Media and Identity in the Margins: The Garifuna Response to Social Media

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to understand how social media is affecting the identities of indigenous cultures. Using natives of Central America with ancestral roots in Africa as research subjects, this research explores how the Garifuna culture experiences social media and how these media influence cultural perceptions. Using a grounded theory approach, in-depth interviews were conducted in the United States and Honduras. The results of those interviews indicate that media can aid individuals within the Garifuna culture to reconcile their three identities (Black, Hispanic, and American) and thereby form a stronger sense of self. This research suggests that new media might create a type of triple consciousness within cultural perception.

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Social media are reshaping the way cultures view themselves and others (Johnson & Callahan, 2013; Ross Altarac, 2008; Khan & Khan, 2007). These media are creating new social contexts that provide alternative psychological outlets for communicative action (Lévy, 2000) and remake the communal identity of their users (Arnett, 2002). While traditional forms of social use are still viable, new mediascapes are emerging and creating unique communicative environments. Because new media are creating these cyber-environments, which in many ways replicate other types of cultural environments, there are now a variety of new cultural responses that can alter identity (Arnett, 2002).

Valenzuela and McCombs (2009) argued that individuals within a particular culture have a psychological need for orienting themselves to new environments. Scholars, such as Lévy (2000), have posited that online communities are creating their own cyberscapes, transcending traditional geographic, ethic, linguistic, or religious single-point definitions of culture. This argument extends to the elimination of spatial identifications for culture, that cultures are not geographically-based anymore (Mitchell, 1995; Callahan, Robinson, & Trachmann, 2011).

The purpose of this research is to understand how minority cultures are reorienting themselves with the larger social media milieu. In order to do this, the research focused on the experiences of the Garifuna culture. The Garifuna people are a group of black Latinos with ancestral origins in Central America, the Caribbean, and Africa. In the United States, the Garifuna have had differing experiences fitting in with any one culture. Since they are Hispanic and speak Spanish as well as their native Gari-

funa, many African-Americans have not accepted the Garifuna people; conversely, many Latinos have not accepted the Garifuna because they are black (Johnson & Callahan, 2013). All of these variables add to the overarching challenge of fitting into U.S. culture and lifestyle; therefore, the Garifuna continue to cluster together in homogenous groupings centered in large cities. The result is a conflict of identity in which Garifuna are forced to question their own identity and choices. This paper explores the various ways in which Garifuna—both in the United States and Central America—handle this conflict.

Minority Cultures and Social Media

Because media use has increased worldwide, this changing cyberscape context is a major influence within both majority and minority global psychological structures. Arnett (2002) claimed that the largest psychological consequence of this change is that it results in transformations of identity or "how people think about themselves in relation to the social environment" (p. 777). Increased global participation is more than simple media consumption. While the exploration of global media participation is important, the conversation needs to shift from a discussion of the digital divide to the new cultural digital construction. This is because, as Singh, Lenhert, and Bostick (2010) argued, global media participants are increasingly engaging in message and content creation rather than mere passive consumption.

While there are many studies that detail how minority cultures participate in media—such as how minority cultures adapt to new media technologies (Leonardi, 2003), how culture influences the use of media technolo-

gies (Barker & Ota, 2011; Baron & Segerstad, 2010; Campbell, 2007; Lin, Peng, M. Kim, S. Kim, & LaRose, 2012; Scott, Quinn, Timmerman, & Garrett, 1998; Shuchuan & Sejung Marina, 2011), cultural perceptions of technology (Fulk & Boyd, 1991), the globalizing effect of media (Ross Altarac, 2008), and minority representations within new media (Jimenez, 2011)—the amount of research regarding how cultures use new media structures to augment their own cultural identity is lacking. Most of these studies focus on media selection within the majority milieu (see Leonardi, 2003), which includes correlating demographic variables with contextual adaptation (Khan & Khan, 2007), and on the impact of media use on adaptation (Miglietta & Tartaglia, 2009; Walker, 1999). Some trade journals have recognized the opportunities afforded to minority groups through social media (Foster, 2008), but more work needs to be done to augment and recognize how social media is influencing group identities. While valuable, these types of studies do not address the construction of cultural cyber-enclaves.

Minority groups and developing countries participate in the global media for different reasons than those for dominant groups. The traditional view of global media is that it has a homogenizing effect on global culture (Segev, Ahituv, & Barzilai-Hahon, 2007), and the values of the dominant producers of media were thought to influence global consumers. Those countries that could not or would not participate in the dominant global media were termed "off the map" (Allen & Hamnett, 1995), and were considered to be left out of the global conversation. When countries did decide to participate in the global media system, it was usually for different reasons than developing

countries. Kramer, Callahan, and Zuckerman (2013) argued that there have been three main motivations for minority cultures to participate in global media: (1) as an apparatus for foreign national use, (2) to preserve indigenous culture, and (3) to forge a national identity from diverse ethnic groups.

While the one-way downloading of culture homogeneity seems to be a trendy topic (see Friedman 2005, 2007), recently, there have been greater efforts to study the usage of cyberscapes in providing a locus of influence. Notable among these perspectives is the co-constitutionality between culture and media—media shape cultural identity and cultures shape media through usage (Kramer, 1993, 1995, 2012). If this is true, it means that cultures do not evolve into whatever is downloaded by the dominant media; rather, they co-evolve, or form a unique media ecology. The concept of co-evolution between media and culture is an important part of the media ecology perspective, which privileges the individual culture's ability to adapt to the changing environment.

Identity Management within Social Media

Perhaps the most significant source of stress within intercultural communicative contexts is the renegotiation of one's identity (Kramer, Callahan, & Zuckerman, 2013). This includes a change in "social and work activities as well as thinking patterns, values, and self-identification" to match the most prevalent surrounding culture (Allison & Emmers-Sommer, 2011, p. 139). Although family, friends, and coworkers can help relieve any stress that occurs with this shift in identity, other methods are also available to immigrants to help ease the process.

Moon and Park (2007) suggest that American mass media can play an important role in helping immigrants learn which practices are acceptable within the American culture. Ultimately, immigrants who viewed more of the host nation's television programming were found to be "acculturated more quickly than those who viewed less host programming" (Raman & Harwood, 2008, p. 297). Similarly, interactive media, such as the Internet, satellite television, and other accessible forms of communication, are also tools that new immigrants can use in order to "ease their 'cultural shock'" (Allison & Emmers-Sommer, 2011, p. 140) as well as find tips on how to fit in with the majority cultural view.

Minority Identity Management

Perhaps one of the most well-known theoretical approaches to minority identity management (in relation to the majority view) is Du Bois' (1903) concept of double consciousness. Du Bois suggested that double consciousness explains how a person could identify as both an American and a Negro. While these two identities sometimes conflict with one another, they can also work together to benefit the souls of those who are struck with this double consciousness. Du Bois used himself as an example, mentioning how he would not want to rid himself of his Africanism nor Africanize America, and emphasizing that both facets of his self could work to learn from one another. As he put it, he would like to "merge his double self into a better and truer self" (Du Bois, 1903, p. 9).

While Du Bois emphasized its positive aspects, double consciousness can also lead to negative consequences, such as mental conflict (Moore, 2005). For example, white

Americans do not take on the role of black Americans, but black Americans may take on white roles because of inequality between the two communities—and they are quite conscious of doing it (Rawls, 2000). At times, many black people will only relate to their blackness, which can result in isolation from friends and society (Moore, 2005). Instead of just relating to one aspect of a person's self, double consciousness "involves two cultural identities, each corresponding to a different social role" (Rawls, 2000, p. 243). Although much has been said about double consciousness and how it can shape a black person's life, it is important to note that this double consciousness does not determine a black person's identity (Wilson, 1999).

While there have been many works published about double consciousness within the African-American community, double consciousness has also been used across disciplines and applied to other groups of people. For example, Arab-American poets have also been seen as being "caught between two worlds" (Abraham, 2010, p. 125). These Arab-American poets describe their feelings of being both Arab and American—their identities cross back and forth between the two, and they credit this crossing as what makes the difference in their lives (Abraham, 2010).

Russians in Israel also have experiences akin to double consciousness. Although they may share a common religion, cultural heritage, and even ethnic identity with the Jewish people, the Russians see themselves as having a unique identity apart from the Jewish people (Caspi, Adoni, Cohen, & Elias, 2002).

Other immigrant communities have also had similar experiences, including the Welsh in Argentina (Laugharne, 2007).

Many Garifuna are dealing with similar cultural dynamics within their own identities. The Garifuna are black, because of their skin, as well as Hispanic, because of where they come from. They have already been raised with a sense of double consciousness. However, those Garifuna who have moved to, lived in, or are now living in the United States may also think of themselves as American, taking on an American sense of consciousness, without giving up any part of their other "selves." Based on the above discussion of new media's influence on culture, cultural responses to the new media environment and how identity is managed culturally, the following research question emerges:

> RQ: *How do minority cultures manage identity through social media, particularly when separated geographically from their native culture?*

Method

The changing nature of minority identity management detailed above points to a new way of conceptualizing the minority responses to dominant media forms. These media trends include (1) an increase minority voice through social media, (2) an increase in new media use, (3) identity management though social media (e.g. social media outlets), and (4) the emergence of cultural cyberscapes. In selecting a subject pool for this research, care was given that the subjects would reflect these newer trends.

Participants

The authors chose the Garifuna for this study for four main reasons. First, there is a general lack of research on the Garifuna people and no research relating to

the Garifuna and media use. Second, the Garifuna are virtually absent in mainstream media and relatively unknown by others outside of Central America, yet there are a significant number of them in both Central America and in the United States. Third, the Garifuna have succeeded to varying degrees in maintaining their identity and language, despite the pressure from surrounding host cultures and languages. During the course of interviews for this study, one frequent theme was that Garifuna receive great pressure from African-Americans to identify with that culture because of their skin color. Yet they also receive great pressure from the various Latino populations to identify with that culture due to the Spanish language that most Garifuna speak. Last, this culture fits within the general definitions of a "minority culture." This cultural group receives experiences both physical and psychological pressures from a number of dominant and subdominant cultures, including Hispanic, African-American, and general United States culture. These dynamics lead to an ideal population to study cultural interactions, including acculturation, home/host culture, and new media use to form virtual cultural spaces.

A set of subject pool criteria was developed in order to select participants. Subject pool selection criteria addressed two main components: (1) the changing nature of cultural identification and (2) the minority population's use of social media. While researchers sought to determine the extent of media use among participants, subjects were not excluded based upon their access to social media. Researchers first determined the participants' access to social media and the forms of social media available. Then, participants were queried about their usage of social me-

dia. Garifuna cultural participants were selected because they fit these two pre-established categories in the following ways:

- These individuals are members of a minority culture spread over a large geographical area.
- Many Garifuna members are currently living outside of their ancestral homeland.
- The individuals were highly motivated to stay connected with their home culture or with loved ones outside the home culture though social media.

Because of their unique experiences, Garifuna culture has been the focus of varied research, including dominant language selection (Bonner, 2001) and native rituals (Green, 1998).

Garifuna

The Garifuna people are a group of Black Latinos, descended from West African slaves (Caribs) and Arawak Indians. In 1797, the British removed the Garifuna from the Caribbean island of St. Vincent, placing them on the island of Roatan, off the coast of Honduras. From there, these people moved to the mainland and established villages along the coast from Belize to Nicaragua (England, 1999). It is estimated that the worldwide Garifuna population numbers about 600,000. Currently, there are approximately 300,000 Garifuna living in Central America, while many (an estimated 100,000) have migrated into various areas of the United States, with principal groups located in New York, Los Angeles, and New Orleans. There continue to be strong cultural ties between those living in traditional homelands and those in the United States (England, 1999; Gonzalez, 1998).

The Garifuna are a very tight-knit population, perhaps attributable to their history of forced relocation. They have their own language, music, and religion. Most have family members who have emigrated to the United States, or elsewhere, in order to help support family members in the homeland. Even before social media, the Garifuna maintained strong ties with other Garifuna, and new technology has allowed that contact to increase.

In all, 60 members of this culture living in 8 distinct areas were involved in this research. Participants were identified and solicited based on their age, gender, and geographical location. The intent was to construct a sample reflecting Garifuna demographics in age and gender. Geographically, the intent was to sample the same demographic diversity among those living in various cities in the United States, a relatively large city in Honduras, and multiple traditional small villages. A local Garifuna guide was obtained in each area and helped identify potential participants based on specified criteria. No effort was made to select participants based on their use or non-use of media, in order to reflect a degree of randomness. The guides did not know the intent of the research ahead of time, other than the researchers were asking questions about the Garifuna culture. The geographical background of the participants was diverse, as illustrated in Table 1.

The three cities in the United States represent significant populations of Garifuna immigrants, as well as varied cultural surroundings. In Honduras, the researchers spent significant time living in the traditional villages of Tornabe, Limon, and Triunfo de la Cruz. Researchers also visited Los Cayos Cochinos, an island off the coast of Honduras inhabited almost exclusively by Garifuna. La

Ceiba is one of the larger Honduran cities surrounded by Garifuna villages and was included to get a feel for differences in a larger city versus smaller and more traditional villages. The average age of respondents was 37, with a median age of 38, and a mode of 34.

Qualitative Interviews

The researchers used an open-ended interview consisting of seven different lines of questioning to illuminate the process of minority media use. While this study was primarily interested in newer forms of media use, such as the Internet, the questions were purposefully general to see to what extent new media responses would surface. The goal was to understand the impact of newer media forms on minority cultural magnification. In other words, this study investigated how minority groups use media to create cultural cyberscapes. The interviews and procedure received Institutional Review Board approval. Each question was designed to reveal personal experiences in the media process, including new media. These areas included:

- what it means to be Garifuna and their feelings about this identity,
- the difference between Garifuna and the rest of Hondurans,
- what types of media are the most important to Garifuna, and whether or not the participants had access to and used the indicated types of media,
- the ways in which various types of media were used—particularly social media,
- the ways in which Garifuna used media to maintain ties with friends and family across large distances,

Table 1
Locations of Garifuna Participants

Geographic Location	Participants
United States	22
New Orleans	8
New York	7
Los Angeles	7
Honduras	3
Tornabe	11
Limon	10
Triunfo de la Cruz	9
Los Cayos Cochinos	4
La Ceiba	4

- the differences in perceived connectedness when using various types of media,
- the feelings of the participant about the use of social media in strengthening or weakening his/her culture.

Interviews were conducted in the language most convenient to the participant—the majority were conducted in English and Spanish, with a few in Garifuna. Researchers were both fluent in English and Spanish, and a Garifuna guide was used to translate for surveys conducted in Garifuna. Each interview was recorded and transcribed. Researchers conducted interviews in locations most comfortable to participants. Most interviews were conducted in participants' homes. However, a few were conducted in parks, village school buildings, and even on

isolated Central American beaches where Garifuna were coming and going from fishing boats.

Using Constant Comparative Analysis, this analysis inductively approached data collection with no a priori scheme (Charmaz, 2000; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Corbin & Strauss, 1990). Each interview was transcribed, read, and reread. During open coding, similar responses were identified by moving back and forth within the dataset as the categories were formed (Lindloff & Taylor, 2011, Bisel & Arterburn, 2012). Next, similar categories were grouped together and the analysis moved to compare and contrast these larger categories of data. Lastly, these categories were then compared back with individual responses to ensure that the categories accounted for the level of nuance and force within the participant responses (Bisel & Arterburn, 2012). Constant comparative analysis is useful for establishing categories from qualitative data (Dey, 1993; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Patton, 1990). Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that this method "stimulates thought that leads to both descriptive and explanatory categories" (p. 341). The advantage of comparative analysis is that it demonstrates the basic mode of understanding and how it structures the experience of reality (Hyde & Smith, 1979). The analysis gave special attention to statements or stories describing the application of media experiences and how these statements were communicatively framed by the participants. This analysis of firsthand adaptation narratives allows researchers to identify theoretical elements and show their role in the adaptation process.

Results and Discussion

The research findings highlight several important

elements regarding minority media use and cultural iden-
tity. These include 1) the presence of a double conscious-
ness, 2) the move from a double to triple consciousness,
and 3) the impact of social media on a triple consciousness.

In-depth interview results indicated that the Gari-
funa experienced a double consciousness prior to immi-
grating to the United States. Following the move to the
United States and the adaptation process to the new envi-
ronment, new cultural contexts created an additional di-
mension to their cultural identity. This research will also
discuss issues of conflict between those cultural identities
and the eventual resolution of those conflicts within the
minds of the Garifuna. Finally, it will examine the Gari-
funa's situational use of the three "identities" and their
ultimate choice to strengthen the Garifuna identity amidst
the strong pull of the United States and African-American
cultures.

The Double Consciousness of the Garifuna

For many decades, the Garifuna people have lived
in Honduras under a double consciousness akin to that
described by Du Bois. While some of the details may be
different, the concept is applicable due to similar levels of
overt discrimination against Blacks in Honduras: they
weren't represented in the system of government, and they
were typically left to live by themselves in racially and
ethnically homogenous villages. However, the discrimina-
tion even reached into the villages. Schools made up en-
tirely of Garifuna children were mandated by the govern-
ment to speak only Spanish while at school.

One interviewee, Neco, spoke of corporal punish-
ment being inflicted upon him for speaking in Garifuna

while attending a Garifuna school. This prohibition on speaking his native language led Neco and other to question the value of being Garifuna. The contradiction between home life and life outside the home was drastic. For Neco, the double consciousness is a reality. "It make you feel all like, 'Then what is Garifuna?' But Garifunas respect authority, so we was just Garifuna everywhere but school, but in school or outside the village, we was black Hondurans."

Neco's comments are an excellent example for this research because he is still coming to terms with his various identities. This comment reveals the strength of conviction felt by all Garifuna in regards to their heritage and what it means to be Garifuna. Such praise and devotion to their heritage was unanimous across all interviewees. A less apparent devotion was an attachment to their Honduran, or Hispanic, identity—at least until the interview topic turned to life outside Honduras. This was when most Garifunas then clung to their Hispanic heritage, and specifically, their being from Honduras.

The Garifuna consciousness is easily identified when Neco discusses his early years. The Honduran consciousness can be seen in his comments about his time immediately following immigration. Neco immigrated to the United States with his parents when he was eight years old, but he remembers those early days in Honduras. He spoke about how he took both identities with him when he left Honduras. His comments shed significant light onto the existence of a double consciousness prior to immigrating.

Excerpt 1: Neco
I noticed the differences in the States. Everybody stick to they own kind, basically. When I first got

there I used to hang out with my Honduran people, but after that when I got a little older, my neighbor is a lot of American kids. Not so much Garifuna. Puerto Rican. So I started hanging with them. I felt like I fit in more with them cause of language and all that. But then I notice that they treat me different than others in they group. It was 'cause I am black. So I started hanging with the Black kids. I was growin' up. I just like the things they do. Going to school, I like nice things. Like the way they dress. Nice cars. Women. All the stuff I seen on TV that the Blacks had. It was so easy.

It is interesting to note the process Neco discusses in adapting to his new environment. As he grew into his teenage years, he felt pressured to fit in with one crowd or another. Initially, he chose the Hispanic crowd because he felt more culturally at home there. But as he was treated differently, he began to see he could fit in better if he went with the African-American group. He went on to say that he quickly had to develop English language skills to fit in with the African American group, because if he hadn't, he would have been shunned from that group as well.

Cultural Conflict Leading to Triple Consciousness

This research found that the process of attaining an appreciation of a double or triple consciousness usually involves some cultural conflict as the person begins to discover who they are and how their identities fit into the world around them. Neco's conflict in the school as a child being forced to abandon aspects of the Garifuna culture and language is one example of double consciousness. Neco's conflict in the United States and the process of coming to grips with his place in society is the beginning of the process to triple consciousness.

Neco is still coming to grips with this conflict. He knows the value of the Garifuna way of life and talks about having an appreciation of it. But at the same time, he is caught up with what he sees on TV and in the streets relating to life in the United States. The following excerpt highlights the clash of Neco's three internal consciousnesses.

Excerpt 2: Neco

I told you, when I left I was a baby, man. And in my neighborhood, there wasn't that much Garifuna people in my neighborhood. It was, you only see Blacks, Puerto Ricans, Dominicans. Every time I go to school, all you see is black kids running around. Being that I was young, I thought that the things that they do, it was fun. It started by playing basketball. Then going to the mall, hanging out. Then the nice clothes, the girls. The girls, you give them a lot of attention. To me, I'm from Honduras, oh you a foreigner. Girls don't want to know about you, they don't want to talk to you. It's the way you dress, it's the way you look. You you you nappy-headed. And once I started hanging with the black kids, they started dressing me up. And the girls started coming and the money started coming and that's how it started.

Neco, like many other youth, was exposed to images of United States life through media and television. He said one of his favorite channels growing up, both in Honduras and in the U.S. was BET because he liked the lifestyle the African-Americans on that channel led. However, the lifestyle portrayed on BET is in direct conflict with what Garifuna culture values: putting family before friends, showing respect to elders, and, most importantly, living off the fruits of hard work.

Neco is not alone in navigating this cultural mash-

up. Another interviewee, called Mincho, went through a similar process. Mincho, now 36 years old, was also taken at a very young age to the United States to live in New York City. He became part of a gang and was ultimately jailed and deported after being charged with attempted murder following a gang-related gunfight. His interview reveals similar conflicts between his Garifuna and Honduran identities and his American lifestyle. Ultimately, Mincho was able to resolve this conflict. Particularly, he spoke of the older generation and their worry for him in making poor decisions. Through hard experiences, Mincho began to see the value in his Garifuna Heritage.

> **Excerpt 3: Mincho**
> Maybe it was the easiness of the lifestyle that got me. But I did things I can't believe ever happened. It took being in prison and coming back to my village to make me see the difference. I'm so much happier now that I have chosen to be Garifuna. I want to help other youngsters in trouble come to that peace.

Mincho now volunteers in his native village to work with young Garifuna who display gang-like actions in the villages of Honduras. Neco is one of his projects. Mincho said Neco has not quite finished the process of embracing his Garifuna heritage and is still attracted to the easy lifestyle in the United States. An analysis of Neco's interview shows this conflict in identity. At one point, Neco talks about how wonderful it is to be Garifuna. He mentions similar things to other interviewees. The Garifuna eat better. They work harder. They are more honest people. But his answers follow up by saying he wants to leave Honduras and return to the United States. The following excerpt shows his affinity for his home culture:

Excerpt 4: Neco

We still doing things they used to do back in the days back in Africa. We still got it in us. That's what Garifuna is. The way we cook. The States, they don't really cook out there. They only cook macaroni and cheese, McDonald's, pizza—over here you cook. We eat machuca, tapado, rice, and beans. Good food, fish, fresh off the sea. Chicken. You know, we eat better than the States. We see over here a lot of people in the States they fat, they sick. You see that we healthy over here. Everything's natural.

Neco decries much of the culture he sees in the United States when comparing it to his own culture. He speaks of the downside of the fast lifestyle and the result on the food and the people. He talks about the downsides of the very culture that he liked in regards to material possessions. However, after these remarks, Neco shows the cultural conflict within him by talking about how he doesn't like some of the things that form part of his Garifuna heritage and how he desires to return to the easy lifestyle of the United States.

Excerpt 5: Neco

Nah, I'm not happy here [in Honduras]. Over here, it ain't easy over here. Ain't nothing easy in the States either, but it's a little easier, it's a little better than down here. I could work over here, but I don't like to do the things they do. Like cuttin' grass with machetes. A lot of stuff I'm not used to, it's too hard work.

The conflict is evident between the two identities and lifestyles Neco is trying to reconcile within himself. He still talks about the value of the Garifuna culture and lifestyle and puts much of it above the culture he sees in the

United States. This process is necessary to be able to achieve a triple consciousness that will make a true multi-cultural identity possible.

Resolution of Cultural Conflict Leading to Triple Consciousness

It is possible to resolve the inner turmoil one feels regarding the various aspects of one's self. Mincho has been spending a considerable amount of time helping youth who return to Honduras, including Neco, come to grips with themselves. He said it took him some time to resolve the internal conflict within himself as well. But he also said the process involved first making peace with who you are. For him, the realization that the older generation stuck with him even longer than his friends did brought him to the next step. He had been taught from a very early age that young people respect their elders and it was this respect that sparked an appreciation of his native heritage.

Excerpt 6: Mincho
It took me getting in prison to realize what was important. I decided the people in my life, my family was most important. That's when I made the connection to my Garifuna roots. The culture I was in doesn't respect parents and elders. Garifunas do. I knew that if anyone truly cared for me it was my parents, but my other life didn't show them any respect.

Mincho's experience is enlightening because it provides a model that others can follow when balancing out the three parts of consciousness. The process is also made easier if you are able to select compatible elements of each culture, a process that takes some time. Mincho spoke

multiple times about how it is possible to live outside the geographical boundaries of your homeland without giving up your culture. Mincho and others pointed to some common values between cultures that helped them. One such value is hard work.

Excerpt 7: Mincho
Garifunas value hard work. Thing is, if you think about it, so do Americans. I heard it all the time when I was there but never paid attention. I think that's a part of who they are, and it's also who we are. Once I realized that, it gave me great peace.

But one of the challenges over the years is that the Garifuna culture is centered around rituals and festivals that must be performed by a village *buye*. Even Garifuna interviewed in the United States speak of these rituals as being a part of what makes them Garifuna. In fact, the Catholic church has begun having all-Garifuna mass services in Honduras. Occasionally, *buyes* are paid to come to the United States to perform some of their rituals for all Garifuna in the area to participate; for instance, the Garifuna community in New York paid for a *buye* to come and perform a Garifuna mass service in New York City.

Social Media and the Garifuna Triple Consciousness
Social media and new technology are making it even more accessible for Garifuna in the United States to remain a part of their culture. Without exception, all of the Garifuna interviewed and observed in the United States had access to social media. Not all had computers, but they all had access to one, and all had social media accounts. In fact, Jose, a Garifuna opinion leader in New York said in an interview that social media was making it

possible to keep Garifuna culture alive in the United States. He spoke of religious ceremonies, such as a *velorio,* a ceremony given on behalf of a deceased relative one year after his or her passing, that are being performed on You-Tube and Facebook. These are keeping people connected and maintaining cultural ties across the distance – and this connection is not limited to the family living outside the homeland. The connection is felt by those inside the homeland.

Excerpt 8: Jose

> Loved ones in the U.S. begin to feel like they are a part of the ceremony. They obviously can't eat the food or drink the drink, but they still feel con-nected. And the people in Honduras feel like those in the U.S. are connected as well.

Before social media, attendance at Garifuna gather-ings and festivities was problematic. One interviewee in New Orleans, whom the author has given the pseudonym Ingrid, mentioned another reason the cultural practices posted through social media have become so important to Garifuna—the fact that some of the practices can be loud and are not very well understood, and thus, are not ac-cepted in the United States.

Social media has become a powerful tool in helping the Garifuna keep grounded in their culture, while adapt-ing to culture in their new surroundings. In fact, due to social media, many Garifuna are learning to write in their native language for the first time. They are learning this through the online culture for the Garifuna—writing in Spanish when interacting with Hispanics, in English when interacting with Americans, and in Garifuna when inter-acting with Garifunas. More than 75% of the Garifunas

interviewed in the United States indicated they were learning how to write in this mostly oral language. They all attributed this to wanting to be a part of this virtual community of Garifuna online, which is facilitating a growing pride in the Garifuna culture and language.

Many Garifunas interviewed have come to appreciate life in the United States, adapt to its culture, and be proud to be a part of it. At the same time, these Garifuna cling strongly to the other elements of consciousness within them. Once they have walked the path of adaptation into the culture and come to terms with the value of who they are, they arrive at a state in which they actually value all three identities: Garifuna, Honduran, and their new host country – a potential triple consciousness.

Garifuna Triple Consciousness in Action

The Garifuna people have been able to adapt into whatever environment they are in, and they have proven this ability over generations. Those who have immigrated to the United States are no exception. After attaining citizenship—a vital part of this triple consciousness—Garifuna people use their multiple identities to their advantage. For example, after Hurricane Katrina devastated the Louisiana coast, the U.S. government began offering jobs to Hispanics to come to New Orleans and help rebuild. There was not a significant population of Garifuna in New Orleans prior to this event, but over time, more and more Garifuna came to claim jobs offered to Hispanics in the area. Most of them stayed and have formed a vibrant community there. Scholarships offered to Hispanics are being claimed by Garifuna eager to improve their means of support. Yet, just as Garifuna are claiming benefits offered to

Hispanics, they are also claiming benefits offered to Blacks. As one Garifuna father explained it in New Orleans, Garifuna are able to take advantage of many opportunities because they legitimately can claim all of them.

Conclusion

Despite the claim that global media is marginalizing minority cultures and causing global homogenization, this research found that newer forms of social media are in fact creating virtual cultural cyberscapes that are reshaping minority identities. The Garifuna cultural response to social media can be demonstrative of the positive impact of social media minority perspectives. The findings here are in agreement with Mitchell (1995) and Callahan, Robinson, and Trachmann, (2011) that culture can be extended out from traditional geographical models. Cultural spaces seem to be more than points on a map.

This research suggests that Garifuna experience a double consciousness prior to immigrating to the United States and that Garifuna then go through a process that leads them ultimately to what could be described as a triple consciousness. Additionally, sometimes these identities are in conflict with each other, but they can be resolved into an identity that makes Garifuna happy and more comfortable with themselves.

This research has also shown how media is helping Garifuna reconcile the three consciousnesses. The results show strengthening of Garifuna identity within individuals. Ingrid best sums up the intent of this research:

Excerpt 9: Ingrid
I used to only be able to watch TV that came from places that weren't Garifuna—mostly from the U.S. That's a big reason why I came to the U.S. But at

first I didn't like the lifestyle here—particularly in New York. It's too fast. New Orleans is more like Honduras—laid-back and calm. But I missed hearing from people back home. Now I can do it through social media. Now I feel like I have adapted. I like living here. I understand the people more. I still watch TV, even U.S. TV, but maybe not as much as before. Now I see videos and posts from people back home, and I feel more myself. I feel more Garifuna, and it just feels right. That is why social media is good, I think. It has helped me adapt to being both American and Garifuna.

This study does not discount the myriad of voices decrying acculturation or cultural adaptation. However, it does shed new light on the issues once brought forth by Du Bois about race and identity. Having cultural identities that clearly pull from Black, Hispanic, and American cultures, perhaps the Garifuna understand a multiple consciousness better than anyone. And because of the struggle that comes with blending those multiple consciousnesses, perhaps they have a better sense of personal identity.

The implications for this research extend far beyond the Garifuna culture. The impact that social media is having on cultural perspectives can create significant alterations to cultures themselves. This obviously includes outward manifestations of culture, what Appadurai (1996) terms cultural "substantialism." The language a culture employs, its rhythm (dance, etc.), foods, dress, and social structure are all observable, substantial identifications of culture. For Ong (1980), Appaduarai (1995), and the technological determinists, though, it is the perceptual differences that constitute the social force behind cultural actions. The construction, maintenance, and evolution of these perspectives are determined in part by how the cul-

ture communicates. Thus, cultures that use media, and specifically social media, to magnify outward cultural expressions to some degree could be altering internal perspectives. This implication could have an important impact on the way that social media research is conducted in relation to culture.

Directions for Future Research

This study returned data that suggest implications in other areas that warrant further investigation. The data indicate a possible weakening of the impact of geography in the formation and maintenance of cultural spaces, at least in the case of the Garifuna. Another potential area for further research enlightened by the data is this study is the use of social media between the Garifuna culture and other cultures. This study found initial data that suggest the need for further investigation of how Garifuna are using new media to learn about and interact with other cultures – both in traditional Garifuna villages and beyond the geographical Garifuna borders. Shuter (2012) agrees that this is an area of need for future investigation and the Garifuna living in the U.S. provide insight into this fertile field.

As an exploratory look at minority use of new media, this research is limited in its ability to apply the findings to any sort of broad minority/social media model. More work needs to be done to understand the process of how Garifuna specifically adapt to their surroundings in a new host culture. A more specific, and larger sample of Garifuna living outside their homeland would be helpful – especially to understand the process beyond the use of social media. This research suggests a possible triple con-

sciousness in the case of the Garifuna people. More work needs to be done to understand and better be able to generalize this process among Garifuna living outside their homeland. More research needs to be done to identify and document those changes in Garifuna culture.

Mumford (1974) has argued that, "Every manifestation of human culture, from ritual and speech to costume and social organization, is directed ultimately to the remodeling of the human organism and the expression of human personality" (p. 10). Social media is changing the nature of expression for globally dispersed minority cultures. This research has demonstrated the importance of going beyond behavioral or usage studies. Social media is not only changing the questions asked by cultural researchers, it is also shifting the focus of those questions. This study's findings are in agreement with Lévy (2000). Minority cultures are using social media to create their own cultural cyberscapes, and, by doing so, are rewriting their own cultural identities.

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