“WE EAT CACHUPA, NOT CLAM CHOWDER:”
MAPPING SECOND GENERATION CAPE VERDEAN YOUTH IDENTITY
IN THE GREATER BOSTON AREA

A dissertation presented by

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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Sociology in the Graduate School Arts and Sciences of Northeastern University, September 2008
On the basis of fieldwork conducted in the Greater Boston area from May 2007 to May 2008, this dissertation explores the ways in which second-generation Cape Verdean youth in the Greater Boston area negotiate their identity as Cape Verdean and, by extension, as black through multiple articulations of diaspora. Using the ethnographic method this dissertation attempts to understand processes of racialization of “blackness.” My objective is to examine how racialization works to create black identities and to challenge the assumptions that black people do not actively participate in the discourses and practices of racial identity formation. I argue that Cape Verdean youth identities are constructed out of a process of negotiation and contestation, but the negotiation and contestation is stunted by the racial logic of the U.S.; a logic that configures blacks one-dimensionally. In doing so, I examine how North American ascriptions of blackness and forms of black popular culture inform processes of identity formation and negotiation among Cape Verdean youth. I investigate the expressive forms of Cape Verdean youth culture, paying particular attention to hip-hop culture to see how it is used as a site where new (or old) identities of being Cape Verdean are fashioned and reworked within the contemporary socio-cultural context of race in the early 21st century. I map the interplay between structuring experience and individual choice by wider historical and social factors. In short, this dissertation is focused on the mysterious workings of race and how Cape Verdean youth think and feel their identities into palpable everyday existence, while keeping in mind the dynamics and politics of racialization.
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I would also like to thank all the Cape Verdean youth throughout the Great Boston area that took the time to sit with me and answer my questions. Although not everyone made it into the manuscript, all your comments, suggestions, and incites on race, identity, and popular culture in the United States left an indelible mark in the following pages. Muito obrigado!

And to the most beautiful person I have ever met in my life, my wife and partner, Jasmine. Thank you for your intense love and example.
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The time approaches 10:00pm and all of the black-leather booths are filled with people sipping alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages, talking on cell phones, looking over notebooks, laughing, and texting friends. The crowd also thickens on the small dance floor at Xxodus Café at the Providence Black Repertory Company (Black Rep), a place that produces and presents artistic performances inspired by the cultural traditions of the African Diaspora. The décor is dark and Afrocentric. The walls feature African masks and carved wooden elephants; animal prints are carefully placed to create a chic environment. Some people are dancing in a cipher; arms are flailing, feet are kicking, and robotic motions are mimicked. Others stand with arms crossed and heads nodding. The bassline is thick and heavy and the constant thump pounds out over the sound system, reverberating amidst the dancing and motionless bodies. Alternating between the energy infused hip-hop performances are melodic and sublime readings of poetry. Six days a week the scene is similar, for the Black Rep presents live music, poetry, and other live performances, contributing to the cultural literacy of the Providence community. As a result, the Black Rep is one of the more popular nightly destinations in the area. Every Monday night local hip-hop artist “Chachi” Carvalho, a Cape Verdean American, hosts an open microphone, spoken word, and poetry series called “Polyphonic.”

Tonight, most of the people in attendance are Cape Verdean Americans, but there are a few African Americans and white people enjoying the music played by DJ Theron,
a Cape Verdean American. This edition of “Polyphonic” is dedicated to Cape Verdean hip-hop artists. On a typical night the “Polyphonic” crowd is noticeably more diverse, that is, racially mixed, but tonight Cape Verdean youth are the majority. On this night, there are appearances by local Cape Verdean hip-hop artists from the Greater Boston area: DJ Lefty, Tem Blessed, Gremlin, and D.Lopes. Unlike other nights, traditional and contemporary forms of Cape Verdean music are mixed somewhat seamlessly with old school and new school hip-hop music. Wearing baggy jeans, a camouflage baseball cap, and a white t-shirt with the old flag of the Republic of Cape Verde imprinted on the front, “Chachi” jumps on stage and begins to kick a freestyle\(^1\) using English, but suddenly, and to the amazement and thrill of the crowd, switches to Crioulo, the national language of the Republic of Cape Verde. Similarly dressed, Tem Blessed, whose performance was no less energetic, follows “Chachi”. From this, it became abundantly clear that a hip-hop party with a Cape Verdean feeling had clearly begun. But something else was lurking, which was obviously apparent, the specter of race.

\[\text{Second-Generation Cape Verdean Youth in the Greater Boston Area}\]

In the last four decades the United States has experienced large-scale immigration from Asia, Latin America, and Africa. Africans, especially from sub-Saharan Africa, that have settled in the United States in the last 40 years represent the largest number of Africans in more than 300 years to settle in North America. Today, there are over one million African immigrants in the U.S. The cultural polyphony of Africans has become a noticeable aspect of the urban landscape of major metropolitan centers across the United States.

\(^1\) Freestyle rap is an improvisational form of rapping, performed with little or no previously composed lyrics.
States and is transforming the character of race relations and racial and ethnic categories. As the number of African immigrants has expanded, their children have gradually entered mainstream institutions like secondary and post-secondary schools, community centers, the workplace, and as a result have increasingly become more visible. Despite, cultural and ethnic differences, African immigrants and their children often find themselves confronted by a racial system in the U.S. that configures them one-dimensionally as black (Waters 1999).

Cape Verdean immigrants are no exception, for the Cape Verdean diaspora in the Greater Boston area has consistently grown since the 1960s. As Halter (1993) and Sanchez Gibau (1999 and 2005) have argued, the Cape Verdean diaspora has actively contested the boundaries of racial categories in the United States by creating a space for cultural differentiation. However, these studies do not account for the multiple and diverse ways in which Cape Verdeans challenge culturally hegemonic notions of race and ethnicity, or how many adhere to racial categories through performance. These studies use the narratives of Cape Verdeans only and have failed to investigate areas such as popular culture. Sanchez Gibau (1999 and 2005) only briefly alludes to the import of popular culture and Cape Verdean youth. Further, many of these early studies (Halter 1993; Meintel 1981; Sanchez Gibau 1999 and 2005) focus only on first generation Cape Verdeans. It is reasonable to assume, especially given the wave of Cape Verdean migrants in the 1970s, that many Cape Verdean youth have come of age living with other racial and ethnic minorities and are producers and consumers of black popular culture. As a result, the processes of racialization that Cape Verdean youth confront and adhere to, are fundamentally much different from their parent’s generation. Thus, I open with a
seemingly trivial description in the epigraph because it hints at something important about race, ethnicity, identity, and popular culture.

In general, identity is experienced, performed, and communicated in cultural practices including racial and ethnic identity. Diasporic identities are constructed out of a process of negotiation and contestation, but the negotiation and contestation is sometimes stunted by the racial logic of the U.S.; a logic that configures blacks one-dimensionally.

This dissertation is my attempt to understand processes of racialization; the ways in which discursive acts and ideological practices give race social significance as well as the cultural and political ways that race is invoked to give meaning to social phenomena. This study grapples with the performance and the nuances of raced identity in empirical contexts. It looks into the durability and flexibility (or inflexibility) of race and racial discourse. I examine how second-generation Cape Verdean youth in the Greater Boston area negotiate their identity as Cape Verdean and, by extension, as black. This study examines how U.S. ascriptions of blackness and forms of black popular culture inform processes of identity formation and negotiation. It also examines expressive forms of Cape Verdean youth culture, in particular hip-hop culture, to see how it is used as a site where new (and/or old) identities of being Cape Verdean are fashioned and reworked within the contemporary socio-cultural context of race in the early 21st century. This dissertation is an attempt to provide an ethnography of processes of racialization of “blackness.” In short, this dissertation is focused on the mysterious workings of race and how Cape Verdean youth think and feel their identities into palpable everyday existence, while keeping in mind the dynamics and politics of racialization.
This dissertation is the culmination of fieldwork conducted from May 2007 to May 2008. It entailed informal and formal interviewing, participant-observation, and textual analysis. Despite the insights gained from informal and formal interviews, participant-observation and textual analysis became central to mapping second-generation Cape Verdean youth racial and ethnic identity. All 16 informants were between the ages of 18-25 years old and from the Greater Boston area. As a result, the conclusions I draw are not generalizable to the entire Cape Verdean diaspora.

*Personal, Historical, and Political Catalysts for My Research*

I chose to focus this research on Cape Verdean youth identity for personal, historical, and political reasons. I first became interested in Cape Verdean identity while an undergraduate student at Rhode Island College, where I studied under the guidance of Dr. Richard Lobban Jr., one of a handful of scholars who have made the history and anthropology of Cape Verde their scholarly focus. It was under his tutelage that I first became aware of the complexities of, and arguments around Cape Verdean identity, which was later reinforced after reading the scholarly works of Deirdre Meintel (1984) and Marilyn Halter (1993). My awareness of the complexities and nuances of Cape Verdean identity was further enhanced after spending a summer in Cape Verde in 1999.

In the islands, as well as here in the United States, I was witness to countless debates, many of which were emotional accounts, between young and old, on what it meant to be Cape Verdean. The variability was vast. They often debated the constitutive elements of Cape Verdeanness, which at times included one’s skin color, hair texture, eye shape and color. At other times these debates included the island’s colonial past, its close
proximity to the Africa continent, shared experiences of oppression, and its hybrid cultural features that are simultaneously European and African. From this, it became increasingly apparent that some Cape Verdean people believed they transcended the strict black/white racial binary that was so often evoked in discourses on race and ethnicity in the United States, while others worked within it. The idea that race was immutable and stable began to unravel before my eyes. Race no longer seemed to be dichotomous (See Telles 2004). Rather it seemed, especially in reference to Cape Verdeans to be fluid and contextual. Through these experiences, Cape Verdean people, more than ever, seemed to sit between both registers of race and ethnicity (Halter 1993). It became increasingly obvious that identity was the “suture” that linked the social with the self, and that the process of suturing was indeed a political one (Hall 1996c).

Another personal catalyst for my interest and engagement in this type of research comes from my past experience working with African youth, in particular Cape Verdean youth, in local community centers in the northeast. It is at these community centers where I witnessed how African immigrants found themselves confronted by a racial system in the U.S. that configured them as black within the narrow cultural logic of its binary black/white racial structure. This was especially perplexing at the time, for I was not only critically engaging with texts that suggested the eventual demise of the “bimodal” black and white model of racial identity, but my past experiences with Cape Verdean people, as mentioned above, also suggested this demise. With their newly and narrowly ascribed blackness, these immigrants faced new forms of racism(s) and racial discrimination, which not only impacted their daily lives, but also impacted contemporary dynamics of race and ethnicity in the U.S. The proliferations of
communities of color, especially those from Africa, were transforming the character of race relations and the idea of race in the U.S. With this in mind, I began to pay particularly close attention to the nature and dynamics of African and African American group relations and sources of conflict and change in such relations. Unfolding before my eyes was, not only the making and remaking of the black diaspora or the continued dynamic interactions between Africa and the African diaspora, but the re-articulation of racial hierarchies and racialization as global and hegemonic. Such realizations proved to be the initial catalyst for this research. This study was as much a personal inquiry as it was an academic and political one.

I entered graduate school and began to explore the vast and growing literature on the African diaspora. Much of the literature confirmed my preliminary observations that the racial terrain of the U.S. was being drastically altered, resulting in a more complex and nuanced racial situation in the U.S. Sources illustrated how black immigrants, mainly Afro-Caribbean and Afro-Latinos, have negotiated the contours of race in the U.S. with the creation and maintenance of ‘ethnic enclaves,’ while others have argued that many second-generation black immigrants self-identify as black and share a stronger connection with their African American peers (Waters 1999). To my dismay, research on the contemporary African immigrant experience and continental African diaspora was grossly inadequate. This inadequacy proved to be the second and definitive catalyst for this research. Despite the dearth of literature several scholars have produced useful insight into the African immigrant experience (Arthur 2000; Dodoo 1997; Kamaya 1997; Stooler 2001). Yet few of these studies provide useful insight into the experiences of African immigrants’ engagement with U.S. racialization. Further, many studies have
failed to come to terms with the influence of black popular culture on processes of racialization. Our understanding of race and racial identity will remain insufficient if we omit popular culture from the literature.

Although sociology clearly recognizes that the social and political constructs of race significantly inform various forms of identification in black communities, it seems reluctant to directly engage with Africans. Such a predicament is, I believe, structured by an unwillingness on the part of sociology, to understand racial formation as a global hegemonic phenomenon. By paying particular attention to African populations in diaspora, we can potentially create a more nuanced theory of racial formation that has broad implications for the discourse, practice, and understanding of race. I am determined to add the Cape Verdean experience to the growing literature on race in the United States and African diasporas. Therefore, what follows is a response to the gap in the study of African youth and processes of racialization.

Finally, the end of the 20th century and the transition into the 21st century ushered in a period of the post; the postmodern, postcolonial, postapartheid, postindustrial, post ethnic, and post racial. My motivation for conducting this research is partly fueled by anger and frustration. More specifically, I have become frustrated and angered by remarks by both scholars and laypeople alike that are as tiresome as they are pivotal: “I don’t see race” and “there is no such thing as race.” Such statements suggest a post-racial and post-ethnic epoch. In the present condition to speak of race, racism(s), or matters of race (e.g. redlining, racial discrimination, affirmative action, etc.) are to many, racist; its an outdated discourse that only is meant to hold us back as a people, a nation, as a global community. As Gray (2005) has pointed out, “With the discourse of diversity,
the marketing of blackness as an urban lifestyle, and the continued visibility of black images of middle-class success, one begins to sense the terms of a conservative bid for a post-civil rights color-blind America…(Gray 2005: xviii).” The irony of post-racial theory and commentary is that it can and does unite partisan political agendas. For example, the ideas of neo-conservatives like John McWorter (2001 and 2003) and Dinesh d’Souza (1995) are echoed in the presumably liberal rhetoric of Deborah Dickerson’s book *The End of Blackness* (2005). More importantly, colorblind politics have had the effect of deflecting critical attention from an increasingly racialized world.

However, I do not agree with some post-racial thinkers, such as Paul Gilroy (2000) Darder and Torres (2004) and others (See also Appiah 2006). Rather, I see great potential and value in some of their commentary. However, the idea of potential is key—potential in a future society. Far too often I get the sense from thinkers such as Gilroy and Appiah that they are simply trying to will their way into a post-racial future. They use postulates peppered with a heavy dose of intellectual jargon; such as “planetary cosmopolitanism.” I do understand that many are simply calling for the need to jettison the concept of race and the study of race relations, while calling adamantly for the critical study of racism(s)—but are we there yet? In other words, post-racial implies that we live in a post-racist world. Further, I also understand that despite our theoretical understandings of race as socially constructed, historical, and contextual, there is still a tendency to objectify and freeze notions of race and ethnicity. Despite these brave and committed attempts I feel that, for the moment, this is impossible, for race still matters. Our understanding of race and processes of racialization are incomplete, making racial closure difficult. While ideas are easy to throw out the window, the lived experience is
not. Race is continuously being produced and reproduced in the real world, thus giving it conceptual meaning and social life. As Cornel West has stated, a social construction does not turn you black and blue. White supremacy is still hegemonic and as a result race still matters (See Bonilla-Silva 2006 and 2001). White supremacy holds sway in the political, judicial, cultural, cognitive, economic, somatic, and metaphysical spheres of society. And given that race is historical and contextual, thus constantly changing, our understanding of race and processes of racialization are never more in need if we are to move beyond race. Omi and Winant (1994) show that the idea of race and the construction of racial identities are formative processes and that social factors such as recession, war, immigration, and so on, can and do alter racial meanings.

America is decidedly not post-racial or colorblind. One need only observe the sodomy of Abner Louima by the New York Police Department, the debate around affirmative racial policies, the hyper-incarceration of black males, the response to the atrocities of Hurricane Katrina, the prosecution of Jena 6, or the debates circulating around the possibility of Barack Hussein Obama becoming the nations first “black” president to know that race still matters. The desire to move beyond race is not only evidence that society is unwilling to openly face its past, a past filled with deception and death, but also its unwillingness to face the fact that race is at the vortex of postmodernity. If we fail to examine race, processes of racialization, and racial identity in the 21st century, we fail to understand how many, in this case Cape Verdean youth, are...

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2 Members of the New York Police Department (NYPD) assaulted Abner Louima, a Haitian immigrant in 1997. More specifically, Louima was severely beaten and sodomized by NYPD. The case was considered by many to be a clear case of police brutality and torture.

3 Jena 6 is the name given to six black teenagers charged with beating a white teenager at Jena High School in Jena, Louisiana in December 2006. The six teenagers were charged with attempted murder, sparking protest throughout the United States.
reacting to new racial politics and practices and how those things are reconstituting black identities. In other words, it is helpful to recognize, as Nayak (2006) has done, that race is “a practice with no solid basis outside the discursive, material, structural and embodied configurations through which it is repetitively enacted, performed and, tenuously, secured” (Nayak 2006: 423). To this end, in order to produce an anti-racist politics that is successful and forward thinking— not one marred in the politics of old—we must understand the contemporary terrain of race and racial meaning. We must heed E. San Juan’s pronouncements for the need to be “committed to the elimination of the hegemonic discourse of race in which peoples of color are produced and reproduced daily for exploitation and oppression under the banner of individualized freedom and pluralist, liberal democracy” (San Juan 1992: 96). Given that both my theoretical and methodological orientation are informed by critical social theory, I, like most critical researchers, assume that the knowledge developed in this research may serve as an additional step toward addressing injustices associated with race and ethnicity, especially those afflicting the African diaspora. In other words, I am not simply interested in “knowledge for knowledge’s sake,” but rather in producing a critical intervention that allow us to more fully comprehend racial processes in the U.S. and globally.

Herein lies a theoretical and empirical pursuit to better understand how social agents are defined or define themselves as racial subjects and how racial membership is defined. In many respects this project is about establishing a generative dialogue between theories of racialization and post racial thinking. By conducting an ethnography of Cape

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4 Critical social theory is not to be taken in its narrowest form, that is, the work of Adorno, Horkheimer, and others. Rather, it is to be taken in its broadest form to include the critical insights of Marx, Hegel, Kant, Weber, Foucault, Derrida, Bakhtin, the CCCS, and others. I believe much of what is called ‘Cultural Studies’ is critical social theory.
Verdean youth in the Greater Boston area I explore the points of dissonance and connection between academic theories of race - from sociology and cultural studies - and everyday practice.

**Disciplinary Positioning: Why Cultural Studies?**

Although I would like to resist disciplinary classification and sectarianism, this dissertation works within, and takes from both sociology and cultural studies. At times, both sociology and cultural studies seem complementary to one another, but they can also be conflict. Unfortunately, the complementary nature of the two fields is often one way (See Hays 2000; Seidman 1997). Cultural studies, per the insight of scholars like Stuart Hall and others, has been a more gracious host of things ‘sociological,’ while sociology has been wary, almost disdainful at times of cultural studies (See Alexander 1988; Schudson 1997).

Given the limitations of space, I do not seek to replicate or add to the investigation of the relationship between sociology and cultural studies. Rather I simply want to answer the question, of “why, I have chosen to root parts of my dissertation in cultural studies.”

My heavy reliance on cultural studies for empirical and conceptual guidance throughout this dissertation is not that sociology has little to offer my investigation of Cape Verdean identity and race in the United States. But like all fields of study, sociology has some problems, which conceptually limit my research.

First, sociology has had some empirical problems. This is not to say it has rid itself of such problems in toto. However, sociology now frequently acknowledges, for
example, the global context of social activity, the importance of media, and the centrality of identity. Empirically, as Pieterse has observed:

A global sociology is taking shape around notions such as social networks (rather than “societies”), border zones, boundary crossing and global society. In other words, a sociology conceived within the framework of nations-societies is making place for a post-international sociology of hybrid formations, times, and places” (Pieterse 1995: 63).

Sociology’s new empirical focus illustrates that sociology is empirically supple and correlates with the new social conditions in which we find ourselves.

Yet, theoretically sociology is less tractable. It is here that cultural studies’ theoretical robustness can help in the development of this dissertation. Sociology has been reluctant to entertain that which lies outside the discourse of modernity. In other words, sociology has shown great hostility toward the category of postmodernity and the specific conditions that emerge from it: the fragmentation of identities and the displacement of material labor by immaterial labor.

Similarly, as Michele Barrett (2000) has lucidly observed, sociology has been reluctant to consider post-structuralist ideas and by extension “has allied itself to a modern nationalism, and has hidden its judgments behind a rhetoric of scientificity and objectivity” (Barrett 2000: 18-19). In short, sociology’s theoretical problems have also lead to political problems in that sociologists often explore, argue, and conclude “behind a veil of apparent objectivity” (Barrett 2000: 18).

Further, my application of cultural studies allows the current project to straddle not only the social sciences, but also the humanities. Therefore, my use of cultural studies is not so much my abandonment of sociology, but a return to the classical tradition of sociology (Hall 1997).
Cultural studies adopts a specific theoretical vocabulary such as concepts like diaspora and hybridity. This vocabulary, more than anything, gives another means to map a specified reality. In other words, cultural studies allows for a means of mapping out the key dimensions of contexts, conjuncture, and formations. While I hope to explain and describe Cape Veredean youth identity, I hope more than anything to situate the work the registers of explanation and description. Further, this project is not structured around providing casual or definitive accounts of Cape Veredean youth identity or racial and ethnic identity as a whole. Rather what is to come in the following pages is a partial description and provisional explanation of Cape Veredean youth identity. Thus, this project is more suggestive than it is definitive. In short, what follows is my attempt at entering into the dialogue on the intersections of race, ethnicity, and popular culture and as any strong, sophisticated sociological cultural studies would do, identify “certain constitutive tendential features that might give us a more comprehensive grasp of the phenomena in question” (McLennan 2002: 643). In the end, the disciplinary stylistics will fade from view and the issue at hand, Cape Veredean identity, takes center stage.

The goal of this research is to map second-generation Cape Veredean youth identity. In order to do so, I approach this research using these questions: how do U.S. ascriptions of blackness and forms of black popular culture inform processes of identity formation and negotiation among Cape Veredean youth? How is hip-hop culture used as a site where new (and/or old) identities of being Cape Veredean are fashioned and reworked? How important is fashion in the creation and maintenance of identity? What do the clothes Cape Veredean youth wear say about who they are or who we think they are? Finally, how does racialization work in creating “Black” identities?
Terminology

Throughout the study, I utilize the label “second generation Cape Verden youth.”

In general, the term “Cape Verden” is used as a general descriptor of an ethnoracial community whose members trace their cultural and national heritage back to the Republic of Cape Verde. Traditionally, those who use the label “Cape Verden” as opposed to “Cape Verden American” were born in the islands and emigrated to the United States sometime during their life, whereas “Cape Verden American” is often reserved for those whose family members were born in the United States. It is a label that is commonly used when talking about third and fourth generation Cape Verdeans. However, many youth who were born in the United States, whose parents where born in Cape Verde, also use the label “Cape Verden American.” In order to remain faithful to the views of all participants I will use both Cape Verden and Cape Verden American interchangeably unless otherwise indicated.

Despite seeming straightforward, “second-generation” is used in a loose fashion. I use the term “second generation” to refer both to the American-born youth of Cape Verden parents, as well as for Cape Verden-born youth who came to the United States as pre-teenagers. I see these groups as similar. By their teenage years, such Cape Verden-born individuals are culturally similar to their American-born peers. For example, most are English-speaking dominant and many have little if any desire to return to Cape Verde.

I also employ the term “diaspora” in my description of Cape Verden youth in the Greater Boston area. The term is employed in a more general sense, to refer to the larger
more expansive African diaspora and more specifically to the Cape Verdean diaspora. However, in this study diaspora is never used merely as a descriptive tool to categorize a specific people and their relationship between “home” and “away.” Diaspora as a descriptive tool draws attention to immigration, as well as the political connections (especially issues concerning patriotism) and economic ties (especially issues concerning remittances) of diasporic communities. Diaspora in this sense has been a useful concept that has allowed social scientists to concentrate on circular immigration practices, transnational, social and cultural linkages, and the ways that diasporic communities negotiate social dynamics of race and ethnicity. However, as a descriptive tool only, diaspora is limiting, since it says little about the political and cultural uses of diaspora. Diasporas are not homogenous immutable communities; rather individuals are positioned differentially within their collectivity with regard to their gender, class, culture, sexuality, and other social categories.

As Hall (1996d) suggests, diasporas are articulated, that is, composed of a number of instances, forces, and relationships. As a process and condition diaspora is always in the making, but can also go through the process of unmaking (e.g. white Latino/as). Here, diaspora is not only descriptive, but also political. As mentioned above, the purpose of this research is to map the relationship between the Cape Verdean diaspora and the African diaspora in order to see how black subjectivities are created and sustained.
CHAPTER TWO

“LIGHT-SKIN AFRICAN BLOOD”
CAPE VERDEAN HISTORY AND RACIAL POLITICS

In order to contextualize second-generation Cape Verdean youth identity, we must first consider Cape Verdean history. By Cape Verdean history I mean both the historical development of the island country itself, inclusive of the colonial period and war of liberation, as well as, the history of Cape Verdean migration and by extension diaspora, particularly the historical development of Cape Verdean communities in the Greater Boston area. This chapter is by no means a comprehensive history of Cape Verde and Cape Verdean migration. Rather it is simply a historical overview that is to serve as a point of orientation and contextualization for Cape Verdean youth identity. For example, as I discuss in chapter seven, Cape Verdean history, especially the period of decolonization, serves as an important racial and ethnic identity marker for the majority of Cape Verdean youth interviewed. In other words, the history of Cape Verde allows participants to simultaneously speak of cultural difference and similarity with other Africans, and African Americans. Within this chapter, I also offer a brief, yet important overview of race in Cape Verde.
Before discussing the Cape Verdean diaspora it is useful to consider some of the archipelago’s history. The Republic of Cape Verde (in Portuguese, *Republica de Cabo Verde*) is a small West African country consisting of ten volcanic islands and five islets 300 miles due west of the westernmost point of Africa. The archipelago features two island groups: windward and leeward. The windward (or Barlevento) group on the north includes Santo Antão, São Vincento, Santa Luzia (uninhabited), São Nicolau, Sal, and Boa Vista along with the islets Raso and Branco. The leeward (or Sotavento) group on the south includes Maio, Santiago, Fogo, and Brava, and the islets of Grande, Luís, Carneiro, and Cima. Praia on São Tiago is the capital and main town of the Sotavento islands, while Mindelo, São Vincente is the main town in the north. Of the islands’ estimated 426,998 inhabitants, the majority is of European and African descent (CIA Factbook 2008).

The majority of the population of the drought-scourged islands of Cape Verde is *Crioulo* or *mestiço*, descendents from early relationships between slave masters and slave women. The people of Cape Verde descended from both European and African ancestry, developing a Luso-African culture. The Europeans include Portuguese (mainly from the Algarve and Azores), Dutch, Genoese, French, and English. Sephardic Jews (fleeing the Inquisition), Lebanese, Chinese, Brazilians, and Americans have also played some role. The Africans included those of Mande origin (such as Mandingo, Fula (Fulani), Wolof,  

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The official language of Cape Verde is Portuguese. However, it is Crioulo that is the mother tongue and national language. Crioulo expresses the saudade (soul) of Cape Verde and is the defining linguistic feature of cultural identity. Crioulo—which consists of antiquated Portuguese modified through contact with various African languages—emerged in the sixteenth century serving as the lingua franca for Portuguese and African slave traders; a hybrid language of commerce.

Over the centuries, Cape Verdean society has developed its own distinctive/hybrid culture that reflects its African and European roots. Cape Verdean culture or Crioulo culture has unique music and dance forms as well as a wide variety of folkways such as arts, crafts, dress, food, and games. More specifically, crioulo cultural markers exist in music in the form of batuko, funana, tabanka among other forms. Key markers can also be found in typical foods like cachupa (a corn based stew), conj (soup), and gacida (a chicken dish) and in the use of panos (a textile) and headscarves. Although many Cape Verdeans are Catholic or Protestant, some African-based beliefs and practices relating to animism still exist, such as the notion of spirit possession (See Lobban and Saucier, 2007).

Between 1455 and 1462 Portuguese and Genoese navigators sailing for Portugal reached the uninhabited archipelago. In 1495 the islands were declared a crown possession of Portugal and subsequently began importing slaves from western Africa. With the expansion of the slave trade in the sixteenth century, Cape Verde became a key commercial interface between Africa, Europe, and America, despite early efforts to
develop plantation agriculture. Further, the Portuguese Crown established a feudal system known as the *companhia* system. The feudal social structure included capitãos (captains), *fidalgos* (noblemen), *cavaleiro-fidalgos* (noble-knights), *almoxarites* (tax collectors), *degradados* (convicts), *exterminados* (exiles), and *lançados* (outcasts). Slaves occupied the bottom of the feudal social structure and were classified as *escravos novos* or *boçales* (raw slaves), *escravos naturais* (Cape Verdean born slaves), and *ladinos* (baptized or “civilized” slaves). In the end, the *companhia* system was abandoned for the *morgado* system of land ownership, a process that transmitted land under the principle of primogeniture. In 1863, the *morgado* system was abolished and land reforms took place (See Saucier 2004).

As the trans-Atlantic slave trade was reluctantly abandoned in the 1860s, Cape Verde once again became an important commercial center during the late nineteenth century. Despite this the people of Cape Verde suffered from drought, famine, and Portuguese corruption and maladministration. While most Cape Verdeans worked as tenant farmers and sharecroppers, tens of thousands sought employment abroad in Brazil and the United States.

Following the Berlin Congress (1884-85), Portugal’s claim to Cape Verde remained intact, despite losing areas of influence on the Guinea coast. In 1908, both the king and crown prince of Portugal were assassinated, which ushered in a brief period of democratic Republicanism. However, these events brought little substantive change to Cape Verde. As a result, opposition to Portuguese colonial rule grew in Cape Verde and neighboring Guinea-Bissau. In 1926, fascists, led by Antonio Salazar, took control of the Portuguese government and later added a colonial policy (i.e. the Colonial Act of 1933)
to the constitution, which placed severe limitations on civil liberties by expanding the
powers of an extremely authoritarian internal police system known as the *Police
Internacional e de Defesa do Estado* (PIDE). Consequently, anti-colonialist movements
grew in Cape Verde and Guinea-Bissau. Initial Cape Verdean nationalist sentiments were
expressed in the literary *Claridade* movement, founded by Baltazar Lopes and others in
1936. The intellectuals and writers of the Claridade movement, known as *Claridosos*,
examined the roots of Crioulo culture and spoke out against racism, fascism, and
Portuguese colonialism.

In 1951, Portugal changed Cape Verde’s status to that of an “overseas province”
in an attempt to avert growing nationalism. Despite this action, nationalists responded by
founding the clandestine *Partido Africano da Independência da Guiné e Cabo Verde*
(PAIGC), a party founded (in Guinea-Bissau) by Amílcar Cabral and others in 1956.
Influenced by the writings of political theorists, including Karl Marx and Vladimir
Lenin, the PAIGC created a political strategy of national liberation and pan-Africanism;
its main goal was to liberate both Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde from Portuguese
colonialism authority. In 1958, the PAIGC initiated a series of general strikes but later
concluded that the violence practiced by the Portuguese could be defeated only by armed-
struggle. With the support of the Soviet Union, Cuba, and other socialist/communist
countries, the PAIGC abandoned peaceful means of protest in favor of a war of national
liberation. They began the armed struggle in 1963, with fighting concentrating in Guinea-
Bissau. Due to the logistical difficulties of maintaining forces on the relatively open
islands and supplying them by sea, the PAIGC refrained from attacks in Cape Verde.
By 1972, the PAIGC controlled the majority of Guinea-Bissau. On 20 January 1973, Amilcar Cabral was assassinated, but the PAIGC quickly intensified its attacks against the weakened Portuguese military and by 24 September 1973 independence was declared. Following this declaration, in 1974 the fascist Portuguese government in Lisbon was toppled, prompting the new Portuguese government to reconsider its colonial policy. Eventually, Portugal and the PAIGC agreed to a transitional government and full independence was achieved in Guinea-Bissau by 24 September 1974 and in Cape Verde by 5 July 1975. Aristides Pereira became the first president of the Republic of Cape Verde, and Pedro Pires became the first prime minister. Although the original constitution envisioned political unification with Guinea-Bissau, a coup there in November 1980 strained the relations between the two countries. Shortly thereafter, Pedro Pires founded the Partido Africano da Independência de Cabo Verde (PAICV), abandoning the hope for unity with Guinea-Bissau. The PAICV established a one-party system and ruled Cape Verde from independence until 1990.

In 1991, the first multi-party elections took place with Movimento para Democracia (MpD) replacing the PAICV. António Mascarenas Monteiro replaced Pereira as president, and Carlos Veiga replaced Pires. Under the leadership of the MpD the economy became increasingly privatized. The collapse of the world communist movement had also permitted a broader range of diplomatic choices for the MpD than had formerly been available. On the domestic front, the MpD continued the earlier policies of improving educational and social services, which resulted in assuring the party’s parliamentary victory in the second multi-party elections in 1995. Shortly thereafter, Monteiro was reelected to the presidency, while Veiga retained his post as
prime minister. In a growing democracy the economy expanded under the neo-liberal orientation of the MpD, but the prosperous private sector economy benefited few.

Wanting change, the citizens of Cape Verde returned the PAICV to legislative power in 2001 with José Maria Pereira Neves appointed prime minister and former PAICV stalwart Pedro Pires elected president. Similarly, the 2006 legislative and presidential elections resulted in the continuation of a PAICV legislative majority and the reelection of Pires and re-appointment of Neves. Under the newly oriented PAICV – one that has slowly unhinged itself from an earlier socialist and pan-African orientation – Cape Verde has undergone major developmental and economic accomplishments. Since 2001, the government has implemented a series of programs supported by Cape Verde’s international aid donors to improve the infrastructures fundamental to the development and sustainability of the archipelago. The programs have included public investment in infrastructure; private investment in fisheries, services, and export processing; an increase in agricultural output; and increased services to international air and maritime transport. Further, tourism is now the major industry sector targeted by the government. As a result of nearly two decades of free and fair democratic elections, good governance, and by extension strengthened political and economic ties with donor states, access to health services and education have greatly increased, making Cape Verde one of Africa’s most developed nations.

Ironically, it has been under the PAICV, the political descendent of the pro-African PAIGC, that Cape Verde has moved substantially closer to Europe while moving away from Africa. Since the turn of the twenty-first century, the government has expressed greater interest in establishing closer, more intimate ties with the European
Union (EU) than with the African Union (AU). In 2002, Prime Minister Neves lobbied the EU for the similar association status accorded to Cape Verde’s sister islands, the Azores, Madeira, and the Canary Islands. Given republic’s geographical location, its historical ties to Portugal, good management, and recent economic interest by European private capital, influential Portuguese and Cape Verdean’s have called for Cape Verde to become a member of the EU. In 2005, former Portuguese President Mário Soares submitted a proposal pressing the EU to start formal membership talks with the republic. To this end, despite belonging to the African Union (AU) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the republic’s African connections seem more symbolic than substantial. Although many Cape Verdeans in influential positions are in favor of expanding ties with Europe, some are opposed to strengthening ties with Europe while weakening ties with Africa (Lobban and Saucier 2007).

Although known throughout Africa and the world for its successful revolution led by Amilcar Cabral, democratic governance, and developmental growth, Cape Verde is often known because of its large and continuously growing diaspora.

_Cape Verdean Migration and the Making of Diaspora_

The history of Cape Verde has been shaped tremendously by emigration. The motivation to leave Cape Verde has been connected to the inhospitable landscape of the archipelago, made all the more difficult by frequent and long periods of drought (See Barrows 1990; Lobban 1995; Lobban and Saucier 2007). Jorgen Carling (2002), one of the leading scholars on Cape Verdean migration, links the widespread wish to emigrate to
poverty caused by the lack of rain. High levels of unemployment also contribute to emigration. In this sense, emigration is generally conceived of as a way to achieve a better life. It has helped offset high unemployment and population growth. Remittances from abroad are an essential part of the gross domestic product (GDP). As a result, the Cape Verdean diaspora is transnational in that there is a constant flow of people, culture, and capital to and from Cape Verde. The interconnectivity and interdependence between nation-state and diaspora is so important that the government of Cape Verde established the Instituto das Comunidades in 2001. The Instituto das Comunidades is attentive to issues affecting the diaspora and its emigrants. Similar to many developing countries, Cape Verde also allows those in the diaspora to maintain dual citizenship. The diaspora, as a result, has developed long-term cultural connections with the archipelago. The transnationalism of Cape Verdeans has led what some call the emergence of a bilateral diaspora ethnicity (Pires-Hester 1994).

In the second half of the 19th century, many Cape Verdeans, mainly from Brava and Fogo, immigrated to the United States to seek work in the whaling industry and packet trade. This laid the foundation for a substantial emigration to the US at the turn of the 20th century. Roughly 1,500 Cape Verdean migrants arrived annually on packet ships between 1860 and 1920 (Coli and Lobban, 1990: 5-7). They settled mainly in New Bedford, Massachusetts; between 1860 and 1920 26,585 Cape Verdean immigrants arrived in New England (Coli and Lobban, 1990). With the decline of the whaling industry and packet trade, they went to work in agriculture – picking strawberries and cranberries – and in factories, settling in Massachusetts (New Bedford, Boston, Plymouth, Taunton, Brockton, Cape Cod), Rhode Island (Pawtucket, East Providence,
Central Falls), Connecticut, New York, Florida, Hawaii, and California. Nearly one-third of all Cape Verdeans arriving in the New England area between 1900-1920 listed Plymouth County as their intended destination (Lobban and Saucier, 2007: 68). The introduction of immigration quotas in the 1920s - the Immigration Acts of 1921 and 1924 - derailed Cape Verdean emigration to the U.S. for nearly five decades. In the 1960s and early 1970s, with the demand for workers in Europe and strict immigration limitations in the U.S. as outlined in the Immigration Act of 1965, many Cape Verdeans chose to emigrate to Europe, particularly to Portugal and the Netherlands. However, even with independence in 1975, the flow of immigrants has continued. According to Halter, approximately 913 Cape Verdeans emigrated to the U.S. between 1975-80 (Halter, 1993: 46). Today, there exists a strong migratory flow to Portugal, Brazil, The Netherlands, Italy, France, Luxemburg, Sweden, and Germany. Others have emigrated to Angola, Senegal, and Argentina. Of all the destinations, Portugal, the Netherlands, France, and the United States are most important.

The number of Cape Verdeans in the diaspora probably outnumbers the population of the republic. However, quantifying the Cape Verdean diaspora is difficult. The reliability and validity of the data is also questionable. The Cape Verdean government, for instance, tracks people entering and exiting the country from all ports and airports, but the type of journey one is embarking on is never specified. As Jorgen Carling (2000) has pointed out, quantifying diasporic populations is tricky because of overlapping categories of citizenship, nativity, ethnicity and issues of mobility. Problems with quantifying the Cape Verdean diaspora population in particular, including the number of undocumented Cape Verdeans, those who emigrated when Cape Verdeans
held Portuguese passports, those of mixed “ancestry,” and the increasing number of third and fourth generation Cape Verdeans. The latter are common especially in the Greater Boston area. Nonetheless, the best estimate puts the Cape Verdean diaspora between 370,000 and 650,000 people (Instituto das Comunidades, 2007).

The oldest and largest diasporic population lives in the U.S., particularly in the Greater Boston area. Many of its members come from the islands of Fogo and Brava, followed by Sal and Sao Vincente. In 2000, U.S. Census reported less than 80,000 Cape Verdeans and alluded to the possibility of re-introducing “Cape Verdean” ethnic category to the Census. Others have estimated that the number is closer to 300,000. The Greater Boston area alone is estimated to have 255,000 people (Instituto das Comunidades, 2007).

Race and Cultural Identity in Cape Verde and in Diaspora

Due to its important position within the Trans-Atlantic slave trade, Cape Verde served as a meeting place for various peoples. As a result, a Crioulo or mestiço population emerged in the archipelago. In a very basic sense Cape Verden people are decedents of Portuguese and African people. During the initial phase of colonization there existed only two racial groups in Cape Verde: brancos “whites” and prêtos “blacks.” However, there is some evidence that people of Moorish descent (i.e. North African) were sometimes classified as moreno. Nonetheless, the brancos consisted of crown officials, including military governors known as capitàos, noblemen, merchants,

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6 I often had to turn willing participants away, for there were of mixed ancestry.
7 This also proved to be problematic in locating participants.
8 “Cape Verdean” as an option was added to the 1980 Census, which was subsequently dropped.
and other European settlers (e.g. *degredados* and *lançados*). In many respects, *brancos* served as a homogeneous term that overlooked Moorish, Jewish, and Mediterranean diversity which is found deeply embedded in Portugal’s racial inheritance. *Prêtos* on the other hand, were those of African origin such as Susu, Papeis, Balantas, Bijagos, Jalofas, Felupes, Fulas, Mandingos, and Manjacos. *Prêtos* were almost all slaves with the exception of those who served in local militia (*grumete*) or as coastal translators for slave traders (*tangomãos*). During the early days of Portuguese colonization, *prêtos* were the overwhelming majority (Lobban, 1995). However, as was the case in Brazil, race mixing between Europeans and enslaved Africans was common, especially because the Portuguese did not place strict measures on social separation as did the French and British. To this end, a large *Crioulo* population was developed. By 1550, the racial composition of the islands was nearly 70 percent *mestiço*, while whites constituted of only two percent of the population. In 1950, again nearly 70 percent of the islands population was considered *mestiço* (Lobban 1995). Today, the official racial composition of the country is unknown, for the “race” category was dropped from the census following independence in 1975.

Ethnic identity was often preserved in slave shipping registers. For example, one finds observations about ethnic origins and various features deemed of great significance. Although, color was most often reported simply as *prêto(a)*, there were many slaves who were recognized as *prêto fula*, or simply *fula*. This distinction is with reference to the somewhat lighter complexion of the interior Fula people who had figured among the pre-nineteenth century slaves. Similar to Brazilian racial taxonomy, skin colors in Cape Verdean racial taxonomy could also take the reference *mulato(a)*, or *mulato(a) claro(a)*
(light tan) or mulato(a) seguro(a) (dark tan) as well as pardo(a) or brown. If this were not sufficient, the complex system of racial classification could then turn to other phenotypic markers like hair and nose type. For instance, hair types including the cabeca seca (dry or wiry headed), the cabo crespo (frizzy hair), and cabo encrespado (curly hair), while types of noses included chato (flat) or muito chato (very flat) (Lobban and Saucier 2007).

Although official “race” categories cease to exist in contemporary Cape Verde, Crioulo folk culture has distinct and overlapping racial categories, which structures a racial hierarchy. Sampadjudo, for instance, are considered mulato, but weak and feeble. Conversely, mulato elites look negatively on the badiu. The badiu tend to be phenotypically darker than most Cape Verdeans and are the core of the peasant population of the island of Santiago. The badiu have retained a certain degree of African-based cultural distinctiveness in their customs, folklore, religious practices and dialect of Crioulo. They are often viewed as the primary representatives of an African heritage and, as such, have historically been denigrated by the colonial authorities and looked down upon by other Cape Verdeans. Badiu has the connotation of being an uncivilized barefooted renegades (also known at times as rebalados). In his attempt to strengthen Cape Verdean identity and establish the principles of unification between Cape Verde and Guinea-Bissau, Amílcar Cabral spoke of the “re-Africanzation of the spirit”: Portuguese colonialism featured a program of African ethnocide. As a result, the badiu, given their preservation of “African culture” became a positive symbolic force in the fight against Portuguese colonialism (See Amada Duarte, 1984; Cabral 1973). More

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9 This complex system of racial classification is similar to the ways Brazilians are racial classified (See Telles 2004).
specifically, their cultural folkways, namely musical forms like *tabanca* and *batuko*, became symbols of resistance.

Throughout the colonial period, both the *Badiu* and *Sampadjudo* looked judgmentally at the Portuguese as “*Tugas*.” Other colloquial terms relating to racial categories are Manjaco and *Nyambob*. The term Manjaco is often used as a pejorative term for continental “black” Africans from Guinea-Bissau, Senegal, and Guinea, while *Nyambob* is a negative reference meaning “white person.” However, these words are being used less and less in contemporary Cape Verde (Lobban and Saucier 2007).

In Cape Verde the system of racial classification were and are confounded by wealth, power, and class position, which often “lightened” one’s appearance, while poverty, crude behavior, and illiteracy “darkened” it. One’s race was not only associated with phenotype, but also associated with one’s social class and cultural capital. In this regard, this phenomenon is similar to Brazil. In the early 20th century Cape Verdean racial identity again was complicated by colonial decree. Complicating Cape Verdean racial identity further was the legal status *assimilado*. The status of *assimilado* was assigned for indigenous Africans in the Portuguese African colonies whose cultural standards of literacy, education, and class position would entitle them to fuller rights as Portuguese citizens, while the overwhelming majority of black Africans were relegated to the lowest paying jobs and inferior schools, and subjected to extra-legal taxes, restricted movement, and more severe and arbitrary punishment within the criminal justice system. In other words, the status of *assimilado* was constituted by race and culture and lent itself to justify, in law, discriminatory colonial policies, limited civil rights, and inequality of opportunity. Further, many Cape Verdean *assimilado* complicated their position by
serving as strategic intermediaries in the colonial system as local administrators and functionaries in all parts of the Luso-African world, in places like Mozambique and Angola (Lobban and Saucier 2007). However, as Lobban has argued, “although Cape Verde’s colonial experience was unequivocally marked by racism, social inequality, and racial stratification, any effort to impose an American, South African, or European model of racial hierarchy onto Cape Verdean society will fail” (Lobban 1995: 51).

Understanding Cape Verdean racial identity becomes more complex when Cape Verdean emigration is included. Due to the country’s history of persistent drought, food shortages, and poverty many Cape Verdeans have emigrated to Europe and the United States. Given that more Cape Verdeans live outside Cape Verde than within, the nation has become one of emigrants. To this end, issues of racial and ethnic identity have been expanded and played out in diaspora. Since Cape Verdeans range in phenotype and skin color issues of racial classification have taken on a new dynamic in the diaspora. Given the transnational nature of Cape Verdean peoples, we can also assume that the racial identity politics developed in diaspora have also impacted the ways in which Cape Verdeans in the homeland conceptualize and articulate race. Like all examples of racial identity, Cape Verdean racial identity is one of contradictions. Because Cape Verdeans carried Portuguese passports and self-identified as “Portuguese”\(^\text{10}\) during the early and mid-twentieth century they became known in the United States as “black Portuguese,” while in places like Brazil they are referred to as “black white men” (Halter 1993). Although they did not fit easily into the United States’ black-white binary, Cape Verdeans were often ascribed the racial status of black, which has not changed. Being

\(^{10}\) Self-identifying as “Portuguese” rather than Cape Verdean has persisted, although constantly challenged by younger Cape Verdeans. Such designation is a remnant of colonialism.
ascribed black status was something earlier settlers adamantly denounced, segregating themselves from African American populations. For example, Cape Verdean children were often discouraged from socializing with African Americans (Halter 1993). Throughout the northeast, several self-contained Cape Verdean communities existed. They published their own newspapers and newsletters (e.g. Lebanta and No Pintcha) and organized cultural and religious organizations. Cape Verdean emigrants quickly learned that being conceived of as non-white or black limited their upward mobility. In other words, a basic incompatibility existed between being black and social advantage. The immigrant voices in Halter’s *Between Race and Ethnicity: Cape Verdean American Immigrants, 1860-1965* (1993) illustrates this racial understanding well. As one emigrant explained,” the first thing Cape Verdeans learn is that black people sit at the bottom of the American totem pole. We found out quickly that America doesn’t believe in shade – only black and white” (as quoted in Halter 1993: 146). Despite their efforts to distance themselves from African Americans, many Cape Verdeans were relegated to similiar types of employment opportunities held by African Americans and lived in similar impoverished conditions. Nevertheless, Cape Verdeans were some of the first “people of color” to obtain employment in positions traditionally reserved for whites (e.g. postal worker) (Coli and Lobban, 1990). Nonetheless, as Halter states, “the definition of race that was imposed upon them was based not only on the color of their skin but also on the role they played in the local economy and social structure” (Halter, 1993: 8). Yet, in the wake of both the Civil Rights movement and Black Power movement, not to mention their war of liberation, Cape Verdeans sought wider social and communal ties with African Americans. Many even embraced the term “black.” Amílcar Cabral’s ideas of
“re-Africanizing the spirit” of all Cape Verdeans also impacted those in diaspora (See Cabral 1973). As a result, by the 1970s Cape Verdeans were especially active in the Urban League, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), and other national and local organizations that worked for black empowerment.

As we will come to see in the following chapters, many second-generation Cape Verdean youth actively construct their identity at the intersection of race and ethnicity, negotiating notions of blackness and Cape Verdeanness. As Sanchez-Gibau (2005) has shown, there exist deep tensions between immigrants and American born Cape Verdeans about what it means to be Cape Verdean. Cape Verdeanness is exemplified generationally and contextually by certain cultural practices and reading of Cape Verdan history. To be conclusive about what it means to be Cape Verdean is futile. Given their complex colonial history, geographical location, and history of migration, Cape Verdeans are a multiracial and multiethnic people. However, processes of racialization often strip Cape Verdeans of racial and ethnic difference and complexity; the racial hegemonic state quickly absorbs difference and racial transgression.

In this chapter, I have provided a brief, history of Cape Verde as a way of further understanding Cape Verdan youth identity in diaspora. In addition, I have discussed Cape Verdan migration and racial and cultural identity in Cape Verde and in diaspora. The next chapter will look closely at literature on race, ethnicity, black diaspora, and popular culture. In other words, it will provide an overview of the theoretical framework that will guide this study.
CHAPTER THREE

MAPPING RACE AND RACIAL IDENTITY:
LITERATURE REVIEW and THEORY

Before engaging in methodological concerns, it is necessary to first outline the basic theoretical frameworks I will employ in the treatment of identity among second-generation Cape Verdeans in the Greater Boston area. Many of the works discussed are not strictly from the discipline of sociology, but include important insight into race, racial identity, performance, and racialization from the areas of cultural studies and African Diaspora Studies. This chapter outlines the literature that is relevant to second-generation Cape Verdean identity. First, I define race and explore what constitutes racial identity. Although, brief and elementary, this is necessary, as it is defined differently throughout the world. Second, I look briefly at the literature on the sociology of race and ethnicity, paying particular attention to scholarship on immigration and diasporic communities in the U.S. Given the importance of assimilation theory in the sociology of race and ethnicity, I revisit this literature, assessing its relevance. This is followed by a review of the cultural studies literature on race and identity from the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) and those influenced by the CCCS. I then discuss performance theory in connection to the performance of identity and racial identity in particular. Lastly, I investigate the question, “why racialization?” Processes of racialization are central to this project, namely because race means little, historically or contemporarily, without “something” that creates meaning for social beings and by extension structures their lives. A review of the literature shows that the study of identity and processes of racialization are a significant part of a large theoretical and ethnographic
discussion on race and racial identity that is ongoing and ever changing. In short, the focus of this chapter is to delineate the ways in which race, ethnicity, and identity are theorized, with special attention to theories and empirical studies that highlight the African diaspora.

Defining Race

The concept of race is essentially a modern concept which began to take shape with the rise of global capitalism (Gilroy 1993; Goldberg 1993 and 2002; Wallerstein 2004; Winant 2001). Race is often understood as a biological reality and/or a constructed social category. Through religious, artistic, philosophical, and scientific discourses, the “other” emerged and the racial categorization of human beings was born (Baker 1998; Banton 1977; Hannaford 1996; Pieterse 1992; Said 1978 and 1994; Takaki 1979). Race would change over time, in the service of European colonialism, imperialism, and conquest; it mattered differently in different times under different circumstances, but it always mattered.

For example, in the United States, the idea of race became connected to the decimation of Native American people and submission and conscious exclusion of black Americans via de jure and de facto segregation (e.g. Plessy v. Ferguson) (Cornell 1994; DuBois 1992; Singh 2004; Snipp 1996). The Caribbean and the Pacific Rim, including Hawaii, the Philippines, Cuba, Haiti, and Puerto Rico were subjugated, while Asian immigration was halted (e.g. Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and Gentleman’s Agreement). At the turn of the 20th century anti-Mexican racism began to imbed itself in the socio-political fabric of the Southwest (Almaguer 1994; Barrera 1979).
Researchers sympathetic to social Darwinism, eugenics, and Spencer-inspired evolutionism dominated early accounts of race. The work of Arthur De Gobineau (Essay on the Inequality of Human Races), Paul Broca (Memoies d'Anthropologie), Herbert Spencer, and Francis Galton (Hereditary Genius) and others proved deeply influential in early 20th century accounts of race. Many of the founders of sociological thought were committed to the “scientific” study of racial difference, intelligence, and hierarchies of people. The measurement of skulls, bones, and facial features were utilized to analyze race. Means of measurement were developed in order, supposedly to scientize theories about race (Gould 1981). In general, early studies were fixated on the ‘intractable’ and ‘intrinsic’ characteristics of race.

With the work of Du Bois (1996) and Boas (1938) at the turn of the 20th century, the idea of race as a social construction, that is constructed by social actors, emerges, and as a result the idea of race as “natural” began to lose its appeal. Many sociologists abandoned naturalistic/biologicist understandings and cautiously challenged social Darwinism, eugenics, and Spencerian evolutionsism. Race was now seen as a human construction rather than the product of some abstract social force. The social construction of race sees race as relationally constructed, that is, races were and are constructed against one another, rather than in isolation. Racial meaning is given through human interaction, not natural difference. For example, race in the U.S. is constructed binarily. Although we sometimes speak of race in terms of a spectrum, and the U.S. Census identifies five distinct categories (Caucasian, Black/African American, Native American/Alaska Native, Asian, and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander), race is frequently collapsed into a white/black dichotomy. This process by which racial meanings happen
has been labeled racial formation. Racial formation theory sees race as constructed, flexible, fragile, and contested (Omi and Winant 1994; Winant 2001).

Given the flexibility and fluidity of race, it has come to be thought of as various other things. Race has been thought of as cultural, that is, race is identified with certain cultural practices, such as language, dress, music, norms, and customs (See Boas 1938; Du Bois 1996). Others seem to imply that race is a form of ethnicity (Waters 1994) or race is nation (Balibar and Wallerstein 1991; Gilroy 1987). Nonetheless, race as culture, ethnicity or nation are similar; all hint at the sociality of race.

Even those scholars who recognize race as a social construction generally define it in physical terms. Omi and Winant define race as “a concept which signifies and symbolizes conflicts by referring to different types of human bodies (Omi and Winant 1994: 55).” What Omi and Winant (1994) are arguing is that race as a social construct is built on 19th century biological notions (See also Wacquant 1997). Despite agreeing with Omi and Winant and others on the social construction of race, such a definition is narrow and omits the complexities and nuance of race. David Theo Goldberg suggests that race is “a fluid, fragile and more or less vacuous concept capable of alternative senses…a hybrid concept [that] assumes significance in terms of prevailing social and epistemological conditions at the time” (Goldberg 1993: 80-1). For instance, as Haney Lopez (2000) argues, prior to the U.S annexation of Mexican territory in 1848, to be labeled Mexican was different from being labeled black, white, Indian, and so on. One could be a black Mexican or white Mexican; race and nationality were distinguished. In order to gain public support for the annexation of Mexican territory, race and nationality were conflated. Due to political motivations and economic interests on the part of the

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11 Any in-depth genealogy of the sociology of race would uncover this fact.
U.S. government, to be Mexican went from a nationality to a race within a few decades (Lopez 2000).\textsuperscript{12}

Throughout this study, race is understood as a constructed social category that is claimed or imposed (or simultaneously both), yet still connected to the body. Race is constantly being made and remade (Hall 1996b and 1996d). It is processual and performed. And more importantly, race still matters—it is still a source of social division, marginality, exclusion, group solidarity, self-pride, and so on. For example, as Shapiro (2004) argues, the inequality of wealth in the U.S. can be attributed to racial advantages. Wealth accumulation is made difficult based on a number of racial advantages whites have (Shapiro 2004). Racial inequality is also reflected in statistics of crime and the criminal justice system. African Americans make up approximately 12 percent of the general population of the U.S., but more than half of the prison population (Prison Policy Initiative 2008). More specifically, nearly 26 percent of black males in prison were incarcerated for nonviolent drug offenses. In comparison, only 13.3 percent of white males in prison were imprisoned for nonviolent drug law violations (Covington 2004: 13). From this, it is reasonable to assume and possibly foolish to declare race as merely a social construction, for phenotype and skin color mark the body and as a result, people are placed in racial hierarchies imbued with social power (Bashi 1998).

One of the more problematic exercises in defining race is distinguishing it from ethnicity, for racial groups are sometimes defined in ethnic terms (Sollors 1986; Waters 1994 and 1999).\textsuperscript{13} Ethnicity in its most fundamental form is a concept referring to a

\textsuperscript{12} The transformation from a nationality to a race of people is illustrated in the so-called “Greaser Act” of 1855, which was created to discourage vagrancy among Mexicans.

\textsuperscript{13} Starting in the 1930s, “race” slowly began to be displaced by “ethnicity” in the social science literature. At the turn of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century in the U.S., Italian-Americans, for example, were defined in racial terms, but
shared way of life as reflected in specific cultural practices. It is, as Goldberg suggests, “the mode of cultural identification and distinction” (Goldberg 1993: 74). African American ethnicity, for instance, draws “on the syncretic cultural heritage created by diverse African ethnic groups and do so within the distinctly American religious milieu of an overarching American civil religion” (Hill Collins 2006: 79). Comparatively speaking, race is defined on the basis of “the rhetoric of descent,” while ethnicity is socially defined on the basis of “the rhetoric of cultural consent” (Goldberg 1993: 75-6). Racial designation often refers to appearance and aptitude; ethnicity has none of these connotations. According to Cornell and Hartmann (1998), ethnicity is internally asserted, whereas race is externally imposed. African American ethnicity has been used to craft black nationalism in order to combat racism and, by extension, racial inequality. It is reasonable to assume then, that race is also a power relation, whereas, ethnicity is not. In other words, ethnicity, for Cornell and Hartmann (1998), is not necessarily exploitative, hierarchical, and conflictual as is race. Ethnicity is nonhierarchical, but only as far as it is unrelated to race. Ethnicity is more about inclusion than exclusion. However, the constitutive elements that comprise a particular ethnic group change over time. As Barth’s (1969) model of ethnicity stressed, ethnic boundaries are permeable; they are situationally defined and transactional in nature (See also Avrch 2003; Balibar and Wallerstein 1991; Hobsbawn 1983).

Despite the efforts of countless scholars to delineate the two concepts, race and ethnicity are often misunderstood and confounded in the social science literature.

gradually became an “ethnic group” (Guglielmo & Salerno 2003). The Chicago School was oriented to understanding racial and ethnic conflict and focused a great deal of attention on issues of migration, crime, and poverty in Chicago. In fact, The Polish Peasant (1994) prefigured many studies on whiteness in America and how ethnicity and whiteness were constructed.
Nonetheless, ethnicity is too valuable a concept to discard, for ethnicity is seldom without race. That is ethnicity is often understood in racial terms (Bashi and McDaniel 1997; Omi and Winant 1994). In other words, ethnic groups may be, and often are, racially differentiated, just as races may be ethnically differentiated.

As we will discover, the boundaries of race and ethnicity are not fixed. They are discursively and ideologically produced. Both race and ethnicity and, by extension, racial and ethnic identity are relational and are best conceived as political constructs that have material consequences for those included or excluded from group membership.

**Brief Note on Racial Identity**

In outlining the criteria for racial identity, Charles Mills’ (1998) insight is valuable. This is not to say that Mills provides the only account for the criteria for racial identity, rather he provides a comprehensive and straightforward account (See also Shelby 2005). For Mills, the criteria for specific racial membership are not mutually exclusive and often function in conjunction with one another.

Racial identity is constituted, according to Mills (1998), by bodily appearance, ancestry, experience, culture, and self-identification. Bodily appearance refers to visible, apparent, identifiable markers, like phenotype and skin color. This visible manifestation of race is often connected to ideas of shared ancestry. Globally, appearance and ancestry are not always connected, but in the U.S. the two often seem inseparable. The “one-drop rule” or more formally known as “hypodescent” are illustrative of the point

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14 Tommie Shelby in *We Who Are Dark* (2005) also provides an illuminating account of the criteria for racial identity. Although recapitulates much of what Mills states, he does provide subtle nuances into the metaphysics of racial identity which are beyond the scope of this project.

15 It cannot be assumed that visible manifestations of race are always reliable.
that ancestry connotes racial membership. In reference to ancestry, Mills also distinguishes between an epistemological and ontological form of ancestry. In other words, a self-awareness of one’s “roots” and the public’s awareness of a persons “roots” serve as measures for racial membership. Culture is an additional criterion of racial identity that historically stems from biological differences (See Hernstein and Murray 1994; Karenga 1990; Senghor 1995; Thernstrom and Thernstrom 1997). Cultural differences are explained through racial difference. Many believe that experience is at the core of racial membership, and often deals with the privilege or oppression one experiences being a member of a particular race. Lastly, self-identification is simply how people racially identify, how people see themselves in relation to others. As I will show in chapters 5-8, all of these criteria are important for second-generation Cape Verdean youth identity.

_Sociology of Race and Ethnicity_

For nearly five decades, immigration to the United States has shifted drastically from predominately European to non-European population sources. The increase in non-European immigrants to the U.S. can be attributed to a number of factors. First, reforms in U.S. immigration policy (Djamba 1999; Foner 2001; Pedraza and Rumbaut 1996). Two important U.S. immigration policy reforms include: (1) the Family Reunification and Refugee Law (1965), which prioritized family reunification and abolished quotas; and (2) the Refugee Act (1980), which changed the definition of refugees (Borjas 1990;
The second factor contributing to the increase in non-European immigrants to the U.S. has been the shifts in the global economy since the end of the Cold War and the emergence of independent nation-states in Africa, the Caribbean, and Latin America (Castles and Miller 1998; Kasinitz 1992; Stoller and McConatha 2001). In other words, global socio-economic changes have brought about increases in non-white immigration to the U.S., non-white immigrants seeking refuge from armed conflict, persistent violence, underdevelopment, and environmental degradation (Borjas 1990; Zolberg and Benda 2003). More specifically, and as a result, the black population of the U.S. has grown; immigration accounts for a quarter of the growth in America’s black population (Logan and Deane 2003).

Many authors have argued that with large-scale non-white immigration to the U.S., the racial terrain of the U.S. has been drastically altered, resulting in a more complex and nuanced racial situation (Pedraza and Rumbaut 1996; Omni and Winant 1994; Rodriguez 1992; Rumbaut 1994; Vickerman 1999). These studies often focus on the limitations of binary white/black racial categories and emphasize the importance of culture and politics. Many have shown how post-1965 black immigrants negotiate the contours of race in the U.S. with the creation and maintenance of ‘ethnic enclaves’ (e.g. Little Ghana in New York City). These studies explore the manifestation of localized immigrant settlements and social networks that are not simply racially oriented but more importantly ethnically determined (Duany 1994; Kasinitz and Vickerman 2001; Pedtaza and Rumbaut 1996). In his study on West Indians in the San Francisco Bay area, Hintzen

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16 The Refugee Act of 1980 was to correct a bias that existed in U.S. refugee admissions in favor of aliens from countries with communist, socialist, and leftist forms of government. Previously, these people were excluded from entry into the U.S.
(2001) shows that West Indians want to separate themselves culturally from African Americans and do so through public displays of West Indian identity.

Others have argued that ethnic identity not only helps black immigrants transcend the limits of racialization in identity construction, it also helps combat anti-black racism. Establishing cultural differences serves as a way for black immigrants to distance themselves from the racial stereotypes typically ascribed to African Americans (Gracia and de Greiff 2002; Hintzen 2001; Itzigsohn and Dore-Cabral 2000; Waters 1999). Some scholars have argued that employing the paradigm of ethnicity allows for greater socioeconomic success (Butcher 1994; Waters 1994 and 1999). As a result, Jaynes (2000) suggests the eventual demise of what he calls the “bimodal” black and white model of racial identity. Vickerman (2001) also asserts that the current flow of non-white immigration complicates binary black/white categorization in the U.S., for many black immigrants seek to maintain an ethnic identity in order to distance themselves from the pejorative assumptions that plague African Americans (See also Waters 1994 and 1999). Kastiniz (1992 and 1998) has demonstrated that black immigrants from the English-speaking Caribbean in New York City have moved away from race-based forms of political activity to ethnically situated discourses (See also Lorick-Wilmot 2007). In the end, most scholars argue that the social impact of black immigrants on American society is the creation of more space for the recognition of diversity within black populations.

Scholarship oriented towards the paradigm of ethnicity has created a reaction among several scholars who argue that such studies undermine the importance and social power of race. These scholars have argued for the continued saliency of race for black immigrants in the U.S., while illustrating the limitations of ethnicity (Bashi and

Scholars have examined the importance of class and the black immigrant experience in the U.S. (Duany 1998), while others have underscored not only the significance of race and ethnicity, but gender in their analyses of the black immigrant experience (Conway et al. 2001; Grasmuck and Pessar 1991; Gomez 2000).

Much of the previously cited work focuses on the lives of adults and first-generation immigrants. However, there is a growing body of literature on the children of black immigrants and the issue of identity. The literature suggests differences in identity formation between generations (Fouron and Schiller 2001; Zephir 2001). Rong and Brown (2002) explore black African immigrants attitudes toward racial discrimination within the U.S. educational system. Some scholars have argued that many second-generation black immigrants self-identify as black and share a stronger connection with their African American peers. Waters (1997) and others (Kasinitz and Vickerman 2001) have argued that identifying as African American has negative consequences educational performance and employment opportunities.

As Kamya (1997) has argued, African immigrants have been largely excluded from the migration literature despite increased immigration. Some scholars have
produced useful insight into the African immigrant experience. Arthur (2000) and Stoller (1999) examine the causes and process of African migration, suggesting that they can be attributed to political instability, high rates of unemployment, civil strife, and so on. Gordon (1998) addresses the recent shift in African migration from Europe to the United States. According to Gordon (1998) this shift corresponds with changes in both European and American immigration and refugee policies, the former becoming more severe and the latter less so. Adenji (2000), and Obiakor (2000) both provide useful insight into the experiences of African immigrants’ engagement with U.S. racialization. Obiakor provides us with the personal narratives of several African immigrants and their experiences with racism in the public sphere. However, these studies often concentrate on middle-to-upper class African immigrants and exclude marginal-working class African immigrants. Both Dodoo (1997) and Djamba (1999) provide a look into the differences in socio-economic status between African immigrants, Afro-Caribbeans, and African Americans. Dodoo (1997) maintains that Africans usually earn more than both Afro-Caribbean’s and African Americans.

Literature on Afro-Latino immigrant populations includes studies ranging from Cubans to Dominicans to Puerto Ricans. On the one hand, many of these studies focus on the politics of Latino identity in the United States (Gracia and Greiff 2002; Pedraza 2000; Rodríguez 1992). On the other hand, a great deal of work has come from scholars working on Dominican racial and ethnic identity. These studies range from Duany’s (1994) study on the transnational identity of Dominicans in New York City and Torres-Saillant’s (1999 and 2000) essays on Dominican blackness and community in America. Bailey (2002) has demonstrated that Dominican-American youth are increasingly challenging the assumptions underlying U.S. racial categories by identifying as “Spanish” or “Latino” despite their dark skin. However, he does point out that his informants readily acknowledged their African ancestry and expressed solidarity with African Americans based on shared experience of oppression. Flores (2000) and Gomez (2000) have analyzed Puerto Rican identity and community in the United States, while Urciuoli’s (1996) ethnographic study examines the intersections of language, race, and class.

All of the above-mentioned literature—whether on general black migration and racialization or case-specific immigrant populations—posits a number of theoretical explanations for understanding the black world beyond the nation-state and more specifically second-generation Cape Verdeans. If anything, what this literature demonstrates is that race and ethnicity in the U.S. is situational, complex, and nuanced. In short, the reviewed literature, although largely neglecting Africans, provides the
theoretical tools to understand the meaning of the world in which human actors, in this case, Cape Verdean youth, live. The literature is particularly attuned to pointing out the variable contingencies with which the social reality of everyday life is produced.

*General Assimilation Theories Revisited*

Much of the early literature on immigrants and diasporic communities focused on cultural and socio-economic assimilation. European immigrants at the turn of the century, it was predicted, would eventually reject their native cultures in favor of “becoming American.” Processes of assimilation were to follow one path, that is, the adoption of white middle-class values, an unmarked white identity (Gordon 1964; Park 1950; Thomas and Znaniecki 1994). This path from foreigner to mainstream American was beneficial, providing greater social mobility and socioeconomic success. As a result, to identify ethnically would become a choice and one largely declined by successive generations of European Americans. These generations began to live and marry outside their ethnic groups. Yet, assimilation was not simply the result of personal choice and the passage of time, but specific socio-economic and historical forces (Omi and Winant 1986; Goldberg 1993 and 2002). Cultural and linguistic difference among European immigrants began to wane across generations. In effect they “became white” and insulated themselves from discrimination and segregation (Brodkin 1999; Ignatiev 1996; Jacobson 1999; Ramos-Zayas 2001).

However, the Immigration Act of 1965, which opened the doors for Asian, African, and Latin American immigrants, forced some researchers to rethink the assimilation theories of old. Given that the first major wave of immigration were of
European decent and post-1965 immigrants were more culturally and racially diverse, the old assimilation theories of Park and others were incapable of capturing the experience of post-1965 immigrants (Portes and Rumbaut, 2001). In short, the straight-line assimilation theories based on 20\textsuperscript{th} century European immigration fail to explain the experiences of non-white immigrants.

Refuting ‘straight-line’ theories of assimilation, Portes and Zhou (1993) suggested that post-1965 immigrants and their children would inevitably experience what they call segmented assimilation. Segmented assimilation includes many different ways that a new immigrant or their children may adapt to its host society. In other words, the trajectories of acculturation will vary, different ”segments” of society are available for immigrants to assimilate into. The options are, first, they may assimilate into the white middle class as straight-line assimilation theories suggest. Second, they might follow a less prosperous path and assimilate into the underclass. Finally, they might attain upward mobility in a strongly defined ethnic enclave, an immigrant community that deliberately preserves the community’s values in order to maximize material, and I might add psychological, resources. The preservation of ethnicity by immigrant communities is bifurcated. According to Portes (1995), there exists both linear ethnicity and reactive ethnicity. Linear ethnicity is based on the continuation of cultural practices from the old country (e.g. financial institutions, religious institutions, etc), while reactive ethnicity is based on the experiences of discrimination and oppression. Gans (1992) on the other hand predicted a direct reversal in regards to social mobility for second-generation immigrants, especially for non-white poor immigrants. Gans (1992) prefaced his ideas on “second generation decline” on the idea that second-generation immigrants would refuse low-
paying and low-level employment and, as result, would become pessimistic about employment and educational opportunities. In other words, second-generation decline is preaced on a lack of opportunities and, as a result, a disinterest in assimilation.

As we will come to see, second-generation Cape Verdean youth identity is not so much about assimilation, especially in the traditional linear sense, but rather processes of racialization and racial formation. Assimilation theories, new and old, focus on economic, cultural, and political conditions that help shape and determine how immigrants and other minority groups are incorporated (or not) into mainstream America. This often quantitative focus, while useful at times, works at the expense of answering other pertinent questions, questions for example about racial and ethnic identity negotiation and its intersections with popular culture. More specifically, while segmented assimilation research seldom considers race and the impact racism has on the lives of immigrants, it does not pay attention to processes of racialization that immigrants and their children experience. Assimilation theory in its various forms fails to illustrate the multiple ways racial subjects are created. It fails to consider how race informs encounters with social institutions and identity formation. Assimilation models fail to explain, for our purposes, how Cape Verdean youth think and feel their identities into palpable everyday existence.

_Cultural Studies on Race and Identity_

Despite the important insights of the above-mentioned literature, the study of race and ethnicity, particularly among black diasporic populations, must be approached from
an interdisciplinary perspective. The necessity of working across fields of study is necessary because of the new ways in which race and ethnicity are defined and performed in a globalizing world and the new ways in which racism, ethnocentrism, and xenophobia are experienced. As a result, new areas of scholarship have emerged, and this new literature is highly suggestive and illustrative of the future orientation of racial and ethnic studies. The new approaches, which come completely from the field of cultural studies, investigate the connections and disconnections between race, ethnicity, cyberspace, sport, and musical forms such as hip-hop and jazz.

Cultural studies is a very complex set of perspectives, currents, and traditions which are not easily defined. As Stuart Hall makes clear:

Cultural Studies has multiple discourses; it has a number of different histories. It is a whole set of formations; it has its own different conjunctures and moments in the past. It included many different kinds of work…It always was a set of unstable formations…It had many trajectories; many people had and have different theoretical positions, all of them in contention (as quoted in Storey 1996:1-2).

In general, cultural studies is interested in the relationship between culture and power (Grossberg, Nelson, and Treichler 1992). Further, it interrogates how meanings and forms are socially constructed in all human spheres, analyzing culture as an aspect of all society and human life. But it is also concerned with activities and institutions that in our modern society are marked as ‘cultural’, including the arts as well as popular culture and the practices of everyday life. “Culture” in cultural studies is defined politically and rooted in the everyday, mundane, and ordinary (Willis 1979). This is where cultural studies intersects with politics. In other words, culture is a contested terrain, a key location for the production and reproduction of the social relations of the everyday.
Ruminating on the importance of understanding popular culture, Hall writes that popular culture is:

an arena of consent and resistance. It is partly where hegemony arises, and where it is secured. It is not a sphere where socialism, a socialist culture…might be simply ‘expressed.’ But it is one of the places where socialism might be constituted. That is why ‘popular culture’ matters (as quoted in Storey 1996: 3-4).

In Hall’s opinion, culture is ideological, where ideological struggles are won or lost, where meanings are struggled over and where subordinate groups resist meanings opposed by dominant groups. Thus, the field of culture is where meanings of race, racial belonging, racial superiority, and ethnicity are constructed, deconstructed, and circulated.

Furthermore, cultural studies is fundamentally critical. It shows how power and resistance interplay in culture, striving to expose all illegitimate forms of domination. Critique in the service of emancipation has crucial tasks to understand “the other” and to criticize “the self.” Unlike sociology, issues of race and ethnicity have not always been part of cultural studies. The publication of The Empire Strikes Back (1982) marked a turning point in cultural studies, for it is when race and racial matters became part of the discourses in the field. As the CCCS states:

There are many reasons why issues raised by the study of ‘races’ and racism should be central to the concerns of cultural studies. Yet racist ideologies and racial conflicts have been ignored, both in historical writing and in accounts of the present. If nothing else, this book should be [seen]…as a corrective to the narrowness of the English left…(1982: 7)

This turn to race and racial matters became known as Black British cultural studies, which Manthia Diawara states, took “as its main subject the elaboration of black Britishness over and against ethnic absolutism in Britain, the construction of hegemonic blackness by black Americans, and other manifestations of diasporan aesthetics (1993:
Meanwhile, the concepts of identity, blackness, diaspora, hybridity, essentialism, and representation gained new currency (Baker et al. 1996; Diawara 1991; Hall 1996b; Gray 2004; Mercer 1994). Work by British and American scholars reflected this transitional moment. Of the cultural studies research that followed, race and ethnicity became central to textual accounts of popular music and film (Diawara 1996; Guerrero 1993; Neal 1998 and 2002; Xeng 2002), interrogations of nation and identity (Hall 1996b; Hall and Du Gay 1996), subcultural analyses (Jones 1988), and ethnographic accounts (Clay 2003; Forman 2001; Jackson Jr. 2005; Skelton and Valentine 1998).

In addition to the concepts mentioned above, both identity and subjectivity are keywords in cultural studies. How we are produced as subjects, how we come to be the kinds of people we are, and how we identify with descriptions of ourselves, especially as racialized beings are of central concerns. According to Hall, Gilroy, and others, identities are not things which exist; they have no essential or universal qualities. They are, instead, social (discursive) constructions. Identities, whether racial, ethnic, or gendered, are constituted, made rather than found, by representations and signifying practices. For example, the idea of racialization has been deployed to illustrate the argument that race is a social construction, and not rooted in biology or essentializing categories of culture. Race, as it is constituted, does not exist outside of representations but is formed in and by these processes of social and political power struggles. As a result of struggle and conflict, a new form of racial identity arises, a hybrid form; “pure” forms become questionable. Identities suddenly become problems to be examined contingently, rather than fixed entities to be protected. This shift marked, as Hall writes, “the end of the innocent notion of the essential subject (Hall 1998: 32).”
Placed in this context, there is no unitary subject identical across time, for “identities are...constituted within, not outside representation” (Hall and Du Gay 1996: 4). Since representation and signifying practices change over and through time, so too do identities. As far as Hall and others are concerned, identity, especially racial and ethnic identity, is to be understood not as a hidden essence to be uncovered, but as an active process of representation. Identity has no essence. In turn, race should not be seen as referring to some genetic or cultural essence, but as a floating signifier, whose meaning changes over time. In the end, anti-essentialism does not mean that we cannot speak of truth or of a black identity. Rather, it points to their being productions of culture in specific times and places.

For the purposes of this study the literature on blackness is extremely salient. Blackness in its most uncomplicated form is phenotypically constructed, an ascribed racial identity indicative of African geographical origin. Outside of phenotypical markers, blackness has and is determined by the common experiences slavery, racial terror, and socio-political marginalization based on internationally held racist ideologies of African and black inferiority. Beyond phenotype, blackness assumes a shared notion of history, consciousness of origins, and/or commonality of identification on the part of those presumed, on racial grounds, to be part of the black diaspora, the international community of black people.

Taking their cue from Fanon (1967) and poststructuralist thought, some within cultural studies, namely Hall (1996 a b), Gilroy (1993), and Mercer (1994), argue that prominent theories of blackness and black identity rely on forms of racial and cultural essentialism that collude with Eurocentric understandings of race, culture, and
nationalism. They claim that aspirations to construct a genuine, innate, and secure black identity results in an “ethnic absolutism” that reifies the very categories of racial oppression, asserting that these notions valorize a black subject but exclude many who identify as black but do not fit the essentialist criteria. For their part, they offer alternatives to understanding blackness and the black diaspora as an intellectual project.

For Hall, Gilroy, Mercer, and others blackness resides in several places at the same time. Mercer (1994) has developed a highly nuanced and stylized understanding of blackness and the black diaspora. Since diaspora connotes movement, diasporic identities are made in transit and by extension through entanglement with other cultures. For Mercer (1994) diaspora becomes an adjective. He writes of “diaspora perspective” and “diaspora identity” so as to suggest that black people living in displacement develop a particular ontology and culture by the process of hybridization.

Mercer (1994) is critical of ideas of essentializing forms of blackness and celebrates the creative mixing of tradition and culture, as well as the appropriation of dominant discourses for rebellious aesthetic and political ends. According to Mercer, there is no unified black community, blackness is an open signifier, complicated, as others have also shown, by ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and class. In other words, to speak of blackness today is to speak of a hybridized identity. According to Hall (1998:30) “it is to the diversity, not the homogeneity, of black experience that we must now give our undivided creative attention…we [read black] are always different, negotiating different kinds of difference—of gender, of sexuality, of class.” This, according to Hall reflects “the end of the innocent notion of an essential black subject” (32).
One of the residual effects of the essentialized black subject is the “burden of representation.” Despite the acknowledged heterogeneity of the black subject, black people within the margins of “institutional spaces of cultural production…are burdened with the impossible task of speaking as “representatives”…they are widely expected to speak for the marginalized communities from which they come” (Mercer 1994: 235). Further, their part in the political economy of racial representation “stands in for the whole…[and] serves to legitimate, and reproduce, the invisibility, and the lack of access to public discourse, of the whole community” (Mercer 1994: 240). The arrival of blacks in the public sphere puts undue pressure on the black subject to act in a specific way, thus hiding the complexities of the subjects. However, many cultural producers challenge “the essential black subject,” and continue with the project of cultural entanglement and hybridization (Gray 2005; Rose 1994; Quinn 2000).

Despite articulations and powerful analyses about blackness, identity as understood by cultural studies practitioners can be seen as limited and weak. Hall uses identity:

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\text{to refer to the meeting point, the point of suture, between on the one hand the discourses and practices which attempt to “interpellate,” speak to us or hail us into place as the social subjects of particular discourses, and on the other hand, the processes which produce subjectivities, which construct us as subjects which can be “spoken” (Hall and Du Gay 1996: 5-6).}
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Identity seems to be the passive result of certain historical conjunctures. Gilroy supports this claim by stating “identity provides a way of understanding the interplay between our subjective experience of the world and the cultural and historical settings in which that fragile subjectivity is formed” (Gilroy 1997: 301). Here, again, identity is formed by forces outside one’s control. However, he does go on to say, in a play on a formulation
by Karl Marx, that people “make their own identities but not in circumstances of their own choosing and from resources they inherit will always be incomplete” (Gilroy 1997: 341). Some sort of agency is implied, but it is limited.

Cultural studies suggests that globalization and diversity allows individuals “some space in which to reassert a measure of choice and control over everyday life and to ‘play’ with its expressive dimensions” (Hall 1988: 28). The free play of identity construction makes difficult the location of a standpoint, or generally speaking a position from where politics can be waged. To this end, Gilroy represents a middle ground between the ontological essentialism of black cultural nationalism and the anti-essentialism of blackness as hybridity. In his elaboration of what he refers to as an “anti-anti-essentialist” perspective, he addresses the question of unity and commonality of the diaspora (Gilroy 1993: 99). Gilroy favors the use of the “Black Atlantic” as an analytical category over black diaspora. Rather than focus on racial and cultural essences, he focuses on similar and shared experiences of racial oppression, subordination, and struggle; historical roots become important. Blackness is a cultural matrix, a complicated series of connections and appropriations which include, but are not limited to, what he calls the “memory of slavery” (Gilroy 1993: 40).

However, historical roots do not, according to Gilroy, trump the movement of people and ideas across boundaries. “Routes” take precedent over “roots.” Gilroy constantly argues for a movement between the consideration of “roots” and “routes,” the social experience of being black in a white-dominated world and the travels and migrations that connect black people. He is particularly interested in how forms of black culture, especially music, encode epistemologies and aesthetics which run counter to the
suppositions of modernity, in turn providing political struggles with the raw materials to transcend the boundaries of nation. Through a meticulous analysis of the movement and innovation of black popular culture, Gilroy is able to show “the reproduction of cultural traditions not in the unproblematic transmission of a fixed essence through time but in the breaks and interruptions which suggest that the invocation of tradition may itself be a distinct, though covert, response to the destabilizing flux of the post-contemporary world” (Gilroy 1993: 101). For Gilroy black subjectivity is both produced and producing, an identity which people can and do create.

With this in mind, notions of solidarity, Gilroy argues, cannot be based on sameness. In the modern world, “connectedness and difference become bases on which social action can be produced” (Gilroy 1996: 229). But he warns against liberal notions of separate but equal or multicultural approaches. Gilroy writes:

A political understanding of identity…emphatically not a reified identity politics-points to other more radical possibilities in which we can begin to imagine ways for reconciling the particular and the general. We can build upon the contributions of cultural studies to dispose of the idea that identity is an absolute and to find the courage necessary to argue that identity formation…is a chaotic process that can have no end. In this way, we may be able make cultural identity a premise of political action rather than a substitute for it (Gilroy 1996: 238 emphasis added).

Further, “the political language of brotherhood and sisterhood can be used in ways that accentuate an image of community composed of those with whom we disagree. From this perspective, the differences we still experience, in spite of white supremacy’s centripetal effects, might be seen as a precious and potentially productive resource” (Gilroy 1998: 310).
Similarly, Hall approves of those who have reached “for a new conception of ethnicity as a kind of counter to old discourses of nationalism or national identity” (Hall 1996: 118). “New ethnicities” break from fixed and essential forms of ethnic identity, simultaneously creating new space for identity and “insist on difference–on the fact that every identity is placed, positioned, in a culture, a language, a history” (Hall 1996 118-9). More importantly, these new ethnicities are not necessarily defined by exclusion, for they themselves are hybrid.

While many in cultural studies have been assailed for their anti-essentialism, and ideas of free-floating racial signifiers, they, like many traditional sociologists argue that while race is a social construct it is also a social fact whose effects are real. They highlight, as does racial formations theory (Omi and Winant 1994), that black identities are formed and transformed in relation to other identity constructs. Racial ideologies differentiate between people on the basis of phenotype and ascribe to them particular, often negative, biological and cultural qualities. While these ideologies vary over time and place, they resonate with previous meanings and transcend national and regional boundaries. This does not mean that blackness is derived from dominant racial constructions alone, but that they employ them in an effort to imagine a distinct sense of peoplehood.

According to Dent (1998), Gray (2004 and 2005) and others, black popular culture reminds us that racial identities, specifically blackness, are not given in nature but are constructed, affirmed, denied, and ascribed. The creation of these identities occur under local conditions (Forman 2001) yet take on hybrid and diasporic dimensions when people share symbols of global blackness. Further, blackness should not be viewed
simply as the creation of a shared sense of collective identity that transcends boundaries and time, but instead analyzed for the political meanings and effects related to local and transnational struggles.

*Performing Race/Race as Performative*

Since racial identities are neither biologically determined nor socially stable they rely on an ongoing process of “performance.” Racial identity is achieved or not achieved based on one’s actions and how others interpret them. According to this insight, race is something one does, an act, or more precisely, a sequence of acts that accomplish a racial identity. This raises the question of racial authenticity which is achieved through performances and cultural practices.

As cultural studies became popular in the United States, two strains, which have dealt considerably with race and racial identity, developed: oppression studies and performance studies (Diawara 1993). On the one hand, oppression studies is concerned with the various modes of oppression\(^\text{17}\) confronted by women, gays, lesbians, and racial and ethnic minorities. To this end, oppression studies have been keen to interrogate the subjugation of black men, black women, and black youth (See Hill Collins 2004 and 2005; hooks 2003; Neal 2005). According to Diawara, “historically [it has] done much to uncover and decipher the exclusion of blacks from the inventions, discourses, and emancipatory effects of modernity” (1993: 25). Performative studies, on the other hand, focuses a considerable amount of attention on the black public sphere. More specifically,

\(^{17}\) Oppression is overdetermined. Thus, when we discuss oppression we must be sure to highlight the interlocking character of various modes of oppression such as classism, racism, ageism, heterosexism, and so on.
it focuses on cultural practices and texts such as jazz, cinema, and hip-hop (See Boyd 1997; Forman 2002; Gray 2004 and 2005; Guerrero 1993; Hunt 2004; Johnson 2003; Rose 1994). In other words, performative studies looks at “the ways in which black people, through communicative action, created and continue to create themselves within the American experience” (Diawara 1993: 25). Some scholars of performance studies, taking their cue from Butler (1993)and distinguish between performance and performativity, although at times the two terms seem to slide into one another. Performance is bodily expression. Performativity on the other hand is created through discourse(s). Butler argues that gender works as performative, constituting the very act it performs. Performativity presupposes no agency in the voluturistic sense, no pre-discursive identity. For example, choices of clothes and musical taste are in some sense predetermined by society. As she states, “performativity must be understood not as a singular “act,” but, rather as the reiterative and citational practice by which discourse produces the effects that it names” (Butler 1993: 2). Butler is clear that resistance and subversion is possible: however it takes place within the existing discourse (Butler 1999).

Butler’s insight is valuable in that she argues that racialization may be incorporated into what constitutes the performative (Butler 1993). The distinction between performance and performativity is important for it shows that performativity is more than a Goffman-like performance. In other words, the performative of an action lies in the fact that the individual submerges himself in the subject of the activity. The social actor is not merely acting out an image, but incorporating himself into the image.

How is race performed? Race is performed through phenotype, skin color, and a range of cultural signifiers such as music, language, and clothing (See Clay 2003;
Dimitriadis 2001; Forman 2001). These qualities act together and communicate a racial and ethnic identity. While racial identity is considered to be unstable, as are other identities (namely gender and class), certain racial performances have become normative, produced out of the discourse that it names.

Similar to gender, race is culturally and socially configured, while falsely naturalized through reification, in order to uphold forms of cultural hegemony. For example, racial identity through the use of hip-hop culture serves to reify certain reductive ideas and ways of being black, that is, ways of presenting one’s self as black given a specific audience. Further, and more importantly, the discourse of hip-hop signals for race, in this case blackness, to be performed in a certain way. What is required for this shared sense of blackness is a continual repetition of blackness in the everyday. As Queeley (2005) posits, “There is a clear connection among the appropriation of hip-hop culture, the representations of blackness that have come to dominate the visual landscape of hip-hop, and the unprecedented rates of incarceration that we are witnessing” (189). As she suggests, the images of gang life, drug dealing, and other criminal activity in hip-hop reinforce black criminality and by extension justify the growing rate of incarceration. Queley and others are concerned about the hegemonic control of blackness. In continuation, Queeley states “In them [music videos], first generation urban artists, regardless of their racial identities, perform blackness. This racialized performance illustrates the continuity of narratives of black people and, in particular, reveals that black male/female (hetero)sexuality remains a central vehicle through which white supremacist discourse is reinscribed” (Queely 2005: 192).
Despite the helpfulness of theories of performance in understanding the social construction of race, the visibility of the marked body cannot be theorized in the same way, despite the intents of the social actors. In other words, the mark that accompanies blackness is not reversible. As Peter Wolfe has stated, “race is not a negotiable condition but a destiny, one whose outward sign is the body” (Wolfe 2002: 52). All the same, the performance of race and race as performative shows that race and racial identity is constructed through discourse and ideology, rather than natural, that the significance of the body is cultural and social. In other words, performance studies illustrates that identity is not natural, there is no racial identity that is not social; processes of racialization are tied to the performance of race. It is with the notion that race is performative that I turn to the literature on racialization.

*Why Racialization?*

Racialization has become one of the central concepts in the study of race, ethnicity, and racism. There has been a proliferation of texts that use this notion in quite diverse ways. It is used broadly to refer to ways of thinking about race, as well as to institutional processes that give expression to forms of racial and ethnic categorization. The concept refers both to cultural or political processes or situations where race is invoked as an explanation, as well as to specific ideological practices in which race is deployed. In his book *The Racial State*, David Theo Goldberg feels that racialization has become theoretically weak and simultaneously cliché. As Murji and Solomos state that, “It is not always clear what the race in racialization refers to – a specific and narrow discourse of biologically distinctive races, a process of cultural differentiation, or a code
in which the idea or language of race is not manifest at all” (Murji and Solomos 2005: 4).

Racialization must be distinguished from race as a mere concept (Allen 1994 and 1997). Racialization is the process or activation of that concept in the production of racial subjects. For example, Wolfe (2002) shows that race was secondary to slavery and that it was only after Emancipation that race became a central social force. The relationship between blackness and slavery was disrupted and as a result “a new and more inclusive oppressed category emerges, one that, being defined by race, does not admit the awkward exceptions and contradictions manumission had entailed for the peculiar institution of slavery. Emancipation, in short, cancelled out the exemption–you can be an ex-slave but you can’t be ex-Black” (Wolfe 2001: 879-80).

For Fanon (1967), racialization was the process by which difference among Africans and black people was conflated under the label Negro. Colonialism and white supremacy were responsible for this process. Similarly, racialization, according to Miles (1982), is a “social process in which human subjects articulate and reproduce the ideology of racism and engage in the practice of racial discrimination, but always in a context that they themselves have not determined” (Miles 1982: 177).” According to Omi and Winant (1994) racialization is a process of racial formation, that is, a “sociohistorical process by which racial categories are created, inhabited, transformed, and destroyed” (1994: 55).

In Omi and Winant’s formulation, racialization works solely at the structural level, and as Goldberg has cogently pointed out, it neglects the subjective level. Thus, Goldberg proposes that we take into account the “subjective” component of racialization.
Two vectors then constitute racialization. It is sub-divided into race creation and race constitution. Race creation emerges out of the ways in which subjects express themselves, that is, how they use, or put to work discourse. Race constitution is what makes one “a racial member, what inscribes one racially in society and in the law and identifiably gives substance to one’s social being” (Goldberg 1993: 83). To this end, racial identity is structural and subjective.

Racialization foregrounds the external ascriptions for the purpose of domination (Miles 1989). One is made racial. Echoing ideas that race is performative, racialization is largely deterministic, enforced from some other place and lacks possibility. Processes of racialization are vaguely similar to Foucault’s concept of bio-power. For Foucault, bio-power is a technology of power, a means to control and subjugate populations. Biopower is literally having power over other bodies, “an explosion of numerous and diverse techniques for achieving the subjugations of bodies and the control of populations” (Foucault 1978: 140). However, racialization does not foreclose agency, as Reeves (1983) highlights, processes of racialization may be a way to mobilize people. Thus, in order to create a non-racial world, race must first be recognized. Racialization calls to the forefront anti-racialization.

In understanding processes of racialization we can see why and how race has retained its ability to structure the lives and experience of people. Racialization is important because it determines life chances, access, and privilege. More specifically, as sociologist Tom Shapiro points out, there is a cost to being black. Once a group, a people, or an individual is racialized they act and exist within a set of assumptions and formulations.
In summary, racialization refers to the ways in which ideological practices give race social significance as well as to the cultural and political ways that race is invoked to give meaning to social phenomenon. Simply put, racialization is used to refer to processes, phenomena, events, moments, and social situations that are race-inflected. It is a way to understand how and why race is constructed, used, and maintained.

In the end, theoretical contributions on and about race and racial identity from cultural studies, sociology, and other disciplines should be paired more aggressively with the ethnographic method. Ethnographies of identity formation allow us to focus on the ways identities are constructed and mobilized. This eliminates categorizing people into preconceived notions about how they should act and identify. This is a critical step in the elaboration of politics that take seriously African peoples, in this case second-generation Cape Verdean youths, own conceptualization of their life-world. It provides one of the only foundations upon which we can construct politics that combat the racial polity and the specifics of racial oppression. The literature cited in this chapter provides the conceptual framework necessary to map the ways in which second-generation Cape Verdean youth in the Greater Boston area negotiate their identity as Cape Verdean and black. After discussing the projects methodology, I will map how second-generation Cape Verdean youth from the Greater Boston area construct and negotiate their identities.
CHAPTER FOUR

IN THE FIELD: PARTICIPATING, OBSERVING, AND WRITING AN ETHNOGRAPHY

The framework of qualitative methodology was used in this study. This project involved ethnographic fieldwork that included formal and informal interviews, textual analysis, and, most importantly, participant-observation. While no single methodology is superior, this project borrowed most from critical ethnography, that is, a perspective through which the researcher can frame questions and promote social action (Hammersley 1992; Madison 2005).18

This chapter outlines my methodological choice to use qualitative methods. This is followed by a description of the various sites of my fieldwork. It then moves on to a description of the multiple methods I employed in mapping second-generation Cape Verdean youth identity; briefly describing interview instrumentation, textual observation, and participant-observation. This chapter ends with a discussion of my experiences in the field and an outline of the limitations of my ethnographic experience.

Methodology

At the core of all qualitative research is the task of trying to understand the world from the point of view of those who live in it. The goal of qualitative research is to grasp the “meaning” of social phenomena and reveal the subjective beliefs of those being studied. To this end, this study sought, not only to observe and describe, but also offer a

“thick description” of how second-generation Cape Verdean youth, as actors, understand and ascribe meaning to their actions (Geertz 1973). This project is grounded in the analytical approaches of constructivism and critical theory as outlined by Lincoln and Guba (2000), Kincheloe and McLaren (2000), Madison (2005) and others.

Constructivism, with its roots in symbolic interactionism understands that all knowledge is a social construction. Constructivism confers the idea that the knowledge that emerges from interviews with research participants is partly created, and not discovered by the researcher. In short, knowledge and interpretation in a constructivist research paradigm is a collective process. One glaring weakness of constructivist methodologies is that they often downplay power relations. Constructivists assume that there are many possible interpretations of the same data, that is, everyone’s testimony is accorded equal status and no attempt is made either to explain or inform. The researcher in this case is merely an impartial reporter enabling informants to express their own definition of the situation. As such, constructivists have little to say about the material world and are reluctant to address processes, like racialization, by which different forms of consciousness and being are socially and historically constructed. So as not to abandon the idea that some actions are quite real in their consequences, I attempt to cast the information gleaned from my informants and through participant-observation and textual analysis in a wider framework. In doing so, I utilize the methodological insights of critical social theory (Guba and Lincoln 1994; Kincheloe and McLaren 2000; Madison 2005).

Critical social theory does not allow researchers to simply accept the explicit beliefs of the people being studied at face value. Rather critical social theory provides
the tools to examine, in the context of a broader structural and historical analysis, the subjective, unstated beliefs of people being studied. Critical social theory provides a framework for checking the accounts of those being studied and also allows for a closer look at the processes that shaped their views and assesses the extent to which they are distorted by hegemony and ideology (Comaroff 1992). In other words, critical social theory enhances constructivist methodologies by turning the ‘everyday’ and ‘common-sense’ assumptions from superficial distillations into deeper understandings about the social world, which in turn can contribute to the development of critical consciousness amongst oppressed groups. Despite the inherent difficulties of representation within qualitative research (Denzin and Lincoln 1994), simply presenting the participants’ voices is not adequate. As Sandra Harding has observed, “there are good reasons to want to record the voices of all kinds of subjects…to recommend that researchers try to set aside their own assumptions when approaching a research situation…Yet to restrict research in such ways would reduce the researcher to a kind of (inevitably inaccurate) transcription machine” (Harding 2004: 72). Thus, “The key issue is not to capture the informant’s voice, but to elucidate the experience that is implicated by the subjects in the context of their activities as they perform them, and as they are understood by the [researcher]” (Altheide and Johnson 1994: 491 in Denzin and Lincoln). In other words, critical ethnography must not only observe and transcribe human actions, but also unravel the meanings that social actors assign to their actions (Schutz 1967).

At first glance, the two perspectives might be thought to be at odds with one another. However, a closer look reveals that both critical and constructivist methodologies may be employed together in fruitful ways. Carspecken (1996), for
instance, shows or illustrates/demonstrates that both hermeneutic meaning reconstructions and objectivizing studies of social systems, events, and phenomena, can be employed simultaneously within a critical research project. In other words, a constructivist approach is utilized in order to collect and reconstruct implicit social and cultural themes and structures that members commonly employ to interpret and judge the world, and construct their social realities, while a critical approach is employed in order to understand how social structures help shape and constrain identity and culture. In distinguishing these two basic methodological perspectives (See also Guba and Lincoln 2004), Carspecken (1996) developed a five-stage scheme for conducting critical qualitative research. The five-stage scheme is divided into two subsets, where stages 1-3 employ constructivist techniques and stages 4-5 emphasize the critical stance in one’s search for system phenomena. In the first stage, the researcher observes interactions within the social site of choice. Here the researcher forms a collection of monological data. In the second stage, the researcher begins to analyze the primary data looking for patterns, relations, roles, meanings, and intersubjective structures. The purpose of this stage is to generate implicit cultural themes that, as such, are not readily apparent. In stage three, dialogical data is generated via interviewing techniques. At this point, the researcher converses with the subjects under study. After generating both monological and dialogical data and a preliminary reconstructive analysis, the researcher in stage four attempts to discover system relations. In other words, the research examines the relationship between the social site of interest and other specific social sites bearing some relation to it. Finally, in stage five, the researcher seeks to explain the findings in stages one through four via inference to the broadest system features (Carspecken 1996).
Further, as Murphy and Kraidy argue, “Ethnographic inquiry, with its base in local
practices and the performative features of culture, offers the material to bridge the gap
between meaning and structure without losing sight of the complexity, context, and
inherent power imbalances of cultural consumption” (Murphy and Kraidy 2003: 15). Per
Murphy and Kraidy’s insight, while looking locally at local diasporic manifestations of
Cape Verdean identity, I tried never to lose sight of global structural concerns, namely
global racial formations and processes of racialization.

Critical ethnography allows one to uncover and assess common subjective
experiences, especially around racial identity, and the significance of the activities
discovered with respect to the social system at large. It has also been my intention to
remain aware that synthesizing the subjective testimony of informants within a broader
historical and structural analysis has the potential to slide either into a particularistic and
superficial account of the views of respondents or a deductive approach in which a pre-
existing theory is simply legitimated by the selective and biased use of qualitative data. I
have adhered to the framework of critical ethnography. Although challenging, I pursued a
mixture of observation and theoretical work, self-reflexively managing the research
project, and, as a result, always remaining skeptical of observations and critiques
(Kincheloe and McLaren 2000). In other words, I was attentive to my own processes as a
researcher as instrument” and always questioned whose reality is being validated, and
whose interest is being served (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995; Wolcott 1995).
Therefore, I acknowledged that all information regarding second-generation Cape
Verdean youth identity is partial and partisan, but plausible based on the reality that race
persists in the U.S.
A Brief Note on the Politics of Research

I undertook this project with an aim to provide a better understanding of processes of racialization and by extension the forms of oppression and domination that are based, loosely and/or directly, on racial distinction. In other words, as I have already alluded to, albeit briefly in the introductory chapter, my overall aim in this project is to contribute to the theoretical grounding and development of anti-racist movements and alliances locally and globally. As a concerned racial outsider, privy and familiar to the devastating effects of anti-black racism on the lives of African-American friends and associates, I could not help but recognize the similar effects it had on others racialized as “black.” From this my perspective is informed not only by the tools and techniques taught to me, formally and informally, within the confines of the academy, but also from the emotions, primarily rage and frustration, that have accumulated while bearing witness to the increased stratification of wealth, resources, and power locally and globally. I offer no apology for this perspective, for this dissertation is provided not only to map Cape Verdean youth identity in the 21st century, but also to illustrate how race still matters in the everyday lives of those marked as black and other in a world that is supposedly post-racial. To parrot the young Karl Marx, the point of intellectual practices, like this one, are not only to interpret the social world, but also to help to change the world.

Selecting the Site(s) and Identifying Participants
Although I’ve been engaged with the Cape Verden community in the Greater Boston area for the better part of a decade, formal interest in mapping Cape Verden identity and by extension processes of racialization commenced in the winter of 2007. As part of my fieldwork preparation, I used personal contacts from the past and present, in order to locate potential informants. In doing so, I gauged participant interest and research feasibility. After satisfactorily gaining approval from the Northeastern University Institutional Review Board (IRB), fieldwork in the Greater Boston area started in May 2007 and ended in May 2008 (See Appendix A).

My first criterion in selecting participants/informants was important to this research. In order to examine identity construction of second-generation Cape Verden youth, I needed, to identify and locate second-generation Cape Verden youth. Thus, all participants had to identify as Cape Verden or Cape Verden American. They also had to be between the ages of 18-25 years of age from the Greater Boston area. This proved difficult, for many willing participants were not of the second generation – typically they were either of the first or third generation. In fact, the dearth of “legitimate” second-generation Cape Verdeans, which undoubtedly was impacted by the time limitations that framed the start and completion of this project, than the actual existence of second-generation Cape Verden youth in the chosen area, lead me to rethink generational definitions and criteria for this project. Consequently, the term “second generation” refers both to the American-born youth of Cape Verden parents, as well as to Cape Verden-born youth who came to the United States prior to age eight. The literature on immigrant youth who straddle this line are often referred to as the 1.5 generation, a label I find cumbersome. Further, I include this group because they have spent the majority of
their young existence in the U.S. and are culturally similar, based on previous contact, interpretation, and initial fieldwork preparation to American-born Cape Verdean youth. Second, it was important to identify public Cape Verdean-orientated cultural events. In my search, I identified several annual, bi-annual, and weekly cultural events that were directed toward Cape Verdeans in general, and Cape Verdean youth more specifically. These events included: the annual Independence Day festivals of the cities of Brockton, New Bedford, and Providence; college and university student gatherings and celebrations; and local hip-hop gatherings and shows. While some events were more inclusive of all types of people and backgrounds, they all shared a common relationship with Cape Verdean people in diaspora.

Of my 16 informants, six were female and 10 male. The informants’ educational experiences were as follows: one dropped out of high school, three graduated from high school, two earned baccalaureate degrees, and 10 were in the process of pursuing a post-secondary education. Although, the categories of socioeconomic class can be simplistic, the majority of informants’ described their class position as working-class poor. Only three of the 16 informants were born in the archipelago. Out of the 12 with some college or a college degree, 10 were members of Cape Verdean student groups as well as student groups dedicated to “black” social issues.

I chose to conduct my fieldwork in the Greater Boston area. This decision was based on my embeddedness in and familiarity with the Cape Verdean community. Over the years I have created and sustained relationships with teachers, administrators, community center directors, community leaders and others. Further, the area is home to a large and established Cape Verdean diasporic community. My involved a number of
sites. I took the Census Bureaus definition of the Greater Boston area, which created a wider functioning metropolitan area within which to work. More importantly, this expansive definition included areas with large numbers of Cape Verdean people, which the definition of Boston proper would have excluded. The Census Bureaus definition of Greater Boston is home to nearly 7.5 million people and includes metro-Boston and other surrounding urban areas such as Brockton, Cambridge, Fall River, New Bedford, Providence Rhode Island, and Pawtucket, Rhode Island.\(^{19}\) Given the size of the Cape Verdean population in this area, the Greater Boston area is a fascinating site for investigating how local understandings and performances of race and racial identities articulate with larger processes of racialization.

**Methods and Material\(^{20}\)**

I explore identity formation and processes of racialization through a number of methods. This study involved ethnographic fieldwork that included formal in-depth interviews, textual analysis and, most importantly, participant-observation. In order to maximize the richness of information, the sampling strategy I utilized was purposeful and not random. More specifically, I utilized homogeneous and snowball sampling techniques. Homogeneous purposeful sampling was useful due to my desire for people from a specific geographical location and age-grade. I selected to start with a personal contact, several participants from the Cape Verdean community of the Greater Boston area and then asked them to provide other possible participants. Some participants I met


\(^{20}\) The term material will be used in place of data for it is more inclusive and represents all the “stuff” of research.
by chance, while others were referred to me. Occasionally someone would say that “so-and-so” is a good person to talk with, “they’re Cape Verdean and like hip-hop.” All 16 informants were culled from the Greater Boston area, although most were specifically from Brockton, New Bedford, and Providence.

**Interview Instrumentation**

Informal conversational interviews and standardized open-ended interviews were used. I also conducted one focus group consisting of seven people. My choosing of the informal conversational interview is based on its strengths: interviews are built on and emerge from observation; the interview can be matched to individuals and circumstances. However, I am aware that informal conversation is not systematic and comprehensive, resulting in difficulties with data organization and analysis. Thus, pairing informal conversation with standardized open-ended interviews increased comparability and evaluation of responses (See Appendix B). The use of standardized wording of questions may constrain and limit the naturalness of answers, but is counter balanced by informal conversation. Although tempting, for data analysis is made simpler, I choose to avoid closed, fixed-response interviews, because it is often impersonal, mechanistic, often constraining and distorting what respondents feel or have experienced. In short, fixed-response interviews would not allow me to get to the texture of life, the dimensions, themes, images and words people use among themselves to describe their feelings, thoughts, and experiences. Unlike traditional ethnography, critical ethnography requires a much more focused approach to interviewing, in which questions are asked about specific issues derived from the broader social critique. Throughout the data collection process a dialectical approach was adopted, allowing me to oscillate between views of the
informant and the insight culled from historical and structural analysis. This approach echoes Bourdieu’s (1992) arguments for the development of a reflexive sociology and soft approach to interviewing.

Interviews typically commenced with questions about non-threatening contemporary topics (e.g. Who is your favorite musical artist?). I then moved to soliciting opinions and probing for interpretations of experience. Since demographic questions can be boring, I strategically dispersed them throughout the interview process. To this end, I did not begin the interview process with a list of demographic questions; instead, as mentioned above, I started with questions that would induce thought and opinion, questions that potentially could establish rapport. Also, rather than setting the stage for short, routine, and somewhat non-descript answers, beginning with non-threatening questions often elicited interest and descriptive information. In order for critical qualitative research to be truly successful, it must remain dynamic, characterized by flexible and generative methodologies. Thus, sometimes interview questions were discarded or revised to fit the pace and feel of the interview.

Taped or written interviews, field notes, and observations helped document my informants’ lives. Sixteen formal interviews were conducted. At all times participants were under no obligation to complete the interviews. However, all those who sat with me, did so until completion. As Sears has stated, “The power of qualitative data…lies not in the number of people interviewed but in the researcher’s ability to know well a few people in their cultural contexts” (Sears 1992: 148). Interviews, lasting anywhere from 45 minutes to two hours, took place in school cafeterias, coffee shops, lunch counters, on the telephone, and in after-hour clubs. I tried to meet people on their own terms and at
their own convenience. For many of my informants, formalized interviews were the extent of our ethnographic exchange. For others, these interviews were the beginning of an ongoing informal conversation at various cultural events such as festivals and musical concerts.

My decision to conduct a focus group interview came after all individual interviews were complete. It was created out of my desire to check my conclusions. To this end, the focus group interview was used as a secondary method that assisted in interpreting the results of the individual interviews, to help build theory. This process was chosen over the reverse of using focus groups to establish themes and directions. The focus group recapitulated much of what was stated and explored in individual interviews, confirming my feelings at the time of ethnographic saturation.

**Participant Observation**

Racial and ethnic identity is not solely contingent on skin color, phenotype, and individual perspective, but also observable socially meaningful events, practices, behaviors, and social performances. As a result, interviews were coupled with observations of people’s actions and performances in public and semi-private arenas. I employed the method of participant observation. In order to gain a better understanding of the topic at hand identity construction needs to be observed in action, in public space, clubs, sporting events, festivals, and community gatherings. “Just being around” if you will, offers insight into the pulse of life. Thus, I attended various cultural events and, less formally, would spend my days and nights hanging out with informants at festivals and hip-hop clubs. Further, I am interested in other communicative acts beyond language.
Through observation I was able to survey and record body language, for as Carspecken (1996) has noted, meaning sometimes is not in language, but in bodily acts.

My participant-observation(s) were based on contact zones or spaces of coalescences where Cape Verdean youth were bound to be. The most publicized display of Cape Verdean identity in diaspora can be found at various Cape Verdean independence festivals throughout the Greater Boston area. These festivals, which are exclusively Cape Verdean events are held annually during the month of July. These festivals, whether located in Boston, New Bedford, or Providence, place a great deal of emphasis on music, food, dance, and politics. Over the last five to six years these festivals have significantly shifted their demographic focus targeting young people. In turn, these festivals offer programs that appeal to the younger generation of Cape Verdeans including various musical performances by hip-hop groups. I attended as many of these events as possible to get a more textured account of Cape Verdean identity. Other public and semi-public events that I attended included cultural events and social gatherings sponsored by university groups throughout the Greater Boston area. For instance, the Cape Verdean Student Associations located at Northeastern University, Rhode Island College, and UMass-Boston all hold annual cultural events such as fashion shows and independence day celebrations all of which I attended. These events provided highly condensed, yet embodied, examples of interactions and experimentations with identity (Back 1996).
This project is also interested in the production, circulation, and consumption of texts written, verbal, broadcast, visual, material, and musical, for identity and, by extension, the lived experience cannot be properly comprehended without understanding the consumption and use of texts. To this end, hip-hop music and fashion are of great relevance and importance. Texts are entwined in our everyday lives, providing a shared social and cultural currency. Young Cape Verdeans, like others, draw on the symbolic worlds of media in thinking about themselves, who they are and who they might become. Attention to various texts permitted me to explore the significance of popular forms in the processes of racial identity formation (Dimitriadis 2001; Forman 2002; Gillespie 1995; Hebdige 1981 and 1987). Just as Lila Abu-Lughod (1999) has argued that television is in fact central to ethnographic practice, I posit that the Internet is central. Thus, it is imperative for any ethnography interested in understanding youth culture and identity formation to look to media technologies, especially the Internet. If we are truly interested in “thick description” it “needs some creative stretching to fit mass-mediated lives” (Abu-Lughod 1990: 111). Webzines and blogs have reconfigured the cultural space which ethnographers have to cross since they play a significant role in youth culture and identity formation. I look to the music of local and popular Cape Verdean hip-hop artists, the Internet (including blogs, homepages, chat rooms, and myspace.com), local newspapers and magazines in order to assess how Cape Verdeans use media to define themselves and their networks.
Material Analysis

All material was analyzed using the insights of critical theory. As an interpretive style, critical theory is collaborative, dialogical, reflexive, and grounded in the worlds of lived experience. Rooting my analysis in such an interpretative style allowed me to merge textual approaches with the ethnographic. As Denzin has observed, critical theory as an interpretative style “moves back and forth between concrete ethnographic texts and the content, semiotic, and narrative analysis of systems discourse” (Denzin 2004: 461; See also Carspecken 1996).

In order to minimize the tendency to impose my voice and values on the group being studied I make every effort to share with the interview participants and the Cape Verdean community, interview and observation transcripts. In doing so, I provide the opportunity to add, clarify, or otherwise edit comments and observations.

Ethical Concerns

All social research raises important ethical issues such as informed consent, privacy, harm, and exploitation. Since the present study is qualitative in nature, three particular ethical considerations must be considered for. First, there is the issue of informed consent, that is, voluntary participation and identity disclosure. Social scientists often argue that the people under study should be informed about the research and that unconstrained consent should be granted. Nonetheless, what must be understood is that all qualitative research falls on a continuum between overt and covert research. Even when operating in an overt manner, as I have done throughout my fieldwork, a researcher
can rarely tell all the people involved everything about the research. For example, obtaining informed consent at a festival would not be logistically feasible and it has the potential to alter the participants’ comfort and behaviors. In fact, it is the reflexive nature of qualitative work that makes informed consent difficult.

The second ethical issue of concern is confidentiality and privacy. Like informed consent, confidentiality and privacy is complex. To illustrate, one can simply ask the questions of what is public and what is private? Answering these questions is not easy, for what might be considered public to one individual may be private to another individual. Nonetheless, measures were taken to maintain the privacy and confidentiality of participants. For instance, for the purpose of maintaining anonymity and confidentiality, all my informants were given a neutral type of terminology/code. Throughout the study I also employ fictitious names and when possible, I use no names at all. Further, all transcribed data is password protected in my personal computer. All transcripts and audio material are currently being kept under lock and key. All potentially identifying information will be removed from transcripts and all data will be kept indefinitely.

The third ethical issue of concern is the exploitation and potential harm of research subjects. Many claim that research always involves the exploitation of those studied. As is often the case, subjects supply the information, which is used by the researcher, and little, if anything, is given in return; this is especially apparent with advocacy research. Thus, the researcher feels at the very least that the subjects be empowered by becoming part of the research process and have been granted first look at all research findings. As for issues of harm and risk, like most ethnographic research this
research project involves the observation and interaction of the researcher (myself) with participants in ordinary life and poses risks not greater in and of themselves than those ordinarily encountered in daily life. In other words, there are no foreseeable risks involved in the proposed study. Although, the demands made on informants varies considerably, I believe the impact of this study was minimal in the sense that often all I required is that participants carry on as much as natural.

In short, ethical considerations are important and cannot be ignored or resolved by appeal to absolute rules (i.e. ethical codes of conduct), that is, the researcher must make judgments about what is and is not legitimate in particular cases. Like the fundamentals of qualitative research, ethical considerations are also reflexive.

Frustrations, Shortcomings, and Fieldwork Insight

Like many ethnographers, I entered the field hoping to find the quintessential Cape Verdean subject, that is, the proverbial key informant, who could speak for all second-generation Cape Verdean youth. However, once I entered the field site(s), I didn’t find that person. Instead, I found youth who took a passing interest in my project. Youth who would often agree to participate but seldom followed through with sitting down with me to answer my questions. This fact prompted me to rely more on participant-observation and textual analysis than I originally had proposed. A few Cape Verdean youth I met seemed genuinely excited to talk to me, whether they agreed to sit for an interview or not. Sometimes we just hung out at a local club bouncing our heads to the infectious hip-hop beats or talked while checking out the wares and food of festival vendors. These less formal, everyday encounters were the most significant ones I had in
the field. Through these everyday occurrences my field experience took on deeper and thicker meaning facilitated by my need to open a MySpace account, for many of my informants demanded that we connect by “hitting them up on MySpace,” I became part of the social networks of certain Cape Verdean youth.

Throughout my time in the field, I never felt unwelcome or uncomfortable. Originally, I thought my whiteness and age, in spaces of blackness, Cape Verdeanness, and youthfulness would make aspects of my research frustrating. Getting youth to sit and talk with a white guy about race, identity, and popular culture almost seemed like a futile endeavor. Ironically, people typically categorized me not as an older white male interested in things black and different. Rather, I was often categorized as Cape Verdean. I was often asked, “What island are your parents from?” “You were born here, right?” This highlights the phenotypical ambiguity that sometimes constitutes being Cape Verdean. Being perceived as Cape Verdean and investigating Cape Verdean youth identity formation for many of my informants made sense. Yet, when I revealed I was not Cape Verdean, little changed in regards to the developing informant/researcher relationship. In fact, many would just brush it off and state something to the effect of “I just thought you were one of those light-skinned Cape Verdeans.” Given that I was not an insider, my knowledge of Cape Verdean history and cultural ways enhanced my trustworthiness. Having visited the islands also helped with establishing rapport. Further, my insider perspective on hip-hop culture provided me with an important form of cultural capital that translated into respect and interest.  Trust was also developed because many of my informants had questions about Cape Verdean identity. Many of the people who listened to my endless questions seemed genuinely interested in answering.
In the end, any ethnographic enterprise is constrained by a myriad of factors. These factors are personal, legal, political, social, and cultural. However, rather than highlight and bemoan these constraints, it is best to understand that the constraints and shortcomings of this project and all ethnographic work for that matter are shaped by these problems. The text is the result of not only the information gleaned from interviews, participant-observation, and textual analysis, but also the ever-present constraints. In the next chapter, I explore the ways in which second-generation Cape Verdean youth in the Greater Boston area negotiate their identity as Cape Verdean and black.
CHAPTER FIVE

BECOMING BLACK? NARRATIVES OF RACE AMONG CAPE VERDEAN YOUTH

Cape Verde is part of Africa. Regardless of skin color, eye color, or hair texture, our roots are in Africa. African women received, willingly or unwillingly the seeds from European men… I am proud to know I’m Cape Veredian and that my roots are firmly planted in Africa… In America, I’m black because this is the way society views us. We are not white… We may speak a different language or eat different foods, but we are all from Africa and have a similar experience with oppression. We need to be proud and unite.

(Informant, 2007)

I love being black and wouldn’t change for the world. If I had a choice, I would still choose black. Yeah I’m Cape Veredian, but regardless of where my family is from, I’m black.

(Informant, 2007)

Marilyn Halter’s (1993) work clearly illustrates that early Cape Veredian immigrant identities sat between the registers of both race and ethnicity. However, when it comes to understanding second-generation Cape Veredian youth identity in the Greater Boston area, as the epigraph shows, the ambiguity and liminality surrounding race and ethnicity in previous generations has vanished. Cape Veredian youth have come to see themselves racially, as black, and ethnically, as Cape Veredian. More importantly, they have come to see themselves as minorities in a white-dominated hierarchical social structure. As a result, they experience noteworthy solidarity with non-whites, particularly African-American youth. Further, Cape Veredian youth have come to see themselves as a marginalized population locally and globally. Many of my informants informally and formally discussed the hardships their parents and grandparents endured in Cape Verde in
relation to the neglected neighborhoods they inhabit, as well as, the substandard schools they have attended in the U.S.

Although Cape Verdean youth often reject monolithic/homogenous definitions of blackness via the performance of their Cape Verdean-ness, their identities are fundamentally structured by racial discourse. Regardless of their skin color and phenotype, second-generation Cape Verdean youth, unlike their parent’s generation, learn to think of themselves as non-white with little hesitation. In fact, many strongly denounce their European ancestry.

As we’ll come to see, the consumption and production of black popular culture, particularly hip-hop, helps many Cape Verdean youth to articulate ethnic difference, while also providing them with a language of resistance. This is something I investigate in-depth in chapter six. Yet, while the consumption and production of black popular culture creates space for the performance of ethnic difference, it also makes them subject to a more totalizing set of assumptions that they are black. In the following pages via interview material, I map the importance that phenotype, skin color, class, and cultural practices have in creating black identities out of ethnic difference.

Defining Blackness and the Politics of Racial Sincerity

Blackness is an elusive concept. It is overdetermined - a constituted fact - and therefore has multiple meanings; meanings rooted diachronically and synchronically. Its elusiveness does not preclude anyone from trying to define it with particular attributes and fix it in time and space. Since the invention of race and, by extension, racial identity, the quest of authenticating a black identity has been a long, complex, and politically
contested struggle. As an elusive racial signifier - one that is not always based solely on skin color and phenotype - blackness has sometimes been constructed as natural, one-dimensional and static. As Fanon (1967) has lucidly and poignantly acknowledged, some, both black and white, see blackness as a universal standpoint. On the other hand, others underscore the multiplicity of blackness and the black experience.

Throughout this dissertation, I straddle the dichotomous nature of blackness as fixed and multiple. On the one hand, I tease out the ways in which blackness, conceived as one-dimensional, as conforming to pre-existing, although updated patterns and stereotypes, continues to reinforce and sustain white supremacy. On the other hand, I repudiate the idea that there is an “authentic” undifferentiated black identity.

As many have already argued, white hegemonic notions of essentialized blackness are evoked to construct and maintain essentialized notions of whiteness. The discourses of white supremacy have targeted and effectively marked black people as primitive, undeserving, capricious, dangerous, unintelligent, sly, oversexed, and violent (See Fanon 1963 and 1967; Hobson 2005; Sharpley-Whiting 1999). In the past, tropes of blackness circulated in the form of Zip Coon, Stepin Fetchit, Jezebel, Sapphire and others (See for example Lott 1993; Sharpley-Whiting 2007). Similarly, the discursive constructions of blackness of today still represent negative and narrow depictions of black people. This enlarged picture of essentialized blackness now includes the welfare queen, prison inmate, prostitute, hedonistic rapper, thug, single mother, and pimp (See Gray 2004). As a result, whiteness is none of these; the trope of whiteness is supreme, pure, moral, and good. The fact of whiteness is taken as a sign of everything, rather than a sign of nothingness (Fanon 1967). In the end, whiteness is everything blackness is not.
As Fanon (1967) demonstrated, racism and constructions of blackness are interrelated. And David Theo Goldberg stands correct when he states “blackness has been produced in coercive circumstances…” (Goldberg 1997: 75). Blackness has been constructed within a culture of racialized exclusion.

Essentialized notions of blackness come not only from the outside–from white people–but black people. For example, the Negritude movement of the 20th century attempted to rescue blackness from the racist and colonial gaze and as a result provided inspiration for and unity among black people. However, it inverts the terms of colonial and racist discourse. As evidenced by thinkers like Leopold Senghor, the negative associations of blackness were rarely questioned; rather they were redeployed as positive. In other words, Negritude writers and thinkers continued to rely on in white hegemonic stereotypes of blackness.21

As bell hooks observed in her essay “Postmodern Blackness (1990)”, many black people uphold essentialized notions of blackness and thus are unwilling to accept the multiplicity of blackness because they “fear that it will cause folks to lose sight of the specific history and experience of African-Americans and the unique sensibilities and culture that arise from that experience” (hooks 1990). Recently, for example, black and white critics alike have gone to great lengths to debate the blackness of 2008 presidential hopeful Barak Obama. Mr. Obama’s blackness has been questioned because his life journey is seen as a departure from customary black stereotypes. As Alan Keyes and

21 For a lengthy critique of Negritude see Frantz Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963).
Stanley Crouch have publicly observed, he is not a descendant of a slave and never lived a “typical” black life, one filled with hardship and crushing encounters with racism.\textsuperscript{22}

The late Marlon Riggs underscored the multiplicity of blackness. He illustrated through films like Tongues Untied (1990) and Black Is…Black Ain’t (1994) that when people attempt to define what it is to be black, they restrict its possibilities. That is, the pursuit of an authentic blackness confines and restricts black subjects and therefore human potentiality. For Riggs, blackness needs to be seen as a site of endless possibility.

In his book, We Who Are Dark: The Philosophical Foundations of Black Solidarity (2005), Tommie Shelby conceptualizes blackness in two ways, a thin and thick form. Thus, Shelby provides a valuable distinction between forms of blackness. Thin blackness is based solely on skin color, phenotype, and ancestry. For Shelby, “One cannot simply refuse to be thinly black…No amount of wealth, income, social status, or education can ease one’s thin blackness” (Shelby 2005: 208). In other words, one is visibly marked. A thick conception of blackness includes physical characteristics, genealogy, and more. The more, includes ideas about cultural heritage, nationality, ethnicity, kinship, and “an identifiable ensemble of beliefs, values, conventions, traditions, and practices that is distinctively black” (Shelby 2005: 211). According to Shelby, persons who satisfy the thin social criteria for blackness can and often do embrace thick conceptions of blackness. However, this embrace varies in intensity. Those who meet the thin social criteria of blackness and reject thick conceptions of blackness are an action that are considered by many as acting in bad faith (Gordon 1999).

\textsuperscript{22} Obama’s connection to Reverend Jerimiah Wright also brings up questions to what blackness is and can be. Wright’s inflammatory remarks about the U.S. and its treatment of black people hint to the idea that Obama, because of his perceived blackness, is predisposed to such rage and possibly criminality, whether real or perceived.
However, regardless of transgression (deviation from the mean of essentialized blackness) or an embrace of thick conceptions of blackness, as Frantz Fanon described in *Black Skin, White Masks* (1967), there is “the fact of blackness.” No matter what, despite his objection to the “fact” of an essential and thin blackness, Fanon states, “I was responsible at the same time for my body, for my race, for my ancestors…I discovered my blackness…and I was battered down by tom-toms, cannibalism, intellectual deficiency, fetishism, racial defects, slave ships, and above all else, above all: “Sho’ good eatin’”’ (Fanon 1967: 112).

Despite “the fact of blackness,” black identity relies on the ongoing process of performance discussed in chapter three. Notions of racial authenticity are achieved through performative practices. Racial authenticity involves an assessment of the degree to which someone is intelligible to others. Any attempt to speak of black authenticity is an attempt to draw the boundaries of blackness as a racial signifier. In other words, racial authenticity confines the social actor on how he or she can act. To this end, the inclusion and exclusion of subjects from blackness is political and never innocent, for the drawing of boundaries is always political. Racial authenticity can be read as a way of establishing social credibility while also protecting interests whatever those interests may be. When we engage in questions around racial authenticity, we are asking what it means to be of a particular race/ethnicity? We are asking how these identities are constructed and by whom?

As Shelley Eversely has observed, “racial authenticity is masquerading as the natural, ontological “truth” about people of color” (Eversely 2004: 79). Racial authenticity pervades black culture in that the “real” or “authentic” becomes a cultural
stance, a racial positionality, an index of culture, and a barometer of trust of racial group members.

In chapter one (Looking For the Real Nigga) of *Yo’ Mama’s Disfunktional!*, Robin D.G. Kelley illustrates with ease and sophistication how social scientists over time have created ethnographies about “authentic Negroes” and collapsed the experiences of black people into one monolithic experience. These same social scientists in turn constructed the image that black urban areas, known as the ghetto, were thought to be monolithic geographic spaces. These studies and others that followed were persistent on looking “for that elusive “authentic” ghetto sensibility, the true, honest, unbridled, pure cultural practices that capture the raw, ruffneck “reality” of urban life” (Kelley 1998: 35). For many, that reality can now be found in hip-hop culture and more specifically rap music, the so-called authentic, unmediated voice of urban ghetto youth. Hip-hop stalwart Chuck D from the group Public Enemy once remarked that rap was “the CNN of the ghetto.” Similarly, as Essex Hemphill explained in *Black Is…Black Ain’t* “Perhaps the standard…is the inner city for defining what blackness is. That you you’ve got to constantly be up on the changes in the hip language, the hip black fashions, the hip black music. You’ve got to use your ghetto experience as your American Express Card.” In other words, “the ghetto” is a prerequisite to the ‘real’ black experience (Forman 2001).

It can be argued that racial authenticity as an analytical concept has been overused and as a result scholarly analysis of racialized phenomena is shortsighted because of its

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reliance on the concept. Anthropologist John L. Jackson (2005) questions the validity of authenticity as a conceptual analytic stating that it stunts a fuller understanding of racial identity and black identity in particular. To pair racial sincerity with racial authenticity creates a framework for a more dynamic understanding of blackness and those classified as black. Racial sincerity as a conceptual analytic, urges researchers to look at the efforts of the participants in order to see how they get on with their everyday lives.

Unlike racial authenticity, racial sincerity highlights the intent, not the content of the social actor. In other words, racial sincerity is about the logic, rationales, and motives that people attribute to aspects of their own being and to others (Jackson 2005). Social actors to deploy racial sincerity in order to negotiate their closeness or distance from racial authenticity. As I will show, when Cape Verdean youth “become black” they do so with varying intensity. While all my informants met the social criteria for both thin and thick forms of blackness, and perform essentialized and non-essentialized ideas of blackness they did so with varying degrees of authenticity and sincerity.

The Fact of “Cape Verdean” Blackness

“If I’m not black, then what am I?”
(Informant, 2007)

“Once you have a mix in you. You’re black.”
(Informant, 2007)

Blackness is often associated with disadvantage and criminality. Thus black immigrants have and often seek to distance themselves from such associations. In turn,
many use ethnicity as an important marker of distinction. This tactic is particularly useful for black immigrants, for it is difficult to deny thin blackness, but denying thick forms of blackness, especially those rooted in culture and cultural practices is less difficult. Historically, the children of black immigrants have merged into black American populations (Bryce-Laporte 1972; Waters 1994 and 2001). Woldemikael (1989) distinguishes between first and second generation Haitian immigrants in Illinois. Woldemikael found that the first generation maintained a strong ethnic national identity, while Haitians become culturally black Americans in the second generation. This is recapitulated in Bowie and Stepick’s (1998) research on second generation Haitians in Miami. In her study of Afro-Caribbean immigrants in New York City, Waters (1994) found that second-generation immigrants from families of higher economic status maintained a strong ethnic-national identity, while those from lower-income neighborhoods and poor families adopt African-American identities, that is, their language is influenced by black popular culture, as are their cultural tastes, and perceptions of race and racism. For Portes (1995) socioeconomic position is not so much the issue, rather the degree to which second-generation immigrants participate in the ethnic community is important. A strong community reinforces a common cultural memory and identity. Lorick-Wilmot’s (2007) study on Caribbean immigrants reinforces the importance of community and social organization in ethnic identity construction and maintenance. Other research shows that the children of immigrants, rather than sever ties with their homeland, engage in transnational practices, that is, maintain socio-economic and political ties to the homeland (Levitt and Waters 2002).
For second-generation Cape Verdean youth, race is central to identity formation. While the parents and grandparents of Cape Verdean youth commonly sought to resist racial ascription as mentioned in chapter two, today’s youth do not. Rather than distance themselves from African American youth many of my informants have extensive contact with African American youth and black popular culture. In Fanonian terms, many Cape Verdean youth understand the “fact of blackness” as the following interview excerpts illustrate.24

PKS: How do you identify in terms of race and ethnicity?
Antonio: “Personally, I identify with being back. I’m black! I’m a black man!”

PKS: Do you identify with any ethnicity?
Antonio: “Again, I’m black, but ethnically I’m Cape Verdean. Being Cape Verdean takes a back seat to being black.”

PKS: Why does it take a backseat?
Antonio: “Black is first because that is what you see. Look at my skin color and how I dress. People don’t know I’m Cape Verdean. Plus, that wouldn’t make a difference. Black and white is too powerful of a concept. You look at me you’ll say I’m black.”

Another informant, again, when asked how he identifies in terms of race and ethnicity, while loosely identifying with being Cape Verdean, also emphatically stated, “I’m black! “Look bro” he said, “you ain’t fooling anyone to say your not black. Yeah, I can say I’m Cape Verdean or African or whatever, but what will that do? Tell the police that shit. The fact is I’m black, if I like it or not.”

Despite claiming a Cape Verdean identity these two informants understand that it means little in a society were race is at the vortex of its creation. Thus, I am at odds with

24 All informants’ names have been changed to protect their anonymity.
Halter when she states “For the Cape Verdean American, social identity can never be assumed and is never given” (Halter 1993: 174). Despite efforts to transcend racial categorization Cape Verdeans, whether they approve or disapprove, are sucked into the vortex of the racial state. Black racial identity is coercive in part because identity formation is coercive. They suffer from what philosopher Charles Mills (1998) has rightfully identified as “the stigmata of subordination.”

In the focus group that I conducted, Soraya from Tauton, Massachusetts, via Brockton, Massachusetts had this to say about being black: “No one has ever considered me a white person. They always say “Yeah, that’s that black girl.” Carlos, a 22 year-old native of Brockton, Massachusetts and proud Cape Veredian had the following to say after explaining how his parents, especially his mother, ironically identified as black.

PKS: Do you also consider yourself black?

Carlos: Yes, I do.

PKS: What’s first? Black or Cape Veredian?

Carlos: To me, if you put anything before black in America your fooling yourself. Because they don’t care if you been here ten years or whatever. All they know is you’re a nigga!

Eighteen-year-old Juvenal of Providence, Rhode Island echoes Carlos’ sentiments.

PKS: How do you identify in terms of race and ethnicity?

Juvenal: I say I’m black, but the weird thing is a lot of Cape Verdeans won’t say they’re African, but that’s what we are. Cape Verdeans are African, they’re black, but at the same time we’re mixed. And a lot of first generation Cape Verdeans, like my mother, identify as European. She has difficulty identifying as African…”

PKS: But…[interrupted by Juvenal]
Juvenal: Here, I’m black. My parents never said to me “you’re black.” They said, “you’re Cape Verdean!” But if you live here long enough that don’t matter.

Being Cape Verdean in a country where race is of central importance simply means being assigned to an unfavorable position in the racial hierarchy. In his concern over the celebration of hybrid identities, much like Fanon’s concern over the praise for “negritude,” Peter McLaren states: “We are not autonomous citizens who can fashionably choose whatever ethnic [and racial] combinations we desire in order to reassemble our identity…it is dishonest to assert that pluralized, hybridized identities are options…”(McLaren 1997: 7). Despite seeming deterministic, McLaren’s observation reflects what many of my informants stated in informal and formal interviews. Throughout many of my interviews, I sensed from my informants a yearning to simply be “Cape Verdean,” but as many noted this is difficult, if not impossible, in a racialized state. As Anthony, a 21-year-old born in Pawtucket, Rhode Island of Cape Verdean parents, stated: “Society makes you black. Being Cape Verdean is second, if it means anything at all.” In short, some Cape Verdean youth treat blackness as totalizing in which ethnicity, culture, and ancestry are undifferentiated.

*Similarities, Differences, and Solidarity in Blackness*

Many informants related to being black, which for some is coterminous with being African and were careful to draw a distinction between being African and African American. Many did not identify as African American (or black American), but identified with African Americans and their experiences. Living in an anti-black social world forces one to desire group solidarity. Herein I define solidarity loosely, for it is not meant
to be a comprehensive political program nor is it meant to address every social problem black people experience. Rather, solidarity, as it is alluded to below, is based on shared racial oppression and its consequences. Unfortunately, this narrowly conceived form of solidarity is not ideal because it neglects other forms of social oppression (See Hill Collins 2006; Neal 2005).

Having lived in the Greater Boston area for the better part of her 23 years, Luisa offered the following insight into Cape Verdean identity.

PKS: How do you define yourself?
Luisa: I’m black and Cape Verden.
PKS: What makes you black?
Luisa: My ancestors.
PKS: Anything else?
Luisa: Yeah…background, skin color, and culture.
PKS: What do you mean by background and culture?
Luisa: All our dances and rituals come from Africa. For example, batuko and funana are both African. As for background, I’m badius.

Recalling my description in chapter two, badius are a people on the island of Santiago that have retained a certain degree of African-based distinctiveness in their cultural practices from other Cape Verdeans; the badius were of great symbolic importance during the war of liberation. Luisa also stated: “I’m black, but I’m not African American. When I think of African Americans, their traditions are different. I mean they have jazz and the blues. We got funana. Do we have similarities? Sure! Like our struggle with racism. It’s because of racism that we should unite as a people.” While Luisa accepts
here blackness, she is resolute in drawing a distinction between “black” as a racial identity and Africa-American, seeing the latter as culturally distinct from Cape Verdeans such as herself.

While identifying as African, black, and Cape Verdean, Carlos offers this lengthy insight into similarities and solidarity with black Americans:

Carlos: Like I said before, I do identify with black Americans because unlike continental Africans - even though for some of them they’ve been moved around. People think because they’re from Ghana or whatever their family was always there, but not necessarily because people were moved throughout the slave trade. And Cape Verde was uninhabited. Once you get back to Cape Verde you don’t know where you go. And Cape Verde was founded around the same time the American colonies were getting Africans. So our history probably goes back as far as theirs. So for me I identify with that. Our histories are similar. [Pause] So when people go, well at least you know what country you’re from. Well, not really. Cape Verde wasn’t there before. So I identify with that…So first of all I identify with them [African Americans] in terms of black issues and what should be of concern for us as a people in terms of where we are and where we’re lagging. [Pause] I think also being black or feeling black, I think maybe I have a hypersensitivity to race. Sometimes people will say, “You’re just looking for prejudice. Maybe they were just having a bad day.” But being black you don’t have that luxury, being a black person in America, if you’re conscious of history. You can walk around with your blinders on and say “it’s equal. And I’m going to get a job like anybody else and I didn’t get it because the other guy was more qualified.” Simply put! You can believe that if you want to, but if you are cognizant of the civil rights movement, if you’re cognizant of slavery, and anything that has happened since then. I’d rather welcome that and put that in my backpack. Being black is something I can’t control. And that’s why I think I’m so pro-black…I mean I don’t believe in racial superiority. I’m not a black supremacist. Me loving black doesn’t mean I’m hating anybody else…Pro-blackness is anti-whiteness. I think this is how it is perceived in this country. Whereas I think it’s different. I’m pro-black. That doesn’t mean I hate white people or whatever…

Carlos’s identification with African-Americans is based on a historical fact that most African-Americans know little about which specific parts of Africa their ancestors came.

Further, he highlights the shared structural position of black youth in the U.S. Due to this
he feels he has more in common (culturally) with African-American youth than African youth, despite understanding that structural racism affects both groups. Throughout his interview he grouped African-Americans and Cape Verdeans by using the first person plural pronoun of “we” and “they.” Carlos’s use of the pronoun “we” is significant and draws attention to the structural and historical similarities of “black people.” For Carlos, racial discrimination was historically directed uniformly at individuals of African descent, regardless of difference.

Born in Providence, Rhode Island, Francisco, a 24-year-old second-generation Cape Verdean, also emphasizes experiential similarities and as a result the need for solidarity:

Francisco: A small number of Cape Verdeans in America don’t seem to like to be identified as Black or African American... We should be aware of the fact that as, we say in Crioulo, “a união faz força” (united we are strong) and stop trying not to identify with black people because that is what we are, either Black Africans or Black Americans for those born in America.

PKS: Can you say more?

Francisco: Yes, we are Cape Verdeans, but we are still black people...I mean where did we come from? West Africa! What is the predominant race and culture of Cape Verde? African people and African culture! Just because we have some Portuguese blood in us doesn’t mean we’re not black. How many black people don’t have some European blood? So, lets be proud of who we are: Black and African!!

Cape Verdean youth experiences with structural and individual racism lead them to see themselves as black and African. Racist culture prompts self-defining cultures of resistance. As a result, they experience solidarity with other marked black bodies particularly African-Americans and continental Africans, who they see as inhabiting the same social position in the U.S. and globalized racists structure. Some Cape Verdeans
draw cultural distinctions between Cape Verdeans and African-Americans, choosing instead to identify with continental Africans. Some informants resist black/white dichotomization, yet they are sympathetic to black issues. What should also be highlighted is that second-generation Cape Verdean youth do not deploy ethnicity to a draw distinction from blackness, but to complicate blackness. The deployment of “Africa” and “African” is presented as a political project. Therefore, they are not obfuscating the power relations embedded in processes of racialization. Furthermore, my informants articulate a desire for a pan-African politics of liberation that comes from similar experiences of oppression and racialization.

In the end, my informants express a connected fate with African Americans, a shared history of oppression rooted in ideologies of white supremacy and racial hierarchy that has motivated these youth to develop a common narrative of exclusion and struggle, and a shared consciousness (Dawson 1995). Given this, racial group identity is important for group mobilization – social issues become framed as important for the “black” community, locally and globally, a part of which many of my informants see themselves.

“My Last Name is Ramos, but I’m Not Spanish”: A Note on Mistaken Identity

Despite identifying with other racially marked subjects like African-Americans and continental Africans, the Cape Verdean youth that I interviewed resisted identification with other non-white minorities, particularly Latinos. Given their tendency to be light in skin color Cape Verdeans are often mistaken as Dominican or Puerto Rican. As one informant noted with slight dismay: “Some people think I’m Hispanic…I always
get, ‘are you Puerto Rican? Are you Dominican?’ In this context, my informants were adamant about defining their Cape Verdeanness and blackness as exhibited by the following statement: “I always let people know I’m Cape Verdean. I don’t want to be mistaken for nobody else.” In her study on Cape Verdeans in Boston, Sanchez-Gibua (2005) suggests that there exist between Cape Verdeans and Latinos great similarities, culturally and socially, which has resulted in a relationship between the Latino population and Cape Verdean diaspora. She speaks of “a sense of affinity in life experiences”, based both on foreign status and language issues. This may be the case with previous generations and current immigrants, but for my informants it was not. Rather, my informants were resolute in denying any relationship to Latinos. This resistance to being identified as Latino raises questions of immigration and citizenship. Cape Verdean youth of the Greater Boston area resist this form of Latino classification by defining themselves as either black and/or Cape Verdean. Through this act, not only are a black and/or Cape Verdean identities claimed, but it is also a form of citizenship.

There are complexities and problems with a word like citizenship, for it is used in a number of different ways in academic and political discourse and social contexts. Herein I am not referencing a citizenship that takes on the specific juridical links between individual and state. Rather, I use citizenship in a simple way to mean belonging to a national community and “a set of moral qualities thought to be crucial for the existence of the good citizen” (Martinello 2002: 116).

Unlike assimilation theories of the past, Ramos-Zetas (2007) has shown that “becoming American” for Brazilian and Puerto Rican youth of Newark is not necessarily tied with “becoming white.” Rather, she shows that migrants from Latin America
associated blackness with “Americanness.” Given my informants incessant need to draw a distinction between themselves and Latinos, I suggest much like Ramos-Zayas (2003 and 2007), that there is an alternative way of exerting and claiming citizenship. This reversal of citizenship or assimilationist logic is a move according to Ramos-Zayas away from “delinquent forms of citizenship.”

Despite suffering from many of the same forms of structural oppression, second-generation Cape Verdean youth are not immune from suggesting nativist views of immigrant illegality. Although previous generations attempted to assert their belonging via “acting white” or drawing a sharp distinction between Cape Verdeans and black, today’s youth attempt to belong by performing blackness; by the valorization of blackness and the devalorization of whiteness.

According to my informants, Cape Verdean youth are often confused for “being Latino.” As Juvenal, who identifies as black and Cape Verdean, stated:

I get ‘you’re Spanish,’ ‘you’re Dominican’ all the time. In high school all the girls would come up to me speaking Spanish. People will argue with me until the death saying I’m Dominican. But I always make sure I tell people I’m Cape Verdean…I don’t like being called any other ethnicity.

The denunciation and adamant responses of distinctiveness from being Latino could be a deliberate way to escape the stigma associated with “immigrant.” Being an immigrant often conjures images of illegality. Further, it suggests “backwardness” and “foreignness.” Denouncing their perceived Latinoness, while aligning themselves with “black people,” Cape Verdean youth escape the negative connotations of “immigrantness” especially following the heightened nativism of 9/11. Also, in avoiding an immigrant identity one transcends the ambiguity of liminality and not belonging.
Racial identity as many scholars have illustrated is not predicated solely on skin color and phenotype are imbued with social significance like “space (locale)” and “place (the realities of physical terrain).” For Forman (2001) and others “the term “inner-city” implicitly refers to racialized images or racially infected conditions of danger, violence, and depravity that can be contrasted with the ideals of calm, safety, and security attributed to non-urban or suburban space” (Forman 2001: 43). Interestingly, the relationship between race and geography has shifted from largely a rural concern to an urban concern. With this shift in concern so too came a shift in the locus of moral panic (Goldberg 2002). Du Bois’s *The Philadelphia Negro* (1996), which prefigured Drake and Cayton’s *Black Metropolis* (1962), and the work of Robert Park and the Chicago School signaled a change in the ecological foci of social scientists from the countryside to city. Simultaneously, racial state policies shifted their focus of containment and spatial segregation from the rural to the urban. These transformations did not occur out of simple curiosity; rather they were the result of black migration north. The more black urbanization expanded the more racial segregation and restriction of black residents within cities was extended. As a result, regions not only became racialized, neighborhoods became racially and ethnically segregated. As Denton (1994) has pointed out, black segregation in urban communities is not the result of black housing preferences but of conscious white avoidance and state design. What emerged is a strong connection
between blackness and urban space in that the symbolic value of the “inner city” now screams racial authenticity.

For my informants, urban communities, “the hood,” and inner cities, are black and brown spaces. In other words, they are spaces occupied by black and brown people including themselves. When asked where they were from and what their neighborhood was like, many of my participants became extremely specific, identifying specific streets and historical markers (namely project housing complexes), even recalling house numbers at times. I must admit, at first I thought the hyper-specificity was strange and unimportant, especially given that my informants were to remain anonymous and any reference to where they lived seemed almost to violate ethical codes. I later realized that the distinctions my informants wanted to seemingly draw where to differentiate who lived where. For instance, if the city itself was not predominantly black or brown, certain streets and sections of town were racialized. The following statements from various informants suggest this:

“I don’t live in the good section like the East Side…I live, and have all of my life, lived in the hood. Ya’ know the Southside, near the projects”

“Let’s get it straight. East Providence is predominantly white, but all my neighbors were African-American or Cape Verdean. In Pawtucket, the same thing.”

“I’m not from the best neighborhood. I mean I’m from South Providence. Crime is high and the cops are everywhere.”

“Where I’m from, things are difficult. People are surviving day by day. The ghetto is a hard place to grow up in.”
“Basically, my entire neighborhood was all black. There were a couple of Spanish people on my block, but that’s it...The funny thing is all around us its nice.”

“My neighborhood, which is mostly black and Latino, is not the best neighborhood in the world; people selling drugs, getting shot. A lot happens! There is a lot of crime...Poverty is high. Even the white people in the neighborhood are poor.”

“I grew up in Dorchester in “Cape Verde-vill” from Bowden Street all the way to Dudley.”

“The streets I lived on in Roxbury, everybody was Cape Verdean. But when I moved to Taunton, everybody was white except the Puerto Ricans and black people on my block.”

In relation to the first and third statement, the racial and ethnic breakdown of South Providence, for instance, also known affectionately at times by its inhabitants as the Southside, is 52 percent Latino and 21 percent black or African-American. Thirty-five percent of families in the area live below the poverty line, while 30 percent of families receive some form of public assistance. The area continues to struggle with poverty issues; the South Side’s median family income is $23,379 as compared with $32,058 for the city of Providence as a whole, and more than one out of three families live in poverty. Conversely, the East Side is the most affluent part of the city of Providence with higher property values, lower unemployment, and higher income levels than the city as a whole. The College Hill area, located on the East Side, for example is 75 percent white, with only five percent of families living below the poverty line. The median family income of the College Hill area is over $100,000. There is no doubt that most of my informants lived and continue to live in markedly racial space and places.

Of participants who moved, many moved from urban community to urban community. Although, the place differed the space remained similar often highlighting the deep and intimate connect between race and class. Informants seemed to maintain that racialized and ethnic minorities, like Cape Verdeans, live in segregated communities and areas with little interracial contact (Massey and Denton, 1989). For example, despite movement to other locale racial and class demographics were alike, housing, and school systems comparable. Some informants described circular urban migratory patterns, such as being born in Pawtucket, growing up in East Providence, only to move back to Pawtucket during adolescence. This phenomenon highlights a reversal in Cape Verdean settlement patterns. Cape Verdeans have gone from voluntary segregation, that is, consciously living away from African Americans so as not to be identified with them, to involuntary segregation, to now living within African American communities.

With the exception of two, Cape Verdean youth interviewed lived and continue to live in urban areas. Interestingly, and what made me realize the importance of space, particularly racialized spaces like the “inner city,” were the two who spent some time growing up in a white suburban enclave in Massachusetts they valorized being from “the hood” or the inner city.

Even those who spent the early part of their childhood in Cape Verde, particularly in the urban cities of Mindelo and Praia, highlighted to me the decrepit conditions into which they were born. As one participant who was born in the area of Praia known as the “Plateau” stated, “I’ve always been from the hood.” Even though many have not returned since leaving or maintain little contact with family members in the islands, many
emphasized the city’s seemingly worsening harsh conditions. These informants almost fetishized the conditions and realities of Cape Verde’s urban enclaves.

Why valorize the hood or “being urban?” Here social scientist Pierre Bourdieu’s definition of “cultural capital” is instructive, for the valorization of “being urban” is a means of bring to bring sociocultural distinction to one’s identity. In a sense, what many Cape Verdean youth have projected and take pride in is a “streetwise” presentation of self. In his book *Streetwise: Race, Class, and Change in an Urban Community* (1992) (See also Anderson 1999) Anderson suggests that being “streetwise” is a way to navigate the harsh realities of urban America. While this can be said for those Cape Verdean youth who spent their lives in urban communities, what does it mean when those who have spent time away from urbanity continue to valorize “being urban?” And why would some participants valorize the harsh conditions of Cape Verdean cities?

I want to suggest that “being urban” is at the vortex of northeast blackness. Acting authentically black is to be of a particular space and, by extension, specifically classed (See Quinn, 2005). In her study on Brazilian and Puerto Rican youth in Newark, New Jersey, Ramos-Zayas (2007) observed that one’s urbanness was often used to authenticate a black identity. The same can be said for the Cape Verdean youth. Many participants pointed out that life is hard in the ghetto. The ghetto in this sense becomes a symbol of authenticity; it becomes the heart of blackness. Life in the streets of Providence, Brockton, or Dorchester becomes a badge of honor, but also an experience that contributes to racial sincerity. A ghetto lifestyle helps connect and forge an imagined community of the oppressed. There is a shared sense of identities in struggle.

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26 I make reference to the northeast, for “being country” as opposed to “being urban,” it can be argued is at the vortex of southern definitions of blackness. Any number of popular hip-hop songs from the south in the past five years is illustrative of this point.
Hegemony and socio-economic conditions create a setting that cannot help but be valorized by its inhabitants.

The valorization of the hood and the dangers of the inner city were proclamations made by Cape Verdean males. They appeared to embody an imaginary conflation of “masculinity” and “blackness” with “being urban.” Some informants, despite having described the harsh realities of their communities took great pride in being “from the Southside” or “from Brockton” as if there exists a “ghetto hierarchy.” Statements from some of my informants such as “It’s tough out there…” almost seemed like badges of honor, a source of intense pride. Taking from reggae artist Damon Marley’s hit record “Welcome to Jamrock” – an album that covers issues such as crime, poverty, and political corruption as part of the harsh reality of “Jamrock,” Marley’s personification of Jamaica, as opposed to the Jamaica advertised as a popular tourist destination - one informant boasted that he was “from New Bedrock [New Bedford].” Describing the difficulties of one’s hood contributes to sustaining a black masculine identity. Evoking street toughness is a form of macho posturing. Unfortunately, such forms of black masculinity fail to challenge marginality and poverty. Further, black masculinity comes across as natural, locking individuals and groups a priori into a genealogy that is fixed and static, not fluid. Black masculinity almost seems to be immutable and intangible in origin. This rigid model allows for little if any flexibility in the construction and performance of black masculinity hence cultural critic and black male feminist Mark Anthony Neal’s (2005) call for a “new black man” (See also Hurt 2006).

David Harvey (1993) notes that place-bound identities are becoming more important, rather than less important. While both federal and state governments have
divested in urban areas over the last 30 plus years, the Cape Verdean youth I interviewed and observed have over invested culturally and emotionally in their neighborhoods. In other words, policies of “benign neglect” seemed to have created a “benign embrace” of dangerous regional localities. As Forman (2002) has shown, to “keep it real” or “represent” in hip-hop is always to represent the hood. This phenomenon in effect has trickled down from hip-hop artists and made its way into the everyday lives of young Cape Verdean men. While I do not doubt the dangerousness of the urban communities from which my informants are from, I do wonder how much my male informants seized on and exaggerated many of the sensational aspects of urban living. How much did they exaggerate what neo-conservatives and gangsta rappers have been portraying for years?

It is here where “being urban” can and may support white supremacy, and reinforce the status quo. The ways in which my male informants described their communities tended to reaffirm prejudicial beliefs about predatory inner-city communities and black males. As a result, they reinforced racial stereotypes held by many whites. However, can we blame these youth for perpetuating racial stereotypes? Can we blame them for keeping stereotypes in circulation? As Harvey explains: “Places in the city are dubbed as ‘dubious’ or ‘dangerous,’ again leading to patterns of behavior, both public and private, that turn fantasy into reality” (Harvey 1993: 7). Not only do stereotypes become “common sense,” thus reinforcing racial hegemony, but stereotypes also become reality. Unlike the gangsta rappers who have capitalized on the marketing of the hood or ghetto (Quinn, 2005), Cape Verdean youth are unable, for all cannot become hip-hop artists, to exploit “being urban” for capital gain. Further, exaggerating the dangers of urban locales has a reductive effect, thereby stripping these communities
of their socio-cultural heterogeneity. In a sense, these communities are far more diverse than their caricatures suggest (Kelley 1997; Jackson 2001).

Sartorial tendencies, as described in chapter seven, such as wearing regionally specific athletic paraphernalia (e.g. Boston Red Sox hats) are further illustrative of this point. In other words, “being urban” is protected and authenticated not just through lived experience and spatial residency, but also through “ghetto fabulous” clothing styles associated with hip-hop culture. The ghetto has become a product, that is consumed, that is worn.

Most of the informants that I talked with, formally or informally, defined themselves as Cape Verdean and by extension black (or African) in terms of the U.S. racial hierarchy. Cape Verdean identities in the Greater Boston area reflect their socialization in low-income urban American environments. Cape Verdean youth grow up in a context where their skin color, phenotype, geographical location, history, and cultural tendencies (performative practices) mark them as “black.” Based on these experiences and being classified as black, Cape Verdeans identify and experience solidarity with groups that they see in the same structural position (with the exception of Latinos). My interviews also suggest that identity is also the result of discourse that is organized by the social relations of production. In other words, there is a close correlation between race and class relations. They realize that racism can just as easily be aimed at them as at African-Americans and other racially marked subjects, that the dominant groups in society seldom differentiate among non-white groups giving race a totalizing effect. Many Cape Verdean youth see themselves as black, but this is to be understood as a racial identity and not to be confused with being African-American (or
black American). Therefore, suggestions that the black/white (non-white) binary is under radical reconstruction are at best questionable.

Intergenerational conflict exists between Cape Verdeans because the two have been raised in different social contexts. Cape Verdean youth move away from their parents’ generation through corporeal contact and social interaction with other black people. Further, they use a different cultural framework to view themselves, which may highlight racial identity and racial solidarity in an ever-increasing globalized world is sometimes better predicted by generation than skin color or phenotype.

In short, “being black” is not only based on popular culture and consumption patterns, but it is also organized around power relations and material conditions. Cape Verdean youth are interpellated, called, into constructed racial categories, categories that only make sense in a racial hierarchy. To be black in a world where white power is normative is to always be structured in hierarchical relation to that power. The racial self involves thinking of oneself in terms of the prevailing concepts and performative practices of the socio-historical order. Although levels of agency are exhibited, these youth exist and act within a set of pre-existing assumptions and constraints. To this end, the following chapters will continue to show how second-generation Cape Verdean youth racialized as black, are affected by race and actively structure their existence around the reality of its normalizing paradigms.
CHAPTER SIX

HIP-HOP MUSIC: NARRATIVES OF CAPE VERDEANS IN AMERICA
(Red, Black, and Green Remix)

In January 2006, Black Entertainment Television’s (BET) music video show 106 & Park’s segment “Wild Out Wednesday,” a weekly talent show, Cape Verdean hip-hop artist D.Lopes, from Brockton, Massachusetts performed “My People,” a song about Cape Verde and his African roots. In one hand D.Lopes held the microphone. In the other hand, he proudly held up the flag of the Republic of Cape Verde. At the conclusion of the show D.Lopes, with a sense of accomplishment having won the talent show, said “I’d like to give a shout out to all Cape Verdeans.”

Approximately two years later, on Wednesday January 6th, 2008 at 6:00pm, I tuned into 106 & Park to see Cape Verdean hip-hop artist “Chachi” Carvalho. Standing next to host “Roxy,” Chachi, from Pawtucket, Rhode Island, outfitted in a beige fedora with a Robert Nesta Marley patch fixed to the side, a black blazer, a green t-shirt with the words “Cabo Verde, Est. 1975” spread across the front, baggy jeans, and dark colored sneakers, performed to a screaming crowd “Like I Do.” Although not as overt in his pride for Cape Verde as D.Lopes’ previous performance on the cable television channel, Chachi made sure to represent Cape Verde. In fact, he will return to 106 & Park this summer to perform “Cape Verdean in America” a song I look closely at in the following chapter. Both of these moments are significant for two reasons. First, for the Republic of Cape Verde and the diaspora to be represented on cable television was a rare moment. Second, and more importantly, for Cape Verdeans like D.Lopes and Chachi to fit seamlessly on the set of 106 & Park, a music video show that features popular hip-hop,
dancehall, reggae, and contemporary R&B videos, illustrates the ease with which young Cape Verdeans traffic in blackness. Their racial authenticity was never questioned. In fact, both D.Lopes and Chachi were successful in winning, by large margins, the popular vote for their respective performances on “Wild Out Wednesdays.”

Identities are discursively mediated constructs. In other words, we come to understand others and ourselves through discourse. For cultural critic Herman Gray, “Music is about making and remaking subjects and, as such, making and remaking identities (Gray 2005: 153).” While scholars have investigated the impact hip-hop culture has on the identities of African-American youth (Clay 2003), little has been done on its impact on Africans and African immigrants in particular (Forman 2001). Therefore, the purpose of this chapter is to map the link between hip-hop culture and Cape Verdean youth identity. This chapter asks the questions: How does hip-hop inform the lived experiences of Cape Verdean youth? And what do hip-hop texts tell us about these lived experiences? The investment of Cape Verdean youth in black popular culture, particularly hip-hop culture is not haphazard nor is it by accident. As cultural critic Tricia Rose has pointed out “We do not invest in cultures randomly; cultural exchanges, desires, appropriations, and affinities always speak to already existing relationships, conscious and otherwise-those we want to reinforce, transform, deny, embrace…The cultural traffic in blackness is part and parcel of a legacy of race…” (Rose 2005: vii).

Before I map the connections between hip-hop and Cape Verdean identity, I offer a brief outline of the history of hip-hop in order to provide a context for my discussion. This is followed by an account of the perceived relationship between blackness and hip-hop by my Cape Verdean informants. Lastly, I investigate the texts of Cape Verdean hip-
hop artists from the Greater Boston area to help define what it means to be young and black in the U.S.

A Brief History of Hip-Hop

Hip-hop, which began in the early 1970s in the South Bronx, New York originally was no more than a leisurely pursuit developed by disaffected Caribbean, Latino, and African-American youth. Hip-hop culture is comprised of four foundational elements or cultural practices: graffiti (aerosol art), turntablism (deejaying), breakdancing (b-BOYing/Br-Girling), and rapping (mcing). Emerging out of the postindustrial ghettos of New York City, hip-hop achieved commercial success in 1979 when the rap song “Rappers’ Delight” by the Sugar Hill Gang gained national exposure. Today, hip-hop is a global phenomenon that connects youth across race, income, ethnicity, and geographic boundaries. In many ways, hip-hop culture today has less to do with a separate and distinct black and Latino perspective and more to do with general youth rebellion and politics. However, race and racial identity, especially blackness, is at the vortex of hip-hop culture; it is intrinsic to racial identification. More than anything hip-hop is still seen as the expression of a black racial identity and the collective angst of black youth. Rap music, in particular, remains dominated by black youth in its local, global, and commercial manifestations.
Whether it was breakdancing, graffiti, rapping, or deejaying, hip-hop culture emerged from years of inner-city violence, unemployment, police brutality, and draconian depictions of inner-city residents. As Tricia Rose (1994) stated, “Hip hop culture emerged as a source for youth of alternative identity formation and social status in a community whose older local support institutions had been all but demolished along with larger sections of its built environment.” In sum, hip-hop culture was the result of a general state of benign neglect.  

The individual typically credited with initiating what later became known as hip-hop culture, is Clive Campbell, better known as DJ Kool Herc. DJ Herc created a new sound, influenced profoundly by Jamaican sound-systems and dub music that overwhelmed listeners in New York City parks, recreational centers, and clubs. Using two turntables, he created extended versions of instrumental recordings, and isolated various instrumental portions of popular songs, what he later called “the breaks.” Further, Herc popularized “scratching,” a sound created by running the record needle across a particular groove at varying speeds. As deejaying became more popular, with the technical advances of Kool Herc and others, MC’s, currently known as rappers, became fixtures at hip hop events. Of all the elements, rap music is presently the form to have had consistent and large-scale commercial success. In addition, breakdancing developed simultaneously with deejaying, while graffiti, the first of the four elements to have developed, consists of an elaborate artistic style using spray paint to eventually

cover private and public space with names (i.e. tags) and complex murals (i.e. pieces). Trains, subway cars, and overpasses have been especially popular canvases for graffiti writers because of their exposure to the viewing public. Although these four elements represent the foundation of hip hop culture worldwide, new forms integral to contemporary forms of hip-hop have developed. These include spoken-word poetry, literature, cinema, language, fashion, business, and knowledge.

As hip-hop culture grew it was still limited to mostly inner-city neighborhoods and was largely void of any form of politics with the exception of the Universal Zulu Nation. In 1973, Afrika Bambaataa established in the South Bronx the Zulu Nation, a collective of hip-hop deejays, rappers, breakdancers, and graffiti writers. The Zulu Nation, which stands for knowledge, wisdom, understanding, freedom, justice, peace, unity, love, work, and fun, created an alternative to gang life and violence. In other words, Bambaataa and others sought to steer estranged youth away from nihilistic practices by cultivating and celebrating the four elements of hip hop culture. To this end, hip-hop became a powerful tool for individual consciousness raising and collective self-determination. In his hit song “Planet Rock” Bambaataa envisioned a world that transcended racial, ethnic, economic, gender, and political problems. “Planet Rock” was a call for global peace, cosmopolitanism, and conviviality. For Bambaataa, hip-hop was an awareness movement.

However as it evolved and extended beyond the ghetto and New York City specifically, it began to articulate and analyze the socio-economic and political factors that led to its emergence: material deprivation, police brutality, etc. Grandmaster Flash and The Furious Five’s hit rap single “The Message” as well as “New York, New York”
pioneered the social awakening of hip hop into a form of social protest. Aside from Afrika Bambaataa and the Zulu Nation, other artists like KRS-ONE have spoken directly against inner-city violence. KRS-ONE’s “Stop the Violence” and his rap project “Self Destruction” are illustrative of this approach. Others including Public Enemy, Brand Nubian, and X-Clan focused on renewing black nationalist and black radical thought. Queen Latifah, MC Lyte to name a few used hip-hop to push gender and sexual politics from the margins of hip-hop into the center, rapping about the devastating effects of patriarchy and misogyny, while encouraging self-empowerment.

Similarly, early Chicano rap superstars from the United States like Kid Frost, Aztlán Nation, A Lighter Shade of Brown, and Aztlán Underground used hip-hop to promote Chicano nationalism and call for the restoration of Aztlán. Others used hip-hop to pay homage to the inspirational Latin icon and revolutionary, Che Guevara, and to criticize American imperialism on the southern frontier. The catchphrase by Aztlán Underground, “We didn’t cross the border, the border crossed us,” is representative of Chicano pride and protest in Chicano hip-hop. Further, hip-hop has provided a space for Chicano youth to articulate a vivid portrayal of Chicano identity and culture, while also illustrating the hardships of the barrio. Over the years Asian Americans have also used hip-hop culture to create commentary and protest on a wide range of topics that have impacted their community from the tension between Korean and blacks in urban America to the heinous murder of Asian American Vincent Chin.
Global Hip-Hop

Hip-hop has now become a global force, forever moving across borders and between nation-states, crossing linguistic and cultural boundaries; a testament to its universal appeal and influence. In many respects Afrika Bambaataa’s “Planet Rock” has come full circle. The growth of hip-hop can be attributed to various global conditions. For instance, the movement of people, the global configuration of technologies, and the electronic capabilities to produce and disseminate information has allowed hip-hop culture to penetrate previously impervious boundaries. To this end, hip-hop has developed in urban areas across the globe (e.g. Paris, Milan, Madrid, Accra, Havana, etc). There is even an emergent and vibrant hip-hop scene in Cape Verde.

Throughout the globe hip-hop continues to emerge under similar socio-economic and political conditions that affected disenfranchised youth in the South Bronx in the 1970s. Like blacks and Latinos in the United States, poor and politically disempowered youth in Europe, Asia, Africa, and Latin America have turned to hip-hop culture as an outlet to confront state structural outsiderism, xenophobia, and racism. Further, hip-hop has provided a means by which youth globally can demand justice and equal opportunity. Hip hop is a cultural form created by and for estranged youth and one in which confronts issues that face racialized minorities. Thus, it is no wonder that it has found acceptance throughout the world.

In Cuba for instance, the appropriation of rap music has allowed for many youth to make criticisms of the Cuban state and the reality of Cuban life, develop alternative strategies for economic survival, and explore new avenues of pleasure and desire, while
also protesting social injustice and racial discrimination at home and abroad. Hermanos de Causa and other Cuban hip-hop groups articulate great dismay about the processes of globalization and commodity fetishization, but also advocate Latin American unity. In France, groups like NTM and Alliance Ethnik chronicle urban life, oppose the national front, and criticize the police, while hip-hop in Italy has allowed youth to express disgust for the mafia and for the plight and hardships of life in southern Italy. Similarly, South African hip-hop has come straight out of the youth movement with an uncompromising political message, as have other expressions of hip-hop in Sierra Leone, Ghana, and Tanzania.

*Hip-Hop Activism*

Today, many hip-hop artists, although not all, see themselves as artists and activists, fusing the various elements of hip-hop culture with politics. Rappers like Dead Prez, Boots Riley of the group the Coup, and Ozomatli’s Raul Pacheco, often form alliances with older activists, like the former Black Panthers. Fred Hampton Jr., son of slain Chicago Panther, along with rappers Dead Prez, are organizing their own political group. Former Panthers Elaine Brown and David Hillard have both worked with hip-hop artists

Beyond protest lyrics, hip-hop has also developed vibrant organizations and political platforms that have enhanced its activist edge, known as hip-hop activism. For example, former member of the Nation of Islam Conrad Muhammad established A Movement for Conscious Hip-Hop Activism Necessary for Global Empowerment.

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(CCHANGE), while the late Lisa Sullivan, who saw hip-hop as having untapped potential for grass-roots organizing, founded the District of Columbia’s Local Initiative, Support, Training and Education Network (LISTEN). Others like hip-hop mogul Russell Simmons founded the Hip-Hop Summit Action Network, which has launched a literacy program with the Urban League and in the past has relaunched, with the NAACP, the “Rap the Vote” campaign. Further, in 2004 Ras Baraka, son of famed poet Amiri Baraka, and others looked to the 1972 National Black Political Assembly as a model for political empowerment. To this end, the National Hip-Hop Convention was born. The Convention marked a high point in the history of hip-hop activism for it tried to activate local networks of hip-hop activists including radio personalities, rap artists, student activists, community organizers, journalists, voting rights advocates, and to work on issues like the prison-industrial complex, education, environmental justice, sexism, and racism on a national scale and even global scale. Hip-hop culture was also central to many of the youth workshops of the World Conference Against Racism and Xenophobia in Durban, South Africa and has made its way into the movement for national and international reparations for colonialism and slavery. In short, due to the emergence of various organizations and activists’ networks, hip-hop culture has both a national and international political agenda that reflects current socio-economic and political tensions.

Despite being filled with contradictions and commercial visibility hip-hop is more than music. It is a social phenomena and process that articulates youth estrangement, economic hardship, and political disenfranchisement. Although hip-hop culture has issues with misogyny, destructive behavior, and commercial cooptation, it also provides a
space to advocate for social justice and equality. Hip-hop is an expression of identity, politics, and the collective angst of black youth.

Black Dialogue: Hip-Hop and Cape Verdean Youth

Embracing blackness and expressing a degree of urban competency is insufficient or inadequate for second-generation youth. Racial belonging needs to be followed by the production and consumption of culture. Despite the multiple sites where blackness is constructed, hip-hop culture takes precedence over other sites. As Clay (2003), Forman (2001), and others have observed, youth perform hip-hop culture as a primary racial signifier for blackness. Hip-hop’s performative practices are used to authenticate a black identity, but they also illustrate a level of racial sincerity, an intent and proactive investment in being black.

For the majority of Cape Verdean youth, “being black” includes adopting a hip-hop style. The clothing is hip-hop inspired, as I will further investigate in chapter seven. The English they speak is inflected with hip-hop terms and verbal stylizations. The fact that most of my informants have adopted a hip-hop style contributes to their “being black” and it illustrates their embrace of a thick conception of blackness, that is, blackness is not only biologically defined, but also culturally defined.

My interest in the connection between hip-hop and the performance of race stems not only from my interest in hip-hop culture in general, but also, and more importantly, the obvious centrality of hip-hop in popular culture in the lives of youth locally and globally. Similar to Somalian teens in North America, Cape Verdean youth in the
Greater Boston area “encounter the hegemonic authority of the hip hop culture” (Forman 2001: 50). To this Robin Means Coleman adds “If you don’t enter into hip-hop culture, then you are open to Huxtable-esque criticisms of facilitating modern racism” (Means Coleman 2006: 86). As Forman states “‘real’ black identities are given voice in complex and often vitriolic terms in hip hop” (Forman 2001: 51). In addition, Paul Gilroy has claimed that hip-hop is “the very blackest of culture – one that provides the scale on which all others can be evaluated” (as quoted in Clay 2003: 1348). If Cape Verdean youth are racialized as black and hip-hop is the blackest culture to date, it is useful to determine the significance of hip hop for Cape Verdean identity. The adoption of hip-hop indexes the shift in Cape Verdean identity from the past to the present. Rather than disassociate themselves with something labeled “black,” as previous generations had, many of my informants embrace hip-hop for its blackness. Many of the Cape Verdean youth that I encountered use hip-hop as a form of cultural capital in everyday settings, which in turn authenticates a black identity and illustrates racial sincerity.

PKS: Is there anything that ties hip-hop with being Cape Verdean?

Juvenal: Being black! The funny thing is the newer generation is more accepting of being defined as black. We live in the same neighborhoods. We go through the same things…Cape Verdeans don’t realize they’re black until they run into the cops. If they have any legal troubles, they’re going to get treated the same way. So what if you have a Portuguese last name. They look at your skin complexion and it’s a rap for you. That’s when Cape Verdeans realize, yo’ we’re really black…As Cape Verdeans we’re always identified as black no matter how light skinned we are. If you’re at a white friends house and something goes missing. Their parents will be like that black kid did it.”

[Pause with contemplation]
Hip-hop is black. Although it’s open to everybody, this is our music. It’s black music. It’s black style. The thing about hip-hop and being black is it almost seems as if you’re supposed to like it. People don’t even question if you really like hip-hop, they just assume. Being black is enough. Being black and listening to hip-hop is authentic enough. People don’t question you.

Luis states, “I first became interested in hip-hop after watching music videos on BET and MTV. I could relate to them; we black people.” He went on to say that he first identified with hip-hop because of the skin color of most hip-hop artists and believes it would have been difficult to relate to hip-hop if the artists were predominately white. For Luis, the social commentary was secondary but no less important than skin color and phenotype. “Hip-hop,” he stated, “shows you that we all go through the same shit. People don’t understand things are hard and difficult.” “Hip-hop reflects,” stated Luis “my background. How the world is. What 50 cent and Lil Wayne talk about speaks to me because it’s hard out there and they know what it’s like to be a black man.” Similarly, Antonio, a 21 year old, from Providence had this to say about hip-hop and being black.

PKS: Why hip-hop? What is it about hip-hop that makes you want to listen to the music and be part of its culture?

Antonio: It reflects me, my mind state as a black man in the United States. The artists talk directly to me. The experiences they talk about resonate with me and my life. Hip-hop parallels my life. It’s connected to growing up poor in South Providence. Mobb Deep, for instance, reflects my mind state.

PKS: Anything else? What else draws you to hip-hop as a culture?

Antonio: I mean hip-hop is black. Hip-hop wouldn’t speak to me if it was about middle-class white America. Black people are pushed into the same areas, regardless of our differences, and hip-hop gets that.

PKS: Do you do anything else besides listen to hip-hop music?
Antonio: I’m a product of hip-hop. Most of what I do is because of hip-hop. The way I dress, speak, even walk is because of hip-hop. The way I shake hands. The way I greet people. Hip-hop influences everything I do.

In her commentary on hip-hop, blackness, and identity, Carmen from Brockton, spoke more about the cultural origins of hip-hop and its relation to her “being black” as reasons for her interest and love for hip-hop. As she stated, “Hip-hop derives from Africa. So that’s why I feel I assimilate better with hip-hop. The roots of hip-hop are African, and since I’m African, its roots match mine.” The adoption of hip-hop culture by many of my informants is a way to cultivate a thick conception of black identity. For many of my informants, physical appearance is not enough. Acknowledgment of one’s African ancestry is also not enough. Thus, a thick black identity is assumed through hip-hop’s performative practices. This highlights being black is not just a matter of common physical appearance and shared ancestry, but a matter of common cultural practices. Racial identity and culture become linked and indistinguishable. For instance, Carmen emphasized the fact that hip-hop is African in origin or at the very least traceable to the culture of African ancestors, thus making her participation in the culture almost automatic and pre-determined. Others stressed the connection between the experiences of black people with oppression and the rich culture they have created out of that context.

In conclusion, partaking in hip-hop culture, via its production and/or consumption contributes to the “blackening” of second-generation Cape Verdean youth in Greater Boston area. There was a sense among many of my informants that since hip-hop is viewed as black culture *par excellence* or African in its origin they must enjoy some aspects of its culture and participate in some of its performative practices. To be black and not participate in hip-hop culture are grounds for questioning racial authenticity.
Thus, to embrace hip-hop illustrates a level of intent of sincerity about being black in the U.S. One is not black, at least in the thick sense of blackness, unless one has embraced the culture is hip-hop.

_Cape Verdean Noise: Rap Music and Cape Verdean Youth Culture_

Hip-hop culture and rap lyrics, in particular, help define what it means to be young and black in the U.S. Since Cape Verdean youth are primarily consumers of hip-hop culture, and as a result are influenced by both the local and global presence of hip-hop I offer the following investigation into the lyrics of some Cape Verdean hip-hop artists, namely “Chachi” Carvalho, D.Lopes, and Tem Blessed. I chose these artists largely due to their popularity among second-generation Cape Verdean youth in the Greater Boston area. Hip-hop music performed by Cape Verdean artists is instructive, for it allows for us to “examine the contexts and processes that produce the narratives commonly found in rap music.” (Neal 1997:134). In other words, what does the music tell us about being Cape Verdean in America?

Too often the idea of indigenization, the reformulation of cultures within sets of specific localisms, is applied to the study of foreign societies and cultures, and not to local cultural communities. Like other cultural forms, hip-hop in the Cape Verdean diaspora, particularly in New England, has been localized and indiginized in relation to the political economic and socio-cultural realities of Cape Verdean youth. Hip-hop speaks to the reality of Cape Verdians in the U.S., past and present.

Both Chachi and D.Lopes, the artists mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, tackle the experience of Cape Verdians in the U.S. with songs like “Cape
Verdean in America” and “My People.” In “My People” D.Lopes speaks not of his struggles in the U.S., but his mother’s struggles related to being a first generation immigrant and a women raising kids in a land with little opportunity for those racialized as black. Similarly, Chachi’s “Cape Verdean in America” speaks candidly of the struggles many Cape Verdean youth experience; the reason why the song was a major success on the New England hip-hop scene. As one informant enthusiastically said to me, “Everything you hear in that song. I’ve been through. I’ve lived.”

In “Cape Verdean in America,” Chachi not only illustrates for its listeners what Cape Verdeans endure in the U.S., he simultaneously uncovers and deconstructs the idea that America is the land of opportunity and freedom. Chachi begins his narrative by racializing the subject:

Yo,’ light-skin, African-blood  
Born in America  
The land of the slave with a raft and flood  
Where they’re quick to leave your ass in a tub  
With no water to drink and grub  
So we trapped in the mud  
Growin’ up pockets were broke  
Kicks were trashed  
So if I couldn’t crack back  
I just kicked some ass…

A catchy, yet descriptive and disheartening, chorus line then follows the first verse:

Do you know what it’s like?  
To be a Cape Verdean in America  
You gotta know how to fight  
Cuz’ the world’s so cold in America  
And they cut off ya’ heat and lights  
If you can’t pay your bills in America  
And you know that ain’t right  
Yup, no, no, no!

131
In verse two, Chachi explains his efforts not to be confused with an immigrant, while also telling Cape Verdeans who desire to come to America that it is not exactly the land of opportunity, rather the land of low-wage employment and soullessness. In Marxian style, Chachi briefly alludes to the fetishization of commodities and by extension alienation. Chachi is keenly aware of patterns of individual competitive materialism and the exploitative relationship between capital and labor, and wishes to bestow this knowledge to the listener. Chachi writes:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Growin' up in Pawtucket had to roll wit' a team} \\
\text{Down to fight anybody tryin’ to call you a green} \\
\text{All guts, no glory when you young on the scene} \\
\text{When my cousin learned English his swagger was mean} \\
\text{U.S. is like a different world} \\
\text{Cuz my cousin couldn’t speak no English} \\
\text{Still get all the girls} \\
\text{Flavaless flavor} \\
\text{TV’s, DVD’s, CD’s, got all that} \\
\text{America ain’t what it seems to be} \\
\text{You lose soul, like fingers, in machinery} \\
\text{Or sweepin’ floors up in Newport Creamery} \\
\text{And everybody’s mama made jewelry}
\end{align*}
\]

Rap music is also used to discuss other issues like violence and deportation; issues both real and dear to the Cape Verdean community in the Greater Boston area. Hip-hop not only describes the realities confronting Cape Verdean youth, it also provides an outlet for coping with said realities. In several songs in his album entitled “The Challenge, Mixtape Vol. 2,” Tem Blessed, a Cape Verdean rapper from New Bedford, Massachusetts articulates a high degree of concern for the violence plaguing black communities. With a slow, methodical, almost depressing beat, Tem Blessed in “4 Black

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29 Chachi’s constant referencing of America, I believe is evidence that he sees alienation as an individual condition, but also a structural concept.
Males Die” tells his listeners about the ubiquity of death plaguing black males throughout the world. In “Too Much Blood” he regrettably informs the listener:

So much killing around me
It’s astounding to see
So much death in this black community
Loosing three homeboys in a month, not uncommon
Foolishly, they increase the police ta’ keep bombin’

In “Welcome to Bedrock” Tem explores the violent conditions of his hometown of New Bedford. According to the FBI’s annual Uniform Crime Report, New Bedford for 2006, had the fourth most reports of violent crimes in Massachusetts. D.Lopes from Brockton, rapping about the life and work of Amílcar Cabral, concludes his tribute to Cabral by stating, “He did everything…So that we could live in this world. Now we out here killing each other.” This final statement is one of urgency and a direct reference to the senseless violence occurring in Brockton, violence that has touched the life of D.Lopes and other Cape Verdean youth in the area.

Chachi and D.Lopes also mention deportation in their lyrical passages. The Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 permitted the deportation of immigrants nationwide convicted of crimes and undocumented status. As a result, deportation became automatic, regardless of the circumstances of the crime, how long the immigrant had been in the U.S. or whether they had reformed since committing the crime. From 1996-2005, 365 Cape Verdeans have been deported from America, with the overwhelming majority due to criminal activity, not undocumented status (United

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Given the harsh realities of daily life, the violence, incarceration, poverty, and deportation, in their lyrics and in conversation with me many Cape Verdean artists evoked the ideas of repatriation, a return to the motherland, namely Cape Verde. Both D.Lopes and Chachi speak nostalgically of a return to Cape Verde. D.Lopes urges all Cape Verdeans to return at some point in their life, for it will bring clarity to one’s identity and position in life. Despite having never visited Cape Verde, Chachi sees the archipelago as his future home. As he stated one night, “I see myself returning to Cape Verde, although I’ve never been, for the American dream is clearly a myth. It does not include black people. There is little room for minorities.” To this end, the islands are viewed not as an accessible holiday where one simply attends clubs, eats katchupa, and visits relatives. Instead, the islands are the ideal backdrop to experiment with ideas of liberation, freedom, and hope. Rap not only allows for the illustration of nostalgic images of the archipelago, it allows Cape Verdean youth to celebrate, preserve, and extend what is uniquely Cape Verdean, namely the political message of national liberation of Amílcar Cabral.

Sampling Cabral: Political Activism, Leadership, and Hip-Hop Culture (Return to the Source Remix)

The politics and black consciousness of the 1960s and 1970s continues to live on via the musical and poetic talents of hip-hop artists. Conscious rap, as it is known, exerts a powerful political influence on its youthful listeners. Hip-hop, as already mentioned,
has become a major vehicle for disenfranchised youth to express their worldview, concerns, and dreams. Conscious rap speaks with a sense of urgency, emerging out of economic depravity, psychological enslavement, and political trickery, while also building on the rich tradition of black poets such as June Jordan, Gil-Scott Heron, Amiri Baraka, and The Last Poets, to name a few.

Throughout the album “The Challenge, Mixtape Vol. 2” Tem Blessed plays with popular and commercialized rap songs. Often keeping the beats and melodies of the originals, Tem Blessed changes the lyrical content of these songs, removing the misogyny and destructive behavior for a politics of freedom and justice. In other words, he takes on the practice of signifyin(g), a rhetorical device used to apply new meanings to old symbols and ideas (See Potter 1995). In describing the art of sampling, a means of signifyin(g), music scholar Joseph Schloss (2004: 138), states “it allows individuals to demonstrate intellectual power while simultaneously obscuring the nature and extent of their agency… It allows producers to use other people’s music to convey their own compositional ideas (emphasis added).”

Rather than have continuing dreams of commercial success and intercourse with R&B singers, like commercial rapper The Game envisioned in his popular music single “Dreams,” Tem Blessed signifies on the hypnotic beat of the original in his song “Dream,” and with a stroke of honesty, self-introspection, and determination states:

I too had dreams of fucking R&B chicks
Now my dream consists of feeding the kids
This world is sick
Packed in like project bricks

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32 The Game. *The Documentary.* Aftermath/G-Unit/Interscope Records, 2004. The beginning of the second verse which Tem Blessed signifies on is as follows: I had dreams of fuckin an R&B bitch like Maya/When I saw dat ass on the front of that King/Read the article in a magazine/She loved gangsters, loved nasty things/ So I’m the glass house havin’ nasty dreams…
Just trying to live like Africans on slave ships
Think, list of dreams
Platinum and diamond scenes
My black brothers and sisters living like kings and queens
Gold mines and mountain springs mold minds to climb high…

This freedom dream, according to Tem Blessed, will be the result of praxis, that is, the actions of a “Black Panther super soldier destroyin’ this bitch ass system.”33 Similarly, Tem signifies on Southern rapper David Banner’s hit single “Play.”34 Banner’s original song is bawdy and course as the chorus illustrates:

Cum girl, I’m tryna get your pussy wet
Work that, lemme see you drip sweat
Cum girl, I’m tryna get your pussy wet
Work that, lemme see you drip sweat
Gon play with it
Gon play with it
Gon play with it
Gon play with it
Gon play with it
Work that clit
Cum girl

Following this raunchy and explicit chorus, David Banner continues to take the listener on a verbal sexual escapade, filled with oral sex, female objectification, and sexual domination. In an ironic twist, with the catchy head-nodding beat of the original, Tem Blessed gives the listener “Run Girl,” which articulates the rappers enthusiasm for the impending revolution, leaving out the misogyny of the popular David Banner original. The chorus of “Run Girl” is as follows:

Run girl, tell someone the revolution has just begun

Run girl, tell someone the revolution has just begun
Run girl, tell someone the revolution has just begun
Run girl, tell someone the revolution has just begun

Following the chorus, Tem Blessed tells the listener about building progressive social institutions for “the people,” institutions prefaced on the ideas of Malcolm X and Huey P. Newton. Given that the CD is a mixtape, “Run Girl” seamlessly blends into the next track “Lace them Boots,” which builds on the ideas and practices explicated in “Run Girl.” Only this time, Tem Blessed does not use a popular commercial beat and signify on its content. Instead, he uses an original beat and employs the poetics of Umar bin Hassan of The Last Poets, a group of poets and musicians from the late 1960s and early 1970s inspired by black nationalism and the politics of the Black Power Movement. Umar’s presence on the track gives the song’s idea of “people power” and revolution historical continuity with the past. His poetics serve as a bridge between generations confronting similar social problems. Umar recapitulates Tem’s call that the revolution has not been completed, that the fight for freedom must continue if people, black people are to achieve full human potential and dignity.

Despite his deep desire for a social revolution, never for a moment does Tem Blessed give the listener the idea that social justice will simply be given nor will revolution be easy. In fact, as the title track alludes, it will be a challenge. Thus, what is in order is a “return to the source,” a reference to a volume containing some of the principal speeches Amilcar Cabral delivered in his last years during visits to the U.S. More generally, Tem’s call is to access the words and wisdom of past freedom fighters like Cabral and Malcolm X in order to provide guidance for the fight for justice in the new millennium. Through his music, he urges Cape Verdean and black youth alike, to
identify closely with the historic and contemporary struggles and learn from their positive and negative experiences. As Chachi expresses in the last verse of “Cape Verdean in America:”

And this is for Amílcar Cabral
Who taught us all how to love
But sometimes we got ta' throw on gloves
And we still need him
We still fightin’ for freedom

As Homi Bhabha has observed, “remembering is never a quiet act of introspection or retrospection. It is a painful re-membering, a putting together of the dismembered past to make sense of the trauma of the present” (Bhabha 1986: xxiii). The referencing of Cabralian politics and use of black national sentiments (and black nationalist like Umar bin Hassan) illustrates a bridging and intersecting of Cape Verdean and African-American identities, showing similarities in the “black experience.” It creates the potential to forge a progressive politics, an identity politics prefaced on the experiences and historical affinities of black people in the U.S. To this end, hip-hop is a space where Cape Verdean youth can and do use identity as a site of socio-political struggle to strategically forge their “imagined communities.” The racialization of Cape Verdean youth also serves as an impetus for political mobilization. Similar to Amílcar Cabral, Tem Blessed, Chachi, and others stand for peace and justice. Their lyrics confront invisible forms of oppression and the dehumanizing racist practices of the U.S. and global economy. As Peter McLaren cogently states, rap urges the creation of
coopertives of resistance, zones of freedom, where strategies and tactics of liberation can emerge…”(McLaren 1997: 176).

Although the experience of being black offers a potential for coalition building and community, we must also be wary of the impact and social force of hip-hop, for music in itself is not politically transgressive; to offer a critique of the material social relations of exploitation is not enough. Music only becomes transgressive when it is inscribed in the actions and activities of people and groups. Despite their commercial success, albeit on a local and regional level, the importance of building real social institutions has not been lost in the lyrical finesse of Cape Verdean rappers like Chachi and Tem Blessed. Both, along with other Cape Verdean artists, have been central in establishing and participating in grassroots organizations in the Greater Boston area. Hip-hop has in many respects filled the void of not having a large mass-based social movement. For instance, Chachi has founded Beat Box Studios, a place where aspiring artists can record and learn about the art of rapping and turntableism, and is the creator of Peace Fest. According to a flyer distributed during the 4th annual Rhode Island Hip Hop Peace Fest (2007):

Peace Fest was an idea created to raise awareness about the dangers of gun violence in our music and in our communities and how it affects our everyday lives. By combing the visual arts community, local media and the local community of musicians we would be spreading the message through the voices that create change and really make a difference. Everyone involved has their own story to tell…we will not stand aside and watch violence ruin our neighborhoods and poison our youth. We celebrate, life through music and shed positive light on hip hop as a culture…The goal of this event is to enlighten, enrich, educate and motivate all those involved to join us in the continuous struggle to stop

35 For McLaren, “rap[also] helps to communicate symbols and meanings and articulates intersubjectively the lived experience of social actors. The ontological status of the…rapper resides in the function of the commodity of blackness, but a certain quality of blackness that is identified through expressive codes of the rapper is the “inner turmoil” of the oppressed black subject of history (McLaren 1997: 171).
senseless violence and encourage those around us to spread a little love
(emphasis added).

Tem Blessed has been affiliated with 3rd Eye Unlimited of New Bedford, a non-profit youth organization. Third Eye’s vision is to:

1. Build a movement to improve the community, centered around the principles of economic and social equality, with young people being an integral part of that movement in roles of leadership and action.
2. Empower youth to think critically and independently, therefore fostering a heightened understanding of themselves, their peers, and important societal issues.
3. Build leadership skills by providing valuable experience in organizing, video production, event planning, and community outreach.
4. Create positive activities for inner city youth that aim to promote their talents and bring people together in a safe, energetic atmosphere.
5. Raise awareness in our community by advancing the positive and progressive aspects of the Hip Hop culture, which challenges the social status quo, and offers an array of diverse and unique ideas to society. We strive to give young people a chance for their ideas to be developed and their voices to be heard, regardless of race, creed, or religion.
6. Provide forums that allow young people to express themselves, to communicate with other youth, and to create art that is reflective of themselves and their environment.36

Not all Cape Verdean artists are engaged in progressive politics. Some fall victim to hegemonic racial stereotypes and hyper-materialism. While D.Lopes attempts to communicate a level of social consciousness, he also attempts to capture the themes, idioms, and iconography of the pimp and the playa, as do other Cape Verdean artists. To this end, white supremacy has become so hegemonic that it has even annexed and colonized the blackest of cultural forms, hip-hop. Thus, hip-hop as a site of resistance is put into question— the very means by which some youth asserted their humanity is limiting. As Andrea Queeley has observed, “Black performers have always been

pressed to perform the Blackness of the white imagination, and that Blackness is most often in the service of white supremacy” (Queeley 2003: 4). Further she states, hip-hop helps to reinforce “the naturalization of black criminality that is deeply rooted in the ideology and economy of the United States (Queeley 2003: 9).” Looking at, and listening to Cape Verdean youth hip-hop, one is struck by its duality, its two faces: that of voyeuristic spectacle and community creation.

As empirical evidence shows, hip-hop culture is important and has special meaning for Cape Verdean youth. It allows Cape Verdeans to celebrate their Cape Verdean heritage while absorbing African-American cultural markers. Simultaneously, hip-hop is used to identifying with the struggle of “being black.” Hip-hop for artists, like Tem Blessed, are political and empowering, for hip-hop provides a space to give voice to their struggles, their experiences with racism and injustice. Hip-hop is a way to link struggles across borders; hip-hop allows for the framing of black history and political struggle. Cape Verdean youth privilege hip-hop as a site for political information about their racialized selves. In other words, young cape Verdeans are turning to hip-hop and other forms of popular culture in lieu of narratives available in traditional institutions. As de Certeau (1984) has observed popular culture is a resource used to make sense of the world. In the end, being black in 2008 is intrinsically related to hip-hop culture. Hip-hop culture and the lyrical content of rap music indexes a shift in the racial identification of Cape Verdean youth in the Greater Boston area. In the next chapter I turn my attention to fashion, style, and bodily adornments.
CHAPTER SEVEN

Cape Verdean Youth Fashion: Identity in Clothing 37

Several hundred festival attendees are standing, sitting, and roaming within the festival confines; an erected makeshift fence. Over twenty clothing and food vendors are participating in the 2007 Providence Cape Verdean Independence Festival, creating a cacophony of sound, smell, and color. The smell of grilled food (charred chicken in particular) is thick, with hints of cachupa, and fresh coconut. Traditional and modern forms of Cape Verdean music is piped through the large speakers at decibel levels high enough to disrupt conversations taking place between festival goers. Old and new Cape Verdean flags are everywhere. Both are being flown above vendor tents and tables. They are being sold, as either flags or imprinted on shirts. As the attendees make their way through the sea of vendors, young Cape Verdean men wear baseball caps twisted to the side. Many are draped in the green, red, and gold of the old Cape Verdean flag; the flag is being used as a head-wrap, as a bag, for shorts, and it is imprinted on t-shirts...Aside from flags being worn on the body, the latest in hip-hop fashion is exhibited. Young Cape Verdean men are wearing oversized basketball jerseys, ultra-voluminous jean shorts, and big sunglasses. Many have their hair braided (i.e. in cornrows). Some are sporting fads. Of the clothing name brands I can visibly identify, all are popular within hip-hop, such as LRG, Rocawear, Saucony, ECKO Unlimited, etc. Platinum and silver jewelry is popular, particularly long necklaces with crosses...Tattoos are also prominently displayed on arms of many Cape Verdean youth...

(Field Notes, July 2007)

Looking over my field notes from festivals, like the one described above, and various other cultural events (e.g. music concerts and college student group events), I was struck by how much space I dedicated to describing what people were wearing, how they were wearing their clothes, the colors and size of their clothes, and the name brands the wearer fancied. The clothing, hairstyles, jewelry, sneakers, and tattoos of Cape Verdean

37 Initially, questions of fashion and style were simply going to play a peripheral role in understanding Cape Verdean identity. However, after attending many events, the importance of fashion and style became increasingly noticeable.
youth had a communicative quality to them in that the sartorial tastes of my informants and those observed from afar ‘said’ something to me. They communicated to me who they were, or at the very least, who they wanted you to think they were. From this, I began to realize the centrality of the clothed and decorated body in constructing and maintaining an identity, particularly a racial and ethnic identity. Consequently, fashion is never innocent and is more than mere appearance (Barnard 2002).

The body as a social canvass has been called “the symbolic stage upon which the drama of socialization is enacted” (Turner 1980: 12). The body adorned with its clothing and other sartorial adornments has semiotic value and social import. Using participant-observation and textual analysis, this chapter investigates popular, political, and economic meanings assigned to treatments of the body. I look at the ways in which Cape Verdean youth in the Greater Boston area construct individual and social identities via fashion. More simply, this chapter considers fashion and clothing as an important social sphere of identity construction. This chapter highlights a semiotic web and performative practices where local, national, and global identities are negotiated and constructed. To this end, this chapter asks a series of questions about the commitments brought to notice by clothes and fashion. First, how important is fashion in the creation and maintenance of identity? Second, how does the powerful and hegemonic racial coding of clothes and style affect the use of clothing by Cape Verdean youth? Lastly, what do the clothes Cape Verdean youth wear say about who they are or who we think they are?

After briefly looking at fashion as a form of communication and hip-hop fashion, I turn my attention to the sartorial practices of Cape Verdean youth. I look specifically at the wearing of the Cape Verdean flag and images of Amilcar Cabral on t-shirts. I then
turn my attention to the intersections between fashion and masculinity and the economic space Cape Verdean fashion has created for Cape Verdean entrepreneurs.

Fashion as Communication

Fashion is a primary symbol in the construction and reconstruction of identity. It implies a move away from clothing as necessity, to clothing as a display of identity. Fashion is dynamic in that it allows individuals to express individual and group difference, while also allowing conformity with a group. In other words, fashion is an intensely personal phenomenon since creates difference, yet, simultaneously, it is an important social phenomenon in that it creates solidarity; it allows personal values to be expressed at the same time norms are followed (Simmel 1904). For instance, wearing a National Basketball Association (NBA) authentic basketball jersey conforms to a current fashion trend within hip-hop culture. Yet, wearing a NBA jersey specific to the wearer’s hometown and with one’s last name imprinted on the back, as opposed to the last name of a real NBA player, creates a level of distinction among those who wear NBA jerseys within hip-hop culture.

Fashion is a form of non-verbal communication. The dressed body communicates our personal and social identities (Barnard 2002; Barthes 1967; Calefato 2004; Damhorst, et al 2005; Eco 1972; Lurie 2000). It expresses our thoughts, feelings, and desires, as well as, group membership (Hebdige 1979). Fashion is revealing, in that it separates people into groups – black, white, rich, poor, hip-hop, goth, prep, to name a few. Sartorial practices become signs that say something about the wearers, allowing the wearers to communicate with their clothes. As Hendrickson has observed “the body
surface is an especially compelling indexical sign. Bodily signifiers present an ever-present semiotic possibility for expressing identity and intention, for asserting the legitimacy of the status quo or subverting it” (Hendrickson 1996:14-15). One way to subvert the status quo is to challenge the conventional uses of clothing, to recontextualize them (Hebdige 1979). For instance, young Cape Verdeans may wear army fatigues and Timberland boots, known as “Tims,” to “make clear the severity of the urban storms to be weathered” (Rose 1994: 38). In this case, fatigues and boots are still used for ‘war,’ but not a war fought overseas, rather one fought daily in urban and racialized settings throughout the U.S.

Further, the meanings a person attributes to clothing and fashion is based on his or her socialization within a particular historical and cultural context (Hebdige 1979). In other words, fashion is context dependent. If we go back to the NBA jersey, we can see that the jersey worn by an NBA player on the basketball court conveys the occupational identity of the wearer, while an NBA jersey on the shoulders of someone in the arena who stands watching a live basketball performance, communicates the wearer is a fan, and quite possibly a fan of a particular player.

In short, fashion and clothing constitute signifying systems in which a social order is constructed and communicated (Barthes 1967). High-end acquisitions such as Armani suits and Salvatore Ferragamo shoes might communicate to the observer that the wearer is upper class, while clothes from Walmart might communicate the opposite, that the wearer is working-class or poor.38 For the purposes of this study, what is important is the racial structuring of a society often calls forth expressions of race and ethnicity via

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38 I am not suggesting that all working class and poor people shop at Walmart, nor am I saying all wealthy people wear Armani suits and Salvatore Ferragamo shoes. However, the price discrepancy between shoes from Walmart, for instance, and shoes by Ferragamo suggest that only wealthy people can afford the latter.
fashion. Racial identity often demands one dress in a particular way; markers such as skin color and phenotype are not enough in authenticating one’s racial identity. Like to gender, race and ethnicity as social performances involve the adoption of certain accessories and style of dress in order to accomplish race (Butler 1990; Garfinkel 1967). Falling back on the notion that hip-hop is the blackest of cultures, as explicated in chapter five, to be young and black is to dress within the confines of hip-hop culture. In doing so, one establishes racial authenticity and racial sincerity. Fashion becomes significant because it communicates who is and who isn’t authentic and sincere.

*Hip Hop Fashion: An Overview*

Over the centuries, fashion has been one of the ways in which people of the African diaspora have created their sense of self, sense of community, and sense of place. Bodily practices have been almost as important as political manifestos in the struggle for freedom, agency, and identity. Often political ideologies are accompanied by sartorial practices. Thus, there is an added importance to the ways in which black people in diaspora have dressed and adorned themselves. For example, black cultural nationalism promoted by Mulana Karenga and other cultural nationalists of the 1960s and 1970s advocated for natural hairstyles (e.g. the Afro) and African-styled clothing, such as the dashiki’s. In many ways, members of the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense are known more for wearing black leather coats and black berets than for their political radicalism. Today, hip-hop fashion is an extension of the ways in which blackness is conveyed. To be black and young is to dress in accordance with the sartorial ethos of hip-hop culture.
Hip-hop fashion expresses the ideas and attitudes of hip-hop culture. Hip-hop style is, and has been for over 30 years, an extension of black style and fashion. It is a style that has appropriated and experimented with other taste cultures. In the 1980s, hip-hop fashion included sportswear brands such as Le Croq Sportif and Adidas. Clark shoes, namely Wallabees, and Adidas shelltoe sneakers were the footwear of choice, while popular accessories included Kangol bucket hats and heavy gold jewelry. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, “African cool” replaced the sartorial practices of the early 1980s. Hip-hop artists drew from the black cultural nationalism of the 1960s and 1970s and appeared in videos and concerts wearing African jewelry and clothing. Along with African cool, “gangsta” styles emerged on the West coast. Central to the “gangsta” style were Dickies pants, white t-shirts, and black Los Angeles Raiders Starter jackets and baseball caps. In the mid-1990s, baggy clothing became the norm. Members of the hip-hop community wore ultra-voluminous shirts, athletic jerseys, and pants. Platinum jewelry also replaced gold as the metal of choice in hip-hop fashion. Today, the baggy style remains, as does diamond-encrusted platinum jewelry. However, recent developments in hip-hop fashion include the reemergence of the styles of the 1980s and African cool. It is possible to attribute the renewed interest in African fashion and style to the increase in African immigrants to the U.S. It can also be attributed to the popularity of Jamhuri Wear, a brand from Tanzania popularized by Jay-Z, as well as to the rise of Senegalese hip-hop artist Akon and his Konvict Clothing line. Also, in the late 1990s, hip-hop fashion labels emerged. Notable labels included LRG, Enyce, FUBU, Phat Farm, Baby Phat, ECKO, and others. In the end, hip-hop fashion is about mixing street fashion with high fashion. It is about excess and style. As Rose (1994) suggests, the
“[e]xceptionally large gold and diamond jewelry (usually fake) mocks, yet affirms the
gold fetish in Western trade…[while] Gucci and other designer emblems cut (sic) up and
patch-stitched to jackets, pants, hats, wallets, and sneakers in custom shops, work as a
form of sartorial warfare” (Rose 1994: 37-8). Whether it is chunk gold jewelry or $500
retro Nike Air Force One’s, excess has always been part of hip-hop fashion and can be
read as a means of transcending the limitations of life and racial and class inequality.

Regardless of time period, as sociologists Robin Chandler and Nuri Chandler-Smith have observed, “Hip-hop folks (hip-hop heads) are defined by their gear” (2005:
231). Style is of the utmost importance to creating and sustaining a subcultural identity
(Clarke 1976). Like fashion in general, hip-hop fashion has its own structure. Youth
never ‘just dress,’ but ‘wear’ within a set of norms and forms that are considered
appropriate (Barthes 1967). Wearing within the fashion structure of hip-hop is as much
about what one wears as how one wears it.

Throughout the years the shades and shapes of hip-hop fashion have changed;
there exists an ongoing redefinition of what it means to be hip-hop and by extension what
it means to be black, through how the body is dressed. Black youth are always looking
for ways to subvert mainstream clothing. Yet, hip-hop fashion has become mainstream,
it is a prominent part of popular fashion and the cultural barometer for what is cool and
hip among youth globally. Today, hip-hop fashion defines the look of global youth
culture, which includes boutique clothing, baggy designer jeans, expensive athletic
apparel (e.g. professional basketball and football jerseys), fitted baseball capes, sneakers
(both retro and new styles), tracksuits, and goose-down winter coats. A quick glance at
Complex Magazine, The Source, XXL, and other media outlets such as music videos
immediately gives one an idea of the overall, and current, fashion system of hip-hop. In
the end, the highly distinctive and ever-changing styles created by black youth of the
African diaspora have been influenced by the desire to forge a distinct identity and
strengthen group solidarity.

The Sartorial Practices of Cape Verdean Youth

The sartorial practices of Cape Verdean youth in the Greater Boston area illustrate
the importance of fashion in the ongoing process of identity formation. Based on hours
of research it has become clear through countless hours of formal and informal
observation that fashion allows for the drawing of boundaries and construction of
narratives of self and community. Cape Verdean youth’s emphasis on their blackness in
interviews as well as their interest in hip-hop music is matched by the clothing worn and
body adornments they fancy. Through these performative practices they are performing
race, more specifically blackness. They are authenticating a black and Cape Verdean
identity. To be young, black, and Cape Verdean in the Greater Boston area is to dress
within a specifically defined fashion system influenced by hip-hop culture.

The first time I met 18 year-old Juvenal, with his milk-chocolate skin tone and
low cut Caesar fade, he was wearing baggy Mecca blue jeans, a large stylish aqua-blue
Polo shirt, and white-and-aqua blue Nike Air Force One’s. The next time I saw Juvenal
his style had changed little, only this time the aqua-blue and white were replaced with
black and gray. As I continued to see him at music concerts and cultural festivals, he
continued to wear baggy pants and loose shirts. His sneakers always matched his shirt.
Similarly, Luis, with his light coffee colored skin and cornrows was consistently wearing
baggy jeans, ultra-voluminous t-shirts, and platinum jewelry. The clothing labels he fancied were always graphically imprinted on the front or back of his t-shirts. Labels included LRG, Konvict Clothing, G-Unit to name a few. Other informants, like 21 year-old Soraya, used on hip-hop fashion in her effort to adorn her body, despite disliking the music and other aspects of the culture. For instance, when I first met Soraya she was wearing studded Apple Bottoms\(^39\) capri pants, a gold colored studded Apple Bottoms tube top, and matching gold pumps. Weeks later, Soraya was wearing light brown Baby Phat Bermuda shorts, low-top white and pink Nike Air Force One’s, and a pink Baby Phat scoop neck t-shirt. It was clear that hip-hop fashion had an influence on the sartorial practices of Cape Verdean youth.

Similar to uniforms and dress codes, the hip hop outfit allows for people to be identified and classified; the unknowable becomes knowable. Here Pierre Bourdieu’s (1984) theory of class reproduction and cultural tastes is useful. He suggests that social structures are complex systems of class cultures comprising sets of lifestyles and cultural tastes, which in turn reproduce class distinction. This can be seen when we look at more contemporary forms of fashion, for not only is class reproduced, so too is race. Bourdieu’s theory also illustrates that through class reproduction the status quo is maintained. In other words, social structures are maintained over time through consumption of cultural goods. Blackness is maintained through the consumption of cultural goods associated with essential forms of blackness. Cape Verdean youth adopt the clothing behavior of black America. This can be attributed to the areas in which many Cape Verdean find themselves living, that is, in close proximity with African-Americans. Cape Verdeans then have little opportunity to deviate from the American

\(^{39}\) Apple Bottoms is a hip-hop clothing line created by rapper Nelly.
racialization process and create an identity of their choice. Nonetheless, Cape Verdean youth exhibit tendencies for creating difference within blackness.

Wearing the Flag and Cabral on the Body

While authenticating a black identity through the manifestation of hip-hop fashion, many of my informants also used clothing to communicate and create value in being Cape Verdean. For example, as one informant revealed, while wearing an oversized PAICV-imprinted t-shirt and baseball cap, “This [pointing to his shirt] represents whom I am: a Cape Verdean in America… It also shows where I’m from. It symbolizes my mentality…it reflects my love for hip hop.” Due to the difficulty of being black in contemporary times, Cape Verdean youth seek ways to construct and maintain a sense of self and dignity.

Although there are various ways in which my informants could exhibit being Cape Verdean, many chose to adorn their bodies with the Cape Verdean flag and/or images of Amílcar Cabral. The wearing of the flag, while a common performative practice at festivals (as noted in the epigraph), was also observed outside the context of Independence Day festivals in the Greater Boston area. Since independence, the national flag of Cape Verde has changed. During the war of liberation until 1992, the flag of Cape Verde was the same as the revolutionary party’s of the PAIGC and PAICV. The original flag featured a pointed black star, two corn stalks, a seashell, while green, yellow, and red served as background colors (See Appendix C). In 1992, following the electoral victory of the MpD, a new flag appeared. The colors went from the pan-African
colors of the original to red, blue, and white and the black star, seashell, and corn stalks were replaced with a circular arrangement of ten gold stars.

In performing blackness, many Cape Verdean youth have turned to the old flag as a statement of personal loyalty to Cape Verde’s African heritage, the war of liberation, and the archipelagoes’ spiritual leader Amílcar Cabral. In discussing the national flags of Cape Verde one informant stated:

As you may know “the powers that be” changed our beloved Cape Verdean flag back in the early 1990’s. There are a lot of political reasons for why they did this. One is to align Cape Verde with the European Union. My opinion is that the original flag that Amílcar Cabral designed was more than adequate; it was truth and wisdom towards a united Africa. The African colors in the old flag were significant; African colors reflect our people and our history. Red for the Blood, Green for the land, Gold for the natural resources found in Africa and black for the people and the essence.

Another anxiously stated:

The change of the color of our flag symbolizes the prostitution of the Cape Verdean government and disrespect for our great hero, Amílcar Cabral. They want to change our African heritage. That flag that looks like the European Union flag is not mine; my flag is what Cabral designed with African colors.

Wearing the old flag on the body expresses an understanding of the relationship between individual and polity, between Africa and the diaspora. The importance of the flag in the imagination of Cape Verdean identity is that it signifies the struggle to choose representations of the polity and assign lasting meaning to them. Wearing the old flag on the body is a central symbol through which a Cape Verdean polity and identity has come to be imagined; it has come to be imagined as an African country, as a nation of black people. While some resist wearing the new flag, others have chosen to wear both the old and new flag. As 23 year-old Manny from Brockton stated:
I have tattooed on my back both the old and new flag. The new flag looks, well, new and the old flag is tattered and torn. I really don’t like the new flag, but it’s our flag...I prefer the old flag. It represents who we really are and the struggle that we have gone through.

Whether it is the old or new flag, flags on the body are not merely sartorial accessories that go well with sneakers. Rather the Cape Verdean flags as a individual bodily symbols tie the wearer to a wider collectivity of people, that is, the Cape Verdean diaspora. In an effort not to dismiss the new flag, despite its lack of popularity among second-generation Cape Verdean youth, a third flag has emerged in the U.S., which reflects the growing imagination of Cape Verdean youth identity. This flag, which utilizes the framework of the new flag, but the pan-African colors of the old (Appendix C). This flag, whether held in the hand or draped over the body is one example of the symbolic (re)construction of Cape Verdean identity. Flags often represent historical unity. However, both the old and new flag, and the emergent third flag, reflect and perpetuate an internal division in the Cape Verdean community. A particular flag membership implies a commitment to a particular reading of Cape Verdean history and identity.

Similarly, t-shirts with the image of Amílcar Cabral on the front have become popular among Cape Verdean youth. Years ago one would be hard pressed to have found Cabral t-shirts. Today, they are ever-present and Cape Verdean youth are largely responsible. They celebrate a specific racial, ethnic, and political identity in which Cabral is significant.

Amílcar Cabral t-shirts are not so much about the creation of value, but the reproduction of value, the reproduction of his importance to Cape Verdean freedom and self-pride. Similar to the image of Argentinean revolutionary Ernesto “Che” Guevara,
Cabral shirts communicate the idea of fighting the oppressive and racist system, a system that confronts Cape Verdean youth in the U.S. Cabral has become a symbol of romantic rebellion.

Furthermore, the wearing of Cabral t-shirts simultaneously reproduces value in being African and in being black, value in African diasporic relations, relations that Cabral was keen to have observed between colonized African people and oppressed African-Americans (See Cabral 1973). Cape Verdean youth also include other, albeit more universally recognizable black cultural heroes into their sartorial practices, such as Malcolm X and Robert Nesta Marley. Similar to Cabral, both Malcolm X and Bob Marley were political rebels and have become counter-cultural icons that link black struggles throughout the diaspora, strengthening imagined communities.

Another common sartorial practice of Cape Verdean youth is the use of pan-African colors in shirts, hats, jewelry, and footwear. Pan-African colors come in two different color sets: red, black, and green and gold, green, and red. The former was popularized by black nationalist Marcus Garvey and later by the nation of Ethiopia. In general, both color sets represent the socio-political worldview of Pan-Africanism, an ideology that seeks to unify both native Africans with those in diaspora (See Esedebe 1994). The colors are symbolic of the global African community, those in diaspora. The use of pan-African colors is especially pronounced among Cape Verdean youth. These colors are dialectically symbolic, for they represent the old flag and the pan-African colors. The colors bring historical depth and continuity to being black and Cape Verde, for they are rooted in the black national traditions and the war of liberation.
All efforts at self-representation employ popularized symbols and images of Cape Verdeanness and blackness. Many of the diasporic resources (or symbols) that define blackness are universally recognizable, while those specific to being Cape Verdean are slightly more obscure, however they do reference symbols of recognition. In other words, the imagery of Amilcar Cabral is not usually left alone, to stand for itself. Rather, it is paired with a symbolic cognate, for instance Malcolm X. Two sets of symbols and symbolic rituals are integrally connected in the construction of Cape Verdean youth identity. At the same time, they serve fundamentally different functions. One set of symbols and symbolic rituals act to demarcate the character and nature of the Cape Verdean community, while simultaneously and strategically distancing it from the African American community. In contrast, the second set of ritual performances are instrumental in the performance of blackness and in developing and sustaining political and strategic links to the African American community more specifically and the African diaspora more generally.

Put in the context of hip-hop culture this all makes sense. Flags on the body and Cabral shirts do not express a depersonalized sartorial style, but the intimate relation, whether real or imagined, to the collectivity. Cape Verdean sartorial style illustrates, as Simmel (1904) suggested over a century ago, the possibility for individual agency and the probabilities of belonging to a wider community and social world. Fashion symbols are indices of one’s commitment to the group, its history, its future. The ubiquitous use of these symbols suggests a desire on the part of Cape Verdean youth for greater social cohesion and group affiliation.
The fashion styles of both Cape Verdean men and women reflect popular culture in general, but Cape Verdean men seem attuned to the styles expressed within hip-hop culture. It seems that hip-hop styles resonate more with macho mythologies and in doing so young Cape Verdean men tend to gravitate toward such styles. Hip-hop fashion connotes a racialized masculinity that is the ultimate definition of cool. And as Brian Wilson has noted, “black youth are more likely than white youth to define masculine identities through fashion” (Wilson 1996: 417). Cultural critic Mark Anthony Neal points out, “hip hop has been a primary site for the articulation of distinct forms of black masculinity: urban, hyper-masculine, hyper-sexual, pseudo-criminalized” (Neal 2005: 129).

Amilcar Cabral shirts not only symbolize peace, revolution, and humanity, as described above, but also lend themselves to the construction of a masculine identity. Cabral is seen by Cape Verdean youth as the father of the nation and as a man par excellence. He is the iconic symbol of Cape Verde and Cape Verdean manhood, just as Malcolm X and Huey P. Newton were for many African American men in the 1960s and 1970s. The connection between manhood and revolution was verbally expressed by many Cape Verdean youth. Further, male participants never, formally or informally, acknowledged the role of women in the revolution, nor did the women I interviewed.

40 Both Malcolm X and Huey P. Newton still hold sway over black youth, but their symbolic significance was no doubt at its apogee in the 1960s and 1970s.
41 This omission should be seen has a result of historical neglect. Historians have, in fact, noted the role of women in the revolution. See Stephanie Urdang. 1979. Fighting Two Colonialisms: Women in Guinea-Bissau. New York: Monthly Review Press.
The Cape Verdean revolution, like other revolutions before and after the war of liberation, is and continues to be seen as a masculine affair, something undertaken literally and/or metaphorically by men, and what better way to illustrate ones manhood than by wearing a t-shirt imprinted with Cabral’s image. Other men of observable prominence in the wardrobe of Cape Verdean men included rappers Tupac Shakur and Biggie Smalls and fictional gangster and hip-hop icon Tony Montana of the movie *Scarface* played by Al Pacino. For Cape Verdean youth the importance of such men goes beyond a mere popular culture embrace. Rather it illustrates the embrace of a hyper-masculinity (See Hurt 2005). For instance, as Greg Dimitriadis (2001) suggest, Tupac is seen as “an invincible outlaw who settles his problems swiftly and violently, providing feelings of physical invulnerability to an often intensely vulnerable population (Dimitriadis 2001: 102-03)”. Further, these figures serve as metonyms for the experiences of Cape Verdean youth (Perry 2004). In other words, Tupac, Biggie Smalls, and others bring the male experience to light.

Aside from Cabral t-shirts, other sartorial images that are important are animals, particularly animals of strength and power. More specifically, the image of the lion was often exhibited in the sartorial styles of many Cape Verdean youth. As one participant clearly stated, “The lion represents power and that’s why I have lions on my shirts, pants, and sneakers…I got lions on everything.” Seconds later he added, “Can you think of anything stronger?” To this end, the lion becomes a metaphor of physical power and control that is often identified with the male body. Young Cape Verdean men, especially those linked to the norms and values of hip hop culture, seem reluctant to project an image that deviates from this projected masculine norm. Given that animal prowess and
masculinity are connected, clothing with animal imprints that fit within the hip hop fashion system are on the whole easy to find. For example, LRG Streetwear Clothing, Ecko Unlimited, and Tuff Gong Clothing all produce garments that feature animals like rhinoceros and lions.

The utilization of masculine imagery on clothing is an attempt to authenticate a black male identity. In the end, young Cape Verdean men fashion their masculine persona through the creative use of symbolic and metonymic accessories. If anything can be gleaned from this, is that the insistent embrace of authenticity, is especially characteristic of struggles to define masculinity.

*Cape Verdean Entrepreneurialism: Fashion and Economic Space*

Fashion has also contributed to creating a culturally mediated economic space. In order for clothing to have value both within the hip-hop community and the Cape Verdean community, wearers must have the appropriate dress and bodily adornments. Thus, many entrepreneurs create clothing that conforms to current hip-hop fashion trends. Yet, these entrepreneurs are careful to balance their fidelity to Cape Verdean culture with carefully managing its appeal to hip-hop culture writ large. At Cape Verdean cultural festivals, hip-hop gatherings, and entrepreneurial websites, t-shirts, hats, and flags are sold to cater to Cape Verdean youth who desire hip-hop style with Cape Verdean flair. As one clothing entrepreneur proudly and boldly states on his website, “You’ll be the freshest banner for Cape Verdean culture!” With a clear hip-hop reference to the importance of place, the site goes on to state, “Let’s celebrate our culture. Shout out to all
the Cape Verdeans in the states and all over the world! Wear your style, doesn’t matter where you’re at, represent where you’re from.” For many young Cape Verdean entrepreneurs one of the best ways to represent, to show off Cape Verdean pride, is to purchase their apparel. To this end, culture has become a commodity to be bought and sold.

While there is not a wide array of clothing styles available to potential buyers, there are explicit and implied gender-specific styles. As one young entrepreneur stated, “We need to keep our women looking good and the men fresh.” The styles of dress for men include short and long sleeve t-shirts and fitted baseball caps. Although women could purchase the aforementioned styles, the available sizes, fit, and colors of the shirts and caps are gender-oriented. In keeping with the current hip hop trend of oversized shirts for men, XXL and XXXL sized shirts are common, while small and medium sized shirts are absent. Colors include black, army green, blue, white, and gold. Further, much of the clothing reflects a combination of pan-African colors, red, black, and green. Custom-designed Cape Verdean-specific sneakers offered by Cape Verdean entrepreneurs are also available only in large sizes.

Styles for women are limited. Spaghetti-strapped tank-tops, form-fitting t-shirts, and tight short-shorts are the only possibilities. Most of the featured apparel is light in color; light pink, yellow and white with pink lettering. Tank-tops and shorts alike tend to be small and form fitting so as to accentuate the wearer’s body type. Noticeably omitted from the styles available for women are the pan-African colors of the red, black, and green. As one participant informed me, “those colors aren’t feminine…that’s why most


Here I read “our” as referring to Cape Verdean women, not as a personal possession.
girls can be seen wearing the new flag…those colors [red, white, and blue] are feminine.”
In this case, femininity, it seems, trumps ethnicity. Also, women’s bodies, adorned with
the new flag, may signify the creation of a new nation. When asked about the limited
options for Cape Verdean women, one Cape Verdean entrepreneur quickly replied,
“Women don’t wear t-shirts and hats!” There is some truth to this statement, in that any
quick glance through a hip-hop culture magazine or visit to any of the number of hip-hop
clothing lines that cater to women will show that t-shirts and hats are not part of the
current fashion trends for women. Rather more tailored and complex garments are
featured such as bustiers, ruffled blouses, sequin-studded jeans, and halter jumpsuits.

To maximize profits, the clothing styles created not only reflect forms of dress for
men and women, but also strongly reference age. The over-sized t-shirts, fitted caps,
form-fitting shorts and tank-tops speak to youthful desires and a playful exuberance.
Thus, while an age-specific and hybridized diasporic identity is constructed, so to are
diasporic fashion entrepreneurs. Cape Verdean hip-hop styles are both culturally and
economically profitable. While an economic space is created, thus generating income for
the creators and sellers, a hybridized diasporic aesthetic is created and maintained. In the
end, as Bhachu suggests, “the market is not used just as a straightforward mechanism of
exchange but also as a means of negotiating a diasporic style, a material form that
encodes complex battles of cultural and racial pride (Bhachu 1999: 48).”
At cultural festivals one becomes aware of the vigilant marketing of the image of Cabral and by extension his political ideas via clothing, which raises the question: Is wearing a Cabral shirt really a political statement? Although a Cabral shirt authenticates a Cape Verdean identity, a political statement in itself, it could be argued that the socio-political message of Cabral is muted and silenced, reduced to a specific spectrum of colors and revolutionary imagery and glamour. Similar to other revolutionary figures whose faces have graced cotton t-shirts, some could argue that Cabral has moved from “a politics of liberation to a politics of fashion” (Davis 1994: 37). This change in politics, what Cornel West calls a “double bind (West 1990: 20),” is what confronts all political projects today. However, Todd Boyd sees potential in the ‘double bind.’ For Boyd, the wearing of revolutionary glamour is where “radical political discourse can critique dominant culture and dominant culture becomes financially viable through the selling of this oppositional discourse” (As quoted in Tulloch 2004: 65).

Many of the hip-hop styles adopted by Cape Verdean youth oscillate between protest and mainstream commodity. Cabral t-shirts can keep his memory alive for current and future generations to remember. However, there is also the danger that this memory will become apolitical and ahistorical. In order to resist this temptation, Cape Verdean youth must never substitute the images of Cabral and others for political action, as I outlined in my investigation of Cape Verdean hip-hop music. Cabral’s message and iconic status must be incorporated into the current socio-political landscape and used in new ways as to ward off political atrophy.
Sadly, and ironically, in order to revive the past and iconic historical figures like Cabral, individuals must turn to the marketplace. Thus, if the market chooses, consciously or unconsciously, to neglect certain aspects of the past, it is left out of the revival and reinvention. The past in this case becomes increasingly fragmented by market forces.

Despite its seemingly growing popularity, I am skeptical that the image of Cabral will become just another floating signifier in the world of commodities. Cabral shirts are probably less likely to die a popular death as we have seen with Che Guevara shirts. The unlikelihood of this occurrence is due to the small numbers of Cape Verdian youth and the general omission of African revolutionary thinkers from western popular thought. Thus, the counter-cultural significance of a Cabral shirt may in fact stand the test of time and resist cooption. However, this is not to say that Cape Verdian youth have not and are not capitalizing on the image of Cabral, as I have noted above.

In conclusion, the styles and fashions that many Cape Verdian youth adopt are compensatory and defensive. It allows them to affirm their identities, while also affording them protection in a hostile world. The role of fashion cannot be neglected, for any robust understanding of the construction of race and ethnicity in the United States must be paired with the practices of everyday life such as fashion and style.

Using of the images of Amílcar Cabral, the color-sets of pan-Africanism, and hip-hop fashion trends suggests a performance belonging to a greater community. For example, Cabral and Bob Marley t-shirts cannot simply be seen as t-shirts, but rather as symbols entering into a dialogue suggesting a shared experience. These images give the clothing worn by Cape Verdian youth a certain significance that possibly does not exist.
in other sections of society, meaning not duplicated elsewhere. In the end, the sartorial
tendencies of second-generation Cape Verdean youth merge content with intent.
Sartorial practices serve as badges of identity, expressions of political allegiance, and
communal values. Flags on the body and the image of Cabral are not worn because Cape
Verdean youth want to relive the war of liberation or be like Cabral, but because they
want the experiences of the war and lessons of the Cabral to enhance their own struggle
of being black and Cape Verdean in an increasingly troubling and fragmented world.
CHAPTER EIGHT

CVSpace: Musings on Identity, Technology, and MySpace

It’s sunny and hot and hundreds of Cape Verdean youth are in attendance at the
Annual Cape Verdean festival in Providence, Rhode Island. I’m excited about meeting
several potential participants. However, given the exuberance that develops and
excitement that comes with attending cultural festivals in the middle of the summer when
people are spry and high on sunshine, many interested participants had little time to talk.
“I’m definitely down,” said one potential participant, “but there goes my cousin…hit me
up on MySpace and we’ll connect.” Excited, but also disappointed, I continued on only
to be told by another would be participant to check out their MySpace and get back to
them. Again, I continued on. I was getting the sense that MySpace and Facebook were
much more important than I had originally thought. Later, I was asked if I had a
MySpace account and when I replied “No” the participant responded with an emphatic
“you got to get one bro!” 44

Anxious to start my research, I went home and immediately turned on my
computer. I went to MySpace.com and began to browse for people I met at the festival.
Informant found! Thus, I start with a click of the mouse. The webpage begins to load, but
before the page loads completely music comes whispering out of my weak desk speakers.
The music sounds familiar. I turn up my speakers—it is Chachi Carvalho’s “Cape

44 Initially, I thought social networking sites like MySpace, Friendster, Bebo, Facebook, and others, were
nothing more than technologically advanced versions of Internet chat rooms, where spammers, computer
nerds, and teenagers virtually hung out.
Verdean in America.” As the music plays, I bounce my head to the beat of the song while Pan-African colors (i.e. red, black, and green) fill my once black 15-inch computer screen. Words and pictures appear next. More specifically, I get a brief biography (and picture) of the creators of the domain. I learn where they are from, where they live, their age, marital status, cultural influences, hobbies, and the like. I scroll down and a montage of photos of black nationalists and revolutionaries such as Amilcar Cabral, Fidel Castro, Malcolm X, and others hang together on the left side of the page. The page is fully loaded, a virtual gallery of sorts, where pictures, biographies, list of friends, and music all clamor for my attention. Tired, after a long day in the field (and virtual field), not to mention sensory overload, I sign off, forgetting to create a MySpace account for myself. On the following day I establish a MySpace account.

Self-portraits (or web profiles) such as described above have become digital, crafted from pixels as well as cotton fiber (as we saw in chapter seven). New communication technologies, cyberspace in particular, have become important mediums for the creation, negotiation, and performance of identity. In this chapter I will discuss how Cape Verdean youth use new communication technologies for identity production. Although important this chapter is by no means an exhaustive or comprehensive account of Cape Verdean identity and communication technologies, rather it is merely suggestive. I examine the process by which second-generation Cape Verdean identity was articulated, reified, and renegotiated at MySpace.com. By observing several MySpace pages, I witnessed the process by which members of the Cape Verdean diaspora negotiated the meaning of blackness and Cape Verdeanness, that is, how blackness and Cape Verdeanness are articulated in cyberspace? In other words, I explore the ways in which
blackness, identity, technology, and cultural politics are imagined and performed in cyberspace. I show how identity is central to the use of new communication technologies like MySpace. More specifically, what is being expressed? To what extent does the Web continue with traditional representational practices? To this end, I juxtapose more traditional spaces for ethnographic observation with a virtual space like MySpace in order to map subtle differences in the construction and performance of identity online.

_Cyberscapes and Racial Identity_

Over the past decade, scholarly interest on the relationship between race and technology has grown. The scholastic interest and enthusiasm has reached such a height that the Center for Black Studies at the University of California-Santa Barbara has launched the Race and Technology Project, while also playing host to an international Ford Foundation sponsored conference (in 2005) entitled “AfroGeeks: Global Blackness and the Digital Public Space.” Noteworthy texts on the intersections of race and technology include *TechniColor: Race, Technology, and Everyday Life* (2001), *Crossing the Digital Divide: Race, Writing, and Technology in the Classroom* (2004), *Race, Rhetoric, and Technology: Searching for Higher Ground* (2005), and many peer-reviewed journal articles. Despite the academic eagerness, most of the work on race and technology and technological practices focuses on the seemingly ever-growing digital divide and potential for remedial initiatives to bring about universal access and participation in new informational technologies for people of color nationally and globally.45 Important issues, undoubtedly, but issues about race and technology extend

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45 Here I am referring to The One Laptop per Child Association (laptop.org).
beyond the focus of this recent scholarship. As a result, there exists an imbalance in understanding race, representation, and cyberspace.

Issues of access frame most accounts about new communication technologies and race. The proverbial digital divide – “the troubling gap between those who use computers and the Internet and those who do not” – is a ubiquitous trope in most literature concerning race and new technologies (Compaine 2001; Mehr, et. al: 2004: 782). Yet, the most recent study by the Department of Commerce (2004) suggests that the digital divide is not a crisis of extreme concern. Internet use for instance has continued to increase regardless of age, class, race, or gender. According to the report, nearly 40 percent of black people are on-line. Further, the population of young on-line users has grown in recent years (Lenhart & Madden 2005). Despite economic inequalities, in 2000 a study showed that the majority of low-income urban black youth surveyed in 10 urban cities had access to internet use (MEE Productions 2004). Many of those interviewed participated in a wide range of on-line activities, from sending e-mails, creating on-line cultural productions, buying clothing, and, most importantly hanging out in social network sites like MySpace. My informants were frequently online. Furthermore, if the literature is not talking about the digital divide, it focuses on the leveling-effect new technologies may have in creating a society where social constructions such as race, gender, and class do not matter. The Internet is viewed as a techno-utopia of sorts, a utopian space where race does not appear; it is where dreams of a post-racial world are lived. People, it seems, are magically freed from the constraints of

46 By making this criticism I am knowingly omitting the literature on Afrofuturism.
race. Cyberspace provides the opportunity for people to play with and transcend traditional identities, examples of which are race and gender (Danet 1998). As long as one does not reveal his or her body via a visual representation, s/he can play and perform multiple identities online (Nakamura 1999; 2002). For instance, Nakumura (2002) argues that the Web has allowed surfers to engage in a cyber tourism and “play” or perform the role of the other. She argues that race and body in cyberspace become separate. While the potential to transcend race and to play with racial identity exists in cyberspace, the fact is that race continues to exert its influence as a concept, an idea, as a performance in cyberspace (See Everett 2007; Ignacio 2005; Kolko et. al 2000; Nakamura 2002). The performance of race is just as apparent online as it is in person. For instance, there are a plethora of “identity” websites devoted to specific groups and communities (e.g. theRoot.com, blackvoices.com). Further, with sites like Youtube.com, a video-sharing website where users can upload, share, and watch video clips, visual representations of race and the body are seldom severed.

**MYSPACE.COM**

Launched in 2003, MySpace now boasts over 50 million registered users; users who check their profiles everyday and spend hours updating their profiles; only Yahoo!

48 Lisa Nakamura provides us with the term “identity tourism” which describes the process where one plays with identity that would not be ascribed offline. As she states, “[in] cyberspace players do not ever need to look for jobs or housing, compete for classroom attention, or ask for raises. This ensures that identity tourists need never encounter situations in which exotic otherness could be a liability, an aspect of racial passing on the Internet that contributes to its superficiality” (Nakamura 1999: 56).

49 I use MySpace.com because of its popularity among Cape Verdean youth in the Greater Boston area. Further, its popularity offers insight into identity production that exists on other sites.
has more page views than MySpace. MySpace users are between the ages of 14-24 on average (Boyd 2006).

MySpace is a social network site that features a profile page and links to friends on the system. Setting up an online identity is fairly simple. Provide your name, address, and e-mail address, after which you are ready to create an online identity. MySpace allows users to personalize their pages by incorporating images, videos, and music which, as I described above, all clamor for the viewer’s attention. MySpace users can also blog, that is, provide commentary about current events and/or a particular subject. It also includes a section “About Me,” where you can post your name and other physical traits. In short, profiles are personalized to express an individual’s tastes, beliefs, and values, it is constructed to give the viewer a sense of who they are.

Once an account is created and constructed, a considerable amount of time is spent updating one’s profile – posting comments, blogging, uploading photos and videos, and changing the site’s music. However, checking and sending messages constitutes the main activity of users. It is what brings them back everyday. This was confirmed by many of my informants MySpace was part of their everyday lives.

MySpace as a part of the everyday life of Cape Verdean youth is methodologically interesting, for my participation in the everyday life of Cape Verdean youth, as outlined in chapter four, was limited to cultural festivals, music concerts, and student group performances. Creating a MySpace account allowed me to have a small, albeit virtual, window into the everyday lives of Cape Verdeans. In other words, it was one of few areas where I was able to apply the Geertzian (1973) method of “deep hanging-out.”
As I explored in the previous chapters, performative practices are part of the everyday lives of Cape Verdean youth, be it consuming or producing hip-hop music or dressing the body in a particular way. In doing so they convey something about their identity; the salient aspects that they want people to see. To this end, my observations suggested that sites like MySpace are far from a refuge from race. Rather, there was little difference between the virtual and the real. Cape Verdean youth created photographic collages of Amilcar Cabral, black nationalists as Malcolm X and Huey P. Newton, and reggae superstar Bob Marley. They blogged about contemporary political issues salient to black communities such as the “Free Mumia Campaign,” the Jena 6 case, and the murder of Shawn Bell. And, they pasted photos of themselves in the latest hip-hop fashion, often the same clothing I observed them in at festivals and other cultural events.

MySpace profiles were just another mechanism by which Cape Verdean youth signaled information about their racial and ethnic identity. Thus, cyberspace is not a domain where race ceases to exist, nor is it where “race happens” (Nakamura 2002: xi), for race never just happens. The centrality of race and ethnicity on MySpace could be attributed to several factors. First, MySpace is an image-centered site where photos and videos are prominent features of a users profile. Posting photos of yourself and others makes one’s site attractive to surfers. Therefore, to play with one’s racial identity on MySpace becomes exceedingly difficult given that the body is visually represented. Second, identity on MySpace must be somewhat honest, for it is used not only to meet virtually, but it is also used to meet people physically; merging the virtual and the real.
MySpace pages are social bulletins of sorts that highlight where one is going, where one is performing, and where one has been. Third, Cape Verdean youth may simply seek continuity between the real and the virtual. They want to make sure that their racial and ethnic content (i.e. racial authenticity) and intentions (i.e. racial sincerity) are carried out throughout cyberspace, where they could remain raceless. In other words, this continues the process of identity in a realm where race could be left out. This self-monitoring may highlight what Foucault noted in *Discipline and Punish* (1991), that “he who is subjected to a field of visibility and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection” (Foucault 1991: 202-03). For whatever reason, the dynamics of racial identity production play out visibly in new communication technologies like MySpace.

*Cape Verdean Youth and the Virtual Imagined Community*  
*(Remixing Notions of Diaspora)*

We are in an era of technospheric space, where dislocated geographical points merge and re-pollinate one another in virtual realms (Mannur 2003: 283).

The above epigraph speaks of a new phenomenon emerging in diasporic communities, the emergence of virtual communities (See also Bernal 2005). Per Mannur’s incite, cyberspace must be taken seriously when thinking about diasporas. To speak of diaspora or, better yet, to theorize about diaspora without reference to the World Wide Web and other cyberscapes is inadequate and wrong headed, for many diasporas
“are already mediated through cyber and digital spaces” (Mannur 2006: 283). Thus, any work on Cape Verdean diasporic identities engage with the Internet. Access to cyberspace allows Cape Verdean youth to connect, albeit in a virtual sense, with others in diaspora and to others in the homeland. Thus the Internet makes diasporic connections to the homeland more intimate than ever before or in ways not possible in the past. The creation of the Internet has allowed for various diasporic zones of alliance to develop (e.g. virtual newspapers). Cape Verdean youth in the Greater Boston area are able to forge communal links in new and exciting ways. With the click of the mouse, Cape Verdean youth can connect with other Cape Verdeans globally, wherever they are located.

Speaking of her experience and connection with the Papua New Guinean diaspora, Mannur (2006: 285) suggests, “the World Wide Web has served as a way to keep those webs of affiliation spinning. We can feel that we were part of a community that is not in danger of becoming an ossified memory.” Similarly, Cape Verdean youth in the Greater Boston area use various social networking sites, mainly MySpace, to connect with other Cape Verdean youth in diaspora. Further, youth within the archipelago, the geopolitical borders of Cape Verde, are able to connect and reconnect with youth abroad, thus extending their own sense of community. In other words, social networking sites such as MySpace connect users throughout the world, throwing conventional ideas of diaspora into question.

Based on my preliminary observations, MySpace strengthens transnational ties and creates virtual diasporic communities. For instance, it was not uncommon for Cape Verdean youth in the Greater Boston area to have virtual Cape Verdean friends from the
archipelago, Portugal, Angola, France, and the Netherlands. As a result, MySpace users may feel the social pressure to be more Cape Verdean when performing their online identities. More importantly, social network sites promote informal learning, where Cape Verdean youth can learn about Cape Verdean history and historical figures. The MySpace pages that I frequented, for instance, preserved the legacy of Cabral with photos, excerpts from speeches, songs of dedication, and more. Many were replete with romanticized metaphors of looking back to the past, that is, the war of liberation. These symbols and images create a complex set of metaphors by which Cape Verdean youth live (Lakoff and Johnson 1980).

MySpace is where social interaction takes place and where common ties are established. New communication technologies serve as an alternative, yet common, source of community in a world comprised of fluid boundaries and displacement. Online discourse builds cohesion by creating identities rooted in a history and by transmitting culture. A common thread that binds Cape Verdean youth from the Greater Boston area together with other Cape Verdean youth around the world is issues of marginalization and displacement. MySpace provides a forum where members discuss shared interests and experiences from which they build a sense of belonging to a greater whole and sense of solidarity, which has the potential to manifest itself into collective action (Ebeling 2007). Leonce Gaiter suggests, “The Web could be…an extraordinary political tool…But only if we are finally willing to forego the dreams of terra firma to which we’ve hitched our star for all of our postwar history. We must acknowledge that the world into which we so desperately sought entree is dying -- and we, like the majority, must embrace new and untested worlds if we are to prosper” (Gaiter 1997). However, Cape Verdean youth have already embraced “new worlds.” In fact, people working for
the “Free Tem Blessed campaign” used the Internet to quickly spread information about
the arrest and trial of Cape Verdean rapper Tem Blessed.\textsuperscript{50} Seen in this light, new
communication technologies are central to a diasporic consciousness and coalition
building. As ships once connected people, now the Internet, microchips and
microprocessors, home computers, e-mail, and social network sites like MySpace connect
and recreate a robust sense of self within the matrix of the Cape Verdean diaspora (Gilroy
1993). We must keep in mind however that while virtual homelands and diasporic
communities may share similarities across oceans and fiber optic lines, racial identities
are specific to location and context.

In the end, new technologies serve as a means remix and reconfigure identities
and notions of diaspora. MySpace identities, more specifically, would cease to exist if
not for the plethora of information on and about Cape Verde, images of black
revolutionaries, downloadable music, and more. At the hands of its users, pictures of
Amílcar Cabral and others can be accessed and pasted as a backdrop for a site’s content
or used on the periphery of the webpage as a revolutionary iconic frame, complete with a
social conscious audible from the likes of Tem Blessed and others. If nothing more, new
communication technologies like MySpace, play a meaningful role in the construction of
race and ethnicity, for it provides a space for a discourse that articulates the lives of black
people more generally and Cape Verdean youth more specifically. In other words, the
Internet provides a space for Cape Verdean youth to experiment with identity, where they
can share experiences, and focus on black history, culture, and social conditions.

\textsuperscript{50} Tem Blessed was arrested, abused, and detained by Massachusetts State Police on October 16, 2006. He
has been charged with resisting arrest, threatening to commit a crime, malicious destruction of property
over $250, disorderly conduct and assault and battery on a police officer. A campaign was started accusing
the police of racial profiling and police brutality.
CHAPTER NINE
CONCLUSION

I can’t say I’m anything but black…one time I was in Lincoln [a predominantly white suburb of Rhode Island] and kids rolled by me and yell out the window “nigger”…Even though I’m light skinned…they’re not going to be like he isn’t black. He’s black!…That kid called me a “nigger.” He didn’t care that I was light in tone, that I was Cape Verdean.

(Informant, 2007)

This dissertation focuses on understanding processes of racialization of blackness. It explored how second-generation Cape Verdean youth in the Greater Boston area negotiate their identity as Cape Verdean and black. In addition, I have explored the tension between racial authenticity and racial sincerity among Cape Verdean youth. In doing so, I have paid particular attention to the performance of Cape Verdean identity. This project has been an effort to understand how social agents are racially defined and how they define themselves racially; identity is a socially generated construct, defined by the individual but created with others. My research has been grounded in qualitative research in the Greater Boston area. The observations made here about Cape Verdean identity might be helpful in increasing our knowledge about race, ethnicity, and identity in the U.S.

My mapping of Cape Verdean youth identity has hinged upon three assumptions: U.S. ascriptions of blackness and forms of black popular culture, particularly hip-hop culture, inform processes of identity formation among Cape Verdean youth; expressive forms of Cape Verdean youth culture are used as sites where new identities of being Cape Verdean are fashioned and reworked; and racialization works to create global “black”
identities. More specifically, I approached this research using a series of questions: how do U.S. ascriptions of blackness and forms of black popular culture inform processes of identity formation and negotiation among Cape Verdean youth? How is hip-hop culture used as a site where new (and/or old) identities of being Cape Verdean are fashioned and reworked? How important is fashion in the creation and maintenance of identity? What do the clothes Cape Verdean youth wear say about who they are or who we think they are? How does racialization work in creating “Black” identities? As a result, I have tried to offer a more complex and sophisticated mapping than has been hitherto available about Cape Verdean identity. On the one hand, Halter (1993) gave us the first sustained work on Cape Verdean identity in the U.S. She argued that Cape Verdeans, historically, sit between both registers of race and ethnicity. For her, Cape Verdeans operate and occupy a liminal space, one where racial and ethnic meanings compete. As a result, Cape Verdean identity represents a mix of both racial and ethnic elements. Despite being classified as black within the U.S. racial system, Halter emphasizes Cape Verdean ethnic difference. On the other hand, Sanchez Gibau’s (1997 and 2005) work argues that Cape Verdeans are actively reshaping race and race relations in the U.S. by highlighting cultural differences – speaking Crioulo, eating different foods, listening to different music, and so on. She suggests that normative ideas about race and, by extension ethnicity, are questionable when observing Cape Verdeans in the U.S. Both studies privilege the position Cape Verdeans occupy in the black/white binary of the U.S. One gets the sense that both racial and ethnic identity at times dissolve, that race and ethnicity as structuring agents reach a vanishing point, which allows individuals to transcend the power of racial classification and by extension racial hierarchies (Bashi 1998).
The problem, or the political folly, with these studies is that while both understand that race persists, they highlight ethnic difference, at the peril of undermining the power of race. For instance, Sanchez Gabau suggests, “Cape Verdeans may enact one “racialized” identity in the workplace and another “cultural” identity in the home/enclave environment” (Sanchez Gabau 2005: 433). For Sanchez Gabau, a racial identity is employed at the performer’s convenience. In other words, race is only constructed authentically and in doing so is constructed at the expense of racial sincerity. Yet, the insight gained from my informants contradicts such an observation. The “fact of Cape Verdean blackness” is always pronounced, never just conveniently used to accomplish a specific identity. Asserting multiple identities does not necessarily mean challenging and transforming racial classification. To what extent are challenges made and, how transformative is this assertion of multiple identities? How does difference eliminate the hegemony of race? The multiple identities of white people have done little to alter the power and privilege of whiteness (See Brodkin 1999; Ignatiev 1996; Jacobson 1999). The grotesque conditions of inequality in which many Cape Verdean youth find themselves is not the result of cultural difference, rather it is the result of being racialized as black. Further, the articulation of difference among Cape Verdean youth from the Greater Boston area is the struggle to articulate the black self. My informants have come to think of themselves as black, as suggested in the epigraph, a category that corresponds to an unavoidable social reality (Goldberg 1993).

In the adoption of race as a social construction, the import of the body, a material canvass for racial politics is lost. In other words, as academics and others have increasingly accepted the social construction of race, the body as a marker of racial
importance has lost much of its significance; physical observable characteristics have fallen to the wayside. Yet, my informants consistently remarked that the body, skin color, and hair, mark them as black. And attached to this difference comes cultural connotations. Race is consistently attached to biology. As M.A. Doane (1999) suggests, “skin becomes the locus of an alienation more acute to the extent that it is inescapable” (Doane 1999: 452). Blackness becomes a social fact to the extent that it is a parameter of racial performance—being black is parametric (Fanon 1967).

An important conclusion of this study is that in today’s world we often speak of race as if it were incorporeal. But of course it is not. Race always shows up attached to the body, clothed or not (as discussed in chapter seven), virtual or real (as discussed in chapter eight) in political, spatial, and cultural contexts. It is the context that gives meaning to race (as discussed in chapter five). Despite being a social construction, race is physically associated with the body and, as a result, gives meaning to all other performative practices to which it is connected (as discussed in chapter six). There is a dialectical role between the semiotic (the cultural) and the material (the body). In doing so, my informants accomplished both thin and thick forms of blackness. Cape Verdean youth conceive of blackness and its performance in public as centered on experience. Cape Verdean youth in the Greater Boston area move back and forth between thick and thin forms of blackness, but are never without blackness. In doing so, the tension between authenticity and sincerity emerges.

Throughout this dissertation, what has been implied is a constant tension between racial authenticity and racial sincerity. Authenticity is a social device used to project images of truncated forms of blackness. It is steeped in social life (sociality). Examples
are black youth as hyper-masculine, materialistic, anti-intellectual, and criminal-minded. On the one hand, racial authenticity is the false naturalization of racial identity. It is the performative. As Saidiya Hartman suggests, “the performative has the power to produce the subject that it appears to express” (Hartman 1997: 57). Racial sincerity on the other hand, is the self not expressed in everyday social life. It is the dialogical process between subjects (Jackson 2005). The fluidity and complexities in Cape Verdean identity suggest an inner struggle of what it means to exist. It then becomes a matter of ontology. Along with identities come regimes of oppression (ontological suppression). Blackness (racial authenticity) is held hostage by white supremacy. Blackness, thus, requires liberation from racial authenticity. The reality of oppression creates demands for identity.

Despite creative efforts on the part of Cape Verdean youth to highlight difference, to celebrate their Cape Verdeanness, this study suggests that racialization is a process that reifies race even as it challenges our thinking about race. More importantly, the outcome illustrates that racialization is a process that ignores difference and forces people into racial categories and hierarchies (Bashi 1998). For example, as suggested, hip-hop, the blackest of all cultures, plays a crucial role in the meaning making process (as discussed in chapters six and seven). Hip-hop is a site of resistance, a space where difference is exhibited. Yet, it is also a site where narrow forms of identity are cultivated. Many of my informants performed the blackness of the white imagination, blackness in the service of white supremacy.

The assertion of multiple identities within a racialized society like the U.S. mean little if the idea of race still has the power to impact where one lives, how much money one makes. What is lost in all of this is that race and ethnicity are intertwined. In other
words, ethnic identification is often racialized, in that it requires phenotypic connotations. Further, race as mapped throughout this dissertation exists and is performed through the use of ethnic symbols. These symbols are of a particular kind, that is, they are ethnic symbols that highlight Cape Verde’s African roots.

Race legitimates and gives meaning to social life. Despite the power and thrust of colorblind ideology from the left and right, its impact on public policy, academia, and everyday life, race still persists. Racialization happens in the convergence of the body, physical space, and cultural practices in which Cape Verdean youth engage in on a daily basis. While identity is fluid, it does not mean that there are no limitations imposed upon it. One has to feel one belongs to a racial group to feel it is worth investigating in political and cultural events, organizations, and practices on a racial basis. There are structural limitations and self-imposed limitations. While we create society we are also subject to it. For instance, as we have seen, hip-hop culture can sometimes be a means of expressing resistance, but it can also mirror the patterns of dominance from which Cape Verdean youth are seeking refuge. In doing so, truncated forms of blackness are performed and hyper-masculine postures adopted.

From the beginning I set out to map the processes of racialization, rather than the “process of racialization”. While racialization is often evoked in the negative, it can also be a positive. As Reeves (1983) has shown, racialization may be a means for political mobilization. Race is used to achieve moral ends, something he calls anti-racialization. Racialization in a conceptual sense can be seen as dialectical. As anthropologist Leith Mullings has observed, “The modern color line is imposed from above, but also becomes
a site for contestation from below” (Mullings 2004: 1). There is what Leith Mullings calls “racialization from above” and “racialization from below.”

Racialization from above begets racialization from below, that is, racialization from above creates counter-hegemonic social movements. It links the struggle of black people with what is happening in others parts of the world where other oppressed and racialized people live. My informants expressed a pan-African sensibility and they performed their Cape Verdean identity accordingly. My informants also recognize the fundamental importance of culture for the mobilization of people. They know what it is like to be racialized as black, turn to Cape Verde, neither in search of stagnant cultural practices nor for geographical yearnings of a lost land. Rather, they turn to Cape Verde for political inspiration and solidarity with other oppressed people. To this end, this project was just as much a political project as an intellectual endeavor, for I attempt to understand the complexities and connections of black identities in the 21st century. Anyone interested in building multiracial unity must recognize the fundamental role of race and racism in contemporary times. Now is not the time to state that race no longer matters. Identity politics are still relevant because race, gender, and other social constructions still persist. Calls for individuals to transcend race is next to impossible when processes of racialization are hard at work. Creating a new society will not be accomplished by appeals to color blindness; rather it will be constructed by rethinking race and ethnicity in a multicultural and global context. People must recognize the multiplicity of experiences and (re) recognize the importance of race in our everyday lives.
Aside from politics, this dissertation also raises a question about method. Mapping the tensions that emerge between performativity and performance is difficult and inconclusive. As Fanon remarked in *Black Skin, White Masks* (1967), “I shall be derelict. I leave methods to the botanists and the mathematicians. There is a point at which methods devour themselves” (Fanon 1967: 12). While I am not condemning the development of method as a vain or futile exercise. However, the meaning I extract from Fanon’s statement is that it is easier to develop methods when one studies objects. Even when people are the constant object of study, subjectivities emerge. In this sense, the difficulty in developing a valid method to study something like identity makes conclusions and absolute generalizations easier said than done. Further, my mapping of Cape Verdean youth is woefully uneven when it comes to mapping the identities of Cape Verdean women from the Greater Boston area. Future research on Cape Verdean youth needs to take a closer look at issues of class, gender, and sexuality politics. More needs to be done on mapping the voice(s) of Cape Verdean women. How is Cape Verdean identity gendered? Similarly, more research is needed in mapping generational dissonance between Cape Verdean Americans as well as exploring racialization among other Cape Verdeans in diaspora.

Race has real effects in determining access to resources; it structures political and social hierarchies, and informs the production of knowledge (Goldberg 1993). It shapes the images of self and community. The circumstances of our times do not require an abandonment of race. Instead it requires the unrelenting critique of race. Identity is contingent, fluid, diachronic, and so on, but the specter of race lurks in the background.\(^{51}\)

\(^{51}\) As Leith Mullings suggests “the meaning of race is constantly reconfigured as new forms of exclusion build upon the continuing consequences of enslavement, colonialism, and imperialism (Mullings 2004: 2).”
Racial identity in its essentialized and fluid forms are aspects of the lived realities of Cape Verdean youth from the Greater Boston area. This dissertation is more about the “sites” through which racialization is articulated and how these processes in effect strengthen the racial hierarchy locally and globally. It shows how second-generation Cape Verdean youth in the Greater Boston area, racialized as black people, are affected by race and actively structure their existence around its reality. In short, we must continue to investigate the significance of racialization in the lives of those defined as “black.”

Race as an idea, a concept imbued with power, has two general characteristics. First, race is never neutral. Racial categorization is hierarchical (Bashi 1998). For instance, to be labeled black, like second-generation Cape Verdean youth, is not innocent. To be labeled black is to be relegated to a specific place in the racial hierarchy. Second, race is not open to discussion, but a destiny. As Charles Mills suggests, “[r]oom has to be made for race as both real and unreal: that race can be ontological without being biological, metaphysical without being physical, existential without being essential, shaping one’s being without being in one’s shape” (Mills 1998: xiv).

My informants’ understanding of what it means to be black in the U.S. are informed by their relationship with peers and their marginalized positions in larger society. They embrace a black identity. Second-generation Cape Verdean youth inhabit blackness suspended in the public imaginary and popular cultural portrayals of blacks. African descent still holds a great deal of weight as totalizing criteria for social categorization. While they assert a black identity, they also express a strong sense of ethnic solidarity. Like other oppressed people, they are re-creating identities under
unequal relations of power. Cape Verdean youth recognize that they are seen as racialized “others,” and they have responded to racial exclusion and inequality by adopting and embracing their blackness. The racialization of Cape Verdean youth must be understood as an ongoing process of the articulation of blackness both in its homogenized non-historicized form and its multiple fluid form. Despite showing levels of agency, racial structures have a structuring effect on identity, that is, they call you into being. Processes of racialization have expanded and continue to promote the maintenance of culturally/politically distinctive forms of self-definition. Mapping racial identity in the 21st century is important. Our work on race, racial identity, racial hierarchies, and processes of racialization are far from over and complete. Race is continually changing. Thus, I urge that we continue to produce dynamic and illuminating accounts of racial formation, so that we can move forward and create a world anew.
APPENDIX A: Informed Consent for Participant

Northeastern University, Department of Sociology and Anthropology

Name of Investigator: Paul Khalil Saucier

Title of Project: Cape Verdean Youth in the Greater Boston Area: Race, Ethnicity, and the Performance of Diasporic Identities.

Request to Participate in Research
We would like to invite you to take part in a research project. The purpose of this research is to explore the ways in which second-generation Cape Verdean youth in the Greater Boston area negotiate their identity as Cape Verdean and black in the United States and to examine expressive forms of Cape Verdean youth culture and uses of black popular culture.

You must be at least 18 years old to be in this research project.

If you decide to take part in this study, we will ask you verbally answer a series of questions about being Cape Verdean, your ideas about race and ethnicity, as well as black popular culture, especially hip-hop culture. It will take about 60-90 minutes.

There are no risks to you for taking part in this study.
Or
The possible risks or discomforts of the study are minimal. You may feel a little tired and bored answering some questions.

There are no direct benefits to you for participating in the study. However, your answers will help us to learn more about Cape Verdean identity and by extension race and ethnicity in the United States.

Your part in this study is anonymous. That means no one will know if you took part in this study and no one, including the researcher, will know what your answers are. Any reports or publications based on this research will use only group data and will not identify you or any individual as being of this project.

The decision to participate in this research project is up to you. You do not have to participate and you can refuse to answer any question.

If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to call Paul Khalil Saucier at 401-497-8308 or Mike Brown at 617.373.2686, the people mainly responsible for the research.

If you have any questions about your rights in this research, you may contact Human Subject Research Protection, Division of Research Integrity, 413 Lake Hall, Northeastern University, Boston, MA 02115 tel: 617.373.7570.

You may keep this form for yourself.

Thank you.
APPENDIX B: Semi-Structured Interview Protocols

I. General background:
   o How old are you?
   o Gender?
   o Where were you born?
   o Where were you raised? What was your neighborhood like?
   o How would you define your class background?
   o Did you attend college/university?
   o Do you belong to any student or community organizations?

II. Race and Ethnicity
   o How do you define yourself ethnically?
   o What meanings, if any, do you attach to your ethnicity?
   o What is ethnically important to you (holidays, food, etc)?
   o Do you speak Crioulo?
   o What does it mean to be Cape Verdean and by extension African in the US in 2007?
   o Does race still matter in the US in 2007? If so, in what ways is race still important?
   o Are you conscious of being Cape Verdean? If so, when?
   o Do you visit Cape Verde? If so, how often? Do you visit to see family, leisure, etc?
   o How is being Cape Verdean different from being African American or continental African? How is it similar?
   o Do you consider yourself black? If so, what makes you black (e.g. phenotype, style, argot, etc)?
   o What situations or specific encounters are likely to remind you of your race and ethnicity?
   o Racial composition of friends looks like…?

III. Popular Culture
   o What type of music do you listen to? Why?
   o What do you think of hip-hop?
   o Do you frequent clubs? If so, how would you describe them in regards to music, style, etc?
   o How would you describe your style?
   o What is your favorite television show? Movie?
   o Do you use myspace.com at all? If so, why? Networking?

52 All questions are in no particular order.
APPENDIX C: FLAGS OF CAPE VERDEAN

New Cape Verdean Flag (1992-present)

Old Cape Verdean Flag (1975-1992)

(WikiMedia Commons, 2008)


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