West Indian immigration: To what extent was West Indian national identity shaped by their experiences in Britain during the Windrush era (1948-1963)?

History

Abstract

The arrival of the ship MV Empire Windrush on 22 June 1948 is largely considered the land mark of post-war mass migration to Britain. With approximately 492 Caribbean men and women aboard the ship, their lives in Britain following their arrival has been a key area of examination. Throughout this study, I use the Empire Windrush as an overarching case study that forms the central basis of my research. My dissertation explores how 'Britishness' influenced the national identity of West Indian citizens, from both within the colonies and during their time in Britain. It analyses the impact of the cultural and economic hardships experienced by Caribbean immigrants, while also highlighting the formation of newfound resistance to these adversities. Therefore, it becomes clear that the role of the 'Mother country' within the narrative of West Indian immigration has played a major role in defining West Indian national identity.

Contents

Introduction

In 1948 the Windrush ship made its first voyage to Britain, bringing almost 500 West Indian immigrants to their new home. This notable journey marked the beginning of the Windrush influx which saw thousands of Caribbean citizens endure the same journey to a post-war Britain. Promises of employment opportunities, financial stability and a more prosperous future were key driving factors of this movement. However, the harsh reality of life in Britain was soon realised with West Indian communities being a prime target of social and economic discrimination. Immigrants were refused jobs they were over-qualified for and faced 'Colour bars' on numerous rental properties leaving them with low incomes and poor living standards. These materialistic restrictions were encompassed with violence and racial aggression driving a clear segregation in society. The Windrush immigrants were so isolated from the native population that they began to form their own communities in areas such as Notting Hill with 'Caribbean only' bars being set up in direct opposition to the oppressors. The idealistic notion of 'Britishness' held by West Indian immigrants was quickly being tainted by an overwhelming lack of belonging. This thesis will cover the journey of the West Indian immigrants starting from their lives in the colonies until the passing of the immigration restriction act in 1963, where their British identity was established and broken down in the space of a decade, resulting in a divided empire. It will also focus on the opposing actions taken by these citizens to form their own 'separate but equal black British identity.'

In order to achieve this, the following thesis will be centred around three key chapters. The first will focus on the adoption of 'Britishness' by West Indian communities and how this became an integral part of their national identity. It will analyse how a connection to empire was originally institutionalised through the means of education and consequently how a devotion to the British monarchy and loyalty to the British nation further served to consolidate their status as British citizens. The second chapter will then use these views to

identify how the experiences of living in England, specifically the cultural and social hardships, came to challenge their original understanding of their connection with empire. However, this chapter will also explore how a new notion of ''Britishness'' was formed, whereby a resistance to the narrative of discrimination gave rise to a new national identity based on a shared cultural and social respect. The third and final chapter will follow along similar lines to that of the second, however as opposed to cultural factors it will highlight the impact of economic influences on the shaping of West Indian national identity. Moreover, the importance of occupation, accommodation and living conditions will be considered. When understanding the resistance to these hardships, a particular focus will be given to the success of West Indian communities in overcoming the restrictions set by an overt colour bar, allowing immigrants to embrace the opportunities Britain had to offer.

The importance of this topic is ever present in the 21st Century. In April 2018 the current Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, Theresa May, made a public apology to Caribbean leaders over deportation threats made to the children of commonwealth communities. Despite living in Britain for over 70 years, the legitimacy of their national identity has now been called into question. Given the lack of paperwork and largely unplanned influx of West Indian citizens into the UK following World War II, immigration officials are now questioning the legality of their British Citizenship with pressures of deportation arising. The presence of immigration issues in modern day society is undeniable, having dominated political discussions and media coverage over the last few years. The immigration of West Indian citizens during the mid-twentieth century, otherwise known as the Windrush generation, is a prime example of immigration gone wrong where a lack of support for new residents led to a clear segregation of communities in the country. In order to ensure that the key mistakes made are not repeated, it is imperative that the causes of such errors are identified. The collective memory of the Windrush generation and the hardships they faced

should not be dismissed as a past fault but rather kept at the forefront of political agenda to resolve the irrefutable immigration issues we are facing at present.

Literature review

Historiographical accounts on the study of West Indian national identity have evolved significantly throughout the last century. The end of World War two saw an influx of colonial subjects entering Britain, resulting in an increase in relevant literature. While this thesis chronologically covers the British identity of West Indian immigrants, starting prior to their arrival in Britain, the historiography's initial focus on this topic merely covered the period after they had immigrated. Therefore, only when the historiography progressed did the national identity of West Indians prior to their arrival in Britain become seen as a crucial element in forming their own sense of Britishness.

The seemingly backwards order by which this topic was covered within literature is evident by the work of sociologists Michael Banton, Ruth Glass and Sheila Patterson. Throughout the 1950s, their research regarding the extent to which West Indian immigrants became integrated within British society from within the metropole placed the issue of race as the biggest obstacle with regards to their acceptance. At the time of their publication these works were extremely relevant due to a rapid rise of colonial immigration between the years 1948 and 1962.[1] With West Indian numbers reaching approximately 115,000 by the end of this period, these writings must be considered crucial elements which "carved out the beginnings of the British field of race relations in Britain."[2]

Several years later, in 1984, the work of Peter Fryer in 'Staying power' advanced this area of historiography further through an account which tracked the growth of the black community. However, rather than engaging with black British history from a Eurocentric view, Fryer steers away from white history which is so often tainted by the absence of black people and

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[1] Ceri Peach, *West Indian Migration to Britain. A Social Geography* (London: Oxford University Press for the Institute of Race Relations, 1968), 10–13.
[2] Anne Rush, "Reshaping British History: The Historiography of West Indians in Britain in the Twentieth Century," *History Compass* 5, 2 (2007): 464.

their own agency. Alternatively, through the use of colonial biographical accounts he was able to address the issue of race and national identity from a West Indian perspective, which provided 'a veritable arsenal of weaponry against white historiography.'[3] As a result, Fryer demonstrated that "Without knowing something about black history we can neither understand the world of today nor see the way forward to the world of tomorrow."[4]

However, while the authors mentioned above examined the identity of West Indians from the perspective of their life in Britain, they largely dismissed the origin of British identify held by West Indian communities. Therefore, arguably the largest shift in the historiography arose from research which combined both West Indian identity in the metropole, as well as in the colonies. Peter Fryer highlighted the importance of integrating histories by stating "they are two sides of the same coin. Neither can be understood without the other."[5] This was supported by scholar Harry Goulbourne in his 1991 work 'Ethnicity and nationalism in post-imperial Britain.' Goulbourne argued how the colonial upbringing of Caribbean migrants was an essential area of research that must be included when trying to understand the fluctuating nature of 'Britishness' within West Indian national identity. This was driven by the fact that West Indians had already developed a strong British identity that had preceded the arrival of the Empire Windrush in 1948. Therefore, scholars who had not considered this area of study were not able to trace the narrative of Britishness and compare its influence on identity before and after their arrival in England. This same point has been emphasised in the publication of 'We ask for British Justice' by Laura Tabili in 1994. Within this study, Tabili used the connection of both the histories of colonies and the metropole to demonstrate how West

[3] Ambalavaner Sivanandan, 'Staying Power: The History of Black People in Britain,' by Peter Fryer, *Institute of Race and Class*, October 1, 1984, Books, 99.
[4] Peter Fryer, *Black People in the British Empire: An Introduction* (London: Pluto Press, 1989), p. xii.
[5] Ibid.

Indians used their own version of Britishness to fight against the racism and discrimination they faced.

From this point onwards, it is evident that the historiography of national identity and Britishness has remained in line with the works of Tabili and Goulbourne. Therefore, while there have been tangents within the scholarship, they have continued to refer to the idea of colonial origins as an integral aspect in the formation of any analysis. This is made evident by Marcus Collins, whose 'pride and Prejudice: West Indian men in Mid-Twentieth Century Britain' tracks the changing beliefs towards black masculinity. It is also within this area of historiography that this thesis is situated. By using more recent works in the historiography of West Indian national identity, I have been able to present an analysis on the extent to which Britishness penetrated colonial identity. Through using the work of later scholars such as those mentioned above, I have been able to formulate a better understanding of the narrative of identity as analysed by earlier scholars.

Methods and aims

The primary aim of this research is to understand how the West Indian expectations of London compared with the reality of their experiences upon arrival into Britain. It will encapsulate notions of West Indian national identity, including the extent to which the concept of 'Britishness' changed as increasing amounts of migrants came to reside in the 'mother country.' This aim encompasses three major areas of identity formation within my research. Firstly, as the progression of historiography has shown, early accounts of migrant identity focussed solely on their time in London and disregarded the reasons as to how a sense of connection with the empire was initially formed. Therefore, in this study I aim to overcome this gap in early literature by using the works of scholars such as Harry Goulbourne and Anne Spry Rush to track the narrative of Britishness from its origins,

through to a more contemporary perspective. Secondly, existing historiography from the 1970s until approximately the early 1990s focused on the experience of migrants living in Britain. In this dissertation, I aim to use this research and apply it to the more specific cases of cultural and economic difficulties to portray the separation of Britishness from West Indian identity. Thirdly I will present the argument that despite these difficulties, a new definition of Britishness was produced which could also be considered a form of resistance against institutionalised racism within Britain.

In order to achieve these research aims; I have made use of the plethora of primary sources available at the Black Cultural Archives in Brixton. These have included various transcripts from members of the West Indian community, questionnaires completed upon arrival into Britain and letters written by Windrush passengers. These sources have provided a great amount of information relevant to all three different stages of identity progression. Additionally, when aiming to understand the re-assessment of 'Britishness' and the importance of colonial voice, 'Windrush. The irresistible rise of multi-racial Britain,' by Mike and Trevor Philips became a vital source. Through the memories and impressions of survivors who made the journey to England in 1948, the authors encapsulated the changes in British society in terms of identity. Therefore, within my thesis I have been able to use these testimonies to portray the formation of a multi-racial Britain which was shaped by migrant experiences.

Chapter 1- The shaping of 'Britishness' in the colonies

Introduction

In order to understand the progression of West Indian identity from the Windrush era to the twenty-first Century, it is integral to acknowledge the origin of their sense of 'Britishness' and the key factors driving this notion. From the mid-nineteenth century to the early twentieth century West Indian Communities believed the concept of Empire to be a significant element of their identity. Children growing up within the West Indies were educated in-line with the English Syllabus giving them a heightened understanding of British culture and philosophy. The more rigorous education programme also gave the Children enhanced job prospects allowing them to compete with their British counterparts. Furthering the sense of British origin within the West Indies, historical events involving the Royal Family were a key focal point for media outlets. Royal Birthdays, Weddings and the Queen's coronation were all broadcasted to the mass population of the West Indies enriching a sense of belonging to the Empire. Finally, the significant contribution in personnel made by West Indian communities during both World Wars signified their continued support of the Empire and compelled patriotism for Britain which had strengthened over time. Throughout this Chapter, each of these three factors will be analysed to understand the extent to which they impacted the sense of 'Britishness' held by West Indian Citizens and how this determined their national identity over time.

Educational influences

Arguably one of the most prevalent influences towards the emergence of West Indian identity stemmed from the nature and interpretation of the British colonial education system. By constructing primary and secondary schools to be reminiscent of those in the mother country, education helped to pave the way towards an "immersion into Britishness."[6] This view has been supported by philosopher Edgar Morin who stated that education, specifically the

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[6] Anne Spry Rush, *Bonds of Empire: West Indians and Britishness from Victoria to Decolonisation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 22.

teaching of history, is "indispensable for the establishment of national identity."[7] By affirming the perspective of education as a construction of national identity along the lines of collective memory, the predominant social group, in this case the British, are positively valued. This is extremely evident in the case of West Indian education which promoted a sense of 'self' through a distinctly Anglo-centric lens.

One way in which education was particularly influential was through the reflection of British institutions within the national curriculum of the West Indies. The manipulation of syllabuses so as to connect them to the idea of colonial expansion, as scholar Pamela Horn has suggested, "Moulded young minds in favour of the imperial ideal."[8] This was particularly evident following the consequences of the Boer war, whereby concerns were raised regarding the education of recruits, and the ethical values of the school curriculum. Therefore, the 1906 'Code of Regulations for Public elementary Schools' and the introduction of 'moral instruction' reflected the patriotic and imperial influence of the curriculum during this period. While this curriculum was ultimately directed towards natives in Britain due to the prominence of their role in the Boer war, West Indian students in the colonies also became the recipients of this pro-British propaganda. This has been supported by West Indian Vince Reid, who stated that "the whole imperialistic thing was drilled into you."[9] Furthermore, as noted by Anna Spry Rush in 'Bonds of empire,' this propaganda reached "all backgrounds, colours, and creeds" and it was not something "designed exclusively for the 'lesser' colonial

[7] Mario Carrentero, Mikel Asensio, María Rodríguez Moneo, *History Education and the Construction of National Identities* (Charlotte: Information Age Publishing, 2003), 2.
[8] Pamela Horn, "English elementary education and the growth of the imperial: 1880- 1914," in *Benefits Bestowed?* Ed. J. A. Mangan (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), 40.
[9] Mike Philips and Trevor Philips, *Windrush: The Irresistible Rise of Multi-Racial Britain* (London: Harper Collins Publishers, 1998), 13-14.

people."[10] Thus, as a result of receiving the same message that was intended for the mother country, West Indians justifiably considered themselves an "integral part of empire."[11]

However, some scholars, particularly those from the neo-Marxist framework of study such as Martin Carnoy and his work 'Education as Cultural imperialism', have questioned Britain's governmental motivations. This particular theoretical standpoint held the British Empire responsible for the establishment of educational policies, stating they were "expressly designed to perpetuate European cultural and political hegemony."[12] Consequently the idea that "education was maintained to foster the subordinate status of the indigenous people"[13] is a key feature of this view. However, this interpretation can be strongly argued against to support the premise that the impact of British colonial education on national identity fostered a greater sense of belonging and equality than of a subordinate status to the white colonizers. To begin, individual memoirs from former West Indian students can be seen to adhere to this view. For example, in an interview with Jamaican Mrs Watson, the interviewer working for the Black cultural archives asked a series of questions relating to the issue of British superiority and what children were taught about their relationship to the empire. In her response Mrs Watson stated, "I wouldn't say I'd look upon them as they were superior… we were taught that we'd been colonised by the British and that we were part of the British Empire and we were part of the commonwealth."[14] In another account, Grenadian Ros Howells recalled how "Grenada was definitely part of empire," it wasn't seen as a "separate

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[10] Anne Spry Rush, *Bonds of Empire: West Indians and Britishness from Victoria to Decolonisation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 38.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Clive Whitehead, "British colonial education policy: a synonym for cultural imperialism?" In *Benefits Bestowed?* Ed. J. A. Mangan (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), 211.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Watson, "Interview with Mrs Watson," 18 March 1988, Oral History Interviews, Black Cultural Archive, BCA/5/1/14.

entity" but instead was considered "the only place you'd come to after you finished [education], like a finishing school."[15]

In relation to these accounts, and many others with like-minded recollections, Anna Rush has argued how West Indians, especially those from a middle-class background, came to embrace British cultural values. They regarded them as "a means to become respectable, contributing members and leaders of their own society."[16] Furthermore, the role of education in demonstrating and providing middle class status led some to believe that the British orientated content of classrooms came to hold a certain intrinsic value. As a result of the social mobility gained through the adoption of a British education, it was anticipated that a place within the mother country would be consolidated. Additionally, due to students being able to easily access schools which expressed a British style of learning, there was a shared idea that all West Indians who received this level of education were an essential part of the Britishness they were taught. Nevertheless, while "British education initiatives served imperial motives of remaking colonists into the colonizer's image"[17], West Indians embraced this culture of the mother country. Spry Rush confirms this by maintaining that West Indians were "taught to think of themselves not as conquered people, but as conquerors, as Britons in their own right who shared with native Britons a proud heritage."[18] Therefore, patriotic gestures such as saluting to the Union Jack, singing 'Rule Britannia,' and playing sports such as cricket, were encompassed by the West Indians as a part of their own culture.

Media influences

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[15] Mike Philips and Trevor Philips, *Windrush: The Irresistible Rise of Multi-Racial Britain* (London: Harper Collins Publishers, 1998), 13.

[16] Anne Spry Rush, *Bonds of Empire: West Indians and Britishness from Victoria to Decolonisation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 169.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Ibid,40.

Aside from educational influences impacting the British identity of West Indian communities, imperial loyalties were also cultivated following a clear devotion to imperial ideologies that centred around the British monarchy. By tracing this allegiance back through the history of the West Indies, it becomes evident that the attractive representation of Queen Victoria, following the abolition of slavery, played a crucial role in defining the type of relationship the West Indies would establish with the British Empire. Thus, while the 1833 emancipation act was enacted some four years before Victoria's accession to the throne in 1837, there was a delay in the changes to Caribbean society. The result was that the end of the post- slavery apprenticeship system and the subsequent exploitation of workers was not carried out until the late 1830s. Consequently, the integration of Queen Victoria's reign within this period of positive change gave rise to an extremely powerful image.[19] She became known as a "beneficent Queen, the liberator of slaves and the guardian of their future freedoms."[20] This idea of protection and loyalty to the throne has been supported by Jamaican 'nationalist' Robert Love, who argued: "we desire to be English, in spite of some faults which we see and feel there is much that is good and sound in the heart of England, and we have confidence in her great intentions."[21]

Accordingly, just as education has been shown to have institutionalised ideas of loyalty and a connection to empire, the use of propaganda has arguably achieved a similar effect through coverage of the Royal family. So much so that the British monarchy became included within the fabric of everyday life.[22] This is evident from very small, seemingly insignificant details, such as the sovereigns head on stamps, to more noticeable country-wide festivities, such as

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[19] Anne Spry Rush, *Bonds of Empire: West Indians and Britishness from Victoria to Decolonisation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 49.
[20] David Killingray, "A Good West Indian, a Good African, and, in Short, a Good Britisher: Black and British in a Colour-Conscious Empire," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 36, 3 (2008): 364.
[21] lbid, 9.
[22] Anne Spry Rush, *Bonds of Empire: West Indians and Britishness from Victoria to Decolonisation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 49.

the celebration of royal weddings and coronations. Nevertheless, the impact of these differing levels of commitments penetrated all sections of West Indian society. Consequently, a strong identification was created, not only with the British Royal family but also with the empire it represented.[23] A source which is particularly useful in portraying this connection is Jamaican newspaper *The Daily Gleaner*. On the 14th May 1937, two days following the coronation of King George VI, the Gleaner dedicated a whole page to the event, with the title "London looked like a great bazaar for the coronation- chilling rain on eve of great celebration failed to dampen spirits of millions."[24] It documented detailed descriptions of the 25,000 people who gathered in the nation's capital, as well as the thousands in the colonies who heard the coronation, courtesy of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). From 4.15 a.m. lasting until after 9.15 a.m. the account recalls how Jamaicans "felt a thrill when they heard the King in accents bold, give his solemn oath to 'govern the peoples of Great Britain."[25] This supports the view that Caribbean colonies felt a strong association with the Empire through the established connection with the Monarchy.

However, while these methods were extremely influential, it may also be argued that there were other less passive ways by which the persuasive ideology of imperial governance was more significantly conveyed. Active participation in colonial celebrations represents a considerably effective example, for it enabled colonial populations to establish a more personal relationship with British royalty. In the instance of the coronation this was particularly important and can be witnessed by the extent to which various countries commemorated the royal occasion. In Kingston, Jamaica, a "tremendous crowd" lined the capitals racecourse (approximately 1 mile in circumference), in order to witness the firework display managed by the scout's movement, with estimates placing crowd numbers at

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[23] Ibid.
[24] W.I.P Cable Coy, "London looked like great bazaar for the coronation," *Jamaica Gleaner,* May 14, 1937.
[25] Ibid.

approximately thirty thousand. Similarly, Barbados was described to have "joined the rest of the empire in celebrating the coronation in a fitting manner,"[26] with a city that was "lavishly illuminated."[27] During these occasions direct acknowledgements were also made towards the British sovereigns, with speeches expressing "deep loyalty and affection to His Majesty's throne and person,"[28] and the singing of "God save the King" in all services. Therefore, when understanding the importance of the West Indian relationship with the British monarchy, it becomes clear that the development of popular and positive notions about royalty aided the formation of ties with the British Empire. Hence, the structure of their national identity was significantly shaped by the supposed 'colourless' view native Britain's were believed to have possessed regarding the concept of inclusion within the empire.

Involvement in the War

The loyalty for the monarchy that was engineered through the participation in celebratory events, along with the same ideas being promoted throughout education, was best showcased through West Indian representation in Warfare. The recruitment of approximately 15,000 men in the First World War, and over 10,000 men in the second, is a clear indication of the extent to which the imperial message had moulded the West Indian sense of National identity. A key factor which influenced this considerable commitment to the war effort came from the indoctrination of the idea that British manhood was embodied by respectability, and that this trait was considered integral to the notion of Britishness. According to Glenford Howe; "although some West Indians took the stance that they should not get involved in a

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[26] W.I.P Cable Coy, "Coronation Celebrations in Colonies," *Jamaica Gleaner,* May 15, 1937.
[27] lbid.
[28] lbid.

white man's war, many more identified themselves with the British cause and considered war service a chance to demonstrate their loyalty."[29]

Since many West Indians identified as citizens of the British Empire, they felt duty-bound to defend and protect the Country they were brought up to perceive as the 'motherland.' As legitimate members of this empire, the danger presented by the Nazi party in 1939 was considered a direct threat to West Indian society. Therefore while West Indians were fighting for their own individual countries, they were also fighting for the survival of the British Empire.[30] Both World Wars served to reinforce "already powerful ties to Britishness."[31] This connection with empire, and especially with the monarchy, as seen above, was strengthened by King George V's message to support the empire "which your fathers and mine have built."[32] It presented the British West Indian Regiment (BWIR) and the native British army as "one united family behind Britain,"[33] fostering a sense of pride in fighting for the imperial cause. This is evident through various soldier accounts, such as that by Eugent Clarke who stated, "I was so joyful to go and fight for England,"[34] and Guyanese Harold Peraud who spoke of fighting as a "tremendous feeling of loyalty."[35]

The war not only promoted a sense of pride through conclusive success, but simply being a part of the British war effort reinforced the West Indian connection with their idealised British empire. In an interview with Jamaican Hector Watson, when asked how he saw the mother country, he described it as a "great country". Similarly Victor Brown, a member of

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[29] Glenford Howe, *Race, War and Nationalism: A Social History of West Indians in the First World War* (Kingston: Ian Randle, 2002), 121.
[30] Anne Spry Rush, *Bonds of Empire: West Indians and Britishness from Victoria to Decolonisation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 132.
[31] lbid, 119.
[32] lbid, 121.
[33] lbid, 128.
[34] Richard Smith, "West Indians at War," *Institute of Caribbean studies* 36, 1 (2008): 225.
[35] Anne Spry Rush, *Bonds of Empire: West Indians and Britishness from Victoria to Decolonisation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 117.

the merchant Navy said "we were British subjects and that was something to be proud of."[36] From this, it can be understood that to the people of the Caribbean who "regarded their 'Britishness' as non-negotiable,"[37] Britain was superior. Calypso singer Sam King has described this intense amount of value that was placed on the Empire by stating that "you could not be good on your own. Your good was no good. Your good has to be British."[38]Along with the men who were active in combat or whom had very prominent roles within the British army, the mobilisation of ordinary citizens towards the war effort further shows the extent of Empire loyalty. As Anna Spry Rush has documented in 'Bonds of Empire,' "In many respects the response of West Indians to the Second World War mirrored their reaction to the First World War."[39] This can be seen by the contribution of West Indians to the war effort regarding clothing, materials and money as part of the War Relief fund. As highlighted by scholar De Lisser, the support of colonials, even those from the poorest of backgrounds, demonstrated how deep imperial ideologies penetrated colonial society.

Conclusion

It is evident to see that the national Identity of West Indian communities was significantly impacted by three key factors, with the first beginning during infancy. West Indian citizens were subconsciously raised with the notion of a British identity through the application of English syllabus during school years. These are arguably the most influential years of an individual's life as they begin to understand their own character and acknowledge the identity they hold. By placing British ideology at the forefront of this process, through

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[36] "Soldiers of the Caribbean: Britain's forgotten war heroes," BBC, accessed January 21, 2019, https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-32703753
[37] Mike Philips and Trevor Philips, *Windrush: The Irresistible Rise of Multi-Racial Britain* (London: Harper Collins Publishers, 1998), 5.
[38] Marcus Collins "Pride and Prejudice: West Indian Men in Mid-Twentieth-Century Britain," *Journal of British Studies* 40, 3 (Cambridge University Press on behalf of The North American Conference on British Studies, 2001): 396.
[39] Anne Spry Rush, *Bonds of Empire: West Indians and Britishness from Victoria to Decolonisation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 128.

implementation of the English Syllabus, the sense of 'Britishness' encompassed by West Indian society was inevitable. Strengthening this belief of British identity within West Indian communities was the focal point of media coverage during the mid-nineteenth century. The Monarchy were seen to be an overriding body connecting all aspects of the Empire and were included within media coverage on numerous occasions. Key historical events involving the Royal family were all broadcasted to the mass public within West Indian society, solidifying the sense of involvement and togetherness with the rest of the British colonies. The impact of these two factors is clearly evident, as shown by the subsequent involvement of West Indian citizens in both World Wars which epitomises their patriotism for the Country. This involvement is the final driving factor behind the belief of equality between both Nations and the devotedness of West Indian's to their British identity. It is integral to understand the underlying factors which denoted West Indian immigrants as British Citizens in order to comprehend the clear contrast in identity once the Windrush generation arrived in England, as covered by Chapters two and three.

Chapter 2- To what extent did social and cultural experiences shape West Indian national identity?

Introduction

Unbeknown to those on-board the empire Windrush, the 22nd June 1948 was a date which would come to mark the start of a new chapter in the history of the British Empire. The perceptions of Britain and 'Englishness' that were examined in Chapter one argued how up until that point West Indian society promoted a sense of inclusion in the British empire. They regarded themselves as equals both in status and in citizenship to the Native Britons and were assured that those in the 'motherland' were of the same opinion. However, this chapter will use these views to assess how the cultural experience of living in England came to challenge the West Indian communities and their connection with the empire. Though the concept of national identity is a central theme throughout this dissertation, within this chapter it is in its most volatile state. It becomes clearly apparent that the narrative of West Indian identity was almost unrecognisably shaped by their experience in Britain. Rather than a journey to solidify their identity, West Indian immigrants were driven to define their own ideology of being British.

Discrimination - Cultural isolation

Almost immediately upon their arrival, the publication of various British newspapers and other media outlets began to shape the publics opinion of the 492 immigrants on board the HMS Windrush. These documents proved vital in defining initial judgments on the new immigrants and their position within British society. At first sight, it is evident that the influx of colonials existed as a celebrated event. The headlines "Welcome home"[40] and "Cheers for men from Jamaica"[41] appeared to conform with the characterisation of migrants as "members

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[40] Denise Richard, "Welcome Home!" *Evening Standard*, June 21, 1948.
[41] Unknown author, "Cheers for men from Jamaica," *Daily Mail,* June 22, 1948.

of an inclusive empire."[42] They were both "embraced and welcomed… in regard to the passing of the Nationality act"[43] in 1948.

However, it is evident that these opinions ran in parallel to opposing views voiced by competing tabloids at the time. The description of migrants by the Daily express as "unwanted people" who were picked up as the Empire Windrush "roamed the Caribbean" instantly presents the West Indian immigrants in a negative light. Scholars such as David Ellis highlighted how such accounts comply with the true "postcolonial paradigmatic relationship," whereby the new arrivals were immediately forced into a transition from "British subject to foreign immigrant."[44] The Evening Standard presented the migrants in a similar vein. Through the use of scaremongering tactics such as "Double guard on men from Jamaica,"[45] migrants were automatically depicted as unpredictable, even felonious characters, who needed to be controlled. Thus, it is evident that even before the migrants had spent a full twenty-four hours in Britain, an assessment of colonial character had been established. The passengers were, in compliance with popular colonial discourse of the time, construed as "a population of degenerate types on the basis of racial origin."[46] Furthermore, identity within this discourse "entails the representation of the subject in the differentiating order of otherness."[47] An article released by the Daily Express one day prior to the arrival of the immigrants states how "everything is being done on board to give the men the right idea

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[42] Hannah Lowe, "Writing the Empire Windrush (critical thesis) and Chan (poetry collection)" (PhD Diss., Newcastle University, 2016), 20.
[43] lbid, 21.
[44] David Ellis, "Race, Identity, and Discourse in Post-Windrush Britain," *Journal of Narrative Theory* 31, 2 (2001): 215.
[45] Hannah Lowe, "Writing the Empire Windrush (critical thesis) and Chan (poetry collection)" (PhD Diss., Newcastle University, 2016), 13.
[46] David Ellis, "Race, Identity, and Discourse in Post-Windrush Britain," *Journal of Narrative Theory* 31, 2 (2001): 216.
[47] Homi Bhaba, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 64.

of Britain."[48] This one sentence while rather ominous, accurately foreshadowed the severe hostility and discrimination the West Indian immigrants would face in the years come.

Within a month of their arrival, the take on West Indian immigrants appeared in the vast majority of media sources heightening the sense of controversy evident within the Country. However, given the nature of media and new headlines appearing, within a short period of time their presence became increasingly scarce in the news. This period of un-acknowledgement by the tabloids was crucial to the individual experience of the West Indian communities in shaping their sense of national identity. The racial climate throughout the metropolitan centre resulted in migrants becoming the recipients of the preconceptions and prejudices inherited from the colonial period.[49] Following the defeat of Britain's enemy abroad, within a mere three years German fascism was swiftly replaced by the perceived threat of multiculturalism at home. West Indians soon found that it was the colour of their skin which "the British nation took to be the characteristic that defined their status and potential."[50] This racial attitude, as Mike Philips has documented, both "confirmed and intensified their sense of isolation."[51]

In an interview with Tryphena Anderson, a passenger who came from Jamaica in 1952, this climate of loneliness is clearly expressed. Anderson explained, "I wish I could be back home so bad it hurt, tears came into your eyes, because you missed the sort of freedom and companionship that you used to have."[52] Others such as Jessica Huntley expanded on these opinions by describing the unfriendliness as a "shock wave"[53] which later transformed into

[48] Express Staff Reporter, "Empire men flee 'no jobs land:' 500 hope to start a new life today," *Daily express*, June 21, 1948.
[49] Mike Philips and Trevor Philips, *Windrush: The Irresistible Rise of Multi-Racial Britain* (London: Harper Collins Publishers, 1998), 96.
[50] lbid.
[51] lbid.
[52] lbid, 97.
[53] lbid, 127.

disbelief for the lack of humanity by native Britons. For most migrants, racist comments were a frequent feature of everyday life, and the definition of British citizenship was increasingly reinforced by the depiction of blacks as "an outpost of an alien culture in Britain."[54] The 'othering' of Black culture expanded this view. It was often the case that the new immigrants had nowhere to express their culture or engage with others who had taken the same journey. The unconcealed presence of a colour bar within London significantly affected the sociality of immigrants. Even in official reports it has been documented that "there is no properly organised way in which these people could spend their leisure, to break the monotony of everyday life."[55] This is evident by their rejection from most bars and pubs, including all entertainment facilities located within the West End.[56] The extent of public hostility towards immigrants is most distinct when considering the circumstance of social pastimes. In these situations, the usual grievances of the white British public, specifically the competition for jobs and accommodation, became invalid. Thus, it can be argued that their continued alienation increasingly fractured the ties that had previously formed the foundation of their national identity, and that being denied the 'Britishness' they thought they knew resulted in their former West Indian identity becoming tainted.

Cultural isolation – resistance

Due to the prevalent rhetoric of white supremacy which continued to penetrate post-imperial mentality, a fight against the notion of 'otherness' became a key motivation of colonial migrants. This establishment of a "separate sphere of nationality"[57] within the metropolitan centre may be considered a form of resistance, fighting against the institutional

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[54] Ibid, 377.
[55] "Bound for Britain," The National Archives, accessed March 12, 2019,
http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/resources/bound-for-britain/source-4/
[56] Mike Philips and Trevor Philips, *Windrush: The Irresistible Rise of Multi-Racial Britain* (London: Harper Collins Publishers, 1998), 299.
[57] Ibid.

discrimination which had greatly disfigured British society. Consequently, "the emergence of new culture became a defining feature of Britain's black communities."[58] For many the meaning of safety in numbers acquired a separate connotation in contrast to the purely physical sense. Instead, a common bond was formed in the shared experience of discrimination. The creation of shebeens was one example of the formation of a new West Indian social environment. These illicit clubs or bars, usually located in basements and private houses, overcame the issue of 'no-coloured' policies. They provided a relief from "the pressures of the climate, situation, culture, food, and hostility".[59] The importance of these social events was emphasised in an interview with Linton Johnson. He expressed how "without the music, without the Friday night shebeen, I don't know what we would have done as a people. It held us together."[60] Through the establishment of their own independent cultural institutions, West Indian music was given both a location and a name within London. Furthermore, with their increasing prevalence throughout London, it wasn't long before legitimate clubs such as 'the Jamaican' and the 'mango club'[61] became an influential sector of the London landscape. While it took several years for white British clubs to allow black migrants, the nature of West Indian social establishments portrayed how a distinctive black British identity developed from the individuality of migrant experience.

While resistance movements ranged from seemingly insignificant day to day activities, to large organisations, it may be argued that they all played some part in contesting the predominance of imperialistic thinking towards white British homogeneity. For the case of cultural resistance however, the difficulty in determining the precise definition of cultural factors has been presented by scholar Chris Weedon. His answer in *'Identity and culture'*

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[58] Ibid.
[59] Ibid.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Hector Watson, "Interview with Hector Watson," 18 March 1998, Oral History Interviews, Black Cultural Archive, BCA/5/1/14.

stems from the understanding that cultural forms are not embedded in formal rules and laws. Instead they exist "in all the informal aspects of cultural life that are taken for granted."[62] These may include daily rituals, customs, unwritten social codes, speech idiom, musical expression and image metaphors.[63] In relation to the wider theme of national identity, examples of West Indian encounters aid the view that they fought against the sense of isolation to create a new black British identity based on companionship and camaraderie. As explained by one Windrush interviewee, "in the fifties, if you were walking along the road and saw another black face over the road you'd run over quickly and say 'hello, how are you?" Regardless of who they were or where they came from. In other examples, West Indian neighbours would meet up on weekends and share recipes and food from their homes.

In the formation of a new West Indian definition of 'Britishness', the use of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) also became an incredibly important facilitator towards this cause. Radio programmes such as *Caribbean voices* (1943-1958), gave a platform to West Indian writers, while others such as *The colour bar* (1943) examined racial prejudice in Britain. The latter would allow guests to "openly address their perceptions of racism"[64] and share the difficulties they faced regarding the acceptance of their British citizenship by others. Thus, the BBC as the "quintessential British metropolitan institution,"[65] provided an arena that could observe the changing sense of national identity among the new arrivals. Rather than pledging to represent 'the voice of Britain' or that of the West Indies, the shows came to epitomise the formation of a new, distinct identity. BBC producer E.R . Edmett, has described this separation by stating, "[W]e shall probably be disowned by the B.B.C. from

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[62] Chris Weedon, *Identity and Culture: Narratives of Difference and Belonging* (Berkshire: Open University Press, 2004), 31.
[63] lbid, 20.
[64] Darrell Newton, "Calling the West Indies: the BBC World Service and Caribbean voices," *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 28, 4 (2008): 490.
[65] Anne Spry Rush, *Bonds of Empire: West Indians and Britishness from Victoria to Decolonisation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 174.

time to time for being un-British and by the West Indians for being un-West Indian." While this identity had initially developed as a bridge between both 'Britishness' and West Indian culture, overtime it would come to diverge further from both, to support the view that a new identity was formed as a result of immigrant experiences.

Discrimination - Violence

Arguably the most significant factor which promoted the breakdown of 'Britishness' from the identity of West Indian immigrants, was the growing presence of violence in the 1950s. Through a series events abroad such as the independence of India (1947), Mau Mau rebellion in Kenya (1952), and the independence of Ghana (1959), the position of Britain as a leading hegemonic power became a considerable source of doubt. The slow dismantling of Empire, coupled with a fear of cultural change, led to the prevalence of unchecked violence and increasing hostility towards immigrants. Racial superiority became an undisputable element in the articulation of ideas about empirical discourse. Thus heated discussions and arguments between colonials and natives frequently ended in the latter asking the question, "Why don't you go back where you came from?"[66] Through these confrontations, their anticipated sense of homecoming and belonging was instead replaced by the notion of loss, isolation and rootlessness.[67]

However, the incidence of this response by the native Britons can be strongly argued to have been "backed up by a vast and popular consensus."[68] It was an "awareness fed from a number of sources,"[69] primarily the British newspaper. From headlines such as "Keep Britain

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[66] Mike Philips and Trevor Philips, *Windrush: The Irresistible Rise of Multi-Racial Britain* (London: Harper Collins Publishers, 1998), 163.
[67] Hannah Lowe, "Writing the Empire Windrush (critical thesis) and Chan (poetry collection)" (PhD Diss., Newcastle University, 2016), 5.
[68] Mike Philips and Trevor Philips, *Windrush: The Irresistible Rise of Multi-Racial Britain* (London: Harper Collins Publishers, 1998), 163.
[69] Ibid.

white"[70] in the Times, to articles expressing the rise of serious problems following the "unrestricted immigration of coloured people into Britain"[71], the depiction of black colonials in media outlets strongly reflected the racism that shrouded the streets of London. In these accounts, examples of violence[72] and sexual threats accorded colonials to the racialist urban myths surrounding their nature. However, as the enactment of the restrictive 1961 immigration act moved ever closer, the increase in colonials caused an equally sharp rise in racial tensions[73]. This friction was typified by the 1958 Notting Hill race riots, beginning officially on the 29th August and lasting until 5th September. During this week the severity of racial intolerance reached its upmost height. Accounts of men singing "vicious anti-negro slogans"[74] such as 'old man river' and 'bye bye blackbird' were followed by other reporters who described young children of around ten years of age screaming "Come on, let's get the blacks."[75]

Yet while the riots were a source of excitement and entertainment for some, for others they signified the rise of fear and resentment towards white neighbours. As an account by West Indian, Connie Mark, stated, "Our lives were in danger", "they [black men] were afraid to go to the cinema, afraid to go to the clubs." Even walking alone was considered too hazardous by some, resulting in men being urged to move around in gangs to ensure they were never isolated if an attack occurred. In other instances, petrol bombs were thrown at houses where mushroom parties and gatherings were known to take place. These acts of aggression, performed by white working class 'Teddy boys,' resulted in 'iron bars, butchers' knives and weighted leather belts' being used against members of the West Indian community. Such

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[70] Political Correspondent, "Keep Britain White' Call in Notting Hill Area," *Times*, September 10, 1958.

[71] Unknown author, "unrestricted immigration of coloured people," *Daily Mail*, August 29, 1958.

[72] Special Correspondent, "London Racial Outburst due to many factors," *Times*, September 3, 1958.

[73] Mike Philips and Trevor Philips, *Windrush: The Irresistible Rise of Multi-Racial Britain* (London: Harper Collins Publishers, 1998), 159.

[74] Ibid.

[75] Ibid, 176.

violence was exacerbated by organisations such as Oswald Mosely's union movement and the white defence league in the far-right.[76] When analysing the effect this had on West Indian national identity, it may be strongly argued that the violence of the Notting hill race riots sharply contrasted their idealistic view of England. Thus, the riots themselves came to enshrine the "classic uncertainty about how to define the nature and boundaries of British citizenship."[77]

Resistance to violence

However, while the extent to which intimidation and fear suffered by the migrant population significantly fractured a connection to their British identity, in its place a more active resistance against discrimination took form. In contrast to the former passive nature of most West Indian immigrants, the fighting of 1958 produced an unforeseen side effect whereby migrants became "Bound together by a common defensiveness."[78] This renewed sense of confidence which can be seen through various recollections of the event. While one account stated, "we showed them that we weren't afraid of them,"[79] another described the thought process towards fighting as being, "in for a penny, in for a pound."[80] This was driven by the fact that regardless of innocence or passivity to the situation at hand, the bearing of non-white skin would justify attacks on any West Indian migrant. Thus in light of this, action was taken to oppose the racial intolerance which had already disfigured a large portion of British society.

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[76] "Notting Hill riots 1958," Exploring Twentieth Century London, Accessed February 26, 2019, http://www.20thcenturylondon.org.uk/notting-hill-riots-1958
[77] Mike Philips and Trevor Philips, *Windrush: The Irresistible Rise of Multi-Racial Britain* (London: Harper Collins Publishers, 1998), 72.
[78] Ibid, 179.
[79] Ibid.
[80] Ibid, 175.

Founded in response to the Notting Hill race riots, the Notting Hill carnival came to represent another example of what Mike and Trevor Philips described as "collective resistance leading to collective identification."[81] Within this concept, the continuing fight against the colour bar in Britain took the form of social change, whereby West Indian customs were gradually absorbed into Domestic British life. Stuart Hall has commented that this "recolonization" of urban Britain signified a "quiet re-appropriation to certain aspects of black life." The significance of this assumption lies in the idea that Caribbean "cultural authority and cultural customs" became asserted over a previously marginalised section of society. Through the use of steel bands, Caribbean cuisine and Trinidadian dress, the carnival came to represent a re-definition of what it meant to be British. However, while the colonial roots of the West Indies shaped the character of the event, it would be more precise to return to the idea of a bridged identity. Thus, as accurately described by scholar Robert Miles, it became a "creative construction of a new cultural tradition, saturating and modifying culture symbols and practices [form the Caribbean] with a specifically English experience."[82]

However, not only did the carnival allow for the representation of West Indians to expand beyond the traditional conceptions of native Britishness, it also helped to expose the nuances of West Indian culture. The implication of this is evident when considering the acceptance of colonials into British society. When first arriving in Britain, many newspaper reports referred incorrectly to the passengers as solely Jamaican citizens, such as the Daily workers' "Jamaican job-seekers are here" and the Daily mails' "Jamaicans here for jobs."[83] This inaccuracy became a constant in most accounts surrounding the Windrush, in spite of the fact

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[81] Ibid, 179.

[82] Robert Miles, *Between Two Cultures?: The Case of Rastafarianism* (Bristol: Research Unit on Ethnic Relations, 1978), 2.

[83] Unknown author, "Jamaicans here for Jobs," *Northern Daily Mail,* June 22, 1948.

that approximately 20% of its Caribbean passengers originated from other islands.[84] Later, the term Jamaican became interchangeable with the identifiers; 'coloured' and 'negro.' The harmful effect this had on national identity was that black culture existed as an expression of one homogenous group. However, through the establishment of the Notting hill carnival, the complexities of immigrant identity could be accurately expressed and appreciated.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is evident to see that the experience of West Indians in Britain facilitated an opportunity of to re-define their national identity. Through the existence of a deeply ingrained colour prejudice which had outlived the diffusion of Empire, the narrative of 'coming home' was soon replaced by a feeling of disappointment and loss. However, as seen by the cultural revival of the West Indian social scene, a new bridged identity formed that continued to hold onto certain British values, whilst also celebrating Caribbean roots. This struggle has been clearly explained by Mike Phillips who states "by the end of the 1960s it was clear that if there was a way of being black in London we would have to create it ourselves."[85] While this chapter has covered the hardships and resistance of cultural discrimination, another extremely significant section which will be explored further in chapter three is that of the economic experience. This topic will use key themes studied from chapter two and apply them to the hardships of occupational racism and the living conditions of Windrush migrants.

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[84] Hannah Lowe, "Writing the Empire Windrush (critical thesis) and Chan (poetry collection)" (PhD Diss., Newcastle University, 2016), 21.
[85] Mike Philips, *London Crossings* (London: Continuum, 2001), 56.

Chapter 3- To what extent did economic experiences shape West Indian national identity?

Introduction

This chapter will analyse the extent to which economic hardships shaped West Indian national identity. To do this, there will be a focus on three subcategories. The first shall concentrate on occupational discrimination both in terms of securing a job and subsequent treatment once in the workplace. Following this, the issue of housing and tenancy will be examined along with the effect of living conditions on West Indian immigrants. In studying these aspects of immigrant experience in Britain, a strong argument can be put forward that supports the view that economic difficulties played an extremely large role in the breakdown of Britishness that had formerly comprised a significant portion of West Indian national identity. Furthermore, it will also be argued that colonial immigrants actually took hold of their own definition of Identity by resisting the institutional discrimination which infiltrated much of British society during the period. Thus their identity experienced two major shifts, emphasising the chaotic nature of the immigration narrative.

Occupational difficulties

One of the key motivational factors driving the Windrush migration from a West Indies perspective was the hope of well-paid employment. The West Indies, in the period following the end of the Second World War, saw a rapid rise in population, particularly on the islands of Jamaica and British Guiana. Coupled with numerous natural disasters, such as hurricanes and floods, the lack of resources and over-population put a strain on employment opportunities. As such, high levels of unemployment led many to "look outside their islands for economic improvement".[86] However, the modern, advanced industrialised economy they

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[86] Ruth Glass, *Newcomers: The West Indies in London* (London: Centre for Urban Studies, 1960), 7.

had expected to enter was in disarray. The weight of six years total war was evident, with most people suffering economically and socially. The effect this had upon migrating colonials has been captured by Anna Spry, who argued that rather than welcoming the West Indians as "fellow British subjects,"[87] many native Britons treated the colonials as "dark strangers who posed a threat to the British way of life."[88]

Despite the legitimate need for immigration in fulfilling the labour shortages that arose following the devastating effects of war, press coverage at the time continued to portray this solution in a negative light. This can be seen by headings such as "Jamaicans here for Jobs"[89] and articles in newspapers such as the Manchester Guardian. In this example, the political correspondent commented on a debate in the House of Commons which concerned the "problem created by the large number of colonial immigrants" described as "pouring" into Britain, many "without any prospect of work here or housing."[90] Coupled with the backdrop of racism in London, this resentment towards West Indian presence is evident in their unsuccessful attempts to secure work. For many, the nature of race became a "central feature of their resultant life chances."[91] As such, in compliance with the climate of racism that influenced the labour market, old colonial stereotypes became mobilised to endorse a new labour hierarchy[92] whereby West Indian migrants were considered lower in status and forced to carry out unskilled and menial work. This is a view which has been supported by scholars

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[87] Anne Spry Rush, *Bonds of Empire: West Indians and Britishness from Victoria to Decolonisation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 171.
[88] Ibid.
[89] Express Staff Reporter, "Empire men flee 'no jobs land:' 500 hope to start a new life today," *Daily express*, June 21, 1948.
[90] Unknown author, "Immigrants from West Indies: Influx May Compel Some Control," *Manchester Guardian*, November 6, 1954.
[91] Malcolm Cross and Hans Entzinger, *Lost Illusions* (London: Routledge, 1988), 103.
[92] Ibid, 84.

such as Cross and Entzinger who argued how "commentators are right to point to the salience of Britain's colonial past when describing the position of ethnic minorities in Britain."[93]

A key example can be seen in the case of one particular West Indian, Clifford Fullerton. Arriving in England on the 21st June 1948, Fullerton came with the aim of learning more about Tailoring and the fundamentals of drafting. However, when applying for a cutting job, the owner explained that he couldn't trust people from the West Indies to cut English clothes.[94] Following this, he described the suspicious treatment adopted by other employers who were then shocked to find he had finished his work before his white counterparts. In many other examples, the pressure placed on managers by white native employees dictated the outcome of many immigrant careers. This is extremely evident in the case of Thomas Joseph who recalled his boss saying, "Those men have been with me, some for fifteen, some for twenty years, and they told me in no uncertain terms that if you are kept on in employment then there are going to quit."[95] Where these examples illustrate the overwhelming cost of racism towards occupational opportunity, this reality supports the assertion that economic hardship played a significant role in the shaping of West Indian national identity. The importance placed on gaining an English-style education as examined in chapter one, was undermined by discrimination in all stages of employment. Consequently, for many, the expectation of London as a city of opportunity and hope was very quickly replaced by the realities of hostility and contempt which shadowed the lives of migrants. This drove any sense of pride in being English to undergo a substantial shift with the respect for Britain rapidly declining in a short space of time following the Windrush migration.

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[93] Ibid.
[94] Clifford Fullerton, "Interview with Mr Clifford Fullerton," 3 May 1988, Oral History Interviews, Black Cultural Archive, BCA/5/1/161.
[95] Thomas Joseph, "Interview with Mr Thomas Joseph," 3 May 1988, Oral History Interviews, Black Cultural Archive, BCA/5/1/161.

Subsequently, the dislocation of 'Englishness' from West Indian identity was an occurrence increasingly witnessed throughout the nineteen fifties and sixties.

Occupational Resistance

Despite the lack of acceptance in many occupational environments, the hope of a better future was not completely rejected. Increasing numbers of second generation Windrush arrivals continued the fight started by their parents in establishing a more guaranteed sense of belonging. Thus as Mike Philips stated in 'London Crossings, 'by the end of the 1950s it became evident that "if there was a way of being black in London, we would have to create it ourselves."[96] This initial base in redefining racial identity can be witnessed by a character already introduced above. By declining London's own rejection of him, Clifford Fullerton confronted the racist treatment he suffered early on in his career, to become the first black man to be made an associate member of the Foreman tailoring society. Furthermore, increasingly throughout the nineteen fifties and sixties was the presence of media outlets taking notice of the aura of racism and hostility within the city. By bringing these issues to the forefront of the public domain, racism became a recognised problem in the city that needed to be corrected, as opposed to a passive effect of post war immigration. In support of this are headlines such as "knock out the colour bar!" "Colour bar city sends out SOS," and "colour bar laws suggested." The latter example from *The Times* suggested how a "stronger provision against acts of incitement to violence on grounds on race"[97] must be enforced. The desire of a less turbulent relationship between colonial immigrants and native Britons was

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[96] Mike Philips, *London Crossings* (London: Continuum, 2001), 56.
[97] Unknown author, "Colour Bar Laws Suggested," *Times,* February 9, 1959.

proposed by Barrister Mr Neil Lawson, Q.C., who stated that "the law cannot make you love your neighbour, but it can make it much more difficult for you to express your hate."[98] Within these examples, the fragmented national identity of West Indians as previously seen, was reconstructed to form an identity built upon their own terms. Moreover, it was precisely this new identity which forced its own integration into British society. The racial superiority and 'nativist exclusion' which were once ever-present within Britain were now being questioned and broken down.

Housing difficulties

Another significant area of difficulty faced by the West Indians following their arrival into London was the issue of housing. The type of accommodation they could occupy and where it was situated, was to a great extent, out of the hands of the authorities. As Ruth Glass has described in her study 'Newcomers', discounting the case of municipal housing, "the selection of tenants is regarded as being subject solely to the personal discretion of the landlord."[99] As such, the search for housing was visibly blanketed by racial discrimination and an "overt colour bar"[100]. Through the study of various interviews with members of the West Indian community, it is evident to see that many immigrants struggled to reside in any one place for a significant period of time. Cecil Holness described the difficulties he faced in 1949 when trying to obtain a room he saw in a shop window. The blatant prejudice he faced was evident as soon as the tenant answered the door as he described her as "frightened because she didn't expect to see a black man"[101]. Her lack of subtly when explaining how the room had been taken just five minutes prior to his arrival is evident of how West Indian migrants were not accepted as equal citizens into British society. Other examples include

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[98] Ibid.
[99] Ruth Glass, *Newcomers: The West Indies in London* (London: Centre for Urban Studies, 1960), 66.
[100] Ibid.
[101] Mike Philips and Trevor Philips, *Windrush: The Irresistible Rise of Multi-Racial Britain* (London: Harper Collins Publishers, 1998), 70.

boards shown in vacant flats which displayed warnings such as, "black – Niggars not wanted here"[102], and "no colours."[103] However, even for those members of society who were much more welcoming than most, the climate of the rest of the country often dictated their own treatment towards the new immigrants. This is apparent by the experience of William Naltey. Following a viewing of an apartment, Naltey was sat smoking with the landlord who stated that he couldn't rent the room to him. When asked for a reason, the man stated "if I let you have it, the rest of my tenants will go. I have nothing personal against you, but that's the way it will be." Consequently, many scholars have expressed how the expectation of a shared identity was sharply juxtaposed by the apparent lack of acceptance by the British public. Mike and Trevor Philips have supported this argument by identifying that the situation of housing "proved to be a fault line which sketched out the nature of the black community and also began to determine the style of relationships over the following three decades."

A factor which exacerbated this situation was the accumulation of immigrants within areas of low living standards. In a city where landlords were notoriously unwelcoming and the housing stock depleted[104], these were the neighbourhoods where accommodation was easiest to acquire. However, escaping became exceedingly difficult, acting as a barrier to most forms of social mobility. The impact this had on West Indian acceptance into native British society was significant. Being in association with areas ranging from Clapham through to Brixton, and Finsbury Park through to Hackney, migrants became increasingly "identified with the unsavoury reputations of the places where they lived."[105] Notting Hill came to represent the height of this. However, when examining the major determinants of a migrants housing position up until the early 1960s, it becomes clear that they had very little choice in the

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[102] Ibid, 89.
[103] Ibid.
[104] Ibid, 105.
[105] Ibid.

matter. Despite the demand for their labour, the infrastructure of post war Britain was insufficient to account for such an increase in the capital's population. Therefore, a lack of housing options, coupled with the discriminatory inflation of property prices worsened by the imposition of a 'colour-tax,' made housing options extremely limited.

Living Conditions

Once the battle of finding accommodation was won, a new hurdle presented itself which further eroded the West Indian ideals of 'Englishness.' The state of the accommodation acquired has frequently been described as one of the biggest problems faced by the arrivals[106], especially those with families. One account by Mike and Trevor Philips described their situation whereby one house was home to nineteen children and eleven adults, all residing in just nine rooms and with access to only one toilet.[107] Others, such as Connie Mark, also documented similar experiences. She explained how her bathtub was located in the Kitchen of the Landlady's apartment, but due to the number of people and lack of facilities, many had to use the public baths in Fulham or Camberwell Green.[108] Furthermore, in a 1998 questionnaire, West Indian immigrants who arrived between the years 1954 to 1967, gave information regarding their housing conditions. Of the six recipients, five stated they were in shared accommodation, with the same people also sharing a toilet. Four people were said to have shared a bathroom while one person explained how his family did not have any bathroom at all. Finally, while five out of the six used a shared kitchen, one of these

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[106] Randolph Beresford, "Interview with Mr Randolph Beresford," 12 April 1988, Oral History Interviews, Black Cultural Archive, BCA/5/1/161.

[107] Mike Philips and Trevor Philips, *Windrush: The Irresistible Rise of Multi-Racial Britain* (London: Harper Collins Publishers, 1998), 108.

[108] Connie Mark, "Interview with Mrs Connie Mark," 26 January 1987, Oral History Interviews, Black Cultural Archive, BCA/5/1/161.

explained how, due to the amount of people, the landing was used most frequently for cooking. The impact of these conditions reveals how previous conceptions of life in Britain, such as being more civilised, cultured, and refined, were rendered false. Embarrassed by the way they were living, many immigrants resented their situation and wanted to distance themselves from friends and family back home, for fear that they would wish to visit them in their new life. However, these thoughts directly oppose their former relationship with England. Their enthusiasm and loyalty to Britain had been dampened by the prejudice and squalor in which they were forced to live, with the severing of British ties from their identity being an increasingly direct effect.

Where the stain of prejudice and racism eroded the connection of Englishness within the West Indian identity, a new definition took its place. It fought against the restraints of discrimination and led the way towards a West Indian stereotype that they themselves had created. In relation to the issue of housing and living conditions, resistance to the adversity they faced took the form of strong community ties arising from the formation of areas with a much denser West Indian population. This is evident by areas such as Notting hill and Notting dale. While the activities within these destinations often involved violence, gambling, sex and music, "there were a number of migrants who were relatively untroubled by the character of the district"[109]. Young single men helped to build the area into a testing ground whereby a network of clubs and gambling joints allowed them to live in a much more free and wild manner. However, the appeal for others, such as women and families, was founded on the positive move away from isolation in unwelcoming white neighbourhoods. As Mike and Trevor Philips stated, "to be an immigrant anywhere else in London meant that, out in the open, you ran a gauntlet of hostility until you were safely forted up behind your own locked

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[109] Mike Philips and Trevor Philips, *Windrush: The Irresistible Rise of Multi-Racial Britain* (London: Harper Collins Publishers, 1998), 108.

doors. It was only in Notting hill that there was a public life."[110] Nevertheless, this new West Indian culture gradually began to spread and penetrate into various other forms of entertainment, as described in chapter two, such as clubs and bars influenced by Caribbean heritage. Furthermore, West Indian immigrants were also successful in overcoming the difficulties of gaining ownership of housing following the formation of money-pooling arrangements. While the housing was often of poor quality, and purchased with the assistance of high interest loans, it permitted migrants to break away from the exploitation by unscrupulous landlords, allowing for a degree of independence to be re-gained. From this, it can be argued that in opposition to the constraint purposely placed on the migrant's choice of accommodation, many used this creation of an 'ethnic village'[111] throughout London, to reflect their "desire to maintain customary social networks" whilst also "defending oneself in an alien environment."[112] Hence this demonstrates the growth of West Indian confidence and the subsequent   establishment of their own position within society.

Conclusion

Therefore, it is evident that the marginalisation of issues regarding race and colour became one of the key factors in the shaping of West Indian national identity. In all aspects of everyday life, particularly occupation, accommodation and living standards, West Indians fought the discrimination which had become an all-encompassing feature of their life in Britain. Their strong sense of 'Englishness' was sharply contrasted by the economic difficulties which arose almost completely from the continuation of an imperial attitude that had outlived the decline of Empire. Thus many found London intolerable, precisely because the sense of belonging they expected was juxtaposed by the lack of anything in its history, its

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[110] Ibid, 110.
[111] Malcolm Cross and Hans Entzinger, *Lost Illusions* (London: Routledge, 1988), 130.
[112] Ibid.

institutions or its self-image which reflected their presence.[113] Nonetheless, from this many sought the restoration of their identity. Only this time, it was constructed with a greater sense of self and a stronger connection to the migrant community, which ironically the British had inadvertently developed.

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[113] Ibid, 56.

Conclusion

This paper has addressed the extent to which a connection with the British Empire shaped West Indian national identity. In doing so, it has memorialised the Windrush era through the process of challenging, and then reasserting what it means to be British. However, what this development of identity has demonstrated is the juxtaposition between the complexities and struggles of a community, and the seemingly uncomplicated acceptance of Britishness they sought. The need to evolve beyond the 'us' and 'them' narrative of identity required the fight against a country whose imperial rhetoric had outlived its status as a leading hegemonic power. For that reason, the impact of the Windrush in redefining the deep- rooted imperial centre provides a clear explanation for this unprecedented exertion to fight for the sense of Britishness West Indian's already believed they had.

As Chapter one has revealed, the formation of a cultural identification with Britain when in the colonies was shaped by the influences of education, the monarchy and the demonstration of loyalty during both World Wars. However despite this connection, for many it became a "journey to an illusion."[114] The issue of racial difference which defined post-war Britain, excluded migrants both culturally and economically from the everyday workings of British society. Arising from this rejection of the empires own people, the sustainability of an empire built on race appeared doubtful. As chapters two and three have revealed, regarding the reality of Britishness within the 'mother country' itself, this was certainly the case. The process of resisting the discrimination and racism experienced by West Indians became a catalyst in changing British society as a whole. As Louise Bennett had famously described it, this redefinition of Britishness stands as a metonymic of "colonisation in reverse."[115]

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[114] Donald Hinds, *Journey To An Illusion* (London: Heinemann, 1966)
[115] Louise Bennett, "Colonization in Reverse," *The Penguin Book of Caribbean Verse in English* (1986): 33.

As a result of the discrimination which coloured the experience of living in Britain, it is difficult to perceive the narrative of the Windrush generation as one which is not "charged with trauma." Similarly, the history of West Indians along with that of Britain itself, will permanently be coupled with the history of racism and resultant effects upon society. However, while this is the case, this thesis has also presented a more positive outcome by portraying the Windrush era as a time of a new identity formation, of becoming British by their own definition of the term. As Donald Hinds stated in '*Lost Illusions,*' "I am indeed grateful to the English. Grateful for rejecting me in order to discover myself."[116] The West Indian relationship with Britain therefore acquired a different meaning. It was one which condemned the previous imperial rhetoric of the ninetieth and twentieth century but continued to maintain a sense of Britishness, however only in its newly defined state. This has aptly been described by C.L.R. James who described himself as "one of the west indies West Indian' – but also of England, half English. He was an enemy of empire – but his was a peculiarly intimate enmity, shot through with love."[117]

The issues and hardships faced by West Indian immigrants during the Windrush era are ever present in society today. Politicians are fighting to bring back a 'Greater Britain' and reunite the imperial connections that have been lost. However, these motives are met with continued hostility and discrimination towards minority groups, as was experienced by the Windrush generation. In order to reinstate a new sense of patriotism towards national identity within British colonies, it is essential that the key issues identified throughout this thesis are addressed as a matter of urgency.

Word Count: 12,100

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[116] Malcolm Cross and Hans Entzinger, *Lost Illusions* (London: Routledge, 1988), 5.
[117] Bill Schwarz, *West Indian intellectuals in Britain* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013).

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