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THE DEVELOPMENT OF ETHNIC IDENTITY AMONG AFRICAN-AMERICAN, AFRICAN IMMIGRANT AND DIASPORIC AFRICAN IMMIGRANT UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

by

VICTOR AKINLOYE OGUNDIPE JR.

Under the Direction of Dr. Meredith Greif

ABSTRACT

The goal of this project is to investigate the development of ethnic identity among different Black ethnic groups in the United States. The three different Black ethnic groups that will be investigated are: 1) African immigrants, 2) African-Americans, and 3) Diasporic African immigrants (Caribbean, Afro-Brazilian, etc.). These groups were selected because they broadly encompass the bulk of the range of people of African ancestry in the United States amalgamated under the term "Black." Through thematic analysis of in-depth interviews, this project explores the impacts of immigration status, discrimination and inter-group relations (between different Black ethnic groups) on the ways that members of different Black ethnic groups form their ethnic identities. This analysis reveals that place, ethnic pride, and inter- and intra-racial relationships all affect the ethnic identity development process differently across Black ethnic groups.

INDEX WORDS: African, African-American, Diaspora, Discrimination, Identity, Immigration, Pan-ethnicity

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VICTOR AKINLOYE OGUNDIPE JR.

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Masters of Arts

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2011

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May 2011

## DEDICATION

I dedicate this to Mommy. Without you this journey would not be possible.

I also dedicate this to 'The Beautiful Ones.'

To burgeoning scholars doing similar work; I don't agree with all of the epistemological groundings of this work, but concessions were made to get closer to loosening the epistemological stranglehold on other ways of knowing. One day this will not be necessary.

A.B.E.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to acknowledge my thesis committee: Dr. Meredith Greif (chair), Dr. Adia Harvey, and Dr. James Ainsworth. You all have helped me to become a better scholar and writer. As a result, you have a role in any scholastic successes I may have from this point forward.

I want to acknowledge and thank all of my family, friends and sources of inspiration; I am a product of your efforts.

I would also like to acknowledge and thank Mylinda, specifically. This thesis would not be without you.

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Purpose of the Study

In the last few decades, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of Black students enrolled in higher education in the United States. Though Black representation has augmented in these institutions, the representations of different Black ethnic groups has not increased uniformly, as Black immigrant students (mainly West Indian and African immigrants) are overrepresented in comparison to native born Blacks (Massey et. al, 2007). Research on this topic has ultimately produced inconclusive results about the precise causes of these differences, but the rising number of Black ethnicities in institutions of higher education highlight that they are a significant portion of the Black population that is often overlooked, particularly regarding the ways in which their racial/ethnic identity is similar or different from U.S. born Blacks and other Black ethnic groups. Black ethnic groups are often simply aggregated together under the racial category "Black" without respect to the ethnic diversity that exists between them, but analyses of similarities in how these groups (i.e. Caribbean, Kikuyu, Yoruba, African-American) construct their ethnic identities are rare. This study will examine the differences in Black ethnic groups' identity construction, which is imperative to gaining a greater understanding of the intra-racial dynamics of Blacks in the United States and their implications for Blacks' social, political, and economic status. By investigating the ethnic identity of three groups (African immigrants, African-Americans, and Diasporic African immigrants), this work will move beyond literature in this area that simply analyzes the difference between foreign born and native born Blacks, as well as studies that only compare two of these three groups.

# 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

## 2.1 Race and Ethnic Identity

Benedict Anderson's concept of imagined communities provides a strong foundation for understanding the *invented* nature of social identities (Anderson, 1983). Imagined communities are socially constructed communities of people who cognitively see themselves as a part of a larger group. These communities are imagined in the sense that the shared identities of members are not intrinsic; they are socially constructed and are given meaning through a complex web of human interactions. Anderson posits, "communities (identity groups) are to be distinguished not by their falsity/genuineness, but the style in which they are imagined" (Anderson, p. 4). Thus, the critical marker between identity groups is that members of distinct groups view themselves and non-group members differently. It is important to note that the imagined nature of identity does not make it any less socially relevant. The fact that identity politics is the site of such unity and dissention simultaneously is a testament to its significance.

The construction of both racial and ethnic identity is a multifaceted process influenced by issues of structure and agency (Howard, 2000). It is shaped by social, political, economic, and historical factors. Ethnic identities are created through boundary work of individuals and groups; collective meaning is established and reifies a certain way of life, particular ways of thinking, and unique cultural products (Nagel, 1994). It is critical to note that the process is dynamic and thus the shape, size, and porousness of boundaries are constantly shifting based on day-to-day interactions and social events (such as immigration and discrimination). Ethnic identity development is an active lifelong process; individuals may have an ethnic identity, but they also 'do' ethnicity (Bernal et. al, 2000; Espiritu, 1996).

Omi and Winant's seminal work *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1980s* (1986) discusses the concept of ethnicity as an element of social discourse that emerged as a new way to discuss race through a focus on culture as opposed to biology. Ethnicity has always been closely tied to race and racial discourse, and at times the two concepts are even used interchangeably. Ethnici-

ty, however, has grown beyond its origins as a simple byproduct of racial discourse to a fully thriving identity category in its own right, interestingly, under which race is sometimes subsumed. But, what exactly is ethnic identity and how specifically is it different from race?

Culture is crucial to the idea of ethnic identity and it is the primacy of culture that separates ethnic identity from racial identity. Fox defines ethnicity as "a combination of cultural affinity, geographic roots, language religion, sense of history and sometimes 'ascribed' race." Race is also defined as "a biological concept now discredited by most [scientists] as a way of categorizing human beings because it is based on superficial, vague and inaccurate characteristics and because it has been used over the past 200 years to create a bogus hierarchy of cultural, moral and intellectual worth that has justified unequal treatment" (Fox, 2001; p. 14-20). In her research focusing on conversations about race with college students, Fox found that even collegiate social science students were not always cognizant of the distinction between the concepts of race and ethnicity. These students made sense of ethnicity through focusing on the cultural, geographic, religious, historical, and ancestral aspects of identity. Though these factors may sometimes intersect with race when viewed through an ethnic framework, race was seen as historical or ancestral. For instance, one student who identified as being Black through the lens of historical and ancestral factors stated, "I am not African-American, I'm black. I refuse to be called American until the day that this country treats me with the same value and respect as everyone" (Fox, 2001). Though this student identifies as Black, it is a reaction to a historical legacy of ancestral oppression as opposed to biology.

A poignant aspect of Fox's definition of ethnicity is her emphasis on ascription. Ascription (or ethnic categorization) is the imposition of an identity by a dominant group on a less powerful group (Espiritu, 1994). Ethnic and racial groups are sometimes lumped together, divided, or re-amalgamated by dominant groups. The assumption that ethnicity is only a voluntary phenomenon is a weakness in the way that ethnicity is conceptualized, as it downplays the role of ascribed status which is frequently

different from self-identity (Espiritu, 1993). Imposed ethnic labels have the potential to be either an oppressive imposition or a stimulus for collective resistance and empowerment against the dominant group.

Pan-ethnic identities, a key focus of the current research, can be either ascribed or chosen. Ethnic groups may be callously lumped together, divided, or re-amalgamated by dominant groups, but pan-ethnic unity can be a source of collective resistance and empowerment against oppression. For instance, the Black Nationalist philosophies of the 1960's and 1970's and the Pan-Asian movement were largely centered on the use of pan-ethnic politics as a tool to overcome social oppression. Pan-ethnicity has been pursued by collective ethnic groups as a strategy to further shared interests through greater political representation. It is important to note that the process of ethnic amalgamation can marginalize small ethnic groups becoming a part of a larger pan-ethnic identity (Espiritu, 1993). Not unifying under imposed pan-ethnic identities, however, could potentially equate to political powerlessness in terms of a lack of group representation.

## 2.2 Black Ethnic Identities

The current study addresses ethnicity in the Black community because it is a particularly unique and understudied topic. In Waters' *Black Identities: West Indian Immigrant Dreams and American Realities,* she posits, "Americans tend to see race and ethnicity as interchangeable for black Americans–failing to recognize any ethnic heterogeneity within the racial category of black" (Waters, 1999, p.7). This observation highlights the often-overlooked nature of the topic of Black ethnic identities. Waters' work is particularly involved with the dynamics of 'becoming American' and the process of assimilation for Black immigrants, juxtaposed with the process for European immigrants in the early 20$^{th}$ century. Waters' work also explores the similarities and differences between the racial and ethnic identity formation of first and second-generation immigrants (the children of initial immigrants); and explores

whether second-generation immigrants identify racially, as Black, or according to their ethnic background. In investigating these issues, Waters' main contribution is her observation that the straight-line assimilation model, which is based on the assimilation experiences of early 20th century White European immigrants to the United States, does not fully capture the dynamics of the late 20th/early 21st century experience and realities of Black immigrants (Alba and Nee, 2003; Lee and Bean, 2004).

The straight-line assimilation model assumes that proceeding generations of immigrants will become more economically successful and increasingly accepted into the American mainstream. Waters' work shows that this is not necessarily the case for Blacks. If a model were created to capture Waters' findings about Black immigration, it would resemble a fork in the road where Black immigrants may take one of two general paths: 'become American' (choosing to identify racially as Black, arguably the most stigmatized racial identity in the U.S.) and face augmented economic challenges as a result of doing so, or maintain their ethnic identity and reap greater educational and financial success. A crucial difference between the straight-line assimilation model and this model is that the idea of 'becoming American' for Whites has a very different meaning for Blacks. For a White immigrant, 'becoming American' means integration into the dominant racial group in American society and thus an increase in privilege. On the other hand, for a Black immigrant, 'becoming American' means adopting an identity of a highly devalued group and sharing the mantle of a legacy of slavery and supposed inferiority.

This aspect of Waters' work begins to point to a structural incentive for Black immigrants to create or maintain a social distance from Black Americans for their own wellbeing and life chances. While Waters focuses primarily on the implications for Black immigrants in terms of comparison to other immigrant groups, her analysis can be used as a springboard for further investigation of intra-racial relationships of Black ethnic groups in United States. For instance, Waters' analysis does not include African immigrants, a rapidly growing subgroup that differs greatly from West Indian Blacks and native-born Blacks. Additionally, her work clearly shows that Black ethnic groups do not follow the standard assimi-

lation model, but the disparities between Black ethnic groups are not well understood. By engaging these weaknesses in the literature, particularly the inclusion of African immigrants (which Waters did not do), this project will gain a better understanding of the complexities of Black ethnic identities.

The key variables that have been chosen in this project, discussed below, have been selected because they were overlooked or not given proper treatment in Waters' work, which has been the foundation for many studies on racial and ethnic identity. Scant research has addressed a particular factor that may affect intragroup dynamics and consequently identity: context. Furthermore, although she highlighted racial discrimination and intragroup relations among native-born Blacks and West Indian Blacks, the findings are incomplete because they do not represent the experiences of African immigrants, even though they are a rapidly growing subgroup in the United States. Overall, these key factors may contribute to noteworthy disparities in Black subgroups' racial and ethnic identity.

### 2.3 Discrimination

Racial discrimination has a profound impact on shaping racial and ethnic identity, though not in the same way for all Black ethnic groups (Schildkraut, 2005; Scott, 2003). For example, in Waters' study of Caribbean immigrants, heightened discrimination led to a greater likelihood of identifying as African-American, while less discrimination resulted in greater retention of their ethnic identification (Waters, 1994). African immigrants also have an option to choose between a racial and an ethnic identity, but African-Americans do not, as a Black racial identity is perceived as synonymous with an African-American ethnic identity in the dominant society. Conversely, Black immigrants are sometimes referred to as invisible immigrants because they are often compared to African-Americans, suggesting lack of choice in racial labeling. By failing to attain an immigrant status, these Black ethnic groups may face more racial discrimination, causing them to identify as Black as opposed to identifying with their ethnic origin.

Many “upwardly mobile” second-generation youth not only identify using their ethnic identity, but also are also more likely to view the United States as a place of opportunity. These upwardly mobile youth report fewer instances of perceived racial discrimination. On the other hand, poorer second-generation youth immigrants are more likely to identify as African-Americans (Waters, 1994). Economically disadvantaged immigrants are also more likely to see racism as an important factor in their lives when compared to more economically advantaged immigrants, thus it plays a larger role in shaping their identity (Waters, 1994).

It has also become clear that for Black ethnic groups, ethnic identity buffers the stress of perceived racial discrimination. Ethnic identity serves as a way to cope with discrimination through creating a sense of belonging and cultivating a space to reinforce positive group perception in contrast to the racist ideas produced in the dominant society (Mossakowski, 2003). Additionally, for many Black immigrants, discrimination from other Black groups plays a role in shaping whether they identify racially or ethnically. Perceived discrimination from native-born Blacks increases the chances that Black immigrants will identify ethnically as opposed to racially. Raumbart and Portes’ *Legacies* (2001) also explores the ways that resilience to discrimination plays a role in the development of strengthening ethnic identity. In this sense, both discrimination and the response to discrimination prove to be important influences of ethnic identity construction.

Exploring the role that discrimination plays in shaping the ethnic identity of the rapidly growing African immigrant population and comparing it with other Black ethnic groups is an important contribution. The invisible immigrant status of African immigrants, in tandem with their position as the most educated immigrant group in the U.S., makes their experiences of discrimination unique from other Black ethnic groups (Kalu, 2007).

## 2.4 Intra-racial Relationships

Relations between Black subgroups should affect the way individuals identify racially and ethnically. Evidence from the African Diaspora "contradicts the ideas of the Middle Passage as a historical discontinuity" for people of African descent (Miller, 2005, p. 30). A shared experience of oppression based on race and economics has fortified the historical and cultural links between diasporic and continental Africans, transcending the damage done by the slave trade and the loss of African language that accompanied it (Lake, 1995). Struggle against racism, oppression, exploitation and a search for freedom and equality connect the African diaspora (Jackson and Cothram, 2003). But, this is a dynamic process, and thus bonds must either be consciously forged or maintained to keep inter-ethnic connections alive; diasporas are not natural occurrences and they must be created through negotiation by groups with different experiences coming together around a common thread.

Though highly used, the term African diaspora is a greatly contested one. In his often cited *Black Atlantic* (1992), trans-Atlantic scholar, Paul Gilroy, references the Atlantic Ocean as the conduit that separated ties between Blacks on the African continent and those transported to the Americas. Gilroy views the Middle Passage as a severing of ties, thus making the concept of an African diaspora null and void. This may not be the case, but what is clear is that the Trans-Atlantic slave trade created different experiences and different ideas of "diaspora" for Blacks based on their location (Zealea, 2009). Although there may be connections between Black people, it is important to avoid viewing them as a monolithic group, and regrettably, the nuanced experiences of Black immigrants of different ethnic backgrounds have been rarely investigated. By separating the foreign born Blacks into African immigrants and Diasporic immigrants, this project will take a necessary step toward a more advanced understanding of Black ethnic identity.

Both bonds and cleavages characterize intra-racial relationships of Black ethnic groups in the U.S. In Chacko's (2003) study of Ethiopian immigrants, many Ethiopians reported that they were Black

when asked to report their race, but voiced that they did not feel comfortable with that description. Many did not like the term African-American to describe them because they felt that they were different; in fact only one respondent in Chacko's (2003) study of Ethiopian immigrants voiced feelings of unity with African-Americans, while the rest of the respondents expressed their feelings of separation from African-Americans. Interestingly, many Ethiopian youth stated that the longer they lived in America, and ostensibly the more discrimination they faced, the more aware they became of race, though Chacko (2003) does not conclusively state that this caused them to identify more so racially.

The repudiation of Africa (and as a result African immigrants) by members of some Black ethnic groups is a factor that further drives a wedge in intra-racial relationships. Many African immigrants report being frustrated by constant questions about whether people in Africa wear clothes, drive cars, or live side by side with animals (Traore, 2003). These ideas of African people are largely influenced by popular culture's depictions of Africa as primitive. A damaging outcome of these stereotypes is the distortion of relationships between people of African descent by creating images that cause them to view each other through a negative and often inaccurate lens. African immigrants are not the only victims; various Black ethnic groups hold stereotypes about other Black ethnic groups. Jackson and Cothram's (2003) research demonstrated that members of different Black ethnic groups admitted that they felt that cross-cultural communication between people of African descent was problematic. Africans were viewed as being arrogant, backward, suffering from colonialism and having no unity. African-Americans were depicted as having a "slavery mentality" and a history of oppression that has been internalized. West Indians were depicted as apathetic and less radical (Jackson and Cothram, 2003, p.596).

## 2.5 Context

It is important not only to study Black intra-racial relationships, but the social contexts in which these relationships are formed. The role of place is critical to a study of the development of ethnic identity, as it is a variable that shapes and is shaped by the experiences of social actors. For instance, Waters' (1999) work compares and contrasts West Indian immigrants and African-Americans in New York. Her research provides important information, but the patterns that emerge are rooted in the context of one place, New York City. Many analyses of Black ethnicity take place in northern cities (New York in particular), and very few analyses of the formation of ethnic identity have occurred in southern cities. This is problematic because it diminishes the possibility of generalizing findings to various settings. Thus, the proposed study will be conducted in Atlanta, Georgia. By considering place and the concept of placemaking, we may gain a more nuanced understanding of the spatial aspects of the process of ethnic identity construction.

Placemaking refers to the role of cultural influences and local and global histories in shaping urban environments (Luke, 2003; Wood, 1997). Placemaking includes factors such as the architecture, signage, economy, and political influence of groups in urban areas, but the issue of the history undergirds all of these, as Nieves posits, "by examining the embedded history of these places, one can further understand how the layering of historical meaning occurs (2008, p.24)". Having made this observation it is also important to keep in mind that placemaking is a dynamic process; placemaking is rooted in history but it is not stagnant. The flow of immigrants in U.S. urban areas greatly contributes to the complex and global nature of placemaking.

Building on the idea of placemaking in her study of race and ethnicity in New York, Foner references the concept of the city in context (Foner, 2007). This refers to studying ethnicity in cities with a focus on the factors that create unique historical legacies in distinct locations. For instance, Atlanta has historically been affected by slavery, Jim Crow legislation, and the one-drop rule (where the existence of

any black ancestry renders an individual "Black"). This may suggest that in the South, Blacks of different ethnicities may be more likely to identify racially than ethnically (Harris, 2002). Racism has occurred historically in New York as well, but it has traditionally been a site where racial and ethnic identity expression has taken on a more voluntary nature than Atlanta due to continuous immigrant flows and the large immigrant presence in New York (21.9% of the population is foreign-born in comparison to 7.6% in Atlanta) (FAIR, 2006; FAIR 2007). Based on this aspect of New York's history, recent immigrants may face an environment where ideas about race are less stark than the South and that has more knowledge of the ethnic diversity among Blacks. It is also important to note that the Black population in New York is comprised of a wider variety of ethnic subgroups relative to Atlanta, given that New York is a leading point of entry for many immigrants. The greater heterogeneity among Blacks in New York also suggests there will be greater emphasis on nation-specific or region-specific identities as opposed to a pan-ethnic one.

The spatial distribution of Blacks in both Atlanta and New York reveal great complexity. The city of Atlanta's Black population is 61.4%, while New York has a Black population of 25.1% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2007; U.S. Census Bureau, 2008). A closer look at the entire metropolitan racial distribution of both cities provides a somewhat different picture. Figures 1 and 2 show the racial distribution in both Atlanta and New York's metropolitan areas. On a metropolitan level, Blacks represent 28% of the Atlanta population, only slightly larger than metropolitan New York's 22% Black population (Census Scope, 2010). Thus, on a *metropolitan* level, Atlanta and New York have similar racial distributions. However, when viewed on the city level proper this is not the case.

Figures 3 and 4 show the distribution of West Indian immigrants in both Atlanta and New York. These figures show that in Atlanta, the West Indian population is sparsely populated throughout the metropolitan area, while in New York there are much denser concentrations. Figures 5 and 6 show the distribution of the Sub-Saharan African population in both cities. In Atlanta there are a handful of

densely populated pockets of Sub- Saharan Africans largely in the metropolitan areas and a more even and sparse distribution in the city proper. Similarly, New York has densely populated pockets of Sub-Saharan Africans (though denser than Atlanta) unevenly spread throughout both the city and the metropolitan area.

Overall, New York is largely characterized by Black ethnic enclaves adjacent to predominantly White areas, while Atlanta is more so characterized by a larger population of Blacks in the city proper in contrast to largely White suburbs in the metropolitan area. Drawing on studies of group consciousness we could hypothesize that the increased racial homogeneity of Blacks in the city of Atlanta may lead to a greater sense of collective identity (Demos and Hughes, 1990). The prevalence of ethnic enclaves in New York suggests the potential for stronger ethnic development in New York. It is not clear what impact the sparse distribution of West Indian immigrants and denser population of Africans in suburban-metropolitan areas of Atlanta will have on the process of group identity development. Overall, a primary goal of this project is to investigate how ethnic identity formation among Blacks varies across contexts, and to illustrate that Waters' study may not generalize to Blacks in cities with different historical legacies and demographic compositions.

### 2.6 The Intellectual Production of Ethnicity in the University Setting

In *Asian-American Panethnicity: Building Institutions and Identities,* Espiritu states, "although Asians in the United States have long been engaged in political action, their efforts never drew public attention until the 1960s. Prompted by broader political struggles and internal demographic changes, college students of Asian ancestry in America spearheaded the pan-Asian-movement (1992, p. 25)." Espiritu's quote points to the instrumental role that university students play in the production of ideas about ethnicity through student organizations, publications and Asian studies programs. This suggests that it is important to study ethnic identity in the university because students not only learn about eth-

nicity, but create and disseminate ideas about ethnicity that have the potential shape to shape the broader society. Wang et al.'s (1992) research on ethnicity and student organizations also revealed the importance of student organizations as places where ethnic frustrations are channeled and ethnic ideas are more openly exchanged. Ethnic student publications provide the opportunities for the dissemination of new perspectives, dissident views and further organization along ethnic pan-ethnic and/or racial lines (Espiritu, 1992). Further, African-American and African Studies programs and organizations create concentrated opportunities to focus on ethnic and racial issues. All of these avenues provided greater opportunities for understanding the ways that students intellectually contribute to shaping ethnic ideas for the population at large and develop their ethnic identity in the process on university campuses.

Students also play a key role in advocating, shaping and establishing the dynamics of pan-ethnic political agendas. Espiritu's work has shown how students have been instrumental in the creation of conceptions that have given rise to a pan-Asian agenda. Black students' conceptual contributions were instrumental to the Civil Rights Movement, Black Power and Pan-African politics in 1960's and 1970's (for instance Black activists Stokley Carmichael's conception of institutional racism, which is critical to the sociological discipline) (Carmichael and Hamilton, 1967; Espiritu, 1992). Many of these students not only create and propagate critical ethnic ideas, but also eventually move on to influential positions as professors, government workers, artists, activists and other positions where they have the ability to influence ideas about ethnic identity. Consequently, this study will employ the university setting as a backdrop to gain a greater understanding of ethnic identity development and the intellectual production of ideas about race and ethnicity.

In sum, the primary research question this study will address is: How do these three Black ethnic groups (African immigrants, African-American, and Diasporic immigrants) differ in their development of racial and ethnic identity? In exploring this question the project will investigate: 1) the impact of discrimination, 2) intra-group (Black) dynamics and 3) the impact of region and the unique nature of the

university setting as sub-areas shaping the identity process for Black ethnic groups. The unique contributions of this research are the inclusion of African immigrants (whose voice has been missing in key works in this research area), region (the research taking place in southern city), and a focus on the ways that the university setting plays a unique role in the creation of ideas about ethnic identity.

# 3 SAMPLING AND METHODOLOGY

## 3.1 Sampling and Methodological Framework

The sample population consists of individuals from three different Black ethnic groups: African-American, African immigrants, and African Diasporic immigrants. African-Americans are defined as people of African descent whose lineage in the United States dates back to the slave trade (Black people living in America with no connection to a specific African ethnic group) and/or who identify as African-American. African immigrants are defined as immigrants from an African country that have retained either an African ethnic or national identity. Diasporic African immigrants are defined as immigrants of African descent from countries that are a part of the African Diaspora (other than the United States in this instance).

This project includes Black, Georgia State University students of different ethnic backgrounds from the ages of 18 to 43. Non-probability sampling was used to conduct the research. Participants were recruited through organizational meetings and organizations' e-mail list. The sample size of this project is 30. Three student organizations were used to draw the sample: the Black Student Alliance (African-Americans), the African Student Association (African immigrants) and the Caribbean Student Association (Diasporic African immigrants).

It is possible that bias may have resulted from only selecting respondents that are members of ethnic organizations, as membership may serve as a predisposition to a greater understanding of the construction of ethnic identity. In an attempt to combat this possible bias, snowball sampling was used

to obtain non-organization members in the same social network. After participating in semi-structured in-depth interviews, respondents were asked if they have friends that are not in a racial/ethnic organization that would be willing to partake in the research project. Five non-members of a racial/ethnic organization were snowballed from members of each organization for all three groups and then interviewed. Five non-ethnic organization respondents will be selected from each sub-population, for a total of 15 respondents without membership in a racial/ethnic organization. This provides a total of 30 interviewees, 15 that are members of ethnic organizations and 15 that are not.

Interviews took place at different locations on the Georgia State University campus. On average interviews lasted 30 minutes. The longest interview lasted 55 minutes and the shortest lasted for 15 minutes. Interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed. Interview questions (Appendix C) addressed ethnic identity development process, discrimination and the importance of context. Interviews were coded as per themes revealed by analysis of the data (the interviews): interracial dynamics, intra-racial dynamics, ethnic pride and place. After the coding process poignant quotes representative of the sentiments of the majority of respondents (over half) were selected.

All interviews were conducted and coded by the researcher for consistency. Of the 30 respondents interviewed, only six were males (20%). This output was largely consistent with the gendered compositions of the organizations, at least in terms of active members (represented by attending monthly meetings). On two occasions the researcher attended monthly meetings of different organizations and recorded attendance. On the first instance out of a total of 25 attendees seven were male (28%). On the second occasion out of a total of 45 attendees seventeen were male (36%).

The nature of this research project is largely exploratory in the sense that it is qualitative and seeks to gain a better understanding of the way that people of African descent in the United States construct their racial/ethnic identity. Thus, the ideal format is face-to-face, in-depth interview given the complex nature of identity construction. In addition, the interviews were semi-structured so as to allow

for complexities to be more thoroughly explored. This cross-sectional analysis of African-Americans, African continental immigrants, and Diasporic immigrants is an important contribution because it builds upon Water's research and represents a new and more in-depth level of analysis of the complexity of the construction of Black ethnicities.

# 4 RESULTS

## 4.1 Interracial Dynamics

Regarding interracial discrimination, all Black ethnic groups noted experiences of White on Black discrimination. Respondents describe incidents of overt discrimination, including being called racial epithets and openly being denied access to opportunities or profiled based on skin color. For instance, a 25-year-old Caribbean female non-organization member shared, "I have been called nigger, I think in second grade somebody called me Black trash." Another respondent, a 25-year-old African–American female, organization member recounted an incident of discrimination involving local police, "I got pulled over by a White police officer for no reason. He was just like let me see your license and registration. I gave it to him and then he ran my information and everything was fine. After that he threw my insurance card back at me and told me that I was ignorant and just left." Additionally, respondents also cite covert forms of discrimination such as being stereotyped. In this regard a 21-year-old African-American male, non-organization member offers, "I've had a few incidents. Mostly from white people, you know that stereotypical fear of a Black man. I've had people lock their car doors when I walk by." These examples indicate that both overt and covert interracial discrimination remain serious dynamics that Black people in the U.S. face.

Of the three Black ethnic groups interviewed, African immigrants are the least likely to report that they perceive themselves as being the recipients of out-group discrimination. Furthermore, when African immigrants do cite instances of possible discrimination they often categorize these occurrences

as not worthy of their 'attention' or largely rooted in 'ignorance'. The sentiment of the majority of African respondents is echoed in the succinct, yet poignant words of a 43-year old African male, non-organization member, "I am above discrimination." This sentiment may not be intended as an expression of group haughtiness, but rather an attitude of refusal to acquiesce to the challenges of life, of which racism just happens to be one. It is not clear how realistic of an attitude this is towards racism for Black people across ethnic groups or even African immigrants themselves, but it is clearly an indication that perceptions of racism vary across Black ethnic groups. In contrast to Africans, African-Americans and Caribbean respondents were more adamant about the role that racism plays in their lives, giving instances of being called derogatory names (i.e. 'nigger, cheegro, big fat burnt burrito') and moving (or planning to move) to other states to escape racist environments and to seek better opportunities. These respondents are not giving up in the face of racism, but they do not express feelings of being above racism; they convey an understanding that they are clearly in the thick of racism and not above it.

A key phenomenon that emerged during this analysis is that largely, African respondents saw discrimination as primarily an African-American experience. While many African respondents say that they have not experienced discrimination, they later describe what could be viewed as seemingly striking instances of discrimination: unequal treatment involving employment, school, sports, and educational endeavors. African-American and Caribbean respondents, on the other hand, clearly identified events, such as curtailed access to the opportunities that their White counterparts enjoyed, as discrimination without reservation. This reveals that what individuals in one Black ethnic group perceive as discrimination may be very different from what many individuals in another Black ethnic group perceive as racism. Thus, it is not clear whether African immigrants actually experienced less discrimination or just perceived themselves as experiencing less discrimination. Therefore, perception is central to the analysis of African immigrants' experiences of discrimination. At the very least, African immigrants feel that discrimination is something that one has the ability to overcome, and in general they do not seem to think

that discrimination is a vital determinant of their chances in life. Rather surprisingly though, some of the most scathing analyses and comments about race relations and structural discrimination in the U.S. came from African immigrants, yet most of these comments about race relations were seen as relating specifically to African-Americans and Whites.

African immigrants did, however, recount invoking a Black immigrant identity to separate themselves from native-born Blacks as helpful in attaining employment, in educational contexts, and navigating more smoothly through U.S. society in general. Caribbean immigrants echoed this sentiment by confirming that in the labor market they are more likely to highlight their ethnic identity because it gives them an edge over African-Americans. African immigrants fully elucidate the strategic use of invoking their ethnic identity to escape discrimination, as a 38-year-old African male, non-organization member expressed:

> I came and discovered that Blackness may have a very pejorative connotation. It comes with a lot of baggage…so there is the tendency to distance myself from the African-American, so you often will hear me call myself an African immigrant and that is a distinct Black identity for me and for so many other people who are trying to navigate the whole complex of racial discrimination in the U.S…. the difference between me, the African immigrant, and the African-American is contrived, it's a contraption so to speak… It is more as some type of defense mechanism. It is more as a way of survival. It is not that the African-American has any characteristic or any attributes that is different from my own attributes. It is not that there are any cultural features or characteristics that make them inferior it is just that there is a label attached to the African-American, and if I allow that label to stick to me it simply means that I will find myself in the same predicament that they find themselves and it is a predicament of underachievement and lack of access to social opportunities and awards. So, in asserting my own distinct African immigrant identity I am challenging or trying to navigate the whole complex of racial discrimination to see if I can forge some type of headway.

This quote displays African immigrants' knowledge of the structural incentive to identify ethnically as a means of evading racial discrimination.

Another interesting phenomenon that emerged involves the learning and teaching about interracial discrimination between Black ethnic groups. Some African and Caribbean respondents spoke of instances in which they were not aware that they were being discriminated against by Whites, but were later informed that they had been by African-Americans. Thus, African-American friends and/or acquaintances clearly play a crucial role in alerting Black ethnic immigrants to the nuances of interracial discrimination in the U.S. A 36-year-old African-American female, non-organization member confirmed this by discussing an interaction in which she and an immigrant co-worker were called 'gal,' a racial epithet with historical baggage of which her immigrant friend was not aware. This kind of communication was both a source of bonding and tension. Intra-racial communication about interracial discrimination provides the potential for individuals from different Black ethnic group to bond through an understanding of the shared discrimination that they confront in the U.S. as a result of their Black skin. Conversely, in some cases tensions can arise from the clash of different understandings of interracial discrimination that members of varying Black ethnic groups bring to bear in their communications. In some cases, Black ethnic immigrants felt that African-Americans were being overly sensitive about racism, confirming Waters' finding of tension between Black ethnic groups over their conception of U.S. race relations. These exchanges serve as opportunities to learn, not only about interracial discrimination, but also about intra-group differences and similarities.

### 4.2 Intra-racial Dynamics

While African-American and Caribbean respondents identified the bulk of their discriminatory experiences as interracial (between White and Black), African respondents shared that they encountered just as much, if not more, discrimination from other Black ethnic groups (specifically African-Americans) as they did from Whites. Many African respondents feel as though African-Americans view them as an economic threat and competition. Additionally, African immigrants express that the narra-

tive of Africans as race traitors and 'slave merchants' is still prevalent. African immigrants view this mentality as a fundamental element in fueling the discrimination that they encounter from African-Americans. A 38-year-old African male, non-organization member summarized this sentiment:

> I also see that there is a growing instance of Black on Black discrimination and in fact I strongly believe that there is discrimination between African-Americans and African immigrants … many African-Americans will see me as an obstacle, they treat me as if I am a traitor in cahoots with the Caucasian to deprive them of jobs, to deprive them of respect, to deprive them of income, to deprive them of value and on top of that they tend to treat me as if I had a hand in their misfortune in America in the first place. They go back to the whole idea of slavery, if I was never sold in to slavery I would not be experiencing this in America and those who sold me into slavery where my Black brothers and sisters so I feed into that other oppressive structure, the structure of African slave merchants so there is a great deal of animosity between me as an African immigrant and the African-American all flying under the radar.

This quote illustrates not only the claim of Black on Black discrimination, but also the view of Africans as a threat. Moreover, we also see the recurring theme of Black intra-racial discrimination as having roots in a complex web of structural discrimination. Most striking are the implications of the assertion, "I feed into that oppressive structure." This seems to imply that as a result of the narrative that accompanies an African immigrant identity; African immigrants may be automatically perceived as potential oppressors in the eyes of African-Americans. This constitutes a critical hurdle that African immigrants face, and has possible consequences for intra-racial relationships and racial unity.

Overall, African immigrants expressed experiencing the most discrimination from other Black ethnic groups. While a few African respondents do express feelings of unity with other Black ethnic groups, even these respondents point out critical cleavages in intra-racial relationships. The cleavages are largely fueled by Africans' negative interactions with other Black ethnic groups (specifically African-Americans) in various arenas over the issue of their *Africaness* – aspects over which they have no control or do not wish to change. These aspects include accent, style of dress, and general cultural differences. A 29-year old African female, non-organization member quipped, "They [African-Americans and Carib-

bean immigrants] don't seem to like Africans a lot." African respondents make the claim that an element of their disconnection from other Black ethnic groups indeed comes from the poor treatment that they receive from these groups. On this topic, a 21-year-old African female, organization member offers the following:

> In terms of being African or Nigerian, when people heard my name or found out that that's what I was, people were like you need to go back to Africa. A lot of African-Americans never believe that I am from Africa and a lot of people believe that there is no possible way that I can be African because I am light-skinned. Just as a child kids were like you need to go back to where you came from and it was usually African-American kids that used to say this to me, "go back to where you came from. Why are you even in America then if you are Nigerian?"

Africans identify non-African Blacks' questioning their place in U.S. society as a wedge between themselves and other Black ethnic groups. This frequently pushes Africans to identify more ethnically than racially, resulting in lower levels of unity with other Black ethnic groups. Also, Africans also view their culture as being distinct from the cultures of other Black ethnic groups. In general, for African respondents, the concept of a diaspora does not override what they see as pronounced cultural differences between Black ethnic groups, as a 38-year-old African male, non-organization member suggests:

> I feel a strong sense of commitment and even loyalty to people of African descent. I do not feel that same sense of attachment to African-Americans. I also do not have that same sense of attachment to people from the Caribbean. I believe that we have very distinct social experience and we also have very distinct cultural experiences, so to lump all of us together as one, I think begs the truth of the situation."

Though comments like this show that African respondents believe that there are differences between Black ethnic groups that may preclude unity, African respondents also admit that the way that they view other Black ethnic groups may be through a Eurocentric and fragmented lens; the same respondent posits, "I think that the tendency is for us to see them through the prism of the predominant White society. It is how they have defined them that we usually see them." Some African respondents even admit to

feeding into common stereotypes about African-Americans and people from the Caribbean, only to have those ideas debunked after spending time with other Black ethnic groups.

Caribbean respondents' feelings of unity toward African immigrants, African-Americans and other Black people from the Caribbean are very diverse, and run the gamut from acknowledging or holding negative stereotypes to embracing 'Pan-African' viewpoints. For instance, in regards to negative views on Africans and African-Americans, one 29-year-old Caribbean female, non-organization member shares the following:

> For Africans the stereotype is that they are conniving people, crooks. For Americans especially being a Caribbean person, a lot of [Caribbean] people and this is just a general sentiment for Americans, view them as always complaining and not working hard enough and always being the victim and we are at times a bit judgmental towards Black Americans and hold our noses up towards them.

Additionally, this respondent discussed her family's disapproving posture toward dating Africans as influential in the level of unity she felt toward Africans, stating that Africans were viewed as 'sneaky' and 'not to be trusted,' resonating with the preceding statement of the Caribbean respondent who described African immigrants as "conniving" and "crooks." Many Caribbean immigrants identify their off-putting feelings towards Africans as being developed through the cultural mores of the Caribbean. There is a sentiment among some Caribbean respondents that Africa is 'primitive' and 'backward.' This attitude, rooted in a view of Africa as impoverished, seems to spill over into interactions with African people.

On the other hand, positive feelings toward Africans also emerged, largely influenced by feelings of connectedness through the conduit of a diaspora, as a 26-year-old Caribbean female, non-organization member posits, "My interaction with Africans have been really good 'cause I can see the connection with the Caribbean and Africa; especially in West Africa, you know, because a lot of slaves came from West Africa to the Caribbean." Some Caribbean respondents not only drew similarities be-

tween themselves and Africans historically, but culturally as well. Many pointed out the parallels between African and Caribbean foods and arts. These shared elements of culture across ethnic boundaries create a sense of familiarity easing intra-racial interactions and facilitating smoother communication.

Although Caribbean respondents exhibited the most negative attitudes towards African immigrants, a portion of Caribbean respondents felt that relationships with African-Americans were adversarial; in the words of a 33-year old Caribbean female, organization member "we just clash!" Tensions between Caribbean respondents and African-Americans are evidenced by their exposure to African-Americans' comments about Caribbean people immigrating to the U.S. by 'coming in a banana boat' and 'swimming across the water.' Furthermore, Caribbean respondents describe instances of African-Americans teasing them about their accent and questioning the authenticity of their Blackness as additional elements fueling tension between themselves and members of other Black ethnic groups. Other Caribbean immigrants' response to teasing by African-Americans is light-hearted, they point out that friends make these comments in jest. These respondents take an understanding approach citing these as instances emerging from lack of understanding based on cultural differences. For Caribbean respondents, in general, the unity that they feel, based on a sense of shared experiences and oppression, outweigh some of the cultural barriers. Some Caribbean respondents, however, admitted to having stereotypical views about African-Americans, highlighting gang affiliation, lack of education, and the "ghetto" as some of the factors that they associate with an African-American identity.

African-Americans' feelings toward African and Caribbean immigrants are primarily categorized by unity. African-Americans largely share the perspective, "Black is Black;" in terms of other Black ethnic groups, African-Americans tend to feel that the racial bond that Black ethnic groups share trumps ethnic differences. Few African-American respondents voiced any negative sentiments towards Africans or Caribbean immigrants, but there is a significant level of ambivalence and puzzlement in regards to the perceived lack of unity that African immigrants feel toward them. This is hard to reconcile given African

respondents' claims of discrimination from African-Americans. This could be evidence that much of the acrimony across ethnic lines is rooted in miscommunication. The comments of a 36-year old African-American female, non-organization member denote the two overarching group sentiments pertaining to intra-racial relationships:

> Personally, I don't know if they feel it towards me but I definitely feel a very strong connection [to members of other Black ethnic group] and maybe it is just the way that I have been raised or the people that I surround myself with or that I think of the African Diaspora. It is funny because when I hear people say that Africans don't really like African-Americans, like I have not had that experience. I feel that there are some misconceptions that we have about each other but it is no different from somebody from another part of town you know it is like I need to get to know you.

The aforementioned metaphor depicts people living in different areas of a town, part of the same social environment, yet not aware of their similarities. This emphasis on the disconnection stemming simply from a lack of interaction highlights African-American respondents' take on the potential, yet unfulfilled opportunities for unity among Black ethnic groups. Echoing this sentiment, a 19-year old African-American female, organization member posits, "When I look at a Black person I don't really think anything negative or positive, it all depends on the way you dress and how you act and how you present yourself." Thus, in general African-American respondents are open to interactions with other Black ethnic groups largely without predispositions. The belief among some African-American respondents that African immigrants do not like them is an exception to this pattern. African-American respondents identify these feelings as emerging from hearsay as opposed to actual experiences with African immigrants.

### 4.3 Ethnic Pride

Ethnic pride is integral to the way that African immigrants navigate discrimination, confirming the use of ethnicity as a buffer against discrimination (Mossakowski, 2003). Ethnic identity provides a

sense of rootedness and serves as a source of resilience (Portes and Rumbard, 2003). Discrimination often served as a reminder of the importance of ethnicity and served as a motivator to overcome discrimination, as a19-year-old African male, organization member stated:

> They automatically think that we're ignorant, we're stupid, we're worthless, and that we're incapable of doing anything and that all we can do is play sports, and sing or do music or something like that. But, my perception is completely different, I think we're strong, we have greatness instilled in us, we have a lot, lot, lot, lot of potential and a lot of greatness and the ability to do lots of beautiful things.

The idea of ethnic history connoted by the comment "we have greatness instilled in us" is an instrumental tool in countering the negative toll of discrimination. A rootedness in an ethnic background and the narrative of a positive ethnic past allows members of a group the ability to compare the negative depictions of themselves with a collective ethnic memory of more positive past accomplishments; this may play a role in offsetting the impact of discrimination.

Both Africans and African-Americans commented on the prevalence of a narrative of an ethnic past, which African immigrants experience in a way that African-Americans do not. A 19-year-old African-American female, organization member expressed feelings about African-Americans not having "a culture to call [their] own" and a 38-year old African male, non-organization member stated that ethnically and culturally African-Americans occupied a position in "a no man's land…with no place to call their own." The viewpoint of African-Americans lacking access to an ethnic past plays a role in African immigrants feeling that a Black immigrant identity is considered superior to a native-born Black identity. The incentive for disunity with native-born Black people is, in its most benign form, access to social opportunities and, in its most dire formulation, the ability to survive. African immigrants may see eschewing a Black pan-ethnic identity as a form of resistance to the U.S. racial climate. This may be a pragmatic way of navigating through racial discrimination in U.S. society, but it is not clear that this tactic is ultimately

beneficial in terms of race politics in the U.S. This issue begs the question of whether Black groups should pursue racial politics or their own ethnic interests.

Ethnic pride and the use of ethnicity as a buffer against discrimination was most pronounced among Africans. When invoked by both African-Americans and respondents from the Caribbean, historical accomplishments of Black people on the African continent were always highlighted as a critical element of the ethnic past in which they took pride. But for African-American and Caribbean respondents, the connection to Africa is less tangible. For instance, some respondents mention famous empires such as Ancient Egypt and the Ashanti, but do not feel a connection in terms of language and familiarity with culture that some African immigrants do. A connection to place is a vital aspect of ethnic identity development.

### 4.4 Place

Ethnic placemaking in private spaces is a vital element of place that has a major impact on respondents. Ethnic placemaking in private spaces refers to the infusing of private residences or businesses with ethnic specific elements. This includes language, customs and décor. Place is clearly important on a regional level as evidenced through things such as architecture, signage, economy and political influence of groups in urban areas. But, respondents also view ethnic placemaking in private spaces as having a major role on the shaping of their identity. These private spheres include households, family residences, and clubs and parties. Place-making in private spaces must not be underestimated as it allows the members of ethnic groups an intimate level of control in regards to expressions of ethnic identity in their immediate environment, a 21-year-old African female, organization member offers:

> I don't really see myself as American because in my household, when you stepped in to my mother's house it was like Nigeria almost, this is Nigeria for me and when you step out of it your in America. So you have parents at home that basically placing this huge cultural

> knowledge of who you are and where you came from and that you are to never forget that.

This quote informs us of many aspects of the role private spaces plays in shaping ethnic identity. First, the role of ethnic placemaking in private spaces is of particular importance for immigrants because it facilitates the maintenance of ties to their land of ethnic origin. This is evidenced in the statement, "When you stepped into my mother's house it was like Nigeria." This is a feat that may be difficult to replicate on a city or regional level, yet it is more feasible on a private scale, in this case, a household. Second, from the preceding quote we see that the creation of ethnic place in private spaces is essential in the preservation of cultural knowledge. Carving out ethnic spaces assists in the intergenerational transmission of ethnic ideas and provides a practical avenue of contributing to the broader construction of ethnic place on a smaller level.

On a larger scale, across ethnic groups, respondents are divided over whether they feel that place makes a difference in the development of their ethnic identity. Those that do not think that place is important in the development of their ethnic identity essentially convey the feeling that the racial climate in the U.S. is the same throughout the country. These respondents do not feel that regional differences and local nuances have the potential to alter their ethnic identity. Respondents that did think that place did impact their ethnic identity discussed four key issues: 1) the uniqueness of the South as a place to express ethnic identity; 2) the racial composition of the city of Atlanta proper; 3) placemaking in private spaces and; 4) the university setting.

Many respondents discuss geographic region as having an impact on their opportunities for ethnic identity development and expression. In general, among this group there is a sentiment that there are fewer opportunities for ethnic identity development and expression in the South than in other regions of the U.S. Respondents who have lived in both the South and other regions of the U.S. perceived the South as more segregated and less tolerant of ethnic and racial differences, a 43-year old African,

non-organization member posits, “It appears that the northern states have been able to reduce the racial divide as it were, but right here in the South it is very pronounced.” Other respondents make allusions to the South as racially dichotomous; they reference the ‘one drop’ rule, confirming the historical legacy of racially based social arrangement in the South.

Interestingly, respondents’ view of Atlanta, in terms of ethnic identity development is strikingly different from their assessment of the South in general. While many respondents view the South in general as ‘backward’ ethnically and racially, their perception of Atlanta is quite positive. The sheer numbers of Black people in the city of Atlanta proper and their visibility in positions of power largely fuel this positive perception. In this vein a 30-year Caribbean female, organization member comments:

> I think that Atlanta is a pretty interesting city because it is the only city I have seen that visually revolves around Black culture. I know when I went to other states you would go to very exclusive restaurants and you’d be the only Black person there in Atlanta that is not the case. In terms of the material wealth and also the financial wealth of certain African-Americans and it is very visible that what I have definitely seen here. I guess it kind of challenges the stereotypes.

Another 29-year-old Caribbean female, non-organization member adds:

> Atlanta kind of really made me see successful Black people, not just in the media but people that I can actually touch like friends and family, I have been in their home and these are upper middle class people, very educated, very culture, they have been married for 50 years, not only themselves but their children and their grandchildren all have doctorates and Ph.D. It is just a different kind of thing.

These quotes display the racial composition of Atlanta as a critical element of place that makes Atlanta important to respondents. It is not just the presence of a relatively large number of Black people in the city, but the ability to come in contact with successful Black people from various walks of life that makes the racial composition in Atlanta so significant. In the words of the first respondent, this aspect of place “challenges the stereotypes.” Many respondents point out that in other parts of the country, the presence of successful Black business owners, politicians, lawyers, and other professionals is vastly smaller

than in Atlanta. For these respondents, successful Black people are an aspect of place that enhances future aspirations. It is also instrumental to note that this is an issue devoid of intra-racial tensions; all Black ethnic groups emphasized appreciation of the presence of successful Black people, regardless of ethnicity.

Comparing the results obtained from this research in Atlanta and those that Waters obtained in New York, it is evident that that geographic location has an impact on the ethnic identity development process. It appears that the lack of true ethnic enclaves in Atlanta and the high percentage of the Black population in the city proper promote intra-racial relationships and pan-ethnicity. For instance a 20-year-old Caribbean female states, "I was fighting back in New York and New Jersey to get people to know more about the Virgin Islands and here they already know about it and they are loving it." Though this was not a widely shared sentiment the preceding quote engages the possibility that the augmented size and heterogeneity of the Black population in Atlanta facilities cross-ethnic interaction and understanding in a way that may not be present in the ethnic enclaves of New York. This could imply that the interspersing of ethnic groups in an urban areas has a greater impact on pan-ethnicity that the amount of ethnic enclaves. Ultimately, these result show that it is important to continue to investigate how geographic factors affect the ethnic identity process, not only in Atlanta and New York but other locations where similar analyses have yet to be conducted.

Finally, the university setting was a component of place that played a slight role in ethnic identity development. Across ethnic groups the role that the university setting played was more minimal than expected. No students discussed being engaged in explicit political action, though students in ethnic organization were more likely to write in publications, arrange ethnic events on campus, attend lectures, and be involved in cultural studies programs. Students in ethnic organizations were also more likely to engage in Black pan-ethnic events. Thus, these students were most effective at disseminating ideas about ethnicity through official channels on campus. Though respondents did not identify ethnic organ-

izations as places to vent frustrations, they did highlight that these organizations are an important site for meeting other students with the same ethnic background and shared experiences.

## 5 CONCLUSIONS

Understanding Black intra-racial relationships is vital in achieving a richer picture of Black identity in the United States. This research is necessary for three key reasons: 1) to address absences in the African immigrant ethnic identity literature, 2) to investigate the role that discrimination and intra-racial relationships play in Black ethnic identity development and 3) to evaluate contextual factors (i.e., geographic location and immigrant status) that may alter patterns of ethnic identity development. These three reasons address areas not fully elucidated by Waters' work. The inclusion of the voices of African immigrants in this research is a unique addition to the sociological literature on Black ethnicity, because rarely has the African, African-American, and Caribbean ethnic identity development process been compared in the same project. Special attention was given to the relationships between these groups because it affects the future of a pan-ethnic Black identity, and addresses the question of whether ethnic groups in the U.S. are best served by pursuing racial politics or their own ethnic interests. Additionally, ethnic identity development was explored in a major Southern city. As most analyses of ethnicity are done in the North or West, the exploration of ethnicity in a large Southern city provided an exciting opportunity to understand the unique aspects of place that shape the ethnic identity development process.

Pan-ethnicity is increasingly becoming a tool that minority groups use to exert the power in numbers needed to further their overlapping interests. To some degree, elements of Black equality and social progress may be hinged on various Black ethnic groups' ability to establish a common political ground. Developments in the Latino/Hispanic community seem to make these issues even more pressing for Black ethnic groups because Blacks have lost their status as the majority minority and are not

projected to regain it, and because Latinos' political power has strengthened as a result of pan-ethnic alliances. In light of these developments, Black respondents' lack of clarity about the broader implications of their ethnic and racial identity in the U.S. political milieu is of concern. Few respondents discuss the political implications of Black pan-ethnicity or note participation in protests, rallies, strikes, activism or utilizing power in numbers to advance an ethnic or racial political cause.

Additionally, Black pan-ethnicity is fundamentally engaged with the issue of immigration. Immigration is a hot button topic in the U.S., yet discussions of Black immigrants' lives exist largely under the radar. This confirms Black immigrants' status as invisible immigrants in the context of the U.S. Invisible immigrant status is a double-edged sword because it means that the voices of Black immigrants and the dialogue needed between Black ethnic groups for pan-ethnic progress is muted. Conversely, many groups of highly visible U.S. immigrants are facing high levels of negative stereotyping (i.e., Muslim immigrants as terrorists and Latino/Hispanic immigrants as economic competition). Therefore, having the "invisible immigrant status" may serve as a buffer against discrimination.

Three critical findings emerge from this research: 1) Black intra-racial discrimination as a powerful agent in Black ethnic identity development, 2) the existence of a structural incentive for Black disunity and 3) the importance of geographic context in ethnic identity development. Black ethnic groups face as much, if not more, intra-racial discrimination as interracial discrimination. Members of all of the ethnic groups in this study identified experiencing intra-racial discrimination. Intra-racial discrimination does not reach the detrimental proportions that structural interracial discrimination does, as intra-racial discrimination is not as deeply rooted in the fabric of U.S. society or its institutions like inter-racial discrimination. But, intra-racial discrimination does perpetuate the existence of racial stereotypes and an ethnic hierarchy. Ultimately, these experiences serve to reinforce Black intragroup differences and strengthen ethnic identities.

In addition, there appears to be a structural incentive for racial disunity for particular Black ethnic groups. Waters' interviews with Black Caribbean immigrants reveal perceptions that a foreign-born Black identity is superior to a native-born Black identity, and this was confirmed and expounded upon in this research among African immigrants. African immigrants described their use of strategies to navigate racial discrimination in U.S. based on this understanding. Some noted invoking their ethnicity and purposefully distancing themselves from African-Americans, much the way West Indians in Waters' study did, in order to increase their chances of success in mainstream society. Studies' pointing to employers' elevated feelings of threat or disappointment regarding native-born Blacks' job performance or presentation when compared to foreign-born Blacks, points to the possibility of a structural advantage among Black immigrants (Foner, 1985; Kalmijn 1996). Thus, identity choice is guided by structural and social realities.

This research has also shown that geographic context, or place, has an impact on ethnic identity development for Black ethnic groups. Across ethnic groups, respondents stated that the nuances of their region (the South) and city (Atlanta) had an impact on the development of their identity. Some respondents feel that the South is racially intolerant in comparison to other regions of the U.S. Respondents' feelings of discrimination emerging from a stark racial dichotomy in the South, largely oblivious to ethnic difference, may make them more likely to identify pan-ethnically. Additionally, immigrants expressed that placemaking in private spaces plays a key role in maintaining culture; language and cultural values and knowledge are transmitted to younger generations in the private spaces. These spaces are critical in immigrants retaining ethnic identity in a new land.

There are a few limitations of the current research: 1) lack of generalizability due to a small sample size, 2) the use of students as respondents and 3) the presence of more female respondents than males. While the small sample size was necessary to conduct informative in-depth interviews, future research should also strive to examine the identity outcomes of a larger body of respondents, po-

tentially through the use of survey data. The use of university students is instrumental in understanding the ideas emerging from institutions where ideas about ethnicity are produced, but analyzing a sample with a broader range of educational outcomes would also be desirable. Lastly, there were more female respondents in this study, as females compose over two-thirds of the membership in all of the ethnic organizations from which respondents were selected. Therefore, it is possible that the data represents a more female-centered perspective. Thus, the pursuit of gendered patterns of pan-ethnic identity development would be valuable, and is suggested for future research with larger case numbers.

In addition to exploring Black pan-ethnic relations on a quantitative level, future research should also probe further into the issue of structural incentives for Black unity or disunity. Amidst a dialogue surrounding a post-racial society, the finding that structural racism is not only embedded in U.S. institutions, but that it also promotes ethnic division within racial groups, is a striking discovery. This evidence has potential implications for the treatment of race and ethnicity as constructs, as structural pressure may be responsible for the creation of a greater chasm between groups, challenging the viability of certain pan-ethnic alliances.

The issue of Black intra-racial relationships also has implications for the current and future racial climate in the U.S. Lee and Bean (2007) suggest the emergence of a Black-nonblack racial divide predicted by Herbert Gans a decade ago. This new color line is characterized by the amalgamation of Whites, Latinos and Asians (and other non-Black minorities) in opposition to Blacks. While the traditional White-Black color line privileged Whiteness in terms of attaining access to opportunities, the new Black-non-Black color line privileges non-Black status. The growth of socially and economically advantaged immigrant Black populations may hinder or alter this process, with perhaps even the emergence of a “native born Black/non native born black” line. The future of the color line, however, may lie in the nature of the alliances among Black ethnic groups, which has been exposed in greater detail by the current study.

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# 7 APPENDICES

## Appendix A – Tables

**Table 1.1 Respondent Demographic Information**

| Interviewee | Sex | Age | Ethnicity | Membership |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| #1 | Female | 33 | African-Caribbean (Jamaican) | Yes |
| #2 | Male | 19 | African (Ghanaian) | Yes |
| #3 | Female | 25 | African-American | Yes |
| #4 | Female | 21 | Caribbean (Latino) | Yes |
| #5 | Female | 19 | Caribbean (Jamaican) | Yes |
| #6 | Female | 19 | Caribbean-African-American (Ghanaian) | No |
| #7 | Female | 20 | Caribbean | Yes |
| #8 | Female | 22 | African | No |
| #9 | Female | 19 | African-American | Yes |
| #10 | Female | 26 | African (Ghanaian) | No |
| #11 | Male | 36 | African-American | No |
| #12 | Female | 23 | Ghanaian | Yes |
| #13 | Female | 29 | African-American (Black) | No |
| #14 | Female | 25 | African-Caribbean | No |
| #15 | Male | 43 | African (Nigerian) | No |
| #16 | Female | 24 | African-American (Black) | Yes |
| #17 | Male | 38 | African (Nigerian) | No |
| #18 | Female | 36 | African-American (Black) | No |
| #19 | Female | 30 | Caribbean (Black) | No |
| #20 | Female | 26 | Caribbean | No |
| #21 | Female | 19 | African-American (Black, Nigerian) | Yes |
| #22 | Female | 21 | Ghanaian-American | Yes |
| #23 | Male | 22 | Caribbean (Bahamian, Black) | No |
| #24 | Female | 29 | Caribbean (Jamaican, African) | No |
| #25 | Female | 33 | African-American (Black) | No |
| #26 | Female | 21 | African (Nigerian, Black) | Yes |
| #27 | Female | 21 | African (Black, African-American) | Yes |
| #28 | Female | 22 | African-American (Black) | Yes |
| #29 | Female | 24 | African-American (Black) | Yes |
| #30 | Male | 21 | African-American (Black) | No |

## Appendix B – Figures

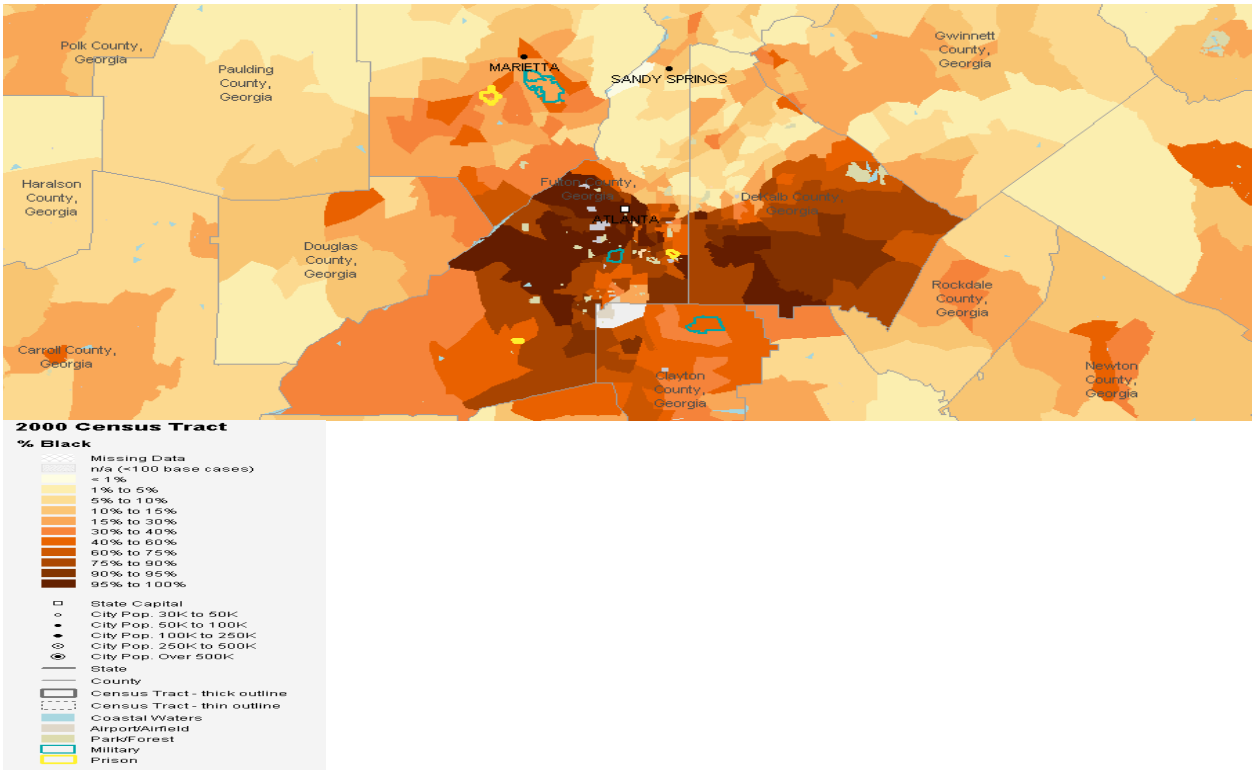


**Figure 1.1 Atlanta 2000 Census Tract (Black)**

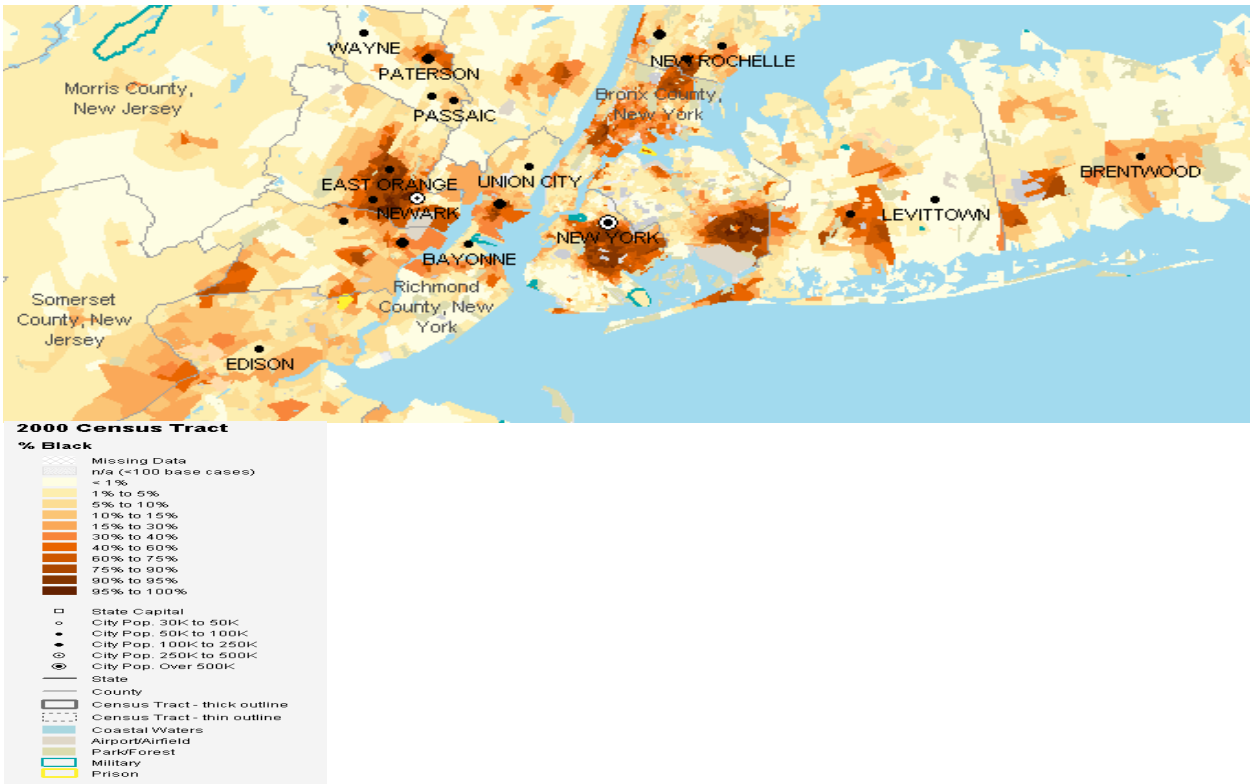


**Figure 2.1 New York 2000 Census Tract (Black)**

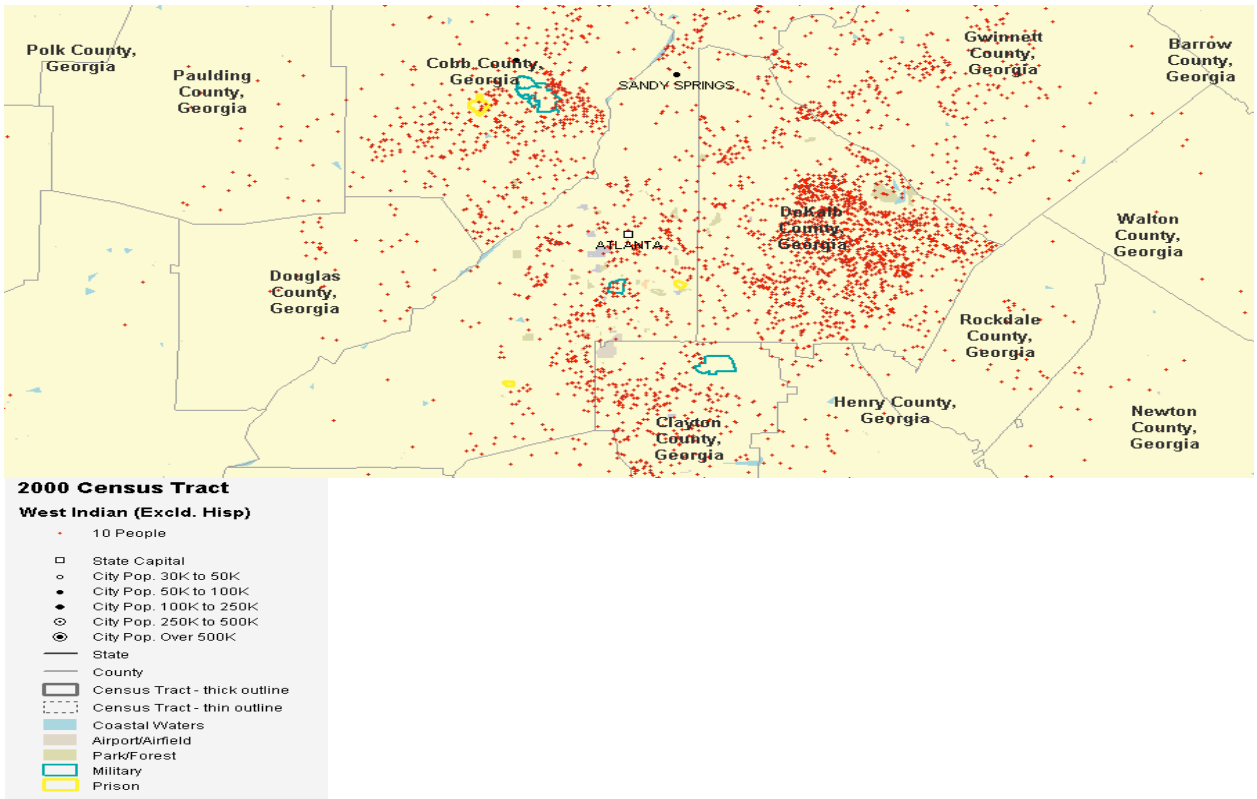


**Figure 3.1 Atlanta 2000 Census Tract (West Indian excluding Hispanic)**

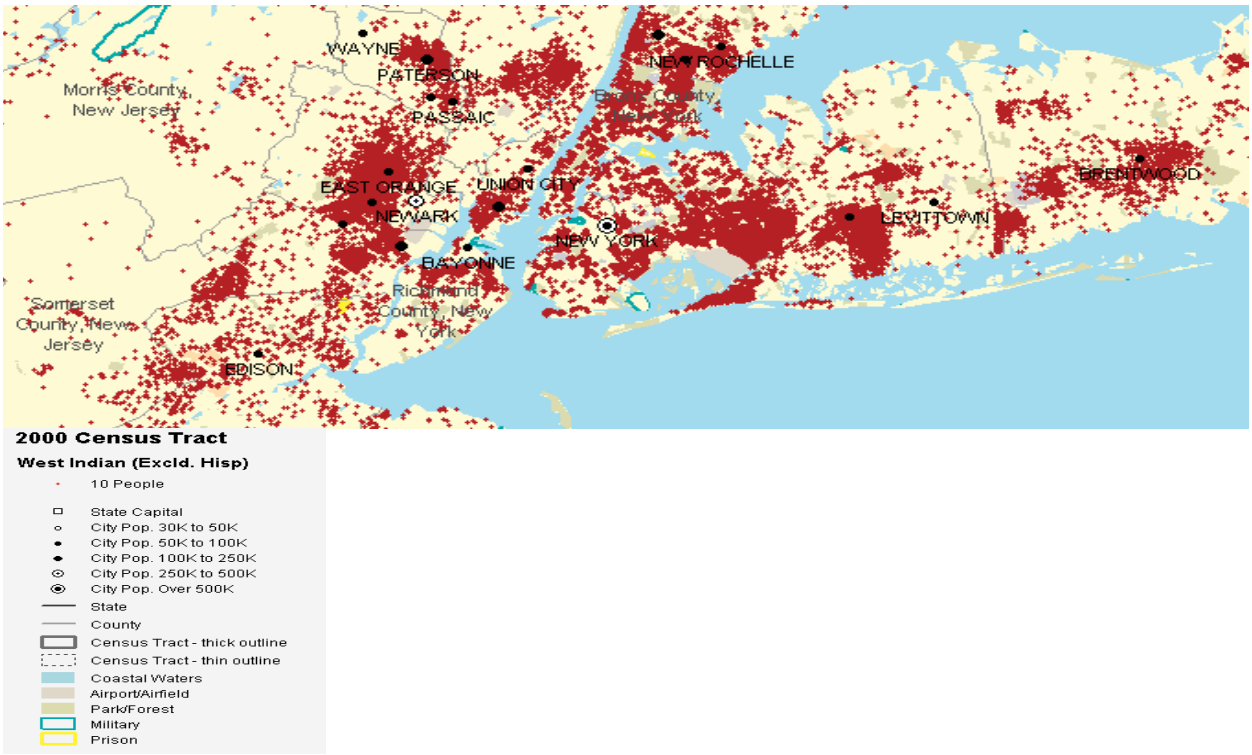


**Figure 4.1 New York 2000 Census Tract (West Indian excluding Hispanic)**

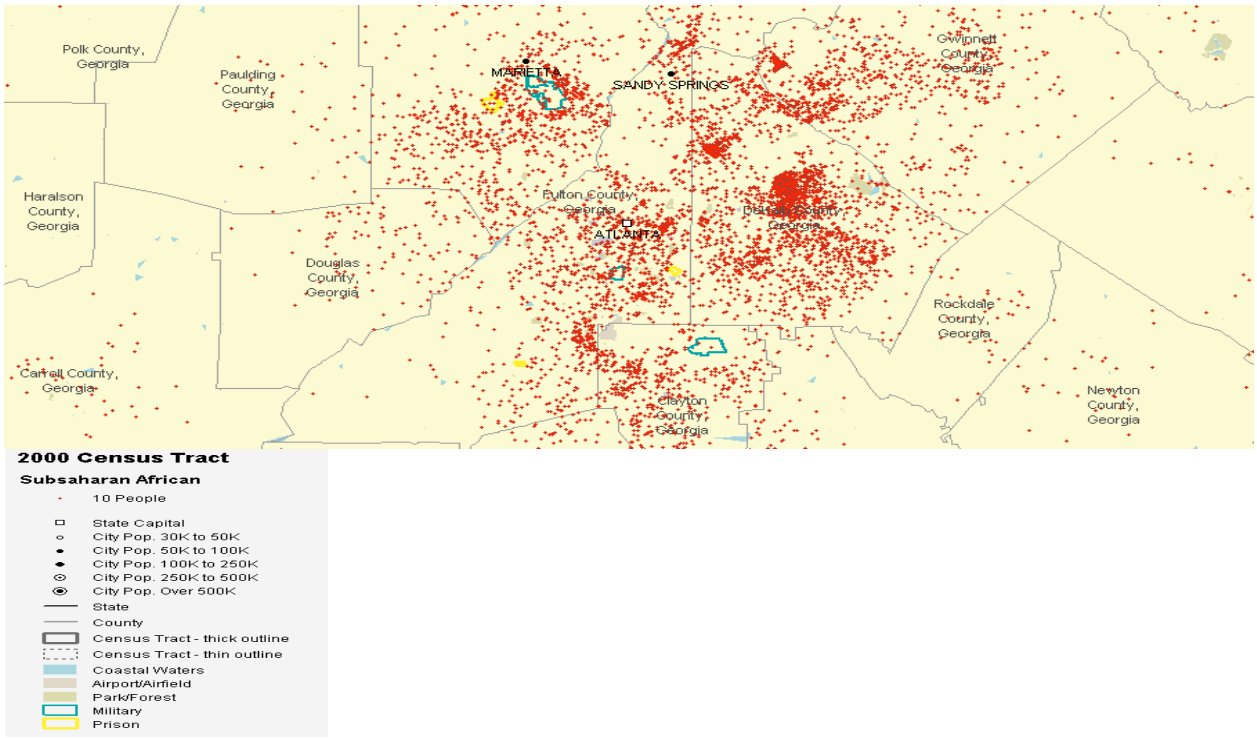


**Figure 5.1 Atlanta 2000 Census Tract (Sub-Saharan African)**

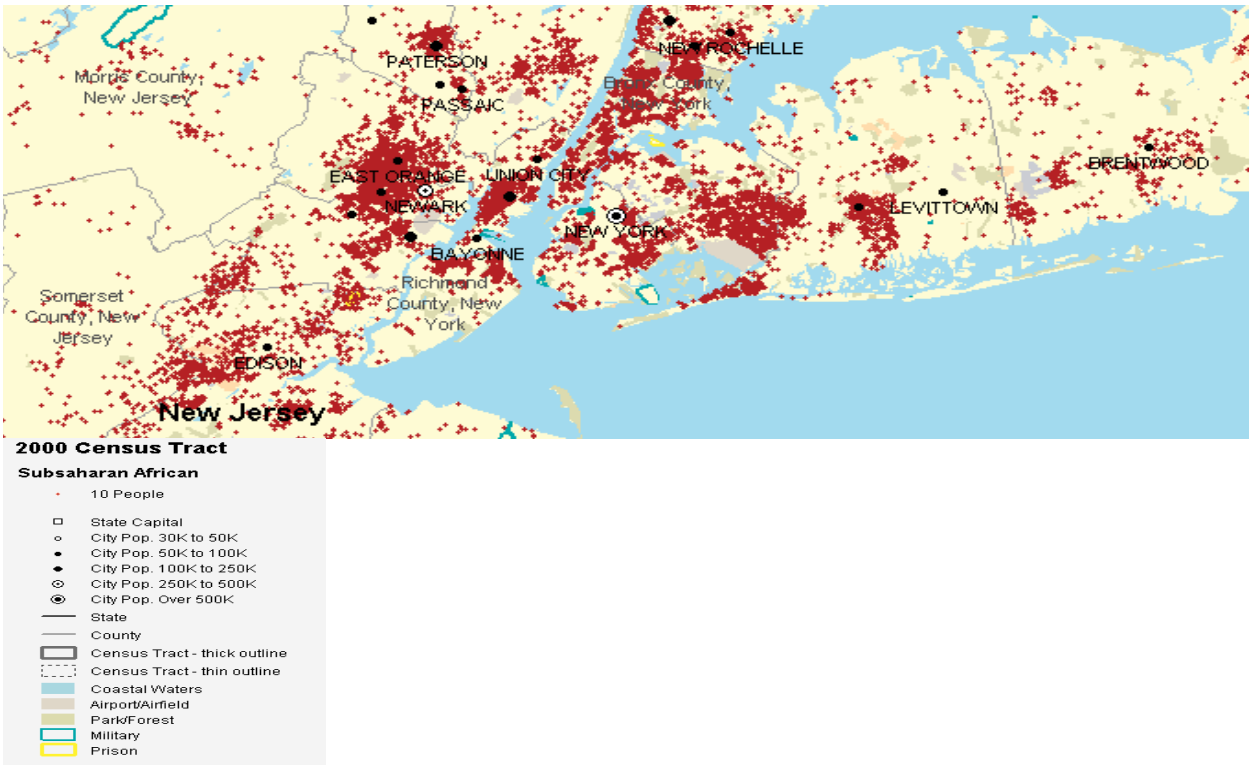


**Figure 6.1 New York 2000 Census Tract (Sub-Saharan African)**

**Appendix C – Interview Schedule**

Demographic Questions

1) What is your major?
2) What is your age?
3) What is your gender?
4) What social class do you identify with?
5) How long have you been at Georgia State University?
6) What is your racial identification?
7) What is your ethnicity?

Interview Questions

8) Do you feel that the way that you personally identify racially/ethnically is different from the way your racial/ethnic identity is perceived by others? How so?
9) When did you become aware of your ethnic/racial identity? Was there any particular event that contributed to this event?
10) How has your ethnic/racial identity changed over time?
11) Do you think of yourself as an American?
12) What types of images and characteristics come to mind when you think of other Black ethnic groups?
13) Have you ever experienced discrimination? If so, from which racial/ethnic group (this could include your own group)?
14) How has this impacted your feelings about your ethnic group?
15) Have there been times where you feel that you have benefitted from your ethnic identity?
16) How much of a sense of unity do you feel with other Black ethnic groups?

17) What ethnic group(s) are your closest friends from?

18) Is your neighborhood characterized by a particular ethnic group? If so, what group?

19) What do you do to express or convey your ethnic identity (holidays, festivals, protests, presentations, lectures, articles, parades, maintaining contact with people in your home country, etc.)? Does attending your university provide any unique opportunities?

20) Are you a part of any ethnic organizations (on or off campus)? What are your responsibilities in these organizations?

21) (For immigrant participants) What are your experiences of the racial and ethnic dynamics in your home country? How do those experiences from the experiences from those in the United States?

22) Have you ever lived in another country or anywhere in the United States other than Atlanta? Do you feel that there are things specific about Atlanta that has contributed to the development of your identity?