"*Garífuna is our way of being, it is who we are*": A focus on identity and hybridity within transculturalism

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Abstract: This paper provides an overview of the history of the Garínagu in Central America, and especially Honduras. It explores how connections to the U.S., through work, immigration and the media, have influenced Garífuna identity across the continents. While the possibilities and spaces for hybridity have opened, there is also a danger of homogenization when minority groups are overwhelmed by the dominant majority. Nevertheless, the Garínagu have been able to find ways to maintain and integrate their cultural and linguistic backgrounds into Honduran and U.S. life.

Garífuna Background and History

The Garínagu[i] trace their heritage back to Western Africa where they were forced onto Spanish ships to serve as slaves. A ship wreck near the island of St. Vincent led to a rebellion where they subsequently escaped slavery. This group remained on this West Indian island where they intermarried with the Island Carib women, which ultimately led to the birth of the Garífuna people. Following an extended settlement in St. Vincent, British colonizers forced their deportation in 1797. Nearly 5,000 Garífuna men, women and children were placed on ships and abandoned on Roatan, an island off the coast of Honduras, twenty-four years before the nation's independence (Anderson, 1997). Fewer than half the passengers survived the voyage and inherited the sole responsibility for the perpetuation of their rich culture and language which is a mix of Caribbean Indigenous, West African and European grammatical and vocabulary structures. It "consists of 70% of the words from Arahuaco-Callina, 15% from French and 10% of words from English origin…and 5% of Spanish technical vocabulary" (Suazo, 2001, p.9). Over time, the Garínagu in Roatan spread to the mainland and settled on the northern coast of Central America in Honduras, Belize, Guatemala and Nicaragua. Many have since relocated to the United States, with large concentrations based in New York City, New Orleans and Los Angeles.

According to the 2001 Honduran census there are nine indigenous groups that make up 7.2% of the national population, which differs drastically from its neighbor Guatemala, where over half the population is indigenous. Although the Garínagu do not originate in Honduras, they still fit within the nation's indigenous label because they were there before the country gained independent status (Anderson, 1999). The Garínagu are the largest minority group with nearly 50,000 residents across the forty villages that span the coast of Honduras. Throughout their time in Honduras they

have been held and nearly pushed to the fringes of the nation. The Garínagu live in extreme poverty. Their beachfront land offers picturesque scenery, but in many cases does not allow for the harvesting of crops. Like other poor communities in the country, many Garífuna villages lack running water, electricity, and infrastructure, and schools remain of poor or uneven quality. Many Garínagu rely on remittances from family members living and working abroad, mostly in the U.S.

Researcher Positionality and Postmodern Ties

My interest in the Garífuna community emerged while I was working as a third grade teacher in a Honduran international bilingual school. Living in San Pedro Sula, a city with few Garínagu residents, I mostly learned about them through advertisements for tours that emphasized their distinct style of dance and Punta music. These superficial aspects of their culture were highlighted and perhaps even exploited via "ethnic tourism" by government and tourism agencies for their own economic gain (Kirtsoglou & Theodossopoulos, 2004). This approach leaves the Garínagu vulnerable as their culture differences and beachfront landscape are taken advantage of and even "stolen" as they serve as "reservoirs of cheap labor and cultural entertainment" for the groups in power (Anderson, 2007, p. 389).

This struck me as an incomplete picture of a group of people who drastically differed from the nation's Ladino[ii] mainstream. Incidentally, every time I would share with a Ladino acquaintance that I was planning to spend time in a Garífuna community, the inevitable response was, "Oh so you'll have to eat pan de coco and get your hair braided." Frustrated with the limited and surprisingly consistent responses, I set out to learn more. This led to an internship with USAID (United States Agency for International Development) for an informal radio education program called "Educatodos" that functioned across the nation, and within one Garífuna community where I was able to spend time on two occasions. On my second visit I returned to conduct a pilot study in two Garífuna communities in Honduras on the impact of race, culture and language in the local schools. During both of these experiences I was able to live with a family in the community, observe and sometimes even teach classes in the schools, and speak informally with community members. This experience allowed me to gain a tiered understanding of Garífuna realities. Additionally, some of the connections I made in Honduras continued in my current place of residence, New York City. Therefore, I have been able to witness the transnational experiences of Garífuna as they adjust to new and different contexts and maintain logistical and cultural ties to their

community of origin. However, it's important to mention that this paper will not and cannot share "the" Garífuna experience, but rather, only that which has been revealed to me, given the limits and privileges associated with my being perceived as a White, middle-class American woman. Along those lines I will present the stories and findings revealed to me through Garínagu who have been living, traveling and experiencing the local, national and international realities, especially between Honduras and the U.S. These intersections lead to areas of convergence and divergence that emerge across borders, people and knowledge from the process of globalization.

Through a postmodern lens I challenge the mainstream definitions that seek to negate, label and sustain hierarchies. Instead, a greater emphasis lies in the cultural, local and transnational experiences of individuals to dictate their perception of self and group. Overarching theories become meta-narratives that tend to "conceal, distort, and obfuscate…to exclude, order and control rival powers" (Rosenau, 1992, p. 81). Dominant theories and narratives stem not only from a given base of knowledge, but also from those in power. Therefore, to understand the complexity behind transnationalism, one must not only consider the dominant discourse from those in power, but also the perspectives of less visible groups who either internalize the overarching labels that stem from the "knowledge-power nexus" or create a counter and other narratives (Foucault, 2000).

Through the consideration of the Garífuna case, this paper aims to challenge taken-for-granted "truths" about how individuals are perceived from the outside versus how they see themselves. As a way to expand the discourse and problematize that which is "known," I consider larger theoretical bodies of knowledge from the experiences of a minoritized group, both in the Honduras and U.S. context. I look at universal assumptions of race, ethnicity, languages and identity from different historical and lived perspectives, as well the concept of hybridity as a product of transnationalism in a more critical way.

National, Transnational and Diaspora Contexts

Identity does not always coincide with place of birth or residence, but is negotiated locally within the context of transnationalism where individuals consider the "historical ground in specific locations and processes within which racial, ethnic and national ideologies have been mobilized for projects of both domination and resistance" (England, 1999, p. 6-7). As indigenous citizens in Honduras, Garínagu are entitled to rights including land ownership, cultural autonomy and economic development. But unlike most of the nation's indigenous population, Garínagu also fall

within the category of Afro-Latinos, a group that has had limited success in gaining rights due to the associations to racial discrimination attached to the label. That correlation brings forth a contentious platform from which to seek group rights, especially within the outright denial of racism in Honduras (Anderson, 1999). Culture and ethnicity, which are more aligned with indigenous groups, are less threatening and safer constructs. The indigenous label thereby becomes more inclusive through a type of multiculturalism that conflates the indigenous and black experiences, without attention to differences across the groups (Hooker, 2005). However, the Garínagu, who are racially black, still differ from other indigenous groups who trace their birth to the land.

The way Garínagu are perceived by others varies significantly across national contexts and brings implications of rights, affiliations, and discrimination. During the 20th century, Honduras centered itself around the concept of mestizaje, which theoretically lauded the Indian, European and African groups that came together to create the nation. However, the prevalence of the European hierarchy of race led to the marginalization of blackness as it focused on the Europeans and Indians. As a result, blackness, associated with African ties, is not readily perceived as a feature of a group that makes up a part of the national identity (England, 1999). The power embedded within the racial hierarchy served as an outright denial of the Garínagu as a central group in the mestizaje movement.

Within the U.S., the multiculturalism of the nation is often discussed as strength, from the Native Americans to the immigrants who helped to build the nation. However, in current times the face, and more specifically the color, of immigration have changed along with its perception. Historically, immigration to the U.S. was predominantly white and European. Although immigrants have always faced resistance, the recently the tide has intensified and immigrants have come to be viewed as a social, economic and cultural threat to national unity (Huntington, 2004). The national dialogue has focused around undocumented or “illegal” immigration, with a magnifying glass around Mexican immigrants. The present perception, or stereotype, of an immigrant is one without papers, with brown skin, Spanish-speaking and unable to speak English. This limited view of immigrants has allowed Garínagu to escape this immigrant label and for those who are not documented, to be camouflaged from authorities by their darker skin and residences in African American communities. In this case the meta-narrative serves, although unintentionally, to work in the benefit of some Garínagu. Nevertheless, they will not escape the consequences of immigration policies in relation to legalization, employment and the ability to travel internationally.

Within Honduras and even Latin America there exists a range of racial and ethnic categorizations for different groups. While individuals do not fit neatly into these prescribed labels there exists a much wider range of categories than in other countries such as the United States. Across Latin America these labels include ladino, mestizo, mulato, indio, negro, and cholo. In Honduras Garínagu are readily known and recognized throughout the nation. They are labeled by their ethnicity as Garífuna, more so than by their black race. In Honduras there is a minimal, although superficial, knowledge about the culture of Garífuna and about Garífuna-Spanish bilingualism. There is, however, also racism and discrimination that comes with the label.

As a way to increase their social and economic position, some Garínagu relocate to the U.S. where labeling and discrimination exist, but on different terms. Naheed Islam reminds us that "categories of race are not static or stable in any context, but this is especially true when we deal with transnational notions of race, for racial concepts do not travel easily…or translate across languages and conceptual frameworks" (2000, p. 41). In the United States racial categorizations become much more narrow, basically leaving individuals with five discrete possibilities: White, Black, Latino/Hispanic, Asian and Native American. This creates an either/or situation for Garínagu who, based on their phenotype, would fit easily into the Black (or African American) category, yet based on their country of origin and Spanish proficiency could also fit within the Latino categorization. Many stay away from this label due to negative sentiments towards Latinos who treated them poorly in Honduras. Furthermore, since skin color is a salient identifier in the U.S., most outsiders instantly assume that Garínagu are African American[iii] as most people in the U.S. have no familiarity with the group and thereby categorize these individuals within the standard national race-based framework. Two fourth grade students in the Bronx show the different perspectives and identities that Garínagu in the U.S. must negotiate:

> Student 1: Our skin is Black, we talk Black and we act Black, so we're all Black.
>
> Student 2: That's not true. I am dark, but I am Garífuna. My family comes from Honduras and we can speak Spanish, English *and* Garífuna. Just because someone is dark, it doesn't mean they are just Black. (Marerro, 2004, p. 15)

For Garífuna youth external demands to identify as a monolithic group clashes with pressure from the home culture and community to take pride in their distinct background.

Although both the U.S. and Honduran frameworks work to set up hierarchies and power structures across groups, the Honduran system of labeling leaves some space for differences in racial and ethnic backgrounds. Conversely, the Black or African American label in the U.S. is both limiting and homogenizing to those who have grown up outside the U.S. and speak languages other than English.

The perception of Garínagu as African American is not without its issues. As most take on the African American label to outsiders, over time they come to see how treatment of African Americans is one that stems from the group's low status. Within the national context this illustrates how "when one identifies as a member of a racial group…one necessarily takes on the history, stigma and stereotypes associated with that group" (Norguera, 2003, p. 51). Therefore, the African American label may become an undesirable one for many Garínagu. England (1999) mentions that when some Garínagu were overheard speaking Spanish, their status increased from being "just black." As time passes in the U.S. some Garínagu also begin to take on stereotypical beliefs about African Americans as lazy and unintelligent. They see life in the U.S. as an opportunity to improve one's economic position via hard work and determination, buying into the theory of meritocracy and the "American dream."

In order to develop a better understanding of different perspectives of success (and lack of it) Ogbu created a classification system for two distinct groups of minorities in the U.S.: voluntary and involuntary minorities. These groupings are based primarily on "the nature of white American involvement with their becoming minorities and the reason they came or were brought to the United States" (Ogbu & Simons, 1998, p. 164). Involuntary minorities, such as African Americans, were forced to come to the U.S. through conquest, slavery, or colonization, while voluntary immigrants, such as Garifuna, came to the U.S. by choice, seeking out opportunities that did not exist in their homeland. Ogbu claimed that these groups differed in their educational success rates because of voluntary minorities' willingness to work hard and overlook institutional racism due to a constant comparison of the greater oppressive forces in their place of origin. While involuntary minorities develop resentment of structural forces that work to hold them back, voluntary minorities tend to focus on the positive opportunities they would otherwise not have access to. This theory has been criticized for a number of reasons, including its deterministic view of minority success and the perception of children and youth who were brought to the U.S., without choice, as voluntary

minorities. Nevertheless, this framework may help to explain why after spending some time in the U.S., Garínagu take on perspectives that differ from those of the African Americans group that they so easily, yet inaccurately appear to be a part of, demonstrating how color, culture and language clash.

Within both contexts identity is based more in culture, color and ethnicity than nationhood. Many Garínagu are ambivalent to call themselves Honduran or American. Within Honduras there is little integration of Garifuna as a valued part of the nation, in spite of their being indigenous citizens. This aligns with how Native Americans fall out of the "American" definition even though they are the original inhabitants of the land. In Honduras, Mestizos identify Garífuna by their ethnicity and blackness, which is not seen as a central or even partial element of the nation's identity. Ladinos often perceive Garínagu as "sticking to themselves." On the other hand, many Garínagu simultaneously view Ladinos with suspicion as racially and ethnically discriminating. A Garífuna teenager responded to my inquiry about his view of Ladinos stating, "I never trust a Spanish person, they're not honest. They rob and steal as well as kill. A black person would never do that. They are not welcome in our communities, but whites (tourists) are fine. They care for us and we care for them." The mutual distrust and disrespect leads to Garínagu being positioned as peripheral citizens, which is partly by choice as a result of their not wanting to be associated and identified with the dominant group, as well as their marginalization.

Often left without a strong national connection, Garínagu must seek out other ways to identify themselves. Honduran identity is primarily linked to Ladinos, with the occasional mention of indigenous, and in the U.S. American identity is most often connected with white Europeans. The affiliation of American identity in the U.S. with White, English speakers is so strong that Black, Latino, and Asian citizens (not to mention those who don't fit within these labels) often see themselves as unwelcomed and certainly unrepresented by the term (Nieto, 2002). From a different perspective, the question of whether these groups truly desire to take on the American label, or see it as one the ignore or misrepresents their realities.

An alternative view of Garínagu as "diaspora of nationhood" places "categories of race and nationality within which Garínagu have been inscribed by others and challenges the notion that ethnic nation should be bounded by one particular territory" (England, 1999, p.

35). A diaspora is generally referred to as “a people dispersed from their original homeland, a people possessing a collective memory and myth about sentimental and/or material links to that homeland, which fosters a sense of sympathy and solidarity with co-ethnic diasporans” (Patterson, 2006, p. 1896). Even without one specific homeland a Garífuna diaspora can span continents, external labels and common land. Transnational experiences of a shared ethnicity, culture and language across continents take precedence as a defining force in building a unifying and symbolic group identity.

The Push, Pull and In-between of Hybridity

The focus on migration has been on countries where people are being pushed out by forces such as economic status, discrimination and future opportunities. The same factors, but often at opposing levels, work to pull in immigrants who seek to improve their standing and the futures for their children. While each nation has distinct qualities which people either aim to escape or experience, there is also an in-between space where physical and virtual connections remain, as new hybrid ways of being are formed. Hybridity has the potential to bring together the modern and traditional where neither are advantaged, but work together in a process of transformation. Appardurai (1996) has referred to this process as the “indigenization” of Western Culture, pointing to the bi-directionality of the process. For Garínagu hybridity is negotiated based on their place of birth, residence, type of schooling, language background of their family and exposure to popular and dominant cultures across settings.

It is worthwhile to explore the transnational flow of people, languages, money, and attitudes as related to the Garínagu. Basch et al. (1994) defined this as “the process by which transmigrants, through their daily activities, forge and sustain multi-stranded social, economic and political relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement, and through which they create transnational social fields that cross national borders” (p. 6). Such connections are mitigated by the situation in which one leaves their country of origin (for example, religious persecution, poverty or war), resources to maintain communication (technology, finances, etc) and desire to maintain connections with family, friends and the community or nation in general. These ties are generally stronger with recently arrived immigrants and can potentially wane over generations, depending on the strength of the connection and affiliation with their community of origin.

The economic climate within both nations creates a situation of dependency on those living overseas, as employment opportunities within Honduras are dire. Racism coupled with a poor quality of education creates a substantial obstacle for obtaining employment in nearby cities or towns. Often men obtain work at sea and experience shifts that can last for weeks or even months at a time, leaving the women home alone for extended periods of time to care for the household. For Garínagu in the U.S. it is common to send monies back to their home communities. For those who were educated in Honduras and speak limited English, jobs tend to be in blue collar industries, such as maintenance and factory work for men and employment as health aids for women. Once the quality and quantity of education increases, along with a proficiency in English, Garínagu find employment in administrative, educational and health care fields.

The economic survival of those who remain in Honduras often depends on remittances from family members living and working in the U.S., creating a one-way flow of money and products to communities that otherwise lack significant avenues for generating funds, outside of the occasional hotel or small bodegas. This more or less consistent stream of money serves to meet the basic survival needs of Garínagu in local villages, but does little to redress the issue of poverty and lack of economic opportunities. In some ways the products purchased through remittances ultimately benefit the Ladino business owners. The pattern also reinforces the dependency between the "developed" and "developing" nations.

Another more sustainable way Garínagu immigrants, in collaboration with those in Honduran communities, work to improve their hometowns is through civic organizations that aim to improve living and learning conditions. Groups may raise funds for infrastructure upgrades in villages for roads, water and housing. In one of the communities in which I spent time an Afro-Latino organization composed of local and U.S. Garínagu were able to furnish a computer lab for the public school. Organizations such as these address local development at two levels: putting pressure on the national government to put more resources into community needs while at the same time taking these issues into their own hands, having realized the apathy and corruption of the government in relations to the Garínagu.

The combination of difficulties and discrimination Garínagu experience when searching for work coupled with the overall challenges of living in Honduras results in a difficult living situation. Exposure to Garínagu living in the U.S. and media, that paints a picture of the "American dream"

seeped in materialistic comfort and luxury, creates a high motivation for many Garínagu to immigrate to the U.S. Many feel moving to the U.S. will increase their financial opportunities, allow them to live within a more accepting environment and assist family members in the community. For many, this strong pull results in an increased desire to learn English, becoming trilingual as they add onto their proficiencies in Garífuna and Spanish[iv]. This aspiration to learn English and immigrate to the U.S. is actually what keeps many youth in school through the 9th grade year so they may become graduates. Ironically, although English is prominently heard in the communities, and as phrases become inserted into the Garífuna language by those living in the U.S. who become more comfortable in English, the community school's English instruction is very weak. Instead of building on the community's multilingual strengths, language teachers barely speak English, leaving students to copy words from the board that the teacher has copied from the dictionary himself. This follows what Paolo Freire (1970) called the banking model of education where the teacher deposits knowledge into the student, but in this case the teacher lack the information. It's likely that English acquisition comes more readily from interacting with those living in the U.S. as well as exposure to popular media and music than from the school system.

Each of the three languages heard and used within Garífuna communities have specific and important purposes. One Garífuna woman explained this to me:

> Spanish is our survival language. What does that mean? We need to speak it in order to communicate with officials and the outside world. English is a plus and most of the time we consider it more important than Spanish because way back English was the language our grandparents needed to communicate with the outside world as we do with Spanish today. Garífuna is our way of being; it is what we are, our sense of pride and culture. It is ours and the pride we keep alive after some 300 years.

Both Spanish and English clearly play a vital role for Garínagu. Spanish is a necessity for living in Honduras, the use and possible opportunities associated with English elevate its status locally. However, the Garífuna language is the one that cannot be separated from their core as a shared language is a strong determinant of group identity. Due to its low status in Honduras and the lack of knowledge of its existence in the U.S., Garífuna language loss and eventual shift to Spanish or English is still a reality. A fourth grader born in the Bronx to Garífuna speaking parents explained, "I don't like to talk Garífuna even though I can understand some of it. It's just funny to me in a way. Since I know that others can't understand the language I do not want to speak it in front of my friends…that is why I speak English or even Spanish more" (Marerro, 2004, p. 12).

However, many Garínagu that I met felt that within Honduras there is currently less fear of ridicule associated with speaking the language outside of their communities than in decades prior. In the U.S. speaking Garífuna maintains ties to the home culture, while Spanish provides an added benefit of communicating with the many Spanish speakers from all over Latin America. Thus, these three languages each serve as a combination of practical, necessary, economical and cultural tools across both nations.

For Garínagu who migrate to the U.S., their home culture and languages become masked by external perceptions. The conflation of internal and external perceptions leads many young Garínagu to acculturate or even assimilate into the African American, and more specifically, the hip-hop culture. This comes across in their style of dress, speaking in Black Vernacular English and a fondness for hip-hop music. Some students exhibit shame or even denial when asked about their background, exhibiting a strong preference towards assimilation, leaving one's language and culture behind (Bonner, 2001; Marerro, 2004), as opposed to acculturation where cultural "code switching" or mixing becomes a new reality. To dissuade assimilation, Garínagu parents may send U.S.-born children to stay with relatives in Garífuna communities over winter or summer breaks. Some of the children speak only English and are forced to learn Garifuna and/or Spanish while simultaneously building bridges to their family's culture of origin. Trips back work to counter the ever-increasing pressures that favor the dominant U.S. culture and language while forgetting that of one's own background. But even seeing parents or family members make trips back to their country of origin still has the potential to reinforce the importance of transcultural ties (Smith, 2006).

The ability to maintain transcultural ties has been shown to offset the strong pressure of assimilation for most immigrants (Portes, 2001). Furthermore, connections with the home language and culture have been found to be a characteristic for academic success of immigrant students in the U.S., who can anchor themselves as they navigate a new cultural context (Nieto, 2002). The Garífuna community in New York City is a tightly knit one where familial and community ties work as support and social networks. As a result, safe cultural spaces such as religious places of worship, Punta concerts, Garifuna festivals, internet sites and other gatherings allow Garínagu to easily identify without labels, in the absence of the need for explanation and external assumptions about race, ethnicity and languages.

Garínagu within the U.S. generally maintain strong ties to their communities in Honduras, making frequent and extended trips back home when circumstances – such as finances and immigration status - allow. For those who return to their communities of origin they bring with them influences and artifacts associated with U.S. African American and, specifically for the youth, hip-hop culture (note that this is not to imply that African American and hip-hop culture in the U.S. are one and the same. Hip-hop is a sub-culture that falls within it). Hip-hop music can be heard blasting from boom boxes or as background music in fashion shows. Greetings in English such as "Yo cuz, what's up?" can also be heard. Garifuna living in the U.S. also form transnational economic ties bringing back music Punta CDs to sell and purchasing land in Honduras. Clothing brands such as Fubu, Nike sneakers, designer jeans, and American sports jerseys become commonplace in otherwise relatively poor communities. The inclusion of hip-hop culture in no way takes the place of more traditional practices, dressing or even the Garífuna language; the U.S. influence simply exists as a complement to it. However, the exposure to such items radically increases the consumption aspirations for Garínagu in Honduras, more than in most poor indigenous communities who experience fewer transnational connections. As these materialistic desires are nearly impossible to attain in Honduras, the pull of the U.S. becomes even stronger.

As a result of these varied intersections, hybridization occurs, which has been referred to as "the disruption or softening of traditional boundaries between high culture, mass culture and vernacular culture; and with the intensification of cultural crossings between the first and third world" (Garcia-Moreno, 1995, 63-64). The hybridity impacts the cultures and languages of Garínagu who physically cross the borders, as well as those who remain on one side of the border yet have felt the transnational influences without even leaving their communities, illustrating how transnationalism occurs for those who remain at the local level, both in Honduras and the U.S.

Conclusion

As the world becomes more interconnected through technology, travel and media, hybridity has become a widely addressed concept, both by scholars and in the mainstream population, which responds to how places, spaces, people and ideas interact and combine. However, one cannot accept hybridity blindly as a positive result of globalization: there is a note of caution to this phenomenon. If we only see hybridity as a descriptive and neutral term, it overshadows the complexity of sociopolitical and economic forces within local and global contexts. If we look back

to the early uses of hybridity it traces back to the 18th century where the colonization of people of color by Europeans led to concerns over "racial mixing" as a threat to white domination. A century later the Latin American concept of mestizaje brought forth an ideology that the newly formed nations were hybrids of Spanish and indigenous descent, as an attempt to gloss over the colonizer/colonized reality (Kraidy, 2002). The term did little to place both groups in an equal position. However, at least on a theoretical level the term has moved in a more positive direction related to the combination of different racial and ethnic groups and their traditions, while on a practical level hybridity can become a stage towards homogeniety.

One must ask who ultimately benefits from hybridity, especially in local communities where people face strong outside pressures. If one identity is externally forced upon a group or individual, it may eventually push so far to one side that any cultural aspects or linguistic proficiencies may disappear in favor of that which is more accepted and powerful, either on a local, national or global scale. An example is the power of English and Spanish over less common languages, such as Garífuna. In other words, hybridity in the best case scenario brings together the best of all worlds in what Bakhtin (1981) refers to as a "third space" where different languages and varieties function in unison, resulting in a form of hybridization as it creates opportunities for greater understanding. However, it also has the potential to just be a temporary stage and act as "a weapon capable of destroying the minority language" (Garcia, 2006, p. 172) and culture in favor of that which holds the greatest power. Hybridity must then be considered as a possible attempt at domination over time where mainstream cultures benefit from touches of cultural and linguistic "otherness" in the name of perceived inclusion, diversity and economic gain. However, the status of the "other" can never reach or fully infiltrate that which makes up the dominant and ruling group. In the case of the Garínagu, hybridity allows for acceptance and even survival in certain situations while it also permits spaces for the home culture and language. However, careful attention must be paid so that hybridity does not turn into homogenization over time for Garínagu. Just as the book by Karen Brodkin was written about "How the Jews became White Folk" in 1999 it appears that we may be on track in the U.S. to seeing the transformation of "How the Garífuna became Black." However, strong connections to Garífuna communities both in the U.S. and Honduras, as well as ties to a common Garífuna speech community, may counter such a trend.

The larger phenomenon of erasure of ethnic groups through homogenization of macro-labels has touched many groups across the Americas. We can consider other indigenous groups in many parts of Central and South America, especially those that move outside of their communities over time, who are now known just as Guatemalan, Peruvian or Latino. In the U.S. we can look at specific white ethnic groups such as the German or Irish, who at one point in history were regarded as separate and different from the mainstream, yet now fall into the overarching white label. This global trend brings up many questions: What happens to the status of a minority group who becomes part of the societal majority or the majority minority groups (as is the case for Garínagu in the U.S., who often become part of the African American majority minority group)? How are their language and cultures impacted? Do the advantages outweigh the disadvantages over the long term? Or could it be the other way around?

In conclusion, my experiences with Garífuna communities have provided me with a window into a group who has exhibited pride in their history, culture and language, while others have shown shame and denial. The Garínagu have persevered through difficult situations being displaced over three different continents and have adapted in spite of the prior and present day challenges. Even as minorities they have attained rights in Honduras, maintained their language and cultural traditions as they've incorporated Honduran and American culture into their repertoire. Their ability to negotiate outside pressures, racism and discrimination demonstrates the fluidity of power that allows groups to determine their hybridized paths regardless of dominant influences (Genishi, 1999). Garcia-Canclini speaks to the possibilities that exist within postmodernism to allow for different voices and perspectives to emerge, in spite of the power of the dominant knowledge in any given society:

> The increase in processes of hybridization makes it evident that we understand very little about power if we only examine confrontations and vertical actions. Power would not function if it were exercised only by bourgeoisie over proletarians, whites over indigenous people, parents over children, the media over receivers. Since all these relations are interwoven with each other, each one achieves an effectiveness that it would never be able to do by itself (1989, p. 259).

The experiences of Garínagu described within this paper illustrate the pull of dominant values, beliefs and labels, even when presented under the guise of hybridity. However, these experiences also show how those who are perceived as outsiders can assert their realities as valid and powerful. Postmodernism allows for inclusively of multiple and diverse stories and voices, but still exists within a dichotomy where certain groups maintain privilege over others. Thus, the intersection of

differences and similarities as a result of increasingly global and transnational forces becomes a place of struggle, but also one of dialogue across groups from divergent backgrounds.

The impact of transnationalism on Garínagu will be more evident over time. In spite of external pressures and discrimination, they hold a sense of power in determining how and to what degree their culture, language and identity will move toward hybridization. The influence from families, schools, churches and grassroots organizations can take small steps to counter dominant forces. However, the power of dominant cultures and languages is a driving force over smaller communities. Although their struggles are not unlike other minority groups, their position as indigenous, Afro-Latino and a Garífuna diaspora creates a unique situation of negotiating different places, perceptions and pressures.

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[i] Although Garífuna is the common term used to refer to this group, it is the singular form of the word and Garínagu is plural. They are also referred to as Black Caribs.

[ii] In some Central American countries, including Honduras, people of mixed indigenous and Spanish background are referred to as Ladinos. This is not to be confused with the language of Sephardic Jews, which goes by the same name.

[iii] In the U.S. the term African American is typically used to refer to individuals with dark skin who are born in the country. While Garínagu have roots that trace back to Africa and have origins in Central American, they would generally not fall within that label.

[iv] Most Garínagu grow up speaking Garífuna at home and begin learning Spanish once they attend school. The entire curriculum is taught in Spanish, primarily by teachers who do not speak Garífuna. The separation and different uses of languages between home and school, which falls into Fishman's (1972) description of diglossia, leads to bilingualism for most Garínagu, while biliteracy is less prevalent.