spaces are simply misunderstood (Tuan, 1977).

**Bounded Units of Place**

Literature focusing on place boundaries is available in many academic fields. Geography, sociology, adult education, ecology, demography and urban planning and policy house information on places and some theories about knowledge construction in places (Martin, 2003; Ross, 2000; Vortuba & King, 2009; Wright, Aneshensel, Miller Martinez, Botticello, Cummings, Karlamangla, & Seeman, 2005). When searching for literature on place, results reveal that a fixed body of “place literature” is indiscernible which makes “locating place” in the literature an exercise in academic and intellectual futility. Definitions and categorizations of place are scattered across literatures and countries (Bruch & Mare, 2006; Hana, 2011).

As such, this makes place difficult to define in terms of boundaries if a researcher wishes to deal with the perceptions of residents and not the lines drawn by policy makers and urban
planners. However, inhabitants’ perceptions of place are becoming more prevalent in various literatures on place, bringing residents’ perspective into research in a more meaningful way for researchers interested in this idea. Rather than exploring neighborhood boundaries and conceptions from the lens of urban planners, demographers, neighborhood policy makers, or researchers, resident perspectives on place are emerging in some academic areas (Bates, 2006; McKinnish, Walsh, & White, 2010; Patillo, 2005; Silver 2012). However, these other lenses are also important, because the actions of policy makers and local governments influence residents' experiences (Bates, 2006; Saiz & Watcher, 2012).

Differentiation between communities based on a particular function or set of demographic markers and culture based on a geographic entity is significant to research meant to explore the role of natural, constructed, and imagined place among various groups of people (Ife & Tesoriero, 2006). Once inhabitants invoke the contours onto geographic entities then inhabitants begin producing culture and “space” becomes “place” (Ife & Tesoriero, 2006; Tuan, 1977). This differentiation is important to this study because of the culture that Trinbagonians form in Brooklyn as people from the same country of origin, a shared culture and in some instances the same physical hometowns in Trinbago. Consequently, as these groups arrive in Brooklyn and share the same neighborhood space, they are constructing knowledge anew concerning how to live out their Trinbagonian culturally inherited knowledge and customs based on prior experiences with people and place.

Although place boundaries are difficult to delineate from the perspective of residents, newcomers, visitors, policymakers, and other stakeholders, they still exist and take on some structure that is recognizable to their residents. In the sociological literature, some researchers deal with assigning boundaries to place by examining place networks created by various segments of the populations living within larger segments of geographic areas in relation to each other (Hipp, Faris, & Boessen, 2012). Hipp and colleagues. stated:
We propose here one strategy to creating neighborhoods that incorporates information on the social ties within the broader culture. Although some adopt a purely geographic conception of the neighborhood, we argue that the presence of social ties is a characteristic of neighborhoods—and are implicit in many existing definitions of neighborhoods—and thus it is reasonable to incorporate the structure of culture social ties into a definition of neighborhood boundaries. (p. 129)

Hipp et al. measured the social ties of adolescence to determine the boundary of a particular neighborhood. The authors attempted to form place boundaries by studying those with similar types of characteristics within their social networks. From this information, the researchers pinpoint each important locale mentioned by participants and then use these points to form a rough boundary of the place from the participants’ perspective of their social ties. The authors suggested that this is the best way to explore social tie formations for the purpose of exploring place patterns (in this case, the patterns of teens within a neighborhood space and how they use this space).

Point-of-interest populating is a useful step in understanding part of the population of the neighborhood because it at least uses similar persons to analyze neighborhood boundaries. However, this type of analysis does have limitations for the various types of people that traverse a neighborhood space, including non-residents, those who work outside of their home neighborhood, the elderly and other subpopulations of a neighborhood structure. Hipp et al. argued that residents who are more like each other are more likely to associate with each other, therefore, making it feasible to measure social ties (p. 361). Shared commonalities are just one aspect of understanding how one portion of the neighborhood population thinks about boundaries. Hipp et al. do include proximity in their analysis along with social ties and the strength of those ties, which adds another element of how boundaries are made and maintained for this segment of
the population. The proximity of social ties to each participant is inversely related to the strength of those social ties.

Units of place (whether at the scale of the nation state or neighborhood) include other complex factors that move place away from being static containers with relatively stable “networks” as partially described by Hipp and colleagues. In urban geography literature, some scholars recognize the longstanding struggle to identify what and where and how people over time form place boundaries (Coulton, Korbin, Chan, & Su, 2001; Morgan, 2004). In particular Martin (2003) offers an extensive literature review of the conceptualizations of neighborhood in literatures. In her work, Martin addresses four main areas in the literature that many scholars address when trying to define and set boundaries for the neighborhood. Martin outlined:

…four themes in research on neighborhoods, which are related to one another: (1) defining “neighborhood”; (2) equating or comparing neighborhood with culture; (3) investigating so-called “neighborhood effects,” which posits that individuals’ attitudes and opportunities may be shaped (and often constrained) by the neighborhood culture in which they live; and (4) neighborhood as contested space in urban political arenas. (p. 362)

In sum, neighborhood perspectives are constructed and contested as Martin’s emphasizes on her journey through the literature. Comprehensively, a view of neighborhoods that accommodate the following concepts can come together to provide strong tools for addressing the multifaceted, nonlinear aspects of space, place, and neighborhood. Aspects include phases of neighborhood change, transitions of culture and people, economic growth among various socioeconomic statuses, and social and professional movement (p. 363). Place boundaries change over time and are created and recreated in states of opposition among place inhabitants as evidenced by Martin’s exploration of two Georgia neighborhoods. Strong resistance to place
changes by residents in place and stakeholders outside of the place, such as urban planners and city officials, contribute to these changes. The concept of place units (ranging from nations, states, provinces, parishes, cities, counties, municipalities, towns, townships, boroughs, among other configurations of place) as sites of contestation and growth for residents coincides with other work that explores the activity and movement of neighborhood as part of boundary formation and re-formation over time (see Gulson, 2009; O’Sullivan, 2009; Qi, 2007; Silver, 2012).

**Anthropomorphism**

A central concept in place pedagogy for some scholars presents the body as the main method of experiencing and constructing place meaning (Somerville, 2007). Anthropomorphism is the “attribution of human motivation, characteristics, or behavior to inanimate objects, animals, or natural phenomena” (Epley, Waytz, & Cacioppo, 2007, p. 28). Consequently, in place research and discussion the animation that is constructed in place by humans, is attributed to place directly. Two other tenets of Somerville’s theory are centered on the concepts of interpersonal transmission of stories and viewing place as a container for diverse cultural experiences (p. 516). The concept of storytelling is important to place, as storytelling—both oral and written—is how people create culture and history in a place and across places. However, the conceptual framing of the body as it moves about in space and how humans use the senses (Somerville, 2007) is central to understanding how to remake space into places like neighborhood in the migration process for Trinbagonian migrants in Crown Heights. However, this theoretical lens still leaves place in the background, by asserting that Somerville’s body-as-center to place-making concept is the key to understanding informal adult knowledge construction in place. The “sensual aspects of diverse proclivities” (de Carteret, 2008, p. 520) in place making and forming shared
understanding of a locality among migrants partially illuminate the essence of knowledge production in and by place. However, explaining the knowledge that place drives and produces is an increasingly difficult task. Place as an actor inscribes information and knowledge upon the body and mind (Appadurai, 1996) to produce a knowledge product understood by the inhabitants of the place that incorporates the body, but not entirely led by the senses of the body.

However, research does suggest that there is a way of “reaching those who do not have formalised [sic] education on their horizons” (de Carteret, 2008, p. 517), but not essentially how to do so. Many sites of adult learning and knowledge construction are still “off the radar” (de Carteret, 2008, p. 517), which supports the idea that some aspects of knowledge construction in place are tucked away inside of the mind without an avenue of expression or explanation, even with the leading of the five sense. Tuan (1977) raised this issue by contending that:

One person may know a place intimately as well as conceptually. He can articulate ideas, but he has difficulty expressing what he knows through his senses of touch, taste, smell, hearing and even vision. People tend to suppress what they cannot express. If an experience resists ready communication, a common response among activists (“doers”) is to deem it private—even idiosyncratic- and hence unimportant. (p. 7)

Examining how place plays a role in knowledge construction is difficult because adult learning culture still shrouds some avenues of expressing knowledge that are not readily expressed by the five senses. Further, there are constructed knowledge experiences that have no outlet due to the unavailability the senses to relay this information and on the “activists” perspective that this knowledge is not important if not expressed through the senses in specified structured situations (i.e., formal schooling, and training). While the social places, cultural spaces and other non-uniformed, under-examined local activities are important to place making and to making knowledge construction a place-conscious activity, these knowledge construction spaces
are still peculiar in light of formalized, acceptable spaces for “learning” and knowledge creation. These are not “normal” knowledge construction places found in formal settings where knowledge is produced and certified. Thankfully, researchers have taken note of the abundance of abnormalities in knowledge construction happening just outside these structures (de Carteret, 2008; Somerville, 2007; Tuan, 1977).

Gaining the tools needed to recognize and understand knowledge that arises from any place that is meaningful to people may ease unproductive side effects of well-intentioned informal learning situations. Somerville’s (2007) article focused on the concept of “global contemporaneity” (p. 326) and she explicitly takes the position of writing against place as “either constructed or natural”, but a fluid concept functioning on a wide spectrum. Constructing knowledge in place as storied, embodied, and contested ideas (p. 327) is one important tool in the excising process.

Additionally, the concepts of “decolonisation” and “reinhabitation” as central to critical place-conscious pedagogy signals the need to undo how researchers intellectualize place in order to understand its role in knowledge construction for its inhabitants. Gruenewald’s explanation of decolonisation and reinhabitation are broad overlapping themes arising from a post-colonialist perspective that expose how place has been used to exploit and injure inhabitants. Gruenewald’s concept takes a re-conceptualizing approach that preserves and re-centers cultural knowledge of places and inhabitants from their perspective as they deconstruct colonialized understandings of knowledge construction. To this end Somerville stated, “I use this strategy [place pedagogy theory] to disrupt the taken for granted and romantic binaries that construct wilderness and the natural world as distinct from human artefacts [sic]” (p. 24).

In the short history of critical, placed-based education and pedagogy, Gruenewald re-introduces to literature on place-based adult learning the idea of moving away from place-based knowledge machinations where knowledge is constructed to be examined for potential validity
and importance to society strictly extending from formal education experiences. The introduction of the critical pedagogy lens to placed-based education is then widened to consider a multidirectional (versus Gruenewald’s binaries of decolonisation and reinhabitation) approach to how place forms, through feminist poststructural thought and the concept of the body-as-center in place-based pedagogy (Somerville, 2007). Although I question the applicability of the total body and its sensualities as the most central and leading force of knowledge construction experiences in place because of the anthropomorphic properties assigned to it by various researchers, the concept is still important to consider. After all, part of our spatial experience is embodied, and much of what we experience about the world is through the physical body. However, the body-as-center concept regales the places of the neighborhood to an entity that people only act upon and does not treat place as an actor.

The theme of becoming an “unknower” and thinking through imagination (Somerville, 2007) to understand place-based knowledge construction for inhabitants follows in the tradition of the earlier thinkers on place-based informal learning (Appadurai 1996; Tuan, 1997) and the alleged knowledge that is hidden in various places (de Carteret, 2008; Somerville, 2007). A treatment of place that requires the researcher to explore deeply with participants what they know about place while attempting to “unknow” it (reassess mythical or erroneous information about place) through a critical approach can uncover new avenues to explain the complexities of the role of place in knowledge construction.

**Place and Neighborhood as Pedagogical Tools**

Examining key historical and cultural events that influence how information is kept, discarded, or reformed in remaking place in the new neighborhood is one foundational concept of understanding knowledge formation and transference for Caribbean migrants (Freeman, 2010).
Understanding the historicity of the events and customs of migrants is essential to understanding how people develop communities of practice, why migrants enter into similar divisions of labor as in their home country, or how certain rules are discarded or reframed in between their home culture and their new transnational culture. The culture that migrants remake in a new place comprises more than two parts. The parts of the new culture deal with the knowledge of the old place, the knowledge of the new place, and the impromptu knowledge developing among migrants as they work to align or enclave themselves within the new neighborhood, place, culture, and people around them.

Terms such as place, space, locality, village, town, borough, township, and neighborhood (among many others) are used throughout the literature to describe living habitats of humans. I will focus on space and neighborhood for my exploration. I may use the word locality infrequently through this text because some of the literature does not describe what may seem to be a neighborhood from some scholarly standpoints with the term neighborhood.

In the geography, sociology and other literature, it is difficult to decipher where scholars explain knowledge construction through place, space, and neighborhood though the ideas obviously intersect and overlap. From the literature, scholars infer that there is an understanding about neighborhood that residents build based on their experiences, whether they have relocated transnationally or not (Hipp et al., 2012; Martin, 2003). Perplexingly, although we know that there is an entity called neighborhood, researchers do not agree on set aspects of this entity. Neighborhoods take on a rich texture that varies from city to city and borough to borough the world over. Subsequently it is also difficult to agree on what types of knowledge construction spaces exist (Elo et al., 2009; O'Sullivan, 2009; Wright et al., 2006) therein. Therefore, theories about what neighborhoods are and what inhabitants within them remain scattered throughout various fields. Information on neighborhood learning is found in the fields of education, psychology, human development and family studies, urban planning, human geography,
demography and landscape architecture, among others (e.g., Baybeck & McClurg, 2001; Ludick, 2001; Martin, 2003; Stevenson, 2008; Vortuba & Kling, 2009; Weir, 2007).

Researchers, practitioners, inhabitants, and policy makers use the words knowledge construction and neighborhood in different ways when discussing neighborhood in the literature. These terms carry varied elasticity in definitions that are barely agreed upon across overarching literatures. However, this is not the goal of various literatures on neighborhood knowledge construction, nor should it be. Structuring a firm definition of a neighborhood would take away the current texture of explanations of neighborhood that is present in the literature (O’Sullivan, 2009; Silver 2012). While the assumption of knowledge construction within neighborhood and place is spread across the literature, the operationalization of the term is not (Ioniddes & Topa 2010; Qi, 2007; Weir, 2007). The operationalization of the term without a clear definition presents the first issue in understanding “knowledge construction in the neighborhood.”

In adult education literature, neighborhood, culture, locality and place are sometimes used interchangeably (De Carteret, 2008; Somerville, 2007). Critical place consciousness, place-pedagogy theory and place-conscious education in analysis of knowledge construction in culture have emerged in the past decade as paramount theoretical frameworks used to understand and incorporate knowledge construction perspectives of neighborhood (de Carteret, 2008; Gruenewald, 2003; Somerville, 2007). The model of knowledge construction informally in culture (Smith, 2002) or, as conceptualized in this study, constructing knowledge in place is a highlighted feature used to capture the informal learning and knowledge production happening within place and outside of formal institutions (de Carteret, 2008). I emphasize the notion of knowledge construction in place because adult education research uses informal knowledge construction to identify the type of knowledge existing outside formal places (e.g., public or private schools and universities) that is deemed important to culture members and stakeholders (Smith, 2002).
The idea of place making (imbuing an inhabited space with meaning) is encompassed in the scope of knowledge construction. Examining the “social dances” and “local craft and produce markets” within which the act of place-making happens in de Carteret’s (2008) work provides meaningful interrogation of how informal adult knowledge construction occurs. The activities within these fluid places involve considerable types of knowledge construction important to understanding knowledge construction for adult inhabitants.

Consequently, using academic research as a means of uncovering informal knowledge construction spaces brings the places, the activities happening, and the formerly hidden proof of knowledge construction to the forefront. While these less-accepted knowledge construction spaces are becoming distinguishable because of their contributions to the stability and sustainability of the culture, the bulk of the attention largely remains on overt learning agendas (de Carteret, 2008). A place-conscious approach to knowledge construction in place is warranted precisely because of the obscured contributions in the literature, thus far, regarding conceptions of the entity. Additional clarity in terms that describe people groups in a physical location as culture, neighborhood, and place require qualifiers that anchor them to a grounded places, a set of demographic characteristics, or social or political issues as a common denominator is always group interaction.

**A Case for Place as Mediating Artifact**

Place is the cornerstone of discussion in the literature that connects to the neighborhood (Delaney, 2005; Ludick, 2001; Tuan, 1977). This research focuses on the contemporary understandings of place in knowledge construction among Trinbagonian migrants in Brooklyn to situate the ideas of space and neighborhood. Approaching and understanding participant-developed conceptualizations of what space, place, and neighborhood are, as well as the role they
play in knowledge construction, is an appropriate lens that can further examine the currently unknowable knowledge that place shapes. I use the term neighborhood throughout this work as guided by the terminology used by my participants, even if those conceptualizations are different between participants regarding dissimilarities between their international and their U.S. neighborhoods (Butterfield, 2004; Martin, 2003). Neighborhood pertains to the proximity of how close people live to each other, and the boundaries residents are willing to mark on the place they refer to as their own localized living spaces for this work (Appadurai, 1997; Bates, 2006). I take into consideration time, history, and cultural underpinnings in conjunction with other inhabitants and stakeholders that occupy the spaces with and adjacent to them (Delaney, 2005; Martin, 2003). These building blocks of these concepts and ideas are explained in detail in this section.

The literature offers important schools of thought that provide the foundation for exploring the role of place in knowledge construction among inhabitants. These schools of thought extend back to roots in situated knowledge construction, informal knowledge construction, and communities of practice, leading to the last decade of critical placed-conscious knowledge construction. In this literature, notions of place can be conceived as a container or context within which humans use their bodies and senses to construct the knowledge used when moving through life. Researchers usually do not interrogate context itself, even though context is crucial to understanding place in fields such as human geography, urban geography, sociology, culture psychology, and urban planning (e.g., Appadurai, 1996; Bates, 2006; Bruch & Mare, 2006; Coulton, Korbin, Chan, & Su, 2001; Dawkings, Reibel, & Wong, 2007). Analytically combining the work of various researchers may provide richer information on the role of place in constructing knowledge for inhabitants of a place.
Locating Place

Defining place begins with the examination of the physical and psychological impressions of spaces onto residents and by residents onto spaces important to participants (e.g., placement and location of project buildings, row homes, and apartment buildings, where residents socialize and fraternize and memories of each; Appadurai, 1996; Delaney, 2005; Ife & Tesoriero, 2003; Tuan, 1977). Because people invest and use place to achieve goals like financial freedom, high educational attainment it is important to understand how those investments of time money and recourses (or the lack thereof) are made in space and by space. In this study, practices, artifacts, collective or individual rituals, and other activities from the home country that are significant to residents as they remake place in the new neighborhood contribute to the formation of the physiological, psychosocial, and constructed impressions that residents combine to imagine and reimagine place. In these activities residents and other stakeholders also and mark themselves and other residents as belonging to a particular place (Malone, 2007).

Role of Place

Defining Place

Place is a bounded space imbued with meaning by its inhabitants that produces both context-generative and context-driven activities and behaviors (Appadurai, 1996; Tuan, 1977). When inhabitants imbue space with meaning, they assign emotions, memories, names, boundaries and actions that are specific to that particular place and beget its uniqueness. For example, a large space filled with green grass becomes place as we name its shape (rectangular and long), assign boundaries (a fence around the perimeter), perform an activity there (playing football), name its type (a football field), and experience emotions related to what happens in the space (team spirit
before, during and after the game, feeling of happiness or sadness if a team wins or loses, angst and anticipation as the game is in progress). Context-driven activities and behaviors in place (Appadurai, 1996, p. 186) happen as inhabitants act in response to wider, adjacent, neighboring, or overlapping bounded environments. For example, high school football teams from various cities play games throughout the year with the goal of advancing to regional, state and national championship status. The act of a team pursuing a national championship is primarily a context-driven activity from outside of a particular place.

Context-generative activities and behaviors in place (Appadurai, 1996, p. 186) happen as inhabitants act to produce an environment in proximity and response to each other within a smaller bounded environment. For example, high school football programs may vary drastically between schools depending on the parents, students, coaches, school personnel, culture members, activities, meanings, emotions, and boundaries (material or immaterial) specific to the place (city, neighborhood, school) in which this program is located. The act of forming and maintaining any particular football program is primarily context generative—happening from within a bounded place. Additionally, context-generative and context-driven activities and behaviors in and out of place constitute a dialectical process and operate on a continuum. Place constantly encompasses activities and behaviors that are both context generative and context driven; one cannot happen without the other. For example, the concept of being a national, regional, or state football championship team for high school shapes how unique football programs form in different places. Conversely, high school football programs in various places, though unique, shape an evolving idea of what a national, regional or state championship team does and what it looks like in reality. As I use the concepts of context-driven and context-generative activities to help uncover these processes, I can draw inferences about the role of place as an actor in the human knowledge construction experience.
With the two aforementioned explanations of “role” and “place” I combine each to form a stronger foundation for the “role of place” as a unit of analysis. The “role of place” can now be defined as: “The proper or customary function assumed and performed by a bounded space imbued with meaning by its inhabitants, producing context-generative and context-driven activities and behaviors.” This definition assumes that a place acts on its inhabitants just as inhabitants act upon place (Appadurai, 1996; Ife & Tesoriero, 2002).

Type of Place: Neighborhood

The term “place” is a contested term in geography, sociology, education and other literature. The type of “place” under investigation is neighborhood as conceptualized by Trinbagonian migrant residents in Crown Heights. Because I already know that I am studying a particular type of place, neighborhood, I need to test my conceptualization of place against current conceptualizations of neighborhood to see if my definitions hold true. Researchers define neighborhood in many ways. There is little agreement across literatures about neighborhood as a singular bounded place, except that it is a bounded place. People understand the neighborhood from the point of view of residents, policy makers, culture organizations, federal and state elected officials, among other stakeholders (Friedberg, 2000; Greenburg, 2003; Gulson, 2009; Hacksaw, 2006).

The size, meaning, activities, emotions, and names of neighborhoods make each unique, which make them a place. In an increasingly globalized world, where residents, local and national governments may expect a disintegrating and poorly defined neighborhood, scholars contended that neighborhoods are not “withering” but changing and evolving productively (Gulson, 2009). Gulson challenged the departure of the neighborhood by asserting they are, in fact, becoming sites for “generation, contestation and negotiation of social structures” (p. 148). Neighborhoods
are reshaping themselves as the swift transfer of cultures and information influence neighborhoods. Gulson’s statement on “generation, contestation and negotiation” contains clues to uncover the role of the neighborhood in knowledge construction for Trinbagonian migrants in Crown Heights and concur with my prior conceptualization of place as a context-driven and context-generating entity.

**Knowledge Construction**

In this research, I focused on a significant part of adult education that deals with informal knowledge construction. This term is well known throughout adult education literature. However, in order to be more specific about what I wanted to understand, I repurposed the term knowledge construction to convey a metaphorical-literal continuum of sculpting and building of knowledge between international places for migrants. As Freire (1970, p. 109) notes “People as beings in a situation, find themselves rooted in temporal-spatial conditions which mark them and which they also mark. They will tend to reflect on their own “situationality” to the extent that they are challenged by it to act upon it.” This instinctive state of reflection that takes place for inhabitants of any place is the heart of constructing new knowledge from an existing body of knowledge on places and repurposing foundational knowledge about place for new purposes.

For this study, knowledge construction refers to the processes and structures of how ideas and information come together to yield an intangible or tangible knowledge artifact that can be shared or recalled for later use (See Berieter, 2002). Examples include recipes, directions, stop signs, menus, specific customs for preserving cultural traditions, costumes, Carnival, Trinbagonian foods, hybrid cultural foods, and informational pamphlets on topics such as riding the bus, sexually transmitted diseases and Stop and Frisk push back among culture members.
As people live in the neighborhood, which is rooted temporally and spatially, a reflexive process takes place that produces changes in what people do in a neighborhood and what neighborhood does to people. How does this reflexive process bring about these changes, and how can the product of these changes be observed? The products of knowledge change lead to the concept of a locatable, (but physically immaterial to some extent) awareness of knowledge construction. The development of this term, knowledge construction, arises from the readings of Arun Appadurai a social-cultural anthropologist, Yi Fu Tuan a Chinese—U.S. geographer, and Carl Bereiter a Canadian education researcher, all respectively concerned with the production of locality, place making and experience and knowledge building.

Defining Knowledge

In order to understand more about “knowledge construction” here I explain how I define knowledge for this study. The definitions I form here deal with knowledge experiences outside of a formal setting because these definitions acknowledge that knowledge is everywhere. My conception of knowledge assumes that readers have a familiarity with definitions of knowledge that deal with schooling, which is not the general focus of this study. As such, the definition of “knowledge” used “knowledge construction” is the cumulative product and range of the facts, feelings, skills, or experiences known or acquired by a person or group of people, generating awareness (theoretical or practical), familiarity and specific information about something gained by experience of a fact or situation (Hilipinen, 1970; Lewis, 1996).
Defining Construction

Construct, as a noun, verb, and action are important to discuss and describe in conceptualizing the term “construction” for “knowledge construction.” Some important concepts emerge for definition of this term: Building, manipulating and combining, simple versus complex and systematic decision making process in building, manipulating and combining (Roberts & Winter, 2012). Therefore, the definition of construction I use to construct the term “knowledge construction” is: The result of the systematic process of constructing (building, assembling, or combining) material or immaterial entities. The act of constructing involves systematic decision-making about to which entities to manipulate to and how to do it. This yields created structures that can be material, immaterial or both.

From the two ideas explicated above, I conceptualize knowledge construction as: The process and result (material, immaterial, or both) of systematically deciding how to manipulate, combine, and assemble the cumulative product and range of facts, feelings, skills, or experiences known or acquired by a person or group of people (Musanti & Pence, 2010).

Through critical place-based pedagogy (Denzin, 2009; Gruenewald, 2003) the notion of knowledge in and between translocational and transnational place can be explored by examining what residents do in their transitions to a new international place. The body of knowledge and new ways of understanding place arising from habits and customs rearranged and reimagined in a new place serve as a critical investigative space to begin understanding knowledge formation and transference for people in, through and by place.
Any Place is Pedagogical Space

Critical place-based pedagogy literature incorporates many facets to explore bounded, shared, and contested places and neighborhoods. Some iterations of place pedagogy framework are more critical of how inhabitants use place and how place affects inhabitants. Researchers discuss how knowledge construction is produced in place, through the longstanding traditions of communities, such as farmers markets, sidewalk book sales, social dances and other non-formal spaces (de Carteret, 2008).

I align my research with preceding researchers that argue that a place-conscious approach to knowledge construction is fundamental to further exploring how adults learn to make “place” out of “space” and to understanding the knowledge that inhabitants construct in place-making (de Carteret, 2008). Consequently, geographically bounded places imbued with meaning and culture are the contexts and the texts that humans use to learn themselves and their surroundings, both physical and imagined, for the purpose of living (Ife & Tesoriero 2003; Gruenewald 2006).
Chapter 3

Theoretical Framework

In this chapter, I provide an overview of Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) from informal knowledge construction perspective, meant to emphasize the cultural and historical. I also conceptualize the complementary features of CHAT and critical place-based pedagogy as they illuminate the clandestine working of the place, space, and neighborhood in knowledge construction among Trinbagonian migrants in the Brooklyn area. For this work, I use critical place-based pedagogy to form a functional framework of theories for the methodological and analytical framework of this study.

Informal Knowledge Construction, Adult Education, and Place

Incidental and informal knowledge construction is central to how all people perceive and understand how to remake the places of the neighborhood to live life and achieve goals. (Bartlett-Bragg, 2007; de Carteret, 2008; Maurice, 2006; Schugerensky, 2000; Smith, 2002; Somerville, 2008). A review of academic work on this type of knowledge construction shows that many articles on neighborhood knowledge construction rarely refer to how individuals learn within neighborhood spaces. Instead, this literature focuses on (a) the formal education level of the neighborhood, (b) non-formal health education courses and workshops given to residents targeting specific diseases and malaise, and (c) non-formal education sponsored by non-governmental organizations that are contracted by a government subsidiary to carry out specific knowledge agendas. Examples include of accepted and credentialed learning forums are Job Corps, Teach for America, City Teach Fellows programs, and adult basic education courses, among others (Andersen, Boud, & Cohen, 2000; Helterban, 2007; Shimic & Jevremovic, 2012).
These are all credible outlets and spaces for some types of knowledge construction happening in the neighborhood, and literature from most fields is overrun with these examples. Providing only part of the portrait of what informal knowledge construction might constitute within unregulated neighborhood spaces (that is, currently unregulated by government or education institutions). However, it is difficult to understand what is happening in those unregulated, uncertified knowledge construction areas, which are mostly relegated to the background of the recognition of knowledge construction, though this may be where the most knowledge construction happens for all people. An abundance of knowledge construction is posited to occur here because of the amount of time inhabitants spend in these spaces. Additionally, the cultural structures that inhabitants build and manipulate keep inhabitants connected to these places over long periods of time (Appadurai, 1996; Delaney, 2005; Duncan & Regets, 2009).

**Cultural Historical Activity Theory**

Third-generation Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) and the multi-voiced component of CHAT contain powerful components to aid in the exploration of place and the knowledge that inhabitants create in the neighborhood. CHAT is a useful system of theoretical tools used in this study to examine knowledge construction because of its focus on the dialectical relationship between the individual and their knowledge construction environment, wherever that may take place (van der Reit, 2011). Kristen Foot’s (2001) article shapes the idea of multi-voicedness in CHAT as I make a case for the use of CHAT to explore the many perspectives, but singular entity that is neighborhood. Lastly, the notion of multi-voicedness illuminates how neighborhood knowledge construction and production are intricately involved in the evolving motive-object and multi-voiced perspective of the inhabitants of the neighborhood.
The CHAT framework is used to understand how knowledge construction happens in various life situations, in addition to the cognitive conceptualizations of knowledge construction that currently exist. However, this knowledge construction occurs in the theoretical and actual space of activity and adjacent, connected activity systems as a socio-cultural and historical outcome with expansive cycles of change (Foot, 2001). CHAT considers the cultural aspects of various situations (the norms of the group, attitude of the group, shared characteristics of the group members). Additionally, the historical aspects (habits, long-standing customs, the governing rules and expectations) describe how subjects interact to yield knowledge construction and production (Helsinki, 2003-2004).

In CHAT, there are five factors that are important to understanding the theory: activity system as a unit of analysis, multivoicedness (each viewpoint in the activity set that contributes to change/knowledge construction and production), and the cultural context within which activity takes place. Further, CHAT emphasizes the historicity of activity systems in creating new knowledge and the role of tensions as a driving force for expansive knowledge construction (Roth & Lee, 2007). With CHAT, a researcher can examine various life activities through these four aspects to describe how life activities produce new knowledge as human activity evolves over time.

An activity system is the basic unit for understanding human action within CHAT (Foote, 2001; Engeström, 2000). Activity in CHAT is the simplest form of meaningful human action (Helsinki, 2003-2004; Leontiev, 1977, 1978). In the activity system (see Figure 3-1), the following variables help describe knowledge construction and production: subject, motive-object (and the outcomes), instruments, rules, community of practice and divisions of labor of the activity sets.

The components are as follows:
Subject: the individual or group of individuals that is central to the investigation, from whose point of view the motive-object is understood and potentially achieved.

Motive-object: the reason why activity is happening, results in possible outcomes, intended and unintended; the goal or purpose that is desired from the investigation.

Mediating instruments: the tools, symbols, and signs—used by the subject—that manipulate the outcome.

Rules: the expectations, spoken and unspoken, that governs the activity.

Community of practice: the surrounding group within which the subject is operating and in which the rules apply.

Division of labor: the various groups or individuals that carry out the rules and interact with the subject to affect the motive-object of the activity set. (Helsinki, n.d.).

Researches explore activity sets in conjunction with another set of activities. In order to yield knowledge construction and production, some tensions between activity sets must be recognized and resolved, or at least addressed. CHAT aims to identify tensions and navigate the space between the reality of the situation and the unspoken/spoken expectations.

Third-generation CHAT focuses primarily on negotiating the spaces between current activity set processes and what the desired outcomes of the activity set will be. Consequently, negotiating the evolving, overlapping motive-objects created by adjacent activities is key in identifying expansive cycles of knowledge. Taken from Engeström, the resolutions, recognitions, and possible recognition-without-change of the tensions that are exposed using CHAT are key to demonstrating where knowledge construction and production happen and why. Exposing tensions does not, however, always mean that subjects or researchers resolve tensions within activity.
From Informal Adult Learning to Knowledge Construction

In an activity system, the following diagram outlines the factors that are integral to describing how knowledge construction and production take place:

![Diagram of human activity system](image)

*Figure 3-1. The structure of human activity (system) (Engeström, 2001)*

Each component acts upon the others, in some instances up to four other factors acting upon other factors to explain how each factor is manipulated to yield knowledge construction and production in an activity system.

CHAT can be used to explore knowledge construction, including voicing the knowledge construction needs of various voices of the activity system, the tensions between the reality and the desired outcomes and how knowledge construction takes place. CHAT can be especially helpful in explaining knowledge construction that takes place in neighborhoods. Other knowledge and knowledge construction theories may not easily explain the ways neighborhood members deal with external and internal tensions in activity. Informal learning and knowledge production can be overlooked in neighborhood because of its supposed informality.
Activity and Activity Systems

Within CHAT, activity can be used to examine how humans interact with their world and how knowledge construction comes about. The activity of “getting a job,” “getting a bachelor’s degree,” or “improving personal image in a culture” can be understood within a system that includes the aforementioned components. These components drive the activity and work toward the motive-object, which evolves as various parts of the activity system change and interact and as tensions arise.

The three possible activities identified above provide a baseline idea for the components that an activity needs for the subject (whether collective or individual) work toward the motive-object and attain the goals expected in the system. However, between the three activities that make up this set, tensions arise that may not initially allow the subject to work effectively toward the motive-object and obtain the intended outcomes of the activity. Tensions are conditions that arise within the activity or activity system that affect progress toward the motive-object.

There are several types of tensions that can arise in and among activity systems. Primary tensions (Helsinki, n.d.) happen within one component in the activity system. For example, tensions within the rules of activity may arise if one of the rules of an activity system causes another to be invalid. This tension within the rules component of activity needs to be addressed to continue the movement toward the motive-object. As the subject and researchers address these tensions other parts of the system may change, such as the culture or the divisions of labor that contribute to the ever-evolving nature of the motive-object. Secondary tensions occur between two components of the activity. For example, upon further investigation, the rules of an activity may not directly correlate with the divisions of labor. In activities where the rules may dictate that a specific person be in charge of the task, yet the division of labor undermines her ability to
discharge her responsibility. Subjects and researchers encounter these two types of tensions within one activity system.

Tertiary tensions occur when an advanced form of technology replaces an existing form in activity. Tertiary tensions repeatedly happen as subjects find new ways to fulfill the motive-object of the activity and produce an outcome, knowledge construction. Quaternary tensions happen between two or more activity sets with an overlapping motive-object and are the hallmark of third generation cultural historical activity theory. Motive-objects inherently overlap between activity systems and in some cases so do members of the collective subject (see Figure 3-2).

![Third-generation activity system](image)

*Figure 3-2. Third-generation activity system (Weiss & Feldman, 2010)*

The motive-object may not be identical, but there are enough overlapping issues to cause a quaternary tension or tension between activity systems with different subjects. The collective subject may not share the same rules, divisions of labor, mediating artifacts, or community of practice employed in driving the motive-object and obtaining knowledge construction outcomes. When a quaternary contradiction arises, activity does not have to collapse, but subjects of activity do have to decide how much overlap is beneficial for each of the activity systems involved in order to work toward the motive-object and achieve outcomes. Too little overlap may be insufficient to reach the goal and too much may cause further tensions as the blurring of activity
systems may happen. Tertiary and quaternary tensions occur among and between activity systems.

The tensions and intended and unintended outcomes of the activity systems produce new activity sets that present the potential for deeper analysis; they may be dissected to create more awareness and expand knowledge development and production indefinitely. In CHAT, activity systems are not prescriptive. They can be manipulated and tailored to identify and act upon new knowledge development and production to transform the original activity system into a new activity system with an expanded knowledge base. One of the intellectual and practical applications of CHAT aims to understand how the motive-objects of various activity systems evolve and beget new motive-objects as the subject's perspective shifts and as subjects use mediating artifacts to incorporate new pieces of information into the activity systems.

**The Multi-Voiced Subject in Activity**

CHAT is also used to represent the multi-voiced subject, or a subject representing more than one person. For example, a group of teachers working on reforming teaching standards or curriculum or a group of administrators within an early warning system in the Soviet Union working toward resolving issues in their work environment (Foot, 2001; Weiss & Feldman, 2010). Notably, CHAT identifies the positions of actors within the activity systems. Subjects, are often parts of the community of practice, or the divisions of labor, and can also be mediating tools. Because, I use CHAT to explain neighborhood knowledge structures and to locate how and where the subject acts within the system as they move toward the motive-object and to achieve outcomes. CHAT’s elements can be used effectively to discuss the multi-faceted and multi-positioned nature of the subject within the activity.
In everyday life, there are examples of both multi-voiced and single-voiced human activities. For a multi-voiced subject within an activity system, especially one dealing with neighborhood, I must consider the multiple perspectives of the subject representing individuals within the activity while also considering the interactions and mechanisms of a group working toward a single motive-object with particular outcomes. The issue of multiple positionalities of members of an activity system along with a multi-person subject is subject to examination as well. Because members of the collective subject can also be, and often are, members of the community of practice and the division of labor, carefully observing and documenting the perspectives of these members in their various capacities is a critical step in effective CHAT analysis.

Additionally, the multi-person subject is the eye of the activity system, the view from which subjects know activity, and for whom the motive-object has the most significance. Foot (2001) talked about this as a collective subject, as “one or more members of a group engaged in collective activity at any given moment” (p. 11). The interconnectivity of the collective subject affects how the mediating tools and artifacts of the activity system are used to manipulate the motive-object of activity in order to realize the outcomes and goals of the activity.

In the neighborhood, I suggest neighborhood effects indicate the complex tool and mediating artifact that the neighborhood structure becomes for its collective and singular subjects (or inhabitants), depending on the activities that they engage in within the space. CHAT can illuminate the relationship between the neighborhood inhabitants and the neighborhood structure by examining how the subjects of various context-driven and context-generative activities within a neighborhood interact. Context-driven and generative activities happen in and out of the neighborhood by residents and other stakeholders of the neighborhood across a spectrum that denotes a degree, intensity and effect of these activities (Appadurai, 1996). The complex
mediating artifact and tool that neighborhood becomes within activity motivate actors to manipulate the motive-object to reach particular goals and outcomes.

In Foot (2001), the exploration of the operations, actions and activities systems with a multi-voiced subject explains the conflict resolution mechanisms in the EAWARN system (Network for Ethnological Monitoring and Early Warning in place between 1990-1999 in the former Soviet Union) that yielded expansive cycles of change. First Foot discussed how operations turn into actions, which constitute an activity system, which drive it forward, but not necessarily in a conscious manner. She gives the example (pp. 8-9) of how sending an email may begin as a conscious action but turns into an unconscious operation once using the computer for email is no longer considered an activity but a mediating artifact and tool. The computer is used instrumentally in service to another activity (maintaining frequent communication with others), not in service to learning how to send and receive email. This example alludes to interplay between conscious actions and unconscious operations happening within the neighborhood that drive them forward. There is no clear dividing line between actions and operations.

**Finding Historicity in CHAT**

Subsequently, Foot (2001) discussed the historicity of activity and the importance of this concept is for understanding how activity cycles expand and produce change. Historicity in this context corresponds to the knowledge that the histories of neighborhoods produced because of the length of existence and the changes that have happened within the place during that time. The interaction of time and activity produces different changes, or expansive cycles from a CHAT perspective, which reform as time passes and components of the activity are affected. I draw on Foot’s CHAT explorations to inform how to approach the importance of historicity in neighborhood spaces and the history of the actors and subjects of activities within these spaces. I
can use this research inquiry to explore all components of activity (from the automated actions and knowledge construction outcomes) of neighborhood residents and stakeholders within an activity to illuminate aspects of informal knowledge construction and artifact creation and sharing.

**Evolving Motive-object in CHAT**

The results of the evolving motive-objects that give way to intended and unintended outcomes are the next topic discussed by Foot, through mediating artifacts. Consequently neighborhood structures act as a singular or collective mediating artifact that transform motive-objects into outcomes. These motive-objects arise from of the desires of the identified subjects of various neighborhood activities. Kuutti in Foot (1996) stated that the transformation of motive-objects into outcomes is the driving force of activity. To add to the discourse, I argue that one of the major mediating artifacts that drive the evolving motive-objects for inhabitants of the neighborhood is the neighborhood structure as a singular, collective and complex mediating artifact.

Examining neighborhood as a complex mediating artifact includes understanding the contexts that affect and effect neighborhood. The context-driven and context-generative continuum of activities happening there are an important clue in understanding the mediating nature of the place. The manipulation of place by people (by building, naming, and restricting space) and the manipulation of people by place (by physically or psychologically granting or denying access to spaces) are primary indicators of history and culture formation and reformation within spaces. For this investigation, the neighborhood space is investigated for its capacity to manipulate and be manipulated in the knowledge construction process of the residents in this inquiry. Place fits the definition of what mediating instruments are in CHAT and how they
contribute to the knowledge construction outcomes of the activity system because the outcomes produced by a focus on place as mediating artifact have the potential to provide explanatory descriptions of how place acts to construct knowledge. These are the knowledge construction processes about which the literature on knowledge construction and education are curiously silent.

Foot’s exploration of the evolution of motive-objects that result in various outcomes through mediating artifacts cause me to conceive of neighborhood as a complex mediating artifact, containing and producing many other artifacts created by its subjects and stakeholders in activity and activity systems that take place in the neighborhood. A CHAT analysis of neighborhood provides several vantage points from which to discuss informal knowledge construction in the neighborhood. First an intensive focus on the constructed and natural landscape, processes and structures of neighborhood as mediating artifact and second, focus on the context driven and context generative conscious actions and unconscious operations that become in neighborhood (as adapted from Appadurai’s 1997 text on Localities in Chapter 9). I included these ideas, because I assert that there are automatic operations and conscious actions that result in reinforcing a neighborhood structure that stems from previously conscious activities with intended knowledge construction outcomes.

The interplay of and back and forth flow of unconscious operations and conscious actions within an activity could be used to examine knowledge construction. In this research, the international comparisons of resident’s neighborhood place work to highlight the disruptions of the conscious activity and unconscious actions happening from one place to another and within a place. This initial disruption of routine, or formerly operationalized actions, call to my attention knowledge about space that may have been subsumed and forgotten. This knowledge cannot escape through the senses to be understood and valued by the related societies that matter to the residents and stakeholders. Ideas and knowledge about space that forcibly disrupt migrant
transition bring to the forefront of our senses the hidden knowledge of the types of spaces that comprise the neighborhood place experience.

Third, unconscious operations and conscious actions that structure the neighborhood and inscribe locality upon the body and the mind (Appadurai, 1996) reinforce the subject's perspective of the activity system as vital toward motive-object achievement. A multi-voiced subject initially dictates the manner in which automatic operations and conscious actions transform the everyday happenings of the neighborhood. Lastly, a CHAT analysis of neighborhood forces me constantly to consider the interactions of all the elements of human activity, even as I emphasize the unearthing of the mediating tool of the structure of the neighborhood. CHAT situates the researcher in the evolving nature of the motive-object of activity—an endless state of interactions between elements of activity, making sure that the topic of inquiry is described and explained authentically and from the perspective of the subject.

CHAT is well suited to analyzing the neighborhood structure as mediating artifact and tool and to understanding the multiple capacities of neighborhood. Neighborhood is an actor in the knowledge construction and production process and not simply as a container that holds all of those processes. While inhabitants act within their spaces to create and produce knowledge and use that knowledge to make decisions about life, there is a type of knowledge that requires further investigation and explanation. Further analysis of how neighborhood acts upon its inhabitants and inscribes place upon the body and the mind, is a foundational piece of making hidden knowledge visible and valuable as suggested by Appadurai (1996).

In the literature on assimilation and acculturation, the literature that most closely discusses the experiences of migrants in new places, there are glimpses into the construction of knowledge for Trinbagonian migrants (Akowoya, 2012; Carlin, 2009; Eldridge, 2002; Monkman, 1999). In addition to the assimilative and acculturative features that researchers address for these immigrant groups, knowledge construction outcomes can be deconstructed through a CHAT
analysis by understanding the mediating artifacts of place and instruments used by subjects in the system to achieve knowledge construction. One of the mediating artifacts that drive knowledge construction is neighborhood in conjunction with all aspects of activity, but in most research it is viewed as an immovable structure instead of as a living, breathing, creating a structure, peopled with life and lived by people.

Critical Placed-Based Pedagogy

The field of critical place-based pedagogy literature gives new insights into the repercussions of contested and misappropriated spaces of human development and knowledge construction within living, socializing, and working spaces (Gruenewald, 2003). This framework is interdisciplinary and compatible with the cultural, historical activity theoretical framework in my endeavor to discuss a place as a pedagogical tool. This section discusses how the literature combines a place pedagogy and critical theory to form the budding theory of critical place-based pedagogical inquiry. The combination of these two fields is important because place pedagogy studies aims to focus on the culture as the primary source of knowledge construction on a regular basis (Eldridge, 2002; Graham, 2007; Gruenewald, 2006; Sobel, 2004).

In many ways, people are unconscious of the places around them and the effect these places have on learning. However, critical place-based pedagogy advocates for a place-conscious approach to understanding place that serves as a tool to question and inspect the places of living, working, and socializing and the informal happening therein, to provide better forms of “pedagogy” for learners in all situations (Gruenewald, 2003). Researchers can examine dimensions of place exist to foster a state of place consciousness that drive learners toward critical analyses across all levels and types of learning: the perceptual, the ideological, the sociological, the political and the ecological. The purpose of a critical place-based inquiry is to
“contribute to a theory of place as a multi-disciplinary construct for cultural analysis and to unearth, transplant, and cross-fertilize perspectives on place that an advance theory research and practice in education” (p. 619).

Becoming place conscious is difficult work because it requires a reexamination of practices and traditions surrounding informal in place that have previously gone untouched. For example, the space of the classroom is one of the least examined spaces of learning in terms of what is taught to “place-makers” (p. 620) who are experiencing knowledge construction practice in this space, and then taking that knowledge out into other places. Gruenewald explains the problematic nature of the unexamined, uncontested place of knowledge construction that is the conventional classroom:

The pressures of “accountability” and the publication of standardized test scores in the news media reinforce the assumption that student, teacher and school achievement can be measured by classroom routines alone and that the only kind of achievement that really matters is individualistic, quantifiable and statistically comparable. Such an assumption is misleading because it distracts attention from the larger cultural context of living, of which formal education is just a part. (p. 620)

This scene is not uncommon to knowledge facilitators in all fields. The high price educators, policy makers, teachers, parents, and students place on schooling affects how learners perceive knowledge construction outside of the classroom, therefore, causing an overrepresentation of “standardized” learning that flows into places where no such standards apply, or even exist. Consequently, learners suffer if their version of knowledge construction is not “individualistic, quantifiable, and statistically comparable.” Consequently, the evidence is in the scores of students that forgo promotion to the next grade level because of low marks on standardized tests, or the 21-year-old senior that will complete six years of high school instead of
three or four. The individualistic learning model that society promotes is one of the foundational reasons that a critical placed-based pedagogical inquiry becomes necessary. These situations necessitate an undoing of the current understanding of learning in the place that is the classroom, and the culture that has created repeated patterns of standardized test hysteria and rampant student “failure.”

Beyond the structure of the school classroom, there are also dominant structures in society that dictate what knowledge construction should be like, from the neighborhood level to the national level and how learners should exhibit their knowledge in everyday life. Graham (n.d.) explained that:

In contemporary life and education the local is marginalized in favor of large-scale economies of consumption that are indifferent to ecological concerns. The consequences of neglecting local human and natural communities include a degraded habitat…alienation…and a lack of connection to communities. (para. 6)

The constructed and natural habitats and places where knowledge construction resides suffer when completely consumed by the overreaching standards of the dominant culture, which are not always appropriate in understanding the meaning and role of place in knowledge construction. Consequently, the characteristics of what units of place constitute from the national to neighborhood levels affect how humans construct knowledge are left unexplored, and subsumed in a larger, dominant narrative. An overreaching, overbearing knowledge construction narrative is not always appropriate to conceptualize how knowledge construction happens in place. However, issues of power, race, and socioeconomic structure solidify what knowledge and ways of constructing that knowledge are valuable while sometimes ignoring other ways of knowing.
Critically Examining Place

For this study, I relied heavily on visual components to paint a cultural, historical portrait of how Trinbagonian migrant residents learn about Crown Heights, its boundaries, and how to navigate them. These visual components also helped me discern the strength or weakness of how participants described participating in activities in related areas. I used the concept of the context-driven/context-generative continuum (adapted from Appadurai, 1996, Chapter 9) to capture how activities happen in and out of the neighborhood and to what degree of involvement, from inhabitants and non-inhabitants to gauge the activities that I experienced for how “Brooklyn” or how “Trinbagonian” the activities were. I classified activities that happened primarily in the Brooklyn Trinbagonian culture due to high international influences from Trinidad such as Being Trinbagonian in Brooklyn as highly context-driven and lowly context-generative. Activities that have a comparable level of influence from both within the Borough of Brooklyn and from Trinidad such as Carnival are highly context driven and high context generative. I classified activities that had lower international influence if they were conceived and maintained internationally as low context-driven, and high context-generative.

Activities that are difficult to pinpoint as fitting into any one of the previous of this categories are considered neutral or lowly context driven or generative. I did not explore the presence low context-generative or low context-driven activities in this study. I use this method informally to explore what kind of activities migrant residents participate in inside and outside of the neighborhood and how those activities intersect and overlap to contribute to the role of place in the knowledge construction experiences of Trinbagonian migrants. In Table 3-1, the concepts of all activities that fall within a context generative (CG) or context driven (CD) are shown in the adapted portrayal of a table. I pay specific attention to the formation of knowledge artifacts (Berieter, 2002) to understand how Trinbagonian participants deal with the information they have
learned and how this information is manipulated between themselves, their family and friends and the wider Trinbagonian culture. I use cultural, and historical activity theory and the components of the activity system to frame the often-elusive nature of a place (physical, cultural, historical, and imbued with meaning by humans) in the knowledge construction for Trinbagonian migrants (Engeström, 1999; Foot, 2001; Helsinki, 2004).

Table 3-1 *Examples of Context Generative (CG) and Context Driven (CD) Activity Continuum*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Context Generative</th>
<th>Context Driven</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CG High &amp; CD High</td>
<td>CD Low &amp; CG High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brooklyn Carnival</td>
<td>Maintaining Local Lime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CG Low &amp; CD High</td>
<td>CD Low &amp; CG Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being Trinbagonian in Brooklyn</td>
<td>------</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Adding a critical theory approach (Gruenewald, 2003) to place-based pedagogy uncovers a different way of understanding inhabitants’ relationships to place in another plausible place pedagogy context. Most importantly, some of the more obscure places of knowledge construction, especially those places that have little overlap with a classroom-based approach and that do not necessarily stem from a classroom inquiry into the culture rise to the surface for examination (Engeström, 2001; Sawchuck, 2013). As such, the critical place-based pedagogy for this work positions participants as learner-actors in their communities who construct knowledge building activities that have intended and unintended knowledge construction outcomes. These participants, who are inhabitants and stakeholders of the neighborhoods chosen for this study, also serve like the teachers and facilitators of that knowledge to the culture and themselves.

The critical place-based pedagogy called for here is a pedagogy that considers all spaces within a place to be an area for original springs of knowledge, from which an inquiry of value to the culture into knowledge construction outcomes can begin from any person or stakeholder in the neighborhood to be critiqued by other inhabitants. Most importantly, the goal is not to
translate the inquiry into the knowledge construction outcomes back into school- or classroom-based setting. Rather, the goal of this knowledge construction exercise is to unearth what type of knowledge construction emerges and how that knowledge construction is happening in place. Unearthing knowledge construction can be done by making the process transparent to learners who are trained to think of schooling as the primary way of unearthing any knowledge construction that is of value to the dominant culture. This combined approach to spaces within these places provides a way to look at place outside of the typical acceptance of what places are supposed to do and give richer and deeper descriptions of what places does in the knowledge construction process.

In order to get to this deeper, rich description of the critical and pedagogical knowledge construction tool that is a place, the CHAT framework is introduced with CPBP to wed what is done in place through the examination of human activity. CHAT locates the activities that inhabitants engage in within place that gives meaning and significance to the spaces they inhabit. This locating process concretely exemplifies the role of place in the activity itself. Activity takes place somewhere. Each somewhere, signifying a place, has significance and is manipulated—and in turn manipulates the inhabitants of the particular in the activity in place. When I examine activity, the question of “where?” comes up frequently. Where is the activity happening and who is involved? The first part of the question provides a locatable setting (whether material or immaterial, spatial or virtual) for a critical investigation of human activity of inhabitants.

With CHAT and critical place-based pedagogy a new 'classroom' is created. As a researcher and educator, I can examine knowledge construction outcomes of all places where people constructed knowledge, using a CHAT-CPBP combination analysis. The novel 'classroom' is both theoretical and grounded by granting the investigator the lens and theoretical framework through which to investigate real world knowledge construction happening in each space that comprises place. For example, in place there are spaces for schooling. There are spaces for
celebrating. There are places for mourning, and there are spaces for being violent, being homeless, or being affluent. Within each of those spaces, researchers, practitioners, and learners can begin uncover the knowledge construction outcomes that arise out of the human activities. Furthermore, stakeholders learn how they may connect to other activities to form a system of activities that directly conveys the expansive knowledge construction cycle of individuals and collectives in place.

The main reason for using CHAT and CPBP and interdisciplinary pieces of a theoretical framework is to help the cultural and historical aspects of CHAT remain at the forefront of inquiry with the other components of the system. Place is space imbued with meaning (Tuan, 1977), and inhabitants express meaning making when they act within that space, create memories, create traditions, and unconsciously operationalize actions to form the culture and the history of activity that is inherent to identifying and distinguishing place.

Tensions and Relationships in a Place-Based Cultural Historical Inquiry

The demonstrated connection between CHAT and a critical place-based pedagogical inquiry into the knowledge that is being constructed by people in place allows me to take the elements of CHAT and investigate each tension, or that occurs within specific activity systems for the place-based components. In order to properly understand the place-based components of activity, I have identified a set of theoretical analytic methods based on the combination of a CHAT framework and the tenets of critical place-based pedagogy. First I used a combination formula \( nC_r = nPr/r! \) to record all the combinations of the six elements that were possible in groups of two, three, four, and five. I used a combinations formula because I was not concerned with the order of the elements of CHAT for this analysis. After doing this, I constructed a possible question I could ask of about the combination of elements that would aid in a richer
explanation of the how the elements connect in the system. This first step keeps me from treating each element as a standalone entity, for they are complex and interrelated. As explained in the CHAT section of this chapter, the subject, for example, is part of the community of practice and also has a role to play in the rules that comprise the activity system. Next, I ask how place relates to the combination of elements that I am seeking more information on. As I ask about place in relation to these elements, I can record how the relationships between the elements contribute to the culture and history of the activity under investigation. One example of a question for a pair of elements, for instance, would be: ‘what historical characteristics do the subject, and mediating instruments of the activity portray? What cultural characteristics do the subject, and divisions of labor elements portray in this activity system? How do these characteristics relate to place driven knowledge construction?

Conclusion

With CHAT as the analytical framework, place can be understood for its cultural and historical significance in shaping knowledge construction. An interdisciplinary approach that includes other frameworks such as critical place-based pedagogy combined with CHAT to enhance the activity framework put place as central to knowledge construction. Consequently an interdisciplinary approach strengthens the presence of “illuminative hinges” (Foot, 2001, p 25), which uncover the quotidian processes of constructing knowledge that drive the lives of Trinbagonian migrants to the United States and Brooklyn. CHAT is the most appropriate framework to use in efforts for illuminating how informal and non-formal learning happens in place as subjects use place and are affected by place as they go about learning how to establish themselves as persons in new places.
Chapter 4

Research Site and Migration History

This chapter provides a history of migration from Trinbago to the United States to connect the important points in the process that explain how Trinbagonians came to be where they are in Brooklyn today. Additionally, this section gives details about the project site with neighborhood demographics and pictures to aid the reader’s understanding and situate the research questions. This chapter serves as a precursor to the methodological framework of the study, as it is a squarely grounded approach. I introduce the neighborhoods that I will study, and I describe my rationale for choosing these neighborhoods.

Migration from Trinbago to the United States of America

Black Caribbean migrants, in particular people from the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, have developed a history of the place that spans over four centuries in the United States. The first known Caribbean migrants to United States came through the state of Connecticut during the 17th century (Murrell, 2012). The reentry of Caribbean migrants, especially from the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago (subsequently referred to as Trinbago), started during the Harlem Renaissance in the 1920s. For countries like the newly independent Trinbago, the United States did not legally permit non-visa quota or non-immigrant entry into the country until the Immigration Act of 1965.

The U.S. government presented the 1965 act in the form of family reunification program that allowed persons claiming family status to a citizen or worker in the United States to obtain U.S. visas and green cards on a first-come first-served basis. Special refugee status was given to
newly independent countries; the U.S. government included Trinbago and Jamaica in this group. The influx of individuals into the country from the western hemisphere, which now had no quotas at all, increased the wait time to obtain a visa up to almost two years. There were also other issues concerning the employment climate in the country that encouraged illegal immigration for low and unskilled labor, while the number of middle class jobs class during this period slumped. Still, Trinbagonians migrated for job security, educational opportunities, and at the urging of family members who had gone before them and had secured work in the United States, legally or illegally (Andrews, 2009; Archibald, 2011).

Consequently, the majority of Caribbean migrants currently living in New York City today entered during the largest influx to date of Caribbean migration into the United States, which began in 1965 and lasted well into the late 1980s. Many became undocumented or “illegal” for overstaying their visas in the country (Charles, 1984; McCabe, 2011). Lastly the Immigration Act of 1990 provided temporary relief for over-stayers by creating citizenship lotteries and other pathways to legal residents in the United States:

Public Law 101-649 (Act of November 29, 1990 which increased the limits on legal immigration to the United States revised all grounds for exclusion an deportation, authorized temporary protected status to aliens of designated countries, revised and established new nonimmigrant admission categories, revised and extended the Visa Waiver Pilot Program, and revised naturalization authority and requirements. (USCIS, Immigration act of 1990) Under these series of laws spanning 94 years, Trinbagonian migrants have come to the United States numbering more than 500,000 people, with two-thirds of the population residing in the New York City Metro Area (ACS, 2010).
**Trinbagonian Migration in New York City**

Today, Trinbagonian migration—especially to New York City, which boasts the largest Trinbagonian population outside of the country—has slowed. However, Trinbagonians remain the fifth largest population of Caribbean migrants in the United States and New York City (behind Jamaica and the Dominican Republic; McCabe, 2011). Voluntary Black Caribbean immigrants from the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago to the New York City area coincided with the Harlem Renaissance and the influx of other Caribbean migrants to the Harlem vicinity (Eldridge, 2002).

The inter-borough migration of Caribbean people, especially Trinbagonians, en masse to Bedford Stuyvesant Brooklyn from Harlem did not happen until the late 1960s early 1970s. Caribbean people acquired decent levels of socio-economic status, as they entered higher education and gained steady employment in respectable professions. These jobs included nursing, clerical, and childcare work for women; messenger, construction, and public transportation work for men (Conway, 1999).

Real estate vacated by the Jewish and European American populations was purchased and maintained by Black Caribbean and Black American residents who lived together in densely populated areas. These areas eventually became majority Black neighborhoods (over 80%-90% in each) in central and east central Brooklyn such as Crown Heights, Flatbush, East Flatbush, and Prospect Lefferts Gardens (Rotondaro & Ewing, 2013). These four areas are the primary points of culture participation and observation examined in this research. A notably segregated section of town was in Crown Heights, starting four blocks south of Nostrand Avenue (around New York Avenue) creating a dividing line between primarily the Hassidic Jewish and the Black Caribbean and African American populations.

The section of Crown Heights with a higher Jewish population is noted for the world-famous Brooklyn Children’s Museum and the famous Jewish culture and studies center hosting
young Jewish scholars from all over the world (Goldschmidt, 2001). Additionally the culture of Jews in the Crown Heights area (as with other communities of Jews in Brooklyn) had private ambulance services, strictly for Jewish residents in the increasingly strained racial relations during this time of unrest in Crown Heights (Brodkin, 2002; Lewis & Smith, 1993).

This separation factored heavily into developing dangerous levels of hostility between the populations living in Crown Heights. In 1991, an explosion of riots following the killing of a seven-year-old Caribbean Black child and the stabbing that killed a student of the Jewish studies center. The incident caused the divided populations to come together for a short time, but in a violent manner, causing severe property damage, bodily harm, and mass arrests. Groups like the Anti-Defamation League and the Brooklyn Chapter of the NAACP both document perspectives on the issue that seemed to demand justice for Jews and Blacks respectively. Some available articles on the topic claim that the Jewish ambulance service left the seven-year-old boy to die on the street with his injured sister, but this same ambulance service whisked away the vehicle operator that struck the children. (Lewis & Smith, 1993).

Other articles claimed that the riots were the most anti-Semitic time in Crown Heights history, terrorizing more than 20,000 Jewish residents and resulting in a fatal stabbing (Anti Defamation League, 1991). Embroiled in this deep divide were Trinbagonian Americans and first-generation migrants of West Indian heritage that had come from their international location to make a home and space in this area. Further, academic writings on the riots claim the media reported the incident as the spark of a “race war” that was not happening during this time (Conway, 1999). Conway (1999) claims that the media failed to recognize the differences between the plurality of ethnic group sentiments during the riots and the bitter aftermath. However, the young boy who the driver killed and his injured sister were of Guyanese descent, which complicates the claim of extreme anti-Semitism or extreme racism toward American Blacks. Complicating notions of racism and anti-Semitism give context to race issues
that still exist in Crown Heights between the Caribbean and Jewish populations that stem from the riots. People who resided in the neighborhood during these riots that drawn into a “race war” that the media gave a large amount of attention that heightened the alleged problems and fueled further animosity.

**Crown Heights, Flatbush, East Flatbush, and Lefferts Gardens**

Trinbagonians have a long history in Crown Heights and the adjacent neighborhoods of Flatbush, East Flatbush and Lefferts Gardens in the borough of Brooklyn (Figures 4-1 to 4-4). There are many contested neighborhood boundaries in Brooklyn and these areas are often at the heart of such contests. The Crown Heights section of the borough sits in East Central Brooklyn. The Crown Height area used to be a part of the Flatbush area of Brooklyn named Crow Hill. Crow Hill became “Crown Heights” in 1916 when “Crown Street” became a small thoroughfare and cut through the neighborhood (WPA, 1939). These areas have neighborhoods with large Caribbean population, along with African Americans, Hasidic Jews, and more recently an influx of White Americans (Rotondaro & Ewing, 2013). Below are four pictures that depict the neighborhood places that I started my observational journeys during this research.
Figure 4-1. Crown Heights, Brooklyn

Figure 4-2. East Flatbush, Brooklyn
Figure 4-3. Flatbush, Brooklyn

Figure 4-4. Lefferts Gardens, Brooklyn
Crown Heights is a popular epicenter for Trinbagonians and other West Indians, but the adjacent areas shown above are also important due to their similar traditional customs, dense minority and Caribbean population characteristics, and similar status as largely working-class residential areas. Therefore, the geographic scope of my study had widened. I began my official Brooklyn data collection processes on August 2, 2013 near my place of former residence while lodging in the nearby neighborhood of Lefferts Gardens, eight blocks away. When I first talked to people from the Flatbush Avenue Lime (an established group of men and the occasional woman from the Caribbean, mainly Trinidad), I learned that I was lodging in a major Caribbean commuter neighborhood. This area had become increasing gentrified with the introduction of Whites from lower Manhattan, Park Slope, and Brooklyn Heights (among other places) and Africans, East Asian, and South East Asians from international locations.

Table 4-1

*Race and Ethnicity—2010 Census Data*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race and Ethnicity</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>42.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Black or African American</strong></td>
<td>34.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific Islander</td>
<td>0% (1243)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White (Non-Latino)</td>
<td>36.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino or Hispanic</td>
<td>19.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Race</td>
<td>10.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two or More Races</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Born in Foreign Country</strong></td>
<td>37.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Trinidadian and Tobagonian)</td>
<td>(6.8%)  (3.6% foreign born 3.2% direct ancestry)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Brooklyn Population</td>
<td>2,504,700</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** Denotes the cross section of Afri-Caribbean residents in the borough
As I reoriented myself to the neighborhood where I once lived and introduced myself to the Lefferts Gardens culture where I would reside during my field research, I second-guessed my choice for a project site because of the sense of dissonance I experienced. Was the idea of exploring the role of place in knowledge construction still important? There seemed to be fewer Caribbean faces in areas than when I had lived here before. However, I reaffirmed that the culture of the people living there was not the main point of my inquiry. I was there to understand how place was manipulated by inhabitants and, in turn, manipulated the inhabitants and their cultures in the quotidian knowledge construction process.

East Flatbush was another area of heavy Caribbean influence. I exited the train at Church and Nostrand Avenues; I looked around the four corners to see clothing, food and retail shops, and the entrance across the street to the train station, and a multitude of people walking around. It was the Wednesday after Carnival Monday so folks were slowly getting back to normal. I walked down a few blocks to my observation spot. I was meeting Andreis here for my first walk-along.

Flatbush is geographically located just after Lefferts Gardens and extended down Flatbush Avenue to the Junction. Along this major thorough way there are roti shops, many Caribbean-owned or managed stores, many hair-braiding salons, regular salons, and barbershops. There were shops for Jamaican food. To do observations in this area, I would ride the B41 bus that made all regular (not the express bus, which is marked as B41 Limited) stops down Flatbush Avenue until Brooklyn College (that was considered to be in the Midwood section of Brooklyn). The ride from Lincoln and Flatbush where I stayed to the Junction took about 40 minutes. I rode down twice a week for two to three hours to take notes and to observe what was happening at different times of the day.

In the early morning during rush hours it was difficult to find a seat on the bus. Everyone was going somewhere. Work, school, or wherever, the B41 bus was all hustle and bustle all the way to Brooklyn College and the Flatbush Junction. At the Junction, folks were also headed back.
into the borough towards downtown Brooklyn. It was the end of the two and the five train lines as well as the junction for the B6, the B41 and other buses that went further out into the borough of Brooklyn. Many people got off here to go into workplaces, schools, and other locations in the area. Hardly anyone talked in the morning. By midday, if I took the bus to an interview, there would be a little more discussion, but it was still very quiet. In the evenings, when I rode the B41 bus back from a well-known church in Downtown Brooklyn with some friends, we would talk and laugh about my work, the day, or what happened in church that evening. It was usually on a Tuesday or Wednesday evening during height of the workweek.

In the evenings, more people were on their phones talking or chatting, and there were more people talking to each other. The B41 travels from Downtown Brooklyn to Flatbush Junction in a very large loop. The drivers take a break at the two main points on the bus line where the bus route begins in Downtown Brooklyn and where it ends at Flatbush Junction. There were so many differences between these times of day, just through the level of chatter happening on the busses and trains as people traveled through the neighborhoods.

**Changing Colors, Changing Faces**

As I walked through the streets from Atlantic Avenue down to Empire Boulevard and rode the train from Atlantic Avenue down to Flatbush Junction, I noted the changes in the hues of people as Mary Waters described in her 1999 research. In Waters (1999) research, as people entered and left the train car she rode in from downtown Brooklyn to Flatbush Junction the hue of people changed drastically from White to Black by the time she had reached Flatbush Junction (p. 34). This group of Black people, as Waters describes in her work, were of a majority West Indian descent as the train rode further into Brooklyn toward The Junction. The changes from then until now, 15 years later are unusual in comparison to other Brooklyn neighborhoods, but not
necessarily reversed. There are still many Trinbagonians, and other Caribbean peoples in the area, and they make their presence known. There is a prominent Caribbean culture, evidenced by dozens of roti shops, Jamaican jerk shacks and other Caribbean restaurants that exist solely in such high concentrations in this area. However, there are many more White people who seemed to be in the wrong part of town. The polarizing term “wrong” may seem unusual, but it is important to note because of my perceptions of who was supposed to be in the area and who was not. I sat genuinely confused on train rides and took double takes as I walked down the street. This attempt to work from my prior conceptions of how space had been used became unraveled. Everything seemed a little out of place: the new White faces, their style of dress, their presence on the trains and in the neighborhood, and their seemingly seamless integration into heavily Caribbean populated areas.

These new residents were exiting the train past Atlantic Avenue on the 2, 3, 4, 5, Q and B and integrating into the fabric of these previously undesirable Brooklyn neighborhoods. There were fewer people passing those four or five stops on the two trains; President, Sterling, Winthrop and Church Avenue through Crown Heights and Flatbush to get to other affluent, less minority populated Brooklyn neighborhoods. Two of the four areas are particularly attractive, Lefferts Gardens and Crown Heights, because of their accessibility to downtown Brooklyn and Manhattan via the IRT Lexington Avenue and Broadway-Seventh Avenue lines, the BMT Broadway line and the IND Sixth Avenue Line. Each of the trains that run on these lines provide surrounding neighborhoods with direct access to Atlantic Center, with even wider access to other lines and the Long Island Rail Road, among other methods of transport. Additionally the bus services that run from these areas to downtown are abundant. In the four neighborhoods, the B16, 35 41, 44 and 45 among a few others provide express and local service to the downtown area.
The character and presence of the neighborhood and the rebranding that is currently happening are changing how Trinbagonians, Jamaicans, and Haitians—three of the largest resident groups from the Caribbean—shape the Caribbean and overall culture landscape. Residents produce evidence of change by attempts at Caribbean cuisine fusion restaurants that are very successful. Additionally, the containment (by cutting the hours for events and an over-abundance of presence from law enforcement) yet glorification of the West Indian American Day Carnival (or Pride, as the name slowly morphs to fit the other parades of the city—Gay Pride, Hispanic Pride and other “Pride” celebrations) signal further change. Further, political figures and newer White residents to the culture have developed a vested interest and fascination in the celebrations to garner votes and add to a collection of cultural experiences for residents outside of the culture (Lee, 2014). However, some portions of these groups are not necessarily interested in engaging in the culture.

Most of all, the monetary influx of higher-income residents has prompted real estate owners to invest in neighborhood revitalization projects to attract money to these newly popular
parts of Brooklyn. Business owners describe and discuss the changes happening as businesses and restaurants relocate or close each month. Managers and owners, mostly Hispanic or Caribbean, report that the exponential increase in their leasing agreements over the last six years has caused the dislocation of longstanding Caribbean owned establishments in the area. Christie’s Jamaican Patties restaurant exemplifies a longstanding community fixture that went out of business after more than 25 years in the winter of 2014 (Musumeci, 2014). The stories of lower-income residents of the areas that have been displaced to the outskirts of the borough into even poorer neighborhoods, like Brownsville and East New York add further details to the portrait of displacement that is happening in the area (Petrie, 2012; McKinnish, Walsh, & White, 2010).

It was not the case 10 years ago. I began my experiences as an adult in the Crown Heights area, renting a room out of a house near Eastern Parkway and Nostrand Avenue and working in Manhattan. Rent was relatively cheap. Excellent access into Manhattan was a major advantage, but the city did not always keep the train stations clean and safe, and nefarious activity had taken over some parts of the neighborhood. However, changes were noticeable as the years progressed in my time there. By the time I had started my third job in the city, the solidification of plans to build a stadium in Brooklyn finally became widespread public news and not just hearsay. There was plenty of uproar, protests, picketing, and other displays of unrest from all neighborhoods nearer to down to and Atlantic center, for what was inevitably coming.

Today that same room I rented costs three times more than what it did then. There are rental agencies now in the area, such as “MySpace” (Petrie, 2012), which have taken over the management of many of these homes and businesses as the owners either sell for handsome sums of money or move to other areas but maintain ownership of the properties. These rental and leasing agencies have cropped up very quickly to take advantage of big changes in the borough, relatively near to Crown Heights and Lefferts Gardens. Investors’ plans included building the now-completed Atlantic Avenue Barclay’s Center and Sports Complex, the new home of the
Brooklyn (formerly New Jersey) Nets. The Center also accommodates a host of new concerts and events contributing to a much larger flow of people in and out of Brooklyn. Essentially, this has become the Madison Square Garden of the Borough of Brooklyn.

Accessibility to this complex in Downtown Brooklyn has made Crown Heights a hotspot for new residents with more money and different cultural affiliations. Although the scholarly literature on this movement is still emerging, there is no lack of newspaper articles and television news coverage on the changes taking place in the neighborhood (Dailey, 2014; Iversen, 2013; Perlman, 2014; Petrie, 2012; Rotondaro & Ewing, 2013). Both the poorer residents, which include Caribbean people and African Americans who cannot afford to live there any longer, and more affluent European Americans and Jewish residents have voiced their opinion on some of the changes in the neighborhood. Some Jewish residents have even called for residents to “take back Crown Heights” (Petrie, 2012) from those who are moving into the area, whom they believe are detrimental the cultural existence and unique historical context of the culture.

The Significance of Carnival in Trinbagonian Culture in Brooklyn

The West Indian Carnival Day celebrations are detailed and extensive in historical significance, cultural imagery and semantic meaning. Caribbean participants and natives model the celebration after the largest and premiere Carnival celebration in the Caribbean, Trinidad and Tobago Carnival. First, this celebration is a way to keep culture alive for with West Indian roots or ancestry in New York City, especially those from Trinbago and Jamaica, who comprise a large number of participants in Labor Day festivities. These festivities are usually one week long and culminate in a steel pan competition, a King and Queen of the Band contest, many concerts. Participants can patronize the open market with food and Caribbean paraphernalia consisting of flags, jewelry, clothing, paintings, and arts and crafts, among many other items. The last activity
is the biggest of all: the Carnival procession on Labor Day boasting three million participants and observers each year. While bringing many resources and hundreds of millions of dollars to Crown Heights, it also brings alleged violence (Robins & Leonard, 2012). The alleged violence is a striking point of contention for the culture because some of the violence that is attributed to the West Indian Day Carnival Celebration is not always connected to the parade (Richardson, 2012). Each year, most of the people that commit murders in any of the five boroughs of the city that during that weekend are attributed to the parade whether they are parade-related or not (Leonard, 2012).

Carnival officials and participants fashion Brooklyn’s West Indian American Day Carnival after the three-month Carnival season that takes places in Trinbago from Boxing Day in December until Fat Tuesday in March. Brooklyn also hosts Panorama, which is the largest steel pan and steel band competition in North American second only to the International Panorama Competition in Trinbago during Carnival season. J’ouvert is also a cultural foundation in Brooklyn, just as it is in Trinidad. J’ouvert, which celebrates the official start of Carnival, masquerading in costume and pure revelry with a ritualistic cleansing in the sea or with water that takes place as day breaks. While space constraints and context generative and driven activities dictate significant changes to these celebrations of struggle and progress, they have remained, for more 50 years, the most visible elements of success and progress among Trinbagonians and other Caribbean migrants in Trinbago and Brooklyn as well.

The planning and execution of the West Indian American Day Carnival are carried out by its eponymous Association (the WIADCA). The WIADCA also operates as an organization within the culture that carries out events year round in addition to the West India Day Carnival and its surrounding events. Carnival and its interconnected organizations and associations form a network of Caribbean events and activities that are thriving culture commodities for people of Caribbean descent and other ethnic groups as well. These are the contributions of the substantial
concentration of Caribbean people in the living in the area. Carnival is the largest cultural celebration in Brooklyn and draws millions of revelers each year. This year, the West Indian American Day Carnival Association celebrated 46 years of the Carnival procession, and 28 years of the “daybreak” procession known as J’ouvert, which heralds the official beginning of Carnival and masquerading (Labor Day Weekend, 2013) Carnival officials and participants hold these two traditional Trinbagonian Ole Mas events in Brooklyn and Trinbago. However, while Trinbago Carnival follows a Lenten schedule, Brooklyn Carnival is held each year on the first Monday in September that is Labor Day.

**Mas At Madison: The Evolution of Carnival in New York City**

Carnival is the crowning jewel of the four neighborhoods observed for this study. Each of the four neighborhoods is a hot spot for Carnival, especially where there are restaurants that serve Caribbean food. In each of these neighborhoods, there are Mas Camps where professional mas makers construct masqueraders' costumes and headpieces for the upcoming Mas that are open for the Carnival season. These places are open for about four continuous months out of the year in a physical location. With the advent of the Internet, potential masqueraders can find many “Mas camps” online and order costume or express intent to participate in Carnival with a particular Carnival band for the Monday procession. Carnival is the both the culmination and the commencement of the celebration of Trinbagonian culture in this part of Brooklyn. Many people come from international locations come to celebrate Brooklyn Carnival as Caribbean—more specifically Trinbagonian—culture. Although Carnival invites all cultures, groups, and organizations to masquerade on Carnival Monday, the structure of Carnival remains strongly Trinbagonian in style, structure, and essence.
The Movement of Carnival in Between Boroughs

The movement of Trinbagonians to Brooklyn from Harlem coincides with the movement of Carnival from Harlem to Brooklyn. Carnival first started in Harlem but started inside of homes, not outside in the street as a Carnival as in Trinbago. People would go from Mas camp to Mas camp to see the costumes people painstakingly put together through a craft called wire bending. One year, a few people decided take their costumes and music from the basements to the front of their homes and then eventually to the road, and Carnival in Harlem was born. As General (one of the participants in my study) explained in his interview:

They [masqueraders in Carnival] didn’t come to Brooklyn at the inception; they went to Harlem. And in the 60s when Brooklyn was being transformed from the point of Caribbean people were just purchasing homes in Brooklyn…So in the 60s they started coming to Brooklyn and leaving Harlem…. Caribbean people went to Harlem because of the ethnic composition there…they had no choice, because you couldn’t live in any other area. You had to live among Black people…. In the 20s a Trinidad woman started Carnival in Harlem. Well Carnival really started in the clubs, it wasn’t in the street. You’d have sailor band and an Indian band and a history band and everybody would have their little group of 0-30 people…

It was humble beginnings for West Indian Carnival in New York. Around the world, it is known as “New York Carnival” and in New York it is known as the “West Indian American Day Carnival.”
Description of Carnival Day in Brooklyn

Carnival is usually considered a “season” about one month before the actual procession on Labor Day Monday. Understanding the history of the celebrations is the foundation for understanding how important Carnival is to the people of Trinbago, as well as citizens and residents of other Caribbean islands.

Steel pan, which is a mainstay of Carnival, was an instrument borne of the struggle and the only musical instrument created in the 20th century. In Carnival events, Panorama is a fundamental celebration.

Figure 4-6. Brooklyn Carnival Parade Route (WIADCA, 2013)

Figure 4-7. Tenor Steel pan at Carnival 2013 in Brooklyn
The Panorama, which is a steel pan competition between 10 steel bands consisting of groups of steel drums, lasts from about 6 p.m.-3 a.m. A steel pan is made out of an oil drum; at least it was long ago. With the introduction of sheet metal, steel pans are now formed from this material. Each steel pan is tuned by hand, to perfection—chromatically pitched (much like a piano).

Before there were 18-wheeled sound trucks, steel bands on smaller flat bed trucks or on foot led the way on the Carnival route. Additionally, the celebrations were squarely rooted in the victory of the Canboulay Riots. Trinbagonians fought for and won the right to celebrate Carnival as revelers and masqueraders, which has been stripped away from the Afri-Caribbean Culture in many forms over many years.
Early on Labor Day Monday, J’ouvert heralds the official start of Carnival. J’ouvert, which means the dawning of the day, or daybreak, is a pre-Carnival procession that has roots in Trinidad and Tobago’s emancipation on August 24, 1831, which signaled the dawning of a new era for Trinidad and Tobago. Also, incorporated into the history of J’ouvert are the Canboulay Riots of the 1830s that also took place in the wee hours where slaves revolted in the streets in the city of Port of Spain, the capital of Trinidad and Tobago. The street displays were the first iterations of J’ouvert on the island. J’ouvert is also reminiscent of the celebrations that slaves would hold in their yards using their own cultural traditions and music as they were banned by slave masters from attending the masquerade ball held during this time on the island (allahwe.org, 2012).

Figure 4-10. Pan Orchestra performing “Fantastic” Friday by Super Blue

Figure 4-11. Panorama Steel band performing “Fantastic Friday” By Super Blue
The fittingly titled J’ouvert starts in the wee hours of the morning and continues until sunrise. As the sun comes up, onlookers can see all colors and shades of paint and the powder used during the J’ouvert celebration (When Steel Talks, 2013). One notable difference between Brooklyn J’ouvert and Trinbago J’ouvert is steel band only presence in Brooklyn. No sound systems or electronic music trucks are allowed on the streets till the start of the Carnival procession later in the day. The rhythm sections with steel bands make beautiful music for hours, all the way into sunrise. Since the chromatically tuned pans of a steel band can play all styles of music, Jab Jabs (contributors) at J’ouvert are likely to hear any song or musical arrangement in the world tuned to the “key of Calypso.” J’ouvert in Brooklyn is a true time of abandon and fun for onlookers, participating Jab Jabs, and pannists. The refreshing sound of steel, paint, mixed with the glee of painting friends and family with all colors of the rainbow is an experience second to none. J’ouvert also has costumes available for purchase and made to wear during the procession.

Many Jab Jabs leave the road for an hour or two to get ready to masquerade in the Carnival procession. By 8:00 a.m. just few hours after the end of J’ouvert, revelers, masqueraders, and onlookers line the parkway in preparation for the 11:00 a.m. procession. Revelers are getting ready to dance from truck to truck during the procession. Masqueraders are gearing up to dance down the parkway to the stage where they compete for best in show for
small, medium, and large bands. Onlookers are gunning for the best spots on the parkway nearest to Eastern Parkway and Nostrand Avenue and also by “the stage” closer to Brooklyn Museum and the Library. By 10:30 a.m. sound trucks are powered up and ready to start the procession at the signal of police officers lining the streets.

At 11:00 a.m. the first truck moves down the road a bit and the music starts. Over 40 eight wheelers with tens of thousands of masqueraders hit the parkway in feathers, glitter, and bling, whinin’, bubblin’, and chippin’ down the parkway to the music. No one is safe from the music on the parkway, and once the vibes start, masqueraders can dance for hours, and they do! This past Labor Day happened to be beautiful—no rain and beautiful skies, perfect weather for masqueraders and Carnival-goers.

At about 1:00 p.m. masqueraders are dancing full steam ahead, and there are about two million people lining the thoroughfare of Eastern Parkway.

Figure 4-13. Carnival Band and Masqueraders in Brooklyn.
Masqueraders, wave at friends and stop for hugs, and then continue dancing down the parkway at the prodding of police officers and Carnival marshals.

With more than 40 trucks on Parkway, music can be heard across central Brooklyn. By 4:00 p.m. many trucks have crossed the stage and are coming back through the crowd to get food and show off their beautiful costumes. By 6:00 p.m., the city’s sanitation workers clean the Parkway and reopen it to regular vehicle traffic. A slight drizzle of rain at the end of the day is just the right amount of water to cool off hot, sweaty masqueraders. Since rain is a regular occurrence at Carnival on Labor Day in Brooklyn masqueraders and revelers are not bothered and stay to find friends that masqueraded with other bands.

Figure 4-14. Brooklyn Carnival Crossing Nostrand Avenue.
By nightfall, the streets are cleaner than they have ever been in previous Carnival years. The Brooklyn hustle and bustle is almost ready to start again as last remnants of masquerading and Carnival are whisked away by the sanitation department’s street sweepers. Food vendors are selling the last of their jerk chicken, oxtail, mango anchar, curry chicken, roti, bussupshut, and corn soup.

Music and Carnival: Calypso, Soca, and the Steel Pan

The Steel Pan is the national instrument of Trinidad and Tobago. The instrument is to the Carnival Celebration and historically to the emancipation of the republic from slavery, its fight toward becoming a republic, as well as the migratory patterns of the country to the United States of America. Steel pan was an instrument borne out of struggle and resistance to aid African Slaves in Trinidad in preserving their cultural and historical knowledge. Trinbagonian slaves forged new ground against the structure of slavery and indentured servitude that demanded the surrender of their language, traditions of communication through drumming, and cultural celebration.

Slaves introduced steel pan into the culture as a form of communication and revelry as ordinances...
and laws were passed that prohibited slaves from celebrating culture. When government officials banned drums, slaves created the “tamboo bamboo,” or the bamboo drum.

When the taboo bamboo was not durable enough, slaves made instruments using all types of scrap metals, iron, and glass including parts of motor vehicles. Slaves created these instruments to preserve the heritage of celebration, communication, and knowledge construction through music. Trinbagonians and people around the world know these instruments in present day as a staple in many Trinidadian percussion sections. When drumming was completely stripped and banned from the culture, the steel pan was courageously created. The making of the instrument defied the masters’ ordinances because African Trinbagonian slaves took oil drums of the masters, used to transport the country’s crude resources around the world, to make a new type of drum. This drum would be fine-tuned throughout the 20th century to become a unique, chromatically scaled instrument to be created in the century, arising out of the islands of Trinbago.

Figure 4-17. Steel Pan Exhibit Piarco
Trinidad 2014
The significance of this instrument extends beyond its revered status as the single most innovative musical advancement of the 20th century. This instrument holds living proof of the heritage of struggle and progress toward freedom and life enrichment for generations of Trinbagonian migrants and descendants. Just as the steel pan and Carnival were used to forge and celebrate freedom and success, so the steel pan is used to maintain this cultural heritage and knowledge in Trinidad and now in Brooklyn. The steel pan helps reestablish a sense of freedom through the struggle and progress of Trinbagonian migration and reinvention of culture in the United States.

Conclusion

The history of migration of Trinbagonians to New York City and then from Harlem to Brooklyn is presented here as a backdrop to many of the participants’ stories of migration to the country and subsequently throughout the borough. This overview provides a detailed description of the various cultural groups that use the spaces represented by these collective neighborhood places. Moreover for the purposes of this study the overview of migration and the data collection site begins to reveal some of the activities that are manipulated by place and that are used to manipulate place. Also, this description provides a foundation for examining the knowledge...
construction outcomes of these potential activities among Trinbagonian migrants primarily and surrounding, overlapping neighborhood spaces and cultural traditions.

The existence of Caribbean organizations reveals the richness of Trinbagonian and Caribbean cultural life in Brooklyn. Organizations such as the Sesame Flyers, Hawk’s International, Caribbean American Center, the Caribbean American Chamber of Commerce and Industry and The Caribbean Women’s Health Association create the basis for participation in Carnival, the largest procession and celebration in Brooklyn to date. Many of these groups work hard during the year serving the culture in various facets, and additionally as volunteers with the West Indian Day Carnival Association, to produce and manage a successful week of Carnival events and processional presentation. Hundred of groups, organizations, and international travelers finish off the structure and anticipation upon which the culminating celebration of Trinbagonian and Caribbean culture is carried out: the West Indian American Day Carnival (WIADCA, 2013).
Chapter 5

Methods

This chapter brings together the ethnographic, phenomenological and grounded approaches used to develop the qualitative data collection methods. These methods evolved as I conducted informal interviews and observations, and as I acted as a participant researcher in culture events and local groups, taking extensive field notes as well as writing memos and personal reflection before, during, and after the data collection period. This design was modified and refined throughout the project; therefore limitations of this design are addressed here as well. I also present participant biographies here to situate readers to the main and supporting participants of this study.

A Researcher’s Identity Crisis: Being Black within Being Black

First-generation American. Second-Generation Immigrant. Trinbagonian American. African American. African Trinbagonian. Trinbagonian. American. Trinbagonian Migrant. Emigrant. Dual citizen. These terms are familiar to me and have become slightly blurred in meaning over the course of my life. Growing up in a country where you do not have an ancestry but look like the minority of the citizenry is an enigma all its own. You are safe until you speak. What are you? Where do you come from? Why do you speak that way? Why do you eat those foods? What is Carnival all about? Are you actually from Trinidad and Tobago? Or are your parents from Trinidad and Tobago? How do you speak so properly (or most infamously, Why do you speak like a White girl)? With these questions and many more, I had become detached from the idea that all those terms and all those questions meant something personal. The questions
were significant culturally and historically to me and to people who shared some of my cultural and geographic characteristics—that of being a first-generation Trinbagonian American.

These attributes were the beginning of separations and divisions between my peers and I that I had little control over being in the minority of the minority. Being the minority of the minority is to say that I am practicing a form of Blackness within the assumed overall Black culture. This idea of “being Black within Being Black” may only make sense to the few who work the margins of color along with the hyphens of heritage to make meaning and understand how to operate in life. Discovering my blackness as a part of this culture Was (and still is) the area of most concern for me as I entered into this project. I strive to explain the meaning making and knowledge construction processes of this particular group to raise an intellectual discussion on the narrow lenses through which diversity is conceptualized in the United States.

Growing up I was expected to be smart—exceptionally so—and I was by no means close. My mother, my teachers, my family and my church members all expected me to be smart. I was not a “regular” Black child or teenager. I had Caribbean Heritage. I was expected to act different, be different, be more, and accomplish more. These expectations persisted despite being the worst student in the gifted and advanced level classes, where there were only a handful of students of color. How was I supposed to be more? And more of what? There was an Indi-Trinbagonian young woman, an East Indian young man, and a Haitian young woman, along with myself, who ended up in all of the same classes together from fifth grade until high school graduation. Pala Hahs, the East Indian young man, was quite a genius. He earned the highest score in our school on the SAT—10 points from perfect. They all went on to be doctors by the age of 29 or 30.

As I round 33, I can’t help but feel the same pressures I did as a child and teenager for all the same reasons. I am different. I am not Black like other Black people. I knew I was, but for a while, I didn’t want to know how, why, or what that meant for me—if it meant anything at all. My history of avoiding difficult questions about my heritage affects my identity as a researcher
for two reasons. One, I come pre-packaged with the notion that Caribbean people do well regardless of past, present, or projected future circumstances. So if I am not doing well, according to an imaginary standard, this causes tension. I do not use the word imaginary superfluously here. The standard is imaginary because I never see it, but always know it is there much like an imaginary friend. Many people of color who are not “normal” people of color live with this imaginary friend called Standard Bearer. In my mind, my grandfather, my mother and her siblings came to this country so that I could do better. Better than what? I don’t know.

But I knew that I had to do better. Mrs. Bearer has never left. Why did I think this way? How did my mother or grandfather pass this information on to me? And what was it about being in the United States that made them believe this? These ruminations led me right to the doorstep of the idea for this study. I remembered stories and tales my mother and her siblings told of coming to Brooklyn, in the United States. They were the pioneers of their generation. How did moving between international places formulate the ideas that Trinbagonian migrants formed about this place called the United States? How did that relocation experience and the expectations that surely were built into the experience create all of these “standards” for migrants and why?

Was I going to graduate high school? No question. Was I going to get a college degree? No one had to prompt me to fill any college application. It was a normal, regular, routine part of what I was doing next on my quest to be better. Would I get a job after graduation? Well of course. Would I work two jobs to save money? Sure—that’s what most people in my culture did. Would I try to be the best at everything, even if I was not the best? Well yes, that was the point. We by no means grew up rich. But we grew up with rich ideas. It has never once crossed my mind until conducting this research that these “standards” that I bear come from somewhere and are squarely rooted in my culture and heritage as a Trinbagonian American. Exceptions are the rule, and going above and beyond is normal. Being exceptional is what you are supposed to do.
Carrying these thoughts and history in mind for myself, I went into this research. I became far more connected to the research and the meanings of cultural awareness, cultural knowledge, and the idea that I was just as central to understanding Trinbagonian experiences with place and knowledge construction as any of my participants. Because I have lived the life of a first-generation American struggling to understand how cultural knowledge is useful in everyday life, this study brought me closer to some level of cultural and ancestral resonance. My personal resonance primarily meant finding a way to reconcile my new understandings of culture and knowledge production as pertaining to the history and culture of Trinidad and Tobago, which was consequently my history and culture. I was learning that knowledge and tradition were altered or removed from the culture altogether in efforts to achieve activities that signaled positive and successful acculturation and assimilation to new surroundings. In the process, ancestral knowledge, traditions, and vestiges that are historical and cultural become buried in the quest to become “better” and “more” than what your predecessors were.

I experienced an uncomfortable period of realization that made me want to run to Trinidad and Tobago and learn everything I possibly could about my culture, my ancestors, and my historical roots. Faint echoes of familial history originating in the French Congo and Portugal began to call out to me through the annals of place, time, and activity spanning three continents. Every data collection move that I made for this project led me to a new ancestral, cultural, or traditional revelation that caused me to dive in further into what I was experiencing. The mirror that I had held up for my participants to reflect on their experiences for this study was quickly turned upon my own face. I was forced to face my rich history and confront facets of my personhood that I had never explored before.

My unbridled personal reflection is an unintended and unforeseen—but direct—outcome of my long quest of trying to be and do “better.” Being successful and becoming someone of consequence in the United States is still largely connected to White structures of success and
structural discrimination that have left many excluded from all that I have had the privilege (or severe misfortune) of experiencing. In either case, this study has shed light on my knowledge and the knowledge of other people of Trinbagonian birth and descent as central—not peripheral or marginal. This central knowledge is the foundation used to achieve various accomplishments and knowledge building processes that are continuously taking place in the quest for success, stability, and a certified and meaningful place in the world for migrants. I believe the ideas presented here hold elements of veracity for migrants of Trinbagonian heritage and the millions of migrants in the U.S. representing various knowledge constructing perspectives. These numerous, rich, and textured ways of understanding the world deserve the respect of retaining central positioning within their established personhood in relationship with other global citizens as they achieve their own visions of “better.”

**Ethnographic Methods**

Ethnographic methods, including ethnographic photography (Fettersman, 2009; Janzen, 2005a), have opened the door to understanding the cultural processes by which people do life activities. Ethnographic methods have historically signified the written approach to recording, describing and painting a portrait of a culture (Agar, 2011; Berry, 2011). Ethnographic researchers use rich cultural portraits to explain the complex cultural actions of people within a culture and space, having to do with various aspects of the human experience (Fine, 1993; Geertz, 1973; Maanen, 1996). Ethnographic methods aim to capture people in natural settings doing what they normally do. Then a researcher can create a meaningful, accurate portrait of the lives examined. In this case the examination centers on the role of place in the knowledge construction that arises for Trinbagonian residents in Crown Heights as they engage in everyday behaviors (Brewer, 2000). The processes of interviewing participants, using questionnaires, observing the
cultural practices of participants within places, being in the field for long periods of time, living with the people, living like the people, conducting observation and participant observation, being a participant, and entering into field work are all elemental parts of conventional ethnographic research.

For this study, I employed some classic methods of ethnography, which has its groundings in anthropology (Genzuk, 1999). I approached finding the role of place in these area neighborhoods in the tradition of scores of anthropologists, sociologists, urban geographers, and ethnographers (Ford, 2008). Ethnographic methods grounded how I, as a researcher in the social sciences, performed empirical data collection in scientific efforts to explain the processes of daily life of Trinbagonians in Brooklyn (Agar, 2011; Fine, 1993; Genzuk, 1999; Janzen, 2005a; Pink, 2001). I used visual ethnographic methods to explore the place. These tools include photography, observation and GIS data (Banyopadhyay, 2011; Brace-Govan, 2007; Crowe, 2003; Harper, 2003; Pink, 2001; Schwartz, 1989; Viatori, 2009).

I re-conceptualize the ethnographic snapshot (Janzen, 2005b) for this study to explore a two-fold concept that includes collecting data over a short length of time, between three and nine months. This idea also includes the use of extensive visual methods in an ethnographic study to capture rich and thick representations and documentation of place and process, subsequently used to describe and provide explanations of what is happening with a place for Trinbagonians in Brooklyn. The use of visual methods, such as photography, and direct observation enriches the study of place by first respecting the rapidly changing and evolving nature of the place, validating shorter ethnographic inquiries and using new ways of documenting and capturing portraits of the role of place in knowledge construction. These portraits involve the technology of immediacy of information recall through photographs. Photography holds important keys to uncovering neighborhood knowledge construction through visual representation in addition to rich and thick description through text (Gans, 2010).
Capturing the images along with the words and stories of Trinbagonians within their neighborhoods was a powerful tool that I employed well, even though participants did not take as many pictures as I desired. In her work, Janzen (2005a) used photography to generate data for the research that she was designing in a small town in Uganda. She hoped that the photographic method she wanted to employ with her group of women would spark memories, sharpen details, and stimulate discussion (p. 35) that would benefit and enrich the descriptions she hoped to capture in her research. However, her proposed method did not unfold quite as planned. Sensualities are certainly operating that were beyond Janzen’s control. I encountered some issues outside of my control such as residents not wanting to take pictures and me having to interpret the picture they wanted to take and take it for them. However, these pictures were not in vain. I used photographs in this project to act as one point of triangulation for data analysis for similarities and differences between Trinidad and Brooklyn living structures. The photos proved that that there is more than one way to understand the neighborhood and the experiential knowledge construction that happens for Trinbagonian residents.

**Ethnographic Snapshot as Multimedia Ethnography**

The two-fold nature of an ethnographic snapshot is a feature central to the work that I conducted in Crown Heights. I captured snapshots of time and space using ethnographic methods, GIS mapping data, and photography. The combination of technologies afforded researchers today allows me to take unorthodox, technologically advanced snapshots of neighborhoods and communities, to develop informed theoretical ideas about the role of place in knowledge construction and time. Those snapshots and other visual data over a nine-month period were different than the methods used in longer ethnographies but no less meaningful. In reviewing Janzen’s work on the ethnographic snapshot, the two-fold nature of her efforts became clear. To
promote ethnography as a meaningful way to understand the Agabaya women’s interactions in their communities over a five-week period and enhance this short period with the technologies that would allow her to have access to a depth of information that corresponded to a longer ethnography (concerning the richness and saturation of data). Effectively Janzen’s work is a snapshot of time and a snapshot of a place. However, Janzen does not describe her work in this manner.

My ethnographic snapshot was longer than Janzen’s. I added another component to the ethnographic snapshots approach by using Graphic Information Systems data to do ground-level visual data collection without being overseas in Trinidad for that particular collection period. It also helped immensely that I still knew people in the neighborhood who didn’t have trouble with me taking pictures of their favorite buildings and then want to keep the picture for themselves, as in Janzen’s work. A simple multi-media message between smart phones ensured that all interested parties had a copy.

Initially, this ethnographic snapshot centrally involved photographic and participant-observation by both the participants and myself as participant-researcher based on the research questions. However, most of the photograph work fell upon me as a researcher. Photographic representations and GIS mapping data of neighborhoods are important to this type of research. This work aims to capture place-based processes that develop novel methods of thinking about the centrality of knowledge construction in place. The examination of the context-generative and context-driven activities underway in place (Appadurai, 1996) are key to understanding the motivations that them and cause them to evolve.

I analyzed the data collected for the interaction and role of place in constructing knowledge, assuming a critical place-based pedagogy lens that allows any place to be the genesis for knowledge construction. I believed this method would lead my research toward the first stages of better quality grounded theory building if done thoroughly. These methods allow me to use the
data from this inquiry to give way to more analysis going forward, such as creating knowledge
tools with and for the Trinbagonian neighborhoods involved, as a way to share the information
learned from participants.

**Time in the Field**

One other element of the ethnographic experience for researchers is the length of time
that one must spend in the field in order to conduct quality ethnographic research (Genzuk, 2003;
Maanen, 1996). I use Janzen’s (2005) and Pink’s (2006) work as a backdrop for completing a
shorter study, but enrich it with pictures and GIS data to obtain observable and recordable
elements of place to create a portrait of knowledge construction of Trinbagonian residents
through text, audio, observation, participant-observation, and photographs.

Although I had some issues with photography similar to Janzen’s issues with the visual
aspect of this project, I decided to take pictures myself with the help of participants. The process
was one of “show-tell-snap” as participants, and I walked down Flatbush, Nostrand, Fulton, and
other thoroughfares in the four neighborhoods. In this way, I use photography to complement data
collection and as a means of gathering meaningful information while doing abbreviated work. I
situated this work in the larger context of understanding multiple roles of place in the knowledge
construction processes of immigrants nationwide and the diverse nature of those constructions for
the diverse members of African Diaspora migrants to the United States in particular.

Janzen (2005a) addresses this in her master’s thesis and her article (Janzen, 2005b) on her
choice to conduct an ethnographic snapshot consisting of only five weeks in the field. Janzen
draws on Sarah Pink’s (2001, 2006) work on how to use visual ethnography—mainly
photography—to conduct meaningful research. I took problems of brevity into account in my
work because resources and funding were scarce, but I still needed to go forward using
photography to stimulate discussions and my own reflections and privilege the perspective of the participants in my research (Janzen, 2005; Prins, 2010). I used my own smartphone camera to take most of my pictures in Trinidad and Brooklyn.

Because of the accessibility of cameras through the university, I thought I would have less of an issue with photographs. But the limit on most rentals is three days when I would travel to New York for a week. Only two participants had access to cameras and were partly able to use them when we were not doing a walk-along to take pictures of important things in a place they considered their neighborhood. My anxieties (Janzen, 2005) about the pictures rose as well with all the interview data that I collected. With pictures, observation, participant observation, and audio and audio transcripts, I was beginning to feel overwhelmed. What was I trying to accomplish and how was I going to organize all of this data? I needed employ a sound method to analyze all the data I had collected.

**Data Saturation**

As I unpacked my data, I began to understand that uncovering new ways of understanding how neighborhood knowledge works is an ongoing process. Knowledge mining in any place is a historically and culturally sensitive process that I can never capture in totality. However, multiple significant, well-researched, and well-documented snapshots of time, from various angles of the place, can begin to uncover the role of place in the knowledge construction of its inhabitants. I have processed the idea of reaching a point of saturation with the main inquiries of this research. However, this idea of “saturation” has lead to many more questions and wellsprings for further research. As such, I needed another way to explain why “a point of saturation” was not feasible for this particular study. As such, I acknowledge that “reaching the point of saturation,” as defined for qualitative research, is a hotly contested concept.
Consequently, for this study I use Mason’s (2010) analysis of the literature on saturation to situate my intellectual position as a researcher on the issue. Mason’s synthesis of the saturation debate in the literature leads me to this understanding:

The concept of saturation is inappropriate [because] researchers often close categories early as the data are only partially coded and cite others to support this practice, (Strauss and Corbin 1998 [1990]) [because] saturation is a “matter of degree”…The longer researchers examine…Their data there will always be the potential for “the new to emerge.” (para 9)

This statement accurately describes my experience with all the data collected for this work. I have collected: pictures, maps, interviews, observation sessions, participant observations, informal group meeting notes, memos, organizational logs, audio logs, and interactions with supported participants. If I stop analyzing my data too early and do only a single pass, I risk inadequately performing a surface analysis that does not produce information that can be used to create thick and rich descriptions required for this work. To form this multi-media ethnographic portrait of the role of place in knowledge construction among Trinbagonians migrants, I must deal with the constant evolution of knowledge, which guarantees no such point of saturation.

The more I analyze this data; the richer and deeper the information becomes. The deeper I dig analytically; the more questions arise. The more questions arise, the longer it takes to satisfy the continuously emergent “point of saturation” requirement. There are always new ways to examine and interpret data pertaining to answering these specific research questions from a critical place-based cultural, historical, and theoretical perspective. Initially, my goal of reaching saturation in this study was to provide an in-depth and thorough description of the role of place in knowledge construction among Trinbagonian migrants in Central Brooklyn. Cultural, historical activity theory and critical place-based pedagogy bring culture and history to the forefront for
such an examination. Culture and history are important to how inhabitants form place as I stay close the socio-geographic principle that the place is a space imbued with meaning (Tuan, 1977).

In this study the people from the culture and history of transnational and translocational place that I highlight and analyze form “meaning”. Essentially the meanings of place that are made and remade for participants is the knowledge construction I explicate and draw out into plain view. This type of knowledge construction is rich and worthy of analysis in a quest to understand place effects on residents as they form meaning in place. Academic literature on informal learning often obfuscates this type of knowledge construction because of its informal, regular nature; it is not given the credence of formal knowledge construction though it is the type of knowledge construction that all people experience and must experience, as they make meaning of the places they encounter.

**The Diary of an Insider-Researcher**

Conducting an ethnographic snapshot aided my purposes as a researcher who can operate as an authentic insider-researcher in the field. An authentic insider-researcher (Workman, 2007) is an inherent characteristic of a researcher who has familiarity with a particular neighborhood and its inhabitants through personal heritage close working relationship, or some other authentic way of understanding the space.
For this reason, there was no particular requirement for me to stay longer than necessary in the field to collect data. With my knowledge as an authentic insider-researcher, in most cases, I was able to have access to participants’ homes for interviews. I was able to lime with them at the beauty parlor to ask many questions pertaining to my work, and also form quid pro quo relationships with at least half of my participants as I used their knowledge to further my work. From helping deliver babies to reconstructing a professional portfolio, I had to take the time out to give back some of the time and effort that my participants gave to me. Sharing immaterial knowledge resources were a recurring theme in this project. As an insider-researcher, in this case as a Trinbagonian American, I had some level of cultural currency within this group. I even began to talk like my brothers and sisters from Trinidad. I did not expect this from myself even though I knew that as an insider-researcher who grew up in a Trinbagonian context, most of the vocabulary, intonations, and information needed to navigate the situation were most likely sitting in my knowledge reserves. In short, the context of my research fit my data collection plans like a good pair of broken-in shoes. I had some level of access that allowed me to know a particular place and its residents in a different way than someone who did not know the neighborhood or its residents at all.

Figure 5-1. Giving back: volunteering at an observation site in East Flatbush.
However, I encountered some difficulties in resolving the tensions that come along with being an insider-researcher Costley, 2010; Mercer, 2007). I realized that I was not just a participant observer who did not already know how to live among and live like the Caribbean Culture in Brooklyn. I had two major blind spots that I can identify here. First I was forced to interrogate my familiarity with the area and the people (Fine, 1993). My particular problem with familiarity was laughing at many things that were not considered funny to anyone else in the group I was in though it sounded and delivered like a joke to me. I could no longer discern with any certainty beyond a coin toss (when Trinbagonians were joking. I am not sure if this was due to nervousness or if I had lost my Brooklyn Trinbagonian familiarity but I was nervous. Had I lost this important piece that I had been so proud of going into this research? Had I replaced it with a set of stereotypes that depicted caricatures of fun-loving easygoing island people that told jokes all the time? I was slightly embarrassed, because this was Trinbagonian culture 101! Jokes and clever turns of phrase are an important part of how Trinbagonians communicate. I had to be very sharp and listen very closely to catch the nuance of a joke and discern what was not a joke. The process was completely different than the types of intonation involved in the act of joking and telling jokes of those outside of the Trinbagonian culture. These men and women were not telling jokes to impress anyone in a manner that I was used to. These acts were part of the culture of relaying information that also encompassed storytelling and gossiping.

The aforementioned couples with my usual personality, which drives me to get to know everyone I meet in five minutes and feel some camaraderie with him or her, especially through sharing a joke or a good laugh. I had to learn not to laugh immediately in some situations, which then would create another awkward problem. In some situations, I came across as if I did not understand what was going on when I did perfectly well. This issue would also come up as well when I didn’t think the joke was funny—more awkwardness. And at times when I did laugh, sometimes my laughter came across as insincere instead. My terrible joke timing lasted for about
two weeks, which feels like an eternity when you are talking to people for eight hours a day trying to gather information. My joke dilemma seems like a minor issue, but it could have ruined my rapport and credibility with some of my most trusted participants if they recognized this glaring blind spot and treated me accordingly.

Second, my familiarity with Trinbagonian food became an issue one day as I bit into a ladybug in my tamarind sauce that covered my dish of pumpkin and Trinbagonian style bhaji with rice. It was a ladybug, clear as day. I took my plate back up to the manager, showed him the lady bug, and he told me that it was not a lady bug at all, but just part of the tamarind husk that sometimes comes out when making the sauce. As I stand there, I think that I never have in my life seen tamarind husk that was red and black, with a black head and tasted like crunchy dirt (I found that out the hard way). My familiarity worked against me again this time as well. The manager of the store didn’t believe that I could tell the difference between a ladybug and a tamarind shell, and this made me a little angry. However, it is not customary to return food in a Trinbagonian restaurant if you are perceived to be familiar with the culture—this is an insult. If something is wrong with your food, you wait for later and throw it away, like the shrimp roti I had the week before that was sour.

But this time I was hungry and wanted what I had paid for—this time without ladybugs. I asked the manager nicely, without making a scene to please redo my plate (a scene would have been a loud interrogation into the issue starting with, “Oh! So you think that just because I am a Trinbagonian American I don’t know about Trinidad food? Or Tamarind husks?”). Crisis averted. He happily obliged, for the most part, with a twinge of attitude that only a Trinbagonian could deliver with a smile. I was happy to get a new plate of food, so I quickly forgot the attitude. However, every time I went back in the store since, I always watched for ladybugs before taking a bite of food because of how gross that first ladybug tasted. I felt awkward, and even less connected to my heritage. I began to ask questions like, “Do I really know what a tamarind husk
“...look like?” But I shook my head and tried to maintain the knowledge that I did have. In this instance, it was the fact that I knew what a tamarind husk in tamarind sauce looks like! However, I had to dial my irritation down to zero and pretend like it was not a big problem, so that I could keep my credibility and rapport with this manager who let me sit in the store and do observation work.

I had become more of a participant observer over the months because everyone began to remember my face. It was important for me to guard against possible limitations after reexamining those two situations. The message was very clear after my reexamination. Even thought of myself as an authentic insider-researcher, I was still American and further still a researcher. I couldn’t afford to damage my reputation with these kind people in the neighborhood who were letting me into their hearts and homes. Constant reexamination through journaling helped me to step behind the line of a participant back to an observer if I become too invested in a situation that is going in the wrong direction. I was in a familiar setting endeavoring to conduct ethnographic research (Fournillier, 2009) but that did not mean that I was all the way in. I was still a researcher from Penn State. For me, this is where vlogging and journaling were and are still, imperative. They helped me to step outside of myself and gain a

Figure 5-2. Restaurant Observation site in Lefferts Gardens
different perspective so that I could move forward in my data collection if felt I was making no progress.

Field Strategies

To gain entrée into the culture of Trinbagonians in Brooklyn, I first reintroduced myself as a short-term resident to a Caribbean neighborhood similar to and not far from the one I lived in from 2002-2009. Second, I walked through the four neighborhoods of Crown Heights, Lefferts Gardens, East Flatbush and Flatbush to visually document through photographs and GIS data the Caribbean, and particularly Trinbagonian, elements of the Crown Heights, Flatbush, East Flatbush and Lefferts Gardens.

I took photos and observation notes of the places where I met and talked with people at places like De Trini Spot, ate meals, and sat and observed while also attempting to leave faces out of the photos. It proved difficult to do. I started to understand what I was looking for but didn’t know if I was capturing the essence of it all with a camera. To supplement this I documented what my participants told me was important to them. They didn’t take the pictures, as I had hoped, but they were explicit about their neighborhood whereabouts and considerations.
and allowed me to walk and talk with them through the neighborhood, I also gathered GIS data from Internet-provided graphic map data (both map and earth views), from Google World (2011-2013), and Nations Online (2013) from both countries for natural and constructed comparisons of neighborhood and country that participants describe in detail.

The photographs and direct observations included the restaurants, homes, and meeting places I deemed as experientially Trinbagonian and Caribbean in these four areas as evidenced by the flags and other country paraphernalia, displayed proudly out of windows, on cars, around necks, and in other ways. I had success with the accents that I was able to pick out by ear during observation, interviews with participants, and neighborhood walks with residents. During the first few weeks of fieldwork, I began my observations by taking long walks through the neighborhood while taking notes. A foundational way to gain rapport in the Caribbean neighborhoods is maintaining visibility and friendliness. If someone did not know your name, or whom you were affiliated with, this information was quickly acquired. It was my responsibility to remain open to the questions, inquisitions and sometimes-invasive information seeking (to a point...e.g., “You are in school? That’s so wonderful. But where is your mother? Doesn’t she want grandchildren? You need to have a child before you turn 34.”). Someone had to vouch for me in order so that I could be in good standing within my research sites.

I had few complications with collecting rich and bountiful data. In fact, I had most difficulties telling folks that I could not interview anyone else, as my interview log was long, but my time left in the neighborhood was coming to an end. The overabundance of willing participants may be credited to the fact that news of a friendly, moderately loud, wide-eyed Black female researcher spread very quickly through the normal communication structure of the neighborhood. And just like in my Trinbagonian family and friends network, in no time I had become an international medical doctor doing research on the Caribbean. Well, at least they got
part of it right. I was not selling CDs DVDs or jewelry; I was asking folks to tell me about themselves.

My non-Trinbagonian friend and short-term roommate vouched for me very vocally to all of her neighbors. For some, it was off-putting which caused some friction. Efke, a worker at De Trini Spot, where I observed most days, tried to trick me in his potential interview. After about five minutes of taping I realized that he was lying, and he admitted as much. It was a frustrating experience because this meant I lacked a young Black Trinbagonian male perspective for my work. He did let me ask him questions off the record and let me write down my observations of him. Efke was decidedly against sitting for a recorded interview, even though he initially agreed to one. Because of this issue I believe that the study is representative of many voices of the Trinbagonian culture with the exception of the younger Black Trinbagonian male. For my final participants, they were generous enough to walk me around their neighborhoods and invite me into their lives in deep and emotional ways.

**Participant Observation**

Because this neighborhood was so close my old home, I entered the space as one who is familiar with it, but now in a new capacity as a researcher. To gather information, I knew I had to get involved with the culture and began to wonder about the level of involvement I should engage in with my participants. Being a returning resident turned researcher I struggled with how I should “be” in front of participants. I knew that my prior knowledge and familiarity of this place would affect how I collected data. For example, three of my participant interviews were recorded while my cousin lay recovering from a Caesarean section birth at New York Methodist Hospital in Park Slope. She vehemently forbade me to leave her side.
I interviewed her partner, her dad, and another one of our cousins. At first I quarreled with myself about how much of “me” should go into the research, including my family as an extension of me. I let go of this quickly. I could not be reserved and tiptoe around the issue if I wanted to collect suitable data. My family served as the foundation of my inquiry, so I included them. However, I also was chided a bit for not interviewing everyone in the family, particularly the family members who didn’t fit the participant requirements. Because I was doing research for my dissertation, this translated to some of my family members as we were doing research for our dissertation. It was tough to turn down some family members who were not a match (for example; my family members who were in Trinidad with me last June were Trinbagonian migrants to London, so I did not include them).

The timeframe for fieldwork and observations (March 2013-March 2014) was chosen to capture and implement the information constructed during my trips to Trinbago and to use Brooklyn and Trinbago Carnival as bookends to my data collection process. During the beginning of my fieldwork, I took one trip to Trinidad and another near the end. These trips serve two purposes. The first was to orient myself to the physicality of place and to gain a sense of the geography both created and natural of Trinbago. The second was to collect observational data that I could use understand basic physical differences between Trinbago and Brooklyn.

*Figure 5-4. Observation Site: New York Methodist Hospital*
The second trip was to provide a comparative international Carnival description, as this is the main activity in this dissertation. I did my fieldwork in Brooklyn in the late summer two weeks before for Labor Day and Brooklyn Carnival. I took 12 bus trips to New York City each lasting seven to 10 days until the middle of December. I did this to collect all the data I could from my participants. My last interview took place in August and the first in January. For Brooklyn, late summer/early fall is known as a vibrant time in the neighborhood, with various Trinbagonian festivals, expositions and exhibits. I also chose this timeframe because of the likelihood that the discovery, analysis and theoretical framework of activities in the neighborhood, as understood in Cultural Historical Activity Theory, at least be uncovered in through deep and broad data collection for further analysis.

My two observation trips to Trinbago totaled six weeks in addition to the 13 weeks in total dwelling in the project site for a total of six months traveling between my project site and my home, five hours away. The first trip to Trinidad was to Gasparillo in southern Trinidad where my cousin Wayne lives for one month (June 6 to July 3). The second trip took place seven months later during high Carnival season for two weeks (February 21 to March 8, with Carnival falling on the third and fourth of March). I needed to understand more about the current cultural underpinnings of the country and how place was conceptualized and experienced in Trinidad.

I visited five of the neighborhoods that my participants lived in, and two of my participants were in the country for Carnival season as well, so I was able to spend some time discussing the questions of the study with them there as well. Discussions added richness to the comparison, because these two participants were avid travelers between Trinbago and one had just retired there, after years of work in the United States, moving back to Santa Cruz, his original hometown. For neighborhoods that I could not visit, I supplemented with GIS data from Google maps. The GIS data was helpful because of the views (terrain, street view, and map view, or a combination of all three) that gave me better details of the places I could not physically visit. The
second trip also provided another participant-observer experience for the most important part of Trinbagonian culture for residents and descendants in Trinidad and Brooklyn—Trinidad Carnival season.

As in Brooklyn, I played Mas for the event. But the band I masqueraded within Trinidad was 18 times larger, at least, than the band I masqueraded within Brooklyn. I took notes and pictures to get an idea of what I would be looking for as far as “a role of place” for Trinbagonians in Brooklyn. I constantly tried to capture and cement aspects of Trinidad that I surmised could be part of Trinbagonian life in Brooklyn. To guide my inquiry during these trips, I modified my research questions to focus on Trinbagonians in Trinidad compared to Trinbagonian migrants in Brooklyn:

1. What is the role of place in knowledge construction for Trinbagonian residents and citizens in Trinidad?

2. What elements of the role of place in knowledge construction in Trinidad relate to Trinbagonians in Brooklyn and which do not?

I took special note of gardens, backyards, and plants and the way that people showed off their flora and fauna. I took note of the separation of culture between the Indians, Blacks, and the smaller Asian and Southeast Asian communities in, politics, religion, and neighborhood relations. I also took note of the clear effects of Americanism within the country with the presence of every American fast food chain imaginable readily accessible in Trinbago a country that is known for its culinary prowess. Gulf City mall was a large, bustling, American-looking shopping complex in the middle of all of the other towns and villages in Trinidad. It had many American brand stores and British brand stores, along with the Trinbagonian owned and operated stores.

How did this come to be? And what implications did this construction of place here in Trinbago have in Brooklyn? I went to Macqueripe Bay, Vesigny Beach in south Trinidad, the pitch lake in La Brea, bird sanctuaries, and a plethora of homes of family and friends. Their big
backyards host mango trees, limes, zaboca (avocado), five-finger fruit (also known as star fruit and carambolas), and many more tropical fruits and vegetables. After a month of seeing all the sights hanging out with friends and family at birthday gatherings, front yard and backyard limes, and the Campbell family reunion, I was inspired by the sense of the meaning of place that I experienced in Trinbago. I was ready to go back to the United States and reflect on what I should be looking for among Trinbagonians in Brooklyn. From this trip and the information that I learned, subsequent versions of my semi-structured interview tool were refined to reflect my knowledge of what I noted was of national importance, such as the food, politics, and crime that seemed to be a constant worry for some Trinbagonians. I knew this was the case abroad as well, but needed to talk to more people to make my case.

**Brooklyn Data Collection**

During my Brooklyn data collection period, interviews were at first sporadic. In hindsight, my presence in the neighborhood helped me secure participants as information was spread through the various communities about my study. Once I had settled into the culture, introduced myself at various businesses, and passed out contact information cards, the interview schedule solidified and settled and flowed to one per week for 12-16 weeks. In September, walk-alongs were conducted with four participants. Each participant walk-along journey was different in time, distance, and the area that participants considered their neighborhoods. The information garnered from each data collection event was logged and kept in a password protected hard drive. In October, I was fortunate to find a group of men and women that acted as culture knowledge bearer, meeting regularly to discuss happenings of the Caribbean culture. The group held a lime on Flatbush Avenue each evening which including talking, planning, laughter, serious debates, among many other functions. For this reason, I have dubbed the group the Flatbush Avenue Lime
(FAL) group. These limes were purposeful socializing sessions within which the group discussed neighborhood happenings, changes, and sometimes neighborhood threats. Around this time of the year, the pre- and post-Carnival related activities were major topics of discussion. Additionally after Carnival fever had died down, the FAL group also demonstrated how the group approached communal food buying efforts similar to more structured food cooperation systems (or Food Coops stores) in Brooklyn. Food gathering for the group was a weekly discussion. These are examples of some of the rich information grounded in cultural practice of which this group provided examples. I was able to talk with this group about three evenings a week for six weeks to learn about more activities happening in the culture that Trinbagonian residents took part in and to talk to more people about their knowledge construction experiences within their neighborhoods as Caribbean migrants.

**Trinidad Data Collection**

Data collection in the country of Trinbago was much less of a challenge than first anticipated. The plans and methods I had hoped to set into motion only worked about a third of the time. I wanted pictures of everything, and I wanted to interview people as I had planned to do in Brooklyn. However, my perceptions of place were the most important knowledge construction pieces that I was able to gather and write field notes for from both trips. The feel of Trinbago—the places I visited, the people I reunited with and new people I met, the foods, a change of life pace—on both trips helped to complete the circle of data collection that allowed me to make inferences about the role of place for migrants in Brooklyn.

During my month-long stay in Trinbago in June of 2013, there were a few immediate realizations that helped me understand what to look for once I began my fieldwork in Brooklyn. Before landing in Trinidad, I thought I was looking for direct comparisons of place that I could
use to talk about the role of place for Trinbagonian migrants in Brooklyn. While I could make direct observations, these have far less meaning than the differences in perception of place that Trinbagonians had in their knowledge banks. I could see that the houses and land were different with my eyes, taste the difference in foods with my mouth, hear the differences in music, or detect the differences in weather with all my senses. But the semantic meanings behind these place-based experiences are what intrigued me the most. The question arose during this time that helped me in clarifying my research questions. I began by asking what is the role of place in knowledge construction for Caribbean migrants and what do migrants do with the information that they arrive with? Do they keep, manipulate, or discard various parts of their knowledge base as they learn in their new place of dwelling? One of the key findings of this study was coming to the realization of how directly place and knowledge construction were mutually embedded. Without place, constructing many forms of knowledge and the artifacts used to carry out that knowledge would make little sense.

Collecting data in Trinbago during high Carnival season in February and March of 2014 was even more eye opening regarding the role of place in knowledge construction. Carnival in Trinbago has a different meaning than in Brooklyn, even though the two inform each other directly through the residents in both countries who travel back and forth between Carnivals and are heavily involved in the Carnival Network around the world. For instance, one of the most popular bands named Bliss (who has a number of sub-bands as well, one of which our group played Mas with called Tribe) is and international company making costumes for Carnival events around the world. Of all the evidence that suggests that Carnival in Trinbago has a worldwide reach, this band provides the most direct evidence.
Data Collection Phases

Data were collected in four asynchronous phases as I lived as an insider-researcher in a vibrant and well-established Trinbagonian neighborhood. Data included: participant observation sessions in two countries, 11 informal semi-structured interviews, participation in the 46th Annual West Indian American Day Carnival, Flatbush Avenue liming sessions and semi-structured photography sessions by the researcher (Creswell, 2013; Fetterman, 2009). I employed data collection methods that aligned with the project inquiry to answer the main question is guiding this study: What is the role of place in the knowledge construction among Trinbagonian migrants in Brooklyn, New York?

With this question, I approach data collection as a means of unpacking each of the terms expressed therein: “role of place,” “knowledge construction,” and “Trinbagonian migrant.” Choosing and implementing geographic, ethnographic, and phenomenological data collection methods allow me, as a researcher interested in the role of place in knowledge construction, to underscore processes in place. These methods do not exclude gathering substantial data on personal experiences in and with a place. But it does, however, privilege place as the mediating instrument and artifact under examination in the knowledge construction process for Trinbagonian migrants in Crown Heights.

Phase I: Pilot Interviews

For the first part of the study, I used pilot interviews with potential participants to shape interview protocol. This pilot process took place over six weeks between March and June 2013. I conducted each of these pilot interviews with Trinbagonian migrants who do not currently live in Crown Heights but had previously lived there for least eight years. The first participant moved to
Florida in 1988, the second to Texas in 1990 and the third stayed in the state of New York and moved to Long island in 2008. I selected three pilot interviews to gain a better understanding of what I should ask of Trinbagonian Crown Heights residents once in the field concerning place roles in knowledge construction for the study. In one of my pilot interviews I discovered that the question, “What was it like to move from La Brea, Trinbago to Brooklyn, New York?” was the only question needed to conduct an hour-long interview that addressed space, place and neighborhood thoroughly for participants. This question laid the groundwork for collecting data for the 11 study interviews. At key moments during the interview I interjected to gain perspective on the neighborhood, space, new ideas about the meaning of place, culture shock, and place shock. These foundational interviews helped me to form a loose structure of what prompts to use to elicit oral histories of their experiences of moving to Crown Heights (Butterfield, 2004; Fetterman, 2009). The purpose of these pilot interviews was to disrupt any preconceived or romanticized notions that I had about the transnational relocation experience of the participants in this study.

I structured a tentative interview protocol based on the information given by the first three pilot interviews and the recurrent questions I asked during the interviews. I selected a semi-structured interview protocol ready to encourage the narratives of subjects to arise out of our conversation if required. I had a set of questions on hand, but asked that one main question of each of the participants and prompted for other information as needed. Once I refined the protocol, I was able to flesh about a robust number (around 15) of probing questions that I used with each participant’s interview.

Through this process, I became more knowledgeable of the positive and negative aspects of the relocation experience as well some of the implicit information that I would not have known. For example, from my pilot interviews I learned that it was very important to probe participants for 1) their negative reactions to relocation and 2) their adjustments to the extreme
weather difference. These ideas were a part of my thinking as I attempted to form the interview protocol before my pilot interviews. However, the pilot interviews solidified these ideas and brought them to the forefront. These two questions in particular assisted me in uncovering participants’ ideas about space and neighborhood and what they learned to do once they arrived in the United States and to Brooklyn.

**Phase II: Participant Identification**

**Key Actors**

Borrowing from Fetterman’s work on identifying key actors (2009), I used the three key actors mentioned previously to serve as anchors for neighborhood rapport, knowledge and participant identifiers (Butterfield, 2004). Key actors helped expand my potential participant pool beyond the large amount of family members I have in the greater New York area. This method also gave me a different way of building rapport that was not connected to my family. Samara, from the 43rd district councilman’s office, my friend Ingrid who offered me room and board who lived in the middle of the area. Ingrid migrated to Brooklyn, about 10 years ago. After enduring a horrible accident and mugging, she injured her back, lost weight and began a healing regimen for her body. She opened up whole-heartedly to the residents of the neighborhood (many of them of Caribbean heritage as I soon learned) and them to her. Next was Roland, the “Building Mayor” of the tenement where I resided. Roland migrated from Trinbago more than 20 years ago. He is one of the strongest weavers of the web that is the Caribbean network in Brooklyn and particularly Flatbush. He says hello to everyone whether he knows them or not, and he fosters relationships with folks that are interested in his viewpoints on neighborhood, politics, and spirituality. These three sets of actors are the foundation upon which I was able to complete my data collection.
process without struggling for participants. My cousin Elmira, born in Trinidad but raised in Brooklyn from a small child, is a real estate agent living in Crown Heights and also owned a house in Queens. She acted as a consultant on the real estate of the area and was very knowable in helping me understand how the spread of Caribbean culture in the neighborhoods where I worked. These people acted as both the gatekeepers and information-givers about what I wanted to know and whom I wanted to contact. Pseudonyms were used for all participants.

Instead of seeking out who I wanted to involve in the study, I wanted participants born in Trinbago and had lived in Crown Heights to provide insight into how to approach potential participants. I put my preferences for what I thought my participants should be in the background and set the primary residents’ perspective as precedent. I did this with the confidence that the key actors had insights that I did not have, which would provide a level of authenticity in the selection of participants that I could not have achieved on my own.

Participants for the study (five women and six men) ranged from 29 to 70 years old. All were born in Trinbago and spent more than 14 years of their lives there. Delimiting age ranges and time lived in Trinidad (whether as a teenager or a working adult) allowed me to gather more information to discuss the role of place in knowledge construction among Trinbagonian migrants. Participants’ varied ages and experiences provided rich perspectives for discussion and data collection and analysis of the role of place in knowledge construction. During time of data collection, 10 of the 11 participants resided in Brooklyn at least half of the days of the week, and one lived on Florida and was on an extended vacation in East Flatbush. Since then four residents have moved out of the city or state permanently. The participant who lived in Florida was in Brooklyn during the time of data collection, and arrived before I came to the borough to conduct interviews and collect data. As such, all interviews and data collection took place with current (and one visiting) Brooklyn resident, in the borough of Brooklyn.
Knowing that food is a large part of Caribbean culture, staff at the councilman’s office quickly referred to one of the Caribbean business owners nearby to ask for an interview. I was lucky to meet her within 24 hours. Carlene has owned her business for about five years. Most Trinbagonians of the neighborhood consider her food to be Caribbean fusion, and community members are regular, loyal patrons. Evidence of patron loyalty is in the long lines of patrons of all colors from the neighborhood and overseas. Her food, though fusion, is considered traditional and befitting of “home” as evidenced by the 5-6 p.m. rush of people coming into the city from work, or walking over from their homes at dinner time just to get food. It was not unusual to see patrons liming on the bench outside of the restaurant until they feel like buying something. After meeting Carlene, I asked to observe in her restaurant as well.

**The Interview Vine**

I procured interviews with Trinbagonians in the area that provided me with a people’s historical and cultural understanding of the area spanning the past 50 years. My cousin pointed me to decent observation areas and to people in the family whose stories she thought were important to incorporate. She pointed me to the councilman’s office of the 43rd District in Crown Heights where the Grenadian administrative assistant led me to the owner of Wonder Wings, who let me sample her food and always had some sorrel or lemonade waiting when I arrived. Ingrid, my White friend, let me to Roland, who she deemed her building’s mayor because he revived the building’s tenants’ association, was an excellent neighborhood organizer. He was also extremely knowledgeable and intelligent on most any matter you brought to him. Roland was always around a place called De Trini Spot where I met him with my friend Ingrid. I started observing there because I was always there to ask Robert a question or share stories.
I watched the cooks, the servicers, the “money man,” the customers those who ate in, those who took their food to go, listened to the conversations and ate there, four five times a week for 12 weeks. Roland led me to Andreis, whose story of persistence, revolution and advocacy after all he had been through made me cry during the interview as he cried. Andreis led me to General whose interview captured my attention the most of all 11 interviews. His store, Algeria Health Foods, became a natural observation post for me. During our interview, so many Trinbagonian and Caribbean people flowed in and out of the shop that I had to come back to interview him again. I kept coming back to sit on one of his comfortable couches, behind a shelf with a very clear view of the whole store, to see who he serviced, and how he used what he talked to me about in the interview to do it.

When I came in to conduct observations after I interviewed him, I just watched and stayed quiet. I pretended I was studying. But I was taking notes on everything I saw. He would come over to me from time to time to check on me and tell me a good joke. Most of the jokes dealt with the fact that he was a herbalist running a health food store, right next to a store that specialized in voodoo, necromancy, obeah, and other types of spiritualism. He had people come into the store at least twice an hour asking for “a potion to keep a man nine miles away” among other sorts of spells and divinations. “Next door!” he would say sternly and forcefully point at the wall across from his cash register. So I asked him why he did that, why was he so insistent and forceful? He alluded to me that he “didn’t do that kind thing” in his store. I wanted to know “what kind of thing” it was, and he hadn’t said anymore about it.

So, I went next door to discover what was happening for myself. And sure enough, there was a man behind the counter taking orders for potions like “peace and prosperity,” “keep the devil on his back,” or “give me a job right now.” And this man would go to his wall, take down the associated potions, and tell patrons how to used them. I went back to General and asked
quietly “is that the kind of place that does spells and stuff?” He whispered lower than me, “Yes. And I think it’s better to let those things work themselves out on their own.”

The most serendipitous happenstance during data collected occurred when General led me to the Book of Trinidad, which has a story on one of the oldest Campbell’s of Speyside, Tobago: Mr. Pancho Campbell. Mr. Pancho is possibly one of my oldest relatives! Most everyone with the name Campbell that has ancestry in Trinbago can trace his or her heritage back to Speyside. There was a picture of him there in the book, and I blinked a few times and squinted. I took off my glasses and put them back on. This Mr. Pancho Campbell looked exactly like my grandfather. I sent the picture to my mother, just to be sure. She responded right away and asked me where I got the picture. She had heard tales of this man from the French Congo, as legends told it, but they were just tales. In truth, he was real and had lived to be 115 years old.

I would say that the data collection process was easy and serendipitous, but it was very difficult work, even though I knew the unfolding of events in this process happened exactly as it should have. What I experienced through my data collection phases, the culture, vine, and the Flatbush Ave Lime was the very work of the cultured network of knowledge construction that I wanted to learn more about. I was right in the middle of it, and for a moment I did not realize this. In retrospect, it didn’t hurt that my personality lent to these activities as I was willing to talk to anyone, without prejudice, as long as they fit the criteria of the research study. I talked to them even if they didn’t, because they usually lead me to some other interesting idea or person that could be useful. That openness allowed the neighborhood to do its work. I hadn’t dialed one phone number before I had interviewed seven participants (but I had walked several miles).

I had to do my part as well, however. I had to show up on time. I had one instance where I didn’t show up on time, and I had to apologize. I asked Dr. Guy: How can I make it up to you? And he said, “Just bring me a currants roll when you come back.” I had to be willing to stand with the guys in front of De Trini Spot, the fruit stand, or the hair salon (which were all on the
same block) and participate in the Flatbush Avenue Lime for long hours while they told countless stories of all the things I wanted to hear. I was in the process of understanding how Trinbagonian migrants constructed knowledge. And not “in” in the metaphorical sense. Nothing revolved around me or gravitated toward me; I was not in the thick of anything. I retreated very quickly most days to write and review and sleep after walking around Brooklyn and talking to folks all day. Rather, I was both physically and mentally “in” a place where the type of knowledge I wanted to know about was being constructed. I immediately became part of the process simply because I was doing the asking.

One vehicle through which most everyone constructed and passed information to others was through verbal communication. Talking, spreading the word, and putting people in each other’s path was how part of this knowledge construction worked in this culture. When I met with someone, talked with them, told them about myself, and listened to what they had to say, my outlook and understanding on Trinbagonian migrants constantly evolved. From my review and reflection on my interviews I began to think about how I was going about my work, realizing that I was simultaneously constructing knowledge with these participants with whom I shared a strong heritage and ancestral connection. Could I do a better job analyzing the richness of the oral history and neighborhood knowledge I was getting and experiencing? Were some of these distractions? Was finding one of my oldest living relatives getting in the way? Or was it part of the knowledge construction? I also started to feel a certain confidence about my heritage that I had never had before starting the interviews. These people were part of a group of sojourners who paved the way for me to be there, doing research. I knew it was going to be important to me to study about this topic. But where did that sense of pride and oneness come from in such a short time? General, who discusses this pride in ancestral heritage at length in this his interview, helped me understand much of what I was sorting through personally during my data collection period.
Interviewing Participants

Once I identified participants through my newly formed networks of the key actors and their connections, each one was interviewed for at least 45 minutes and at most up to 4.5 hours (See Table 5.1). Each interview was recorded using a smartphone with audio file transfer capabilities. These semi-structured interviews (Roulston, 2009) investigated their transition and adaptation experiences as they recounted their life histories some spanning 50 years (Hagemaster, 1992; Wicks & Whiteford, 2006). Through the qualitative practice of conducting investigative oral histories about how migrants arrived in Crown Heights, participants provided information on the area and its Caribbean and Trinbagonian inhabitants that lived in the “underworld.”

During the interviews I started with one question “What was it like to relocate from X, Trinbago to Brooklyn?” I left out the specific area of Crown Heights in the beginning after my third interview because I wanted to see how it would come up conversation—which it always did, usually concerning Brooklyn Carnival. After I had asked this question participants shared their experiences, during the interview I interjected to ask participants for specific ideas related to what they do in the neighborhood, how they do it, and how they came to know what to do in order to live and thrive in their new neighborhood space. Four participants had follow-up interviews in person or over the telephone to clarify statements made, to provide more information on topics covered, and to double check analysis for the sensitive nature of some of the information discussed.

I went back to one participant, Andreis, three times because of how he guided me through the information I was gathering, in effect teaching me how to understand, review, and revise some of the questions in my interview protocol. When I asked about differences in place between the two countries, I was expecting simple surface answers. I did not think I would hear about how moving from an open home with a backyard and garden with grass, with fruit trees, room to play,
and a culture to grow in would be so different to the Brooklyn neighborhoods. For example, a Brooklyn project complex with concrete, bars, and dilapidated conditions that confined people to living on top of each other, in small spaces with many people in one apartment. There were problems: rodents and pests, unsanitary habits (e.g., peeing in the elevators), or clogged garbage chute so that the building emitted a putrid smell. The differences severely disrupted the emotional, physical, and psychological health of the participants in my study as some of them described how horrifying it was when first encountering a place like this. What completely disoriented some participants was that this was commonplace living for many people. Participants main ideas about living spaces made me ask more probing questions about the role of place. What knowledge did people have to construct to know how to transition is into this kind of living? I would add these kinds of sub-questions to my protocol as they came up.

I also chose to follow up with participants and reinforce the information in the interviews in this manner because a few participants commented in follow up conversations that they “forgot that they were still recording” when they provided some of the information. When I listened to some of the sensitive information on my audio and read it in print, I felt it necessary to call and debrief with some participants. Additionally, I sculpted my ideas about how explicit to be with my connection or disconnection with the area where I was now an insider-researcher. I realized quickly that I had to act like there were many things I did not know so that my participants would not assume, during an interview, that I knew something that I wanted them to explain for the record. This sort of distancing made me uncomfortable in the first few weeks. But I had to devise a way to get information without my participants assuming that I knew what things meant. Playing “dumb” was a difficult line to walk.

I conducted interviews and collected data from 11 participants with varied backgrounds. All participants interviewed lived in or had lived in one or two the four main neighborhoods that
emerged from the participant’s interview data and key actors’ suggestions as central to the investigation. These 11 provided longer interviews and subsequent interactions and discussions; they were also willing to participate in other aspects of my research (such as serving as impromptu participant recruiters and guiding my hand as to what was important to inquire about, every step of the way). The overly cooperative spirit of the residents of this neighborhood and the surrounding areas quickly changed my ideas on what would be ideal. I began listening to the network of what was important to know and whom I needed to talk to. Listening to the Trinbagonian culture networks changed my perception of what an ideal representative sample of participants would be for this study. I went where the network took me and found more substantial and knowledge rich information from very well connected, culture-centered participants. The quality of the interviews and other data collected is beyond substantially sufficient for a robust and thorough analysis.

Participant Profiles

In this section, the main and supporting participants that were most central to the study are introduced. Their trajectories are later used to build a narrative for the findings as I explain the knowledge I constructed as a participant observer. Each participant was assigned a pseudonym in efforts to secure confidentially, however when I inquired none of them had a preference for a pseudonym.

Main Participants

Francois: A 59-year-old man who works as a manager at a prominent postal service company in the United States. He came to the country from Santa Cruz, Trinidad. He lived in
Flatbush for eight years full-time before moving away because of the fast pace of living in the
borough and issues with his wife, who had arrived before him. He now lives in part-time in New
Jersey and comes to Brooklyn frequently to see his daughter and other family in the area. He feels
that the Caribbean and Trinbagonian culture in Brooklyn are only partially preserving the history
of the West Indies and do more to erode the multiethnic traditions and legacies practiced on the
Island.

   Chadwick: A 37-year-old man from Laventille, a poverty and crime stricken area in
Trinidad. He came to Crown Heights in Brooklyn at the age of 14. By 19, he had one child and
now has four. He is the partner of Darla. He is legally separated from his wife, who he alleges
used him for citizenship to the United States (also a Trinbagonian) and then began to treat him
badly. He left her and filed for divorce, which he also alleges she will not sign.

   Darla: A close cousin of mine who came from Trinidad to the United States when she
was 14 years old, which is about 15 years ago. She is 29 years old. She first came to New Jersey
to live with her father and came to Flatbush after her father kicked him out of her home. She lived
in Crown Heights for about eight years with her grandmother and ex-husband. After her
separation she moved back to live with her grandmother before moving to Crown Heights with
her new and starting a new job in Long island. She has two children. She talks about how she
became hardened to some life situations because of dealings with her husband and American
perceptions of Trinidad and the Caribbean. She now lives outside of the state of New York
altogether, as she attempts to make a better living situation for their children.

   Marla: A 53-year-old woman, my second cousin, and the mother of Darla and ex-wife of
François. She came to United States and to East Flatbush in Brooklyn when she was 25. She
discussed her first jobs and how much fun she had as a migrant. Later, however, during
participation observation time, she further disclosed that she had hard times as well, especially
with gaining citizenship.
Harry: a 62-year-old resident of Flatbush living across from Ebbets Field, one of the most famous and contested parks in the area. He came to the country 30 years ago and was an English teacher with the New York City public school system. He has historical knowledge of slavery and traditions in the United States and Trinidad that he uses to navigate much of his teaching and life here.

Andreis: A 60-year-old activist arriving in the Flatbush area 29 years ago, that now lives in Lefferts Gardens in Brooklyn. He has been active in the political life of Brooklyn for many years. Most recently he has become very active in speaking out against “stop and frisk” in the borough. He discussed the difference between how police officers treated neighborhood residents in Trinidad and Brooklyn.

Roland: a 62-year-old neighborhood organizer, activist, and former manager in the New York City transit system. He is a key player in neighborhood development and head of the tenants association in the building. He knows everyone in the area, and they know him. He is pleasant but firm when needed and extremely brilliant. He discussed living in the underworld as a Trinbagonian migrants and how he married for citizenship.

Elaine: a 59-year-old mother of three, a former educator and accountant, and most recently a former quality control manager overseas. She moved to Flatbush in 1978 and lived there for 10 years. She discusses the differences in foods and the prohibited costs of cooking with ingredients similar to those in Trinidad. She also discussed moving to Florida after having her children because of the drug epidemic that was at an all time high in the mid- to late-eighties. She moved to Florida after 10 years and then moved out of the country once her children were adults. She works as a caregiver to a Jamaican family.

Carlene: a bubbly, brilliant, focused, 40-year-old entrepreneur. She owns “Trini Style,” a now famous, high profile, Caribbean fusion restaurant in Brooklyn. I was lucky enough to land an interview with her, an internationally rising culinary professional who was showcased on the
Food Network and was gaining a global following. I felt my investigative antennae readjust to her high level of conscious knowledge concerning her status and responsibility as a Caribbean business owner in Crown Heights and Flatbush. She has been in Brooklyn since 1996 and lived her dream of going to college, getting married, buying a house, and owning a business. She graduated from Martin Elon College in Crown Heights with a Bachelors of Arts in Business.

General: A 70-year-old naturopathic doctor and Doctor of Philosophy in Agriculture and Food Science, studying genetically modified foods. He has been in Brooklyn for 50 years and has participated in all 46 West Indian American Day Carnivals in Brooklyn, along with all 28 J’Ouvert celebrations. He discusses how fresh foods from his country that have been this way for a long time, have names as “organic” and “trans-fat free” in the United States. He expressed very clearly what most of the participants hinted at or voiced. America is both very loved and very hated by him as a Trinbagonian migrant and others he knows.

Margaret: a 50-year-old woman who first moved to Hartford, Connecticut from San Fernando in Trinbago. She moved with her new husband to East New York in Brooklyn, around the age of 21. After spending a few short years with her husband, they separated, and she moved to Flatbush, a thriving Trinbagonian neighborhood. She remarried and moved to Canarsie, in Brooklyn several years later. She is an avid supporter of Trinbagonian life and tradition in Brooklyn and Trinidad, frequently traveling between the two. Her husband is one of the founding members of a Trinbagonian social club, the Sesame Flyers that has been in existence for more than 20 years.

Table 5-1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Interview Length</th>
<th>Interview Date</th>
<th>Completed Walk-along</th>
<th>Brooklyn Neighborhood</th>
<th>Home Town in Trinidad</th>
</tr>
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Supporting Participants

During this study there were others who allowed me to shadow them as they completed their life activities during the week, between 5-10 hours per week. These participants also asked me to help with something important that they needed, but I did not interview them as central participants. However, their contributions to the study are invaluable as they paint a picture of the “underclass,” “Masmen,” and other figures in the Trinbagonian world that are outlined by the principal participants and complicate notions of “Black” and “educated” within the culture.

Alice: 19-year-old migrant brought by her father who is currently working on gaining her citizenship.

Elaina: Childcare professional and my first place of residence (this place ended up being too far from research site).
Marcus: Masmaker since 1979 who specializes in wire bending and is well known in the Carnival circuit around the world for his famous costumes and his unforgettable themes.

Ingrid: 34-year-old White American woman from Buffalo, New York, who deliberately chose to move to the Caribbean area because of the values that she saw there. I spent a substantial amount of time with her, and she was integral to the process of finding participants.

These supporting profiles speak to an important part of human activity: the community of practice. While I worked with 11 main participants to understand how they perceive place in their migration experiences, they could not discuss those experiences without some of the supporting participants listed above, which is especially true of the Flatbush Avenue Lime.

**Phase III: Mapping, Walking and Visual Activities**

I used mapping techniques to obtain oral history collection and begin to build visual representations of what residents know their neighborhoods to be after individual participant interviews. In the end, I did most of the mapping, which may raise the question of how faithful it is to the participants’ perspective. I constructed GIS and hand drawn maps from the information that participants provided in their interviews. For example, I asked participants to give cross streets for each of the places that they thought were important parts of their neighborhood so that I could later map them. The maps were supposed to help participants to further explain what they do in and out of their neighborhood spaces and help me, as a researcher, begin to identify activities that are thematically important to participants in neighborhood (Powell, 2006). I adapted the mapping exercise to take myself on walks while listening to their interviews and map what participants told me during those interviews. Four walk-alsongs (Kusenbach, 2003) took
place, which helped construct the pictorial representations of neighborhood spaces described by residents through mapping and pictures.

After the initial interview and follow up interviews, walk-along long trips were scheduled at a convenient time of day, on any day of the week for groups of two, usually a participant and myself. A neighborhood walk-along (Kusenbach, 2003) is the simple act of walking with participants to observe and discuss the spaces in their neighborhood from their perspectives by participating in their usual activities on that short journey. The walk-alongs became an extension of the places identified in the initial interview. Those who participated took me on varied journeys through the neighborhood describing the structures that they saw, the absence of historic and significant structures, what happens within those structures, and why the structures are vital to how participants understand place.

During the walk-alongs, I added pictures from the places participants mentioned in the first mapping exercise. I took pictures of structures and places in the neighborhood while participants talked about what the walk-along meant and taking notice of the drastic changes happening to the face of Crown Heights-Flatbush proper. I photographed while participants discussed what they believed the boundaries of the neighborhood to be and why they believed the boundaries were there. The walk-alongs were a combination of an interview and a participatory activity for the participants and the researcher. The walk-alongs functioned differently than expected because only some participants completed the exercise. I walked with Roland, Andreis, Judy, Carlene, Darla, and Kevin. The information in the few walk-alongs completed and one go-along (one trip was in a car riding through the streets of Brooklyn looking for Panorama tickets) was another source of abundant information.

I anticipated using a more calculated approach for picture-taking during the data collection period, which would have allowed me to collect visual data to analyze along with the interviews. However, I had to fight once in the field to recapture the importance of that process
for the work. But the pictures I did capture were excellent illustrations of the parts of Brooklyn that multiple participants stated were important. Additionally, I could walk and take pictures while listening to an interview, and go right to those sections of the neighborhood and compare visual information by doing the walk-along activity I planned for the participants. Here, I expected some issues as indicated in Janzen’s (2005) ethnographic photography efforts. Although Janzen did not use the pictures the way that she had foreseen, she still included the photographs in her final ethnographic representation and her thesis. Janzen noted that the women used the pictures as representations of the relationships formed while she collected data. But the women did not connect the pictures to the research questions and inquiries that Janzen presented to the group.

**Phase IV: Participant Observation of Culture Events**

To strengthen my role as a participant-observer (Powell, 2006), I participated in activities that residents identified as part of their knowledge development experiences within the neighborhood. One interesting characteristic of Caribbean life in Brooklyn, for example, is the parties that community members throw for every occasion. Graduations from middle and high school; from college and graduate school; Easter, Memorial Day; baby showers, and toddler birthdays all elicit similar responses from the Caribbean culture: get together, play music, dance, drink, cook, and eat. This is a conglomerate of the many types of activities that I participated in as I “work[ed] the hyphen” (Powell, 2006, p. 37) between participant and observer to gather relevant data on the informal and incidental knowledge development experiences of Caribbean migrant residents in Crown Heights as they worked to maintain their cultural significance in their neighborhood.
I asked participants to partake in participatory photography (Jorgenson & Sullivan, 2010) to help capture what they perceived as the neighborhood boundaries and what they believe are important sites within their neighborhoods. However, I ended up piecing together the visual information on boundaries and important culture sites through the extensive information in interviews with Trinbagonian migrants as I took pictures and along with GIS data to capture neighborhood boundaries.

I significantly changed my use of graphic information systems data as I moved in and out of my data collection periods in Brooklyn. I wanted pinpoint exactly where participants lived or worked, and I used this as a visual starting point for their ideas about place both in Brooklyn and Trinidad. Participant observation (Fetterman, 2009; Kuwalich, 2005) gave me insight into which culture settings and activities participants deemed important and appropriate for my participation and observation. These activities further illustrate what events Trinbagonian migrants participate in that they report helping shape their informal knowledge construction within the spaces. These are activities that Trinbagonians consider important to preserve the culture and a Trinbagonian presence in their neighborhoods. These participant observations took place before and after the initial interviews, once participants and key actors helped me identify important sites, activities and places to dwell in within the culture.

Canboulay

Additionally, I attended a play called name Canboulay, about the early years of the precursor to Carnival in Trinidad. According to play, Canboulay was a celebration derived from African slave ancestry in conjunction with, but separate from, the Carnival that took place in Port of Spain at the Governor’s mansion in the form of a very elegant Masquerade Ball. A similar celebration takes place early during Brooklyn Carnival Week on Tuesday. I took my younger
cousin with me to participate in the production; the story, music, and actors fascinated her, as we observed from the front row. This play takes the audience through the death of a young man during the riots who was participating in a traditional stick fight, which was incorporated into Canboulay from the traditions of African slaves in the country of Trinidad and Tobago.

**Mas Camp**

I saw my costume being made from scratch when I arrived, even though I was not pleased to know that I did not have a costume upon arriving at the Mas camp. A Mas camp is where costumes are made and distributed. Members of the Caribbean community host mass camps in both Brooklyn and Trinidad; however the function is executed differently in each country. In Brooklyn Mas camps are run more like a socialization station, whereas, in Trinidad, they are a place for socialization during the season launch party, which is usually right after Brooklyn Carnival. Then these Trinbagonian Mas camps are run more like as a place of business up until Carnival Monday.

*Figure 5-5. My completed costume at the mass camp. in Crown Heights.*

**Phase V: Flatbush Avenue Lime**

Flatbush Avenue Lime (FAL) Group:

Neighborhood group that got together on evenings to plan events within smaller Caribbean circles in
the surrounding neighborhood. A gathering like this one is known in Trinidad as a lime, a word colloquial to Trinbagonian culture. The guidelines of the American Psychological Association (APA) style of writing as interpreted by professors in my experiences in academia shun the unabridged use of culture-specific colloquial words. The watering-down and attempt at direct translation for terms like these make the knowledge constructed in these groups difficult to convey and understand. For example, most nights, many folks thought this group was hanging out on the corner mainly for relaxation purposes, like some of the other groups in the neighborhood (which also have their roles and purposes). However, this group had very different activities and had a name and structure for the group within which they carried out those activities and produced knowledge construction outcomes.

Trinbagonians and other people from the Caribbean get together and talk about the day, news and other happenings in the area and also learn about where they can find good produce like avocados, almond butter, and orange marmalade. The group’s main focus is to fellowship with each other, in a way, that they have fun while learning something. They also plan events like group food shopping and how they will spend their weekends together. The group varied from 4-8 people depending on the evening.

I happened upon and continued to attend the FAL, which met in the evenings, or in the early evening on the weekends, in front of De Trini Spot to talk business and pleasure. Four to seven men and a few women (intermittently) would show up each evening after work to talk about their day and plan one or two typical activities. The FAL also protect the ladies at the hair braiding salon that stayed late into the night a few nights a week.

All of the group members knew about my project through another participant. Several people showed up once or twice wanting to give me advice on what I data I should collect and to tell me their stories as well. I joined the neighborhood members’ limes two to three times a week, for at least two hours each time. I didn’t record during these sessions; some of the men were not
comfortable with that. But I did take notes, and I memorize the topics of the conversations. I posed some questions to them that I had planned to ask the focus group, and this worked pretty well. There was no time limit, however, so these sessions went on for hours. I would sometimes excuse myself to go back up to my accommodations across the street. I was very fortunate to reside right across the street from the FAL group meeting place.

As a participant-observer, they posed questions to me as well. I participated in these limes during the week, and the word kept traveling across town that I was there collecting data for my dissertation research. The Flatbush Avenue Lime allowed me informally to ask questions of the group with their consent and knowledge of my research. As I learned from Roland, one of my interviewees and Flatbush Avenue Lime member, this is an important feature of a lime in the neighborhood—the aspect of information gathering among residents of the Caribbean culture.

During the FAL, I was allowed to raise topics and discuss ideas that were pertinent to the subject matter of my dissertation. But I was also participating in something that was the subject matter of my dissertation. I was participating in an activity directly grounded and attached to a place; in this instance the place was Trinidad. Food was shared most evenings, with some drinks, and the group talks about many issues; no subjects were off limits. They wanted to get to know me off the record, so I let them. Some participants of the lime were already participants in my study and some were not. But Roland, the block “mayor,” as everyone affectionately calls him, had already told everyone about what I was doing. He went the extra mile to make sure that the community members received me into the neighborhood.

These were not the sessions for which I had planned. But I learned more in those sessions about the role of place in knowledge development for Trinbagonians than if I had tried to force a focus group structure. The ideas about going to the market, planning with your partners and friends what each of you will get, and bringing back produce to share with those on the inside of the Caribbean culture, tell a story of “home” for these lime participants. Shopping for foodstuff
was a collective idea that originated in their homes and communities in Trinidad. Community members repurposed this practice by readjusting to the tools available in Brooklyn versus Trinidad; Trinbagonians added some knowledge development outcomes from those readjustments and reconsiderations.

These changes were due to climate, proximity, availability of healthy foods, the suppliers of those foods, who needed which types of foods, the price of the foods, and how much money they could put together to buy in bulk so community members could have a share, among other issues. These liming partners added to their body of knowledge during that activity by recreating immaterial and material but usable knowledge artifacts from their prior knowledge base on their experiences in the place of Trinidad. Community members form these immaterial artifacts by the order, manner, deference, and respect with which they carry out tasks. If successful this new way to get food for the culture will become (as it has been for this group) a regular weekly occurrence that can fit into a larger activity.

Framework

I examined the data gathered from this grounded ethnographic approach through the lenses of narrative analysis and activity systems. I present the findings in the next chapter from the analysis tactics and strategies carried out in the methods section. This section refers to the activities that arise out of using cultural, historical activity and critical place-based pedagogy as interdisciplinary components. As such, I underscore human activity (as understood through a CHAT structure) to be the driving force to uncovering the role of place in neighborhood knowledge construction.

First I introduce the participants of the study whose stories I used to frame the findings. I chose stories from trajectories that I constructed from the interview data to show how activity
arises out of quotidian human activities in place. Next, I conducted line-by-line, open, and axial coding (Charmaz, 2008; Glasser & Strauss, 1973) as I move between the trajectories and raw data to form corresponding codes. I use these codes to understand how tensions form for participants and how the relationships that lay beneath these tensions are manipulated to result in expansive knowledge construction in human activity and activity sets. Next, I present the findings of the data analysis process that form emerging ideas about the role of place in knowledge construction and re-address the research questions. With 11 participants and a host of activities pertaining to Trinbagonian migrants to four Brooklyn neighborhoods with high concentrations of Trinbagonian migrants, I can present a foundational understanding of how place serves as one of the primary mediating factors in knowledge construction as observed in this study.

Data Analysis

Qualitative analysis of data was conducted by examining collected field notes and written memos, line, sentence, and thought coding to build phenomenological thematic data structures, ongoing personal reflective writings, and participant historical trajectory development using narrative analysis (Charmaz, 2002; Riesmann, 2008. Analysis of interviews, walk-along data from pictures, and participant stories began immediately and continued throughout the project. I started quickly to make sure that I progressed through each phase of the project and build on data that residents produced for analysis and further research. Ongoing analysis included transcription of the 11 interviews, more than 200 hours of observation, hundreds of pictures, more than 20 hours of audio, GIS data, and 30 hours of shadowing with the supporting participants.

I worked with TAMS analyzer qualitative coding software and Nvivo qualitative coding software to organize attributes, codes, categories, and themes, borrowing techniques from grounded theory and narrative analysis (Charmaz, 2009; Reissman, 2008) to work through data. I
analyzed picture and GIS data for spatial mapping and neighborhood comparisons, assessing each place that participants named as part of their neighborhood and comparing to the localities of their home country by considering the type of structures, colors, flora and fauna represented in each photograph. (Brace-Govan, 2007; Schwartz, 1989). Cultural Historical Activity Theory, as described in the theoretical framework, is used to frame data through the lens of human activity to understand how knowledge construction as an outcome is happening for Trinbagonians in Brooklyn, who have undergone a transnational relocation.

**Data Quality**

To maintain quality of data for this study I have employed several methods. Finding the relevance of this study is essential its validity. With the history, current changes, and population in Crown Heights, Flatbush, East Flatbush, and Lefferts Gardens (as well as Trinbago), this study addressed issues of informal knowledge construction happening for Trinbagonians and illuminates this type of knowledge construction for similar populations. I chose and structured the methods for this study from literature provided in peer-reviewed journals across the fields of phenomenological, ethnographic data collection for the qualitative sciences(say which fields). In this way I ensure that the project contains foundational elements of tested methods that are already in the field, while taking research liberties to design a data collection method between the available methods to fit the research inquiry (Riesmann, 2008).

As I completed each activity, observations, interview, the mapping exercise, focus group meetings, and photographs, I kept the data on a password-protected hard drive. To maintain the validity of this study, I used the research questions to decide on how to collect data to capture information from participants from various angles of perspective (Fetterman, 2009). As data was being collected, I used the validity criteria outlined in Whittemore, Chase, and Mandel’s (2001)
work for primary and secondary validity criteria in different phases of research. For this study, my primary data were the interviews and visual data was secondary, yet closely linked to the primary data as an extension of the view of participants. Tertiary data included my reflections and writings and the shadowing of supporting participants. Lastly, I chose to identify some of my bias and disclosed important relationships to me if participants permitted me to do so, which is a significant part of the validity process.

**Analytic Structure**

Once I created a tentative structure to represent analysis of the overall data that aligned with the central question of the role of place in building knowledge, I created an analytical methods structure to address the data at the textual level. This textual analysis would be the foundation for understanding what participants reported that they did in place as they constructed knowledge about the new place of dwelling they had been introduced to as migrants to Brooklyn. I also needed a systematic way of decoding the memos and field notes written for the activities that I observed and participated in.

With this information in mind, I turned to Charmaz (2008) and Riesmann (1993) to assemble an analytic structure would help me do three types of analysis. First, I conducted line-by-line coding (Charmaz, 2008, p. 50-53) to search for themes that arose out of the data from the interviews for the 11 participants and two journals of field notes. The narratives chosen from the interviews were coded at a finer level (from the level of utterance up to a full independent clause) while field notes were coded at a broader level (from one sentence to four sentences, depending on the level of detail). Second I conducted narrative analysis of the interviews using Riesman’s (1993) methods of units of discourse, stanza analysis (pp. 40-71), and dialogic performance
analysis (pp. 71-102). Third, I used the information gathered through these analyses to inform the construction activities in CHAT.

The line-by-line method, as Charmaz described it, manifested itself as thought-by-thought, or clause-by-clause coding instead of the absolute marker of a “line” for this work, which yielded a richer textual analysis. What is a “line” in line-by-line coding? Who determines this line—the word processor? I was uncomfortable with this idea. However, I immediately relied on my knowledge of parts of speech in the English language to code the data; this did not necessarily produce a thorough manner of coding, because this method still relied on a preset structure of reading the text. Thus, I ended up performing open coding near the beginning level of speech, utterance. However, when utterances were not useful, I moved to putting one, two or three words together to determine coding attributes.

Each phrase or thought in the sentences of the narratives could be analyzed at the same level of coding for narrative clause analysis, coding attribute analysis, and activity system analysis if I maintained a certain level of resistance between coding utterances and coding full phrases. Maintaining this state of resistance meant that I constantly had to consult the text to make sure that I have retrieved the smallest piece of useful information that I could obtain from the narrative. These small pieces of useful information helped to shape attributes and codes. I first analyzed for coding attributes in the interview data and later formed codes and categories. However, for this inquiry the categories are not arbitrary—the categories of interest are aligned with the elements of activity in CHAT to determine the role of place in knowledge construction for Trinbagonian migrants.

In the example below, I was able to determine the activity system of “Navigating Changes in Values System” from Francois’s narrative. I gauged the importance of the value of family in the narrative by simply recording the amount of times that the narrator mentioned “family” in reference to “values” and then re-reading what he said after noting the repetition.
Coding at this level lends itself to structuring activities in CHAT, because as I coded, I inductively began making decisions about what activities were arising from the accounts and which elements of activity were described in whole or in part in the narrative. Partial stories were not an issue, because I used the group as a whole to understand activity. Frequently, one participant could not fill in all details of the activity after I coded by stanza, units of discourse, coding attributes. Therefore, the narratives of other participants describing parts of the same activities (such as Reconciling Skin Color and Culture) were used to flesh out the activity systems chosen for study. Using narrative analysis to read through text brings elements of culture and history to the forefront of analysis, which is necessary for examining the role of place in constructing knowledge and understanding.

I adapted some narrative analysis methods for this analysis from established forms of navigating textual and structural analysis with interviews. In chapters 4-5 of Charmaz’s (1993) book there are four to six different methods to choose from, combine, and reconstruct from my research perspective to analyze data. Restructuring and taking the liberty to devise a detailed narrative analysis method allowed me to capture a critical aspect of Caribbean culture: storytelling. Storytelling in Caribbean culture is one of the most vibrant ways that information passes through the culture (Corsbie, 2010).

I first allowed the stories to transform the analysis process by taking advantage of the fact that I already knew there was a story being told and that activities were being discussed. Then I performed structural analysis of the narratives by first coding for the six narrative clauses: orienting information, abstract information, and evaluation, complicating action, resolution and coda structures within the text. Orienting information from the participants usually includes information that sets up the story that participants are about to tell. Abstract information usually provides a summary of the story that is being told. A complicating action in a story told by participants signals a tension or issue that arises between the characters in the story for possible
resolution (positive, negative, or neutral; this aligns with the resolution of tensions in CHAT). An evaluation is the storyteller’s annotating and clarifying information on the complicating action. A coda signaled the end of the scene, or of the entire story being told (Charmaz, 1993, p 92).

With narrative clause analysis and line-by-line coding, I was able to move freely between structural and textual investigations of the text. This movement worked well for the identification of the elements of activity: subject, motive-object, outcomes (both intended and unintended), mediating instrument, rules, communities of practice, and divisions of labor, which are all embedded in culture and history. I moved between textual and structural coding by first considering narrative clause analysis (Riesman, 1993, p. 88) and then as systems of coding attributes (Charmaz, 2008, pp. 40-71). Additionally I investigated the thought-by-thought coding analysis of the stories told by participants revealed stories in a fuller form as narrative elements. Structurally, identifying all six of the elements of narrative clauses gives order to the story for scientific rigor. For example, evaluating information may come before or after a complicating action in a narrative. I used the six narrative clause elements to organize the stories so that I could identify each of these pieces and put them in time order if the narrator did not portray them this way. This process does not take much away from the participants’ perspective; this is only used to group the stanzas and lines of each story by narrative clause element to begin the work of evaluating the stories in the narrative for activities as characterized in cultural, historical activity theory.

I took the liberty (Riesmann 1993, Chapter 4, pp. 79-103) of combining the narrative methods as Riesmann as she does in her work to develop a consistent system of evaluating text. Table 5-2 provides an example of the systematics of this coding scheme. Once I completed this process, I used the codes and clauses to develop the elements of activity taking place in the story. The raw data that begins to form these elements can now be used to discuss at least one activity expressed in the narrative and its outcomes, which are some version of expansive knowledge
development. Expansive knowledge construction for the purposes of this study is the knowledge construction, and in some cases deconstruction, processes that happens during the complicating event from the narrator’s point of view. The coding attributes and the narrative clause elements are used together in this study preliminarily to test the elements of activity because of similarities in the sizes and information held in the analytical units of the text through narrative analysis methods. I evaluated each unit for clausal elements, coding attributes and then activity elements. In this way I go through the phases of open, axial and closed coding through narrative clause analysis and the determine what information to include for the elements that make up activity in CHAT. I demonstrate this movement in Tables 5-2, 5-3, and 5-4.

Table 5-2 Narrative Textural-Structural Grounded Analysis Method

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stanza</th>
<th>Passage</th>
<th>Narrative Clause Functions</th>
<th>Open Codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Now we are talking about</td>
<td>the top 10 values</td>
<td>in the Caribbean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Yes this is one type</td>
<td>I have given you</td>
<td>the first right</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>In the Caribbean</td>
<td>or in Trinidad</td>
<td>one of our values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Then you have,</td>
<td>of course, if you want to say</td>
<td>careers or jobs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Now</td>
<td>when you come to America,</td>
<td>you realize</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Everybody</td>
<td>is career oriented.</td>
<td>So you find</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The narratives serve as the main indicator of human activity sets in this work, and are supported by observation and participant observation. In the table above, narrative clause elements and CHAT elements are aligned for analysis. The categories between the narrative

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Narrative Clause Elements</th>
<th>CHAT Elements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract (summarizes point of narrative, begins plot formation)</td>
<td>Motive-object, Culture, History (motive is the “why” of an activity. Culture and history provide relevant information)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resolution (resolves plot of narrative, by indicating what happened in reference the complicating action)</td>
<td>Outcomes- Intended and Unintended, Culture, History (outcomes indicated what was learned in activity, culture and history provide relevant contextual information bout place)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complicating Action (Describes sequences of actions, turning points, crisis, or problems in the narrative)</td>
<td>Tension (tensions are conditions that arise in activity that hinder affect progress toward the motive object)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation (narrator’s annotation and clarification of the complicating action)</td>
<td>Tensions and Outcomes- Intended and Unintended (outcomes indicate what was learned in activity)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coda (signifies the end of the story and returns the narrator to the present)</td>
<td>Outcomes, History (outcomes indicate what was learned during activity history provides relevant information in activity)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orientation (provides the place time, situation and participants of the narrative)</td>
<td>Culture, History, Subject, Division of labor, Rules, Community of practice</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: In this phase of coding, each attribute is listed each time it appears in the text. For example, “easy (level of ability)” appears more than once because on the textual level it appears more than once.

Legend: CA - complicating action; EV - evaluation; AB - abstract; OR - orientating information; RE - Resolution; CODA - end
clauses and CHAT overlap and do not line up perfectly. This is illustrated by the repetition of
CHAT elements in the second column. In the first row the “Abstract” clauses from narratives are
used to understand the motive-object, culture, and history of activity since abstracts contain the
main point of the story with some background information In the second row, the ‘Resolution’
clauses are used to understand the outcomes, both intended and unintended, because resolutions
indicate how participants resolve the plot of the story and can indicate some of the intended
learning outcomes of activity. In the third row, the “Complicating Action” clause is used to
understand tensions because this clause describes action sequences and turning points in the
narrative that indicate conditions of tension in activity.

In the fourth column, the “Evaluation” clause is used to understand tensions and
outcomes because this clause is used by the narrator to clarify the conditions surrounding tensions
and how they are resolved, if at all, and what outcomes activities produce. In the fifth column, the
“Coda” clause is used to understand outcomes and history in activity because this clause indicates
what happens at the end of a narrative in respect to what is happening in the present. In the sixth
column, the “Orientation” clause is used to understand culture, history, subject, division of labor,
rules, and community of practice because this clause is used by narrators to provide information on the
who, what, when, and where of the story. Information from the “Orientation” clause is used to indicate
what rules are in play, which people constitute the subject (whether individual or collective), when the
activity is happening, how long it lasted, who has which roles in the story, where the story takes place,
and other relevant orienting information that directly informs activity in this work.
Table 5-4

Gleaning Activity Data from Narrative Analysis: Determining Values.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coding Stanza (from Table 5-2)</th>
<th>Code (Open--&gt;Axial)</th>
<th>CHAT Element (Closed Coding)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Caribbean</td>
<td>Culture- Region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Explanation of values</td>
<td>History- Values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Trinidad</td>
<td>Culture- Region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Clarifying Information</td>
<td>History- Information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Values- Type of person</td>
<td>Subject: Trinbagonian Migrants to Brooklyn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Trinbagonian to US</td>
<td>Community of practice- People with Similar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Values- Explanation</td>
<td>Values, Family, Friends, Coworkers, others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Values- Analysis</td>
<td>seeking work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Values- Synthesis</td>
<td>Rules: Explanation of values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Division of Labor: Co-workers, Boss, Subordinates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Caribbean</td>
<td>Culture: Caribbean, Trinidad, Value System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Trinidad</td>
<td>History: Values main, family, importance of family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Values-family</td>
<td>Rules: Importance of family, Ease of Attainment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Value-main,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Value-culture</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Explanation of values</td>
<td>History: Explanation of Values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Values-employment</td>
<td>Culture: Value System, top ten</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Values-top ten</td>
<td>Culture, Community of practice: values-employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>US arrival</td>
<td>History: U.S. arrival</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Values- realization,</td>
<td>Culture: Values- realization, values- change, values- employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Values-change,</td>
<td>values, employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Values-employment</td>
<td>Rules: values, realization, values- change, values- employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>US Perception&gt;</td>
<td>Tension: Change in Values, Low level of difficulty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Value-&gt;Employment-&gt;</td>
<td>for attainment of jobs, school, things, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Career Oriented</td>
<td>Outcomes: go to school, change in values, for better or worse, get a job (or not get a job)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>People from Caribbean</td>
<td>Motive-object: living successfully in US</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>US Realization&gt;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Exclamation (surprise), Easy (level of difficulty), Ability to do-school Easy (level of difficulty), Ability to do-things Easy (level of difficulty)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>US Perception&gt;</td>
<td>Culture: U.S. Perceptions, Value System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>affordable</td>
<td>History: U.S. Perceptions, Change in Values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Affordable&gt; school</td>
<td>Tools: School, Job, Economic Affordability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Affordable&gt; everything</td>
<td>Tension: Values: Rearrange, Priority Change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Affordable</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Values- priority change</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Values- rearrange</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Values- original</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Values U.S. Values-top ten</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Framing Activity: Different Strokes for Different Countries**

From the narrative presented and data analyzed, the activity of navigating changes in value system emerged. From the data, I took the coded elements and used the frame of the activity system to recast the data for tension analysis and knowledge construction as well as production outcomes (See Figure 5-1). The subject of this activity is the cultural group of Trinbagonians migrants in Brooklyn who are working toward the motive-object of living successfully in the United States. Some of the historical contexts that frame this activity are connected to when Trinbagonians arrived in United States, Maintenance of a family or personal value system over time, and time spent achieving goals in Trinidad and Tobago and in the United States. Some of the rules that govern this activity are a set of values that are in use for participants (the “Top-10” for Francois), ease of achieving material and social status in the United States, having a job, and going to school, among others. Some of the groups and people that are a part of the community of practice in this activity are friends, family, coworkers, and other people who may share some of same values, others seeking to obtain jobs and schooling in the United States. Divisions of labor for this activity are portrayed through the roles of employers, family members, citizenship sponsors, spouses, children, and parents, among others as described by participants.
Analyzing Activity: Career versus Family

In this section, I will provide an example of the next steps of analyzing activities as they arise from the data. After the first steps of analysis were completed, I evaluated activities for tensions between components of activity that that spur knowledge construction and production, and explain how participants pursue the motive-object. Each element of activity, when appropriately matched with the data from clause analysis and grounded coding, gives insight into the process of knowledge construction within this framework. From this narrative, the activity of navigating changes in values systems participants first experience tension with their Trinbagonian
based value system in Brooklyn. Francois explains that the family is an important cultural value for Trinbagonians and people from the Caribbean. As participants migrated and experienced life in the United States and Brooklyn for the first time, the heavy value placed on jobs did not match up with their central knowledge of work-life balance constructed in Trinbago. Elaine explains:

> Working in New York City was very, very interesting because in Trinidad, most people work but it was a fun time. If you got up, you felt like it; you went to work, if not you called in. You show up the next day or two. In New York, you do not go to work, you did not get pay and many times you would not have a job. I was bound and pressed for working every day. So that’s another thing I had to grow accustomed to.

For Elaine, the difference in value placed on work between the United States and Trinbago was observable and discernible. From Elaine’s central knowledge perspective, the concept of “going to work” in Trinidad was “a fun time” versus being “bound and pressed.” She had to resolve this new information entering into her rules knowledge base about the concept of “going to work” so that she could work successfully. Elaine states that she “had to grow accustomed” to this new idea of going work. Elaine incorporated the strict concept of working every day, into her knowledge about “going to work.” This incorporation in the rules created room for new secondary tensions, and more possibilities of tensions. Elaine’s community of practice needed updating if she was going to be successful in the employment arena, now that she was incorporating new ways of working in the United States. She had to talk with new people and make new friends, and also form new kinds of relationship with managers and supervisors that were not in place before, because now; she saw these people every day.

Additionally, Elaine’s understanding of the divisions of labor at work and who decided when she would go to work were different from her central knowledge base. In her central knowledge constructed about work, she decided what was a reasonable amount of time to work every week. The new rule of mandated work hours imposed by the workplace may have caused a disruption if Elaine did not observe other workers and make friends. She found the quickest way to get to work, among other tasks that would help her “keep” her job instead of just “have” a job.
Part of the reason that Elaine was able to do this was because of the value that she also placed on being good at whatever she was doing. If being good at her job meant changing a major rule like the one surrounding work, this was an adjustment instead of displacement for Elaine because the benefit outweighed the benefits of not having a job. This information could be incorporated into her knowledge base so that she could fulfill her desire of living in the United States and getting her college degree. The value that Elaine chose to place on being employed and having a career as she grew accustomed to her new working situation was important to being able to get future jobs in the city, and eventually becoming an accountant and a teacher.

**Conclusion**

In summary, I move from open to closed coding using the methods and tools provided by grounded theory’s line-by-line coding (Charmaz 2008), narrative analysis methods and tools provided by narrative methods and analyzing narrative clause elements (Riesmann, 1993). I used the attributes and emerging codes to form categories as directly related to the elements of activity in through a cultural, historical analytical lens. I used a mixture of narrative methods, grounded theory coding, and cultural, historical activity analysis to mine for the emerging human activities and tensions that are happening in place among Trinbagonian migrants and the knowledge construction that emerges from the activities discovered in this process. As demonstrated above, very specific decision tasks rise to the top of the central knowledge base of subjects that drive how they construct knowledge about concepts that may have the same name, but have a different meaning between Brooklyn and Trinidad and Tobago.
Chapter 6

Findings: The Role of Place in Knowledge Construction

In this chapter, I examine the findings by first determining complicating actions and activities that arise out of the narratives and discussing how these rising activities inform the role of place in knowledge construction among Trinbagonian migrants. The collective subject for each activity system is the group of 11 participants in this study. Nine activities are reviewed for their significance to place and knowledge construction. These activities were chosen because I discussed each for at least five to six minutes during interviews with each participant. Activities that were spoken about for less than five or six minutes by only some of the participants were not included because they yielded less information for analysis across the data sources. These activities are: reconciling skin color and culture, being Trinbagonian in Brooklyn, traveling between Brooklyn and Trinidad, cooking Trinbagonian cultural foods, hosting Trinbagonian fetes, maintaining a local lime, owning a Caribbean business, navigating marriage and spousal changes, and participating in Carnival. These nine activities comprise the activity systems network of place-based knowledge construction among Trinbagonian migrants in Brooklyn, New York. Although more than nine activities arose, in order to demonstrate the knowledge construction processes uncovered during this project, I chose only the listed activities for study. Tensions within the overall activity systems set of “place-based knowledge construction among Trinbagonian migrants” in Brooklyn are used to illuminate knowledge construction processes among migrants as told through their narratives. Lastly, I discuss how these activities exemplify the embedded role of place in constructing knowledge and the embedded role of reinventing place among migrants for knowledge expansion.
Reconciling Skin Color and Culture

How does skin color contribute to human activity? In this first activity, I explore how learning to “be” a skin color in a new geographical location became a conscious action for participants once in Brooklyn. Important to being Caribbean among many migrants in Brooklyn are the “good” stereotypes that came along with being a person of Caribbean heritage or descent and colored. Participants described similar stereotypical issues connected to being a different type of “Black” than African Americans, while still being similar in skin color and most cases, of African ancestry. General, who has been in Brooklyn for 50 years, shares his interactions with a policeman on how law enforcement perceived Caribbean people 30-40 years ago:

When I was a paramedic…a high-ranking policeman told me something in the 60s, in the 70s. He said, “We don’t worry with the Caribbean people you know because they’re not into any drugs or anything like that. He say, “All the Caribbean people want to do is to come to America, buy a house and send their children to college,” and that is what we used to be. We may have changed now because we have fallen in line with another beat, but that is why Caribbean people came to America, to go to school and to grow and to develop. To develop their objective faculties, so when they look they can see beyond the horizon…that is why we came here. I don’t know why they are coming here now.

General states at the end of his description of his interaction with the police that he does not know if Trinbagonians now have the same reasons for coming to the United States as his generation of migrants. He believes this is due to the possible complicating action that “Caribbean people” may have “fallen in line to another beat.” This statement exhibits tenets of acculturation that are proportional to the amount of time and the breadth of experiences that General has had as a migrant in Brooklyn. His statement is a noteworthy precursor to stories on the same subject from participants like Andreis, who described more recent interactions with the police that reflect the level of change that corresponds to General’s sense of change in present-day migrants to the United States. Andreis describes the tensions experienced with police and how they view Black people who participate in Carnival as revelers:
The reason why there’s so much insensitivity between the police and the culture, it’s because the police doesn’t know how to deal with revelers. Now what the British did [for London Carnival] was they sent a contingent from Scotland Yard to go down to Trinidad to study the way that the police deal with Carnival in Trinidad. And the studies that they came up with, they wrote up a whole paper and now they have implemented it in their Carnival in London, you see. [But in Brooklyn] they feel, well, something’s going to happen because all of these niggas are together, so something is going to jump off.

In this description, Andreis discusses how he believes the police perceive the celebration of Carnival in Brooklyn in contrast to what he knows about the law enforcement from Scotland Yard’s involvement in the London celebration. Andre contrasts conducting research on Carnival logistics in order to facilitate Carnival in the UK to the preconceived notions of what happens when large groups of a majority of Black people gather—that something is inevitably going to go wrong. This description is a departure from the previous conceptions of the police shared by General, but not contradictory to the idea that General alludes to. General’s acculturated perceptions are ominous. He perceives changes in reasons for Trinbagonian migration to Brooklyn but does not state that he knows the reason for these changes. He is careful in this part of the interview not to make claims for the newer generation of migrants. However, General’s current perceptions of change in reasons for migrating correspond to how Andreis described current NYPD current perceptions and interactions with Carnival and masqueraders in Brooklyn.

The assumptions of the NYPD as described by Andreis and the assumptions of change made by General allude to an unknown factor that makes this current group of migrants unpredictable. This unpredictability has a negative connotation for the NYPD as told by Andre and symbolized by an abundance of police presence throughout Carnival week in Brooklyn. General attempts to stay neutral in this passage but also depicts his assumptions as negative, as described in the rest of his narrative when discussing how younger revelers behave at Carnival (see: Participating in Carnival).
Immersion in the African American Culture

One of the main characteristics of change of place for participants was a different understanding and experience of being Black once in the United States versus being Black in Trinidad. This idea of having to “be” Black emerged in positive and negative contexts across the narratives. Most participants described having trouble with some cultural ways of understanding the world between Trinbago and Brooklyn such as homosexuality (Andreis) and expressed difficulties understanding the limits placed on cultural diversity (Carlene) from Trinidad to Brooklyn.

Discrimination or favoritism based mainly on skin color was a different concept when introduced to participants’ primary understandings and perspectives. In addition to understanding sexuality in a new place and trying to comprehend differences in cultural diversity (sans color), participants also discuss triumphs and struggles as they learned to navigate perceptions of skin color in the United States. Thus, the activity of “Being Black” emerged because what was once a non-issue for participants became a central issue to their lives in the United States. Participants had to learn how to be Black in the United States and uncover what types of Black were acceptable according to dominant cultural understandings. Andreis stated:

It was far easier for me as a Black man to come here to New York and what I did was, because I had such a difficult time with Black males in Trinidad, I didn’t have any Trini friends outside of my family. I immersed myself in the African American culture and up to this day, with the exception of a few; I can probably count them. All of my friends are African Americans. The man who is my soul mate, he’s African American. He goes to Trinidad, met my parents and everything. They love him. He travels when I [travel]…so he knows my family, I know his family and we have [had] a relationship [and] friendship for over 35 years.

For Andreis, he chose to align with African Americans once in the United States. He believed that being Black in the United States was far easier than being a gay male in Trinbago, because of the stigma that homosexuality carries within his culture versus the stigma that skin color carries in the United States. So in this example, being Black in the United States is a
positive experience for Andreis as far as being a gay man is concerned. However, Andre is a strong advocate for the Black culture against what he describes as the severe mistreatment of Black males by law enforcement. He attends symposia and conferences and organizes events with various groups to spread the word on how Black males can avoid confrontations with the New York Police Department, and consequently not get shot, arrested, or mistreated by the police. His further discussions on the topic of Blackness in Brooklyn demonstrate that while it was “far easier” for Andreis to be a Black man in the U.S. than a gay man in Trinbago, he still has to experience some of the severe mistreatments by city and law enforcement that he describes because of his skin color.

In contrast, Carlene’s understanding of what diversity meant was different from Trinidad to Brooklyn in a manner described similarly by all participants:

We all [live] on top of each other, yet there is no cohesiveness. …in Trinidad, we have what we call harvest… the church would throw a party, and we would all go to the harvest. You could be Christian, [or not]…you could be Hindu… the entire neighborhood went to harvest. And when we go to harvest, we would all dance together, we will intermingle. But it will always be all the same people essentially; hundreds of people, but you know everybody. Here, at Black parties, I can’t say that I was at many of them, but the ones that I did go to, I realized or I always felt a sort of separateness from everyone else. And it didn’t seem to me that there was that cohesive element, where everybody just feels like well we are all part of this, and it’s just great. I never got that. I still haven’t.

In Carlene’s description she could not understand the missing feeling of being together with people at a party, whether you knew them or not, and having a great time. This feeling is a common theme among Trinbagonians. Being “stush”, or stuck up, at a party was acceptable for very few people, as it seemed everyone was trying to have a genuinely good time. The pretense of culture was not as pronounced for her in Trinbago as it was at parties hosted by Blacks in Brooklyn. In this party-going experience Carlene loses, or has to discard, a sense of togetherness and fun at a party, which is a foreign idea. What Carlene previously experienced as and described
as a party in her home country does not resonate with her Brooklyn experience of what she thought might have been much more similar concept in feeling and execution.

**Performative Resistance**

Darla’s experiences upon arriving in the country, starting her new life in Brooklyn, and having to explain herself and her heritage to those she met provoked unexpected results. She could not understand the people she met did not know that being Caribbean did not mean being a savage or hat all Caribbean people were not the same:

> It [the US] was different [from Trinbago] when I stepped off the plane because I felt out of place. I felt out of place like I didn’t belong here. I just felt like everything was bigger than me, like I was a little fish in a big pond. That’s really how I felt, and that’s scary.

The “out of place” feeling is common across all participants in this study. The dissonance that is experienced whether exciting or frightening creates ethereal experience as the senses adjust to being in a brand new world. For Darla, her evolving historical knowledge of place suffered from an overload of tensions and disruptions in the rules that she knew about space, and the tools that she had previously used to navigate space:

> I just felt I couldn’t relate to anything up here or anyone up here. And then, too, you meet people who don’t really have much information about other countries, especially Caribbean countries like West Indian countries. They have this notion like we are so backward--we still wear grass skirts, we chase rats around and eat them for lunch. I actually met someone that thought that. He even went so far as to ask me, “Do you guys celebrate Christmas because you guys don’t have snow?” So I gave him a really stupid answer. I was like, “Well, you know, there’s a lot of things we don’t do.” I actually told him that we wear grass skirts, and we do chase rats, and that before we come here we do a crash course on civilization for six months to prepare for the U.S. to deal with people in the real world; and he actually believed me. That was bad, right? I should not have said that.

Intriguingly in this section of her story, Darla takes the position of reinforcing stereotypes of West Indian culture and history instead of offering any new or clarifying information. She purposely avoided sharing any factual information about herself and where she was from that
may have fostered a difference sense of understanding about her experiences with the place. Instead, she chooses to reinforce a caricatured and overtly stereotypical narrative of the Caribbean that was derived from the dominant culture. This act of reinforcement shows her resistance to assimilation and some information found in the new culture through an act or performance. From her perspective, it seems even more out of place of this young man to suggest that not only was she a foreigner, but an uncivilized person, a displaced native.

Darla’s statement on providing a “stupid answer,” by telling the young man that she had to take a “crash course on civilization for six months” reaffirms her previous dissonance when stepping off the plane. This place already made her feel small and insignificant, and in a different but no less significant since she did have to take a “crash course” on American culture, which terrified her. The gaze of persons presenting new stereotypical ideas about culture and race represented the larger structure of “normal” beliefs residing within the dominant culture that she knew nothing about. In turn, persons who knew nothing about her culture or about the Caribbean reinforced her initial feelings of stark cultural dissonance and otherness initiated during her initial arrival in the United States. However, her reaction signaled that even through her fears she made inferences about United States culture and people (in general as suggested below) that caused her to begin a reaffirmation process:

…it’s like the first thing they think is that, “You’re from the islands,” or some people might think, “Oh, you’re exotic,” and it’s like, we’re still regular people. Yes, my accent might sound a little thicker than yours; you may not understand some of the terminologies I used, but we’re still people. I just don’t get it. It doesn’t make sense. The ignorance is what bothered me. Some people would assume, well, “What part of Jamaica is Trinidad?” and I’m like, “Have you even looked at a map lately? You would see that it’s nowhere in Jamaica. It’s its own country. We have our own flag. We have our own president. We have our own prime minister. We have our own government.” It’s just like they group all of us together because they hear an accent and they just group us all together. No, we are our own people.

Here the struggle with being grouped together with others who may have an accent further reveals what her fears entail from the beginning of her narrative. Her assertion that she is “still a
“person” gives clues into what being a Black person from the Caribbean entails in Brooklyn. Here, proving personhood becomes a regular practice that does not have a direct counterpart from her former foundational activities as a citizen of Trinbago in Trinbago. Additionally proving personhood is a practice that has manifold purposes in Darla’s narrative. Darla establishes a facade for people like the man who asked about snowless Christmases, because she is incredulous of his beliefs. However, she does not feel the need to validate herself to him. She self reconciles that she is “still a person” behind the façade—an introverted act. She uses the facade as a tool of protection and reflection, a tool for performative resistance that allows her to

She reinforces to herself that she is a real authentic citizen of a country, with a sovereign government, independent location, and a flag. This cultural inventory-taking process that she performs signals the use of artifacts and mediating instruments that she can locate and use to maintain her sense of identity and culture. She lets the misconceptions of other people outside of her culture interact with the protective façade she has created. She uses this protective mask to dismiss herself from explaining concepts she perceives as resulting from a lack of consideration and education of other cultures. But the façade maintains that she is not responsible for doing the educating. That responsibility lies in the hands of those who “have not looked at a map lately.”

Darla goes on to discuss other aspects of proving personhood that happen with people who are familiar with her culture as perceived through their participation in Brooklyn Carnival:

Let me tell you, that Labor Day Parade is a bunch of baloney…and this is what annoys me. Everybody is West Indian. For me, and this is what I say, if you weren’t born in that country, you are not from that country. So if you were born in the United States of America, you cannot turn around and say, “I’m half Haitian.” No, you’re not half Haitian; you’re an American citizen. You may have parents that came from Haiti, or you may have a Haitian background…but you are an American. I just hate all these default West Indians claiming to be true West Indians when they’ve never even set foot in the country. That’s what I tell people. There are a lot of Trinidadians I call them “Default Trinidadians” because they never went home, they never grew up there; their parents grew there, and they just assume in the Parade, oh, they wear the flag, “Oh, I’m Trinidadian.” No, you’re not. No, you’re not. Your birth certificate doesn’t say, “Born in Trinidad and Tobago.” It says, “United States of America.” So stop being a default Trinidadian; acknowledge that you’re an American citizen, and that’s it. Move on.
In this part of the story proving personhood takes a turn toward delineating citizenship, dissecting heritage, and determining which group has permissions to claim native Trinbagonian status. In contrast to the young man who she met with the protective facade, Darla does not use this method with this group of perceived perpetrators. In this situation she is dealing with people who have some Trinbagonian heritage. However, she does not believe that they are allowed to claim native Trinbagonian status because they were not born in Trinbago. They have never visited the islands (despite having paternal and maternal heritage). Darla portrays this group of “Default Trinidadians” as perpetrators of misinformation that pose a threat to her status of personhood in Brooklyn.

The decision to prove personhood is extroverted and is made in part by using the tool of the birth certificate. Her knowledge and possession of this document is another locatable instrument Darla can use to prove her personhood and authenticity as a Trinbagonian citizen—born and bred—among groups of people who she perceives as cultural perpetrators. She is insistent that others should change their perspectives on their own heritages, and she uses stance against “Default Trinidadians” as a tool to present her personhood as a Trinbagonian citizen. She has lived in the country. She has experienced the place of Trinbago, and she sets herself apart from others with Trinbagonian heritage who have not “set foot in the country” and “never went home.” In short, her characteristics of a Trinbagonian are centered in having some interaction and experience with the place of Trinbago. Acknowledgement of being American by these “Default Trinidadians” is significant to Darla’s story because she has created a tool that does the work of solidifying her personhood and consequently her status as a citizen of Trinbago.

Despite the differences in the characteristics of the groups of people who either perpetrate as West Indians or use stereotypes to form their knowledge about people from the West Indies, Darla’s overall concern is centered on generalizing and stereotyping:
They always lump us together because they don’t have the information, they don’t have the knowledge [and] they think we’re so backward: we wear grass skirts. We don’t drive cars... We don’t have running water; we don’t have a house. We build huts. Huts? We don’t build huts. No. There’re houses! Some people really think that way. Really, they do. They think when we’re hungry; we just go right into the water and stick our hand and just grab a fish and start eating. Like, no, no…it doesn’t work that way. But there are some people that think that way, that because it’s West Indians, West Indian is the islands; that’s their concept of “the islands,” of people who live in “the islands”…it’s all primitive. We probably don’t speak English. We probably knock on stones and make this weird [makes clucking noise] noises…I’m telling you, the same person that I told that story to about the civilization, he thought that. And it’s sad that people still think that way. And I did tell him I used to talk [makes clucking noises] before I came here but because I became civilized in the six months, that’s why I speak this way, and he believed it.

The story being manifested here was a product of the practice and reinforcement of proving and maintaining personhood in a society she believes is adverse to her being an authentic person from an authentic place—but not authentic in the sense of the romanticized idea of exotic.

This concept of authenticity pertains strictly to her positioning of self, as Caribbean, an authentic Trinbagonian citizen, and a person in the place of Brooklyn. This act of reinforcement keeps the young man in the story, (and the Default Trinidadians) on the fringes of Darla’s community of practice of reconciling her skin color and culture. Consequently, those on the fringe less likely to further interrupt the place readjustment process that is ongoing for Darla in her quest to prove personhood, delineate authenticity, and reconstruct identity in a new place.

**Rude Awakenings**

Participants also described how the perceptions of others based on color and culture affected their knowledge of being friendly in this new place. Trinbagonians discussed the importance of maintaining a warm and welcoming character in some situations, and when to be guarded in another situation. Participants believe knowing when to be friendly and knowing when to be guarded is a different experience in Trinbago than in Brooklyn. Participant narratives
characterize examples of the fun-loving, easygoing, laid-back nature of life, which many Trinbagonians believe to be part of their culture. Additionally, some participants discussed the disruption of this characteristic once in Brooklyn due to crime, theft, or victimization of some kind, of an immigrant with limited street smarts or cultural capital in a place like Brooklyn.

Elaine stated:

So my first job was working as a cashier. I encountered a lot of rude awakenings. For example, the drug addicts on the street. They would be robbing the store. They would shoplift and come into the deli where I worked and realize that I am not traditional, average Black American; I am from the Caribbean, so they tricked me many times. And because in Trinidad people are so very honest and fun-loving and easy-going folks, I had that attitude within me. And these guys were just a bunch of crooks. So many times they would take like the dollar bills, cut off the ends, put a ten dollar end on a dollar bill and will buy something for like … let’s say a cup of coffee back then was like thirty-five cents, and I would give them change, which would be like nine dollars and sixty-five cents.

In retrospect, Elaine perceives that the point where she could be taken advantage of is the point at which the perpetrators realized she was not a “traditional average Black American.” Her reconciliation of the belief that she was being targeted because she was not a Black American assists her in subconsciously constructing knowledge about what it means to be Black American; in this instance, it is the opposite of fun-loving and easy-going. She went on to describe the incident:

Meantime, in my register drawer, I’m short because I gave out change for ten bucks, and I literally have a dollar. They just tricked me with the ends on that. So that’s things I had to get accustomed to and learn that there was not a whole lot of honesty within the culture in the city. Very interesting. So I grew, I learned on that. And I remember being robbed as a cashier. I was robbed and that people I saw on the streets every day, when I had to go down to Columbus Circle, 59th in the City on the west side, I was looking through the mug shots I would see all these familiar faces. I can see them out of the deli where I work every day. So that was another cultural awareness for me because back in Trinidad, those things back then wouldn’t exist. They have some crime now. It’s getting a little bit bad over there but back in the 1970s it was just a peaceful and a fun-loving place to be. So those are the things that I had to adjust to moving from the Caribbean into a big megacity like New York.

The perpetrators solidified her belief that the peace and harmony she had in Trinidad was not to be found in the same manner in Brooklyn. Perhaps she had left this back in Trinbago?
Although she goes on to say that there is just a bit of violence in Trinidad now, she asserts that back then, this issue would be non-existent. This act of remembering of the place of Trinbago as peaceful, fun-loving, and crime-free—whether it is true or not—is used to separate the subject’s set of rules concerning how she understands and interprets the culture from this tension of rule in the activity of being a fun-loving, easy going Trinbagonian in either Brooklyn or Trinidad. The “dishonesty within the culture” remark shows the distancing mechanism that Elaine employs in her knowledge-constructing process of dealing with and categorizing the perpetrators who came into the deli while she was working. She uses this mechanism in case of future run-ins with the same or similar characters, and this mechanism informs her self-regulation of when to be fun loving and when not to be fun loving.

From a repeated incident, she extrapolated that, at that time, the dishonest part of the American culture far outweighed the honest part of American culture. Cultural awareness as portrayed here is a negative experience and not a positive one. To be culturally aware here, is to make sure to keep your guard up against crooks and thieves while you are at work, as a new migrant from Trinidad and Tobago to the United States. When to be easygoing changes drastically here for Elaine because of the dissonance she experiences, which is an idea that she states did not exist in her home country of Trinbago.

Proving personhood and delineating authenticity is at the heart of being Caribbean, Black, and Cultural in this study. One outcome of Reconciling Skin color and Culture in this activity is the creation of cultural enclaves within communities of practice in place-making activities that act as a deterrent to the ignorant, the potential racist, and the potential perpetrators. Within cultural enclaves, conversations like the three represented above can take place. In these safe spaces, Trinbagonian migrants can begin to resolve, reconcile, or simply ignore, for the time being, the tensions of place and the people therein. They were encountering new ideas and
concepts about life at a swift pace in their new place of dwelling in Brooklyn that were almost completely absent pre-migration.

Framing Activity: Integrating U.S. and Trinbagonian Culture and Stereotypes

From the narratives displayed here along with participant interviews and observation, the activity of reconciling skin color and culture emerged. The motive-object in this activity is proving personhood and authenticity. Some of the rules that govern this activity are: understanding the meaning of stereotypes, racism, or discrimination in the United States, knowing when stereotypes are in use while interacting with others, deciding how to maintain a sense of self, and setting parameters that structure citizenship, and authentic Trinbagonian-ness. Some of the mediating instruments that govern this activity are skin color, accent, cultural foods, the country flag of Trinidad and Tobago, citizenship, and birth certificates, among others. Groups that make up the community of practice are other residents with similar skin color as Trinbagonians; members of the dominant culture; all other cultural groups in the area; “Default Trinidadians,” and other people who have West Indian ancestry who were not born in the West Indies. The cultural contexts that ground this activity are the traditions, concepts and understandings of race, class, socioeconomic issues, and personhood that are grounded in Trinidad and Tobago, and the new traditions and understandings of these ideas that migrants encounter in the United States. Place anchors the histories and amount of time that migrants spent in Trinidad and what they experienced there. That first place consciousness affects the time that spend in the United States with the new experiences and the differences in culture they are navigating. Activity outcomes including taking cultural inventory, reestablishing authenticity (especially privately and to oneself), integrating into the dominant culture, retreating further into
Trinbagonian culture in Brooklyn, developing performative resistance, and distrust of the dominant culture. Here the dominant culture refers to Americans and White people as described by participants. At times, participants use these terms interchangeably.

**Figure 6-1. Activity: Reconciling Skin Color and Culture**

**Being Trinbagonian in Brooklyn**

After confronting color and culture, the next activity that was foundationally important for participants was deciding how much of Trinbago could be with them in Brooklyn. Being Trinbagonian had different features as participants explained why they either stuck closely to their culture, (or in a few cases stayed as far away from the culture as possible, as Andreis did). General States:
Well at the inception when I arrived in 1964 there was a vast change because you seldom heard a Caribbean accent, you see, because when you went on the train...I lived on Flatbush Avenue, so I was using the BMT. The train was...a great percentage was European people. And when you saw a Black person on the train, when I did, and two people talking, and I heard them with an accent, I will move close to them. “Where you’re from?” They say, “I’m from Grenada.” I so happy to meet to a Grenadian. That is one reason why I didn’t make the United States military a career, because when I was in the army there was no culture, none of my culture was in the army. I was the only Caribbean guy in my company, so nobody spoke my language. And that was the difference, you see. That is why I would run away from the army. I was stationed in Fort Dicks, New Jersey, and come to Brooklyn just to hear people talk.

For General, a lack of familiar cultural connection similar to the one he had fostered in Trinbago with friends and family in that place caused him to reach out to Caribbean people he might never have known personally if a familiar cultural connection had been in place. This section of General’s story is a clear example of how Caribbean people in Brooklyn reached outside of imagined and physical boundaries of their own islands to foster a sense of familiarity. Listening for accents and becoming aware of how—in creating these new measuring sticks for familiarity within the Caribbean culture in Brooklyn—the similarities between islands outweighed the differences between some (not all) people from the Caribbean. This weight was enough to recreate some sense of understanding and reinforce the need for the recurring conceptions of delineating authenticity and validating personhood. General goes on to discuss what he means by finding people who “speak his language” even though they may not be Trinbagonians:

[Speaking my language] means your accent. The Americans speak that way and Caribbean people speak a particular way. We have a different accent. So when you hear your accent it brings you home, you see. It bonds something with your nature to say, “Well, I’m in America, but I could still hear meh people talk and I could still get a roti, or I could still go out and buy a doubles or peleau,” because that is the closest you could get to your country.

In this part of his narrative, General demonstrates how an accent can join people from the Caribbean together. The way a person speaks can signal to others that there is some semblance of culture that is rooted in perspectives of the meaning of Caribbean from other islands. General
describes using “the closest you could get to your country” as a way of recreating a familiar culture in a far away land. Notably, as General discusses how other islands make him feel at home, his examples of what is reminded of when he can “hear meh people talk” are all still Trinidadian—still being able to have access to cultural foods like a roti, doubles, or peleau. From this part of his narrative, being Trinbagonian encompassed finding familiarity in people from other cultures while in Brooklyn. General continues to explain what Brooklyn Carnival contributes to sustain the Trinbagonian culture:

And with the advent of Labor Day in Brooklyn, well you were home, you see because not only the Mas and Carnival that you have become accustomed to, but also you’re seeing people that you may not have seen for 10 and 15 and 20 years because everybody came out on Eastern Parkway to celebrate their culture. Because you must remember, without culture there is no country. So here am I in America, and I don’t have my culture so technically, I’m not existing. I must have my culture; I must hear my pan; I want to hear my calypso; I want to hear my people talk, and that is what culture is all about.

With so many people from the West Indies in Brooklyn, being Caribbean and being a part of the culture was just as important as maintaining the distinction of being Trinbagonian.

Learning From Americans

Discerning who to spend time with and take advice from in the Trinbagonian and wider Caribbean was also important to Chadwick, as he became an adult after entering the U.S. in his late teens. He reserved his information gathering time and resources for Trinbagonian and Caribbean people only. He has no close American friends and does not desire any. From his teen years, he learned “Americans could do nothing for him.” Chadwick stated:

Yeah, I was hanging around Americans because my cousin was practically around the same age with me and all his friends was American friends; he didn’t have no Trinidad friend because he actually grow up here. He came up here as a child, and he grew up here with a bunch of Americans…. It was a big difference [between him and his cousin] because he accustom hanging around Americans, and his friends became my friends.
Now it is because it have a lot of…I would hang around a lot of West Indians now that I get older. I wouldn’t catch myself really hanging around a bunch of Americans because there is nothing to learn from them. Whereas the West Indians, the older folks, I could still learn something, a thing or two from them, work-wise, experience-wise, things that they go through, things that I go through it might be similar. I would know how to deal with it; I would learn to deal with it accordingly.

[But Americans] They couldn’t teach me anything. [Now that I’ve found a Caribbean culture] it’s different. Oh yeah. Learn to deal with a lot of different things different. Americans don’t care. They would bounce up a certain situation and just act on it, not thinking before they do certain things. I didn’t want to end up in that. Situations, instead of them trying to talk out certain situations, a certain situation, they would act on it. They would want to fight; they would want to beat up the baby mother, stuff like that. That is not something I would do.

Chadwick is adamant about Americans not being able to impart anything useful to him from his interactions with them. His insistence stems directly from the difficult experiences of living in Crown Heights as a teenager, which included getting shot, going to jail, and having to steal a week’s worth of pay from a boss who decided not to pay him for his time at a small store where he worked as a young adult. He goes on to discuss more reasons behind why he could have taken the wrong path but chose not to:

I have a friend of mine name Grant [who is from Grenada in the West Indies] I always look at him to…he’s a little older than me, a couple years older than me but he’s a responsible person. I always like to hang out with older folks so that, as I say; I could learn something from them. Younger folks can’t teach me responsibility; they can’t teach me how to take care of my children because they probably don’t even know. They ain’t reach the standard that I reach yet, so this is why I always look up to older folks to teach me something. I could always learn something from them, you understand? I could go on a job…They working; they working all the time. I had friends that didn’t like to work. I had friends that didn’t like to work, they always used to want to be on the streets hanging out, selling weed, all these different things. I don’t want to do that for the rest of my life. This is not something I want to do. I want to know that I could go out, get a job, keep a job, hold a job until because I have responsibilities, and I want to keep up to my responsibilities, you understand…. If I wasn’t taking on that or hanging around Americans or hanging around younger folks, I wouldn’t be doing the things that I do today.
The path that Chadwick does choose, he attributes to his Trinbagonian roots, and how he a raised.

In his narrative the complicating action is to choose another route that leads him away from what he perceives will lead him down the road to irresponsibility:

But I choose the other route; I want to be responsible. I don’t want to be somebody that not responsible. [The] “broughtupsy” I had home, right, because I grow up with my grandmother and my mother. The “broughtupsy” I had home and the friends that I have here, it kind of like bond, so it make me a better person. It teach me how to deal with my kids and make them better kids and not like the American kids growing up, not caring about anything at all. Although they Americans, they wouldn’t grow up with that mentality of not caring, you understand. I mean it did a good. It really did a good. As I said before, I couldn’t learn anything from them [Americans]. [I wanted to learn] anything that [was] responsible. You’d want to meet up on somebody that could teach you. I don’t have to read this book to build this. Or I don’t have to deal with this situation this way; I could deal with it the other way. There’s a lot to learn from West Indians. So I learn to deal with all my issues just taking advice from West Indian people, Trinidadians.

Chadwick resolves his level of involvement with Americans by choosing not to deal with many people who are American. A prominent rule that Chadwick highlights is making sure to interact with people who will also serve as useful to him imparting valuable information for the route that he has chosen to take in life in the US. However, Chadwick does inadvertently “learn from Americans” even in his choice not to interact with many Americans. He reinforces the level of “broughtupsy” or child rearing that he learns from his cultural and home life in Trinbago. He believes that choosing to “meet up on somebody that could teach you” how to live in the culture that Chadwick now lives in means staying away from Americans. He comes to the resolution that he is not interested in leading the type of life he perceives as the ‘American’ life.

**Framing Activity: A Trinbagonian Goes to Brooklyn**

From the narratives portrayed here along with analysis of other data the activity of being Trinbagonian in Brooklyn emerged. The subject is the group of Trinbagonian migrants in
Brooklyn, who are pursuing the motive-object of cultivating cultural connections—old and new. Some of the rules that govern this activity are balancing Trinbagonian culture with a new culture, recognizing accents, being Caribbean, living as a resident in the United States, but born in Trinidad and Tobago. The people and groups included in this community of practice are people from Trinidad and Tobago, people from the Caribbean and the West Indies, African Americans and other people and groups that identify with the African Diaspora in Brooklyn. The divisions of labor in this activity are at the international, country, city, state, borough, and neighborhood levels. These divisions include Caribbean food and service providers, city officials, culture advocates, and some members of the dominant culture, among others. The cultural contexts for this activity are traditions and understandings of both Trinidad and Tobago and the US. The historical contexts for this activity are time spent in both Brooklyn and Trinidad, experience during the migration period, which is an ongoing experience.

Figure 6-2. Activity: Being Trinbagonian in Brooklyn.
Traveling Between Trinidad and Brooklyn

For most participants, traveling is a regular occurrence in their yearly activities. Carlene states the normalcy of her travel between the United States and Trinbago:

I have [traveled back to Trinidad and Tobago]. I do all the time. Literally, at least three times a year and come back.

Even when travel back and forth between Trinidad is not frequent, too expensive, or legally possible participants still described their efforts in gaining residency, citizenship, or procuring other means in order to travel back and forth between countries. Roland describes how he was able to travel back and forth between the U.S. and Trinidad while living in the “underworld” for seven years:

…there are so many people in the underworld that…I remember you had to rationalize that. I mean could have gone home because I had a Canadian status…I had my Trinadad and Tobago passport…[but] I never became a Canadian citizen…I was a resident. And…I would go from here. I used to tell them [U.S. customs] ‘Listen, I could stay in Toronto and pay $900 for a ticket or I could come to New York and pay $600,” and they [would say], “All right.” So I would go home and could enter the country [the United States] and tell them I’m on route to Canada and just coming up through New York. So I was still going home. I was still going home.

General is an avid traveler between Trinbago and Brooklyn, back to his hometown of Belmonte. General described why he could travel back and forth and why this is important to him as a Trinbagonian. General also perceives some aspects of the cultural heritage to be slipping away from Trinbagonians in Trinbago—he describes Trinbagonians as mimic men following in the footsteps of the United States in style of dress, pop culture, foods, and other avenues. General discussed his travels between countries:

Oh, I opened a health food store in Trinidad about 34 years ago, and I would go back and forth. I went to certain areas and employed certain young women that people thought that could not grow because of the culture in which they lived, and I trained them to be herbalists. About five or six of them have their own stores in Trinidad now. They are the best herbalists in the Caribbean. I never kept secrets from them. The first book I will take to them is the Back to Eden, and I teach them about herbology. And I would come to a lot of conferences up here, and I’d bring all the information back to them because they couldn’t travel, and they studied. They were very astute, and they studied and they became professionals.
Because you see, I don’t hide anything, you know. Knowledge and information is not to be hidden from your people because you can’t keep it for yourself. What is the purpose? If God has given this opportunity to know something, it is to share it with those that may be interested in it.

In this passage, General sees travel between these two places as an opportunity to share knowledge. As for the mimicking nature of Trinbagonian culture General stated:

If you have any little smartness, you will embrace America and take advantage of it because in the Caribbean they’re changing terribly. They’re emulating the wrong things, what the Western World is doing now. They’re emulating the wrong principles. You know they call Trinidadians “Mimic Men.” If they invent a dress, a mini skirt that is here, Trinidadians will wear it up here. You understand? They are “mimic men.” They will do everything they see you do, and they will do it better too. Many times they will do it better than you because they have that sort of creative mind to take it beyond the horizon. They do it all the time.

These changes in culture that seem so Americanized are due in part to the fact that the largest population of Trinbagonians living outside of the country reside in the United States, and the majority of that number live in Brooklyn (numbering more than 400,000 people in the NYC metro area). Many also travel back and forth between the United States, which facilitates further knowledge and information transfer.

**Movement of Knowledge**

With the introduction of frequent travel between Trinbago and Brooklyn, there is a plethora of information that is also being passed back and forth between countries. This information is traveling between countries along with human travelers, at sometimes much faster rates that persons on a Boeing 767 to Trinidad and Tobago from Brooklyn or vice versa. One well-known expression of this information travel between Brooklyn and the Caribbean was Trinidad and Tobago’s live broadcast of Carnival Week Events. These events included International Soca Monarch Competitions, and the Carnival King and Queen Competition. The
longest running Trinbagonian traditional event during Carnival season, the Trinidad and Tobago International Panorama Competition is held this weekend as well. New York, Miami, London, Toronto and other cities were watching the competitions either at the same time as those were watching them in Trinidad, which usually aired after the competition was over, or soon after on the day following each event. I observed the house full of people where I resided for my second trip to Trinidad during Carnival and their reverent observation of each of the competitions when broadcasted on television in Trinidad. In this house were three siblings there on vacation for Carnival, and the other three were in the United States. However, the brothers and sisters who were stateside were able to stay connected to some events in Trinbagonian culture by watching these events on television where they aired. They also talked to their brothers and sisters in Trinidad in real time as they watched the events on TV as well. They discussed their favorites, who they thought would win each competition, and how terrible any steel band sounded in comparison to another. This virtual travel allowed the brothers and sisters stateside and in Trinbago experience the event at the same time, through television viewing and telephone communication. Although the stateside siblings were not physically in the Savannah or the National Stadium for various events, they were able to experience a sense of togetherness and familiarity. That experience kept their sense of Trinbagonian culture, music, and revelry strong by having the opportunity to enjoy these events “together” with those who were in Trinidad for the events.

Andreis also described being well traveled and encouraging his friends, who were African American, to get their passports so they could travel and see the Caribbean and see Trinidad. He also talked about how being able about to travel between Trinidad and the United States for Trinbagonians has made a difference in how he perceives being treated as a gay man. Andreis stated:
But it’s something that I think more and more now, Caribbean families because of travel and because of people living here, they have an ability to interact and to see that everybody is okay in spite of their sexual preference. I mean your sexual preference is only at that time when you are interacting with someone of your own sex. Because if I see a man walk in here or a woman, I can’t just blankly say, “He’s heterosexual,” or, “He is homosexual,” unless I see him in a homosexual activity, or I see him in a heterosexual activity.

Here Andreis credits the presence of Trinbagonians in both countries and the ease with which people travel between countries for facilitating change in perceptions of gay men, who are Black (Black Caribbean, or Black American). He states that a sexual preference is not as easily observable as it may have been perceived to be previously. One person cannot tell if another is homosexual just by gazing at them. Andreis’s statement suggests that because folks are able to travel and experience the GLBTQ culture in Brooklyn and the larger New York City area, and see that they are “okay” that these perceptions are slowly changing.

**Framing Activity: Travel**

From these narratives (among many others) the activity happening within the Trinbagonian culture emerged. In this activity the subjects, Trinbagonian migrants are working toward the motive-object of maintaining the place and cultural connections between Trinidad and Tobago. They were working toward seeing friends and family and visiting the places that they lived and grew up in over many years. In this activity the cultural aspects of living in the United States, being Trinbagonian, and the globalized advancements in technology and travel set the context. In this context participants cultivate their plans and desires to travel to Trinidad for holidays, special occasions, or simply to spend time with family they had not seen in many years.

As Roland notes, the motive-object is not always realized for Trinbagonians. Some members of the Trinbagonian culture in Brooklyn live in the “underworld,” which is indicated by having no legal status in the US. The communities of practice, rules, and divisions of labor are
not realized for all members of the Trinbagonian culture in Brooklyn, but this is an ongoing activity, as many members remain hopeful that they will be able to travel back home one day. Additionally, many migrants do not go back home because of the immigration-related penalties that will be incurred—most would be barred re-entrance to the United States for between five and ten years. Additionally, the size of the Trinbagonian culture in Brooklyn provides opportunities for those who are not able to travel back to Trinidad work and support themselves while in the United States. Many Trinbagonians choose to stay even though this was not the motive-object of the activity.

Figure 6-3. Activity: Traveling between Brooklyn and Trinidad
Elaine and General, who are about 20 years apart in age, both voiced their highest concerns for the types of food that are eaten by Trinbagonian and other Caribbean people in Brooklyn. Each participant gave varying perspectives on the types of foods that they encountered upon entering the United States to live. Going forward, as they attempted to recreate cultural dishes here in the United States, the availability of foods in Brooklyn is far different than in Trinbago; this affects the healthy cooking that most participants believe to have had in Trinbago and struggle to maintain in Brooklyn. Learning how to preserve their Trinbagonian food culture, which they describe as fresh, everyday-cooked food, using healthy vegetables and fruits similar to those found in the backyards of their prior homes in Trinbago, is a fascinating task.

**I Don’t Eat Stale Food**

General, who has a Ph.D. in Food Science, is astutely aware of the changes that he describes as detriments to a culture of people who do not have the availability of foods needed to keep up a healthy lifestyle. General tells his story concerning his relationship with food in Trinidad and the United States, which is both informative and comedic:

Well, the cultural shock came from the pattern of food because we ate fresh food every day. My mother didn’t eat food that put in the fridge for tomorrow. When I got married to my wife, the first day she cook it was a lovely meal. I say, “Oh, you cook very good,” because boys always say, “You cook like my mother. Your hand sweet like my mother.” So, my wife, she cooked a lovely meal. I say, “Oh, this is nice.” I say, “What you cooking tomorrow?” She say, “Tomorrow?” She say, “You’re eating this for the whole week.” So I say, “I don’t eat stale food. I eat fresh food.” She say, “Well we’ll see.” Well is old food I eating with no nutritional value in it.

It comes like putting your food in the microwave. When you put that piece of meat or whatever it is in the microwave, it burns out all the properties, and you’re eating emptiness. Not that alone, it is emitting radiation everyday, as long as it’s plugged in. So if you have little children around, don’t let them go by no microwave. Take that microwave and throw it in the garbage. It’s the worst invention they ever make. They
brought it from Germany after the Second World War. Yeah, no good. Microwave is no good. ...I did my [Ph.D.] thesis on genetically modified foods...so that is one of the culture shocks with the old food. You have to eat food in the fridge...Well, I ain’t have no blasted choice! When you’re hungry you’ll eat a snake, you understand? And then we couldn’t get local foods, so we use to send home for certain things, Enos [a laxative] and send a dinner mint.

**Callaloo and Cultural Maintenance**

Elaine tells her story of how she used foods from her home country to get to know other football moms at her sons’ school and how this food was first perceived at the parents’ meetings:

[For parent meetings]…what I know from my culture, I would bring that type of food, and they would bring theirs too, which was generally fried chicken and mashed potatoes, and then they would taste my food. And they would be like, “Geez wow. That’s different. What’s that?? And then you kind of tell people, “Well, its pumpkin, it got sauces, with fresh garlic and oil and you put some different seasonings in there,” and then learn my types of cooking.

Elaine goes on to discuss how she kept her Trinbagonian culture alive in the U.S. through food and cooking:

I liked the food part, the culture, my original culture, where food is concerned. I stuck with that. I remember with some groups, especially with those Black Americans and let’s say the White Americans; there will be a lot of criticism. “Oh, what’s that?” For example, my favorite food, which is made with spinach and okras, we call it Callaloo. And it’s a pretty good dish. And people see it and instead of maybe tasting, to see what it is, they would criticize it first. And be very critical. But I learned that my cultural upbringing where food is concerned, where my standard bias is concerned, I believe within myself, it is much better than what I encountered in the United States. Now, back in Trinidad, the biggest concern was what went into the bodies in order to make it function... help it to function every day.

Here Elaine discussed the different reasoning behind why foods were eaten in Trinidad and the United States. Elaine explained the Trinbagonian culture as more concerned with the food that was good for the body, versus food that may not have looked appetizing to the eye. Elaine gives example of foods that she deems healthier than what she found when moving to Brooklyn:

So, you had more wholesome foods. Like whole grain foods. Foods that was not older that a day...My mom got up every day, and she prepared food every day. There was nothing purchased and stacked in a cabinet for the next three weeks or two weeks. And we fed on that. We fed on, let’s call it alkaline food. We had fresh fruits and vegetables
every day. We did have meat. I was a meat-eater back then, now I’m not. But we had freshly cooked food every day.
When I came to the United States, I had to adjust to having, and this is one of my fun ones, my breakfast was cereal out of a box and cold milk. What is this? ‘Cause I am used to having fresh biscuits made every morning. We call it bake… My mother made that every day, when it’s done; it’s done; tomorrow is another day. Here it’s bought in a box and stored in a freezer.

Here Elaine presents her reasoning behind why “cereal out of a box and cold milk” did not qualify as breakfast. This conceptualization of “food did not exist in Elaine’s home” especially not for breakfast, where all food was hand made from scratch fresh each day. Next Elaine described her turn in knowledge construction that repositioned her food choices:

And people would get up to go to work, and you find that like the doughnut shop gets big business as 6:30 in the morning, 7:00 o’clock in the morning, it was busy. And they were eating doughnuts and coffee, which is a very, very, very difficult food on our system. So I did the doughnut thing, I wouldn’t lie, I did it. And I started learning as years go by that refined flour; refined sugar was our biggest enemy. So in the last sixteen or so, or twenty years, I made a radical change and continued with my upbringing of eating.

After a food affair, which Elaine describes as doing “the donut thing for a while, she re-centers her food knowledge based on what she learned in Trinbago. She began to eat healthier foods, even though they may not have all been based in Trinidad. But, her upbringing brought her back from what she perceived as a diet that was too hard on the body. Elaine went on to discuss the availability of foods from her culture in the United States to keep up her cultural food traditions:

Some of them I was able to find and the reason why because some entrepreneurs started realizing that they could import food from the Caribbean and have it readily available for people of the nature. So finding the food that I am familiar with was not a problem. The only thing that was the problem was the prices that were attached to them. That to me was a problem. They cost a whole lot more. So, I sort of shifted to the American lifestyle and after some years when I figured out how toxic it was, everything was processed and this that, I could only make the shift back to my cultural upbringing.
Dasheen Bush and Egyptian Potatoes

Food substitutions were a part of Elaine’s cooking experience, as she worked to keep her cultural food dishes cooking in her kitchen; she sometimes had to substitute different foods to make a traditional dish. For example, Elaine confirmed to me that spinach was used sometimes instead of dasheen leaves to make a dish called Callaloo, which consists usually of dasheen bush, and okra that is stewed and blended into a green sauce to go over rice or macaroni pie. She describes living in Queens and learning how to find dasheen bush:

And the leaves from the dasheen plant. Also, I learned that when I lived in Queens for a few years, I learned that in their culture, the Egyptians, they actually knew the same thing. [Dasheen bush] was the same thing, except that they called it Egyptian potatoes. They cooked it the same way and the cut the roots the same way.

[Also,] there is a main dish in Trinidad, it’s called pelau. That pretty much remained the same because the peas that is in that specific rice dish, although in Trinidad we use them fresh from the tree; you just go and pick on the day that you want to use them. And get them off the shells and get them ready to cook. In Brooklyn, New York, it’s in a can. Pigeon peas that came in the can readily available, but it is processed through being canned.

So, those were some of the substitutes. Another one that I substituted a lot was… There was a drink that is made from a plant called the sorrel. And it would bear these flowers that were nice and red, and you would pick those flowers and you would make a drink. Well, in Brooklyn that wasn’t readily available. So, the substitute was the cranberry. You would buy the cranberry. And you boil them the very same way. You washed them nice and clean, and you boil them in the water. Let it cool. You put some cinnamon or whatever in there. You cool that, and you sweeten that and you drink that in the same way. It has the very same nutrients in there. Now, crisscrossing into the Middle East, over there and there is hibiscus flowers. That they used to make drinks, hot or cold. And it is the very same sorrel like in Trinidad, very same sorrel.

For Elaine, keeping her traditional food culture intact in the United States meant learning about the substitutions that were available to her from the new culture she encountered in Brooklyn. Elaine also learned from people of other cultures who resided in proximity to her who may use the same foods, but with different names. In this way, Elaine gained knowledge on how to continue eating foods that she thought were nutritious and kept with the food traditions that she learned from her life in Trinidad and Tobago.
**Framing Activity: Cooking in the United States**

From the narratives displayed here and other data analyzed, the activity of cooking Trinbagonian cultural foods emerged. The subjects of this activity are Trinbagonian migrants in the United States, who eat and are pursuing the motive-object of navigating food choices in the United States in order to maintain any cultural food practices post-migration. Some of the rules that govern this activity are: availability of foods, food perceptions by Trinbagonians and non-Trinbagonians in the United States, food preferences of subjects, and viable food substitutes. Some of the groups and people that are included in the community of practice are: cooks of Trinbagonian fare, partakers of Trinbagonian cuisine, and Trinbagonian food experts in the culture. Some examples of the division of labor in this activity are: providers of rare Caribbean foods and ingredients, grocery store owners (Trinbagonian, Caribbean, or American-based), and Trinbagonian restaurants, among others. Some of the cultural contexts that ground this activity are food eating traditions in the United States and Trinidad and Tobago, and food growing traditions in Trinidad and Tobago and the United States. Some of the historical contexts important to this activity are experiences cooking and eating Trinbagonian and American foods and the amount of time spent or lived in the United States and Trinidad and Tobago.
Hosting Trinbagonian Fetes

Hosting fetes in Trinbagonian culture, as described by all participants of the study, is an important activity in Brooklyn. All participants mentioned some party or gathering that was comparable to a fete, whether they participated fully in these gatherings. A fete is more than a lime (as described in the next section), in that it is usually organized, has an entry fee, and usually has live music, a DJ, and a full array of food and drinks for the entire evening. General described why these fetes are important to the Trinbagonian culture:

Trinidadians like to party. So when I came to America we never had parties, Trinidadians never had parties in Brooklyn. There was nowhere to have a party a Brooklyn, so we went to Manhattan. All our fetes we held in Manhattan. I remember that when we were going to have a party in Manhattan three or four times a year. You will take your pot of food, and you take a tablecloth, and we take the train and you dress up in your long dress
and your suit and so on, and we have a big pot of rice and peas on the train. When you got to the building that we rented, the big hall, you put your tablecloth on, you put your big pot of rice and peas there and your soup, and we party. Sir Joe and Daphne Weekes [threw some of the first Manhattan fetes]. Daphne was a woman; she had a band and we dancing and so on. At a particular time, say 1 o’clock in the morning, the fete stop. Everybody start to dish out and eat. You have your rum, and you have your cups and so on, and we drink and so on for about half an hour, an hour. After that exercise we eat, we fold up everything, put back your pot in the corner, and you start to fete again.

Moving Fetes

General begins to discuss the evolution of Trinbagonian fetes from Manhattan to Brooklyn in the next passage. Fetes were an important social event in the culture as evidenced by the style of dress and elaborate planning, cooking, and getting ready for a fete as General describes for fete goers. Full meals at fetes are a tradition that originated in Trinidad for this group and migrated with Trinbagonians to Brooklyn. The growth of Trinbagonian fetes and the introduction of “record sessions” were the next phase of fetes for Trinbagonians:

Now, in 1964 and ’65 we started to make the transition to Brooklyn where we will have basement parties, and it will cost you a quarter to go in. I had several of them. So a basement party, it was a record session because a man will bring a speaker with his records and he play the calypsos and thing, and you’re dancing and carrying on at twenty-five cents until it started to get a little bigger. When the volume of Caribbean people start to come into Brooklyn, we were able to rent certain halls that they would not have rented us before. So that is when we moved from the basement to the halls, and that was a beautiful time.

Here General described how power in numbers as these fetes became more popular throughout the Caribbean culture gave them the social and cultural capital to occupy more prestigious halls in Brooklyn that were not available to this culture before. But as they grew in number, paid their fete fee of twenty-five cents, Trinbagonian fetes became and have remained a standard feature of Trinbagonian and the general Caribbean culture in Brooklyn.
The Fete Network

As a standard feature of the Caribbean culture, fetes began to serve important purposes for the culture:

So, we network through fete. I always felt that Trinidadians especially may have come out of an entertainment tribe in Africa, dancing for the kings and the queens because all Trini want to do is to party. That is when you’re meeting your wife, is meeting your girlfriend. That is how you’re falling in love with your boyfriend because you would meet them in a fete. And most times when you met somebody in a fete, they were related to somebody you knew so then you know that the person had some standards. Because, remember, in Trinidad and Tobago we were socialist by nature. We shared, and we looked out for each other.

Here General described the culture elements that make fetes a pervasive part of the culture. Through fetes, younger Trinbagonians learned how to socialize. Older Trinbagonians could take a drink of rum and reminisce on the old days of Trinbago. Friendships, dating, love, and marriage were common relationships that emerged from attending fetes in the Trinbagonian culture. General describes the processes of Trinbagonians being “socialist by nature” and looking out for fellow Trinbagonians through fetes. I observed some of these same traits attending fetes during the nine months of my fieldwork in both Trinidad and Tobago in Brooklyn. Many fetes, although they were at a cost, operated on a “who you know” basis. In Brooklyn for Carnival, we went to several house-parties. There were people who were turned away from the party because they did not come with someone that anyone knew, or because they tried to come to the fete because they saw the crowd and heard the music from the street. The fetes and parties I attended in Brooklyn were all in the backyard (resulting in the name “Backyard Fete”) and were organized through prior ticket sales, wristbands, and guest lists. These parties were very tightly controlled. This good measure ensured that people had fun and that no violence occurred.

In Trinidad, Trinbagonian fetes were just as fun, with some of the same controls, even though they were much bigger. But Trinidad is a small island; therefore, many people who attended some of the largest fetes in the country would run into at least one or two people that
they knew at a party. For example, some of the famous fetes that take place for Carnival such as “Beach House,” lime, and “Shades” were difficult to get tickets to unless you knew someone who was going or had access to tickets. Ticket exclusivity is a significant aspect of the fete circuit in Trinidad that denoted the caliber and prestige of the fete. The more obscure and difficult the tickets were to obtain, the more a fete cost, and the more people wanted to go. However, tickets were limited and tightly controlled and usually were held for high-paying fete goers and those in the inner circle of the fete promoters, and then to their inner circles, and so forth, until there were no more tickets. Fetes in Brooklyn and Trinbago serve as a level of control within the culture for deciding who was “in” and who was “out,” delineating who came from good families and had good jobs. Additionally fete goers could rub elbows with elites and celebrities such as Usain Bolt—as our group did at the A.M. BUSH private J’ouvert fete at Macqueripe Bay in Chaguaramas, Trinidad and Tobago. Trinbagonian fetes are most popular (and most expensive) around Carnival time in Brooklyn and Trinidad and Tobago.

**Framing Activity: Trinbagonians Love to Party**

From the information in this section, the activity of Hosting Trinbagonian fetes emerged. The subject of this activity is Trinbagonian migrants to Brooklyn, who are pursuing the goal of experiencing and providing entertainment and networking opportunities among Trinbagonians in Brooklyn. Some of the rules that govern this activity are dressing to impress; not being allowed in Brooklyn halls, and having a safe, comfortable, and familiar experience, among other rules. Some groups and people that are a part of the community of practice in this activity are Trinbagonian fete goers, and other West Indian and Caribbean fete goers. Mediating instruments described by participants and explicated by General in this narrative are: Trinbagonian fete traditions, Brooklyn party traditions, food, basements, and money, among others. Some of the divisions of
labor explored are the roles of fete organizers (operating in both Brooklyn and Trinidad and Tobago), fete hosts, chefs and cooks for fetes, cook providers and the network of fetes in Brooklyn. Some of historical contexts for this activity are time in Brooklyn and time in Trinidad. Some of the cultural contexts that ground this activity are Trinbagonian fete tradition and understanding, and Trinbagonian food traditions and understandings, among others.

**Figure 6-5. Activity: Hosting Trinbagonian Fetes**

**Maintaining a Local Lime**

Liming in Trinbagonian society and neighborhoods is usually a lower key, but vibrantly productive gathering that is full of discussion and meaning making. It is not a fete, but could result in a future fete as organizers and promoters may get together at a lime and decide to plan a
fete. Usually a lime consists of a few drinks and always food, but usually more talking, planning, debating, storytelling, one-upmanship, and catching up on the happenings of Trinbagonians in Brooklyn and Trinbago. Liming is one of the best examples of how information transfers between the two countries. Roland stated:

All right. You say ‘hanging out’ [but]… a lime is a group of people and traditionally [in] a lime; we’ll have Liming Partners. So you would have this block; these fellas would lime. Now, a lime can go on to become a football club, a cricket club; a steel band would come out of a lime. Listen, you can play pan, I can play under you, … and Boys Belmont Steel Band, a band from Belmont, came out of a lime. You have a group of people liming and in the night; we disperse; you go to play in this band, he goes to play in this band, she goes to play in that band. And I say, “Well, listen nah, all of we from here, all of we playing pan, why we don’t have we own band for we people in this little village?”

Here Roland begins to discuss the function of liming within the Trinbagonian culture in Trinidad and Tobago. From Roland’s description, limes could turn into anything, and were usually held within the places where people lived and communed within close proximity. In the various places of Trinidad and Tobago a group of Liming Partners could continue liming together for decades because of the social bonds formed through various activities and events that emerge out of a lime.

**The Structure of a Lime: A familiar and productive place**

Roland begins to give a structure to liming and names liming as one of the foundational aspects of Trinbagonian culture:

So, the lime as informal as it is a very formal thing in a sense. It’s like the root of all that is in Trinidad. It is that root that is the trunk that becomes the tree of the lime. And it also serves many purposes. You passing by a lime of older men; you have to comport yourself in a certain way. ‘Cause believe me, they looking on. They know you, they recognize you, so you had to [behave in a certain way]… and they would behave in a certain way too, when you arrive. So no thief can’t come in the village and pass by no lime and go in nobody yard. “Aye, who is you? What you want in dey?” If you can’t come up with the right answer, you might be on the wrong end of some licks. I am very serious about that.
In this part of Roland’s narrative, he demonstrated the serious aspects of a lime and the benefit of those aspects on the culture. Protecting communities from crime and checking up on the behavior of young men in the neighborhood are also important aspects of liming that make them cornerstones of the Caribbean culture. Roland continued to discuss the key aspect of limes and the informal but structured nature:

They were the guardians. The lime is an informal [gathering] but formal structures have come out of it. However, that was when the society was safe. Now that we have these challenging times that the nation facing…there is still limes. For instance, when I go back home all of the [people] there used to be in our village, which is a small place, one lime here, two corners up there was another lime. It might [be a group of] 15, 20, six, eight, but there were just people that had something in common, they’re from the same district and they share a value system. And we hang out in the village, we safe; we live a stone’s throw [from another group of limers].

Roland begins to discuss here how limes change as the society changes. When society in Trinbago was safer, the presence of guardians seemed to be stronger. However, there are still liming groups in Roland’s hometown in Trinidad even though they may be configured differently. While issues of safety are a concern in present day limes, Roland still depicts a lime as a haven of safety within the culture.

Even when people move away and are not in near proximity to a lime they may return to the familiar space:

I remember people moved from Belmont and would not lime in their areas. They would come back to Belmont on a nightly basis because this is their people. I had a friend who used to do that every night. And where he was leaving he used to tell us, he say, some nights if he going home and he see a bicycle parked and it eh lock, he was living so far, he would thief the people bike and ride it and go. I mean when he told us, we laugh, because nobody did not have cars in those days.

From Roland’s description, Liming Partners formed special bonds that would draw them back to the place of a lime where familiar faces, close friends, and common group norms remained attractive and fundamental for a liming partner that had moved away. In the passage below, Roland contrasts his liming experiences in Trinbago with the experience he tries to foster.
in Brooklyn. Robert is the de facto leader of the Flatbush Avenue Lime, the group I spent an enormous amount of time with.

**Liming versus Hanging out**

Roland reaffirms what liming means and discussing liming in Brooklyn:

> So yes, we lime … that’s what we do … what you see me doing out there [on Flatbush Avenue], we liming. Out here, they would say you hanging out. But I’ve argued that with people. There are people who have tried to stigmatize the limers. Time wasting—look at them—bunch of no-goods just hanging out. I’ll say, “You don’t see the value in that? But you’ll go to a bar or a pub and hang out with your friends and drink beers, and you could understand that. And talk about the same thing that you talking about: sports, politics, sex, women, men, relationships, children, and family problems. ‘Aye, listen I have something to talk to you about…’ Because you must have somebody in the lime that you favor more than others, and you could share secrets with. “Hear this nah boy, ‘so so so’ is the case.” So you getting counseling, free counseling…Lime is integral. If you don’t have lime, you have what happening in Trinidad now.

Roland indicates a complicating action with the alleged departure of liming culture in Trinbago and the state of hanging out in Brooklyn. As Roland suggests, limes hold a community together, teach people how to look out for another, and help people discuss issues they have in the community with a close friend, in this case a liming partner. As the culture of liming changes, so changes the culture of criminal activity in the culture. This is one reason why Roland is insists on maintaining the terminology of “liming” versus “hanging out.” For Roland, and this group of participants in general, liming and hanging out are not equal, even though Roland attempts to make the connection here. However, for Roland and the Caribbean community, liming has positive value, while the American pastime in Brooklyn of hanging has negative value. Additionally, Roland distances his social practice from hanging out because the term is used derogatorily to describe what he and his liming partners do. For other men and women of color, hanging out may be acceptable. But the culture of liming among Trinbagonians is such that a distinction between liming and hanging out is maintained, because of the stigmas attached to the
American pastime, members of the dominant culture, law enforcement, and other members of the surrounding community who wish to be distinguished from those who are just “time wasting” and are a “bunch of no-goods just hanging out”.

Framing Activity: More Lime, Less Crime

From Roland’s descriptive definition of liming, the activity of maintaining a local lime emerges. In this activity the subject, Trinbagonian migrants in Brooklyn are working toward the goal of providing a safe and inviting place for planning events, debating the news, discussing culture, and learning about resources are available to them in the area. Some of the rules that govern this activity are, finding and developing relationship with a group of Liming Partners, groups of Liming Partners maintaining some distinctions that are evidenced by participating in the same hobbies, or having similar interests or political leanings. Some mediating instruments that allow a group of Liming Partners to flourish are places like, front porches, yards, or storefronts in Brooklyn that provide venues for Liming Partners to debate and politic, sometimes until late hours in the evening. The divisions of labor in Brooklyn for Liming Partners are still connected to liming groups that exist internationally, for Trinbagonians in Trinidad, Canada, London, and Miami, among other places. While in Brooklyn, groups of Liming Partners also fit the fabric of the neighborhood and with other groups of people that have similar practices. For Trinbagonian migrants, the divisions of labor for the activity of liming are older Trinbagonian Liming Partners who set the standards of what limes are in Brooklyn. Then, younger Liming Partners bring new ideas and thoughts to a group of limers or form new groups of limers. At the most intimate level each liming partners grows the closest to another partner over their time with the same group in the community.
Caribbean business ownership in Brooklyn is colorful endeavor with a variety of shops selling clothing, food, jewelry, herbs, and potions, among other items that dominate the business landscape of the four areas discussed in this study. Each of the participants in this story operate or own a full-time or part-time business endeavor. They each had a stake in a company or maintained a “side hustle” to earn extra money and to provide goods and services that they thought were needed in the culture (See Table 6-1).

However, the most lucrative and popular of most Caribbean businesses in Brooklyn is the restaurant. The presence of Caribbean restaurants in Brooklyn signals one of the most visible
tools and culture building aspects of the Trinbagonian and Caribbean culture. A good Caribbean restaurant is not hard to come by in Brooklyn. Given the presence of more than 400,000 people who are Caribbean born or have Caribbean heritage, the foods that can be found in Brooklyn that are representative of Caribbean—especially Trinbagonian—culture are innumerable. You can turn onto most corners in Central and East Central Brooklyn and find roti, doubles, oxtail, jerk chicken, “rice and peas,” “peas and rice,” bhaji, stew chicken, and barbeque pork, among a host of other types of cuisine originating in the West Indies.

Table 6-1

\textbf{Participants’ Business Endeavors}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Business</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Carlene</td>
<td>Caribbean Restaurant (2 locations)</td>
<td>Full time owner and operator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roland</td>
<td>Makes and sells glass furniture; Bakes and sells sweetbread</td>
<td>Part-time, Seasonal,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darla</td>
<td>Food Vendor (multiple locations)</td>
<td>Part-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kevyn</td>
<td>Independent Contractor (Home Construction), Independent Chef</td>
<td>Part-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elaine</td>
<td>Independent Education Consultant (Math), Independent Accountant</td>
<td>Part-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General</td>
<td>Herbal Store (2 locations)</td>
<td>Full-time owner and operator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marla</td>
<td>Independent Accountant</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andreis</td>
<td>Activist and Motivational Speaker</td>
<td>Full-Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Margaret</td>
<td>Non-Profit Manager (with husband, founder and owner)</td>
<td>Part-time, Seasonal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Francois</td>
<td>Event Promotion and Consultation</td>
<td>Part-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harry</td>
<td>Independent Education Consultant (English)</td>
<td>Part-time</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textbf{Wonder Wings}

Carlene’s business is a culturally significant endeavor that has grown exponentially in the last six years; the vast majority of the Trinbagonian culture in the United States and abroad
celebrates it. All participants discussed being integral parts of businesses in managerial or ownership capacities within the Caribbean culture. Carlene’s narrative, however, serves as a special example of Caribbean influence in the heart of central Brooklyn. Carlene shared her story of how her business came to be in Crown Heights Brooklyn:

I had several ideas of what the food would be [and] none of them was traditional. And it was because there is so much traditional [Caribbean food businesses]. So, I thought of several ideas, and none of them really felt right. Until I had one opportunity with a friend of mine who had a birthday party, and she asked me to make something. And we were making phoulorie. And phoulorie has a sauce, which is a chutney to it. It was mango chutney that I made. And we just making a bunch of little finger foods, and we made wings. And I said, ‘Oh, let’s put some of the chutney on the wings,’ and we did. We loved it. And then I said, “All right, let’s do something for the party.” It was the first thing gone, like literally disappeared and…I looked at that. And then I thought about that, what that meant from my vantage point was that it did have a place where I could bend what people expect in a wing to be what I said I make it to be.

As an extremely successful businesswoman who was featured on the food network for her bold Caribbean food initiatives, Carlene’s method was simple. Her idea for Caribbean American fusion was based in the Caribbean culture she knew and grew up with and in American culture and the “all American” chicken wings. Carlene discussed how she began to expand her idea into the success that it is today:

And I had watched Golden Crust come up and become successful. Lowell Hawthorne who runs Golden Krust is one of the people that I looked to. Because he has done what nobody else has done in the Caribbean culture, so I have a lot of respect for him. And I remember thinking when I came to this country I had no idea what a Jamaican patty was. I didn’t know what it was because I had never been to Jamaica. I don’t know; Jamaica is right across the street from Trinidad, but we never go, right. So in my head, a Jamaican patty taste like a golden crust patty because it was the first patty I had ever eaten. And it was the first one that I had ever eaten that was called a Jamaican patty. So I was like, “Oh, this is great,” so in my head I thought, “Golden Crust guy made patties, how he knows how to make patties, but he introduced it to our market that was wide open for patties. That nobody had known about patties before.”

Carlene provides an important example of how the Caribbean restaurant culture works in Brooklyn. Carlene was correct about Golden Krust Caribbean Bakery and Grill, which started with one store on Gunhill Road in the Bronx 25 years ago. Now Golden Krust has more than 130
franchise locations in seven states in the country with headquarters in Bronx, NY. Carlene demonstrates how the success of business owners in the culture inspired her adventures as a businesswoman:

So it is the same thing I wanted to do for Wonderful Wings. I wanted to create a brand that superseded all others around me. Like there was no other place. And I believe we are doing that...that which we haven’t already knocked off; we are about to. So, I wanted more than anything to create a place that was so unique in its flavor, so much so that you couldn’t find it any other place. And it would change peoples’ minds about what they thought a wing should be like. So, wings have [traditionally] been buffalo or barbecued. But imagine a wing with tamarind, or pineapple or mango on it, nobody would ever imagine that. So, I started experimenting, and I talked to my mom, who is a caterer. And said to her, I have this idea. And I have the names of the flavors already. So, I told her what the names of the flavors were, and she actually was interested with making the recipes to match the names and so she did. And that is how we came about. So, she made all the recipes for me.

Carlene describes the processes of how she decided to start building recipes and support system for a successful business. Carlene also expressed her thoughts on the atmosphere that she wants her create in her restaurants for her customers and why:

I believe any truly successful venture creates a feeling. For example, Apple, Apple creates a feeling of superiority, which is because of its look, its design. People have a Apple, love it. And it’s because it makes you feel a certain way. I had to make that happen for our brand. So for me, it was creating that feeling of home. So when you walked in, the acknowledgement, the greeting, everything that you received, all of it should be like, “Oh, Trinidad, Barbados,” anyplace because in Trinidad and Barbados, in Jamaica, everybody walk along the street; they go “morning.” And that’s normal. So when you walk in there it should be normal. It should be that as soon as you walk in they greet you. If they don’t know your name, they’ll learn it. And then the next time you walk in, they should, again, try to use your name. They don’t remember it; they’ll find it out again, until they remember it. Because each person I know it, I know it for myself. If I walk into a place [I feel that] I am acknowledged at that level where I’m called by my name.

Because of her knowledge of her food from her home country, the help of her mother who is still in Trinidad and her ability to blend her knowledge of Caribbean food with “all American” food of chicken wings Carlene has successful stayed her business. Additionally, her description of endeavoring to make her restaurant feel like “home” was especially important and
insightful in a borough full of Caribbean migrants representing over 20 different islands. Like
General, even though Carlene was Trinbagonian, she saw the value of being Trinbagonian in the
context of the larger Caribbean culture that existed in the Greater New York City area. The
business we were sitting in front of for our interview was the second store that Carlene had
opened up in the Central and East Central Brooklyn areas. The first store was in the Flatbush area
while this store was in Crown Heights. Carlene shared the last bit before ending our conversation
to close up shop for the night:

We’ve been here four years, and I would tell you that in this neighborhood here we’ve so
much respect from our customers as well as our neighbors. When we first opened up
here, they said it had nine businesses here before us. Nine businesses that just opened and
closed opened and closed. And my dad walked around the corner and talked to another
business owner...So he went around the corner ...Up and down, up and down. My dad
went around the corner to a bakery man; he was killed recently ... He was shot. My dad
went around, and he told him, that his daughter is opening up this business around here,
and the guy said to him, that place it is cursed. And my dad never told me. Until long
after we had opened, and he said, “No, you didn’t need to know that.” So now, our
neighbors who are every door down, they come down, and they tell us, thank you. And
they tell us, it’s great to see us... they love having us. in the neighborhood.

As I observed in Carlene’s shop, I began to understand why the neighbors had thanked
her for being in the neighborhood. Carlene’s shop was on the end of the Crown Heights block that
I lived on for six years. In the last eight years, many of the Black-owned businesses on Nostrand
Avenue near her shop had closed or had been sold. The block she was on was dangerous, and the
particular storefront was “cursed,” as her father mentioned to her after the fact. There was a man
there from before; Mr. Beady, who owned the entire corner with a spa, a clothing store and two
restaurants, but could never keep any of them open for long. However, there was something
different about the way she approached the culture and inserted herself as a fixture of comfort and
familiarity in the culture. Her comforting presence was not only for people of Caribbean descent;
people of all cultures and backgrounds visited Carlene’s store from around the world when they
were in Brooklyn.
In addition, Carlene was very culture oriented. She describes some of her first food work with elementary school and teaching children how to cook. Carlene employs Black youth of Caribbean and American descent in her shop, which had a positive effect on decreasing petty crime on her block, as confirmed by most of the neighboring businesses and homeowners on that block and surrounding blocks. She was on excellent terms with law enforcement; she reached out to other business owners in the area, and homeowners that lived nearby to invite them to her restaurant and serve as a friendly face on what was once a very hostile block. In Carlene’s words, she is fighting the “angry Black woman syndrome” one smile at a time. Carlene attributes much of her positive attitude, her business sense, and her success to what she learned as a child and young adult growing up in Trinbago with parents who were business owners as well.

**Framing Activity: From Part-time Passion to Full-time Franchise**

From Carlene’s narrative, observations, and interviews with participants the presence of small, medium, and large business ventures was an important feature of Trinbagonian migrant life. In this activity, the subject, Trinbagonian migrants to Brooklyn, are working toward the object of providing the culture with a desired food or product through their business endeavors. Business activities such as contractor, accountant, event promotion, and education consultant are linked to Trinbagonian culture because Trinbagonians in this study consider their entrepreneurial enterprises to be work that they learned how to do from parents and friends who are Trinbagonian, in Trinbagonian cultural settings. The link to Trinbagonian culture is in the information they learned in Trinbago that in they employ in Brooklyn to achieve their entrepreneurial goals to the communities they live in, which are comprised majorly by other Trinbagonian and Caribbean people. Being an overtly Trini business is only one way to understand how a Trini business is culturally connected.
Although Carlene’s example was a restaurant with high visibility, she started out with a dream and great taste in foods. She had been a full-time accountant before this venture. One of the rules that govern this activity is finding what people like to eat or use. To do this, however, they described testing out their own likes and dislikes and then determining what was unique to the culture, and what would go over well. As Carlene discusses, the unique cultural food heritage that came with being Trinbagonian gave her an edge in providing a unique business that would do well in the culture. While there are many other restaurants in the Brooklyn area, Carlene, along with other Trinbagonian business and service providers, work to maintain individuality by providing innovative renditions of Trinbagonian foods, events, arts, jewelry, and clothing. Some people who endeavor to open up a business may reach the motive-objective but not have the desired outcomes of having a successful business; they may even incur some hardship because of the endeavor.
Navigating Marriage and Spousal Changes

Working with a spouse to navigate the changes during the migration experience to the United States and Brooklyn can be difficult. Some Trinbagonians arrive in the States married but without their spouse; some come married together and struggle to stay together. Some participants come to the United States and get married for citizenship and some remarry—all of which affects what they do with their Trinbagonian lifestyles in the place of Brooklyn. Trinidad and Tobago are two small island communities. With Brooklyn having the largest population of people from Trinbago outside of Trinbago, it is nearly impossible not to know someone, who knows someone, who knows you. With this idea in mind, trying to maintain Trinbagonian heritage, culture, and a sense of normalcy within a marriage can be difficult even in a city filled with other Trinbagonians. Darla and Francois present examples of some of the difficulties
migrants experienced maintaining spousal relationships. While each of my participants discussed marriage in their interviews, these two stories portray some of the intricacies of married life for Trinbagonians that are not understood from an outsider’s perspective. Francois discusses his situation when first coming to the United States to meet his wife who had been here a month before him:

I’m going to get personal now. Marla [his now ex-wife], …she came up one month before me. So when I came up now you would think you haven’t seen me for a month, you haven’t seen your husband for a month so what’s the first thing you’re going to do? Hug and kiss or greet, embrace, or whatever. But my cousin came to pick me up in the airport because Marla was working. No problem, so we went by Jem [Marla’s Aunt]. Francois expressed his disappointment about not seeing his wife when he first arrived in the country even though he was picked up by another family member and escorted to the home where his wife lived. While it was understandable that she was at work, Francois was nonetheless disappointed but stated that it was “no problem” that she was at work. He goes on to describe meeting his wife for the first time in the month after she arrived in Brooklyn:

I’m sitting there in the kitchen talking because it’s the first time I’m meeting Jem, and then it so happen, they say, “Oh, Marla coming next five minutes.” So, she came now, and she walk in. So I’m sitting there, I’m like…[excited to see her] because it’s a month. She walk here, walk behind the chair…so I’m like this [he demonstrates reaching around the chair with his hands up and back arched as his wife passes him by to try and touch her], thinking I’m going to get a kiss. She walk behind there, so I look at her…I said, “You’re happy to see me?” She said, “Yeah, how was the flight?” I say, “Good.” The conversation was strained and still did not match up to his expectations of what he thought meeting his wife would be like once he migrated to Brooklyn to be with her. He went on to discuss how he began to feel from experiencing the strained atmosphere of that first meeting in a Brooklyn kitchen, after one month apart from his wife:

So right away that started triggering in my mind what [what was going on, what was happening] “It was good.” I say, “Come let me hug you”; I hug her. I mean I approached her, but that stayed right there. This is after one month because she came up a month before me, just one month apart. That seed was right there [taps his left temple with his pointer and middle finger], just a matter of her watering it to make it grow. If she didn’t put water…it wasn’t going to grow, but the seed was already planted. That was just right there. I just observed for the rest of the time. I didn’t really take time to think about it because I still got to continue with the conversation and socialize, but the bottom of the
seed was planted. So I know I had to take time away for myself and analyze this and I realized that she just didn’t want to…one, she didn’t want to embrace me in front of her aunt, but I’m like, “We are husband and wife.” You’re husband and wife; that’s your aunt, so…I mean, so what? It’s not like we’re going to have sex in front of your aunt. It’s a kiss, a hug. So, because of her aunt I believe this was happening. So, I’m like, okay, and I left her alone.

Facing a situation with too many unknowns as a new migrant to Brooklyn from Trinbago, Francois retreated. In the passage above, Francois demonstrates knowledge about his wife and family that gets stripped away. This breakdown in understanding what his current relationship with his wife was supposed to be between Brooklyn and Trinidad prompted him to take time away from the brewing situation and analyze what was going on. Unfortunately, the outlook from his analysis didn’t seem positive, and he retreated further from his wife and her family.

**Learning Culture Through Television**

Francois described the final complicating issue that caused him to change the original plans he had made to join his wife in New York, after a total of two-and-a-half months:

Something else happened also. A month, month and half [later], everybody have their own way of doing things, so I’m trying to understand this country now, trying to figure out…what’s going on. So, in order for me to understand this country, I was looking at all the talk shows they used to have. I’m looking at all the talk shows to try to understand, to get a grip of what’s going on. Everybody is like, “Why you don’t go and look for a job? You’re staying home and looking at TV.” So, I explained to her, I said, “Listen, in order for me to get a job I have to understand what I’m facing. I’m not going to run out there. That’s just not me. That might be somebody else; it is just not me. And if you know me, you know when I go at something, I go and attack it and control everything; I take it over.”

Francois emphasized the importance he saw in using television talk shows that talked about American culture and issues, to learn about the country. Although his wife and her family did not consider this acceptable, he recognized the potential in TV show viewing for gathering a
significant amount of information from a single source that he deemed valid to serve as his “crash course” in American culture.

So, I was gathering information before...[through television shows]...Because I have nobody to talk to me. And then again, I know the level I’m at. Very few of my friends on my level, you understand? So whoever I’d known up here, they wouldn’t guide me right. I know that, so it makes no sense I’m going to go seek them. There are one or two [friends] I’ve known from before [in Trinidad] but I just didn’t...and they were...one from classmates, one selling drugs, selling marijuana, so I’m not going to go to ask him anything. Gathered all the information on my own.

In addition to experiencing changes in his marriage structure, he also felt that there were no good role models out there to teach him the next steps needed to change his course, now that he was in Brooklyn in a wavering relationship. But this does not dissuade Francois from pursuing this method of information gathering.

The People’s Pot

He continues on his path and experiences yet another difficult experience that locks-in his decision to move on from his marital situation:

[Here] is a next personal experience. There’s a cook downstairs and the grandmother want a cook upstairs. [The house is structured for] two families. The aunt was downstairs; the grandmother was upstairs. So I tell Marla, I say, “Listen, you got to make up your mind. One, you can’t be cooking two places. Is either you cook once for everybody or try to make it a one family, you know. You cook one place; everybody take care of business, but you can’t be doing upstairs and downstairs.”...What happened is they had some food downstairs. I’m new to the place, first time meeting her aunt, her grandmother. So I told her, I say, “Listen, you go take out the food. I’m not going to go in the people’s pot and just,” that’s just me. I say, “You take it out; you are their niece.” That was a big argument about that. [Because] She find I should have go and take it out, so I’m trying to explain. I say, “Listen, is only a few weeks now I meeting these people. I mean, granted it’s your family, but I have to adjust. I’m trying to work my way, I’m not bold like that, and that is not me.” And then she went downstairs, and I guess...now this is between she and I, both of us. [But] She went downstairs and was talking about it with her aunt and them.

In the midst of his information-gathering quest through television (and radio as he describes once the interview is over), he runs into another issue with his wife and her family. This problem causes a bigger rupture in the hairline cracks that were made to the state of his marriage.
a few months before. In the example above, Francois’s upbringing caused him to see the world very differently than his wife who had been in the country for about a month longer than he. In Trinbagonian culture, a woman taking out food for a man was common practice. However, his wife had experienced a new set of rules in this new place of Brooklyn that caused her to view him asking her to take out food very differently than if they had been in Trinidad. Francois continues his narrative stating the moment he knew that he needed to get out of the situation sooner rather than later:

It so happen I came downstairs. I was sitting in a chair downstairs but the door…how the door is, when you open the door it kind of screen the chair off, so I’m in the corner. So the door is open so they in the kitchen and they talking—about me. This is my wife, bad-talking me [to her family]. I said you know what? First set of money I get I’m jumping on a plane and get out of here. That was my thinking. Anyhow, over a period of time everything just quiet down, and everything went back to normal. But it wasn’t normal for me because I already understood what was going down. And I also saw the changes [in wife and relationship], and I saw where the values…Coming back to the values, got rearranged. It wasn’t so much about family anymore because if I’m family, I’m her husband…[but] this was something else.

Francois did end up leaving his wife and moving out of Brooklyn soon thereafter, citing the pace of life in Brooklyn to be too fast for him and not the type of culture he wanted to adopt for his life in the United States. He moved to New Jersey, where there is some presence of Caribbean people, and became employed as a courier, which he learned while gathering information, was an acceptable decent job. His son, who is now 28, also worked for the same courier service before attending law school in Atlanta. Francois was planning to retire to Trinidad in February of 2014. I spoke to him briefly while I was in Trinidad to see how he was doing during my second visit and after our first interview. He was very busy starting his retirement life and sounded very stressed. But he was happy to be in the warmth and the sun of Trinbago. We discussed the plans that he and his second wife were making for her to join him in Trinidad by the summer time. Francois is one of the few Trinbagonians I know who have fulfilled the dream of working in the United States and then retiring in their homeland of Trinidad and Tobago.
Familiarity Breeds Manipulation

Darla, Francois’s daughter, also encountered issues in her marriage situation regarding knowledge about place and spousal transparency. Darla got married at a young age and learned the difficult way that finding a mate outside of her native home of Santa Cruz, where everyone knew each other, could be a tough situation to navigate as a naïve young person new to U. S. culture, especially the culture of Brooklyn. In Brooklyn, many Trinbagonians could be a potential part of the mating pool. Darla tells her story of feeling taking advantage of for wanting to stay within her culture and marry. She soon realizes that her naïveté may have been a handicap. Darla describes living a very sheltered life in the United States. She describes moving from one sheltered place to another once she got married to her husband. Ultimately, she trusted her husband, who was Trinbagonian, and felt that he took advantage of the knowledge she did not yet have about place and processes in Brooklyn:

Let me tell you, when I first came here, I was very sheltered. I lived with my grandparents; I lived with grandparents; I was very sheltered—very, very sheltered. Came here, live with my dad after we had that altercation, and I went to live with my mom. I lived with my mom and then leaving her and meeting my currently ex-husband; it has toughened me a lot. I’m not as—what should I say? Sweet and pleasant, and think that the world is just butterflies and roses. I’ve become kind of hardened. I’m hardened.

Darla explains how aspects of her first relationship in the States that lead to marriage has made her “hardened”:

Well, he was my first relationship up here. He was someone I knew from Trinidad but I knew him when I was much younger and I had liked him but he was too old for me at the time. And somehow we met each up, and we got together and that’s when we started to live with his mom until we got our own place. We got married, had my daughter. He really wasn’t the person I thought he was.

Darla describes what she thought would have been an ideal situation for her—meeting a Trinbagonian man and getting married in Brooklyn. However, other factors began to surface that caused Darla to change her mind about the situation she and the person she had chosen to be her husband:
He was terrible with money, terrible with money. He was a cheater, and he took me for granted. And after 8 years of being together, 2 ½ years of being married, I said enough is enough, and I walked out, which no one ever thought I would walk out because I was so naïve and because… It was easier for him to manipulate me because he lived here. So, he was more familiar with how it works up here…. For example, when he bought a car, and I wasn’t familiar… with this whole thing call credit and credit history. I didn’t know anything about that. He got a car, and he was like, “Oh, well come and cosign for me,” so I said, “All right, I’ll cosign for the car.” He was like, “Yeah, because if they can’t find me, they could call you to locate me, so that’s why you’re cosigning.” I said, “Okay, no problem,” and I cosigned.

In this narrative, Darla describes one of many encounters with her husband where he misleads her on the issue of finances at other times he would lie about paying the rent, which she did not find out until they were almost evicted from their apartment. Darla goes on to describe her final breaking point with her husband and the realization that he was misleading her in many areas of their lives together:

Not realizing that by cosigning and him defaulting on payments would mean that I would actually be responsible, and I didn’t know how important credit was in this country because credit is not used in Trinidad. There’s no such thing as credit or credit score. [In the US] they look to see if you…base on your credit score, could get this or what not. No. When you’re in Trinidad, you have money, take out a loan; they give you a loan, you go, you buy your house, you do this. I didn’t know anything about that. So, he was able to manipulate me in that sense. Well, now I know that’s not the truth. Back then I didn’t think he would lie to me. Actually, back then I didn’t believe he would lie to me period because, like I said, I was very naïve. I lived a very sheltered life with my grandparents, and he was my first serious relationship here and I married him. Pretty much is whatever he said was it for me because he was my source of information. I still didn’t really have a grasp on how society was, how people work. I didn’t really have that because all I did was just go to school, go to work, and go to school [which is extremely important].

In the end, Darla learns the difficult way that just because she and her husband were from the same island did not mean that they shared the same values. She is now with a new partner, and her family has recently relocated to Pennsylvania to build a better life for her two daughters. Her decision to move was based heavily on the circumstances surrounding her pregnancy and birth of her second daughter.
Framing Activity: Marriage Has to Migrate, Too…

From the narratives above and observations and discussions with participants, the activity of navigating marriage and spousal changes arose. The motive-object for Trinbagonian migrant as subjects in this activity is working toward maintaining a marriage relationship in the United States. All participants in this study had either been married, were currently married, or had a significant other. Some participants were married before entering the states. Romantic relationships, partnerships, and marriage are a desired part of life for this group, and they also describe this as being desired across their social circles. There are dynamic changes that take place in a marriage relationship where both partners are planning to migrate, have already migrated, or have split migration experiences. The exception in this group is Andreis, whose partner is African American and did not migrate from Trinidad and Tobago to the States. The high percentage of marriage and relationship in this group that happens within the culture (i.e., to other Trinbagonians) can be explained by the experiences of those who came with spouses or who related to and trusted other Trinbagonian migrants in the culture enough to form relationships post-migration. Rules that govern this activity as described by participants are sharing the same values, fidelity, and similar understanding of relationship goals, especially if both spouses are Caribbean migrants with goals of obtaining employment, entering the higher education system, or opening a business.
Carnival in both Brooklyn and Trinidad are the most important celebrations of Trinbagonian culture. Outside of Trinidad, Brooklyn hosts the largest Trinbagonian-based Carnival in the world. The next largest celebration is in Toronto. And this is so for a reason, as Carnival is the emancipation celebration of the people of Trinbago, which includes the Canboulay Riots in the 1800s (originally Cannes Brulee, the “burning of the cane” riots). When the slaves rioted, they won the war against law enforcement, slave masters, and government to plan and participate in cultural celebrations as they wished to, without being punished. The celebration represents struggle, progress, politics, and survival, characteristics that are all manifested in the migratory experiences of Trinbagonians to Brooklyn. General describes his long-time
participation in Brooklyn Carnival and how the Brooklyn iteration of the Trinbagonian event began:

Yes, a Trinidad woman started Carnival. Well, Carnival really started in Harlem in the clubs; it wasn’t in the street…and then it came to the streets [and] It was a big Carnival. I went after it was revived, but it never lived; it had a short life. It was a small revival in the 1970s and 1980s, but it wasn’t like before, and it never matured into anything; they don’t do it again. Of course, we may have misbehaved once or twice because you must remember, when you’re dealing with Carnival, Trinidadians don’t have any discipline per se because it is not a parade.

By all participant accounts, Trinbagonian Carnival started in Harlem and the Bronx and later moved to Brooklyn. There were various political and socio-economic issues surrounding the power and resources that Trinbagonians needed to make the celebration successful. But as General described, it is possible that neighboring communities didn’t quite understand what it meant to have “Carnival” and to understand further that it was not a “parade.” General provides further distinction between a “Carnival” and a “parade”:

When they call Labor Day a parade, a parade is when you could march from point A to point B, and you could measure the time and say you’re going to be there in 10 minutes. But a Carnival is when you dance back and forth, and you meet your friend and you hug them up and kiss them and you say, “Look meh mass.” And you go back and forth. So that back and forth could take a whole hour to make a block because that is our Carnival. It is not regimented. It is fun, and it’s to give vent to all the negative things that occurred during slavery, so we’re just opening up. Of course, we have never been really freed from slavery; they have just changed the name and the concept and the time, because many of us still working on the plantation.

General discusses what he believes is the true purpose of Carnival, which is not only celebrate freedom from slavery, but to also “give vent to all the negative things that occurred during slavery.” General sees this as a very important piece for Carnival, since the entire celebration represents Trinbagonian emancipation. His comments regarding “many of us” who “still work on the plantation” allude to a possible life view still affected by slavery that can be exposed and deconstructed through participation as masqueraders and revelers in Carnival. But, as General notes, this idea of Carnival is still new to many people, especially in the historical context of slavery in the United States where emancipation took place 29 years after
emancipation in the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. General goes on to discuss his extensive and longstanding participation in Carnival:

It is something that I want to segue way a little bit that plays a very important role in my life is Labor Day. I have played Mas since I’m two and a half years old. I’ve always played Carnival on Labor Day since I came to America. As a matter of fact, I ran away from the army to come to play Mas on Labor Day. These are some of my awards--I have plenty, but I was just throwing it in. The point in playing Labor Day is that you’re continuing to maintain your cultural heritage in America and you’re not letting it die. So, it’s very important. All these things…you see all that stuff in the back there, all of those things I make for Labor Day and it’s a way of…[points to a three headed sequined creature hanging from the ceiling].

General explicitly connects Mas on Labor Day to keeping Trinbagonian cultural heritage present and active in his life and the lives of his family members. This is important orienting information that gives structure to the historicity of the activity of participating in Carnival in Brooklyn. General’s historical familiarity with Carnival is one of the main part of the picture of maintaining culture as he demonstrates through this discourse.

**Women as both backbone and problem of Carnival**

General goes on to describe his various costumes and the historical significance behind why he puts on a dress for Mas on Labor Day:

This is a turtleneck. I played a triple turtleneck thing, and I have plenty things in the back I could show you later. And every Labor Day I put on a dress. You’re seeing me in my frock over there? That is little Red Riding Hood. And the reason why I put on a dress on Labor Day is because it is something called Gilly Day. It is an African tradition where once a year a man will put on a dress and dance for the women so that he can thank them for nurturing him and nurturing the family and breastfeeding them. Because African women are the backbone of our culture. Without African women, African men are nothing. So we depend on the woman so they will come out once a year and dance.

General compares his Gilly-Day practices in Brooklyn to what he learned about Gilly Day in Trinbago:

Now, in Trinidad what they will do, men will put on a dress with a big ‘bumsee’ and carry on. It was a way of ridiculing the slave master. Now a lot of times when J’Ouvert
started in Trinidad after 1834, the meaning of J’Ouvert is “the dawning”; it’s the “dawning of the day.” And people come, and they dress like the slave master with scissortail coat and thing. And the slave master used to smile because he thought that well, “He’s emulating me,” but what they didn’t know was that he was trying to ridicule him.

General’s explanations here match up with other sources like the Book of Trinidad, which describes how Carnival was initially mocking the country’s leaders. The government did not allow slaves to participate in the Masquerade Ball held prior to Lent, nor allowed them to hold their own celebrations, hence the event of the Canboulay Riots in the 1800s. After this time, former slaves continued to mock their old masters as General describes above.

Next General described the J’ouvert celebration and the differences from how this part of Carnival is celebrated today. He also discussed the skills needed to bring this celebration from Trinidad and Tobago to Brooklyn:

So J’Ouvert was a way of not only expressing the suppressed pressure that we had, but also ridiculing the man. That was the J’Ouvert so I...not me alone because I didn’t start it here. I transferred all my skills from Trinidad to America, and when I got the opportunity, I play my Mas too. Bending wire [is a skill from participating in Carnival in Trinidad]. You have to bend wire to make your Mas. You have to be creative in your mind to put patterns on your costume. All of these are skills that I sat at people feet watching them, and I learned them myself. Organizational skills where you could bring 10 or 20 of your friends together, and you sit down and say, “Listen, what we playing this year? We playing sailor, we playing Indian, we playing some kind of historical African Mas?” So these are the skills I’m talking about. And when you decide that now, you go downtown, and you get African clothes and you put patterns on them and you make a headpiece and all of these things.

General describes the technical and historical skill required to “make your Mas.” General was not only a masquerader and participant in Carnival and J’Ouvert, he also organized groups of Trinbagonians in Brooklyn to participate in J’ouvert and Carnival celebrations:

When I came out of the army [and came back to Brooklyn] I had a group call 2 Plus 1, and we brought several bands on the Parkway and it was successful. And then we decided to transfer everything to J’ouvert morning instead of...I don’t go on the Parkway anymore; I do the J’ouvert on Empire Boulevard, you know about it. So, we’ve been doing that for 28 years. We have had J’ouvert in Brooklyn for 28 years. At the inception, we didn’t have J’ouvert, we just had the Labor Day thing on the Parkway, which they call a Parade, which is not a parade at all, is a Carnival. And 28 years ago, some guys just came down Church Avenue with some pan, and that was it. After the next year, it started to evolve and evolve, and this is what you see today. And this year was beautiful. I never
miss a year and every year I put on a dress. I have several dresses. You wouldn’t believe; I have frocks like rain.

General describes his long involvement as a band organizer, Mas maker, and committed masquerader in Brooklyn J’ouvert. General’s decision to move to J’ouvert morning for a celebration and Mas making is evidenced by the older average age of those who play J’ouvert in Brooklyn and the types of costumes that they wear. Additionally, no big trucks play music during J’ouvert in Brooklyn only steel bands provides music for this early morning revelry. General goes on to reemphasize here the real importance for him of playing Mas:

[However] The serious thing about playing Mas is not for me, you know; it is to maintain your cultural heritage so that my children that are born here and their children would know their history, their father’s history. We have no excuses now. When we came from Africa to the Caribbean or wherever they sent us, the man cut us off. He even cut our tongue out so we never spoke our mother tongue; we spoke another language. Spanish, French, Portuguese, English, this is not our mother tongue, so maybe our forefathers couldn’t express their history in this foreign tongue. But for my period, because I came from Trinidad to America, I could express my experiences. And…when my son was about 12 years old, one day I saw him with a Trinidad flag in his bedroom. He born here! I was shocked! But because I talk so much about the country, he felt part of it. This Labor Day, my grandson who you just saw here, he went and he bought his flag and he tie it around his head…and it’s a Trinidad flag. He born here, and he got some…He say, “I am a Trini.” That is a warm thing, and it is because of, not me alone, but what we expressed to our children.

In contrast to Darla’s feelings about people who were not born in Trinidad and Tobago claiming Trinbagonian heritage or citizenship, General had 50 years of experience in the United States, struggling to make sure that he always participates in J’ouvert and Carnival. He did this to keep Trinbagonian culture alive, and his efforts resulted in two generations of his family, his son, and his son’s son, being familiar and proud of Trinbagonian culture.

General also comments on the changes in Carnival and consequently calypso that he believes takes away from the historical and cultural meanings of the Celebration:

Calypso is part of it because remember without …Look, there are three elements to Carnival: calypso, steel band, and the masquerader. Those are the three elements that make up our revelry. And they don’t work without each other. So, the calypsonian played a very important role, not only from a political point of view. He will tell stories that they couldn’t speak of or couldn’t write. Oh, [but] calypso change. First to begin, they are not
telling a story anymore. When you heard a calypso when you were growing up, it told a story. It could have been a comical story, a political story, something happen in the culture. [The Mighty] Sparrow, all of them. Melody…they would sing a calypso that would [talk about]…The Governor lying. Now you couldn’t write that on the paper but you could sing it as a song because it’s poetry and prose, they couldn’t lock you for that. Although they tried to arrest a calypsonian for singing a song about the Governor but he won the case, because the spoken word is different than the written word. So, they would tell you the Governor lie because he said, so, so and make it into a whole calypso, or if somebody did something wrong in the culture, they will make a calypso about the person. Of course, they changing the name and so on, but you would know.

For General, calypso in Trinbagonian culture served an a tool of knowledge construction that let people know what was going on in politics, government, social, and other aspects, of life.

But, he believes, the storytelling aspect is slowly becoming obsolete. General goes on to describe the changes he perceives and what he thinks they mean:

The calypso told a story, and it raised the consciousness of the masses, especially the political calypsos. It made people aware of certain things and certain politicians doing negative things. Now it is not like that again. They making a kind of…I don’t even know. I don’t understand it. Calypso has always evolved. But now it has it has evolved to this: Machel Montano make a song about the Big Truck; the Big Truck coming. Look the Big Truck…that’s all he saying, the Big Truck. What he is saying is that when you’re playing mas, you following the truck, but that is it, ‘the Big Truck, the Big Truck,’ which don’t make no sense to me, as a person who understand calypso. But young people, they take that and run with it because it mean something to them, but you still have some young calypsonians that making calypsos that is complaining about problems in the country. We still have that. It never really died. It is just that it didn’t sell as much as what the young people buying now, and they are coming back slowly.

General depicts artists like Machel Montano as only singing about one thing in some of his songs, which do not make sense to him. As I observed in his shop it was obvious from the music that he played that he grew up with music from Lord Kitchener, The Mighty Sparrow, Barron, and other Soca pioneers. These artists among others are also given credit spreading Soca and Calypso to other parts of the world, especially London and New York. The Mighty Sparrow and his performances at Carnegie Hall evidence this. But General does see some hope, as he knows some young artists who have political content in their Soca and Calypso. General goes on to discuss the state of masquerading at Carnival in present day:

It is like the naked mas. Carnival is not naked mas. Carnival is a costume that you build, and you’re changing the whole character of the individual; you’re making them
something else. For the last 15 or 20 years, the women coming out naked. [But] We play historical mas. We playing Rome. We playing Egypt, Africa. Now, they just play naked. They come out with a thong and pasties. Some people don’t have bra, you know. They have pasties, and they decorate their breasts and you don’t even know, and they put a strap here, paint it on, so you think they have on something. Naked mas. [It’s] The women, not men. For some reason, women like to show their bodies to men, and they use this Carnival thing as a pretext to expose their nakedness, and that standard is bad because women are supposed to maintain a moral status in our culture. The men not bad at all when you’re talking about Carnival. It’s the women.

General’s final verdict on Carnival is a problem that lies with the women who he believes are walking around naked and playing “Naked Mas.” Here there are different factors in play that I believe affect how women dress at Carnival, particularly in Brooklyn. First, by law, a woman can wear pasties or go completely topless in New York City in all five boroughs. This law is combined with the competition happening between Trinidad and Brazil, which host two of the biggest Carnival celebrations in the world. General’s perception in the change is costume is valid because there is a conscious effort by costume providers to follow the Brazilian Carnival costume constructions. TRIBE, which is the Trinidadian band that I played Carnival with this year, made this explicitly understandable with their move toward a SOCADROME, which is a direct imitation of Brazil’s SAMBADROME.

From the SAMBADROME to the SOCADROME

SAMBADROME is a large space constructed for dancing and celebration during Brazil’s Carnival celebrations. This move came two weeks before Carnival and was still not easily carried out because of the routes that were chosen for the trucks. Residents of areas who had never had Carnival trucks and masqueraders come down their street did not want to start that practice with four of the arguably largest carnival bands. Tribe, Zuma, Bliss, and Paradise wanted to make a new route toward the National Stadium instead of the Savannah. TRIBE and its thousands of members were disqualified from competing in the costume competition judging that happens
every year at Carnival because they chose not to cross the stage on the savannah on Carnival Tuesday and instead go to the SOCADROME.

General also comments on the changes he sees between Brooklyn and Trinidad Carnivals. He seems some similarities in those changes—and not for the better in Trinidad:

Yeah, well, of course. Trinidad worse. Naked mas coming down the road, partner, naked. And that is not mas because there’s no costume. They have some feathers here; a piece of feather here and that is it. They have on a slipper or boots. One would think that they attempted to emulate the Brazilian Carnival. One would think that is where it came from, and it has been going on like that for 15 or 20 years, but for the last 2 or 3 years, I say original Carnival coming back, because they have one or two bands that playing nice mas [by telling a story]….because Carnival is a story, you know. When you playing mas, you’re telling a story, and the story comes from the beginning of the back and it ends in the back of the band; is a story you’re telling. If you’re talking about Egypt, and you’re talking about when people in Egypt were free, you see. They show you how they capture the slaves, and the next section will be the slaves working under duration, and then you see Moses come to free them, and you know, so it’s a story that they tell. Mas is a story. Carnival is a story.

General is a long-time Mas maker and has high hopes that Carnival will make a triumphant return. After many years, there are revelers and masqueraders who want to honor and celebrate the historical roots in Carnival by beginning to tell the stories of the history and culture of Trinidad and Tobago and make sure that these elements of Trinbagonian-ness live on.
Tensions in the Activity Systems Network of Place-Based Knowledge Construction among Trinbagonian Migrants

In this section, emergent tensions between elements the nine activities derived from the narrative are presented for illumination. The previous nine activities emerged to form the activity systems network of “place-based knowledge construction among Trinbagonian migrants.” The overlapping motive-object of this activity systems network is “reinventing Trinbagonian culture and culture in Brooklyn, NY.” The identification process of the emergent motive-object for this activity systems network derived from investigation and analysis of the motive-objects of activities, and then each of the components. The intended outcomes are also refined to represent systemic movement of the subject as pursuant to the motive object. In a cultural, historical
activity theoretical framework, tensions help identify how activities develop and produce the outcomes that signify knowledge construction. Tensions within activity systems for this research arose from analysis and examination of data as demonstrated in the Methods chapter of this work. The types of tensions discussed here are the primary and secondary that emerged in each activity as I endeavored to identify the overlapping motive object. In each activity, there are predominant commonalities that make each of these activities important to participants as Trinbagonian migrants remaking place and space successfully to reside in Brooklyn. These commonalities from the nine activities come together to form the emergent motive object for the activity systems network.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of contradiction</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Corresponding epistemic action(s)</th>
<th>LEGEND</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Occurs between the use value and exchange value of any corner of an activity system.</td>
<td>Questioning</td>
<td>![Primary]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>Develops between two corners of an activity system.</td>
<td>Analyzing Modeling</td>
<td>![Secondary]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 6-10. Primary and Secondary Tensions (with legend) Adapted from “Types of contradictions and corresponding epistemic actions” (Foot & Groleau, 2011)*

Tensions were identified from the “complicating actions” codes derived from the narrative clause analysis strategies of narrative stories analytic structure. In Figure 6-10 I outline the types of tensions that were most present during analysis. The colors assigned correlate to my analysis of the rise of tensions within an activity that lead to the evolving of the motive-object. The red boxes and green boxes indicate primary and secondary tension starting points in an
activity (as derived from the narratives clauses through the complicating actions) The orange boxes with the initials PS indicated possible secondary tensions that are in the midst of forming during the activities as described in the narratives and inferred from observation. The activity components each contain some of the rules, mediating artifacts, members of the community of practice, and the roles and positions of the division of labor as derived from the grounded codes of narrative stories. The following examples will examine four activities in the systems network to demonstrate how their motive objects contain commonalities that constitute a systemic motive-object in place-based knowledge construction for this group.

Figure 6-11. Activity Systems Network: Place-based Knowledge Construction Among Trinbagonian Migrants
Tensions: Reconciling Skin Color and Culture

In this activity, participants first realized a complicating action with the rules. Overall, participants had to construct knowledge for daily use about skin color and race that was different than their central rules. First, participants simply didn’t understand the rules because these rules were a part of American culture in Brooklyn that did not exist within their cultural and primary knowledge about races. Participants had to figure out how to understand race and color before they could further understand how use tools (as outlined in figure 6-12) connected to the concepts. As such, incorporating this new knowledge into their central knowledge signaled a tension in what rules acted as mediating artifacts concern race and culture. In the absence of understanding rules that are in play in a culture some tools for navigating situations in that culture are erased. When Trinbagonian participants were able to incorporate concepts like citizenship, foreign accents, and education in American culture into their central knowledge base, they were able to use their knowledge perspectives to understand race in their new place of Brooklyn. For most participants, this was a negative experience. Marla discussed the differences she observes and experiences between the African American population and the Caribbean population in Brooklyn, with whom she states her interactions have gotten “progressively difficult over the years”:

Well, African American, particularly the women, there is this sense of… They always seem like they are on guard with us, like we are here to take something from them. And I find that you just have to really be careful with them because they can be very aggressive. It’s just their nature, period.

Marla voices her opinions about African American women and the differences in race she learned to incorporate into her knowledge base. This incorporation causes her to separate herself and other women that she knows from the Caribbean from the “guarded” and “very aggressive” African American female. She goes on to say “I mean, every now and then you’ll come across somebody who’s really nice and open, and they will talk to you but there are some of them that
are very, very aggressive, especially the inner city African American.” Marla goes into detail about how she has come to these conclusions about “inner-city African Americans”:

Because you would pass and say, “Good morning” and they’ll be like, “Talking to me?” Whereas if you are with a Caribbean, you say, “Good morning,” and they’re like “Oh good morning,” and they keep going. But they [African Americans] will look at you like, “Who you talking to? What’s so good about the morning?” For me, initially, this was a little bit daunting because, all you are saying is good morning. I’m not saying, “well what happened to you last night?” I’m saying “Good morning. How are you?”

For Marla the hostility in an unreturned “Good Morning” is a warning sign that she may be dealing with an “aggressive” African American. Marla has located (the inner city) and denoted this group, and chooses to limit interactions with them, based on her experiences with them, which she connects with race. Marla also clarifies the complexion issue that she has observed and experienced when interacting with people she considers being African American in contrast to how she believes color is perceived in the Caribbean:

African Americans tend to have an issue with color. Darker women are jealous of the lighter women; the lighter women are confused about who they are and try to be White. They’re very, very fair, and then they’re not sure who they are, if they’re kind of in between because they don’t fit into that particular…[on the other hand] we come out of an island where…[on the other hand] we come out of an island where…[on the other hand] we come out of an island where….and most of the islands are like this, where there’s so much mixture that…you have a girl who’s tall and dark and has light brown eyes an curly hair, and then there’s one who’s really, really fair with red hair, and it’s as kinkly as it is. We love the fact that we’re so many different shades because we’re beautiful, all of us.

Lastly Marla discusses when she “realized” that she was “Black” in Brooklyn: I think because the emphasis is so much on [being black] here that it becomes so glaring that you have no choice but face it. But coming out of [Trinidad and Tobago], it’s never been an issue. It’s all about class. So I never knew racism until I came here. And I always thought I was cute and hot. Black? What are you talking about? I’m black, yeah…it’s a given but…what’s the big deal? …And you tell me tell me that, “You’re Black.” Okay so, and what?

Marla’s main contention is with the rules: What is Black supposed to mean when I’m called Black? What does it mean when I call someone else Black? Why is there such an emphasis on this?
Black versus Black

Because of this central knowledge perspective, as Marla incorporates knowledge about race into her experience, she acknowledged that there are some rules floating around about race but selects which ones she will incorporate into her tools used to understand race and ethnicity and which rules she will not accept:

Pitch is black and what? All right, So? I’m still cute! That’s how we look at stuff. You could tell me that my daughter, Darla, is black, yeah but is she black Indian? What is she? She’s Black? You can’t define a person by the color of their complexion. That’s not their ethnicity. That’s not who they are. You can’t define someone by the color of their skin. It’s ridiculous. It’s absurd.

Marla ends her narrative by choosing to cultivate tools of resistance towards any definitions of about her or others that are simply based on skin color. Here, Marla is clear on what race is not. Color is not ethnicity for from Marla’s perspective, and cannot tell anyone much about who you are as a person, who happens to have a certain color skin. Here, Marla incorporates race into her central knowledge base in terms of describing what she is not—she is not just skin color from what she now understands skin color to mean for her in Brooklyn. In this way, Marla makes sure to assert her personhood. She is a person with skin, not a person behind a skin color. Her Trinbagonian cultural underpinnings contribute to her response of absurdity in judging someone by their skin color. The incorporation of skin color rules into Marla’s central knowledge base is complex. She reinforces conscious efforts to keep skin color out of her mediating artifacts, in terms of using it to form opinions about people. From Marla’s story, even though she has had some negative experiences with African American women in particular, her negative views seem to be rooted in her interactions, and possibly where they are located (inner city). However, Darla is adamant about keeping skin color as something that is beautiful and positive, which is squarely placed in her Trinbagonian culture.
**Dominant Commonalities of Motive Object**

In this activity, the motive-object of Proving Personhood and Authenticity contributes to the overlapping object of Reinventing Trinbagonian Culture in Brooklyn by setting distinctions between cultures and color. For example, Marla’s decides to relegate the views of the dominate culture on skin color on the fringes of her experience, while actively promoting and reinforcing her views on skin color as oppositional to how the concept is constructed and used in U.S. culture and Brooklyn.
Tensions: Being Trinbagonian in Brooklyn

In this activity, participants first experienced a complicating action that signaled tension between the rules and the community of practice. The rules that governed being Trinbagonian for participants were different in this community because everyone was not Trinbagonian. Of those who claimed to be Trinbagonian in these neighborhoods, their definitions and levels of participation in the community varied. Among the migration experiences of Trinbagonians in Brooklyn, the presence of cultural dissonance and regaining a sense of identity and how to “be” in this new place of Brooklyn. At first, they don’t understand where they fit in a community of practice, even among other Caribbean people. General’s narrative contains descriptions of being in the military and running away to find “his people” because he was the only person of Trinbagonian or Caribbean heritage among his peers. Darla describes intense feelings of feeling “lost” and “small” in a new place, and not understanding what to do in and with the place in Brooklyn. Elaine describes her experiences with depression because of dreary Brooklyn winters when she first moved to New York to her sister’s house, coupled with the fact that she was far away from home. For participants who experience this feeling of displacement and disconnect, they first had to cultivate rules to govern their personhood, as Darla did with her authentication process of separating herself out from those who did not hold a Trinbagonian birth certificate. She distanced herself from certain structures in the dominant culture by shutting out those who she did feel where sincere or culturally sensitive. She also excluded from her forming community of practice “Default” Trinbagonians who had never stepped foot in the country but claimed heritage. Next, a community of practice had to be realized.
Community Recognition

Realizing community is not as difficult for all participants, depending on their migration experience. For participants who may have taken a few pit stops before arriving in Brooklyn, they had different experiences. Roland’s first stop in the United States was a small rural town in the Midwest to take a training course for a year on caring for horses. Roland was a horse trainer and breeder in Trinidad and Tobago and had come to the States to get the best training in this area. Roland describes being so “culture-shocked” that he immediately wanted to leave. Additionally, Roland quickly became bored in the course and asked to take the final exam for the yearlong course within a month. He asked in the second week, and had to convince the administrators, who finally conceded, but required that he finish out a month in the course, and pass with high marks. Roland describes finding Brooklyn after being in the United States a few months—and never leaving because he felt at “home” here. As a result of feeling a sense of familiarity and home, Roland dove right into activities within the Trinbagonian cultural groups. As he did this, he found people from his hometown of Belmonte, who had also migrated from Trinbago a few years or months before he did. As Roland solidified his community of practice, he also solidified the rules and instruments that governed how he would contribute to the surrounding community as a Trinbagonian, and as a neighborhood resident of Lefferts Gardens.

Sesame Flyers

Margaret’s first stop in the United States was in Hartford, Connecticut. After a short time, she relocated to Brooklyn. She describes her experiences with encountering the Brooklyn Trinbagonian culture as good and relieving. She didn’t like the cramped space of her first few dwelling places as compared to Trinidad and Connecticut where she lived in homes. Her first
apartment was in Brooklyn. She was happy soon to find others from Trinbago and the Caribbean. However, she stayed on guard because she had a young son and was a single mother living a part of East Flatbush that was ridden with crime. This neighborhood, however, slowly became more filled with people from the Caribbean and Trinbago before she left to move to a home in Canarsie, where many Trinbagonians live as well. Margaret is a full-fledged member of the Trinbagonian culture in Brooklyn who participates and plans many events, as her husband was a founder of a Trinbagonian social club named the Sesame Flyers. Margaret explains her experiences:

“Sesame Flyers” is one of our hangout spots when we’re hanging out. It’s actually a cultural club, but it is geared towards grooming kids. So the motto is “Love a Kid Today and Every Day.” Sam [her husband] is the co-founder of the Sesame Flyers. So what they did was they started pooling their money together in the early days. They had a couple of formal dances, and they had sports days for the children, but everything was geared for having family together.

Margaret’s involvement in this club grows as her husband’s involvement grows as well:

So they had talent shows; they had sports days where you can take your kids there. They had classes. They taught kids Math and English and steel band on Saturdays, so your kids had some place to go. The adults did a lot of the planning, and they [the children] were around, so you basically get to spend time with your children.

Margaret and her son spent time at the club and got involved a majority of the activities that the club had to offer for children:

[The children and adults were] in the same setting in the same building, in the same neighborhood, the same events sort of. So that was very fruitful for the neighborhood. That was one of the biggest organizations that catered to kids [in East Flatbush] and keeping them busy and out of trouble and things like that—and teaching [Trinbagonian] culture because all of our children, at some point played in the Sesame Flyers Steel Band. They originated in Brooklyn, but it started from a group of [Trinbagonians] who hung out in Trinidad. They used to get together every Carnival and Trinidad and have this little cookup where they made all this provision and codfish…so they used to meet once whenever they go to Carnival in Trinidad. One day…they started about possibly starting a club. So it started as a club and then it just…they wanted to make it meaningful when they came back to Brooklyn. They actually sat at one of the guy’s home, and they thought about how they could start.
Marla shows how culture and place remain present in Trinbagonian culture in Brooklyn. The ease of travel between countries keeps Trinbagonians connected to place and meanings of place in Trinbago. Consequently, this affects how they approach forming cultural connections in Brooklyn pursuant to the goal of this activity. Margaret continues to describe how culture is:

So this is how they started in Brooklyn, on Church Avenue. They’ve been on Church Avenue in Brooklyn for…they bought a building eventually over the years. They’ve been at that location for quite some time. I would say 25, 30 years. They actually get support from the city and the Beacon program, so they still have those practices for the children; they still have the steel band; they still have the clubhouse, where you can rent to have parties and events. And they actually bring Mas costumes for Labor Day. So they have a band that comes out on Labor Day as well [they have Mas Camp there].

Margaret gets into the specifics of teaching kids Trinbagonian Culture at Sesame Flyers:

Initially, they taught the kids; they did the sewing classes; they did cooking classes, and they did cooking classes. The steel band, folk dancing, they had different dance groups. And those were adult volunteers who took kids under their wings. So, it was quite a large group. [They had] Sports…some of the soccer and other sports. They actually taught kids, and they would do it on a sports day…once a year they had a sports day at Boys and Girls Grounds in Crown heights. [Sesame Flyers activities had] a Trinidadian flavor sort of…and they also played Mas for Kiddies Carnival during Labor Day.

There are skills that every Trinbagonian needs to know, according to Margaret and other participants, and they are not taught in the United States. These skills function as mediating artifacts, establishing a basis Trinbagonian culture among children and adults in Trinbagonians households who attend Sesame Flyers, which serves more than 200 children and their parents in Brooklyn each year:

[Additionally,] in Trinidadian [culture] you sort of teach your children skills in how to do everything. How to cook, how to sew, how to clean, how to do all of these things. So that’s important too. I find that in this country people are not sending their children to learn how to sew really, So that’s [taught] in a Caribbean, Trinidadian flavor. Because this is what…in the Caribbean this is what people do—you don’t have to be perfect, but you have to learn all of these things.

The Sesame Flyers are an important example of how to foster a community of practice that can be in place to help new Trinbagonians and others from the Caribbean find the cultural connections they need to live successfully in a foreign culture. The existence of groups like the
Sesame flyers promotes a Trinbagonian community of practice that contributes to the motive-object of reinventing Trinbagonian culture in Trinidad, especially for children.

To mediate their sense of personhood, and authenticity participants describe primarily chosen to understand how to be Trinbagonian in Brooklyn by organizing with others, and proving and promoting their authenticity as part of cultural group that was located in Brooklyn but based in Trinidad in Tobago. Participants described the rules that they had to incorporate into their central body of knowledge about Brooklyn, and the Trinbagonian culture in Brooklyn in order to cultivate connections new and old. From the participants’ actions, regulating the rules of what it means to be Trinbagonian helps to foster tools that establish a thriving community of practice. Without those rules, the community of practice would struggle to stay connected, as Trinbagonian cultural groups in other cities do. For example, in Hartford where Margaret first lived the Trinbagonian cultural group had attempted produce Carnival, but could not foster enough participation or interest from other Trinbagonian or Caribbean people in the area.
Dominant Commonalities

In this activity, the motive-object of cultivating new and familiar authentic cultural connections contributes to the overall motive-object of the activity system by providing the structural identity for Trinbagonian culture in Brooklyn. Subjects fulfill the network motive-object and connected outcomes (i.e., improving Trinbagonian families and neighborhoods across international borders) as members of the cultural group continue to form new connections, cultivate old connections, and strengthen the community of practice in this activity.

Figure 6-13: Tensions- Being Trinbagonian in Brooklyn
Tensions: Maintaining a Local Lime

In this activity, complicating actions are first realized within the community of practice, as a primary tension. As Roland described, others describe liming in the community who may not be familiar with the activity derogatorily as “hanging out,” which he has argued does not correctly describe the group. From his description, it does not seem that Roland is against the term hanging out as he states that there are many similarities between hang out groups and limes. However, Roland holds liming in high regard as an integral structure of place and culture, because of his liming experiences and Liming Partners in Trinidad and Tobago. Limes are different for Roland, and other members of the Trinbagonian cultural group, because of the organizational structure. As a temporary member of the Flatbush Avenue Lime, I observed some essentials of a regular lime: a de facto leader, similar interests, frequent meeting times, and a strong planning and organizing component.

Roland acts as an integral part of the Flatbush Avenue Lime because of his love of calypso music. He shares this love with the group, through the songs that he writes and the meanings that he gleans from songs by great calypsonians such as Lord Kitchener and The Mighty Sparrow. This love of music acts as a mediating instrument and an implicit rule in this lime. Other Liming Partners do not have to be avid lovers of calypso, but will hear or partake in a considerable amount of discourse on the subject if they are part of this group. There are also different group interests that can be shared across the whole group, or with just some members of the group. For example, Harry and Roland both love English literature. They share books on the topic.

All of the Liming Partners share an interest in healthy eating and living. They plan how to maintain group interest by deciding what to buy together and share with the group to cut costs. They have explored access to food co-ops and farmer’s markets that have healthier foods that
would be otherwise inaccessible to each member of the group individually. For example, one evening there was a fast-paced discussion taking place surrounding buying avocados, almond butter, and a few other food items at Flatbush Junction when that farmer’s market was open on a Wednesday morning, while most of the group would be at work. Together they planned to get two cases of avocados, enough almond butter to split between the eight of them, and some other items for individual members of the group. They figured out how much everything would cost; they divided those costs among the group depending on what quantity of which items the partners wanted.

After this task, they polled who would be available the next morning to go to the Junction. Roland, who usually worked from his apartment, and another liming partner, who was on the job market, volunteered to go. Between all of this planning, there were also serious debates going on about the president, the impending mayor’s race, and any other topics that were brought up. By 10 p.m., almost all the Liming Partners would head to their respective homes for the evening, except for one or two who stayed behind if the hair salon was open late, to keep a watchful eye over the two women braiding hair late into the night.

**Is Hanging Out Negative?**

From this experience I understood Robert’s frustration with the derogatory nature of the term hanging out, and understood why he chose to defend the term liming. From his cultural knowledge base, he was liming. While liming and hanging outlook similar on from an onlooker’s standpoint, they are very different in experience, for example, from hanging out at the bar right across the street from the lime. These men never went into this establishment. Their place was on that particular block. It was familiar and convenient to them. I, however, had been to that bar several times, and noted the differences between socializing in the bar and socializing in the lime.
While both were forms of being social, one was organized at a much higher level. At the bar, I met people and got to know a little bit about them through asking questions about where they lived or worked over a beer and some music. Across the street at the lime, I met people and was immediately drawn into organizing or planning whatever the group had decided on for that evening, which usually, but not always, happened over a drink, and some music. These distinctions are important to Roland because he does not want liming, his Trinbagonian cultural tradition, to have the same connotations as “hanging out,” if those connotations are negative and cause the group to be perceived as a neighborhood nuisance.

As such, Robert resolves his community of practice tension by creating or emphasizes the rules and aspects of liming that make it liming to set it apart from “hanging out.” Separating liming from hanging out raises the possibility of other secondary tensions that affect what tools will be used to maintain these distinctions and how to add those roles division of labor. From my observations, I detected that there would be a temporary change in de facto leaders during the holiday season. This change would happen during the time when Roland (who is also the de facto mayor of his building, as designated by his neighbors) baked dozens of black cakes and loaves of sweet bread. He began passing out cards in the community in October so that residents could put in their orders. A de facto leader was a direct result of the tensions in the community of practice. Robert and his Liming Partners needed to keep visibility in the community high. Therefore Jacob, the next highest-ranking liming partner would take over the primary job of making sure the group said hello to passersby. He would also make sure that the group watched over the ladies at the hair salon, he informally monitored debates, and helped facilitate the planning of events that were brought up in the group.
Dominant Commonalities

In this activity, the motive-object of providing a place for informal learning and resource gathering, neighborhood planning and socializing contributes to the overlapping object of reinventing Trinbagonian culture in the activity systems network by maintaining the structure of limes and Liming Partners in Brooklyn. Additionally, Liming Partners’ distinction of liming from hanging out is central to pursuing the overlapping motive-object. Making this distinction of the group (lime) that has similar activities to “hanging out” contributing to the distinction of “Trinbagonian” culture in the overlapping object of the network.

Figure 6-14. Tensions- Maintaining a local lime
Tensions: Participating in Carnival

Carnival is the most important and largest Trinbagonian celebration in Brooklyn. However, there are some issues that need constant attention to make sure that tensions that arise are resolved with a higher level of satisfaction to satisfy the historical and cultural rules that are embedded in the activity. Participants in the study were all connected to Carnival in some way, even if they did not participate as full masqueraders during the Monday Carnival presentation and party on the road. For example, during Carnival week, there are many activities going on that participants can take part in. For example, Margaret attends and volunteers at Kiddie’s Carnival on Saturday in Crown Heights every year. She also attends Panorama yearly. Darla and Chadwick hosted a small fete further out in Brooklyn at a friend’s home, where Darla’s baby shower had been held a few months earlier. Francois never went to the Parkway and called the event “assness,” because of the changes it has undergone over the years.

Carnival has always drawn millions of people to the city of New York and the Borough of Brooklyn. However, the efforts on the part of city officials in conjunction with members of the West Indian American Day Carnival Association to change the name of the Carnival, the Carnival route, and shorten the times of Carnival have become very hot topics in the Caribbean community. Instead of participating as a reveler or onlooker on Monday, Francois becomes an organizer and promoter for fetes, and makes some money during the season. Darla, also views Carnival as a “bunch of baloney,” because of the presence of “Default” West Indians who she views as trying to pass as real West Indians on the Parkway during the Carnival presentation. Additionally, there have been rumors throughout the community that carnival would be shut down in a few years. The chair of the 2013 Carnival addressed this point in the 2013 Panorama program in a message to Panorama attendees. Mr. Randolph Babb, a long-time masquerader, pannist, and contributor to Carnival in many other ways discussed the “street talk” (rumors) and
failure that were not a part of Carnival. He reaffirmed that Brooklyn Carnival was bigger and better in 2013 and would continue to be so for years to come.

**Imminent Changes in Brooklyn Carnival**

From my Carnival observations sessions and notes, there are three topics of discussions on the bus, in The Trini Spot, in Wonder Wings, in the Flatbush Avenue Lime, and nearly every place that I went. Has Brooklyn Carnival been taken over by city politicians and the police? Was Carnival moving too far away from the historical reasons for the celebrations? Was there contention among factions in the Jewish community in Crown Heights concerning the Parade?

Participants, restaurant patrons, passersby, friends, and family all had an opinion about the amount of police presence. There were at least 25 police officers at every intersection, with at least 10 corrections buses along the route, with makeshift holding cells at the corner of Eastern Parkway and Nostrand Avenue.

In addition to an overabundance of police, there was an overabundance of political groups that participated in the Carnival procession with trucks, and loudspeakers, and politicians trying to be “West Indian American for the day” as a few shouted from their trucks. Some were even playing calypso. But most of these types of Carnival participants did not bring a band with masqueraders or anything related to the Caribbean to the Parkway. It seemed out of place.
from my perspective, and it seemed as if not that many people noticed. My points of reference were previous Carnival years when I lived in Brooklyn, Toronto Carnival 2012, Atlanta Carnival 2012, and Miami-Dade Carnival 2012.

There were no politicians in these iterations of Carnival. Additionally, after participating in Carnival 2014 in Trinidad and Tobago, the overabundant presence of politicians participating in the parade seemed to be unique to Brooklyn. How did this relate to the history of Carnival for Trinbagonian and West Indian people? The Brooklyn celebration was also the Carnival with the most police presence out of the four.

Figure 6-16. City Council Candidate at Brooklyn Carnival.
In the Jewish community, there were some issues with the weeklong celebration because there was a Jewish High Holiday the Friday before Carnival Monday. As Andreis and I sat in McDonald’s and discussed Carnival, we saw hundreds of members of the Hassidic Jewish community of Crown Heights walking through the streets. Andreis commented that some members of the community found it distasteful to have a parade in the community and that they were working hard to move it from Eastern Parkway to Atlantic Avenue. While there is no evidence of this beyond community gossip, there have been drastic changes to the Carnival procession that made it much shorter. Additionally, the J’ouvert route had been averted. My friend Ingrid had left town for that weekend anticipating the noise that would be in front of her window. However, the streets had been blocked off that led to her house, and the route had been changed and shortened, in a similar fashion to the Carnival route. What was happening with Brooklyn Carnival?

While many rumors fly through the community, no one could discuss beyond the level of “I know they are changing things with Carnival because my brother has a friend who works in the councilman’s office in the 43rd District and he says….” Hearsay spread through the community so fast that even news outlets reporting on Carnival started headlines with conjecture and questions like “Is Brooklyn’s West Indian Parade Growing a Tradition of Violence?” (Bed-Stuy Patch, September 2012).
Changing Rules, Changing Community

All of this information signaled one clear idea as to the state of participation in the weeklong Carnival celebration: There was evidence of some uncertainty in the rules, traditions, and policies that governed Brooklyn Carnival. The Caribbean celebration and tradition of Brooklyn Carnival is showing signs of big changes entering the 47th year. The shorter length of time, the change in the Carnival route, a change in the J’ouvert route, the heavy police presence, combined with rumors, the message from the carnival chair at panorama, and community unrest about violent murders that happen during the weekend of Carnival signaled deep questioning regarding the rules of carnival activity. As such, secondary tension spring forth to every part of the activity system.

The community of practice has certainly changed, with the addition of more than 10 political participants with trucks out of forty trucks on the Parkway. The divisions of labor have changed drastically as Carnival marshals, who are volunteers for procession that help keep order, have been almost completely replaced by the police. And, the most prominent mediating instrument of J’ouvert and Carnival, the road itself, is being slowly retracted as the event route is shortened, and the parade begins and ends earlier each year? While most of the intended outcomes are achieved, as a result, of pursuing the motive-object—reveling and masquerading to celebration freedom and to keep the tradition of Carnival in the Trinbagonian community alive—there are long lists of unintended outcomes that do not seem to fit the motive-object.

This is different than constructing knowledge from unintended outcomes, because the high increase in police presence and added political participant piece are planned components that seem to be added to this activity as rules. Each year police activity increases as the parade route and time shorten and decrease. Because of the changes in the other components of the activity, I infer that another motive-object is affecting the system. This motive-object may not be to shut
down Carnival or to move it away from Eastern Parkway, but there are changes to every part of
the activity, signaling a tertiary tension or the introduction motive-object to the existing system.

Francois gives clues to what this new object could be:

Well, they try to preserve it…They [Caribbean cultural group in Brooklyn] try to
preserve it [Caribbean culture in Brooklyn] via the Labor Day…The so-called
Carnival…we [Trinbagonians] call it a Carnival. We know what Carnival is. Up here,
ye call it a parade, and now, over the past couple of years, they try to change the word
from “parade” to “pride,” Caribbean Pride. And these are the things people not realizing.
These subtle changes that takes place in society, people just go along with the flow
because they are not realizing it. It’s a Carnival…It started in the Bronx…This “parade”
started in the Bronx…They brought it to Brooklyn. They used to go one way, now they
going this way now. Fine. They call it a West Indian Parade. Then they say, “Okay you
know what? It’s a West Indian American Parade,” because they want to incorporate it.
Now they want to change it to West Indian Pride and all it takes is the media to change
one word, and everybody runs with it. I was observing it this year again. Everybody’s
like, Channel 4, Channel 5 “Oh the West Indian Pride.” And then somebody else keep
saying the West Indian American Parade. So you see, they’re bringing the pride, they’re
trying to change it now because you have Gay Pride, Hispanic Pride, you have this Pride,
so they want to lump everything together under this ‘pride’ thing. It’s not a pride. No, it’s
not pride; it’s assness, it’s assness. I don’t go to it because [of the violence].
Francois presents a possible new motive-object that is viable: The phasing out of the

“West Indian American Day Carnival” and the phasing in of the “West Indian Pride.” A
reasonable motive-object arises that explains most of the changes happening within the rules of
the “Participating in Carnival activity” that is in turn producing the types of changes observable
throughout the rest of the activity components.
**Dominant Commonalities**

The motive-object of this activity system, while intact for now, is undergoing changes that signal a tertiary tension as evidenced by the tensions in the rules, mostly implicit, that are affecting the rest of the system. As Francois explains, the subtle, changes, which no one is looking for directly, can be picked up through this analysis and through the analytical eyes of Trinbagonians who “know what Carnival is.” If the motive-object changes, the overlapping motive object will also change, and they activity systems network as a whole will necessitate reevaluation.
Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed how the activities that arise out of the narratives of the participants of this study inform knowledge construction within place among this culture in Brooklyn New York. First, the primary ways that place affects knowledge construction among Trinbagonians is through the knowledge that is built in the country of origin that these participants describe as being rearranged and reinvented in order to thrive and succeed in Brooklyn. Second, place plays a role in constructing knowledge by serving as a historical reminder of emancipation in Trinidad and the literal fight to construct, give meaning to, and move about freely in space through celebration and culture centered knowledge sharing and creating. These ideas are the basis upon which Carnival remains a series of events and historical information that are spatially and culturally contested in both Trinidad and Brooklyn. I found evidence of this by making note of the discussions and political unrest in the municipality of Brooklyn involving the moving and curtailing of the Carnival celebration in New York (Rotondaro, 2013). Also indicative of this was the splitting of the Carnival procession into two separate processions in the city of Port of Spain in Trinidad and the creation of the SOCADROME, a play on Brazil’s SAMBADROME (TRIBE, 2014). It should be noted here that there are many Carnival processions in Trinidad. The significance of the Port of Spain procession being split in two was hailed as ushering in a new age of Carnival that was quickly moving toward a Brazilian model. However, this model simultaneously tore away from the traditional cultural meanings of freedom from slavery, the Canboulay Riots, Panorama, and the steel band. These activities were the foundational meaning behind the revelry, instead of what participants deemed as just participating in the revelry for revelry’s sake.

Third, place plays a role in constructing knowledge for those who hold power over another person by withholding knowledge of a place, as in Darla’s situation. The way that Darla
learned about creditworthiness--by her husband’s withholding of knowledge--is a significant way of constructing knowledge in place that benefits one party while denying the other the knowledge needed in the United States to make an informed decision. Because her husband had been here for a few years longer than she had, he had some information about the place that she did not. Her experienced outcomes negatively affected her outlook on what Brooklyn was like, even though there was knowledge being constructed about culture and place both internationally and locally. Power in knowledge construction is a factor that sometimes is taken away from the subject in the activity by someone else who has more power in the division of labor and the crafting of the rules. Place is used to make knowledge, withhold knowledge, express territorial boundaries, and reinvent culture continuously between the two places of Brooklyn and Trinidad.

As tensions are explored, the placed, locatable nature of knowledge construction becomes evident. What the subject does in place—in a grounded context—from their central knowledge perspective is key to appropriately deciphering the abundance of life knowledge that remains hidden in plain sight. From the analysis provided, I imagine that this knowledge is not hidden at all. Rather, the primary, rich knowledge perspectives of various collective and individual subjects in Brooklyn may simply be seen through the lens of marginalization that treats that knowledge as irrelevant. What would the state of knowledge construction and production by various groups in just Brooklyn be like if we were able to treat all knowledge and ways of understanding the world with same positive regard and level of importance as knowledge that is created, and disseminated by dominant culture structures that exist in places?
Chapter 7

Conclusions and Discussion

Perspectives in Knowledge Construction

Migrant perspectives like the those of the participants in this study that contain a transnational and translocational understanding of place are now commonplace across the globe. As international citizens are able to move quickly through space thanks to various tools of transportation and with moderate monetary resources concepts of “far” and “near” are radically different from a generation ago. When Trinbagonian migrants in this study first started migrating to the country, many of them were making their first airplane flight. And once they were here there was a sense of permanency of place that came with the migration experience. Today, place conceptions are changing rapidly, and with those changes new knowledge is constructed, picked up, and discarded daily about place and the decisions we make therein-- and the from whose perspective this knowledge is central. The centrality of knowledge construction perspectives in place is an important aspect of these construction processes that requires reassessment across all forms and types of learning.

The research presented here provides examples for understanding how people conceive and perceive of place. It gives insight into how perspective can be centralized better to understand what a learner is learning, how they are learning it, why it is important to them, and how this constructed knowledge affects the world around them. Perspectives in knowledge construction cannot be uncovered through conventional tools of schooling and education that leave the knowledge of many by the wayside. The state of unawareness that veils why some informal and formal learning perspectives are privileged over others should be investigated and when applicable, methodically removed.
Perspective and the White Gaze

I confronted issues with my own learning perspective as an adult, a Trinbagonian American, and a woman of color while conducting this research. In order recognize how learning perspectives differ with regard to place for my group of participants, I first had to interrogate certain beliefs linked to my own knowledge perspective and the places my perspective represents. I struggled with accepting myself as a researcher and a Trinbagonian American for this research, because I could not accept how far I had stepped outside of my cultural community and into the culture of academia, which at my institution is predominantly White. During the first months of my research the idea of ‘Kimeka a researcher’ was synonymous with “Kimeka the turncoat.” I felt odd, out of place, and hopelessly ill equipped to go back into my community—to talk to my people—and complete this research project. I had lost something. The focus of why my research was important to me had shifted, and I was not certain why. In the midst of writing this thesis I began to intellectually walk through the impending sense of failure and frustration to ascertain what I was learning. Through soul searching and researching, I came across academic literature on the White Gaze as theorized by Dr. Toni Morrison. The White Gaze represents the dominant societal perspectives that exist in relation my position as a Black, Trinbagonian American, female doctoral student of anchored by transnational and translocal places. Dr. Morrison’s work provided a framework within which I could reposition my perspective to complete my work.

Dr. Toni Morrison, winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1994, discusses the effects of the White gaze in her work, on televisions, and at symposiums (Cornell, 2013). In an interview with Charlie Rose (1999) she discussed the theory of the White gaze:

When I read the poetry of César, or the novels…particularly…Things Fall Apart… [this book] was more important to me than anything. Only because there was a language there,
a posture, there were parameters. I could step in now. And I didn’t have to be consumed
with or concerned by the White gaze. That was the liberation for me…my sovereignty
and my authority as a racialized person had to be struck immediately… Because in this
country [in] many books you could feel the address of the narrator, over my shoulder,
talking to somebody else--talking to somebody white. I could tell because they were
explaining things, that they didn’t have to explain if they were talking to me. It's
profound for me…because the problem of being free to write the way you wish to
without this other racialized gaze is a serious one for an African American writer.

As Dr. Morrison describes, I had finally found a place where I could step in intellectually. After
this revelation, I was no longer unaware of the difficulty that I was experiencing while writing
this work. I was struggling with how to handle the dominant gaze present in academia so that I
could reposition myself as a Black female researcher examining a part of the Afri-Caribbean
Diaspora. The implications of my positioning in the Diaspora and my repositioning as a
researcher caused some tension for me. Which rules was I to follow during this project, and to
what extent? Which cultural or academic tools could I use in the field to gain the information
needed for this research? How would I define my community of practice?

In this work, I struggled to keep the perspective of the participants central to knowledge
construction because attempting to centralize their place-based knowledge perspectives meant
first probing the foundations of place in my own learning perspective. Dr. Morrison discusses
how she dealt with the persistence of the dominant gaze as an author and intellectual:

I remember a review of Sula in which the reviewer said, this is all well and good, but one
day she (meaning me) will have to face up the real responsibilities, and get mature, and
write about the real confrontation for Black people— which is white people. As though
our lives have no meaning, and no depth, without the white gaze. And I have spent my
entire writing life trying to make sure that the white gaze was not the dominant one in any of my books.

Centralizing participants' perspectives was difficult for me, because I am a racialized person who has to act in some instances as if I am able to rise above race or culture, to totally and completely adopt other lenses and ways of understanding the world, in order to do research. However, I am never truly able to rise above race or culture; the higher I tried to rise as a researcher, the further down I was pushed back into examining race and culture, and my related perspectives and central knowledge. It is from this place that I present the finding—a place of struggle. This is not the type of struggle that I invite; however, it is the type of struggle indicative of tensions and learning in cultural historical activity theory. My writing and research cause me to challenge the rules that I have adopted about race, culture, academics, and intellectualism so I can rise. But not above race and culture; I rise to new levels of understanding how to centralize others' learning perspectives from their experiences as racialized persons in place.

Discussion of the Findings

The findings of this work are complex. When first looking at my data, I thought I found nothing. I had made no discovery regarding informal adult learning or knowledge construction from a critical place-based perspective. However, this initial thought, though persistent, clashed with Dr. Morrison’s words and I had to look again. What elements of knowledge had I set aside regarding my own perspective while trying to examine this work for analysis? As I discussed in Chapter 5 (Methods), I had already had doubts about my personhood as a Trinbagonian American as I entered the field to do research. Had I lost the knowledge perspectives that were a part of my direct heritage? Had I gone too long without examining myself, to be useful in this analysis? I was once again trying to push the lens to the back of my consciousness in order to be critical. But
this turned out to be the least critical approach I could take. With the aforementioned in mind, I searched my data again.

Findings from the analysis of data conducted for this research suggest that personhood and authenticity are important to establish early in place-based knowledge construction work especially when a drastic change of place has occurred. Adult learning is a reflective and personal pilgrimage that should directly involve the perspectives of learners. If researchers and educators are unaware of the state of personhood and authenticity of self from which a learner operates, then the knowledge that the learner produces or fails to produce will be misunderstood either way. The descriptions participants gave show that they struggled to fit together new configurations of experiences from their central knowledge bases to make sense of place and space in Brooklyn. The weight given to understanding place and space concerning how learners construct knowledge is worth reassessing because a reassessment can help both knowledge constructors and facilitators understand how personhood and beliefs about authenticity affect knowledge construction outcomes.

Additionally, the findings suggest that the place and space that these four neighborhoods in Brooklyn represent, as indicated by all residents, shaped their understanding of the “new world” as migrants. This relates to the research question concerning the role of place in knowledge construction among Trinbagonian migrants to Brooklyn. Participants indicated that their processes of knowledge construction about place as they knew it from Trinbago were challenged, affirmed, reshaped, and reinvented by simply living in the place and spaces of Brooklyn. This place-based knowledge construction happened as migrants participated in and created activities in these living, socializing, schooling, culture-making, and working spaces. The activities highlighted in this work can happen anywhere.

However, what makes Brooklyn unique is the number of Trinbagonians, Caribbean people, and other migrants to the area. New York City contains the largest Trinbagonian
population second to only the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago (Young, 2009; United States Census Data, 2010). As such, studying the migration experiences of these participants using cultural historical placed-based informal learning illuminates the informal learning perspective of participants. These perspectives demonstrate how participants understand the effects of place on knowledge construction in a place where family, friends, peers, and other citizens of Trinbago also chose to migrate en masse. Place is a physical, constructed, and imagined instrument that is manipulated under different conditions as participants remake place and space in order to persist in Brooklyn.

**Preserving and Centralizing Perspective**

From analytic structure presented in this work, the knowledge process that I constructed around harvesting perspectives was a very useful exercise in knowledge construction for the sake of locating knowledge elements, as conceived in a CHAT framework. I strived to push the cultural and the historical to the front of this work. First, I did this because I knew that culture and history were important to place, but as the data analysis process went on, I kept them central because I needed them. Simply taking a few quick analytical moments to understand culture and history made the process of identifying motive-objects in CHAT more viable.

One example of centralizing perspective that became important to address was the interpretation of intended and unintended outcomes in the nine identified activity systems. In CHAT, intended or unintended outcomes do not inherently hold negative or positive connotations. However when reading through the transcripts and listening to the stories of participants, I realized that unintended outcomes that participants focused on could seem negative to readers analyzing this thesis. This forced me to go back to participants and ask them about the ideas that they conveyed during interviews. I had to be careful about the wording of the inquiry,
however; I did not want to give participants the impression that what they conveyed to me was somehow *too* negative. In revisiting this idea, I found that participants were insistent on their version of events, and explanation of those events. For example I questioned Darla about part of her interview transcript (see p. 165) where she discusses acts of performative resistance in a new culture. During our follow-up conversation Darla stated:

To answer your question, yes, yes I became very intolerant [of cultural ignorance]. I can’t understand how people could be so stupid…so…just…clueless. That made me angry…still makes me angry. I chose to respond [essentially agree with an incorrect cultural perception] like that because I don’t have time answer foolish questions. Do we wear grass skirts? Really…really? Come on. Be educated or something. Why would you just assume…that we wear grass skirts? And live in huts? And eat rats? That was my favorite part. Who wants to just accept that? I know you wouldn’t accept that…but I wasn’t gonna let him know [the truth] either. He wasn’t getting that.

After speaking with Darla further, I realized that this issue is inherent to some traditional interpretations of cultural historical activity theory (Engström, 1999; Leontiev, 1983; Sawchuck, 2013). I struggled with changing the unintended outcomes to read as more “neutral.” However, I realized that this was in direct contradiction to the perspective of participants. There are two passages that reinforce the position that the perspectives of the collective subjects of activity are important, even in the appropriateness of outcomes, whether positive or negative. Roth and Lee (2007) state:

Because the outcomes of actions cannot be anticipated with perfect accuracy, the contexts in which human beings act change constantly, whereas the overall motive…may remain unchanged. The impossibility of perfect anticipation leads to the fact that goals and the actions that realize them have an emergent quality as the subjects of activity consciously choose them under the auspices of the overall object or motive being achieved. (p. 202)

This passage illuminates the idea that subjects expect certain outcomes and, in their efforts to achieve those, they also realize other outcomes that were not “anticipated with perfect accuracy.”

Further, a few scholars have noted the negative and positive nature of unintended outcomes in research with human subjects. Young (2009) delineated “positive outcomes” and
“negative consequences” (p. 49) while researching online social networking in people ages 19-65.

Regarding negative consequences, Young states:

When asked what may contribute to OSN [online social networking] being viewed negatively it was found that respondents felt quite strongly about receiving negative messages/actions and being ignored. Respondents also found the amount of time they were spending online to community to be an issue. [Regarding positive outcomes]…it was [also] found that OSN is clearly an important tool for keeping in touch and communicating with others, less important as a form of entertainment and relatively unimportant as a tool for meeting new people or demonstrating popularity. (p. 49)

I conclude that many of the unintended consequences in this work are the product of imperfect anticipation and the constant fluctuation of information found within an activity system at any point in time. The relevance of assigning negative or positive connotations for each unintended consequences discussed by participants in this thesis is low in comparison to the relevance of maintaining the perspective of participants concerning unintended consequences in activity.

As such, facilitators and researchers of informal learning can learn how to look for the perspectives that are inherent to the unique knowledge construction processes of learners. Finding perspective may involve choosing to note that participants’ perspectives on unintended outcomes may appear negative or positive. This is not at the heart of the discovery process, however.

Reporting on any number of negative unintended outcomes in this study was done with the participants’ perspectives about contrasting places at the forefront of discovery. An overwhelming amount of seemingly negative unintended outcomes in this study is indicative of the migration, transition, and acculturation experiences of the participants.

This work is not a call to take on the perspectives of various learners. This work is a call to build critical place-based knowledge construction approaches from a variety of interdisciplinary fields that can appropriately address perspective, so that educators can learn to pull the knowledge perspectives they see emerging out into the middle of informal adult learning experiences, where central knowledge perspectives belong.
Tertiary Tensions

Discovering competing motive-objects that affect the workings of the activity as subjects pursue the motive object is fundamental to how various perspectives converge in place-based learning. In traditional places of learning identifying competing motive-objects in activity systems can be indiscernible if teaching methods have no connection to the perspective of learners in the proposed learning place. Since place is a space imbued with meaning, and meaning is constructed, this leaves no place exempt from being a place where knowledge construction is happening continuously. The evolving nature of knowledge is important to note when looking for the motive-objects that may be introduced into a learning system from a more advanced, more resourceful, or more powerful motive object (as with the Brooklyn Carnival example in Chapter 6). The evolution of motive-objects demonstrates that informal learning is happening within the system while other components (new tools, different rules, new members in the community) attempt to integrate into the system. In the case of Brooklyn Carnival, at the level of the participant or masquerader, a learner may bypass the significant changes happening with Carnival citywide. All information that enters an activity system should be investigated for the potential it has to change a motive-object from the desire, want, or need of the subject.

Significance

This study illustrates that the main perspective of being Trinbagonian for of this group migrants served as the knowledge base they drew on to understand place and space in Brooklyn. Facilitators of lifelong learning, researchers, and policy makers must use the right tools to evaluate forms of knowledge that have been forced beneath the surface by prevailing knowledge that exists primarily to benefit the dominant culture. Finding and using the right tools to uncover
and preserve perspective benefits both the subject and the surrounding activity systems to which the subject is connected. Creating tools that are appropriate for centralizing informal adult learning from the perspective of the subject allowed me to employ CHAT and CPBPs as perspective preservation and informal learning identification tools. I can use a combination of the frameworks to place productive boundaries on what I expect a group to know, and what I should know about a group in different knowledge construction contexts. I can evaluate the process of constructing knowledge on appropriate terms that privilege the perspective of the subject. This re-centering process repositions the gaze of the dominant culture regarding how place and space are reinvented and used by any group that may be fewer in number or varied in skin color. The structural discrimination that exists within the dominant culture in the United States hardly extends equal privileges to the processes of constructing knowledge that happens outside of the sanctioned spaces for schooling and training within the country.

For this study, I unearthed the concepts of validating personhood and delineating authenticity through heritage as important tools used to maintain a sense of self and continued knowledge construction and product in the middle of severe knowledge deconstruction processes such as migration to the United States. Through this inquiry, I observed how this group of migrants represents all humans whose lives are always in a state flux and change. If this is true and life events happen every day no matter the size, then humans are also constantly participating in cultural, historical activity that guarantees that knowledge construction is happening. However, some subjects may not have the tools that can allow them to develop the perspective to recognize, comprehend and analyze their knowledge because of the monolithic nature of acceptable learning and acceptable knowledge. This narrow view of what is acceptable and appropriate learning leaves no room for knowledge discovery and dissuades lifelong and life-wide learning exploration in favor of an educational funnel systems (Aronson, 2008) that a weed out learners who do not fit that monolith.
The analytic structure of this study can be practically used to understand how validating personhood and delineating authenticity happen for people in grounded cultural, historical place. These two concepts emerge repeatedly for the group in this study as they discard, reuse, create, repurpose, and reinvent knowledge about place to successful create the tools and knowledge needed to navigate their new life situations.

Another area of significance for this study comes in the form of being able to revisit the minutia of quotidian knowledge construction as I strived to know how place was remade for Trinbagonian migrants in Brooklyn. Scholars often note how much misinformation exists regarding the knowledge construction process for marginalized, and peripheral groups (Carlin, 2009). Knowledge construction for non-dominant groups is not always given the respect as knowledge that significantly informs the lives of people who influence both local and global activity. Part of the discovery of this project is learning how to step out of the dominant gaze of academia that gives credence to Afri-Caribbean Diaspora knowledge construction in place as a marginalized part of the whole instead of the epicenter of exponential knowledge growth for Caribbean migrants in the United States. Unearthing a process that made the meaning making of this group central to their knowledge construction discovery was the main challenge of this study.

There is a certain level of difficulty that arose for me as a researcher as I endeavored to understand an aspect of a place in Trinbagonian knowledge construction using concepts and ideas that were foreign to how learning arose during data collection and analysis.

Limitations

The main limitations of this study are the amount of time and effort required to conduct such close analysis of knowledge construction through a place-based cultural, historical lens of knowledge construction. As Riesmann (1993) discussed, analysis methods based in narrative
methods are time-consuming and best suited for small studies (p. 94). However, without this level of analysis, how does one get to the level of learning that happening at below the surface for groups and individuals every day? Additionally, the limitation of time constructs how many details and to what level of specification activities can be presented. I collapsed some activities to present some useful nuggets of data, which leaves out more nuance than I am comfortable with for this type of research.

Additionally, the limitations of CHAT to accommodate seemingly positive and negative unintended outcomes may warrant further investigation in the quest to maintain the perspectives of subjects in learning activities. My perspective as a researcher, a Trinbagonian American, and a participant-observer significantly affects the analytical process (as reviewed in “The Diary of an Insider Researcher” on pp. 111-114).

**Boundaries versus Limitations and Further Study**

Conversely this method also removes limitations and sets useful boundaries within which place-based knowledge construction can be analyzed and assessed. Additionally, it is important to stress that this is one method of many that may be employed to uncover learning processes. The work is first uncovering learning correctly, given the inadequacy of the tools we currently have that only evaluated one, possibly two learning perspectives. For further study, others may focus on the diverse ways of unearthing activity systems in detail that uncover knowledge perspectives. These perspectives have been central for many people from different walks of life but subsumed in the perspective of the dominant culture. These ways of understanding the world can be explored systematically to develop appropriate perspective-centric tools for learning identification, validation, and evaluation.
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Adult Education Program, Pennsylvania State University, Grad Assistant, 1/09-5/11
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Reports


Presentations


Toso, B. W., Campbell, K., & Prins, E. Schaefer, B., Witherspoon D. P., Woodhouse S. (June, 2014). You have to be proactive with your child’s health: Learning and health literacy among caregivers of children with ADHD. 55th Annual Adult Education Research Conference: Harrisburg, PA.


Honors and Awards

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