Cultural Identity and Diaspora

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Abstract. In this article, I intend to argue that cultural identities fit the term diaspora in all senses of the term. Firstly, I intend to discuss the term *identity* itself exploring arguments by different critics on the concept. Secondly, I intend to apply the concept of *diaspora*[1] to the cultural identity formation to attempt to compensate for the western perspective. The concept of identity is complex and different meanings are evident to offer good starting points for its investigation.

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Introduction

If in need of a definition, one looks first to dictionaries. Here is the most relevant entry for identity in the *Oxford English Dictionary*: "the fact of being who or what a person or thing is" or "the distinct personality of an individual regarded as a persisting entity".[2] In addition to this, Beller and Leerssen also assert that: "*Identity becomes to mean being identifiable, and is closely linked to the idea of 'permanence through time': something remaining identical with itself from moment to moment*"[3]. They reveal "the other side"[4] of identity by referring to what they call the synchronic meaning of the concept of identity. This refers to the "unique sense of self"[5] that a person has about his own self. This type of identity, also called "ipse identity"[6] implies a first person perspective. From this point of view, this sense of self

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[1] Diaspora (namely a collective memory and myth about the homeland) refers to those social groups which share a common ethnic and national origin, but live outside the territory of origin. These groups have a strong feeling of attachment to their "homeland", making no specific reference to ethnicity, or to a particular place of settlement. All diasporas, either independent of national and ethnic background or treated as a single group in which ethnical boundaries are crossed are considered as being hybrid and globally oriented.

[2] *Oxford English Dictionary*, ed. Judy Pearsall (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 705.

[3] Manfred Beller and Joep Leerssen, *Imagology: The cultural construction and literary representation of national characters. A critical survey* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2001), 1.

[4] Ibid., 1.

[5] Ibid., 4.

[6] Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 78.

represents one's auto-biographical narrative with the ever changing actions and reactions experienced in the real life. The process of rewriting the story of somebody's life enables the person to reinterpret past experience and is essential for acting as a person with a sense of self in the present and the future. Moreover, the identity of a person (ipse identity) cannot be captured in typologies of roles or of fixed (group) characteristics used to describe the identity of individuals (idem identity), which takes a more objective, or third person perspective. The way somebody is identified and categorized – by others and by him/herself – does influence his/her identity. This self-construction is negotiated by the narratives people invent to tell the story of their lives, which narratives are of course determined to a large extent by their interactions with others. However, from the point of view of the individual sense of self, people need a certain amount of control over the borders between self and others.

Identity as a socio-cultural construct

Following the analysis above, I would argue that identity can figure into the explanation of action in two main ways, which parallel the two sides of the word's present meaning. Recall that "identity" can mean either a social category or, in the sense of personal identity, distinguishing features of a person that form the basis of his or her dignity or self-respect.

The use of different theories and methodologies by different critics has affected the ways in which researchers conceptualize *identity*, and it has also resulted in the simultaneous use of different terms that describe *identity* as a *socio-cultural construct*. In agreement with this, we opted for the term *cultural identity*, which was defined as "an individual's realization of his or her place in the spectrum of cultures and purposeful behaviour directed on his or her enrolment and acceptance into a particular group, as well as certain characteristic features of a particular group that automatically assign an individual's group membership."[1] In this respect, individuals' *cultural identity* as a construct consists of a countless number of facets. Most commonly referred to and described in literature are the following facets or types of one's cultural identity: racial, ethnic, social, economic, geopolitical, gender, religious, ability/disability, language, professional, etc. (see figure 1). Each of these facets represents a specific category, within which a person has specific membership(s).

Stuart Hall's thesis is that rather than thinking of identity as an "already accomplished fact, which the new cultural practices then represent,"[2] we should think instead of "identity as a 'production' which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation."[3] Hall points out that there are two principal ways of thinking about (cultural) identity. He disapproves the view of cultural identity as something that can be defined: "in terms of one, shared culture, a sort of collective 'one true self', hiding inside the many other, more

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[1] P. V. Sysoyev, *Individual's cultural identity in the context of dialogue of cultures* (Tambov: The Tambov State University Press, 2001), 37–38.
[2] Stuart Hall and Paul Du Gay, *Questions of Cultural Identity* (London: Sage, 1996), 145.
[3] Stuart Hall and Paul Du Gay, *Questions of Cultural Identity*, 167.

superficial or artificially imposed 'selves', which people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common."[1]
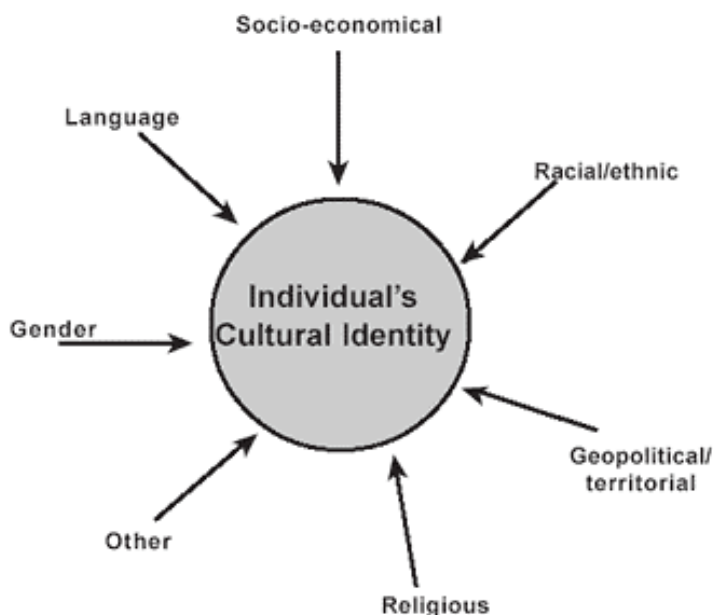

Figure 1. Individual's Cultural Identity[2]

For Hall, however, it is better to envision a "quite different practice, one based on 'not the rediscovery but the *production* of identity'". Not an identity grounded in the archaeology, but in the *re-telling* of the past"[3]. Such a viewpoint would entail acknowledging that this is an "act of imaginative rediscovery,"[4] one which involves "imposing an imaginary coherence on the experience of dispersal and fragmentation, which is the history of all enforced diasporas" and leads to the restoration of an "imaginary fullness or plentitude, to set against the broken rubric of our past."[5] Africa, he stresses, is the "name of the missing term, (…) which lies at the centre of our cultural identity and gives it a meaning which, until recently, it lacked."[6]

The second model of (cultural) identity acknowledges 'what we really are' or rather 'what we have become'". From this point of view, cultural identity is a:

> […] matter of 'becoming' as well as of 'being'. It belongs to the future as
> much as to the past. It is not something which already exists, transcending

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[1] Idem, 393.

[2] P. V. Sysoyev, *Individual's cultural identity in the context of dialogue of cultures*, 38.

[3] Idem, 423.

[4] Idem, 425.

[5] Idem, 428.

[6] Idem, 432.

place, time, history and culture. Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation. Far from being eternally fixed in some essentialised past, they are subject to the continuous 'play' of history, culture and power. Far from being grounded in mere 'recovery' of the past, which is waiting to be found, and which when found, will secure our sense of ourselves into eternity, identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past.[1]

In offering his model of Caribbean identity, Hall suggests that the "black Caribbean identities are seen as 'framed by two axes or vectors, simultaneously operative: the vector of similarity or continuity [the first model of identity], and the vector of difference and rupture.'"[2] Using the Bakhtinian metaphor, he asserts that these two axes exist in a 'dialogic relationship'. To be precise, "[…] the uprooting of slavery and transportation and the insertion into the plantation economy (as well as the symbolic economy) of the Western world […] 'unified' these peoples across their differences, in the same moment as it cut them off from direct access to their past."[3]

Within the framework of cultural identity, Hall finds Derrida's notion of 'difference' particularly useful to describe that "special and peculiar supplement which the black and mulatto skin adds to the 'refinement' and sophistication"[4] of European culture. Difference "challenges the fixed binaries which stabilize meaning and representation and show how meaning is never fixed or completed, but keeps on moving to encompass other, additional or supplementary meanings."[5] The question is: where "does identity come in to this infinite postponement of meaning?"[6] Thus, "meaning continues to unfold beyond the arbitrary closure which makes it, at any moment, possible. There is always something left over."[7]

Drawing upon the notions of both displacement and deferral, Hall insinuates that the Caribbean is neither an isolated and autonomous place which exists in a social and historical vacuum nor is the past separable from the present. The Caribbean identity is a "'production', which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation,"[8] a symbolic journey which a Caribbean or black diaspora must discover.

The concept of identity can be defined in terms of sameness vs. difference. More particular, *différance* (in the sense of difference, according to Dérrida) is always there within any apparently 'similar' identities; though temporary fixity is needed in the process of identification, "there is always something 'left over'".[9]

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[1] Idem, 394.
[2] Idem, 395.
[3] Idem, 396.
[4] Idem, 397.
[5] Idem, 397.
[6] Idem, 397.
[7] Idem, 396.
[8] Idem, 91.
[9] Idem, 55.

Within this perspective, all the three 'presences' that occur in the Caribbean identities ('islanders' to their mainland) can be viewed as such: African not by origin, but always involved; European, but internally dislocated and creolized; and American, by both hybridity and *diaspora*.

In understanding the concepts of *identity* and assimilation, terms such as "diaspora" and "hybridity" become other ways to analyze the nature of identity. Thus, we can see home and exile as two dynamic ends of what Byfield comments as "the creation of diaspora is in large measure contingent on a diasporic identity that links the constituent parts of the diaspora to a homeland."[1] However, the discourse about identity is filed with a clash between those who see a relatively fixed, coherent and racialised identity and those who perceive identities as multiple, provisional and dynamic. This latter group (Gilroy, Hall) prefers, instead, the metaphor of hybridity to capture the ever-changing mixture of cultural characteristics. Early studies of diaspora were largely anthropological and focused on the 'survival' of cultural traits from Africa in the New World.

To a large extent this issue of displacement and authenticity sets up the background for what followed: some sustained that there was an annihilation of cultural characteristics during the middle passage and did not consider Africa as a reference point, while others considered the African culture as being a surviving one and took this as evidence of a desire to return. These returnings are thus connected to a racialised and gendered hierarchy: "we must always keep in mind that diasporic identities are socially and historically constituted, reconstituted, and reproduced."[2] The circumstances in which this takes place are highly organized within the imperial cultural configurations, but one thing which is fixed is that "the arrangements that this hierarchy assumes may vary from place to place but it remains a gendered racial hierarchy."[3]

In what concerns the dynamics of identity within diaspora, during the 1990s, several typologies were adopted in order to understand and to describe the diasporas. In this perspective, for Alain Medam the typology of the diasporic structure should be based on the opposition between the "crystallized diasporas" and the "fluid diasporas". From the point of view of homeland, Robin Cohen (1997) created a new typology of diaspora based on diversity, namely:

1. Labour diasporas
2. Imperial diasporas
3. Trade diasporas
4. Cultural diasporas (the Caribbean case)

The last type of diaspora – the *cultural diaspora* – with the Caribbean case became one of the most stimulating and productive types. In its one cultural dimension,

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[1] Judith Byfield, "Introduction: Rethinking the African Diaspora," *African Studies Review* (Special Issue on the Diaspora) 43 (2000): 2.

[2] Tiffany Patterson and Robin Kelley, "Unfinished Migrations: Reflections on the African Diaspora and the Making of the Modern World". *African Studies Review* (Special Issue on the Diaspora) 43 (2000): 19.

[3] T. Patterson and R. Kelley, "Unfinished Migrations: Reflections on the African Diaspora and the Making of the Modern World," 20.

the diaspora discourse emphasized the notion of hybridity, used by post-modernist authors to mark the evolution of new social dynamics seen as mixed cultures. One of the most important metaphoric designations of roots for diasporic hybridity is considered to be the *rhizome*, a term developed by Guattari and Deleuze. The rhizome becomes thus a useful motif because it describes root systems as being a continuous process that spread continuously in all directions, from random nodes, creating complex networks of unpredictable shape that are in constant process of growing. In this sense, the French Caribbean is a good example of the occurrence of the concept of hybridity. Edouard Glissant presents a clear reference to *rhizome* identity.

In this field, James Clifford (1997) also developed a reference to "travelling cultures" which found a substantial added value in the debate about the Black diaspora and in the work of Paul Gilroy (see the concept of the 'Black Atlantic'). In this perspective, this current was concisely expressed by Cohen in his quotation according to which: "diasporas are positioned somewhere between 'nation-states' and 'travelling cultures' in that they involve dwelling in a nation-state in a physical sense, but travelling in an astral or spiritual sense that falls outside the nation-state's space/time zone."[1]

As Paul Gilroy (1994) described, the nation-state is the institutional means to finish diaspora dissemination (diasporic translocation): on one side, through assimilation and, on the other side, through return. On the other hand, we are also at a converging point here because this research leads to different questions about the connection between trans-nationalism and diasporas.

In Gilroy's view, the concept of diaspora is foregrounded as an antidote to what he calls "camp-thinking"[2] which involves oppositional and exclusive modes of thought about people and culture that rest on basis of purity and cultural identities. In contrast with this approach, the diasporic identities are conceived as being "creolized, syncretized, hybridized and chronically impure cultural forms."[3] Notably, the diaspora concept can be "explicitly antinational" and can have "de-stabilizing and subversive effects."[4] It offers "an alternative to the metaphysics of race, nation and bounded culture coded into the body, diaspora is a concept that problematizes the cultural and historical mechanics of belonging."[5]

Diaspora is also "invariably promiscuous" and it challenges "to apprehend mutable forms that can redefine the idea of culture through reconciliation with movement and complex, dynamic variation."[6]

To conclude, if we turn back to Hall's notion of diasporic identity we can see that his type of identity is one based upon difference and hybridity. Therefore, the diasporic identity can often express more the experience of migrancy and settlement, of 'making' one's home than a fixation to a 'homeland' of diasporic cultures. For much of this subchapter I have suggested that a diasporic consciousness as classically conceived is opposed to the process of creolization.

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[1] Robin Cohen, *Global Diasporas: An Introduction* (London: UCL Press, 1997), 95.

[2] Paul Gilroy et al., *Without Guarantees: In Honour of Stuart Hall* (London: Verso, 2000), 84

[3] Paul Gilroy et al., *Without Guarantees: In Honour of Stuart Hall*, 129.

[4] Ibid., 128.

[5] Idem, 123.

[6] Idem, 129-130.

Types of Cultural Identity

If multiple identities have to be conceived as a cultural pattern, according to the four primary axes that allow cultural identities to form described by David Winterstein, we can identify four types of cultural identities: *nested* or *embedded* identities (conceived as concentric circles), *'marble-cake'* or *mixed* identities (where the components are inseparable at different levels and they influence each other), *cross-cutting* or *overlapping* identities, *separate* or *exclusive* identities. The first axis is the *inclusion*, a set of attributes that an individual uses to communicate with a group; the second is the *exclusion* or the ensemble of means by which the group differentiates itself from others; the third defines itself as a *point of identification* within a culture's value system; and the fourth axis is related to *space*, which helps to associate a cultural group with a specific territory.[1] Within these four axes, the cultural norms are implied and meanings that work together to create the phenomena are known as *cultural identity.*

As Figure 2. shows, certain identities are nested or embedded within others. We will refer to identities towards the bottom as lower order identities (*marble-cake* or *mixed*) and those toward the top as higher order identities (*separate* or *exclusive* identities). Nested identities form the end of the chain to a higher order identity and the end of a lower order identity.
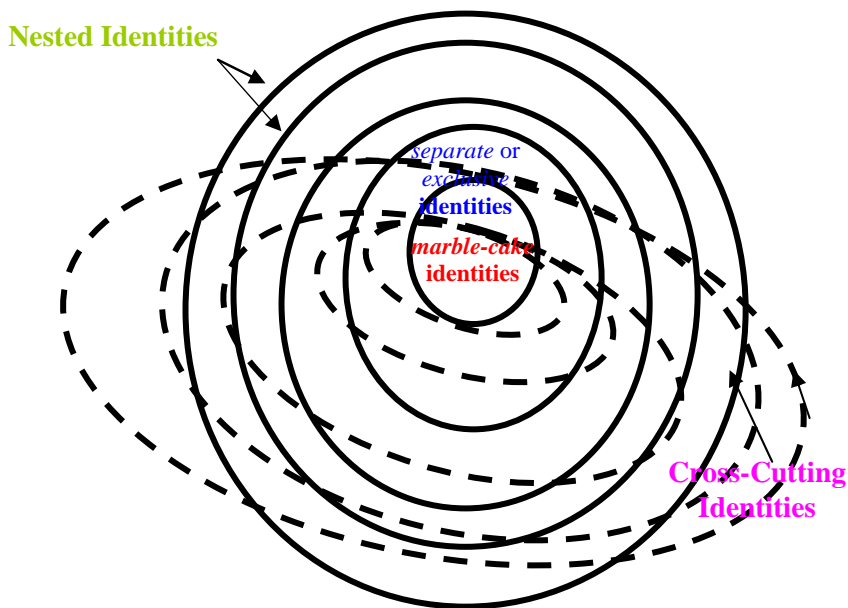

Figure 2. Nested Identities and Cross-Cutting Identities[2]

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[1] David Winterstein, *Local Radio and the Promotion of Language and Cultural Identity in Modern Brittany* (California: San Diego University Press, 2003), 123.
[2] Blake E. Ashfort and Fred Mael, "Social identity theory and the organization," *Academy of Management Review* 14 (1989): 20–39.

The *nested identities* (e.g. personal identities) have at least three key dimensions: inclusive/exclusive, abstract/concrete and distal/proximal. Because higher order identities are more inclusive, abstract and distal, there tends to be at least some overlap in the range of nested identities. The degree of inconsistency and conflict between nested identities may fluctuate in time as new identitarian issues arise. Ironically, such flashpoints may facilitate shifts by rendering multiple identities, although such shifts are likely to trigger heightened anxiety. A second reason that shifts between nested identities is that identification with a given level tends to generalize to other levels such that the subjective importance of the implicated identities tends to generalize as well. Because the culture provides the context in which local identities may flourish, culture may come to be seen as one's 'home' or the 'vehicle' for expressing one's local identities. Thus, identification with a lower order entity may generalize to higher order entities. Conversely, identification with a higher order entity may predispose to perceive lower order identities in positive terms and to internalize them as more specific and localized definitions of self. Combining these two arguments, that nested identities tend to overlap and that identification tends to generalize, it seems likely that a positive correlation would exist between identification at one level and identification at other levels.

The *cross-cutting identities* (e.g. social identities) include formal and informal collectives. The larger rings depict identities that cross-cut multiple nested identities, including identities that extend beyond the boundaries. Although the rings converge on the 'marble-cake' or embedded identities, cross-cutting identities may converge on any nested level.

To conclude, culture in itself is not static, it is very fluid. Culture evolves, adapts and adopts. In this sense, *travelling identities* are part of an initiation step.

Individual and Collective Identities

This section attempts to show that the traditional conceptions developed in order to study individual identity form a useful basis to analyse the possibilities of new postnational collective identities. At the individual level, the first approach to be taken into account is essentialism. Taking into account the collective level, according to which identity is given by social attributions, another level, the individual one arises, according to which identity is given by natural features building an identitarian essence. Another approach to individual identity is constructivism, according to which identities are created, built and rebuilt, rather than being culturally pre-ordinate. Another view to discuss is the model of narrative identity that considers the biographical structure as a condition for thinkability of collective identity.

Within the context above, the social structure and culture contrast two notions of individual identity. In the former, identity is ascribed, inheriting in the social and family several roles the subject occupies; in the latter, identity is chosen and responsibilities are freely taken up. Deprived of structure, the subject is driven into culture; denied identity fulfilled in a significant role, he or she demands an individuality which will make up for what has been relinquished. Furthermore, cultural identity is considered to be the identity of a group or culture, or of an individual as far as he or she is dependent by his/her belonging to a group or culture.

On the other hand, Mouffe states that:

> When we accept that every identity is relational and that the condition of existence of every identity is the affirmation of a difference, the determiners of an 'other' that is going to play the role of a 'constitutive outside', it is possible to understand how antagonisms arise. In the domain of collective identification, where what is in question is the creation of a 'we' by the definition of a 'them', the possibility always exists that this 'we/them' relation will turn into a relation of the friend / enemy type.[1]

The condition for collective identification (we vs. them) – 'my blood, my family, my kin, my clan, my nation, my race' – is an ever-present and potentially violent expulsion of those who are *not* 'my blood, my family, my kin, my clan, my nation, my race'. The existing of one nation presupposes other identical nations, with the consequences that cause Hegel such anxiety and which might be phrased as: "if the other is so like me, the other is within."[2]

The individual, then, is an effect of multiple identifications. For example, if I was born and brought up in England I may mainly identify myself as English; but if as a child I am taken for some time to Jamaica I will have to live into that identity. Paul Gilroy writes: "I am not against the nation… I am against the rhetoric of cultural insider(ism), because I think it is too readily limited to unacceptable ideas of homogeneous national culture and exclusionary national or ethnic belonging."[3] Thus, if identity is understood as an effect of discourse, national identity in a national culture can never achieve the unified homogeneity it wishes for itself. In this case, we have to admit that there can be no escape from identity; and further that all identity defines itself precisely by establishing an inside (*in-hereness*) and an outside (*out-hereness*) so that all identity to a degree practices insider*ism* together with an exclusionary force. In this case, Anthony Smith concludes that:

> Of all the collective identities in which human beings share today, national identity is perhaps the most fundamental and inclusive. Not only has national*ism*, the ideological movement, penetrated every corner of the globe; the world is divided, first and foremost, into 'nationstates' – states claiming to be nations – and national identity everywhere underpins the recurrent drive for popular sovereignty and democracy, as well as the exclusive tyranny that it sometimes breeds. Other types of collective identity – class, gender, race, religion – may overlap or combine with national identity but they rarely succeed in undermining its hold, though they may influence its direction.[4]

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[1] Chantal Mouffe, *The Return of the Political* (London: Verso, 1993), 2–3.
[2] G.W.F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right* (Ontario: Batochener, 2001), 89.
[3] Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*, 72.
[4] Anthony Smith, *National Identity* (London: Penguin, 1991), 143.

All collective identity (clan, nation, region, ethnic group) identifies its-self by denying the other, demarcates inside from outside, stretches a distance between 'us' and 'them'.

In conclusion, the relationship between individual identity and collective identity focuses on two directions of thought: one that claims that individual identity and collective identity are conflicting and that collective identity is not likely to replace the individual one; and the other that argues that collective identity is constructed on an entirely different basis than individual identity and the two can coexist. On one hand, I argued that collective identity cannot compete with individual identity because it does not have deep rooted memories that can induce a sense of loyalty the same way individual identity does. On the other hand, I emphasized that individual identity and collective identity do not clash, because their bases for allegiance are different. Unlike individual identity which rests on a common culture to bind people, collective identity is constructed around 'constitutional patriotism' and individual rights and freedoms.

There are reasons to believe that both these views offer a narrow picture of the relationship between the two identities. I have argued that the formation of collective identity involves forging memories in the same way individual identity did. Because these are not fixed there is no reason to believe that these new constructs cannot become as powerful as the national ones and that, indeed, they can override national identity. Second, although collective identity is too large a degree based on principles of popular sovereignty and civic rights, it still needs a shared 'culture' to connect people at an emotional level. Finally, I have argued that although both collective identity and individual identity are created following similar patterns they do not necessarily clash. It is nationalism rather than national identity that could hinder the development of a collective identity.

National Identity

Nation is a form of collective identity which becomes possible only in the conditions of *modernity*. Hence, national identity is an 'object' of modernity. It is widely known that nation is a form of social philosophy, a way of thinking focused on promoting the interests of a particular social group. Breuilly says that: "To focus upon culture, ideology, identity, class or modernization is to neglect the fundamental point that nationalism is, above and beyond else, about politics and that politics is about power."[1] However, Anderson is right to emphasize that nation, like the rest of human culture, is 'imagined' in the sense that it is constructed rather than the result of a natural process: "I propose the following definition of the nation: it is an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign."[2]

Anderson's work refers to anthropological data, as he maintains that the concept of "nation" is truly a cultural construct, a man-made artifice. Thus, for Anderson, it is "imagined". Nation and identity, begin with one's family and closest

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[1] John Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), 1.
[2] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991), 5–6.

friends, and slowly move out from this centre. In our contemporary example, two residents of the same country may live in completely different geographical climates, having very little in common with each other.

Raymond Williams also comments that:

'Nation' as a term is radically connected with 'native'. We are *born* into relationships which are typically settled in a place. This form of primary and 'placeable' bonding is of quite fundamental human and natural importance. Yet the jump from that to anything like the modern nation-state is entirely artificial.[1]

Lacan works out the implications of the view that the imaginary and the symbolic turn on each other – *identity* and *difference*, *self* and *Other*, are equally inescapable and inseparable. In the 'Mirror Stage' the identity of the individual is constituted by being borrowed from the Other. Subsequently, by repeating this internalisation of an idealised reflection of itself, the subject aspires to a homogeneity and permanence which will make good its lack, identifying its unity in an image of the body as a unified whole and fearing a corresponding image of the body in pieces. The individual, then, is an effect of multiple identifications.

Nation is almost certain to be more heterogeneous in its membership than a pre-national grouping, more mixed by race, class, gender, regional loyalty. At the same time, it is composed of two separate aspects, a modern state and a culture. It occupies a "symbolic rather than territorial space"[2]. In this sense, national cultures provide discursive narratives.[3]

In *National Identity* (1991), Anthony Smith explains the concept of *national identity* by setting forth five essential characteristics: a historic territory or 'homeland' which becomes "a repository of historic memories" (e.g. Caribbean homeland), "common myths and historical memories," a "common, mass public culture," "common legal rights and duties for all members," and a "common economy with territorial mobility for members".[4]

The issue of identity is, therefore, particularly focused in the Caribbean. For the displaced Africans, slavery meant "a negation of their cultural and ethnic identities"[5] resulting in a 'white skin, black mask' schizoid identity. Besides this, the myths and symbols of national cultural identity were imposed by a colonial order and caused the conquest of European civilization, on the one hand, and the negation of the myths and symbols associated with the popular culture and resistance to a system of oppression on the other.

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[1] Raymond Williams, *Culture & Society: 1790-1950* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 180.

[2] Raphael Samuel, *Patriotism: The Making and Unmaking of British National Identity: Minorities and Outsiders* (Routledge: Kegan & Paul, 1989), 16.

[3] Anne-Marie Thiesse, *La création des identités nationales* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1999), 14.

[4] Anthony Smith, *National Identity*, 14.

[5] John A. Lent, *Mass Communications in the Caribbean* (Iowa: Iowa State University Press, 1990), 35.

For the majority of islands in the Caribbean region, the issue of identity is predominantly linked to African ethnicity and heritage as people of African descent form the majority. In Trinidad, however, defining a national cultural identity is complicated by the presence of a significant East Indian population. In Dominica, there is a minority Carib population, known as the most indigenous people of this part of the Caribbean. The European whites have long since departed and are relatively insignificant in the contemporary demographics of the Caribbean. In short, the national cultural identity is largely a hybrid of European, African, Amerindian and Asian cultures, in other words, essentially creole.

Therefore, the struggle for cultural identity involves struggling for the hegemony of the popular creole culture over a culture associated with European traditions and the recuperation of myths and symbols largely suppressed by the local elites. Culture is taken here in both the narrow sense of creative expression and its wider anthropological meaning, the way of life of a distinct population. In Dominica and St. Lucia, the French had significantly influenced the creolization process before becoming permanent British colonies; hence, the popular cultural identity is very much linked to French creole language and cultural traditions. Popular culture and cultural identity in the Caribbean is thus very much grounded on race and social class.

On this basis, to conclude, it becomes possible to say that, on the one hand, "nationalism… is an ideological movement for attaining and maintaining the autonomy, unity and identity of a nation"[1]; on the other, there is a national credo against a colonial power; In both cases, European and colonial nationalism, "some form of national culture pre-existed the state"[2] is a drive to bring nation and culture into alignment.

Travelling Identities

Culture in itself is not static, it is very fluid. Culture evolves, adapts and adopts. In this sense, *travelling identities* are part of an initiation step. The journey is an apparently linear and fixed path*,* while wandering / adventure has some unforeseen and sinuous implications. However*,* the apparent purpose of imposing a trip overlaps the apparent lack of purpose that characterizes the adventures. As Baudelaire asserts, "The real travellers are those who leave to go!"

Within the oscillation between *negritude* and *negriceness*, the African-descendent experiences become the symbol of mobility. This mobility which features the African-descendent identities is sustained by the *double consciousness* of the existential experience that instigates the black subject to move within the westernized world. Du Bois explains that when he lives the *double consciousness*, the black subject "feels his two-ness – an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder,"[3] thus creating a so-called

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[1] Anthony Smith, *National Identity*, 74.
[2] Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 10.
[3] William Edward Burghardt DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: Dover Publications, 1994), 2.

'hyphenated' cultural identity. For Edouard Glissant, such a feeling of duality prepares the white subject for some new aspects of *Creoleness*, an experience that makes the composite identity possible, thus giving room for the kind of "rhizome-like identity, an identity not like a single root identity [Negriceness, or Negritude], but one like a root moving towards the encounter with other roots [Negriticeness]."[1]

The concept of négritude refers to those travelling identities and cultures, coming from Africa, going to the Caribbean, and then advancing to Europe. In such an experience of leaving from one place to reach another, the ship turns itself into the metaphor of displacement, being able to develop a 'travelling alterity'. Within the metaphor of navigation and dislocation that the ship represents, intercultural and identity losses and gains are associated with the concept of *the middle passage*. On the one hand, Glissant links the ship and the middle passage with the African-descendents' losses, arguing that:

> Because the womb of the slave-ship is the place and the moment, in which the African languages disappear, as they never put together in a slave-ship, or in the plantations, people who could speak the same language. Thus, the persons found themselves dispossessed of all kind of elements of their daily life.[2]

While 'crossing' *the middle passage*, the traveller's culture moves itself, displaces itself, loses itself in, resists to, and mixes with, the receptive culture. Clifford argues that a "culture travels through specific histories of population movement, exile, and labor migration"[3]. Travelling culture becomes diasporic culture, which for Clifford, results from "the ways people leave home and return, enacting differently centered worlds, interconnected cosmopolitanisms."[4] This consideration brings the concept of *signifyin(g)* which implies the idea of travelling and navigating cultures; influenced by cultural mobility, *signifyin(g)* intends to account for intertextuality in African-descendents' experiences. In the African-descendent literary scenario, *signifyin(g)* explains "how black texts 'talk' to other black texts".[5]

Glissant is of the same opinion when he suggests that the identity is open and develops a double root, which, according to him is the identity that comes from creoleness, "that is, from the rhizome-like identity, from the identity no longer as one solitary root, but as a root moving toward and encountering other roots"[6].

However, in thinking about travel, the identitarian questions that arise are: What becomes the sense of home? Is home merely a place to depart from, or can we see travel as leading us to think about how homes must also be cultivated through

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[1] Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation* (London: Penguin, 2005), 27.

[2] Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 19.

[3] James Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 27.

[4] James Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*, 27–28.

[5] Henry Lois Gates, The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African-American Literary Criticism, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), xxvi.

[6] Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 27.

movement? James Clifford argues that "Cultural centers, discrete regions and territories, do not exist prior to contacts, but are sustained through them, appropriating and disciplining the restless movements of people and things."[1] This loss of the traveller's identity, according to Leed, "brings a gain of stature and certainty of self". The traveller, "reduced to its essentials", engages in a self-reflective activity, which allows "one to see what those essentials are".[2]

Home is not a place that one leaves behind, but a geographical point of reference, a sense of place which serves as an anchor for the travel. According to James Clifford, the cross-cultural or 'border' experiences of travel should not be viewed as acculturation, where there is a linear progression from culture A to culture B, nor as syncretism, where two systems overlap each other. Rather, Clifford understands these cross-cultural or 'border' experiences as instances of historical contact, "with entanglement at intersecting regional, national, and transnational levels".[3] Inspired by Mary Louise Pratt's 'contact-zones', a contact approach emphasizes the intercultural interaction that takes place within these spaces of interaction and exchange.

Conclusion

When the self refers to the individual, one must wonder to what extent a person can actually know one's own mind. Thus, the identity of the individual is constituted by being borrowed from the Other. In this way, the unconscious provides an example of an-other in the tension between the subject and the ego.

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[1] James Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*, 3.
[2] Eric Leed, "The Ancients and the Moderns: From Suffering to Freedom," in *Defining Travel: Diverse Visions*, ed. Susan L. Roberson (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2001), 6.
[3] James Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*, 7.