

ABSTRACT

Randy Marfield, A RHETORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE 1981 BELIZEAN CONSTITUTION: NATIONAL IDENTITY IN THE CONTEXT OF HISTORY, RACE AND LANGUAGE
(Under the direction of Dr. Kirk St. Amant) Department of English, April 2016

Building upon a variety of approaches in postcolonial discourse, this project performs a rhetorical analysis of the 1981 Belizean Constitution through the features of race and written Standard English. It contends that neither race nor written Standard English are suitable and reliable constructs of national identity in Belize, as each feature perpetuates a particular interpretation of Belizean national identity as formulated in accordance with hidden undertones of colonial power that have influenced, and continue to influence, a vernacular understanding of national identity in Belize. Each feature is also suggestive of continued colonial practices that once deemed Belize a colony of Britain and colonized through the institutions of that era. A specific focus on race and written Standard English allows for a close, rhetorical analysis on the 1981 Belizean Constitution, introducing these features as variables in the act of misrecognition, invisibility and human agency affecting the different ethnic groups in the country. In considering race and written Standard English as rhetorical constructs, this project demonstrates the degree of psychological aggression by the British, and now the Belizean government, which was a common practice and feature Belize's colonial past. Though a critical look at race and written Standard English in the 1981 Belizean Constitution might be problematic, it holds the promise of reconstructing national identity as it pertains to the constitutional recognition of different ethnic groups in Belize, allowing the discursive space to reopen a dialogue on what it means to be Belizean.

A RHETORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE 1981 BELIZEAN CONSTITUTION: NATIONAL
IDENTITY IN THE CONTEXT OF HISTORY, RACE AND LANGUAGE

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DEDICATION

To my family in Belize, from whom I have taken the most precious of things: time.

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I would like to express deep and heartfelt appreciation of Kirk St. Amant whose patience with me throughout this long process has been tested. Whose levels of excitement, respect and involvement with this project matched my own. In him I saw the true spirit of academia, the dedication that can come from one person's belief and determination to change the world one step at a time, and one person at a time. Without him, my life as a PhD student and this dissertation would certainly not have been possible.

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through the years at ECU. I feel fortunate to have met and learned from a person passionate and hopeful about the present and future.

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

The *1981 Belizean Constitution*. It is a document that represents the source of Belizean political achievement in the country's embattled history with the British Empire, and at the same time has the potential to be the source of Belize's troubled state of national identity, reflecting the history, politics and language of Belize's colonial past. Like the constitutions of other western and liberal countries, the *1981 Belizean Constitution* provides the sociological venn-diagram, as it were, of socially connected parts logically encircling and representing multiple aspects of a democratically formed society: history, politics, law, and language to name a few. Each of these aspects, in their own right, contribute and struggle to claim, define and maintain the concept of a collective national identity. National identity can be perceived as what Foucault calls a "discursive formation". From this, the purpose and function of national identity is to provide a sense of cohesion, of collectively sharing and socially accepting a distinct, relevant history, politics, and traditions forging commonalities that assert particular differences from other countries in the world.

Where the political constitution of a people is concerned, national identity also reflects intellectual dimensions of that country's politics, making the constitution relevant and sensitive to the sociopolitical history and social circumstances surrounding the document. The circumstances from which national identity is formed, from the histories of British colonial expansion, are particularly relevant in postcolonial societies; wherein lies the constitutional issue of forming a new and different national identity after independence has been declared. This dissertation focuses on this particular point in Belizean history, the moment of independence when the Constitution should mark Belizean national identity as unique, different and

intellectually apart from English European culture, under which the country has been colonized for over two hundred years.

Through looking at specific rhetorical features of the 1981 Belizean Constitution, this project hopes to illustrate the difficulty of separating from English European ideology presented as defining aspects of the Constitution. Edward Said (1993) argues in *Culture and Imperialism* that cessation from the English Empire is nearly a politically impossible undertaking, because as a project of establishing dominance, imperialism is also the process of creating a relationship, formal or informal. This dominance occurs when one state controls the effective political sovereignty of another political society; and where the supposed sovereignty of a political independent state exists simple through the process and policy of establishing and maintaining an empire.¹ Said theorizes that colonialism is not simply an:

...act of accumulation and acquisition [but is] supported and perhaps even impelled by impressive ideological formations that include notions that certain territories and people require and beseech domination, as well as forms of knowledge affiliated with domination: the vocabulary of classic nineteenth-century imperial culture are plentiful with words and concepts like...*subject races*” (*Italics added*, p. 9)

So, as historically problematic and socially complex as it may be, the relationship between national identity and the concept of race, for instance, demands critical attention for how it functions in terms of rhetorically constructing national identity. For this reason, this project explores historical moments when the idea of *race* began to be perceived as an important feature of Belize’s national identity. To achieve this objective, sections of this project focus on moments

¹ Doyle, M. (1986). *Empires*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. (p. 45).

in Belizean colonial history when race and racialized concepts became associated with descriptions of and engagement with colonized people, as part of political system of that time.

But looking at race as a rhetorical concept that informs national identity is not an easy undertaking, simple because according to some scholars, race has what seems to be the unshakable appearance of logic. Michel Foucault, in fact, maintains that the morality of race and racial concepts have become an immutable aspect of discussions of written and constituted identities, saying “that the power of institutions create identities within and outside the legal apparatus, throughout the social body, where procedures fix individuals and groups in spaces, classifying them, coding continuous behavior for stricter visibility and observation”.² Race, as a means of social classification, and making people visible in the political sense, is typically used as a form of registering, recording and organizing colonized people into a body of knowledge that is accumulated and centralized as part of legal institutions.³

It is for this reason that the focus of this dissertation is to analyze the *1981 Belizean Constitution* to ask questions such as: 1) what are some theoretical underpinnings of the *1981 Belizean Constitution* as it includes *race* as a defining concept of national identity? 2) Does a knowledge of the history of race as a sociopolitical concept help or further complicate the issue of national identity in Belize, as it has done elsewhere in the postcolonial world? Or, does knowing how racial identities were used as part of Belize’s colonial history help to illuminate some contradictions between ethnic people and race as principle of nationality? The narrow scope of these questions does not allow the chance of presenting a solution or alternative to the position of race in Belize’s Constitution. The point of this work is to start an honest and open discussion on the merits of race as a legitimate aspect of Belize’s national identity.

² Foucault, M. (1977). *Discipline and Punish: Complete and Austere Institutions*. Vintage Books, A division of Random House, Inc. New York. (p. 231)

³ *Ibid*, p. 231.

In the case of Belize, these questions are made relevant by the fact that the social category of race was a colonizing apparatus derived from English European cultures during its expansion across the globe. In fact, Belizean Garifuna scholar and writer, Dr. Joseph Palacio, maintains that it is entirely possible the British deliberately over-emphasized the relevance of skin colour in their interactions with Belizean ethnic groups, making skin colour a form of social classification where such form of discrimination did not exist before.⁴ As such, skin colour in Belize, as it was elsewhere during the expansion of the British colonial power, was used to mark divisions and differences between English European culture and others, in order to encourage the perception of colonized, ethnic people as socially inept and intellectually incapable. The questions I ask above are important to address because it is entirely possible that the inclusion of race as descriptive and meaningful aspect of Belizean national identity may in fact be a means of maintaining ‘otherness’ in Belize to ensure the certainty of continued British dominance even after Belize gained independence.

The preservation of English European authority in Belize and the exploitation of its territory, is not a project of the imagination, but as the use of postcolonial theory will show, a very real possibility. As part of proving this point, this dissertation also looks at Standard English as a rhetorical feature of the 1981 Belizean Constitution. The use of Standard English as the language in which the *1981 Belizean Constitution* was written, is a decision that needs to be given closer evaluation for how it affects ethnic people’s understanding of themselves as Belizeans. The Governor General of Belize, Sir. Colville Young, whose ideas about Belizean Creole language and people are featured heavily in this work, reflects upon the imperial status the Standard English holds among Belizeans even today; English is Belize’s official language

⁴ Palacio, J. (2005). *The Garifuna: A Nation across Borders*. Essays in Social Anthropology. Cubola Books, Belize. (p. 13)

and Creole (which is also the name of an ethnic group) is Belize's national language.⁵ There is a sense of alarm in the distinction Sir. Colville Young (2002) makes between an official language and national language:

An official language is the language used by the government in all official situations: legal documents, formal situations, educational and other systems... A national language is any language the government recognizes as having significance in the social life of a nation. This might mean that the government would allow one or more national languages to be used in education (p. 7)

In his book *Language and Education in Belize* Young argues that the Creole language holds the linguistic sophistication to become Belize's official language, but points out that some Belizeans have difficulty accepting the challenge perceiving the Creole language's official status because of its description as being a 'broken language'. Young also points to the fact that Standard English maintains its status as official language of Belize by virtue of Belize's colonial history and its influence among Belizeans even after the country's independence on September 21, 1981.

For users of other ethnic languages in Belize such as Creole, Garifuna and Maya the use of Standard English in the Constitution is a problem for the reason that, through its continued use in other official documents (*The Portfolio of Information on British Honduras*) and intellectual exchanges (*The Belizean Studies Journal*), Standard English becomes self-referential. By this I mean that Standard English becomes the means through which meaning is constructed and meaning is drawn from the Constitution. With this thought in mind, this dissertation theoretically seeks to understand the possible social and political ramifications of Standard English being the only language to be used in writing the *1981 Belizean Constitution*. More specifically: 1) how does this decision further alienate and marginalize ethnic people? 2) How does the status of

⁵ Young, C. (2002). *Language and Education in Belize*. The Angelus Press Limited. (p. 7)

English in the *1981 Belizean Constitution* can be interpreted as communicating and maintaining the dominance of colonial ideology even after independence?

The position of languages in global centers such as North America and England lends some perspective as to why the designation of ‘national language’ toward ethnic languages in Belize is an issue. In these global, independent and metropolitan centers, the language of daily communication is also the language of education, of formal situations, and of legal documents. Standard English is the language with which individuals and groups politically and academically identify. Linguistically speaking there is no notion of an “us” and “them” dichotomy that is written into the body of the constitution and various academic forums (this also speak, of course, to variations in English in Northern and Southern America. Most North Americans are considered English speakers and consider the constitution to be written in a language that they can understand). On the other hand, in Belize written Standard English is used in ‘official’ documents, where even Belizean Creole as a variation of Standard English does not qualify to bear the responsibility of gaining ‘official’ status, much less the chance of other ethnic languages such as Garifuna and Maya bearing that responsibility.

Nigel Bolland (2003), whose work is also featured heavily in this work, explains that this lack of a direct and solid association between ethnic languages (Creole, Garifuna and Maya) and the official language (Standard English) is the cause of a social paradox in the definition national identity in Belize.⁶ The point of analyzing the use of Standard English in *1981 Belizean Constitution* is not to propose that one of Belize’s ethnic languages gain official status as Young proposes. Such an assertion would have global and local implications that cannot be viewed in

⁶ In *Colonialism and Resistance in Belize* (2003) Bolland explains that as the “racial concept of Creole refers to a spectrum of African and European...Creole is also the language spoken by many Belizeans who are not of African and European descent. While Belize’s official language and the language of instruction in schools is English, most people speak Creole. As a result of their education and experience many people can shift their speech according to social context between Creole and standard English” (p. 209)

the limited scope of the questions asked in this work. Rather, this dissertation analyzes Standard English as a historical, socio-political, and rhetorical aspect of national identity, and as having dramatic effects on the way ethnic people are able to participate in rhetorical construction of national identity.

The Significance of this Study

The 1981 Belizean Constitution. To the best of the writer's knowledge, no dissertation, book or political project has been professionally undertaken to question the 1981 Belizean Constitution's specific use of race and language as rhetorical features of national identity. This dissertation addresses questions of constitutional and national identity by tracing and rhetorically analyzing the intersections of race and language in the *1981 Belizean Constitution*, and how these variables come to be significant political mechanisms in the creation of national identity. Since this analysis focuses on the *1981 Belizean Constitution* as the document empowered to describe what it means to be Belizean, I situate the rhetorical features of race and language within a postcolonial analytical framework so as to demonstrate that time, place, power and political circumstances matter in a discussion about national identity.

In regard to this framework, this work incorporates a section that takes a closer look at events in Belize's colonial history for the purpose of highlighting significant and historical matters of race, racialized politics and the ways language, particularly written Standard English, was used to restrict the political power of ethnic groups in Belize, arguably becoming the means through which racial identity became political means of classifying ethnic identities. I provide recorded and researched accounts of slavery and how the aspirations of English European merchants and politicians influenced racialized social structures. I look at how the political power of white European men determined the socioeconomic positions of the black enslaved

minority and the ways in which the level and degree of political involvement of the ‘free coloured’ and ‘people of colour’ was restricted. I also provide a researched correspondence between political figures from England who shared distinct and conflicting views on the matter of race, ethnic and economic divisions among people, divisions that I argue, permitted the use of racialized themes in Belizean political documents that had not been properly addressed even to the point of and beyond the moment of 1981’s Constitution. Thus, without properly inciting debate on the issue of race and the use of written Standard English, the use of these as methods of classification became a forgone conclusion.

Through exploring popular authors in postcolonial studies and discourse, I also provide a chapter which focuses postcolonial implications of race and language and their effects on ethnic identities by looking at multiple intellectual openings for further discussions on how these global matters affect ethnic people in Belize. I argue that it is important for Belizeans to be socially and politically involved in such discussions especially where it concerns the topics of language and race.

This dissertation offers a certain degree of subjectivity to the discussion, simply for the reason the research on racial and linguistic identity in the Caribbean has been extensive, which certainly influences and legitimizes the position of the writer. For instance, Caribbean and postcolonial writer George Lamming ‘s (1995) *The Occasion for Speaking* argues the ways how the British empire, without the physical colonial presence, still maintains control over previously occupied spaces. There is also Peter Roberts (1997), Linguistic Professor and researcher at the University of the West Indies and author of *From Oral to Literate Cultures*, whose research points out that, in the Caribbean, English was regarded as the language of communication and known to be the language of control. Included in the wave of intellectual works and responses is

less known Belizean writer, Assad Shoman (2011) whose research in *A History of Belize in 13 Chapters* quotes Evelyn Baring, British First Earl of Cromer, who said that the British “possess in a very high degree the power of acquiring the sympathy and confidence of primitive people with which they are brought into contact” (xi). Particularly in Belize, through the Constitution, Shoman points out that the British created enough Anglophiles to make Belizeans and expatriates believe that the Empire was in truth a benign civilizing force (xi). This short list of writers, who are cited elsewhere in this work, provide just a few threads of inquiry that I readily engage in conversations concerning race, language and their influence on national identity.

But this dissertation also draws, or rather, drags the *1981 Belizean Constitution* unreservedly into a discussion on race and language, which looks at where both variables intersect to create Belizean national identity within a local and broader global context. To accomplish the specific goal of answering how the Constitution rhetorically creates Belizean national identity, in the third chapter of this work, I look at the relevance of Belize’s colonial history using the following questions as a guide to determine history’s relevance in terms of race and language:

1. What is the socio-historical context from which the Constitution emerges?
2. How does the sociological and historical context provide a basis, intention and logic of the Belizean Constitution?
3. How does the Belizean Constitution appropriate ideas of race and language as sociological and rhetorical constructs as a way of appealing to ethnic and national identity? What theoretical assumptions can be drawn from the use of race and language as means of forming an ethnic and national identity?

4. What aspect of race and language, as rhetorical devices in the Belizean Constitution, seem based on the colonial practice of marginalizing a group or groups? What aspects of this approach, if at all, are unique to Belize?

Chapter II: Method of Research

Research Questions

This dissertation uses postcolonial theory to analysis race and the use of Standard English as rhetorical features of the 1981 Belizean Constitution. In observing race and the use of Standard English as rhetorical features in the Constitution, the chapters herein explores the condition of Belizean national identity through an examination of Belize's colonial history, responses to Belize's postcolonial situation, and theoretically assess how race and the use of Standard English affect the perception and participation of ethnic groups in Belize's sociopolitical structures.

The focus of this dissertation is to examine the ways the *1981 Belizean Constitution* attempts to create national identity for the purpose of unifying an ethnically diverse community. In order to rhetorically analyze the *1981 Belizean Constitution*, this dissertation focuses on variables, or tropes, within the written Constitution that establish a correlation between the people of Belize and their government. This investigation is performed through a document analysis. That is, it looks at the *1981 Belizean Constitution* as a qualitative document, which allows it to be viewed and investigated as a social phenomena within specific context and experience.⁷ This research blends the generic form of simply collecting data to analyze for themes and perspectives and positioning it within a theoretical model (Creswell, 2009, p.184). Essentially, this research responds to the question of how the *1981 Belizean Constitution* tries to rhetorically construct national identity through social variables of 'race' and the 'use of the Standard English'.

⁷ Farquhar, J.D. (2012). *What is Case Study Research?* SAGE Publication Limited. (p. 6)

Why Race?

The question merits being addressed by the fact that a survey of the Constitution reveals that the term *race* appears five (5) times in the Belizean Constitution without proper historical context or what group of people the term is meant to address. In spite of Belize being composed of ethnic groups such as Creoles, Garifuna, Mestizo and Maya, none of these are mentioned in the *1981 Belizean Constitution*, which for epistemological reasons, would have been more logical:

- 1) Protection from discrimination on the grounds of *race*, etc.⁸
- 2) Constitution as Supreme Law section says the “policies of state...eliminate economic and social privilege and disparity among citizens of Belize whether by *race*, colour, creed or sex...”⁹
- 3) Protection of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms section explains “every person in Belize is entitled to the fundamental rights and freedoms...whatever his race, place of origin, political opinions, colour, creed or sex...”¹⁰
- 4) Section 16, subsection 3 defines “discriminatory as affording different treatment to different persons attributable wholly or mainly to their respective descriptions of sex, *race*, place or origin...”¹¹
- 5) Section 16, article 5 explains “nothing contained in any law shall be held to be inconsistent with or in contravention of subsection (1) of this section to the extent that it

⁸ The *1981 Belizean Constitution*, Arrangement of Sections, Cover Page (p. 1)

⁹ *Ibid*, Constitution as Supreme Law section (p. 2)

¹⁰ *Ibid*, Protection of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms section, Part 2 (p. 4)

¹¹ *Ibid*, Protection of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms section, Part 2 (p. 12)

makes provision with respect to standards or qualifications (not being standards or qualifications specifically relating to sex, *race*, place of origin...’’¹²

Along with race being analyzed as a rhetorical feature of national identity, the terms ‘Her Majesty’ and ‘Supremacy of God’ will also be viewed as a racialized concept, for the simple reason of these terms are associated either political or religiously with the colonial administration that governed Belize before independence. Because the terms occur as several significant points in the *1981 Belizean Constitution*, with ‘Supremacy of God’ at the opening of the Constitution and ‘Her Majesty’ at several politically important areas, the terms must be taken into account for how they render English European authority as present and demonstrative, and a kind of oversight or surveillance in Belize’s political structure even after the colonial era. Though the argument is made that these terms are a politically racialized concepts in the Constitution, the terms are not the primary focus of the rhetorical analysis on Belize’s national identity. However, the fact that the term ‘Her Majesty’ for instance, appears in the same document and in several sections of the document, it must be analyzed for the way it affects the discourse on national identity in the local and global context; even if that analysis is brief in comparison to this study’s focus on race and Standard English. The term ‘Her Majesty’ appears in these key sections:

- 1) Enforcement of protective provisions
- 2) Interpretation and savings
- 3) The Governor General Office
- 4) Executive Authority
- 5) Control of public prosecutions
- 6) Form of Oath and Affirmation: Oath of Allegiance and Office

¹² *Ibid*, Protection of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms section, Part 2, (p. 13)

Note the fact that the term ‘Her Majesty’ appears in an affirmation that evokes the function and meaning of a Constitution to its people; the Oath of Allegiance. Again, though the focus of this study is not dominated by the number of instances when Her Majesty occurs in the 1981 Belizean Constitution, the recognition of the term as centered in the Constitutional Oath of Allegiance helps build the theoretical case surrounding the rhetorical construction of Belize’s national identity through race.

The obvious first step is to notice that *race* is evoked on part and in favour of equality in sections where the term is used. However, the notion of race as a rhetorical concept, social construct and sociological subject matter cannot be understated for how it is *not* an autonomous or self-effacing idea originating from within local ethnic groups. As this study will show, race as a socio-historical and political concept carries the meanings and values that come from interactions with British colonial administration, thus works predominantly to stabilize different people, imposing a form of normalization that is quintessential English European.

Francios Ewald agrees that racial classification is a mechanism for organizing society that is essentially connected to normalizing people and inducing social hierarchies, which is often in part perpetuated by law. In the case of Belize, race being mentioned as an integral part of law finds this correlation:

...normalization [through race] does not refer to the production of objects that all conform to a type. Rather, it involves ‘providing reference documents for the resolution of standard technical and commercial problems that recur in the course of interchange of...social partners’. Normalization, then is less a question of [conforming] to a standard than it is of reaching an understanding with regard to

the choice of a model. Normalization is thus the production of norms, standards for measurement and comparison, and rules of judgment.¹³

Following Ewald's perspective on the normalizing to the *choice of a model*, it is reasonable to make the argument that race, as it is included in the Constitution, affects the *choices* and *model* by which national identity is rhetorically constructed and, in this case, rhetorically analyzed. As it is stated above, this examination will explore the rhetorical impact of *race* as a potentially static model used in the formation of national identity, which is rooted in colonial embodiment of the term.

Why Standard English Language?

Secondly, for the simple fact that Standard English is used to write the Constitution, the rhetorical and cultural connections between Standard English and colonial domination must be explored to deeper examine the conceptualization of Belizean national identity through the use of a language that is not the first language of most of Belize's ethnic groups. In this respect, Standard English is viewed as an interesting variable utilized for a sense of belonging, giving the appearance and recognition of human agency. Aside from being written in Standard English, there is one instance in the *1981 Belizean Constitution* where English is specified as the language of documentation, which is:

- 1) Section 19 (a) – a man shall, with reasonable promptitude and in any case not more than seven days after the commencement of his detention, be informed in a language that he

¹³ Ewald, F. (1990). *Norms, Discipline and the Law*. Representations, No. 30, Special Issue: Law and the Other of Culture. (p. 148).

understands of the grounds upon which he is detained and furnished with a written statement in English specifying the particulars of those grounds.¹⁴

With no other ethnic language appearing as the language of documentation, “English” being the only language given authority to be used in such a manner, the challenge is considering the politics of “English” by examining the historical and political circumstances that allow “English” to hold such authority. The use and authority of the Standard English in a postcolonial document as significant as the 1981 Belizean Constitution opens itself to couple questions: How does the position of Standard English determine the sense of national identity of ethnic people in Belize? Could the use of Standard English indicate a hierarchy of languages in Belize and as such suggest that, to a large degree, Belize can still be considered colonized?

These questions, of course, provoke the historical question as to how the decision to use Standard English was made, who benefits from its use, and why is it allowed to maintain social and political power and influence in Belize long after independence and well into the twenty-first century. In the way that language helps to enforce the logic and power of racial identity, in *Life After Race* (1995) Naomi Zack, cited elsewhere in this study, posits that “...our language itself, at least English, underscores such a [power]. The European word for race – in the sense of genealogical forebears – is a homonym of the word for a written mark, namely ‘line’. That is given that race has no objective biological foundation, one must look to language for its origins...” (p. 301). The theoretical implications behind the power of Standard English span across the body of postcolonial literature which is adept in criticism of English European cultural expansion during colonialism. Since Belize is a country affected historically, socially and politically by the events of colonialism, to theoretically engage the possible ways Standard English influenced and still influences an understanding of national identity helps to bring Belize

¹⁴ *The 1981 Belizean Constitution*, Protection of persons detained under emergency laws section. (p. 16)

and Belizeans more functionally into the discourse of identity in postcolonial communities across the globe.

This dissertation focuses its attention primarily on the *1981 Belizean Constitution* as an existing postcolonial political document that directly influences ethnic and national identity in Belize. Using *race* as a rhetorical feature, along with writing the Constitution in a language historically associated with colonial dominance in Belize, begs the research question as to the condition of national identity. Taking the approach of analyzing race and the use of Standard English as rhetorical features of Belize's national identity is essential, as this approach will better help to contextualize their uses in the 1981 Belizean Constitution.

Beginning the Research

Step 1: The 1981 Belizean Constitution

To begin this process a copy of the *1981 Belizean Constitution* was retrieved from the Belize Archive Department located in the capital city of Belize, Belmopan. However, because original copies of the written and signed Constitution are not available to the public, The Belize Archive Department issues a digital copy of this *1981 Belizean Constitution* that is composed of all the necessary articles of agreement relevant to this research. The Constitution was evaluated for the number of times the term *race* occurred and in what sections they occurred. The same process was performed for the term Her Majesty, English, Language, English Language, Creole, Garifuna, Maya, and Mestizo. The results of this evaluation process is seen in the *Why Race* and *Why Standard English* sections above. The focus on race and Standard English helps to make scope of this study manageable, while at the same time centering the discussion of national

identity on two characteristics (race and Standard English) essential to the creation and understanding of identity from the national and global perspective.

Step 2: Previous Research on Belizean History and National Identity

Because the purpose of this study is to rhetorically analyze race and the use of Standard English in the Constitution as to the possible effectiveness these features have on ethnic groups and understanding of national identity within the historical and political context of Belize, the next logical step is looking to three (3) researchers and writers, in particular, who have participated in the discussion on Belizean national identity. In the case of understanding what qualifies as an ethnic identity in Belize, this dissertation relies heavily on the previous and extensive research of O. Nigel Bolland, Doctor of Sociology whose main focus of research is the sociological and colonial history of Belize. Where the focus of discussion is Belize's colonial history, political development and ethnic diversity, Bolland is among the most cited and resourced authority on these topics of interests.

As Professor of Sociology and Caribbean Studies, Bolland has researched topics specifically about ethnic experiences in Belize and written books such as *Struggles for Freedom: Essays on Slavery, Colonialism and Culture in the Caribbean and Central America* (1997) and *Colonialism and Resistance in Belize: Essays in Historical Sociology* (1988) revealing largely undiscussed details about Belize's colonial history. Concerning ethnic identity in Belize, Bolland borrows the definition of Anthropologist Stanley J. Tambiah, who maintains that ethnic identity is a social categorization and marked idea of inheritance, ancestry and descent, place or territory of origin, and the sharing of kinship, any one or combination of which may be invoked as a claim

according to socio-historical and political context.¹⁵ For the purposes of this dissertation, Tambiah's definition of ethnic identity is borrowed whenever this dissertation mentions or refers to ethnic groups or ethnic identities in Belize. In context of the Caribbean, Bolland's works provides a platform for understanding how both local and global political cultures affect the domestic and social organization of Caribbean counties like Belize.

Works from Belizean researcher, writer, and former Belizean politician Dr. Assad Shoman, who has a Doctorate in History from the University of London and has written extensively on the history, and history of politics in Belize. Shoman's works that are featured in this study are *A History of Belize in 13 Chapters* (2011), *Belize's Independence and Decolonization in Latin America* (2010), and *Reflections on Ethnicity and Nation in Belize* (2010). Shoman offers a critique of Belize's history with colonialism by mainly recounting and contextualizing the events surrounding the Creole cultures. Through his focus on the evolution of the Creole culture, Shoman is able argue the ways which Belizean society was created and maintained through the existence of English social practices and political structures that existed during the colonial period, and which still find various uses today in contemporary Belize. Shoman's work is key to note here because his contribute to the discussion on Belize's national identity is purposefully multiethnic, as he includes the scholarship of other Belizean writers like Evan X Hyde (Creole) and Joseph Palacio (Garifuna) as a means of critical engagement with Belize's history.

The last researcher on Belize that is consistently referenced in this study is Sir Colville Young, the current Governor General of Belize, who is Ph. D. in Sociolinguistics and whose research focuses on the evolution of the Creole ethnic group and language as they have developed in Belize. Young's book *Language and Education in Belize* (2002) is also heavily

¹⁵ Tambiah, S.J. (1989). *Ethnic Conflict in the World Today*. American Ethnologist. Vol 16 – 335. (p. 49)

featured in this work, as in his book, Young captures the general social complexities of language as a dynamic feature of national identity in Belize. Young's specific focus is on different social and political attitudes toward the Creole language, what potential the Creole holds in terms of education and politics; because the language is spoken and understood by all ethnic groups in Belize. Though Young makes a compelling argument as to the broad use of the Creole language as the official language of Belize, he largely ignores the historical circumstance which lead to low consideration of Creole as a language of national identity. This study recognizes the contradiction in the 1981 Belizean Constitution as a document which officially recognizes Belize's national identity as English by virtue of using Standard English, which becomes a mode of representing Belize to the rest of the world.

Finally, though not a Belizean writer engaging sociopolitical and historical issues specific to Belize, David Spurr's (1993) *The Rhetoric of Empire* is a book that features specific approaches to colonization and decolonization which help to understand the various effects the variable of race and Standard English has on ethnic identities. In his book, Spurr highlights the different aspects of colonialism through sociopolitical structures and the power they carry, specifically aspects and modes of classification, surveillance and appropriation, which are typical of English European dominance across the globe. Also citing Spurr's position on how writing functioned and functions as a rhetorical tool of colonialism, this work hopes to draw upon arguments that help explain why race and the use of Standard English in the 1981 Belizean Constitution continually marginalize people, and is a testament to the Constitution's reliance on historical law and social norms consistent with Belize's colonial past.

As such, the three main scholars on Belize's history cited in this study, Nigel Bolland, Assad Shoman and Sr. Colville Young, along with David Spurr's insight on the permanence of

the colonial situation, help to properly contextualize Belize's constitutionality through the variables of race and Standard English. The perspective drawn from these authors, in particular will also help to place into perspective the theoretical questions driving the position of other postcolonial writers that are cited and named in each chapter of this study. All in all, these authors will help to demonstrate the purpose of this study, which is to analyze 'race' and 'the English language' as rhetorical variables of the *1981 Belizean Constitution*, exposing the existence of remaining colonial power in Belize, which in turn limits the involvement of ethnic groups in the formation of national identity.

Step 3: Other Relevant Material

In order to address the research question, along with looking at the places where specific terms occur in the Constitution (race, Her Majesty and English) and looking at the literature from previous scholars on Belize's history, these other sources are drawn upon for the ways in which they contribute to the theoretical relevance and vernacular understanding of constitutional and national identity in Belize:

1. The 1961 Portfolio of Information on British Honduras.

This document issued by The Government Information Services in Belize City, British Honduras in 1961. After the Constitutional Conference in England in 1960, British Honduras was granted the opportunity to draft a Constitution which would bring the colony closer to self-government. *The Portfolio of Information on British Honduras* details the structure of Belize's government, the naming of districts and their populations, the workings and finances of Belize's industry in accordance with the British monetary system, the specific structure and languages to be taught and used in Belize's primary, secondary and tertiary level educational institutions. And finally, the languages and distance of Belize's broadcast communications.

2. *The Belize Bill* (July 10, 1981)

The Belize Bill is a transcript of court of proceedings arguing for the legitimacy of Belize's Constitution and consequently, Belize's independence. This document details the acceptable terms under which Belize would be afforded independence by Britain. These terms specifically mention Belize's membership position and participation in the British Commonwealth of Nations, and the conditions under which Belize will remain a constitutional Monarchy with the Queen as Head of State.

3) Articles from *The Belizean Studies Journal*

The Belize Studies Journal is a publication journal from the St. John's Junior College from 1973 to 1995 that focused on research and thoughts on Belize's history, culture and social realities as these concern changes in Belizean politics locally and globally. This journal features authors and articles that are critical about the prospects of Belize's Independence in 1981. Articles are chosen for the specific ways in which they speculate on and are critical of Belize's history, colonial institutions, and events leading up to adopting the Constitution and Belize's Independence. As the publication is no longer in existence, it is important to incorporate the thoughts, ideas and opinions of Belizean contributors to the journal, as these writers and scholars consider the colonial experience of the country, the unique circumstances and set of institutional challenges facing the country prior to and after independence, as they pertain to ethnic and national identity.

The Theoretical Approaches in this Study

The reason for specifically focusing on the Belizean Constitution as it was written and endorsed in 1981 is first, to identify this moment in Belize's history as what marks the country's independence from the British Empire, using the Constitution as a postcolonial document that indicates the social and political conditions of independence. If contextualizing the social and political variables reflected in the Constitution is a conduit to understand Belize's colonial legacy, then it is the hope of this dissertation to understand the social cleavages and rhetorical uses of race and the use of Standard English as they pertain to Belize's independence, which in history have both outlined specific modes of interactions between colonial authorities and ethnic people in Belize. Through focusing on discursive effects of race and Standard English in Belize and as a part of Belize's English European heritage, I argue that these rhetorical features illustrate an existing connection that resembles the colonial relationship between England and Belize.

The subsequent chapters will discuss the rhetorical implications of race and Standard English, rather than performing a quantitative study that measures or determines in what circumstances Belizeans ethnically identify themselves. Or in what circumstances and forums Belizeans use their ethnic languages to communication with others. The reason being that to consider the quantitative study through the effects of race and Standard English on an ethnically diverse people needs a methodology that measures simultaneously the social and psychological impact of these variables on individuals and groups on the basis of interaction in various and different settings, which time and space do not allow. Furthermore, there is the task of quantifying the results of such measurements through monitoring people's cultural behaviors and attitudes in different fixed settings such as multicultural or monocultural classroom and the

nature and content of discussion in different political settings. Or measuring the impact of these variables through interviews on a country-wide study of reactions individuals from different ethnic groups have toward each other. Such broad and expansive analytical approaches are beyond the parameters of this particular dissertation. The scope and content of this work is solely focused on the subject of race and Standard English as rhetorical features of constitutional and national identity in regard to the contents of Belize's 1981 Constitution as a postcolonial document.

Mechanism for Analysis

Theoretical approaches help to guide people into understanding nuances of information that might not first appear clear. *Rhetoric*, often defined as the art of persuasion, is often used to examine how language shapes understandings in social and political context (Smith, 2016). A *Rhetorical Analysis*, as it were, is specific form of theoretical investigation into the logic of ideas and social phenomenon that reaches back into Greek tradition of social and political engagement in creating, debating and exchanging knowledge.

This is most noted in Aristotle's hierarchal construction of *ethos*, *pathos* and *logos* which are meant to furnish an understanding of ideas by removing aspects which are ambiguous or contradictory in the making of new knowledge. While these classic Aristotelian features of rhetorical analysis practices work efficiently in conjunction with each other, they are not explicitly mentioned as approaches to deconstructing the *1981 Belizean Constitution*. Instead, just as Angela Haas (2012) in *Race, Rhetoric, and Technology* uses Critical Race Theory to study rhetoric and identity in U.S. culture, I choose to look at critical interpretations of race and

language as aspects of national identity as explored in postcolonial theory to examine how the Constitution is used to create Belizean national identity in postcolonial context.

This also reflects St. Amant's argument that we need to expand concepts of rhetoric to include new theories and perspectives for studying identities in a global context. This approach to studying technical communications in international context is further advocated by Thatcher, and alluded to by recent edited volumes that examine aspects of culture and communication in globalized (St. Amant and SatiENZA, 2011; Thatcher and St. Amant, 2011; St. Amant and Rice, 2015).

With that, in terms of the analysis of the Constitution, the term *rhetoric*, wherever the term appears, is appropriated to mean the ability of the Constitution to effectively communicate intended messages in the use of race and language in the form of Standard English. Where the term *colonial rhetoric* appears in this dissertation, it is appropriated to mean the complexities of communication and persuasive language used to describe people in the colonial era.¹⁶ It is also necessary to mention that where the term *discourse* appears in this work, it is appropriated to mean the observation and critical reading of particular instances of language-in-use linked to specific aspects of colonial, postcolonial and political context in Belize.¹⁷ Where the term *colonial discourse* appears in this work, it is appropriated to mean and indicate a series of texts and ideas with common elements specific to colonial history and the colonial situation.¹⁸

It is the purpose of this dissertation to analyze what can be essentially described as the *ethos* (i.e. credibility of an idea or notion) of race and the use of Standard English in the

¹⁶ Bizzell, P., Herzberg, B. (Eds.) (2001). *The Rhetorical Tradition: Readings from Classical Times to the Present*. Bedford/St. Martin's: Boston/New York, (p. 2)

¹⁷ Jaworski, A., Coupland, N. (Eds.) (2006). *The Discourse Reader*, 2nd Ed. Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group: London and New York, (p. 11)

¹⁸ Spurr, D. (1993). *The Rhetoric of Empire: Colonial Discourse in Journalism, travel writing and imperial administration*. Duke University Press, (p. 2)

Constitution. In other words, analyzing the ethical implications of these features as they are written and appear as guiding principles of a country's political institution, affecting the social and political realities of ethnic people. Because race would become the dominant feature of the language used to describe others in the expansion of English European Empire, the term is inexplicably bound to the development and maintenance of colonial power across the globe.¹⁹ With this knowledge, the rhetorical analysis performed in this dissertation explores the theoretical foundations of race, its sociopolitical impact, and the implications of the use of Standard English in a politically significant document such as the Constitution. As such, this work takes *rhetorical analysis* to mean assessing the 1981 Belizean Constitution as a postcolonial text for how these variables affect people social and political realities.

Essentially, the rhetorical analysis in this work is defined and viewed as being critical of ideological forces and concepts that represent, shape and organize society in a way that determines its meaning socially and politically.²⁰ So through rhetorical analysis, an appropriate investigation can occur to determine the logic of using race to construct constitutional and national identity in a multiethnic community; or questioning the gesture of using Standard English as a rhetorical mode of representation in a multiethnic community where written Standard English represent the second or third language for most groups of people.

The chapters that follow identify race and Standard English as rhetorical features of the *1981 Belizean Constitution*, and as such, essential to the perception of Belize's national identity. Rather than draw focus to the history of colonialism in a general way, this work focuses narrowly on the Constitution as a historically significant document, marking a historically significant

¹⁹ Hudson, N. (1996). *Nation to Race: The Origin of Racial Classification in Eighteenth Century Thought*. The John Hopkins University Press, 29 (3), (p. 247 – 264)

²⁰ Baumlin, J.S., Baumlin, T.F. (1994). *Ethos: New Essays in Rhetorical and Critical Theory* (First ed. pp. 12). Southern Methodist University Press.

moment in Belize. While a look at history is important to provide and understand the context of the arguments made herein, this work in the chapters herein prioritizes rhetorical analysis over the analysis of historical narratives.

Using Postcolonial Theory

This dissertation requires a critical approach which identifies Belize as a place where the tentacles of British colonial expansion are deeply entrenched. In the English-speaking communities in the western hemisphere it is not difficult to detect institutions and governments that are the result of British colonial expansion (i.e. Canadian, US and Guyanese governments). The hierarchal systems of government, with different legislative bodies each accorded with a degree of responsibility to ensure the normalization of society through provisions law, should themselves be indicators of British colonial influence.

The fact that systems of government function in a hierarchal manner in places such as the United States of America, Canada, and Belize suggest that these places borrowed or maintained structures that are particular phenomenon of colonialism. With that in mind, postcolonial theory explores the visible mantles of colonial power and its expansion. Using race and Standard English as distinct and observable, rhetorically effective mantles, this dissertation looks at how colonial enterprise formed a unique aspect of power and control which fundamentalizes British European culture in the past and present, allowing race and Standard English to become modes through which people are increasingly persuaded to “know” themselves.²¹ So postcolonial theory offers rhetorical modes of analysis that critically view dictates of law and social practice as developed by British European culture as determining the condition of national identity and an

²¹ Ashcroft, B., Griffiths, G., Tiffin, H. (Eds.) (1995). *The Post-colonial Studies Reader*: General Introduction (p. 1). Routledge: London and New York.

understanding national identity. Through the postcolonial lens, especially when analyzed in the Constitution, I look at race and the use of Standard English as having normalizing effects and being the rhetorical means through which the national identity of postcolonial countries like Belize maintain power structures similar to the colonial past.

One especially significant way in which this work uses postcolonial theory is in the critical position through which some postcolonial writers such as Nigel Bolland (2003) views the use of Standard English as the ‘official’ language of the Belizean Constitution. Bolland reminds us that English language achieved its ‘official’ status because of Belizeans’ experience with academic instruction, political indoctrination and socio-economic dominance of the British (p. 209). I also take the position of Ngugi, for instance, who says that English language and culture were important vehicles through which [colonial powers] help people physically and spiritually subjugated; and that politics and education, particularly in literature, is where people became products of the British colonial enterprise.²² Institutionalizing perceptions of identity and Standard English as the language of politics and education is one repertoire of colonial discourse which insured the dominant position of British European culture in Belize, even after the country gained independence.

In the context of this dissertation, postcolonial theory is able to engage the narrative and context of Belize’s colonial history to rightly identify the European essentialist ideals, the form of politics and social practices defined as common elements among and within postcolonial communities. As such, a postcolonial approach to the rhetorical features in the Constitution is used as a means of providing the investigative framework to question the event of slavery in

²² Thiong’o, N.W. (1986). Decolonising the Mind: Politics of Language in African Literature. *The Postcolonial Studies Reader*. Routledge: London, (p. 285)

Belize, how ethnic differences are politicized, and the impossibility of representation through race and language²³ as they are related to *1981 Belizean Constitution*.

Using the Foucauldian Approach

First, let it be clear that this dissertation does not offer a Foucauldian analysis of the Belizean Constitution. Rather, certain Foucauldian views are clearly expressed and used to tease out relevant aspects of postcolonial theory as they apply to the analysis of the Constitution and points of view on Belizean national identity. Foucault offers new and different ways of engaging social and political relationships that can be broad and imprecise in some areas, and curiously exact in others. Foucauldian perspectives are used particularly in their relations to race, and how race in its different incarnations have particular implications and relevance to law, society and power dynamics of postcolonial societies. Foucault's position on the relationship between power and knowledge, for instance is "curiously circumspect about the ways in which [power] has operated in the areas of race and colonialism".²⁴ But ideally, the reason for using a Foucauldian interpretation in certain areas of this work is because of the way Foucault's scholarship recognizes how the control of political power structures situates and restricts power from targeted communities. Specifically, Foucault is able to engage historical narratives, identity construction and representation in a manner that reveals how these aspects of society are influenced and determined by political power.

As mentioned, Foucauldian perspective, where relevant, is used only in interrogating the logic and the political divisiveness of race, as it is linked to the content of law, society and national identity. The idea of race, according to Foucault, is too much imbued with external and

²³ *Ibid*, p. 2

²⁴ Young, R. (1995). *Foucault on Race and Colonialism*. *New Formations*, 25 (p. 57)

internal sociopolitical conflict, where race is centered “on the discourse of power itself. It will become the discourse of centered, centralized, and centralizing power”.²⁵ As it relates to this dissertation, this perspective offers an interpretation of the power behind the logic and dynamics of race – race as a dynamic sociohistorical process by which identities are transformed, created and situated within social hierarchies, and by which these identities are then represented and organized in a global context. This understanding where it pertains to the Constitution locally, comes with the idea that race is inherently linked to process by which national identity is constructed, organized and governed.

To understand the nature of this link, or the relationship of power that race establishes between political authorities and people, race cannot be viewed as simply static – though the fixed idea of physical representation of the human body is the manner and context in which race is evoked in the Constitution. Instead, race must also be seen as being possessed of epistemological powers with specific meaning which attaches itself to the sociopolitical and historical context of Belize. This meaning, which operates at the surface society, at the same time clothed in democratic principles, works only to politically construct and codify racial identities as legitimate aspects of law and politics. This is another way of saying that the Constitution advocates the rejection of discrimination by race, but does not reject the concept of race. So, in terms of its function, the deliberate and continued used of race as a means of classifying national identity does not automatically divorce itself from the colonial discourse, legacy and impact of race as a mechanism of controlling people’s perception of themselves and others. Rather, the idea of race as a principle of the constitution perpetuates and reinforces the notion that race is a

²⁵ Foucault, M. (2003). *Society Must be Defended: Lectures at the College de France, 1975-76*, trans. David Macey, Francios Ewald and Alessandro Fontana (Eds.); New York: Picador. (p 61-62)

legitimate way of thinking and being. Through various Foucauldian arguments on power and authority, this work questions the seeming legitimization and nationalization of race.

Definition of Terms

Race:

My understanding of race as a rhetorical construct and how it has historically determined human interaction comes from a reading of Angela Haas (2012) *Race, Rhetoric and Technology*, who cites African American scholar Audrey Smedley²⁶ as saying that:

Race signifies rigidity and permanence of position and status within a ranking order that is based on what is believed to be the unalterable reality of innate biological differences. Ethnicity is conditional, temporal, even volitional, and not amendable to biology or biological processes (p. 283)

Through Smedley's description of race as a rhetorical construct that produces real consequences, I use race to explain social and political experiences of working and slave class in Belize – also as a means of showing how race and racism, as ideological models, are used with the purpose of perceiving one group as powerful and another as inherently unequal. It is my position that the direct inclusion of race as part of the Constitution suggests the recognition of colonial authority even after September 1981; and that the notion of race maintains its ideological intent as a biologically tangible feature of a group, sustained by universally fixed attributes of behavior and thinking.

Though Smedley's interpretation of race offers a unique and valuable cultural view, the ideas come from North American experiences. Not to say that Smedley's contribution of *Critical*

²⁶ Audrey Smedley is a Professor at Virginia Commonwealth University in African American Studies. Smedley uses the perspective of Critical Race Theory in her works to write on subject matters such as "Race as a Biological fiction" and "Race and the Construction of Human Identity".

Race Theory does not have relevance elsewhere. A Constitution is a legal document after all, and Smedley's scholarship and contribution to the body of literature in *Critical Race Theory* points to the notion that "race is not only rhetorical, but a systematic worldview used to justify conflict and competition" (Haas, p.283).

In spite of its obvious connections to race as a rhetorical construct, *Critical Race Theory* is not applied to this work for the reason that *Critical Race Theory* is a culturally pinned concept tied specifically to treatments of racial ideas in the United State of America. This theoretical approach, while generalizable, would need to be appropriated to Belizean experiences with colonialism and slavery, which display different forms of marginalization. But in the same way that Haas uses race to deconstruct African American experiences, I use postcolonial theory to theoretically argue the effects of race on the national identity of Belizeans through its use in the Constitution.

Ideas of race have operated and affected Caribbean countries like Belize in different and specific ways. As Hall (1995) puts it, there is not necessarily a "right on" virtuous way of collectively dealing with racial experiences. We can no longer live with the products of racism through strategy of binary reversals. This does not mean that in the case of Belize's Constitution, I intend to downplay the moral and ethical implications of race. As a matter of fact, I intend to communicate quite the opposite – that the Constitution is both figuratively and literally the 'Britishness' within which and through which other groups are socially and racially regulated.

As a way of engaging the Constitution through a critical discussion on race, I intend to respond to the following questions, though not necessarily in this order:

1. What groups are and are not acknowledged as 'racial groups' in the Constitution
2. How are 'racial groups' differentiated from 'ethnic groups'?

3. How these differentiations, if acknowledged, affect the ways groups view themselves separately and together?
4. What possible normalizing effect does the concept of race have on an ethnically diverse postcolonial community such as Belize?

My argument will be that the mention of race exposes a hidden framework of power in the practice of norms in the historical, social and hierarchal understanding of racial identity to which the Foucauldian perspective applies. I will argue that the concept of race, as it is used in the Belize Constitution, performs the double function of presenting a constitutional argument against racism, while at the same time presenting itself as a legitimate and comprehensive way of understanding Belizean identity. Although this dissertation is primarily based on document analysis approach, looking at Belize's colonial history in conjunction with understanding the phenomenon of race, helps to facilitate an engagement with the Constitution as a political document that perpetuate colonial understanding of race.

For the purpose of describing the Constitution as a colonial and rhetorical document that informs racial identity, I share the postcolonial perspective of Frantz Fanon (1995) who argue that living with the colonial institutions, people of colour encounter difficulties in the critical and intellectual understanding of their social and psychological state; that being aware of their collective selves is a struggle against political and rhetorical elements of colonialism.²⁷ I also steadily employ the arguments of David Spurr's (1993) *Rhetoric of Empire*, which introduces the argument that race, as a representation of colonialism, is a rhetorical mode that came into play with the establishment and maintenance of colonial authority (p. 3).

²⁷ Fanon, F. (1961). National Culture. *The Wretched of the Earth: On National Culture and the Pitfalls of National Consciousness. The Postcolonial Studies Reader*. Routledge: London, (p. 153)

For a project as narrowly focused as a dissertation, this analysis does encounter expected theoretical issues and limitations when it comes to a focus on race as a Constitutional feature. Given Belizeans' limited literary participation in a larger postcolonial discourse, a discussion on race can be considered an ambiguous encounter. Yet, it is the hope and purpose of this study to view the rhetorical implications of race as bringing Belize into the discussion of creating a more politically inclusive reality through ethnic inclusion.

Language as Written Standard English

For the sake of providing a stable and relatable definition across the humanities, this work recognizes the universal meaning of language as a written or spoken mode of communication consisting of words in a structured and conventional way that is used to by particular communities or countries to differentiate themselves from others.²⁸ For the purpose of this dissertation, language is also viewed and defined more specifically from the postcolonial context. This means that this analysis on the use of Standard English takes into account perspectives such as that of postcolonial author George Lamming (1995), who explains language to be a key rhetorical tool of the British Empire, where in the absence of a physical colonial presence, is the means by which the empire maintained control over previously occupied spaces.²⁹ Or Peter Roberts (1997), Linguistic Professor and researcher at the University of the West Indies and author of *From Oral to Literate Cultures*, who was quoted earlier as say, that in the Caribbean, English was regarded as the language of communication and known to be the language of control (p. 5).

²⁸ Bolton, W.F. (1998). *Language: An Introduction*. *Language: Readings in Language and Culture* (6th Ed.) Virginia P. Clark, Paul A. Eschholz, Alfred F. Rosa (Eds.). Publisher: St. Martin's, (p. 61)

²⁹ Lamming, G. (1960). *The Occasion for Speaking: The Pleasure of Exile*. *The Postcolonial Studies Reader*. Routledge: London, (p. 12)

Since this dissertation uses document analysis as its only method of interrogation, the parameters established for examining language are restricted to the Constitution itself and how it employs Standard English as a communicative and linguistic medium in a postcolonial society. This dissertation does not seek to deliver a comprehensive record of the introduction of Standard English as an aspect of colonial rule in Belize. Neither is the space afforded to scrutinize and aggressively challenge current institutional practices in education that attempt to validate the idea of English as the ‘official’ language of Belize.

Rather, this analysis looks at the immediate imperial logic and possible social outcomes of using Standard English as the only functioning and active language in the Constitution, keeping in mind that Standard English, by most of the population, is a learned written language where Creole, Garifuna and Maya are traditional oral languages. In most cases, English is the second and third language for many people in Belize, but is a common language used to communicate across ethnic lines. As R.B. Le Page and Andree Tabouret-Keller (1985) note in their study of Belizean languages around the time of Belize’s independence, one main concern was that “ethnic identities and their evolution at a time when the emergence of a new identity, that of being a ‘Belizean’, is called forth by a political situation. [Language] being that one important feature of that common ‘Belizean’ identity”.³⁰ This analysis also draws from postcolonial perspective similar to that of Edward Brathwaite (1984), where the writer expands on the postcolonial relationship between Standard English, national identity and colonial power, explaining that the mapping of identity is primarily a rhetorical issue in Caribbean nations, and that identity of colonized groups is affected by rhetorical practices of political institutions.³¹

³⁰ Le Page, R.B., Tabouret-Keller, R. (1985). *Acts of Identity: Creole-based approaches to language and ethnicity*. Cambridge University Press: London and New York. (p. 217)

³¹ Brathwaite, E.K. (1984). *Nation Language. The Postcolonial Studies Reader*. Routledge: London, (p. 310)

To investigate the impact of the Constitution's use of Standard English on Belize's ethnic groups, I propose using the following questions as a way of guiding a response to the issue of English language in the Constitution:

1. Since Standard English language becomes the medium through which other ethnicities are identified and named in the Constitution, does this act of naming and identifying affect or exert power over their economic and political circumstances?
2. How are local ethnic groups linguistically marginalized by a Constitution written in Standard English? How does the language of the Constitution affect access to necessary political knowledge and processes?
3. What linguistic alternatives exist that would demonstrate a more inclusive form of Constitutional identity?

This dissertation sets out to demonstrate that the use of Standard English in the Constitution, as a rhetorical act of national identity, is one that strengthens and solidifies the thought that there is still a sense of being colonized that comes through in reading the Constitution. While the narrow focus of this project cannot analyze the full extent and effect of the dominance of Standard English on national identity in Belize, looking at the promotion of English language as compulsory in Education in *The Portfolio of Information on British Honduras* will help to make clear why Standard English in the Constitution can be viewed rhetorically, as an act of political representation, maintaining the feeling of British European dominance.

This study focuses on the sense of evasion I recognize in the reading of the Belizean Constitution. When I say evasion, I allude to the idea of what authority is strictly implied using Standard English, yet not explicitly mentioning in the Constitution – that English is the official language of Belize. Furthermore, and perhaps even more important, what does the non-

mentioned of other ethnic languages is meant to communicate to most, if not all Belizeans, for whom English is not their first language.

Since this study is a rhetorical analysis of Belizean Constitution and a search for the ways this document rhetorically converts social aspects of representation into constitutional ideals, a full linguistic approach would complicate this particular aspect of the investigation.

Consequently, specific features of the linguistic approach are ignored (syntax, semantics, phonology, etc.) To focus intently on a linguistic response to the Constitution would be to focus more on the benefits of English rather than the felt psychological and political distance it brings on ethnic people. To reiterate, my purpose in this study is analyze the Constitution in a way that reveals deeper rhetorical complexities of the use of Standard English, rather than abide by sanitized, balanced version of national identity represented in the legislative, jurisprudence of the Belizean Constitution.

Common terms used in this study

National Identity:

As it applies to this dissertation, national identity is taken to mean a sense of shared social, political and historical context that promotes a sense of meaning and belonging to a nation of people. In the context of this work, national identity is argued in the context of the *1981 Belizean Constitution*, which has the purpose of promoting a sense of cohesion through distinct rhetorical and representational concepts of identity, language and politics in a country that is thought of and represented theoretically as postcolonial. Speaking more specifically to Belize's

postcolonial situation, national identity is understood to be a trope that legitimizes and gives a sense of permanence to the idea of a nation governed by a Constitution and stable set of laws.³²

Ethnicity:

The history and general controversy around the definition of the term ‘ethnic’ or ‘ethnicity’ is avoided in this instance. For instance, in the wider scope of the discussion about national identity there needs to be an acknowledgement of the more arresting position of Trinh T. Minh-ha, who contends that the term *ethnic* was another socializing device of colonial rule. According to Minh-ha, *ethnic* was used as a term to describe people whose social practices were difficult to anticipate and define by British explorers, thus assigning people to a ‘one term fits all’ sense of otherness categorization.³³ By providing and popularizing *ethnic* as a meaningful way of understanding differences, the discourse most often returns to the classificatory influence of the term – which plays into the centralizing power of the British colonial administrations. The limited scope of this analysis does not allow space for a thorough investigation of the term, which have further deep-seated implications for the way national identities are constructed and maintained with modern societies.

Rather than offer this extensive debate, this dissertation views ethnic, ethnicity and ethnic identity in the marginal context of a rhetorical analysis of certain aspects of the Belizean Constitution. The term is used in strict identification of groups of people in Belize whose differences in identity are marked by linguistic, historical and traditional practices that set them apart from each other.³⁴ For this analysis, its historical context, and providing a subjective meaning of ethnic identity in relation to Belize, this work also incorporates Bolland’s view of

³² Hall, S. (1989). *New Ethnicities*. The Postcolonial Studies Reader. Routledge: London, (p. 224)

³³ Minh-ha, T.T. (1991). *No Master Territories*. The Postcolonial Studies Reader. Routledge: London, (p.215)

³⁴ Sollors, W. (1986). *Who is Ethnic?* Beyond Ethnicity: Consent and Descent in American Culture. The Postcolonial Studies Reader. Routledge: London, (p. 219)

ethnic identity, which says that far from being fixed, ethnic identity is formed by a social process in accordance with the historical social context in which that process occurs – so that ideas of inheritance, ancestry and descent, place of territory of origin and kinship are calculated into the production of social meaning (Bolland, 2003, p. 200).

Proposed Outline

In order to provide some understanding of the Constitution as a feature of colonialism, the First Chapter offers a general introduction to postcolonial discourse that borrows from several contemporary writers. The Second Chapter provides the methodology with aspects of the overarching research question of this study. In this chapter, I specify the method of qualitative analysis which is applied to this research and offer variables along with their theoretical context, which in turn are applied to the specified angles of engaging the argument on Belize's national identity in relation to the Constitution.

The definitions of race and language specified in the Methodology Chapter are certainly not new to discussions about national identity, as they are connected to the various issues that come from a country's history with colonization. It can be argued with reason that Belize's history with colonization ended with the 1981 Constitution and the moment of independence. Though this point is not intentionally the focus here, it can also be argued that with a concept as socially affective and culturally specific as race is to British traditions, use of the term in the Constitution means independence is not fully a reality. The same can be said for the state of language and the use of Standard English.

In the chapter that focuses on Belize's colonial history, it will be shown that there was rarely a moment in the history of Belize (British Honduras) when the identity of non-British

people was not affected by the ideas and practices of colonization. In this chapter, Belize's history with the British colonization, the history of laws, the structure of society and the attitudes of British superiority are examined for the ways in which they affected and are connected to the use of race in the Belizean Constitution. A chapter is also dedicated to looking at arguments in postcolonialism to show race as an ideology and British form of classifying identity, was a colonial apparatus used by a colonial administration to mark, understand, control and determine the identity of ethnic people in Belize. As a result, race determined and controlled the ways people interacted and the degree to which people participated in rhetorically constructing national identity.

Another chapter presents the theoretical challenges with the political and social understanding of race by examining interpretations of race as a classificatory principle. In arguing that the use of race as a rhetorical feature and means of classification was intentional, this Chapter theoretically engages the particular and unique effects race is suggested to have on the identities of ethnic people in Belize. The following chapter looks at the various theoretical underpinnings of using written Standard English as the language of the written Constitution. Through the combined use of the *1981 Constitution*, articles from *The Belizean Studies Journal*, and *The Portfolio of Information on British Honduras*, this chapter offers a rhetorical understanding of the political landscape in Belize by looking at perspectives on the creation, manifestation and maintenance of a socially unbalanced national identity through the use of Standard English.

The Final Chapter provides a summary of the analysis and discussion from Chapter Four and Five as seen and placed within the understanding of a larger global context. The conclusion

offers some political parallels and common social circumstances elsewhere as a way of drawing upon similar global ethnic experiences.

In Sum

This study will remain within its designated limits, which is to analyze the 1981 Belizean Constitution through the rhetorical features of race and Standard English which the document uses as a means of constructing national identity. The theoretical implications of this study looks at the possible sociopolitical effects the constitutional features of race and Standard English might have the various ethnicities in Belize. This project focuses intently on the possible impact and their consequences in the theoretical discussion on national identity formation through the Constitution. The specificity of this project, when it comes to the historical and political context of Belize, means that discussions on race and Standard English are restricted to other research documents and literature that speak specifically to these variables. For instance, perspectives from *The Belizean Studies Journal*, *The Portfolio of Information on British Honduras*, and *The Belize Bill* become demonstrative of the connections between race, Standard English, and concerns in the creation of Belizean national identity.

This research borrows heavily from postcolonial theory and Foucauldian perspectives on power and social construction of national identity, not only to legitimize the criticism of race and language in Constitution, but also in order to situate Belize in the larger, global context of postcolonial discourse. From these two theoretical approaches, understandings of race, language, national identity and ethnicities are drawn out as frameworks and critical points of view.

This project recognizes some immediate limitations of this discussion, for instance, that a Belizean person birth by parents of two different ethnic groups are rendered invisible in a debate about racial, national identity and the Constitution, and their impact of different ethnicities. It is

acknowledged that to incorporate this perspective would add new dimensions to the proposed arguments in this project. It must be stated that this is not the intention here. Yet, from the various theoretical problems identified in the construction of national identity, this project does not suggest any alternative for the construction of national identity. To do so would transgress the boundaries of political science. However, the critical perspectives on race and language that are engaged in this discussion offers a beginning in the re-imagination and a non-essentialist approach for the creation of a different Belizean national identity.

Chapter III

Whose Belizean History?

INTRODUCTION: Facing gaps in the Narrative

The written history of Belize often displays an imbalance in terms of the topics discussed in relation to Belize's unique ethnic make-up and political identity within the Central American region. Some topics of discussion often associated with Belize are, for example, the history and sophistication of the Mayan Civilization and its rise and inevitable crash after internal conflicts and introduction of European cultures in the Central American region. Other research focus intently on Belize's colonial period when the British Buccaneers first established a settlement for extracting Mahogany and logwood for export to England, which marks the beginning of colony with direct diplomatic relations to England. It is at this point in the mid – 1700s, when the Bay Settlement first recognized the need for slaves for the extraction of Mahogany and logwood, that Belize's colonial history begins to take shape.³⁵

But unlike places such as North America where some detailed records have been kept and extensive slave narratives were the means of keeping an accurate view of history, Belize's history is not one that benefits from such early epistemological efforts to obtain a precise view of slavery from the slaves' perspective. In fact, it was not until some years after *An Act for the Abolition of Slavery throughout the British Colonies was passed in 1833*, that some privileges such an education was made available to some, if not a small number of 'free coloured people' in the Bay Settlement.³⁶ Around the time and some years after the emancipation act, the population of slaves in Belize, Bay settlement so much out-numbered the white British elite, the use of institutions were withheld to curtail the influence of the freed slaves (Whites: 537 and Slaves:

³⁵ Bolland, N. (2003). *Colonialism and Resistance in Belize*. Cubola Books, (p.22).

³⁶ Bolland, N., Shoman, A. (1977). *Land in Belize: Law and Society in the Caribbean*. Institute of Social and Economic Research, (p. 6-7)

1,677).³⁷ With that, it is unlikely that slaves and free population of ex-slaves would have been given the opportunity to write their own histories. Again, unlike the narrative of Olaudah Equiano and Frederick Douglas in North America, who figured the power of narratives on their own, there is no known history of a slave or ex-slave in Belize engaging the politics of social circumstances through writing. If there in fact is, then the present and more respected scholars of Belizean history neglect to mention as such. However, research so far on Belize's history reveal just this; that the absence of accurate accounts of slave experiences allowed several misrepresentations of ex-slaves by the white political and merchant elite in Belize. As Bhabha puts it, "the authorial ideologies of [English] or notion of experience in the empiricist accounts of slave history – there emerges the challenge to see what is invisible, the look that cannot *see me*."³⁸ Later in this work I explain how the practice of non-participation of ethnic and colonized people is continued through the language and content of the Belizean Constitution.

There are several scholars of Belizean history who, in their research, find certain aspects of Belize's history to be flawed, simple creations of the colonial imagination. The scholarship of Nigel O. Bolland (1997) in his book *Struggles for Freedom*, for example, who I reference consistently in this work, explores the causes of depopulation of indigenous Maya people in Belize and the Central American coast. In this study Bolland also explores the subsequent repopulation of the area by English settlers and slaves from Africa. In another one of his books, *Colonialism and Resistance in Belize*, Bolland (2003) explores aspects and historical features of colonialism and postcolonialism which are unique and specific to Belize, beyond Belize's independence in the 1981. The research in Bolland's publications are prominently featured in this particular chapter on Belize's history for the fact that they examine the establishment of

³⁷ Bolland, N. (2003). *Colonialism and Resistance in Belize*. Cubola Books, (p. 31); *Stat Source*: Col. Lawrie to Napean, 26 Jan. 1788, CO 123/6.

³⁸ Bhabha, H.K. (1994). *The Location of Culture*. Routledge: London and New York, (p. 67)

British rhetorical practices in their interaction with diverse groups, the British establishment of socio-political structures of dominance and how these forms of interaction and dominance determine the limitations colonized and enslaved people experienced in expressing and determining identity for themselves. In both studies Bolland investigates the anomalous constitutional positions of colonial administrators and misleading claims that slaves were really slaves in name only.

The insight and research on Belizean history and politics by Assad Shoman are also featured in this chapter as a means of critically and rhetorically exploring Belize's colonial traditions; and how these traditions steeped in colonial ideology influenced Belize's ethnic and national identity. In *A History of Belize in 13 Chapters*, Assad Shoman (1994) scrutinizes what he refers to as 'cherished myths' of Belizean history and explains why the interpretation and the misinterpretation of Belize's past has continuously lead to and informed an inferiority complex among the different ethnic groups in Belize. Distortions in Belize's narrative history leading up to the moment of independence, Shoman charges, are at the center of the social disconnect between the various ethnic groups in Belize. In *Belize's Independence and Decolonization in Latin America*, Shoman (2010) explores the political grounds and backdrop that allowed Belize to gain its independence. Although the historical process by which independence was achieved is not the primary focus of this work, it is worth noticing the political milieu Shoman refers to as a 'new imperialism' establishes and maintains the strength of political relations with former colonies was a major component. He points to the fact that the political value systems of former colonies, such as Belize became after its independence, align themselves with the economic and political interests of Britain. So, much of the language, institutions and descriptions of people

identities were simply borrowed or transferred unchanged in the political atmosphere of independence. A fact which comes through in the analysis of the Belizean Constitution.

Thus, the struggle ensues not only with dispelling the myths of peaceful slavery in Belize, but also the practices of misrepresentations that accompany them. The objective of this chapter is to point out, that though it is small country, representations of Belizean identity were influenced by British colonialism in dramatic ways. So, it is only through an understanding of Belize's colonial history can one understand what gave rise to the current understanding of race and national identity in the country.

To emphasize the idea that understanding the circumstances of history in a postcolonial country is imperative to the rhetorical valuation of national identity, I draw immediate comparisons from the theoretical perspectives and experiences of writers from the mantle of postcolonial theory. Among the postcolonial writers featured in this chapter are notable contributors to the discourse on postcolonial identity, Ngugi Wa Thiong'o. I turn to Ngugi's (1972) *Homecoming* as a means of presenting historical similarities in patterns of British colonial rhetoric across the globe, and to explain how the current status of politics in those places once colonized by England, now represent a new and more sophisticated form of colonialism. Though in *Homecoming*, Ngugi draws specifically from Kenyan experience with colonialism, parallels in the rhetorical argument concerning national identity can be drawn more exactly from a later publication *Decolonising the Mind* (1986), which goes further in depth in explaining the historical uses of race and language as rhetorical features of colonialism.

In an attempt to provide further perspective as to the significance of colonial history, colonial rhetoric, and how these continue to inform the national identity of former colonized regions, I turn to ideas such as what is expressed in Chandra Mohanty's (1995) point of view in

Under Western Eyes. The fact that Mohanty offers a unique feminist perspective on the rhetorical construction of identity, though invaluable, is not the reason her perspective is included in this chapter. Rather, Mohanty is able to coherently trace the historical effects of what the author says are, “implicit assumptions in the analytical principles of *the West*”, which is a relevant notion to consider in the case of Belizean history, who wrote that history, and what purpose Belize’s written history serves in terms of rhetorically constructing national identity (p. 259). In other words, historical narratives provide the initial rubric by which the national identity of a people can be analyzed and understood. Thus, to some degree, to know and understand a people’s history is to also understand the principles that inform their collective social and political lives.

In this chapter, and other sections of study, I also rely consistently on the researched perspective of writer David Spurr (1993) in *The Rhetoric of Empire* and other writers reflecting a similar point of view, where the focus is the rhetoric of the colonial enterprise. As so far as the writing of history is concerned, Spurr offers an evaluation from the perspective of writing from the authority of the colonizers position of influence. By this is meant the use of certain identifiers, variables and descriptions by colonial documents to conceptualize the identities of other people. Spurr maintains that historically writing from the perspective of colonizers presents particular problems of historical referentiality, in that it speaks ambiguously from the voice of institutional authority and cultural ideology. Pointing to the specific problem of history’s influence over identity, Spurr makes a point that becomes relevant in the case of Belize’s own problem with colonial narratives, which is that “In the colonial situation as well as in its aftermath, this ambiguity in writing itself joins with the logical incoherence of colonial discourse to produce a rhetoric characterized by constant crisis” (11). Spurr recognizes an important point

that I consider in this chapter when discussing how history connects directly to process of rhetorically constructing national and constitutional identity – which is that the writing of history is a form of reproducing political or cultural ideologies. Political and cultural ideologies, in turn, begin to inform the national identity of people who hold trust in their logic. In the case of Belize, the country’s history is wrought with instances of how English cultural ideology provided a service of political power.

This chapter looks at instances in Belizean history where politics and slavery influenced and supported the constitutional position of colonial administrators, the positionality of slaves and working class people under their jurisdiction. I argue that the history of maintaining economic and cultural difference between people which started first in the ways of writing about slaves and slavery, which used specific descriptions and phrases having direct connections to ‘race’ – can even now be located in Belize’s Constitution. My discussion, then, happens at the border of analyzing Belize’s history and recognizing the rhetorical and problematic traditions that informed the beginnings of Belize’s national identity.

From Slavery in Mahogany Camps to the Constitution

In Belize, slavery was organized through the production of timber from Logwood and Mahogany, which made the socio-structural dynamics of slavery different from the slave plantations in North America and the rest of the Caribbean. Since the Belize area was simply a settlement in the 1700s and 1800s, where there were no townships or heavily populated areas – slaves did not experience the same hierarchy of control that distinguished North America from historically different varieties of slavery.³⁹ But while slavery in Belize was not characterized by

³⁹ Nigel Bolland explains in the “Social Relations: the Slaves” section of *Colonialism and Resistance in Belize* on page 22, that while the large scale slavery in the Deeps South of America to North Brazil was not characteristic of

the massive number as it was in North America, their position and the significant disregard held toward slaves reflected similar treatment. The Logwood and Mahogany industry required extraction and since the British were few in number, the viable economic solution was to bring slaves to the Belize area through exchange with the Colonial Office in Jamaica. In giving full account of slave experiences to the Colonial Offices in Jamaica, around the time when emancipation was drawing near, ideas of comradery between slaves and their masters began to take shape in the correspondences between the Belize settlement and Jamaica. In several written accounts, Bolland (2003) notes that correspondences indicated “the devotion and zeal of the Negroes in the Defense of their Masters’ lives and properties” and the slaves’ willingness to fight “Shoulder to shoulder” with their masters, though there is no way to examine the truth in these statements.⁴⁰

Narda Dobson (1973) questions the purpose and the validity of historical accounts that perpetuated the idea of peaceful slavery in Belize, how and why these accounts survived, inexorably affecting and informing the way Belizeans understand themselves even in this modern era. The argument Dobson makes is that anti-slave agitation received more attention in the colonial offices in London and much human indecencies were brought to the focus of *official* British Communities in the Caribbean, but “Little of this vast body of material related to Honduras. Few travellers visited the Bay, and those who did saw little of the life in the mahogany camps outside Belize” allowing the perception of peaceful slavery to rest on the understanding of the colonial authorities in England, even as emancipation drew near in 1838 (p.

British Honduras, the British determined their status through the ownership of African slaves. In fact, not only was the psychological and physical brutality similar, but African slaves became a form of currency or means of entering in their ranks. Bolland cites a resolution passed among British Settlers as saying that “no person who is not actually possessed of four able Negro men Slaves shall be entitled to a Mahogany work in any of the rivers without leave first had and obtained of a majority of the Magistrates”.

⁴⁰ These accounts are taken from the British Settlers written account in *Defense of the Settlers of Honduras* “An Account of the Descent of the Spaniards on the Settlement in the Year 1798”. 1824, 93.

149). Dobson continues to explain how the gross misperception of peaceful slavery might have been conceived when *The Commission of Legal Enquiry* visited Belize in 1825 “who worked from general impressions rather than carefully compiled statistics and reports” (p. 149).

Dobson’s research indicates that evidence does not substantiate the notion that slaves were content or felt a deep sense of devotion to powerful, white inhabitants. As a matter of basic human principle, the emotional and psychological state of slaves are not best related through the ideological misgivings of the economically dominant white population, but by the slaves themselves, which was never the case.

Dobson uncovers such an account conveyed by a seasoned member of the Commission, a certain Colonel Arthur, who discovered that by the “anomalous status of the Honduras settlement led to a good deal of uncertainty as to whether the [British Abolition Act of 1807] applied there or not” (p. 146). This presented certain political and sociological difficulties that would make circumstances of slavery challenging to identify and define. Charged with issuing penalties for offenses against the Abolition Act, it was perhaps Colonel Arthur’s observation, and others similarly misguided accounts, which gave some credence to notion of peaceful slavery in the mahogany camps in the Belize region, as he wrote to the Secretary of State in London that: “Although I came to the West Indies... a perfect Wilberforce as to Slavery, I must now confess, that I have no part in the world seen the labouring class of people possessing anything like the comforts and advantages of the Slave population of Honduras” (p. 149). Though, Dobson reveals that four years later Colonel Arthur’s position would change dramatically, witnessing gross and countless mistreatment of slaves by the colonial authorities in the Belize area.

To his dismay, Colonel Arthur discovered through the corrupt acts and several violations of the Abolition Act committed by magistrates and the courts “that there was no difference

between the treatment of slaves and free persons” in the Belize area, and that the multiple manifestations of violence against slaves and free persons was fundamentally a matter of power directed against the emancipation act of 1838 (p. 155). From the point of view that Dobson provides, the false narrative that there was ‘no difference’ between slaves and free people (British Europeans) means or implies that ethnic differences exists peacefully alongside the solid the certainty of British colonial rule. The records of slave revolts in Belize show that this was clearly not the case. As it was with Arthur’s discovery, the practice of creating myths as political practice and as colonial discourse in Belize is an act that is arguably refreshed in features of national identity in the Constitution. There are two aspects of Belize’s history revealed here, both of which are common in the colonial history of regions such as North America and Africa that have experienced slavery.

First, is that legislation passed through the courts as constitutional acts to insure constitutional rights, does not necessarily ensure democratic citizenship. Given that certain privileges and prejudices still exist on the irrational basis of skin color means that people of African descent, in spite of the 1807 Abolition Act in the English European colonial Empire and the Emancipation Act of 1833, are still emerging somewhat from a slave class. This is not to discount the many successes and efforts to thwart and remove historical effects of classism and racism at the time. In how the difficulties of the past parallels the present, it is helpful to note the challenges in writing and speaking out against the persistence of racial attitudes within society and government systems, and how facing that challenge may translate into a broader awareness of the effects of racial identity with the chance of providing a solution. In fact, the acknowledgement of racial identities may suggests the troubled state of democracy in its present form. Belize is not known now or in the past for being socially unsettled because of racial

differences. Which begs the questions as to whether or not Belizeans have been effectively pacified by the act of having their identities be written for them? Or, can Belizeans face the inevitable outcome of not asking challenging questions about history and the state of national identity?

These questions are not the focus here, but they do lead to deeper more significant concerns about what and how historical forces influenced and determined national identity in Belize. This is to say or realize that the legacy of colonial authority that comes from Belizean history, and that the details of the *1981 Belizean Constitution* does not come only from the forced exercise of authority, but also from a particular discourse of identity that allows ethnic people to ‘fit in’ without appearing racially ambiguous or struggling to find acceptance in a global political environment. The *1981 Belizean Constitution* not only reflects Belize’s state of democracy in its current form, but also reflects the process by which national identity is rhetorically constructed and fixed in a language and process both demonstrative of colonial power. The power being demonstrated in the Constitution by how it ignores ethnic differences among people, and so ignoring the possibility that acknowledge ethnic differences for political reasons has to potential to unify. The fact that ethnic differences are not acknowledged in the Constitution could mean that 1) those differences are allayed to mean that ethnic people belong to the marginal, unattended positions within sociopolitical structure – thus the intention being not to unify, but to dominate or 2) the lack of any final solution toward the problems of representation is actually the point of ignoring ethnic differences in the Constitution.

Dobson’s re-telling of Belizean history, for instance, exposes the idea that institutionalized amendments written to change behavior formed on the basis of prejudices seldom find success in doing so. As Dobson notes the attitude of Colonel Arthurs nearing the

time of Britain's emancipation of slavery, "The People of Colour have already privileges far beyond what are granted in any other part of the West Indies and our security certainly requires that they should be curtailed rather than extended" (p. 166). The continued reference to the black⁴¹ community in Belize as categorized by a sense of their unworthiness and difference is testament alone demonstrates the position of colonial thinking. But if it is possible that constitutional laws are formed either as a response to or an endorsement of such attitudes toward ethnic differences among people, then it begs the asking of questions such as: What constitutes real democracy? What forms of interaction must be had among people of different ethnic, cultural and political backgrounds that ensures the benefits of pluralism and multiethnic communities, rather than rejecting it?

Again, while the focus of this work is not necessarily questioning the state of democracy, it does hold that a true democracy should be inclined to understanding identity and differences. Dobson's re-presentation of historical events in Belize, illustrate a colonial 'commitment' to social cohesion, unity or oneness of Belizeans through the forced perspective of colonial law and the political structure that supports it. In the case of Belize, and according to Dobson, it was colonial law, and not the democratic involvement of other ethnic groups, that functioned as that instrument of power that governed a specific understanding of identity and social order. She writes, that as a result of a Public Meeting (Belize's first form of government) in 1827, "...there was to be no difference between the treatment of slaves and free persons. In fact [the reforms] suggested that there was a tendency to favour the slaves on account of their *low intellect*" (p. 155, *Italics added*). Condescension aside, Dobson points to the idea that the law, in this instance, works toward equal treatment of black slaves in Belize. Condescension noticed, such a

⁴¹ The term "black" in the context references to African slaves. But later in Belize's history, is used to represent a broad spectrum of Belize with both European and African Ancestry, as well as Garifuna people.

declaration illustrates a moment in the use of labels to identify positions in society, where “slaves” were to be treated equally, while remaining slaves. This stipulation also come with the assumption that black community needs to interact with the English European elite, given their “low intellect”.

In a limited sense, such instances in Belizean history provides the background for a larger analysis which this chapter later engages. From a historical perspective and in the context of the *1981 Belizean Constitution*, to whom does the unifying principle of ‘race’ speak? From a rhetorical perspective, from what position is the meaning of race given? According to Belizean history, at the moment of independence the structures of government was entrusted to those Belizean elites who would replace the economically dominant position of English European colonial administrators, which is a astonishing charge for people of *low intellect*. One can draw the conclusion that somehow over time, competency was manufactured among colonized people that would later take over the local administration in Belize – which would mean that their political disposition must be equal to the standard held before the ‘peaceful’ transfer of power.

READING WRITTEN HISTORY

Belize remains one of the most culturally under-researched countries in the Caribbean and Central America in terms of how the country's Constitution determines people's ability to express themselves. As mentioned before, affecting people's ability to speak for themselves comes from the colonial tradition of using legal processes to deliberately prevent involvement of the slave community in political processes. Without the opportunity to influence social structure and political processes, the gaps and narrative inventions of history have produced what Linda M. Matthei and David A. Smith refer to as shared fictional accounts that bare little resemble to historical truth in the Belize.⁴² The struggle for accurate representation in history, while such struggles are often considered to be an idealism, is significant in that such a struggle entertains relevant questions of identification. Nigel O. Bolland (2003), scholar on Belize's history in the colonial and postcolonial era highlights an unsettling fact the lack of ethnic influence in rhetorically constructing identity through historical narratives. He writes in *Colonialism and Resistance in Belize* that "in 1970, the history of the people of Belize had not been written" which means that what it meant to be Belize was yet to be written, constructed and communicated in way that reflective of colonial conditions (p. 17). The absence of different perspectives to this point, possibly has the effect of simplify the process of creating national identity; but also exposes people to the process of stereotyping, which has been effective in the colonial past.

What Bolland points out is a matter that raises explicit and not so explicit questions about the dynamics of power and the knowledge that comes from history. Not allowing Belizean history to be available in written form displays a degree of control that produces absence in the

⁴² Matthei, L.M., Smith, D.A. (2008) "Flexible ethnic identity, adaptation, survival, resistance: The Garifuna in the world-system". *Social Identities*: 14 (2), pp. 215-232.

representation, whether it be in literary or official government documents. The absence of Belizean history until 1970 suggests a form of colonial discourse that dominates every sphere of internal activity whether political, social or educational. This gives the impression that the colonial government in Belize, moments before independence produced a sociopolitical reality of colonized people that were known, and yet politically and textually invisible. Bolland draws our attention to the fact that colonialism in Belize was essentially monolithic, supplied by a particular set of ideals and practices belonging to the historical process of colonization as related to features of colonial discourse and colonial modes of representation. Simply put, the presence of colonized, ethnic people in Belize had little influence over sociopolitical structures, for the possible reasons of not being represented appropriately in history and in important political documents. In a later chapter I mention specific issues of representation political documents such as *The Portfolio of Information on British Honduras* and *The Belize Bill*.

The idea of history having a monolithic structure brings with it a number of questions that should be considered and addressed in relation to Belize's specific historical situation in terms of how that monolithic structure influenced fixed constructs of identities associated with colonialism (coloured, white, and people of colour, white elite). With this absence, one gets the sense of what Edward Said calls 'synchronic essentialism', or the sense that what constituted Belizean national identity was preserved to reflect aspects that were the measure of English European culture. This might explain keeping *British Honduras* as the name representing the region until the moment of independence.

When Bolland says that Belize's history had not been written by 1970, does he mean that no Belizean native had, up until that time, successfully attempted to provide an academic and balanced record of Belizean history? Or that Belize, being British Honduras at the time, simply

did not experience social turmoil and civil rights activism common in the Caribbean and North America and so garnered and required little attention from the rest of the world? A more far-reaching question, from Bolland's standpoint is that Belizeans themselves, at the time, were mostly unaware of their complicit role in the dominance colonial government over the historical aspects of national identity. He presents this challenge more directly in saying that some Belizeans who are aware of mythical nature of Belize's historical narrative are nevertheless unwilling to dispel the notion.⁴³

Controlling historical narratives as a means of determining national identity through colonial discourse is illuminated by what Foucault calls an 'apparatus' in *Knowledge and Power*, wherein that narrative functions as an:

...apparatus which is essentially of a strategic nature, which means assuming that is a matter of a certain manipulation of relations of forces, either developing them in a particular direction, blocking them, stabilising them, utilising them, etc. The apparatus is thus always inscribed in a play of power, but it is also always linked to certain coordinates of knowledge⁴⁴

Applying the description of Foucault apparatus, the non-active role of colonized and ethnic people in the writing of Belizean history up until 1970 constitute the consequence of colonial discourse. Non-involvement in writing about historical experiences only translates into having no influence as to the input in the process of constructing national identity. The historical factor of non-involvement shapes the way national identity is rhetorically presented in Belize.

This is not to suggest by any measure that Belizeans privilege the general obscurity in the writing of Belizean history. I only suggest that inadequate attention given to historical modes of

⁴³ Bolland, N. (2003) "Colonialism and Resistance in Belize: Essays in Historical Sociology". Cubola Books/Belize, (p. 18)

⁴⁴ Foucault, M. (1980). *The confession of the flesh; Power/Knowledge*. Brighton: Harvester Press, (p. 196)

representation eventually leads to the creation of general inconsistencies and misunderstandings in the way national identity is formed. It might be that dispelling historical inconsistencies would further result in a form of internal confrontation Belizeans are not prepared accept. What history's mythical narratives mean for the state of Belizean politics is the continued non-participatory role of ethnic groups in the understanding and further construction of national identity.

Even as the work toward Belizean independence through *The Belize Bill* happened, the fact that no history books on Belize had been written by a Belizean or a non-white British Honduras citizen prior to 1970, implies either that the people remained unaware of the full magnitude of the political order of their reality or that efforts to authentically write about historical events were thwarted. Neither can be proven at this point. However, the outcome can be seen as fact, not because Bolland's research determines this to be the case, but because there are no books that exists exclusively written in Creole, Garifuna or Maya that focuses on Belizean history – even given the fact these languages have moved into textual traditions. This, in effect, suggests that questions of history and national identity must be turned the constructions of colonial discourse and its commitment to articulating differences and building hierarchies among different groups occupying the same space. So then, the rhetorical question which faces Belize's colonial history is essentially one of how ethnic differences are articulated and represented in colonial discourse.

Bolland (1997) mentions the outcome of ethnic groups not able to write their own histories, as a tragic circumstance by which Belizeans historically define themselves and their social identities. National identity, he argues, was formed in constrained colonial circumstances, largely in terms and conditions which were handed down or inherited, resulting in people

becoming “tokens” of racial, ethnic, and class types – therefore, participating in the shaping of group identities and contests for national identity in the way colonial modes of representation would allow.⁴⁵ In fact, Belize’s political history as a colony in the British Empire reveals that not much control was given to local ethnic groups in defining what constitutes national identity. Details of the *1981 Belizean Constitution* remind people as much. Part III, the section that describes Belizean Citizenship reads:

Every person who, immediately before Independence Day, is a citizen of the United Kingdom and Colonies – a) having become such a citizen under the British Nationality Act 1948 by virtue of his having been naturalised in Belize as a British subject before that Act came into force; or b) having while resident in Belize become such a citizen by virtue of his having been naturalised or registered under that Act (p. 20)

Being specific to this section, what measure of control is given to Belize as a geographically autonomous space if every citizen of United Kingdom and colonies is granted Belizean citizenship? Also, as an aspect of national identity that was written and inherited before independence, the British Nationality Act of 1948 places Belizean national identity under the authority of the broader Commonwealth of Nations; the political landscape upon which the global power of the United Kingdom manifests itself. This means, that the historical context of Belizean identity was determined, or imposed, before an unbiased history about the Belize was actually written since no book was written about Belizean identity before the 1970s. Also, these features of national identity, in the way they are written, focuses on elements territoriality, where Belize gains independence under the authoritative gaze of colonial presence.

⁴⁵ Bolland, N. (2003) “Struggles for Freedom: Essays on Slavery, Colonialism and Culture in the Caribbean and Central America”. The Angelus Press, (p. 262)

This fact only suggests that the Belizean Constitution was written less as a resistance to colonial past and achieved more as knock-on effect. So ethnic groups are passive observers to what is the simple process of legal incorporation into the broader spectrum of the United Kingdom.

In any case, it remains a curious fact that, at least until the early 1980s the only perspective offered on Belizean history was provided by non-Belizean researchers. Philip Sherlock's *Belize: A Junior History* and Narda Dobson's *A History of Belize* represent a few examples of histories that present sanitized views on Belizean history. One might say that the writing of history by either European settlers or non-Belizeans to the point of pre-independence or the 1970s, and a little beyond, in the literary sense, offers the commanding view of Belizean history and an external point of view as to the ethnic composition of Belizean national identity. This being the case, the argument can be made that there was an intention behind the non-participation of Belizeans in the early writing and recording of their history. The intentions being to discourage any critical assumptions toward British institutions, as such, allowing history to become the process through which British culture creates and interprets the identities of other people, and thus limiting the ways colonized, ethnic people can rhetorically participate in the construction of national identity.

The writing of Belizean history by non-Belizeans must be understood as merely more than offering anthropological insight or exploration of historical events, but rather the loss of authority by locals to describe and interpret historical events for their own purposes. The threat of misrecognition in the case of Belizean history exposes the population to an identity which is neither accurate nor acceptable, and may even be construed as psychological aggression towards a people. This failure to socially and properly recognize ethnic identities in the writing of history

Spurr (1993) says is the very process by which one culture subordinates another. Spurr writes that, in a broader sense, this aspect of colonization:

...includes the entire system by which one culture comes to interpret, to represent, and finally to dominate another. It includes, in other words, the discourses of colonialism as produced in such forms as imaginative literature...ethnographic description, historiography, political speeches, administrative documents and statutes of law (p. 4-5)

Taking Spurr's perspective into account, Belizeans must come to understand how they historically fall under the gaze of colonialism, so to speak. Belizeans must build their own understandings and interpretations of their own historical narratives, rewriting history in a way that reflects their experiences from their particular point of view. Without these foundations, Belize will have an inadequate and ill-informed vision for itself, its people, as well as its place in the world.

Being able to collectively write history, and from the writing, create a collective and inclusive historical narrative helps Belizeans define and shape the ways national identity is rhetorically presented and represented. Essentially, Belizeans get to include experiences and features of identity that are excluded from written history and ignore political documents pertaining to national identity, like the Constitution.

Within a people's rhetorical purview, the written history and experiences of people hold the panoramic vista, so to speak, measuring the growth and intelligence which characterizes the sense of understanding the experiences of others and their own. So the writing of history has a connectivity effect, calling attention to people's suffering and transitions into different realms of understanding. In this way, a people's sense of self is not imposed from external sources, but is an

active and affective rhetorical process that contains, localizes and gives meaning to experiences. A people's experience, the way they participate in writing their own histories, and the ways in which they organize themselves should, ideally, exhibit their degree of mastery over the known sociological variables; for example, communitarian government based on respective ethnic groups, rather than one that is hierarchal. Spurr reminds us that the writing which reflected the thinking of colonial governments "possessed an inherent bias toward visualizing non-Western cultures as distant, different and in opposition [to themselves] – creating an ordered space for Western thought to inhabit" (p. 26).

A people who are not permitted to participate in writing their own history, and determining the content of their Constitution for that matter, are unable to consider the full measure and impact of the politics, social structures, interaction and modes of representation in terms of citizenship. For Belizeans it seems that while independence is fixed as a key moment in the country's recent history, it is the non-participation of ethnic groups in writing history that seems to define their political position as Belizeans. I say non – participation because of the simple fact that no ethnic groups are mentioned in the Belizean Constitution, which is a notion and fact which I continually rely upon in this work. To make the claim of citizenship without actually and explicitly participating in the writing of historical narratives brings the label of democracy to some scrutiny. In terms of Belize's colonial history and discourse, such an act is a distinctive action that reflect the patterns and practice of colonialism. As Spurr puts it, the control of discourse is the manner through which "Imperialism has survived the formal ending of colonial rule, but so has colonial discourse" which is found in the way written history specializes and regularizes the present (p. 5).

NATIONAL IDENTITY WRITTEN IN THE MARGINS

As was mentioned above, the notion of national identity as pertains to Belize's history is not as unproblematic as some Belizeans would believe. Perhaps instead of viewing Belize's national identity as complete and comprehensive, and being held together by the unassailable authority of the written Constitution, national identity should be seen as a continuous production, or an exploration that examines processes of inclusion and modes of representation from history and into the present. Of course, this notion problematizes the claim and authority behind citizenship, in that such an approach questions not only who writes history, but the authoritative voice of history fixes, arranges and embeds the identities it creates. More importantly, such an examination looks at history as the sort of knowledge that positions the examiner as analytically subjective from both internal and external viewpoints. Meaning that for a Belizean, revealing the falsehoods of written colonial history becomes an act of national identity. As such, the examiner might be framed as embodying both the vector of familiarity with national identity, while experiencing profound aspects of marginalization because of it.

This section focuses on exploring that latter half of national identity and aspects of marginalization that come from written colonial discourse which identifies ethnic people in oppressive ways specific to the imagination of colonialism. More specifically, this section seeks to open a dialogue through a theoretical approach to written history; a dialogue preoccupied with how ethnic people have been positioned and appropriated by the construct of 'race'. Some of the major points raised in this section deals with matters of position, chiefly, how historically colonized and ethnic Belizeans have been dichotomized through racial identity, political structure and religious concepts – a context for national identity that continues to be creative and powerful forms of representation amongst Belizeans.

Racially Written: Political Structure, Religion and National Identity in Belize

The control of written history, as a rhetorical instrument of identity, reveal the traditional modes of control and regulating knowledge and interaction between the different ethnic communities in Belize. In essence, those who get to write the history are able to use language, knowledge and modes of representation in ways that rhetorically construct a national identity of both themselves and others. Laurie Kroshus Medina says of Belize, that:

much of our history, the natural interaction of cultures which co-exist within one community was inhibited by the colonial policy of divide and rule, which ensured that our various cultures remained largely isolated from and suspicious of each other, and that the colonizer's control remained dominant. (p. 757)

From this point of view the knowledge presented through written colonial history in Belize often determines the manner in which people perceive themselves. The history we write and read structures our communities and inform concepts of identity. For Belize then, the writing of history by non-Belizeans opens an opportunity for those writers to *write* Belizean identity into a colonial or postcolonial situation that gives the appearance of solidarity and fundamentally representative of the real world. This is not to say that each researcher and writer on Belize in recent years performs the deliberate act creating ambiguous narrative histories of Belize. But as it is before 1970 to the point of adopting the Constitution, Belizeans on a national scale had yet to challenge those historical and institutional limits of national identity accorded by written history, and according to the country's Constitution. The ramifications of the absent criticism is still evident and felt in the way national identity is created in the Constitution.

As one way of explaining how written history functions as a form of appropriation, David Spurr, in *The Rhetoric of Empire* (1993) tells us that the resulting social structure preferred by

ruling colonial powers is one that promotes “the sense of inheritance invoking the rhetorical figure which traditionally casts [mankind] in the history of constructs in European Enlightenment thought narrowing the political interests of others...into suzerain and subject races” (p. 29). Spurr suggests and identifies the principle and the dilemma of ordering history through a series of rhetorical tropes; that is the metaphorical use of ideas or mediums such as racial identity, language and economic class. Essentially, a large degree of control is exerted over the politics and national identity when concepts that are quintessentially English European are used to describe and define people in Belize.

For Belize, these rhetorical tropes in many ways go beyond race and language as features of colonial identity, but extend themselves to represent a rational, coherent structures of social and political authority: *The Executive, The Legislature, House of Representative, The Governor General, The Judiciary*, etc. which are specifically named as empowered positions in the Constitution. This structure plays a critical role in the way national identity is understood, in that it provides specific and particular functions and forms of sociopolitical engagement set in history and determined by monolithic structures of colonialism. So while Belize may appear internally autonomous, these titles imply a large degree of control by another, more powerful sovereign state: *England*. This is not to say that any notion of government is altogether an unwelcomed idea. But that the concept of government specific to British dominance only communicates and continues the narrative of colonial displacement, neglecting any other structure of government that may come from different ethnic groups in Belize.

As such, members of the colonizing groups create for themselves on a position that affirms political influence, which makes possible the psychological vulnerability of people negatively affected by that authority. It does so by providing an internal and external methods of

analyzing national identity through the details of written history. Spurr regards this as a rhetorical method of surveillance, characteristic of colonialism where the purpose of the surveyor “is to place himself on some noble coign of vintage and to survey the scene below in such a way as to combine spatial arrangement with strategic, aesthetic, or economic valorization” (p. 17).

The surveillance accomplishes its goal when colonized people begin to share and value themselves through specifically colonial conventions of identity as can be seen with Belize adopting specifically English European titles to organize the structure of its government.

In *The Rhetoric of Empire*, Spurr also explains that this tactic of providing fixed points of reference for political authority both rhetorically and politically places written colonial history “either above or at the center of things, yet apart from them, so that the organization and classification of things takes place according to [a universal] system of values” (p. 16). The implication for Belize is that the common practice in past colonial administrations are embedded in systems of identity and value in a supposedly autonomous government, and so also within the documents and laws that legitimize the structure of government. These are critical points in Belize’s Constitution that describes ‘what we are’ or process of engagement, creating and incorporating knowledge into education, etc. What does it mean that these written, legal aspects of constitutional and national identity are reflective of English European traditions, since it is the case that Belizeans have little to do with writing history? Race, in the way it is used in the Belize Constitution for instance, emerges as one variable with the authority attached to a system of value – and in its use, frames national identity within the particularities and context of colonial history. The matter of race as a rhetorical construct of identity is given more detailed attention in later chapters.

If the structures, social value and authority are embedded in the written history, the character and trauma of colonial experiences comes to be represented as respected and even admirable acts of creating national identity. As will be shown in the matter of race, what was once a traumatic and unsubstantiated form of creating identity becomes a part of legitimizing constitutional and national identity. In the postcolonial community that is Belize, this “above and apart” authority still exists and has not lost the potency of its control. In Belize the nation’s official Constitution remains unchallenged where it is saturated with colonial meaning, which subordinates local ethnic groups by giving control to colonial-approved arbitrators of identity. For example, words and terms such as *race*, *class*, and *Her Majesty’s Government* illustrate how a familiar web of historical and colonial meaning are woven into Belize’s national identity. These terms insists on identifying with basic social and institutional values to determine how closely colonized areas resemble English European ideals. As will become clear, these terms as they were used in Belize’s colonial history to essentialize the identities and positions of slaves, free coloured people and British people, find continued use in the written Belizean Constitution, keeping their original meaning and effective on the structure of government and the ways ethnic people are considered in rhetorical construction of national identity.

European concepts of identity seen in terms such as *race*, *class* and *Her Majesty* are indicators of a colonial discourse, positioning ethnic people as external or removed from participating in the way society is structured. One can say that this is the politics of positionality. Postcolonial writer, Ngugi (1972) in *Homecoming* explains that from colonialism through postcolonialism and into neo-colonialism, the political structures that originated with European expansion have lost none of their critical influence and rhetorical effect because of the very fact

that these ideas remain fixed in the rhetorical methods for constructing national identity.⁴⁶ In the chance that these rhetorical methods of constructing national identity can be used to the benefit of colonized people, Ngugi contends that the:

...the role of institutions in society is to reflect the power that controls [and created] that society. Therefore it is naïve to expect liberation within the framework of the [English] European institutions that were developed to justify slavery and the colonial system that followed. It is even more naïve to expect these institutions to reform themselves when reform is tantamount to presiding over their own demise (ix)

Ngugi calls attention to the permanence of these ideas, concepts of identity and the institutions that support them.

In terms of Belize, the lingering colonial influences associated with British rule have, at least up to the country's independence, prevented Belizean citizens from fully re-establishing their pre-colonial customs, beliefs, ways of rhetorically creating identity and ways of communicating across ethnic lines. Case in point, today Belize is still known as a Standard English Speaking, former Colony of British. This mode of identification is clear, dominant and uncontested. In fact, it is the lack of cross-ethnic communication and a cross-ethnic political structure that has allowed the monochronic, linear colonial structure of government to endure.

A quick survey of *The Portfolio of Information on British Honduras* of 1960 reveal a structure that is not specific to or inclusive of people of different ethnicities, but hierarchy and list of British titles that legitimizes position and authority in a colonial community:

- 1) The Hon. George Price: First Minister and Minister of Finance and Development

⁴⁶ Thiong'o, N.W. (1972). *Homecoming: Essays on African and Caribbean Literature, Culture and Politics*. Lawrence and Company. New York & Westport, (p. 15).

- 2) The Hon. Albert Cattouse: Minister of Public Works, Power and Communications
- 3) The Hon. J.W. MacMillan: Minister of Education, Health and Housing
- 4) The Hon. A.A. Hunter: Minister of Natural Resources, Commerce and Industry
- 5) The Hon L.S. Sylvester: Minister of Local Government, Social Welfare and Co-operatives
- 6) The Hon C.L.B. Rogers: Minister of Labour

Similar to the structural content of the 1981 Belizean Constitution (*The Executive, The Legislature, The Governor General, The Judiciary, etc.*) the monolithic structure here is reflective of English European democratic enlightenment. Yet, the structure is one of limitations based on the fact that the democratic constitution is now deeply representative of a nation's collective and sophisticated understanding of itself, which is as Spurr puts it, is recognizing "gestures of appropriation which represents itself as the desire to be appropriated" (p. 39). In addressing situations such as this one, Ngugi in *Homecoming* maintains there is an unlikely chance of reclaiming ethnic traditions and control completely, given the extent to which colonial principles and practices remain entrenched in day-to-day events of postcolonial communities. He says that "[w]e have seen that colonial institutions can only produce a colonial mentality" (p.

12). This colonial mentality, Ngugi asserts, is enacted on at least two planes:

- 1) One which penetrates to the interior of people's perception of themselves and
- 2) A confrontation that happens when individuals and groups of people come face to face with foreign, totalitarian policies which invariably reveals the disparity in power and political orientation.

For a Caribbean country like Belize, the effects of colonialism on its written history, laws and languages need to be central in confrontations and discussions about Belize's national identity as a postcolonial society. The material value of such discussions would be in the challenge and prospect of historical and political representation, which, as explained by Ngugi, comes at the cost of examining those social variables that inform national identity, and by this virtue, constitutional identity. Confronting such challenges means Belizeans must look at the history of their "social and economic structures and see if they are truly geared to meeting their needs and releasing the energy of the masses" (Ngugi, p. 12). In the postcolonial era, the details and nature of confrontation are marked by the evaluation of specific tropes, such as 'race', popularized in the writing of a former colony's history and the rhetorical constructs of its Constitution. As a constitutional practice, race as a trope, becomes a mechanism for operating within a politically established system of representation.

When critics examine the written history and narratives of slave communities in North America, such examinations reveal fundamental problems with the actions and outcomes of Western political enterprise and thinking, as is the case with *Critical Race Theory* and *Cultural Studies*. Belize, being a long standing repository of European ideals, does not have the dramatic experiences of modern reformation movements. Belize experienced no country-wide, radical revolution that undercut oppressive policies of government equivalent to the scale of North America's Civil Rights and Feminist movements. Nor did Belize undergo the fundamental shift from one form of government to the next – for example from democracy to communism as was the case with *British Guyana's* change to *The Republic of Guyana*. As such, the pressure to constantly question national identity based on historical events has not been viewed as a moral and ethical objective by the vast multitude. Even if inconsistencies were identified as a blight in

the way national identity has been historically constructed, the interest in historical anomalous details is not shared among the different ethnic groups. Some details in Belize's *1981 Constitution*, at the historical moment of independence, have remained generally unchallenged as evidence to the fact. To borrow from a previous argument from Bolland (2003) points to the fact that "[even Belizeans] who are aware mythical nature of [written] history are yet unwilling to dispel it" (p. 18).

The circumstances of the country's independence suggest that Belize's leaders were ready to acquiesce to British political constructionist methods and socializing mechanisms; that is to say, the divided and conquer approach to governance evidenced by Belize's political movement in the 1950s.⁴⁷ According to Bolland (2003), even when the matter of Belizean history was at the center of political dialogue, the matter of the economically lower class citizens and slave community was never a political consideration. The chief concern, according to Bolland, was "the relations between the British settlers and the Spanish neighbors, the problems posed for colonial administrators by the anomalous constitutional position of the settlement, and the development of the country's legislature, courts and other institutions of British origin" (p. 17). The ethnic community and the poor are moved intentionally and systematically out of this political horizon. As a result, these populations were not at the center of Belize's constitutional discussions and were relegated to an inappreciable, unseen position in the national order and process. Returning to Bolland's research once more, he points to the historical fact that the:

⁴⁷ Bolland (2003) explains that "So long as racial and ethnic stereotyping and inter-group tensions exists, as they have long existed in Belize, there is a potential for conflict but there is no history of violence between ethnic groups in Belize... [But] It would be naïve, however, to portray Belize as haven from strife and a model of ethnic harmony. Both before and since independence, several ethnically based associations have emerged, each seeking roots in their particular cultural traditions and promoting their particular interests. Among these are the United Black Association for Development (UBAD), the National Garifuna Council (NGC), and Toledo Maya Cultural Council (TMCC)" (p. 217)

...monopolistic concentration of land ownership [after emancipation] was clearly one way in which the mahogany lords had, since the eighteenth century, deprived the poor members of the free population of an independent livelihood and thereby made them dependent upon wages...through a combination of techniques and circumstances unique to Belize [this tactic] was actually one of the ways by which the masters maintained their monopolistic ownership of land and thereby inhibited the development [and political involvement] of a peasantry...The employers used a system of labor laws and practices designed to keep their laborers under very firm control (p. 145-146)

In fact, for almost a century after 1838 emancipation, the practice of institutionalized prejudice as “backed by the power of the police, courts and prisons. A series of magistrates’ reports [as early as] 1870 shows that large proportions of their work consisted of enforcing the labor laws, called Masters and Servants Act, and this meant, almost entirely, disciplining the laborers” (Bolland, p. 149).

There are three reasons for looking to the significance of these moments in Belizean history. For one, it is important to make distinctions between the ideological claims made by systems of law and the sociopolitical reality of the people living under laws. Secondly, the point that members of the colonized and poor communities were not visible in sociopolitical dialogue and processes reveals a particular mode of representation and European thinking; to control the position and political weight certain members of the community would possess. And third, the uncritical acceptance of certain perspectives provided by written colonial history allows a sociohistorical totality, which becomes progressively influential in the shaping of a nation and its

identity. With Belize's history being marked by many such instances of silencing the colonized ethnic community, the factor of silence itself becomes socially and politically deterministic.

In Belize, any aspiration by 'free coloured' to be more socially and politically involved was prohibited by law, and those laws were strictly enforced as was previously mentioned in Dobson. In terms of identity and power, these restrictions meant that the colonized ethnic community in Belize lived under a forced identification with basic values. The administrative limitations witnessed in the post emancipation era, along with acquiescence to the colonial politics illustrates through written history that Belizeans have either consciously commit or unwillingly submit to colonial or Western ideals. So, it becomes necessary to understand history in a different way. It is essential to look at written history, not necessarily as marking moments of liberation, but rather to evaluate history for the interrelationship between national identity and aspects of political and systematic control.

In *A History of Belize in 13 Chapters* Assad Shoman (1994) points out that, in the early 1800s, any slave or free coloured⁴⁸ in Belize who aspired to be self-employed was cited as a transgressor by the magistrates and the courts. In his research Shoman points to the criminalization of business ownership by blacks, quoting the law of the time which said that:

...slaves of either Sex shall not be permitted to hire themselves to themselves for any purpose whatever...such Slaves being under no control of his Master becomes subject to no authority, but what results from his own Will, which

⁴⁸ The term "coloured" in the context of Belize's history is used to refer to the classification of black people in Belize's population with African slave ancestry. Consequently, since the Creole population of Belize is a mixture of African and European ancestry, the term is also employed when referencing the Creole people with black skin. For Creole people with lighter skin pigments, Creole is used as term to indicate inclusion. However, as Belize is a country affected by outward, physical classifications of race, the term "Red Person" is often used to acknowledge their ancestry as predominantly English.

natural tends to create Insubordination thereby diminishing respect to his proprietors (p. 31).

So, to question paradigms and the ways ethnic people were identified and positioned within social hierarchies was an act of sedition. In essence, Shoman notes the fact that the colonial enterprise, through its political and economic configuration, imposed principles of exclusion while, at the same time, enforcing a *lower status* of inclusion and domestication for those accepting of colonial policies. As such, the individual or group seeking social and economic autonomy is deemed insubordinate. So the principle of inclusion becomes accepting positions and labels association with domestication, which is to say people are not defined by their own “Will” but by the position and constructs assigned to them. This, in effect, is the policing power of the colonial enterprise, which is the ability to determine the terms of social cohesion.

The systematic exclusions of the voices of the colonized ethnic community in Belize’s written history is seen in the minutest political processes and society building. In light of this, there is a need for the politics of a nation to be questioned in terms of the origin, ideologies and the distinct variables of identity that justifies its sociopolitical structures that celebrates its unifying power. Bolland (2003) calls attention to an earlier legislation in 1791 which decreed that a “free person of Colour” and “slave” were not permitted to publically or privately practice their own religions. This legislation declared that:

Any free person of Colour or Slave associated with the practice of Obeah which in the Bay settlement, as elsewhere in the Caribbean, was associated with revolt [was prohibited]. Obeah men could henceforth be punished with death, the severity of the punishment indicating the white settlers’ fear of what must have

been a widespread influence upon the slaves, African customs being utilized to support revolts and escapes” (p. 29)

In this particular instance, the appropriation of identity is achieved by threat and force. But the nature of colonial discourse produced here is one which “decries the loss of traditional ways of life to Western influence.”⁴⁹ This moment in colonial history shows the motivation for religious fundamentalism in the colonial discourse; the idea that the spiritual beliefs of slaves was central to advocacy and flight to freedom, compromised the colonial system of control. So, what was a key aspect of identification for slaves and colonized people, was outlawed and effectively limiting people’s ability to rhetorically express and participate in a functions important to their own identities.

Perhaps this is association with freedom, escape and revolt are reasons why *Obeah* is still not recognized as a legitimate belief system in Belize and the rest of the Caribbean. The *Portfolio of Information of British Honduras*, as representative of the social and political structure of Belize in 1960, for instance, names the officially recognized denominations, which were “Roman Catholic, Anglican, Methodist, Church of Nazarene, Baptists and Seventh Day Adventist”, where all are primarily of the Christian faith (p. 13). The fact that the omission of Obeah as a legitimate belief system remained almost throughout two centuries, from 1791 to 1960 and a couple decades before Belize’s independence, is symptomatic of a profound disequilibrium in the representation of Belize’s national identity.

But the stigmatization of Obeah brings another aspect of Belizean identity into question, which is the association made with ‘persons of colour’ and ‘slave’. The nature of the discourse being produced here is such that being a ‘person of colour’ is interchangeable with being or having slave ancestry. With ‘person of colour’ being featured as particular distinction of slave or

⁴⁹ Spurr, D. (1993). *The Rhetoric of Empire*. Duke University Press, (p. 35).

slave ancestry, groups and individuals that are physically classified by this association are subject to the consequences of this legislation. The combination of these themes was imperative to the legitimacy of colonial logic of subordination based on ethnic and cultural differences. But even more important to understand is how ideologies and anxieties toward ethnic and cultural differences sustained in the passage of time and be manifested through different modes of classification.

Through his research Bolland explains that the position and power exercised by the European members of Belizean society is considerably more than the non-European subjects upon whom this power is imposed. This is the basic structure of colonialism which finds the politically and economically elites above the politically and economically disempowered. The rhetorical conventions of government in the colonial era were typically based on the mastery of the political landscape, an idea which is not foreign to North American nor the rest of the Caribbean. Controlling the economic potential and religious practices of people provided a general schematic and fixed points of view through which members of the colonized ethnic community in Belize can be measured, easily understood and contained. Bolland's research calls attention to the fact that ethnic influences effectively repressed by the "British domination of formal institutions – legal, administrative, political, economic, *religious*, and educational" (p. 205, *italics added*).

Religion as rhetorical feature of British dominance would remain constant and even become accepted as Belize's Constitutional identity, especially where the 'Supremacy of God' is a tenet evoked in the content of the constitution before the exposition of details. Before *The State of The Constitution* section, The Belizean Constitution reads "Whereas the People of Belize – affirm that the nation of Belize shall be founded upon principles which acknowledge the

supremacy of God...” (p. 1). While this phrase only occurs once in the Constitution, it is worth mentioning at this point that the thought and action it advocates is supposedly on behalf of the nation. In spite of the multiple belief systems that exist among the different ethnic groups in Belize, the vagueness in the ‘Supremacy of God’ leans toward the colonial uses of religion.

While the overt form of religious and political fundamentalism seen in history may have shifted toward more liberal and democratic ideals in some global metropolitan centers, over the years political control mechanisms have also made adjustments in policies, where the appearance of power is recast as democratic principles to match the psychological shift toward liberalism. The postcolonial situation in Belize has not experienced this shift, however, where the rhetorical situation is such religious ideals are regarded as ethical references and moral value. However, in the modern shifts toward more inclusive ideologies there seems to be, on the surface, an acceptance of ethnic differences which extends outward to broader acceptance of religious and personal beliefs. On the other hand, the ‘Supremacy of God’ as *the* opening principle of the Constitution clearly identifies the permanence and power of Western influence. Spurr (1993) tells us that these ideas and practices have, in fact not disappeared, but have transformed to match the rationalizations of modern society. He reminds us that modern democracies formed from previously colonized countries use Western moral principles “that act powerfully to signify action, means and agency” by leaving other names of other ethnic belief systems unnamed (p. 38). In the non-mention of alternative belief systems, “...it conceives an idea of the Other that is readily incorporated into the fabric of Western values” (p.128).

As such, the content and historical context of Belize’s Constitution represents an inherited method of governance meant to establish trust between ethnic people and their postcolonial government. Yet, as Marshall Alcorn (1994) notes in *Self-Structure as a Rhetorical*

Device “[W]hen people identify with [the voice of authority] they can be manipulated into accepting the...idea and values” as their own (p. 3). But this identification with Western values becomes a mode of classification, a standard that determines the success and failure of a colonized or previously colonized area. Essentially, the classification itself becomes a rhetorical procedure by which English European culture forces ideologically charged meaning and perceptions of non-Western cultures.⁵⁰ In sum, in the idealization of English European beliefs, Belizeans become comfortable with the notion of English European political principles defining and determining their realities. The degree of acceptance as opposed to being enforced is a matter to be measured by a sociological investigation. But, by virtue of the uncontested “Supremacy of God”, as a constitutional value, the regulatory function of colonial gaze on colonized ethnic people is always present through religious principles in the Constitution.

European expansion in the Caribbean and elsewhere across the globe built itself on the principle of reshaping the interior social and value systems of non-European people. To be effectively colonized no longer meant people being marked by their social status and skin colour, but according to their economic function and political ties to Britain. According to Alcorn this particular switch in purpose of colonialism meant “a sort of epiphenomena constituted by an interplay of social, political, and linguistic forces that determine its nature and movement” of people along the lines of established political hierarchies in Britain (p. 5). Speaking to the postcolonial situation in Belize, Karen Judd (1998) regards this epiphenomena as an issue particularly damaging to Belizean identity. In *Populist Ideology and Expatriate Power in Belize*, the author explains that:

To uncover the continuing source of white economic dominance [in Belize] it is necessary to separate economic and political identities, historically and in the

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, (p. 62)

present. From the 1890s to the rise of the working-class and independence movements in the 1950s, government in Belize changed in composition from mainly expatriates to mainly Belizeans, from mainly white [male] to mainly black [male] – foreign commercial interests (mainly British and American) continue to hold the land and dominate the economy in a system which favoured the local commercial elite (p. 153)

What Judd seems to suggest and confirm is how easily transferrable principles of control are from the colonizer to the colonized – that the problem of control now resides within the character of previously colonized people in Belize. Or rather, the fact that the idealization of English European culture ensured a degree of self-loathing effective enough to for colonized people to view themselves through the same estimation low intellectual value as noted earlier in Dobson's research.

The resulting removal of facets of ethnic identity is the political circumstance that represents and characterizes people living in postcolonial societies. Where the politics and history of colonized people are concerned in Belize, there is not an innate, original intellectual feature that contributes in shaping the political landscape. Rather, the identity of the colonized group is determined by the larger colonial forces that shape their interactions and movements through control features of colonial history and content of political documents such as the Belizean Constitution of 1981.

SLAVERY “IN NAME”

In the 1950s Belize was experiencing what can be appropriately labeled a political revolution. This phase in Belizean history saw the rise of political parties like the PUP (People United Party) and the UDP (The United Democratic Party) as viable alternatives of colonial administrations. In fact, the thought of independence galvanized people into a unifying sense of oneness that was unlike any other sense of nationalism. Yet, historical movements toward independence and fullness of national identity might not have been as transparent and decisive as these national movements portrayed. Bolland calls attention to the fact that, in Belize many aspects of local government “[were] left deliberately vague and indeterminate in order that real authority remained in the colonial power structure” (p. 206).

In the same way the previous sections discussed how colonial authority is preserved through writing, this section discusses how colonial authority is preserved through the inheritance of established systems of governing. In this transformation of power into the hands of locals, independence may seem to be an admirable act of comradery and human solidarity that brings together the intellectual potential and moral qualities of British administration and ethnic people in Belize. This sections looks at reasons why, as a historical moment, the notion of independence suggests a radical transformation from colonial rule, but failed as a rhetorical gesture to bring about equality among the different ethnic groups in Belize.

To make this point more clear, this section looks at 1) how the colonizing mission to rhetorically appropriate people into identifying with British political values in which the idea of constructing historical myths becomes effective, 2) how embracing the structures and principles of colonial rule reveals how colonialism manufactured the consent of British dominance, and 3) how by manufacturing consent, the realities of people are controlled through the context of

history, politics and the understanding of race and language – in short, if colonized people thought they could one day have what their colonial rulers possessed in the form of material goods, political power, or economic influence, they would be more submissive and therefore easier to rule. Such a discussion is important in that it engages a curious feature and phenomenon of colonial and postcolonial societies. This feature being, the fabricated and imperfect reproduction of British culture in colonized places, which then forces certain questions to be asked about the purpose and function about Belize's national identity as it relates to the Constitution. The question becomes not whether a country is independent or not from British rule, but in the moral and political sense, to what degree does that previously colonized place maintain its ancestral ties to British culture? Thus, to what degree can the argument be made that independence achieved little effect outside the formality and the naming of a country as sovereign?

Responding to Myth Making

The problem with Belize's historical myths of peaceful slavery begs the question of whether ideas of national identity moved further away from democratic ideals and into subjective and figured association with British culture. As mentioned before, because Belize has not experienced any form of resistance on the scale of the Civil Rights of the 1960s and the Women's Movement in the 1970s in North America, it is difficult to measure exactly what aspects of British culture has been assimilated and what has been rejected. Perhaps the true measure of success in the control of historical narratives is determining national identity to the extent that colonized people avoid criticizing practices of the British government. The false narrative of 'happy slavery' in this instance, remains worthy of evaluation.

Bolland (2003) points to the underlying content of the myth that “together the masters and slaves worked in mutual affection and to mutual benefit, and together drove away the scheming Spaniards who sought to destroy their society” (p. 17). Most Belizeans who are familiar with the misleading narrative of Master-Slave comradeship come under this understanding through the one-dimensional ways Belizean history has been portrayed in prior in the early 1970s and 1980s. In *Reflections on Ethnicity and Nation in Belize* (2010), Assad Shoman suggests that Belizean identity relies on the myth of its origin and the myth of the Master-Slave relationship from which Belize emerged. He says that Belize “seem to need a myth of origin, some event in the historical past that is considered as giving birth to the entity that the people within its territory must owe allegiance to and that gives meaning and an identity to it” (p. 52). Shoman continues explaining that “In Belize, the myth of origin is based on the victory of the British colonizers against the last attempt by Spain, whose sovereignty over the territory was recognized by Britain... The conflict did not end slavery but rather reinforced the colonial slave society” (p. 53) The author’s continued ridicule comes in a series of relevant questions toward the embrace of these unsubstantiated narratives; the answers to which have significant rhetorical implications for the national identity of Belize. Shoman asks, rather indignantly:

... why did a nation whose people struggled long and hard against slavery and colonialism choose as its myth of origin an event that buttressed the position of the slave masters and colonizers, indeed one that professed that the slaves preferred bondage to freedom? Who created the narrative, what exactly is the moral of the story and whose interests does it serve? (p. 53)

The extent to which the historical myths peaceful slavery has affected the formation of national identity might not be fully understood given the infrequent manner with which the topic is

discussed in Belize. Hence, the reason Shoman asks such a questions as recently as 2010.

Shoman's ridicule aside, Bolland (2003) does not make light of its effects, disputing that "[s]uch a colonially-oriented version of Belizean history is not an academic creation, but is a story which pervades and affects the thinking of many contemporary Belizeans about themselves and with the force of [the] myth" (p. 18).

Narda Dobson (1973) shares a similar position in her book *A History of Belize*, where she explains that the conjectures about the history of slavery and British colonialism in Belize are far removed from the country's historical and political reality. Dobson remarks, "It is curious that a myth has pervaded the whole social history of British Honduras that slavery never existed there, or that if it did, it was slavery only in name" (p. 147). The characterization of slavery had measured effects on how the black community in Belize regarded themselves, according to Dobson.⁵¹ For one, this narrative had its intended effects: the acceptance of a certain position by the black community (i.e. civil servants or farm hands) and the political separation of the various ethnic groups (i.e. Creole in Belize District and Garifuna in Stann Creek and Toledo), to the point where ethnic groups became disengaged with each other through the powers ill-informed perceptions of each other.⁵²

A History of Belize: Nation in the Making, a study of Belize commissioned by the Ministry of Education in 1983, quotes a statement from Laurie Medina's *Defining Difference*,

⁵¹ In the late 1800s into the mid-1900s Belize's Black Community was primarily comprised of Creoles, who were descendants and African slaves, mixed with European ancestry, and the Garifuna, who are an amalgam of the Native Caribs and Africans who had escaped from slavery. These groups were also politically distinguished by the title "Ethnic". Nigel Bolland writes more significantly to this issue in the "Cultural Diversity and Ethnicity in Belize" section of *Colonialism and Resistance in Belize* on page 205.

⁵² Recall Laurie Medina's point in *Defining Difference, Forging Unity* on page 757. British administration continually repressed African cultures in the areas they were thought to have large social influence. Because British white men dominated the legal, administrative, political, economic, religious and educational institutions in the 1800s and mostly in the 1900s, they forced the Garifuna, who successfully resisted English and French colonialism, to the southern districts of Belize. This way, the Garifuna could not influence the body of African slaves living in what was still Belize town. Nigel Bolland writes about this specifically in the "Cultural Diversity and Ethnicity in Belize" section of *Colonialism and Resistance in Belize* on page 204.

Forging Unity already borrowed here – but is worth restating in this instance. The study calls attention to the noteworthy fact that “interaction of cultures which co-exist within one community was inhibited by the colonial policy of divide and rule, which ensured that our various cultures remained largely isolated from, and suspicious of each other, and that the colonizer’s [practice of isolation] remained dominant” (p. 73). The 1983 study of Belizean society at the time, which is not long after independence, explains that the social construction of national identity in Belize was and largely remains fundamentally problematic, which brings to light other foundational inconsistencies in the ways Belizean national identity is viewed from a constitutional perspective – a matter which is given more focus and expansion in the ensuing chapters which focus on race and language as rhetorical features of national identity. But the threat here is posed by the action of not acknowledging or making the narrative inconsistencies in Belize’s history more visible to the Belizean public (which is an educational concern) – or allowing Belizeans to decide how these inconsistencies can be best overcome or resolved.

Even though the written evidence featured here by Bolland, Shoman and Dobson would suggest some degree of awareness, neither of these writers focus on the Constitution as the foundation of misunderstandings of national identity – a fact which figures heavily in the discourse of national identity. This notion begs the question as to why, after nearly forty years of independence and the acceptance of a new constitution, do Belizeans still have difficulty defining national identity for themselves? For Shoman and Bolland, the problem Belizeans experience in defining their space and national identity comes down to accepting the narrative effects of the peaceful slavery myth, which can be directly linked to accepting classifications of national identity in the Belizean Constitution.

When it comes to the effect the peaceful slavery myth has on Belizean's view of themselves Shoman's (1994) research offers the perspective that "the myth of the happy slavery ... was taken to reflect [and mean people's] satisfaction with their lot" (p. 35). By this Shoman implies that the relative unchallenged position of the peaceful slavery myth by Belizeans, on a national scale, leaves an important aspect of Belizean identity largely unexplored and filled by colonial misinterpretation. To exclude such important insight from the process of nation building is one of the means by which English European culture maintains influence over Belizean view themselves. The struggle, whether it is acknowledged or not by most Belizeans, is invariably to determine the historical circumstances, social reality and degree of knowledge Belizeans have about themselves, and their willingness to engage with this history and knowledge however sparse and inconsistent their state. A struggle for meaning and definition which invariably finds itself focused on the content and context provided by the rhetorical features of the *1981 Belizean Constitution*.

Appropriating Structure and Value

Spurr (1993) explains that colonial administration's orchestration of shifting power dynamics of colonialism from British white men, into the hands of the elite black men was considered a progressive notion after England began to lose control of over colonial enterprises after exhausting resources in World War II and embattled colonies in Africa. He reasons that the political method outlined by Fredrick Lugard, who worked to Europeanize Africa through relative degrees of technical and political sophistication instead of using previous methods of surveillance that required the presence of a British administrator (p. 69). Spurr's research cites Lugard as suggesting that the re-orientation and education of the tribal heads in the duties of

rules would allow more administrative cohesion. Lugard continues to advocate for an “internal authority exercised by native rulers which would be turned toward to the advantage of colonial power by a process of co-optation in which the chief enterprise would be an internal part of the machinery of the administration” (p. 69). In other words, Lugard argues that the practice of handing over control to natives is not exactly what it appears. At the end of the British being physically present, colonialism seems to characterized colonize people themselves as fields for development and action, systematically transforming people. In the sense, adopting the perceptive qualities and politics of English European cultures means using the colonial ideological gaze that once ordered and arranged societies through force of law.

What seems to be the issuing of power is actually transferring a standard of civility which reflects a form of discipline and political competence that where the central features of colonialism. Spurr explains that Lugard’s method, employed on a global scale, was a classificatory system that:

...may be seen as emblematic of colonial discourse as a whole, which everywhere imposes a system of nomination, of identity and difference. This classificatory system by its very structure serves to make colonial power more universal and more internally thorough: it is a colonization that administers the order of thought itself’ (p. 69).

Spurr sees in Lugard’s perspective, the problem that comes from policies of colonial past being re-appropriated and includes people, while at the same time determining the way people view and interact with each other. Such an order establishes or allows colonized people to perform a circular analysis on themselves, determining their own value by how accurate the structures and principles of the former British colonial administration is replicated.

That problem for Belize is that, as far as participation in writing the history of national identity goes, colonized ethnic people inventing, creating or influencing the historical context of national identity until 1970. It may be that, in the case of Belize, written history along with rhetorical instruments of normalization like Belize's 1981 Constitution only transferred regulatory practices of the colonial administration before 1981. Referring to Bolland's (2003) research once more, he calls attention to the fact that new Belizean "leadership was successful in achieving constitutional decolonization, but at the expense of an authentic and autonomous...voice in the nationalist movement" (p. 190). Which is to say, nothing about the political structure and ideologies that informed and supported those structures were uniquely different from the past. So long as people's national identity is based on and is reminiscent of colonial administrations and social practices that existed, there is a degree of epistemological and psychological violence associated with the acquisition of independence.

Many of the mechanisms of identity classification from the colonial era, according to Spurr, become so interwoven into the rationale and concepts of social and political authority, that they become as "irreversible as history itself" (p. 69). In the way that Spurr describes, the measurable features of national identity of a previously colonized country (i.e., its government, education and economy) are legitimized through the further acceptance English European ideological and rhetorical lens that determined the identity of colonized people in the first place. For this reason, notions of race and class, and language use, are always recurring features in the ongoing debate on national identity in postcolonial societies.

The argument so far suggests that over time the administrative processes and historical knowledge that classify 'third world' countries like Belize maintain close resemblance to the ways identity was rhetorically formed in colonial practices of the past. To incorporate rhetorical

features such as race and Standard English as means of constructing, classifying and giving meaning to national identity only subject colonized people to the essentializing practices of past colonial rule, which undermines the very notion of independence. These variables of classifications also brings with them the certainty of being discursively disruptive, meaning that an ethnically diverse society, which Belize is, will continue to have in common the experience of being socially marginalized and othered. But the underlying question is: Is there any trust and political agency to be found in a national identity that conforms to a non-western model?

This question draws near to the realm of sociological concerns, which is not the focus here. But, the question has almost immediate implications as how the potential for an open dialogue about national identity is affected by the use of race and Standard English as modes of representation in Belizean politics. But Bolland (2003) reminds Belizeans of the assured consequences of a wholesale rejection of colonial orthodoxies. He points to the attempt by the Natives First political movement in 1948, moving away from “Belize’s social and economic troubles of the wider colonial context, [to] the introduction of Socialism in Belize” (p. 188). Shortly after idea of socialism was merely introduced as a political alternative, the British Governor “passed the [devaluation of the Belize dollar] on the instruction of the Colonial Office, by the use of the reserve powers that were incorporated in the constitution in 1932” (p. 189). Such a swift political action reinforces the thought that any move toward self-determination outside the auspices of colonialism will not find the support of the British government. To have consequences to political acts could mean that national identity, in Belize, is actually the intellectual property of the colonial administration in England. Secondly, devaluation only serves to remind people that the underpinnings of colonial administration are power and control over people as a resource and natural resources. In this action against the simply thought of a different

form of government shows how the colonial structures are used as an act of political and economic fundamentalism – that rhetorical opposition to hierarchies and modes of classification results in discipline or abandonment

Spurr (1993) suggests that much of the world that was colonized by English European culture still clings to normative views of civilization formed in the colonial era, with the consequence of alienation should a series of values – religious, economic and social be brought into question (p. 74). So, because social categorizations hold special rhetorical significance to people who use them, perhaps the largest problem facing ethnic groups in Belize is that institutionalized perceptions of identity out of the colonial era become self-administered and self-deterministic. Being subject to and defined by the same value of power associated with colonial categories of identity may in fact suggest that ethnic people in Belize still view themselves from the perspective of both colonizer and colonized.

In *Identity and Agency in Cultural Worlds* (1998), Holland et. al. point to this problem in the social and political structures of power that provide the loci in which people fashion senses of self-worth or develop identities through social forces that work to determine patterns and acts of identity (p. 60). The authors point to constitutionalized identities as both rhetorical instruments and measurement of compliance to structure, whether that structure is ethnic or political in origin. Explaining the historical ways individual and groups identities become constitutionalized, the authors explain that developmental histories of identities “come by virtue of activities of which they were previously a part” (p. 61). Which means that colonized people begin to rank themselves according to the technical and administrative practice of the authority that governs them. As means of sustaining power relationships identities “continue to be manufactured or produced human [perceptions]” of identity (p. 61). As Chinua Achebe puts it, the point of

colonial politics was to provide specific rubrics of behavior and perception for colonized people so that people become simply and easy to understand; where understanding colonized people and controlling them went hand in hand.⁵³ It is a testament to the strength of colonial rhetoric and power of identification that allow that privileging of Western categories over traditional ethnic ways of forming identity. With the devaluation of other forms of ethnic identity, there is a sustained reliance on Western forms which becomes an ideologically concrete edifice that is able to predict the nature of human interaction. Belize shows no exception to the uninterrupted link between colonial rhetoric and political control which happens between people and their government.

Manufacturing Postcolonial Consent

More questions arise from what can be perceived as intentional gaps in rhetorical construction of history and knowledge that comes to later affect the manufacturing of national identity. Because the construction of historical narratives are crucial to a people's understanding of themselves, the coherence, agency and integrity of these narratives become the focus of the struggle to define cultural and political realities. Appleby, Hunt and Jacob suggest that finding the truth in history remains a contemporary dilemma, and is essential to the debate that focuses on ethnic and national identity to dispel Eurocentric categorizations that brought along the impact of racism and other stigma.⁵⁴ Belize, though a small nation that sits modestly at the borders of larger nations like Mexico and Guatemala, as has been illustrated, is not exempt from the issues constructing political and identity narratives.

⁵³ Achebe, C. (1995). "Colonialist Criticism". *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*. Routledge, (p. 58)

⁵⁴ Appleby, J., Hunt, L., Jacob, M. (1994). *Telling the Truth about History*. W.W. Norton & Company. New York, (p. 5)

Belize's colonial past, as mentioned before, exposes a range of inconsistencies in the manner of which political and social identities were rhetorically manufactured – one of the central issues of identity being that it was fashioned to meet the interests of a colonial government. Bolland (2003) argues this point, realizing that ignoring history itself as a rhetorical construct preserves the logic of British institutions, which becomes the objective of the country's government – rather than the pursuit of for self-determination of the Belizean people (p. 220). The absence of thorough analysis and re-reading of history among Belizeans only encourages the intellectual authority of the colonial administration to remain intact and unchallenged. This supposed *intellectual* authority also constitutes a *moral* authority, which is likely the source of disconnection among ethnic, frustrating the possible introduction of new and different identity concepts, different forms of political authority and national identity. In fact, a study of Belize shows that politics do not focus on the potential power of ethnicity of ethnic diversity, but the strength of socioeconomic circumstances to help maintain relevance to and connection with the British central government.⁵⁵

Belizean history, as a rhetorical instrument for the teaching of national identity, was not actually written for standardized education and established as part of national identity until after 1970, meaning that until then Belize was denied the sort of intellectual engagement, progressive unfolding of social value and awareness that comes with a developed and evolving sense of national pride (Bolland, p. 2). This notion is made even clearer by the fact that at its most politically significant moment, the name “Belize” along with the national symbols that would represent the nation to the rest of the world, were decided upon by colonial administrators and not a cohort of local ethnic groups. In fact, the current symbols have not changed to a large

⁵⁵ Bolland, N. (2003). *Colonialism and Resistance in Belize: Essays in Historical Sociology*. Cubola Books. Belize, (p. 221)

degree since first adopted in 1819 and then in 1907.⁵⁶ The rhetorical act of *naming*, signifies a moment of specific concerns for Belize's independence and its history.

At the moment of Belizean independence, which is the moment and act of *naming* for Belize, is concealed a deeper and culturally significant process of determinism. George Price and Philip Goldson, who both came from the English Creole ethnic background were two political figures most prominent in the negotiations leading up to Belizean independence.⁵⁷ In the absence of members from other ethnic groups in a more inclusive process, the naming of a country takes on deeper rhetorical and historical significance. The name 'Belize', along with the national symbols designated to give social and political context come into question here, with specific focus on how why these names were assigned. What about symbols best suited Belize past, present, national history and cultural diversity? What meaning were these meant to transmit locally, regionally and globally? Spurr (1993) explains that the instability of colonial rule is often present after the success of movements towards liberation, because of the fact that acts of identity are most likely social and political responses to the history of colonialism. As an alternative discourse "first is an object of empirical knowledge – new flags fly [to indicate] that a new political formation come[s] into being. The second is both an intellectual project and a transcultural condition that includes, along with new possibilities, certain crisis of identity and representation", which in the case of Belize, would be the Belizean Constitution (p. 6). In Spurr's view independence is not simply an exercise in the removal of a dominant power, but one that produces a nationalistic mindset and discourse. In the employment of national symbols and

⁵⁶ "Herald of the World" www.ngw.nl last modified date October 29, 2015




⁵⁷ Creole ethnic group is a mixture of English and African slaves, and thus were more privileged by British Government for positions in politics and the acquisition of land and business before and after independence. The Maya, Mestizo and Garifuna ethnic groups were largely ignored in political processes. On page 219 in "A History of Belize in 13 Chapters" Assad Shoman points to the fact that George Price and Philip Goldson, to prominent figures in Belizean politics, would accept or reject the terms for independence brought by British, American and Guatemalan delegations.

adopting a constitution, there is a deliberate attempt of create knowledge and regulating meaning over people's identities. But, as was explained and can be seen in the general unreliability of Belize's historical narrative, the act of naming as a part of colonial history may acknowledge Belize's own incompleteness in the move toward national identity.

For a small country like Belize, the act of naming by the British can be interpreted not as an act of assuring democracy, but one of forced perspective; of further socializing Belize into a westernized political framework and global economic membership. A host of questions presents itself not only about the postcolonial status of Belize, but also about the nature of a collective identity based on a constitution. Who chose the name Belize? What is the origin of the name? Does this name reflect the collective move toward a national identity? And are the experiences of each of Belize's ethnic group reflected in the name? These questions in many ways transcend the limited discourse of the postcolonial argument and find some parallel with the naming of 'Africa' and Asian countries as the 'Orient' by the colonial enterprise of other western and English European exploration.

The Origin Of The Name "Belize"

IN THE 17 CENTURY, PETER WALLACE A DARING SCOTCH BUCCANEER FOUND A RIVER ENTIRELY PROTECTED BY A SERIES OF CAYES AND REEFS AND MADE IT HIS PLACE OF REFUGE FROM THE SPANIARDS. THE FOLLOWERS OF WALLACE GAVE HIS NAME TO THE RIVER ON WHOSE BANK THEY ESTABLISHED THEMSELVES. DUE TO IMPROPER PRONUNCIATION BY THE SPANIARDS THE NAME WALLACE OR WILLIS DETERIORATED TO WALLIX, VALIS, BALIS, AND FINALLY TO BELIZE IN 1790.

NAMES OF THE RIVER	DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE	REFERENCES
<i>Wallis</i>	<p>1790</p> 	<p>1790 MAP DRAWN BY RAFAEL LLOBET SHOWING THE NEW AREA CLEARED IN BELIZE.</p>
<i>Walix</i>	<p>1785</p> 	<p>1785 SPANISH MAP SHOWING THE LOGWOOD AREA OCCUPIED BY THE ENGLISH SETTLERS.</p>
<i>Valiz</i>	<p>1724</p> <p>MEXICO 1027—82. REV. AL MARQUEZ DE CASAPUERTA, VIREY DE NUEVA ESPAÑA, 24 MARZO A 11-12-724. ...y teniendose noticia al mismo tiempo que en las referidas riberas y contornos del Rio de Valiz, proximas a la ciudad de Mérida, capital de la espedada provincia de Yucatán, se hallan hasta el número de 500 miztaca, con armas y orden de ponerse en defensa en cualquiera insistencia de extrangeros...</p>	<p>1724 REPORT IN MADRID OF THE NUMBER OF ENGLISH SETTLERS.</p>
<i>Valiz</i>	<p>1783</p> 	<p>1783 SPANISH MAP SHOWING "RIO DE VALIZ YNGLES RIVER BELLESE".</p>
<i>Balis</i>	<p>1677</p> <p>The last two rivers to be placed are the Rio de Balis and the Rio de Tipu. These are the Rio Viejo, or Old river or Bellese river. There are four leagues from here to the Rio de Nidam (4 leagues). There are two leagues from here to the Rio de Balis (2 leagues). After these two leagues one enters into the Rio de Tipu.</p>	<p>1677 COPY OF FRAY JOSEPH DELGADO'S JOURNEY TO BACALAR.</p>
<i>Bullys</i>	<p>1705</p> <p>'a great part drowned'—meaning swampy and low-lying—and adds: "Sixty leagues from Porto Cavallo [now Puerto Cortés, in Spanish Honduras] lyeth the River of Bullis, where the English for the most part now load their logwood."</p>	<p>1705 EXTRACTED FROM JOHN FINGAS LETTER TO THE COUNCIL OF TRADE.</p>
<i>Bellese</i>	<p>1720</p> <p>der Tornef to an Anchor, and staid Two or Three Days till the Wind eased, and then plied down for Bellese River, where we arrived in about Four or Five Days more. I soon sold my Cargo to the Logwood-Cutters,</p>	<p>1720 EXTRACTED FROM CAPT. NATHAN URING VOYAGE TO BELIZE.</p>
<i>Belize</i>	<p>1790</p> <p>Alargo en Mérida a 8-11-790. "N.º 3. Copia—River Belize 26th October 1790—Sir—Thirty eight days have now elapsed since your arrival in this district, as the Officer nominated by his Excellency the Captain General of Yucatan to visit the Es-</p>	<p>1790 EXTRACTED FROM PETER HUNTER'S LETTER TO BALTASAR RODRIGUIS</p>

From Amandala Newspaper Online: <http://amandala.com.bz/news/mesmerizing-tale-belize/>.
09 September 2015

The evolution of the name seen in the historical chart above reveals several facts and possible rhetorical effects the name 'Belize' potential holds for the country's ethnically diverse

population. For one, the name has possible Spanish European or English European origins at a time of conflict and correspondence between the two dominant cultures on their paths of exploration. As is read by the document, the buccaneer Peter Wallace used possibly the first incarnation of the name Belize – Wallix (the name of a river given the close resemblance to Wallace’s own name) to legitimize his position in the colonial logging enterprise. By allowing the river to be named ‘Wallix’, Wallace begins the paradoxical association of colonized people’s identities with the colonialist and slavery institutions. By identifying the colonial settlement with his foreign name, Wallace begins the moral and philosophical precondition for the mission of the civilized human being dominating the space and characterization of other people. This instance in the origin of the name illustrates the designation of space and the authority of the language to control that space – the combination of which invariably reveals to rhetorical function of colonial discourse.

From the general progression of mapping the area, and the name changing through misreading and mispronunciations, the name ‘Walix’, to ‘Valis’, and eventually became ‘Belize’. The act of naming a country, as a part of national identity and collective self-invention, becomes one act which validates the political existence of that country. Along with the act and moment of independence, naming brings forth claims of belonging to interculturally and intraculturally so that the politics of that nation becomes all-encompassing. Spurr (1993) reminds us that naming is simply another act in colonial appropriation of resources, saying that once the people and land have been imbued with English European culture, by naming places, the dominant culture takes possession of them. He further explains that “Employed as substantives in the web of syntax, [names] acquire an ontological status – a substance – of their own, thus obscuring or concealing the act of appropriation” (p. 32) So naming advances and maintains a superior English European

cultural presence, which happens alongside efforts to build a unique national identity. In the acceptance of the name ‘Belize’ just before independence in 1973, Belizeans become either knowingly or unwittingly sympathetic with the colonial enterprise.⁵⁸

Questions for the Constitution

Looking at the different aspects in the historical struggle for national identity in Belize, other equally important questions come to light. For instance, what aspects of ethnic identity are affected by the structural principles of a western government? How will observing western traditions affect people positioned ambiguously outside constitutionally specified ideas of identity? What context is given to the different aspects of national identity that would appeal to an ethnically diverse country like Belize? Though these are questions only partially explored in this section so far, it is worth noticing as the analysis of Belize’s history has provided so, in the colonialist mindset the focus of colonial government is maintenance of truth, power and knowledge that is specific to colonial rule – and the insurance that colonial rule is maintained even after there is no longer the physical presence of the colonizer.

As Spurr (1993) puts it in his research, even though in postcolonialism “appropriation had shifted from one side of the conflict to the other...the rhetorical strategies of this appropriation were essentially unchanged...a series of rhetorical principles [remain] constant in their application to the colonial situation” (p. 39). In other words, the non-western individuals have not the social and mental capacity to determine identity in the modern era he or she faces and “will not suffice for the actual creation of such a society, nor lend it the qualities of energy, beauty, and action” that such challenges require (65). Such an approach in the assessment of

⁵⁸ The name of ‘British Honduras’ was official changed to ‘Belize’ on 1st June 1973 before independence was achieved on 21st September 1981. In 1973 Belize was already a self-governing nation moving toward independence, but British governing still had executive authority through the Colonial Office in England.

identity of colonized people means there is a lasting perception about non-western people, in the aftermath of colonialism, which needs to be challenged. That challenge for most postcolonial communities focuses on changing and developing national identity outside the complex relationship between norms, power and the colonial rhetoric with which the colonial enterprise is associated. For Belizeans, facing these aspects of colonial discourse is manifested in questioning the tenets of constitutional identity. This means the specific interpretations and classifications of individual and national identity that are brought forth from the written *Belizean Constitution of 1981* – more or less, in the same way that women’s experiences are touched upon earlier in this section. More specifically, the notion of race and the use of the English language for writing the 1981 Belizean Constitution are tagged as transgressive rhetorical features that reinforce the dominant English European interpretation of identity, policing the boundaries between Belizeans and the rest of the westernized world.

UNDERSTANDING THE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN RACE, THE CONSTITUTION AND NATIONAL IDENTITY

What has been presented and argued so far in this chapter is the creation of practices in colonial discourse that lead to a different awareness of Belizean history and how that history simultaneously ignores constitutional inclusion of ethnic identity, while reinforcing the legitimacy of racial differences. As it is today, Belize is recognized internationally and locally for its ethnic diversity. Yet, in spite of the number of amendments the Belizean Constitution has seen since 1981, and scientific research proving race as purely ideological, race remains an important rhetorical, historical feature and structural principle of the Constitution and national identity. Which means that aspects of Belizean Constitution remain connected to the country's colonial history.

While the difference between racial and ethnic is not an argument focused upon here, nor further into this study, it nonetheless becomes an important in this section to note distinctions in the meanings race and ethnicity are applied in terms of identity construction. Bolland (2003) describes ethnic identity in Belize as distinct groups of people that struggle to “shape their identity through ideas of inheritance, ancestry and descent, place or territory of origin, and the sharing of kinship, any one or combination of which may be invoked as a claim according to context” (200). Laurie Kroshus Medina (1997) describes ethnic identity in Belize as language – based categories of people that manage to have distinct lines of descent in the context of family and community.⁵⁹

The ideas and definitions of race, with the expansion of European cultures over time and into far corners of the earth, do effectively qualify as a global phenomenon. The idea of race as

⁵⁹ Medina, L.K. (1997). “Defining difference, forging unity: the co-construction of race, ethnicity and nation in Belize”. *Routledge: Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 20 (4), pp. 758-769

global phenomenon is not a burden on the imagination, simply because over time, there have been different and conflicting definitions of race; some used to promote political and economic agendas as in the case of colonialism and others to bring a deeper more rational and critical understanding of human interaction. Mayr's definition (1963) for instance, says that the idea of race considers the major divisions of humankind to be subspecies, which are aggregations of local populations of a species inhabiting geographic subdivisions of the range of the species and differing taxonomically from other populations of the species.⁶⁰ Baker's definition (1967) is similar in the way it regards humanity, saying that race may be defined as a rough measure of genetic distance in human populations and as such may function as an informational construct.⁶¹ With this being the predominant understanding of race in colonial discourse, the question then holds as to how this mentality informed the sophistication of political and social systems on colonized countries like Belize.

Where this section looks at the historical use of race as a feature of British colonial rhetoric in Belize, it begins to question the grouping effect race tends to historically have on other people's identities. In a sense which is deeply related to colonial rhetoric and colonial institutional processes, William Robertson (1770) forthrightly explains the convenience and underlying purpose of race as a classifying instrument:

...it would be highly improper to describe the condition of each petty community, or to investigate each minute circumstance which contribute to form the characters of its members. Such an inquiry would lead to details of immeasurable and tiresome extent. The qualities of peoples belonging to different tribes have such near resemblance, that they may be painted with the same features.

⁶⁰ Mayr, E. (1942). *Systematics and Origins of Species*. New York: Columbia University Press.

⁶¹ Ranbry, B. (2003). *Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement: A Radical Vision* (First ed.). Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

There are several perspectives to be drawn from Robertson's classificatory method that exposes the logical fallacies behind racializing identities. For one, the underlying motive of racial classification is to determine the "qualities of people" for the expressed purpose of ruling them. Secondly, exploring the intellectual capacity and the potential for people to participate in productive working of society is "highly improper", from which the conclusion can be drawn that indoctrination is the means by people are made more efficient and functional. Lastly, the effort to measure the benefits ethnic difference would have toward politics is deemed "tiresome" and "petty" which, for the purpose of establishing control, is irrelevant.

So the colonial process in constructing national identity was more efficient and less intellectually challenging when framed in simple racialized categories. This notion is reflected more clearly where some phrases in the Belizean Constitution are viewed as explicitly racialized by their connections to colonial history. The *Oath of Allegiance and Office*, which comes at the end of the Belizean Constitution and upon which the entire document is legitimized, reads:

I [say your name] do swear and do solemnly and sincerely affirm and declare that I will bear the true faith and allegiance to Belize, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second, Her Heirs and Successors, and will uphold the Constitution and the law, and that I will conscientiously, impartially and to the best of my ability discharge my duties as [name position] as do right to all manner of people without fear or favour, affection or ill-will. [So help me God] (Section 69)

In this section the rhetorical factors of Her Majesty as a Monarch, identified specifically as Queen Elizabeth, is recognized as in this instance as a gesture through which national identity is appropriated and created in the context of English European political values. In terms of establishing independence, the Oath of Allegiance and Office establishes no political difference

in the relationship between Belize as a colony and Belize as sovereign. The basis of Belizean constitutional and national identity is based on its ideological position and political principles first established during Belize's colonial history. The argument can be made, from the view Narda Dobson expresses about slavery in *A History of Belize* that Belize's independence exists in name only. The Oath only points to a paradox in the Constitution as historical document, as a document that seeks to remove Belize from its colonial past, and postcolonial document that seeks to create a unique democratic space for Belizeans. The Constitution creates or re-establishes English European superiority alongside the effort to appear inclusive and embracing people that have been historically colonized.

This way Belizean constitutional and national identity is always defined by foreign English European political terms with the Constitution function as a policing concept to determine whether or not the terms and measures of constitutional identity are being maintained. Far from being an adequate means of describing an autonomous identity, in the way it surfaces, the *Oath* evokes the power and control of a foreign element.

Belizean History, a Conversation about Race and the Constitution

The preceding section looks at Belizean history and specific issues of constructing national identity. The inconsistencies with the issue of constructing national identity in the arguments made might be regarded as structural weaknesses, but instead offer structural principles for the construction of national identity, as in the case of the *Oath of Allegiance*. In the chapter that focuses on race, I concentrate theoretically on the possible effects 'race', as feature of national identity, might have on people's understanding and interpretation of their ethnic identities in Belize. The subject matter would appear simply conclusive given a declaration of

independence by the Constitution based on the ideas of fundamental rights and freedoms of the human being, as stated in the Constitution. But as a developing country seeking to justify its sovereignty as a coherent body of people, it also enters the process of inventing modes of representation. If the image of democracy is to represent the differences of all people, then a description of democracy must necessarily focus on integrity and balance in the process of constructing national identity as an amicable concept that reflect the collective experiences and aspirations of people. But the aspiration and narrative backed by the idea of *oneness*, argued earlier, may be conflated with the optimisms of embracing *diversity* in respect to the decision to use 'race' as feature of national identity.

While Bolland (2003) acknowledges that historically the concept of race has not had the political impact in Belize as elsewhere like North America and Africa, it is important to be critical of historical narratives where they influence formation of national identity. The following chapter looks at rhetorical and critical views of race, and its uses in British colonialism and how race as a means of constructing identity.

Race provides a specific conduit for understanding identity, in that it provides historical definitions through which people's identities are situated and connected through the context of colonial experience. History embeds the idea of race into the national consciousness so that Belizeans construct and understanding identity in the manner it has been historically discussed. Bolland's (2003) *Colonialism and Resistance in Belize* offers a closer rhetorical reading of Belize's history that exposes acts of subversion in which can be seen the colonial practices of not acknowledging ethnic identities. Bolland's research offers the particular account of a Superintendent of the Bay of the Settlement of Belize Irish Colonel, Edward Marcus Despard in 1784, who, after witnessing distressing mistreatment of black slaves, sought to establish a land

lottery that would remove the authority white colonialists possessed over blacks on the basis of property. The written exchanges between Despard and the colonial administration in Belize and other British colonies, such as Jamaica at the time, explains how the authoritarian ideas of British settlers contributed and constituted to colonist authority over governing and patterns of interaction. At the moment of his appointment the social circumstances were such that British Baymen were allowed to settle on the New and Belize River area, but were exclusively under Spanish governance. The Baymen were permitted to own African slaves, who frequently ran away to Spanish settlement preferring “the hope of freedom amongst the Spaniards in the Yucatan to the certainty of enslavement to the Baymen” (Bolland, 32).

The British Baymen’s reaction to Despard’s appeal to equaling the economic playing field through a land lottery was not appealing to British settlers on the grounds that such an act reduced the status of white settlers to equal standing with their slaves. Despard’s proposal drew criticism and ill-feelings from British settlers who described the manner and nature of social divisions they preferred:

dividing the newly ceded district...after the manner of a lottery, without preference to those who had formerly clear’d ground or built houses, our without any distinction of Age, Sex, Character, Respectability, Property, or *Colour*, the lowest Mullato or free Negro, had an equal chance with...Honourable Members of the Council, with Chief Judge of the Colony, were reduc’d in one instant to the same footing with Negroes and indented Servants and in fact Col. Despard has said and continues to say that they are on an equal footing and that he cannot and will not know any distinction between these very different classes of Men (p. 34)

Such complaints issued in the direction of Despard by wealthy white land owners that comprised the council of magistrates were exaggerations. In the history of what was then only British settlements at the time, white settlers always retained their wealth and African slaves along with few poor white men labored for subsistence and to maintain low stature in the community. At this instance the wealthy British land owners attempted to use their consolidated power and wealth as legitimate reason to keep the status of slaves and other laborers not only beneath them, but completely separate. In fact, even concerning the “free coloured” people that also settled in the area, some of whom, according to Bolland, were wealthy and owned slaves, were forced upon by white settlers who passed legislation in the community that would exclude “coloured people” from “any logwood or mahogany works unless they *naturalized* by the unanimous consent of all the magistrates. The magistrates also threatened to withdraw whatever privileges and rights the *free coloured* might have unless they publicly supported the magistrates’ legislation” (p. 34).

The makings of a social structure and power system that benefited wealthy white settlers began to emerge at this point. The sharpest distinction of how individuals and groups are to be identified comes through relations to whiteness and wealth, and the African slave community. White British settlers occupied influential positions in government in the Belize area, which was the beginning of the identification of nationhood among settlers and provide the ‘moral energy’ for further defiance against the Spaniards and the basis on which industry and community would built.

Bolland writes about instances where “free black men” in the Belize area reacted to being positioned by political processes in which they had no voice or representation. Concerned with the ways they were being disadvantaged by the white British settlers and the government, the

black laborers began to rebel. Bolland describes accounts that detailed “ a Scene of the most alarming nature appear’d, a few white people of the very lowest class, a number of Mustees, Mullatoes, and free Negroes running about the Streets and assembling under Arms to the infinite terror of the more respectable and peaceable part of the Community” (35). The accuracy of this description is debatable, but reveals the tension that existed between people colour and white administrators who only sought to polarize the community through racially infused politics. Bolland explains that this protest was the result of further rejection of Despard’s in Lord Sydney’s response, who happened to be Despard’s immediate superior to the Belize settlements, but who was based in London. Despard’s wrote to Lord Sydney appealing to a higher reason and judicious reflection on the state of economic and cultural affairs, noting that:

The Magistrates have been at great pains to give out that the people who wish to support my authority, are people of the lowest rank, and most infamous Characters. This Charge, I must say, is by no means founded upon fact, but that to the contrary they are remarkably quiet and inoffensive set of people, well attached to his Majesty’s Government...Many of them, it is true, are poor, but on the other hand there are numbers of them possessed of very considerable properties in Slaves, who at present are rather a Burden upon them than an advantage, from the total monopoly exercised by the old Inhabitants (p. 38)

The ideological stance Despard held toward African slaves and “free coloured” was one that argued for the progressive removal of practices that sought to deny the rightful autonomy of these people. Rather, Despard espoused a strategy wherein the contributions of free blacks, and even slaves, to social stability are fully acknowledged, respectfully represented, and promote them as equals. But the colonial administrations in Jamaica and London, based mostly on the

expressed need for political and economic dominance, offered a response and logic that sought simply to maintain the hierarchal arrangements; which was only echoed by the magistrates in Belize, explaining that the notion of equitable treatment of free blacks and slaves:

...breaks in pieces all the Links of Society, and destroys all Order Rank and Government. The Mullatoes and Free Negroes make good Servants: that they are happy and well taken Care of in that Station; and rise in Circumstances, according to their Industry Frugality and Ability, preserving still their proper Rank and Station in the Community. But upon this wild and Levelling principle of Universal Equality, they would become entitled not only to elect Magistrates, but themselves to be elected; and what kind of Government must thence ensue, is submitted to Your Lordship (p. 38)

The magistrates' response exposes attitudes toward people of African descent that has been maintained throughout the history of Belize. Even with the suggestion of a more peaceful and equitable resolve by Despard, there is a want and need to preserve the Eurocentric perspective and ideology that work to define spaces, social conditions and the value of others. In fact, the kind of significance drawn to the rightfulness of 'proper rank' and the outward rejection of 'universal equality' makes no attempt to distort the importance of race as political practice and the unlikely and limited chance of being considered equal to British land owners and administrators.

These social designations become even more evident in the relationship between the African slave community and white Europeans in Lord Sydney's detailed and descriptive rebuke of the idea. In it, Lord Sydney would not only reveal the ideological basis around which all non-Europeans were expected to organize, but would espouse the representational discourse through

which identities would be constructed, expressed and maintained in a colonial social hierarchy.

To Despard's proposal, Lord Sydney's direct response is that:

I will do you some the justice to believe that in the distribution of those Lands you were actuated by the best motives, though at the same time it could have been wished that you have made some Distinction in the Extent of Lots so to be disposed of, between Settlers and Persons of a different description, particularly people of Colour, or Free Negroes, who from the natural Prejudices of the Inhabitants of the Colonies, are not, however valuable in the point of character, considered upon equal footing with People of a different Complexion (p. 39).

In speaking for the magistrates in the Belize area, Lord Sydney employs language that appears overtly less confrontational acknowledging that Despard was "actuated by the best motives".

Yet, the representation of 'people of Colour' and 'Free Negroes' is one that is essentially reductive in the face of English European privilege and power to define and determine the station and "different description" of "people of colour" and "free negroes". Using the misguided "natural Prejudices" Sydney straightforwardly uses the scientific systemization of race, which at the time was believed to be Darwinian doctrine arguing that European cultures were socially evolved and cognitively superior to others in the world. For one, Sydney's position reveals that Belize was not exempt from the social and scientifically reductive and homogeneous ideas propagated in places like North America, Africa and the rest of the Caribbean. Sydney's reveal that race holds a specifically English European point of view when it comes to understanding other people's identities measured by English European political and moral value.

While the social structure in Belize was not one where participation in the economic was not an exclusive privilege of white settlers and "the social structure was not simply one of white

masters and black slaves”, the latter was the “fundamental distinction which affected the social position of the more ambiguously placed people – poor white men and richer slave-owning black men” (Bolland, p. 32). This is to say that free or enslaved, rich or poor, the dominance of English European culture was at the center of the socio-political framework, setting the orthodoxies and ideas of nationhood was to be interpreted and practiced. The idea of superiority was carefully managed so effectively in the Belize area to the point where English European culture represented a standard of coherent value so as to avoid being corrupted or challenged by correspondence across the different ethnic communities. To borrow from Bolland’s research, Lord Sydney insists that:

some measures should be taken to find Employment for the people who have lately arrived in the District, particularly those of small property, and people of colour, to prevent their becoming a Public Burden...I would recommend you calling to your assistance some of the most respectable in the Inhabitants, and having benefit of their advice, endeavour to fix the problem above mentioned in some employment, from whence they may be likely to obtain subsistence (p. 39)

Sydney’s particular method of denying ‘people of colour’ equal status, but offering ‘small property’ as part of structural coherence and equitable practice holds to one purpose of colonialism, which establishing control and superiority, while at the same time embracing people as part of the colonial enterprise.

The exchanges between Despard, the Belize Magistrates and Lord Sydney reveal several ideas about the construction of Belizean identity from the colonial period. Differences between people were essentially marked and appropriated by labels “people of colour” and “negroes” through which is presented a dichotomy and a way of determining “us” from “them”. Yet, to

offer colonized people a means of “obtaining subsistence” and to have them accept employment as economic assimilation, means that colonization becomes a gesture and solidarity between English European administrators and “people of colour”.

The proverbial *cracks in the edifice* are easily noticed, but upon noticing are not straightforwardly engaged. For one, national identity instead of being the all-embracing philosophical stance of right governing through basic human dignity and veneration of cultural differences through labels that re-dramatizes of ‘natural prejudices’ that Lord Sydney holds to such high esteem in his 1793 response to Despard.

But what is observed in Sydney’s and the Magistrates’ responses to Despard also is the creation of culturally specific frame of references to identity tropes and codes positioning people as diametrically opposed to each other, while at the same time being an acceptable way of understanding the relationship between “People of different Complexion”. As Spurr puts it, “The preservation of colonial rule, as well as the exploitation of colonial territories, thus becomes a moral imperative as well as a political and economic one” (p. 29).

Herein lies the epistemological violence that is associated with ‘race’ and the reason why, where Belize is concerned, ‘race’ needs to be evaluated as an essentialist term which is reminiscent and evocative of practices in Belize’s colonial history. The different incarnations of the identity (i.e. People of Colour, Negroes, and People of different Complexion) are reimagined and manifested with the singular, academically acceptable concept of ‘race’ which brings with it the historically modes of representing people’s identities that was and is used for purely colonial and political purposes. To use ‘race’ as a constitutional category for identity suggests not only the acceptance of the ways Afro-Belizean community has been regarded, but would also imply the continuity of those experiences. ‘Race’ as a rhetorical construct and means of classification is

discursively dangerous for the different ethnic groups in Belize because 'race' undermines people's logical interpretation of their own identities and fails to take into account people's unique experiences and historical circumstances, which should also factor into democratic and constitutional labels.

Chapter IV

Postcolonial Discourse and Belize

INTRODUCTION: Responses to Representations

Belize is not a country typically thought of as participating intensely in postcolonial discourse, in spite of the country being known globally as a former British colony. It is true that Belize's colonial history has garnered interests from different writers and researchers from other places on the globe; some of which provide relevant insight to this work. The more radical criticism of colonial experiences, however, typically come from elsewhere across the globe. Louder and more constant criticism come from larger land masses where the population of people affected by British European colonial expansion is more difficult to ignore. The discourse, for example, is well represented by Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak, George Lamming and V.S. Naipaul, Ngugi Wa Thiong'o and Chinua Achebe, authors associated with criticism of their countries' and cultures' experiences with colonialism.

The intellectual work provided by these writers is commonly associated with people's potential to politically and rhetorically create responses to their unique colonial experiences. In doing so, they are able to find new and different ways of giving meaning to national and ethnic identity; either along with or in spite of the mark of colonialism.⁶²

⁶² For instance, in *The Location of Culture* (1994), Homi Bhabha argues the postcolonial perspective that "The familiar space of the Other (in the process of identification) develops a graphic historical and cultural specificity in the splitting of the postcolonial or migrant subject" or rather, that the identity and space of colonized groups are replaced by institutionalized versions from English European distinctions (p. 67). Then, there is Ngugi (1972) who is critical of national identities were maintained after colonialism, saying that "In fighting for independence [postcolonial government and elites] only wanted that which was forbidden to them...they wanted to live the same way as their white counterparts under a [political structure] that was frustrated by the racism inherent in the system" (p. 12). Gayatri Spivak's (1995) *Can the Subaltern Speak* often referenced for its radical analysis of the global expansion of English European culture, in no uncertain terms, is determined to argue that colonial systems and any subsequent form of government that derives from it, is purposed with "...the asymmetrical obliteration of the trace of the Other [by] establishing the [colonial reality] as the normative one" (p. 25).

Though the content and theoretical premise of these authors may vary, their positions all reflect the importance of claiming ethnic identity as a response to colonial history and postcolonial circumstances that have influence over how their own identities are perceived. In their different approaches, these writers provide analytical approaches that help question the rhetorical issue found in the Belizean Constitution, chiefly the identification of people by race and the use of Standard English.

Because the 1981 Belizean Constitution neglects to mention any ethnicity as a means of rhetorically constructing national identity, an understanding of national identity by default begs questioning the labels with which the different ethnicities in Belize are associated. Can a Belizean person, for example, legitimately identify herself or himself as Creole/Kriol in Belize, if the Constitution does not mention Creoles/Kriols when discussing who Belizeans are? Because race is a globally recognized term that informs categories of identity, does the mention of race in the Constitution mean an acceptance of race as a classifying principle? Or does the use of race represent a fundamental misunderstanding of national identity in Belize by its Constitution?

To examine the ideas raised in these two questions, this chapter looks at the extent to which current literature on the theories of postcolonial identity discusses ways in which national identity is formed or is lacking in postcolonial societies. The perspectives advanced by the authors mentioned in this section serve to acknowledge the recognition or the misrecognition of identities in the context of the postcolonial discourse. As it relates to Belize, the perspectives offered herein will help add some scope in understanding how the *1981 Belizean Constitution* fails in recognizing ethnic differences, and thus fails in the social construction of national identity.

The challenge in this chapter is not to produce a theoretically coherent structure that would act as an acceptable substitute for the *1981 Belizean Constitution* for the purpose of constructing a different theoretical framework for national identity in Belize. Rather, the presentation of ideas and approaches to identity in postcolonial societies is meant to explore how colonial experiences affected the formation of national identity in Belize. While not matching the investigative intensity of a project like Barbara Christian's (1987) well-known essay *The Race for Theory* or Ngugi's (1981) *Decolonising the Mind*,⁶³ this chapter uses a postcolonial lens to examine how the Belizean Constitution rhetorically addresses and embodies the concept of race as related to national identity – particularly in addressing the idea of what it means to be Belizean.

⁶³ Barbara Christian's "The Race for Theory" is an essay that focuses on how Western culture controls the literary world through Western philosophy. Christian argues from the perspective of postcolonial experiences, explaining that colonialism was precursory to more contemporary forms of Western control. To argue this point Christian uses theoretical approaches such as *academic hegemony* and *authoritative discourse* to explain how power structures determine which people are heard and what ideas are talked about.

Ngugi's *Decolonising the Mind* is an often cited book in the body of postcolonial literature. The book focuses and argues the notion that imperialism is still the cause of political, economic and ethnic problems in Africa and elsewhere across the face of the globe. Ngugi contends that as long as Western education controls the means and language through which national and individual identity are analyzed and understood, then Western intellectual colonization of the world will remain a problem.

NATIONAL IDENTITY AND BEING ETHNIC IN POSTCOLONIAL BELIZE:

Power and Representation

The first step in understanding critical approaches to identity in postcolonial societies is to understand the circumstances and structures that colonized people navigate when determining their identity in the local and global sense. In *Truth and Power* (1980) Michel Foucault lends perspective to the complexities of this discussion in arguing that the struggle between power and identity is not just that of control in the ways particular societies are organized, but in the way people of different political and ethnic backgrounds relate to each other (p. 115). Robert Young's (1995) *Foucault on Race and Colonialism* looks to combine Foucault's critical perspective on power structures and colonial experiences to establish a theoretical basis for looking at the ways 'other voices' have been excluded from nationalistic discourse and the curiously circumspect ways in which power has operated in the areas of race and colonialism (p. 4). In other words, the concept of race continues to determine the way people understand power relationships within sociopolitical hierarchies. As mentioned, Foucault illuminates a particular conflict in the postcolonial discussions concerning power. He links the power of colonial enterprise to contemporary political structures. He also points to the power and influence structures have over the way people perceive themselves and their involvement in political processes. Social structures invariably determine the way people interact.

Much of the postcolonial debate over identity is centered on the moral arguments, the fact that structural manifestations of power ignore fundamental principles of representation from different ethnic groups. While the mere mention of morality might be a rhetorically slippery slope, Caribbean writer George Lamming (1995) identifies the need and urgency toward

discussing identity in the postcolonial communities. In *The Occasion for Speaking*, the writer issues the idea that:

“...the major [political] issues of our time have demanded of us all some kind of involvement. Some may remain neutral; but all have, at least, to pay attention to what is going...we are often without the right kind of information to make argument effective; on a moral level we have to feel our way through problems for which we have no adequate reference of traditional conduct as a guide” (p. 12)

Lamming’s appeal here speaks to the need of understanding the conflicts in politics that define social circumstances in places that were once colonized. Considering that Lamming writes as a person from the Caribbean, and highlighting the fact that “we are often without the kind of information” to produce effective responses, Lamming points to one particular effect of colonial discourse. The loss of traditions in colonization means that people may not be furnished with effective rhetorical tools to respond to institutional power. The loss of ethnic identity could mean the loss of power and the ability to respond to power. As Foucault puts it, an:

attempt to show that the practices and understandings we perceive [in our political world] are products of conflicts for power in which the hegemonic powers have sought not only to produce certain utilizable forms of being and eliminate others, but to reduce the expression of conflict with others to silence as well.⁶⁴

What Lamming and Foucault both point to is the tendency of power in colonial politics to minimize the potential for conflict by systematically removing rhetorical features of ethnicities, effectively homogenizing people in a way that fosters dependence power structures. So, the achievement of colonialism is not only acquiring the natural resources of a place, but

⁶⁴ Coles, R. (1992). *Self, Power, Other: Political Theory and Dialogical Ethics*. Cornell University Press, (p. 86)

appropriating people's points of view, so that colonized people see themselves as included, but at the same time without power.

Another point that can be drawn from Lamming and Foucault is that ethnic differences play a role in understanding how people are socially marked and politically subjugated. Even with classic and open forms of classification no longer being the norm, new forms of prejudicial practices emerge that have roots in the old. In Belize, for instance, Bolland (2003) points out that "Several features, most notably *race, language and religion*, are seen as socially significant markers of ethnic categorization in Belize [and] are often used as shorthand for identifying ethnic groups such as Spanish and Creole" (p. 209, *italics added*). The issue Bolland points to here is that even after independence, ethnic groups in Belize are still identified in superficial, unsubstantiated ways, where differences become the means of separating people, not unifying them.

In his book *Identity/Difference* (2002) that focuses on the contradictory associations of identity and political power, William Connolly contends that:

...identity is established in relation to a series of differences that have become socially recognized. [Politically] entrenched in this indispensable relation is another set of tendencies, themselves in need of exploration, to congeal established identities into fixed forms, thought and lived as if their structure expressed the true order of things. When these pressures prevail, the maintenance of one identity (or field of identities) involves the conversion of some differences into otherness, into evil, or one of its numerous surrogates. [Politically entrenched identity] requires difference in order to be, and it converts difference into otherness in order to secure its own self-certainty. (p. 64)

The preservation of difference and otherness, it appears, is central to creating and maintaining authority in the sociopolitical context. The question of how differences and otherness are preserved finds clear similarities with labels historically used in Belize, and elsewhere, to indicate or mark people of different ethnic persuasions. Familiar terms such as *nigger*, *people of colour*, *black* and *white* are all recognizable indicators with relevance in showing the manner in which people have been historically and socially positioned in colonialism. In modern times, these terms have lost none of their rhetorical potency and are still used to support an ‘*us versus them*’ mentality or at least to suggest superficial ways differences are perceived.

Much like Foucault, Maria P.P. Root (1992) in *Within, Between and Beyond Race* recognizes the counterproductive-ness of identity being classified and associated with terms indicative of race, saying that these labels create the lasting perception of a “tragic figure relegated to a marginal, anomic existence” (p. 10). Terms such as *black* and *white*, *nigger* and *people of colour* become rigid perceptions because repeated use to represent differences among people allow them to become acceptable and therefore embedded in political discourse and self-constitution. The notion of difference based on the external becomes terminal, common-place and primary means by which people’s characters could be assessed.

Scientific arguments have yet to provide legitimate explanations for race as a social phenomenon, but the historical uses of race in the way people’s social realities are understood.⁶⁵ There is a sense of rigidity and permanence to the way differences are identified through racial categories. In spite of the historical mixing of different people across ethnic and cultural lines,

⁶⁵ In *Race, Rhetoric and Technology* (2012), Angela Haas makes the point that “Race scientists argue that although humans are 99.9% alike genetically, the remaining 0.1% difference is highly significant. But...no research into this slight biological difference can help us to understand the phenomenon of race” (p. 283).

white can never be perceived as black⁶⁶, black can never be perceived as white; and mixed identities face the political and social difficulty of rigid categorizations. Rigid classification through race can be interpreted as a way of systematically ordering people and as a way of making social interactions predictable, facilitating social engagement in a way that is manageable and controlled.

As it concerns that state of postcolonial countries like Belize racial categories “come into play with the establishment and maintenance of colonial authority...they are part of the landscape in which relations of power manifest themselves”.⁶⁷ The rhetorical strength of classifications can easily be understood in places where the politics have been historically fraught by divisive concepts like race. Postcolonial societies, which include North, Central, South America and the Caribbean are places where the issue of racial identity has less potential to amalgamate and more influence to divide. Discussions on race within these populations are not altogether difficult to have if the discussion was an exercise in establishing what is internally common about human experience, and not biologically different. But the expansion of European cultures across the western hemisphere into the Americas and into Caribbean countries like Belize have not been on the premise and logic of forming a conglomerate, but rather on the principle of power, the acquisition of wealth, land, and the dominance of an English European unique form of democracy.

The expansion of English European political principles facilitated a sinister objective with racial classification of people’s identities, which is to create and justify the cause of

⁶⁶ “Black” is a troubled term to use in Belize because it communicates the idea of race, while most people in Belize consider themselves to be ethnic more so than racial. While the Creole and Garifuna, for instance, both have people with “black” skin, they are considered to be ethnic in most discussions about Belize. Bolland, for instance, says “the historical preoccupation with the idea of *race* has left its powerful mark in the prevailing conceptions of ethnicity, leaving the widespread assumption that that ethnic identity is an ascribed characteristic, a matter of common descent linked with *race*.”

⁶⁷ Spurr, D. (1993) *The Rhetoric of Empire: Colonial Discourse in Journalism, Travel Writing, and Imperial Administration*. Durham and London. (p. 3).

separating people, *us* from *them*, for the expressed purpose of centralizing control and ensuring domination of other people for and as resources. There is a certain social fundamentalism towards racial identity that brings English European political principles into focus during and after colonialism. In *Against Race* (2000) Paul Gilroy explains that:

When identity refers to an indelible mark or code somehow written into the bodies of its carriers, otherness can only be a threat. Identity is latent destiny. Seen or unseen, on the surface of the body or buried deep in its cells, identity forever sets one group apart from others who lack a particular, chosen traits that become the basis of typology and comparative evaluation... People become bearers [and barriers] of the differences that the rhetoric of absolute identity invents and then invites them to celebrate (p. 103)

The idea of identity being a “mark or code somehow written into bodies” will hold greater significance as this work enters the section of rhetorically analyzing what is the primary political document that constitutes and describes national identity in the only English speaking country in Central America. But to Gilroy’s point on “rhetoric of absolute identity”, this notion suggests the political convenience of racial categories that avoids and ignores technical aspects of other people’s identities for the sake of constructing simple dichotomies through which social value can be easily assigned and recognized. The social and political aspect of identity becomes efficient and manageable.

The question facing postcolonial societies is, how does the “rhetoric of absolute identity” become an institutionalized truth and law that functions to normalize national identity? As argued in the previous chapter about the presence of English European culture in Belize, the Empire brought with it the limited perceptions and interpretations of differences of ethnic people

that determined ethnic people's ability to participate in political discourse. The more colonial discourse encouraged physical differences to determine how people interact, the more the language of race became fixed into people's definitions of themselves. The classification of race in Belize, for instance, encourages an "oversimplification [of ethnic identities] that ignores the dynamics of Belizean culture, history and obscures the complexity of the social structure".⁶⁸

Physical appearance makes the judgement of people's character and intellectually easy, and offers a politically convenient means of organizing people into a hierarchy. Spurr (1993) notes that in history, "Under Western eyes, the body is that which is most [properly] primitive, the sign by which [difference] is represented. The body, rather than speech, law, or history, is the essential defining characteristic of [difference]. The bodies of all the colonized, have been the focal point of colonialist interests" (p. 22). In the context of colonial history, race has been, and in some cases continues to be, the means through which identities are rhetorically interpreted and societies dichotomized.

According to Spurr, the material value of the body as a form of classification has not been entirely divulged from the way racial differences are perceived. He explains that classification, in terms of physical differences and the intellectual measurement of people therein, is still regarded with a list of ideas developed in the colonial era. He says coming out of the colonial situation, the value of people "proceeds from the visual to various kinds of valorization: the material value of the body as labor supply, its aesthetic value as object of artistic representation, its ethical value as a mark of innocence or degradation, its scientific value as evidence of racial difference or inferiority..." (p. 22). From this, the idea of classification, especially in racial terms, is emblematic of colonial discourse and supplies a world view in the way differences are to be perceived and valued.

⁶⁸ Bolland, N. (2003). *Colonialism and Resistance in Belize*. Belize: Cubola Books, (p. 210)

Although explicit forms of discrimination no longer exist as they did in the classic era of colonialism in places like Belize, the idea of race still performs the essential function of classifying people by English European standards. For this reason, Bolland (2003) contends that a sense of national identity in Belize remains relatively weak. Ethnicity, he argues, competes with the historical, even constitutional legitimacy of race, where “many Belizeans not only practice or participate in more than one cultural tradition, but are also coming to share an overarching national identity as they interact with people of different ethnic groups” (p. 211). Race introduces radical changes to social interaction, redefining perceptions of ethnic boundaries by attributing a uniquely English European interpretation of what social and ethnic boundaries look like. So in this sense, identities in postcolonial societies are not simply a stable production of values, meanings and symbols that emerge from interaction between people of different ethnicities, but enmeshed with hierarchal principles of the colonial era.⁶⁹

The general confusion of supposed interconnections between ethnicity and race in Belize suggests that issues of national identity are far from being amicably resolved. Historically speaking, the patterns and norms of social identity determined by British rule are those that preside over society and are enforced by laws. Especially with the interest and focus on domination by European English culture across the globe, racial identities were constructed, constituted and normalized as a means of understanding people’s place and position in their respective colonized societies. In *The Social Formation of Racist Discourse* (1990) David Theo Goldberg argues in the modern era, and in no uncertain terms, that the rhetorical aspects of values, meanings and symbols in the interests of construction and classification are often, always linked to power and control of people. As he writes:

⁶⁹ Hall, S. (1996). *The Question of Cultural Identity: Modernity*, eds. S. Hall, D. Held, D. Hubert and K. Thompson. Oxford & Cambridge Blackwell Publishers, (p. 597).

The coherence of the racist project, then, is a function of the preconceptual elements that have structured racist dispositions [in the past]. These include classification and order, value and hierarchy, differentiation and identity, discrimination and identification, exclusion and domination, subjection and subjugation, entitlement and restriction, and in a general way, violence and violation (p. 301)

In the context of postcolonial experiences, there is no extreme degree of difficulty to imagine how the “function of preconceptual elements” can be seen in political mechanisms of laws and regulations that legitimized the notion of differences and justified political action based for the same reason – as was explored in previous chapter on the history of Belize. In fact, understanding how laws and regulations help form, create and inhibit identity as historically situated projects is crucial in knowing how national identity is organized, created and represented as postcolonial entities.

Foucault argues that the historical narratives that inform national identity, where race is a rhetorical features, is clear evidence of people being intellectually colonized and represent acts of psychological violence, especially in those places that have supposedly gained independence from Britain. In H.D. Harootunian’s interpretation of Foucault, he argues that including race as a descriptive feature of national identity is the act of reconstituting the collective identity of others into acceptable social constructs of English European culture. He says that in Foucault’s work

the practice of historical narrative [has] empowered the story that has been told...the move to resituate the Other and to propose that [dominant] discourse,

permits the articulation of a field consisting of a variety of subject positions [which questions] claims to representation and closure.⁷⁰

The result of controlling historical narratives, especially in the postcolonial situation, is the production of an environment where national identity is normalized and stabilized by the universality of classifications that originated with English European culture and appropriated to maintain force of representations within the context of politics, law and education in modern society.

This transfer of English European fundamentalism into the lives of people living in postcolonial communities calls the nature of democracy into question. The idea of dominance is essentially concealed around the generation of and advocacy for democratic principles of laws and education. As will be shown in the chapter regarding race, using democratic principles sets forth the authority that engages in surveillance and through the authority surveillance conceals its power, and issues normalizing practices to the rest of society.⁷¹

The authority over identity formation through the influence of colonial history brings with it particular struggles in understanding national identity. The creative and regulatory colonial invention that is race, for instance, can be interpreted as a self-monitoring policing action. Meaning that where one group sees themselves as racial, the chances are likely that that group will begin to see others either in relation to themselves or in opposition. This monocultural point of view has historically affected people's abilities to invent and create meaning out of their own ethnic identities.

As discussions herein invariably turn toward the historical and racial context of Belize's Constitution, it is important to note the thoughts presented thus far suggest the context and

⁷⁰ Harootunian, H.D. (1988). *Foucault, Genealogy, History: The Pursuit of Otherness*. After Foucault: Humanistic Knowledge, Postmodern Challenges. New Brunswick and London: Rutgers University Press, (p. 116).

⁷¹ Foucault, M. (1979) *Power and Norm: Notes: Power, Truth, Strategy*. Sydney: Feral Publications, (p. 66).

content of the Constitution could represent the document as the rhetorical equivalent of colonialism. And rightly, the various subjectivities of colonialism will be seen as appropriated or recast in constitutional values, placed in a document that describes and determines Belize's national identity. For this reason it makes sense to revisit the tradition of *writing back to the empire* as a means of rhetorically engaging constitutional values as they are presented in the Constitution.⁷²

⁷² The idea of *writing back to the empire* is borrowed from the book "The Empire Writes Back": *Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literature* (1989). This book written by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin is feature and cited heavily in postcolonial discourse and features writings from authors from different parts of the globe who use the ideas within the discourse as a rhetorical feature for analyzing the underpinnings of imperial dominance in their own countries and ethnic experiences.

ON BEING ETHNIC AND BEING RACIAL IN POSTCOLONIAL BELIZE

A discussion on how Belize's national identity was historically and rhetorically constructed is not one easily had. As the discussion on historical narratives about Belize as British colony shows in the previous chapter, the number of scholars that have devoted research and have written extensively about Belize are few in count. The number of Belizean scholars focusing on the Constitution as having specific rhetorical implications in the construction of national identity is even lower. To add to this disparaging fact, more often than not, the more distinguished and prolific scholars that are critical of Belizean history, politics and national identity are not Belizean or do not reside in Belize. This factor means, that in some twisted and foreboding force of logic, the value of insights gathered and borrowed from non-Belizeans for the upcoming analysis of the *1981 Belizean Constitution* to some degree, is another form of an external intellectual authority designating itself on the experiences of others. This aspect puts the writer in the precarious position as being analyzer and complicit in the tradition of issuing wholly subjective points of view. In this case, questioning the state of Belize's national identity does not engender a detached contemplation, but rather a sense of being directly affected by the issues of politics and national identity within Belizean borders.

Yet, postcolonial experiences as they happen to be in places like Belize are by no means random occurrences, and the analysis of these experiences through various perspectives only brings the process of political and ethnic interconnectivity into closer view. Because the creation of national identity is affected by forces beyond the reach of ethnic people, the lasting interconnections between English European colonialism and modern structure of Belize's government represent constant pressure. So, the more Belize embraces a form of government with ancestral links to colonialism, the more ethnic people are removed and misrepresented by

the politics of their country. Even though national identity in Belize has been embraced with some enthusiasm, the perspectives offered by Dobson (1973), Bolland (2003) and Shoman (2011) show there is always a lingering sense among some people that nationality in Belize comes with the sense of assimilation or at least a sense of feeling removed from history and ethnic groups. The sense of assimilation justifies continued analysis of the types of discourse and knowledge that resides in and is represented by the Constitution as postcolonial document reflecting those experiences.

Such an analysis is made effective not only by analyzing the center of colonial domination as Ngugi does (1972), but the ways in which colonial domination affected people who came under its global expansion. In *Society Must be Defended* (2003) Foucault contends that:

Rather than ask ourselves how the sovereign appears to us in his lofty isolation, we should try to discover how it is that subjects are gradually, progressively, really and materially constituted through a multiplicity of...forces, energies, materials, desires, thoughts...rather than worry about the problem of [the center] I believe that we must attempt to study the myriad of bodies which are constituted as peripheral subjects as a result of the effects of power. (p. 97-98)

Foucault calls attention to the notion that identity is discussed properly and effectively when analysis focuses on how and who is affected by politics and power.

Belize's relationship with England has always been one based on politics and power seen in the act of 'race' being placed in the concentric context of other terms like *Her Majesty*, *Supremacy of God* and *Governor General*. Contrary to Foucault's suggestion, Belizeans have no choice but to focus on "the problem of the center" because the political center of the English

European has reproduced itself within the Belizean Constitution. The inclusion of race in the 1981 Belizean Constitution, for instance, emerges as both expressing national identity and inheriting a conflicted sense of individual and national identity.

Such conflicts are not incidental, but essential to questions of Belize's national identity. Because the formation of national identity still grapples with inconsistencies in historical narratives, the invariably is a struggle to have a stable sense of nationhood. The difficulty in building a coherent view of nationhood and national identity in light of an identification conflict points to the concern of how national identity is described. Because the British colonial system played an important role in Belize's distorted history and the current condition of the country's national identity, it should come as no surprise that the dominant descriptions and expressions of national identity act as a form of symbolic violence in the aftermath of colonialism.

As the previous chapter notes, colonial narratives in Belize were far from being objective transcriptions, present different and particular challenges for Belize. For one, the institutions within which people were forced to participate held systemic biases, which were later inherited by local people who replaced former colonial administrators. Second, the terms used to describe non-English European people (*black, people of colour, Negro, etc.*) were racially divisive. By this, I mean that these terms had similar effects in their use in Belize as they did in North America, classifying people as unintellectual and less privileged than others that are white or bearing closer resemblance of whiteness. Even in the post-emancipation period that thought that these terms continued to be used as a means of officially classifying people meant, not that there was a rejection of the concept of race, but a rejection of discrimination by race. The identity of colonized people emerged as inorganic constructs, removed from their own creative influences and relying on perceptions of identity that were either legally or socially endorsed by hierarchies.

Belize by comparison to places like North America and Africa, is a small country of less than half a million people. Where number of slaves living in North American in the early 1800 numbered close to one million, the low count of slaves in Belize in 1803 was 3000 when the population of white Europeans number closer to 1000.⁷³ The fact that the Belize settlement remained under British control suggests several methods of forced compliance and maintaining order and stability; means of classifying and enforcing status existed among what was a disgruntled slave community.

Through their control of the early forms of government, commerce and the magistracy, the low number of white Europeans were able to manage the privileges and rights of the less fortunate slaves.⁷⁴ The degree to which people participated in constructing their own identities is also noticed in the fact mentioned earlier: that written historical insight on Belize was not available until 1970. Therefore, it is also uncertain that a more comprehensive and inclusive hypothesis for Belize's national identity can be effectively offered at this point. In spite of this fact, there remain important perspectives to offer and ideas to explore when it comes to Belize's constitutional classification of national identity by race. Jill Swiencicki describes as turning the "gap in consciousness" into a "discursive field that can be limited in its clarity and larger meaning".⁷⁵ In other words, the colonial methods that were used to discriminate, classify and create a sense of English European authority in the past, come into the full view of the people these methods were meant to discipline. Since those methods of creating identity were never replaced with another approach, those methods are what remain to be discussed.

⁷³ Bolland, N. (1993) *Colonialism and Resistance in Belize: Essays in Historical Sociology*. Cubola Books, Belize. (p. 41)

⁷⁴ *Ibid*, (p. 43)

⁷⁵ Swiencicki, J. (2006). "The Rhetoric of Awareness". *College English*. National Council of Teachers of English. (68) 4, pp. 337-345

Of course, the questioning and repossession of historical narratives and reshaping the system of government to change rhetorical features of national identity present specific and particular challenges. For one, the notion of starting from scratch, developing an innovative or alternative system of governance is wrought with local and global fears. Modern reactions toward this line of reason are inclined to be associated with *communism* and do not inspire and express confidence in its potential realize and embrace liberal values.

Previous political movements in this direction forced the devaluation of the Belize dollar by the Colonial Office in England, which at this point would be an unwanted outcome. Secondly, should any other system of governance be devised by public imagination, and thus a new idea of national identity defined (based on ethnic equality rather than economic equality for example), the result of changing from a monochronic and a polychronic structure of government would have far-reaching political and economic repercussions beyond Belize's geographical borders. Bolland (2003) realizes this problem in finding appropriate responses to questions of national identity. He says:

...questions [such as these] suggest that what comes to be defined as the national identity, culture and tradition, far from being predetermined by supposedly primordial identities, is actually the outcome of a complex and multi-layered political and ideological struggle. People who struggle to shape their social identities, and to have them accepted by others, do so in the concentric context of family, community, state, region and the world... (p. 200)

In other words, the particular difficulty of removing the various and enduring influences on an English colonialism encounters the gargantuan task of re-classifying national identity on multiple planes. This does not mean, however, that epithets and rhetorical features of national identity are

not subject to scrutiny and possible change. In fact, attempts at reconstituting rhetorical features have occurred before in Belize.

For example, the creation of the UBAD (United Black Association for Development) political party in Belize was started by Evan X Hyde with the intention of appropriating knowledge from the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s and Black Power in the 1970s. The movement struggled to gain traction and legitimacy among Belizeans precisely because the political notion of ‘black power’ alienated most other ethnicities in Belize and what constituted ‘black’ was clearly a North American intellectual creation. The short tenure of this movement from 1969 to 1974 attests to the difficulty in combining normative value, a sense of ethical judgment with the creation of new and different set of principles to determine the place of the ‘black’ community in Belize and so contribute or alter constitutional descriptions of national identity.

The demise of such a movement was inevitable because of the fact that it concentrated its political efforts on the constitutional empowerment of a single group in Belize. Its inevitable failure was exactly because of its one-dimensional approach to national identity. And as mentioned before, ethnic groups in Belize interact across ethnic lines, so the term ‘black’ isolates and focuses on the political relevance of one group. Furthermore, most Belizeans are not comfortable associating identifying with a single ethnic group; in other words, Belizeans are all mixed up.⁷⁶

Davis Theo Goldberg (1990) in *The Social Formation of Racist Discourse*, is critical of such efforts to engender political support under such formulaic notions of solid identities or exclusive labels such as *black* and *white*. He says such movements:

⁷⁶ Bolland, N. (2003). *Colonialism and Resistance in Belize: Essays in Historical Sociology*. Belize: Cubola Books, (p. 210).

... [Do] not consist simply in descriptive representations of others. It includes a set of hypothetical premises of human kinds (e.g. the ‘great chain of being,’ classificatory hierarchies, etc.) and about the difference between them (both mental and physical). It involves a class of ethical choices. And it incorporates a set of institutional regulations, directions, and pedagogic models (e.g. apartheid, separate development, educational institutions, and choice of educational and bureaucratic language). Norms and prescriptions of behavior are contextually circumscribed by specific hypotheses, ethical choices, regulations, and models” (p. 300)

From Goldberg’s point of view, attempts to determine the sociopolitical order of Belize based on “black identity” have immediate ramifications that threaten to use the practice of using external regulatory systems that were already experienced in colonialism. Arguments can be made to the contrary to say that if there is universal white privilege, there can be a sense of universal blackness. But for Belizeans, a system of governance which focuses on the dominance of “black identity” in the way Evan X Hyde advocated would yield similar devastating results as past colonial systems dominated by “white identity” in that it becomes a political practice of exclusion. In fact, to fall back on these regulations based on “black identity” within an ethnically diverse place such as Belize would be the rationalization of colonialism in reverse; or it can be argued as colonialism, with the repositioning of one ethnic group in dominant political positions. The approach to Belize’s ethnic diverse community must be more nuanced.

There is also the fearing of the extent to which racial identity has re-arranged the interior of ethnic people who have come to identify themselves by race. In Belize, as Bolland (2003) explains, ethnic identities have colonially and traditionally been defined by race, which figures

identity as primarily an exterior object, and at the same time bounded to predefined and predetermined etymology of race, which supposedly measures the quality and character of people. Race, in Belize, only contributes toward a kind of orthodoxy and rigidity.⁷⁷ The racial concept of the Belizean Creole people, Bolland (2003) explains, “refers to the spectrum of African and European ancestry in which a variety of physical features, including hair texture and facial features as well as shade of skin, coexist in prolific mixtures”.⁷⁸ In this sense, a racialized other is socially constructed that is distinguished from that which has been historically pure and elite. Here ‘race’ becomes a limitation where the physical self and the term that represents it become the source of the disconnect between constitutional identity and ethnic identity. Rather than provide a sense of collective belonging and recognition, ‘race’ further demarcates ethnic identities, in that the term associates a group of people with a legacy of discrimination.

In spite of the sense of displacement that comes from discussing national identity in Belize, it is one that needs to be had for the reason that not understanding how ‘race’ affects conversations about national identity only prolongs the feeling of displacement. In fact, this model of identity is an oversimplification that ignores the internal and external complexities of ethnic groups in Belize, forcing a sense of dichotomy that is misleading to the composition of Belize’s ethnic diversity.⁷⁹ Ethnicities like the Garifuna or Mestizo, the Creole⁸⁰ could be viewed being culturally mixed themselves, and thus be viewed as occupying a social grey area; neither here nor there – in comparison to the supposed solid ancestral background of English European cultures, which is what the dichotomy of race is meant to suggest.

⁷⁷ Bolland, N. (1993) *Colonialism and Resistance in Belize: Essays in Historical Sociology*. Cubola Books, Belize, (p. 209)

⁷⁸ *Ibid.* p. 209

⁷⁹ *Ibid.* p. 210

⁸⁰ Creole is actually term used to describe people of mixed African and European ancestry in Belize and elsewhere in the Caribbean. But the term Creole is also used to linguistically describe people of various mixed ancestry, which in this case also includes Garifuna and Mestizo people; Garifuna as an amalgam of Arawak, Carib and African ancestry and Mestizo as a mix of Spanish and Mayan ancestry.

Race as a politically empowered term in Belize's history, as it will come to be seen in the following chapters, resurrects the issue of colonial dominance and control in Belize. With the *1981 Belizean Constitution* using race, and not local ethnicities, as a means of engaging national identity, it raises the question as to whether Belizeans suffer from a crisis of representation, or rather, the impossibility of representation.⁸¹ So, the assumption that race, as a label, holds the potential to appropriately contribute to the definition and recognition of ethnic people with the Constitution is dangerously misleading, as the term determines how ethnic people have conversations about national identity.

It is worth mentioning that although Belizeans are not constitutionally recognized as such, that fact that Creoles, Garifuna and Mestizo are prominent ethnic groups in Belize, themselves with ethnically mixed backgrounds, warrants further research. This is to say that there is likely a rich sense of multi-ethnic collectivity that holds the potential to produce a sense of belonging, recognition and understanding among the different ethnic groups in Belize, beyond the rigid dimensions and meaning of race.

⁸¹ Abu El-Haj, N. (2005). "Edward Said and the Political Present". *American Ethnologist*. (32) 4, (p. 539)

UNDERSTANDING THE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN NATIONAL IDENTITY AND POSTCOLONIAL DISCOURSE IN BELIZE

The sense of being liminal⁸² provides a space where postcolonial societies can neither fully assimilate western descriptions of identity, or completely return to their own, indicates a degree of social inertness and the way people rhetorically construct their own identities is still determined by colonial discourse. In *Colonialist Criticism* Achebe (1995) contextualizes this unique aspect of rhetorical silencing when he says that colonial authorities regarded other ethnicities as “really simple, uncomplicated figures [and that] understanding the native and controlling the native goes hand in hand” (58). This is to say that, the idea of unsophisticated thinking is the default psychological state of the non-western group or individual. Or that understanding complexities of social structure and human interaction is not a task that can be entrusted to colonized people, so easy concepts of identity must be provided. While such misconceptions have been widely disproven in anthropological research, it is interesting that uniquely English European concepts of identity remain a significant part of the interpretative rubric of Belizean national identity in the use of race.

According to Ngugi (1986), the misconception of postcolonial societies as simple and unsophisticated people endures because of the dimensions of colonial control and power that were exerted, determining almost every aspect of people’s lives. So, the form and function of how colonized people thought about themselves and the world were not ethnic in nature, but rather reflected the social and structural dimensions of colonial authority, even after that authority was no longer physically present. In *Decolonising the Mind*, he explains that:

⁸² Liminality is used here to indicate people in a state of discomfort, of waiting and of transformation all enacted at once and also to explain how people’s beliefs, habit, individual and ethnic identities disintegrate over a period of time.

... [The] most important form of domination was the mental universe of the colonised, the control, through culture, of how people perceived themselves and their relationship to the world. Economic and political control can never be complete or effective without mental control. To control a people's culture is to control their tools of self-definition in relationship to others (p. 16)

In sum, one of the successes of colonial discourse and the colonial era was the way in which people began to disassociate themselves from their native and ethnic practices. This, interferes with the potential of people to naturally progress according to their own self-evaluation process. The intent of English colonial authority to disconnect people from their own practices of constructing identity, to replace them with English European processes was the deliberate action of colonial dominance, significantly reducing the level of confidence of locals to have psychological access to political power. Later, I argue that the lack of confidence more educated Belizeans show toward their ethnic identities and language is part of what maintains the feeling of British dominance in Belize. I posit that the sense that being identified by race and the use of Standard English are clear examples that Belize in fact still struggles with colonialism. One may go as far as to say that Belize is in fact still colonized.

The dominance of European English culture also remains in the form of Standard English language in education in Belize, which elicits fundamental concerns about the survival of ethnic identities in the modern era. This topic is argued in the chapter that focuses on the effects of Standard English as a rhetorical feature of the Constitution. But, considering that UNESCO has declared the Garifuna language in Belize endangered, one must consider whether or not there is a similar effect in the use and function of race as a rhetorical feature. By this I mean that in some cases, what it means to be ethnic is also threatened by the concept of race. Ngugi's (1986)

position on this topic is worth considering. He explains that the intentional and legal positioning of race in political and educational institutions work to normalize paradigms of self-definition:

[The] disassociation, divorce, or alienation becomes clear from the immediate environment becomes clearer when you look at colonial language as a carrier of English European dominance. Thought took the visible form of a foreign language. So the written language of a child's upbringing in the school (even his spoken language within the school compound) became divorce from his spoken language at home. There is often just the slightest relationship between the written world, was is also the language of schooling, and the world of the immediate environment in the family and community. The result of this disassociation is colonial alienation.⁸³

The power of education as a colonial institution, as it connects to the process of identity formation, illustrates the control over the environments within which colonized people of various ethnic groups aspire to meet the standard and specifications of identity put forth by colonial and postcolonial administrations. At the same time colonized ethnic people must live with the fact that they have no influence over standards and specific descriptions of identity.

In the matter of Belize, the issues of control and self-definition are concerned with, and invariably connected to the state of education. Alongside dispelling global perceptions of creolized languages and identities as *broken*, aspects of national identity, such as religion and politics, are concerns for the Governor General of Belize, Sir. Colville Young (2002) who writes about and views education, religion and politics as racialized concepts that maintain the social practices that were embedded and critically applied as part of the dominance of English European culture in the colonial period. Young argues that "Management of [public education in

⁸³ *Ibid*, p. 17

Belize] was entrusted to the established Church of England; this early pattern of state-community-church involvement in education has continued to this day and the political parties are committed by their manifestoes to its perpetuation” (p. 36). These anxieties come through reading the first lines of the Belizean Constitution which expresses the nation’s devotion to the *Supremacy of God*; an issue more heavily discussed in the coming chapter.

Young falls short of being overtly critical of the circumstances of education in Belize, and how education acts and remains a colonial mechanism that largely determines Belize’s collection social and national identity. Bolland (2003), on the other hand, maintains that an English European structure of education that is still in Belize is inherently dangerous and has not lost its effectiveness nor objectives, maintaining the sociopolitical conditions in which English European culture viewed as dominant, possessing the power to determine how ethnic groups are classified, subverting the reality of their experiences. He explains that the educational system that focuses on authoritarian relationships:

... which has been persistent in Belize, would tend to guarantee, even if it was not actually calculated to induce, passivity and obedience, rather than critical intellect and a sense of self-worth and autonomy among its victims. In various ways [the successors in] schools of Belize have played an important long-term role in buttressing the authority system of the [colonial administration] and maintaining the “good behavior” of its working people.” (p. 166)

In sum, the purpose of education serves the colonial and political objective of keeping people docile, while at the same time neglecting to educate people about the social and political impact their own ethnic identities could have on political processes. In this way, notions of national identity for colonized people is shifted away from ethnicity and is subject to the interpretations

and discursive representations of colonial rule through education and politics. As is seen in the discussion in the following chapter, the concept of race plays an integral role in this shift.

Generally speaking, as the modern era embraces more liberal ideals, notions of colonial dominance through oppressive political are perceived as archaic and antiquated forms of governance. The colonial politics of old is perceived as being in direct contravention of policies turning more towards sociopolitical equality and justice. The problem for postcolonial countries like Belize, however, is that the framing of national identity in many ways still reflects the thought that power and control over the rhetorical constructs is necessary to maintain a sense of order and coherence within the structures of their communities. So, in fact, the motives of the colonial era have not in fact changed, but operate under the guise of democratic principles.

As an aspect of English European colonial education, for instance, Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* explains the moral complexities that face the advancement of English colonial rule across the globe:

The conquest of the earth, which mostly means the taking it away from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves, is not a pretty thing when you look into it too much. What redeems it is the idea only...an unselfish belief in the idea – something you can set up, and bow down before, and offer a sacrifice to.⁸⁴

The narrative example of Conrad is extreme at this point given the focus of this work. But this philosophy is worth considering given the fact that the expansion and rhetorical potency of race has lost none of its zeal since “conquest of the earth” was a historical theme of colonial expansion. It is important, for instance, to contemplate how “belief in the idea” influences the strength of identity concepts as the foundation and impulse of democratic ideals, which are

⁸⁴ Conrad, J. (1910). *Heart of Darkness*. Signet Classic, (p. 3)

shown to surround the mention of race in the Belizean Constitution. Though it qualifies only as fiction, the ethnocentric position of the author, the *unselfish belief* in English dominance, speaks to a specific purpose and outcome of domination “[To develop] a justificatory regime of self-aggrandizing, self-originating authority interposed between the victim of imperialism and its perpetrator”.⁸⁵

Returning to how this problem of the present *civilized world*, the result of English European *unselfish belief* is a strange form of psychological pressure of members of postcolonial countries. For Belize, the psychological pressure essentially resides with the fact that the idea of independence and the Constitution encourage ethnic people to believe in sovereignty, while consistently reminding them that their process of identification holds little or no political impact. As later argued in the chapter that focuses on race as a rhetorical feature of national identity in the Constitution, where the concept of race essentializes and interprets identity, ethnic forms of rhetorically creating identity is likely to have little sociopolitical contribution towards of national identity in Belize.

Generally speaking, racialized classifications often emerge at that common political denominator and approach interpreting identity, which according to colonial context is often the fundamental source designating privilege and preference of one group over another. In this respect the content of a census may be regarded as a rhetorically divisive tool that initiates people into rhetorically symbolic categories of race or ethnicity. Historically speaking, census taking has been the link between affording and denying privilege within the larger political structure. While the practice of assigning privilege by race may not be as overt and unapologetic as it was in the colonial past, Assad Shoman expresses concerns about the purpose and content of census in Belize as recently as 2010.

⁸⁵ Said, E. (1993). *Culture and Imperialism*. London, Chatto & Windus, (p. 82)

In *Reflections on Ethnicity and Nation in Belize* (2010) Assad Shoman notes that the Belize census of 1946 classified ethnic groups in Belize as ‘races’, with “Creoles as accounting for 54%, the Maya 17%, the Mestizo 13%, the Garifuna 8% and Whites 4%. The census demonstrated that ethnic groups still tended to concentrate in particular districts, responding to their insertion in the colony. Garifuna in the south, Mestizo in the north, Creoles in the central Belize and Cayo districts” (p. 8). The label *white* immediately stands out, not only for the reason that white would have various physical incarnations in a place so ethnical diverse as Belize, but also because, in the colonial context, white is meant to mean European.⁸⁶ The static classifications here largely ignore the number of mixed identities that are a part of Creole, Mestizo and Garifuna ethnic groups, which themselves embody incarnations of white physical appearance.⁸⁷ So, white as categorization having the meaning English European, reflects the idea of a solid, pure and undiluted colour and heritage, which in Belize, would likely mean English European.

The reason for racial classification, where such forms of classifications did not exist within ethnic cultures before, comes from the need to maintain the illusion of segregated and distinct races as well as the colonial of control.⁸⁸ This sort of fundamentalist approach through the category of white, as recently as 2010 in Belize, calls into question the influence former

⁸⁶ Bolland’s (2003) research on census statistics in the 1980s reveals that “In the northern districts of Corozal and Orange Walk, Mestizos constitute 74 and 72 percent of the population, respectfully, whereas in Belize District 68 percent of the population is Creole. Garifuna people are still concentrated in Stann Creek District, and Mopan and Kekchi Maya are largely in Toledo District. It is an oversimplification to think of these ethnic groups as static fixed identities as the census imply, because the historical forces, particularly economic and political forces, which have been the source of a dynamic process of ethnic group formation and redefinition will surely continue in the future” (p. 209).

⁸⁷ Creole already means a mix between British and African. Mestizo a mix between Spanish and Yucatecan Maya. Garifuna people are also with a range of skin colour as part of ethnic genotype because of the Arawak ancestry. In Bolland’s *Colonialism and Resistance in Belize*, he remarks that “Most ethnic groups in Belize today, including the three that are most numerous – the Mestizo, Creole and Garifuna – are themselves the result of considerable mixtures over several centuries and they are continuing to change” (p.209).

⁸⁸ Palacio, J. (1993). “Social and Cultural Implications of Recent Demographic Changes in Belize”. *Belizean Studies*: (21) 1, pp. 3-10

colonialist thinking over the state of national identity in Belize. In *Rethinking Ethnicity* (2008), Richard Jenkins shares a legitimate concern as to the purpose and function of a census in places that were, and still may be, dominated by English European politics:

In order to gather data, population categories must first be defined. Among these are ethnic (or 'racial') categories. Thus they become established in official discourse, discourses which are powerfully constitutive of social reality through public rhetoric, the formulation of policy, the targeting of resources and social control measures... These official categorizations are not necessarily directly re-appropriated as self or group identifications. History, context, and, not least, the content and the consequences of the categorization, all matter. (p. 72)

In the case of Belize, the reification of racial categories as it regards the constitution warrants further analysis as to the possible rhetorical implications of race as a functional feature of national identity. Jenkins makes it clear that there is an undeniable relationship between racial categorization and power. The likely use of race is essentially a matter of keeping control and power over the social construction and meaning given people's identities, interaction and how they participate in the rhetorical construction of national identity.

Chapter V: Race and Ethnic Invisibility in the Constitution

INTRODUCTION: Connecting the Concept of Race to the Colonial

Today, the concept of race is intrinsically linked to the understanding of people's social and political realities as created and reinforced by language of people's respective democracies. W.H. New (1978) puts this idea into postcolonial context by saying that people who consistently use the language of their country allow themselves to be defined by the mentalities and ideologies that inform the sense of national identity in that country.⁸⁹ The prevailing notion, from a rhetorical point of view, is that race as ideological thinking, while it has been scientifically debunked as a means of social and political classification, remains an effective legitimizing instrument in social interaction and in political determination of identity.⁹⁰ In essence, by talking about race, we make it exist in society. Thus, the rhetorical use of race to convey identity achieves the objective of constructing categories within the contexts of our societies. So, by creating and legitimizing the paths for using and discussing race, we map social categories of race into the perceptions of the society using language specifically designated for such a discussion.

For postcolonial countries, understanding and responding to racial classification is not a simple matter. The debate does not surround the simple matter of swapping race with a more agreeable term. Rather, it is the task of seeing how the idea of race, from history into the present, continues to have extraordinary influence over people's anxieties towards personal and national identity. As such, the rhetorical question I address in this section of this dissertation is in what way the valuation of race in the Belize Constitution affects, contributes to or clarifies the

⁸⁹ New, W.H. (1978). *New Language, New World*. Awakened Conscience: Studies in Commonwealth Literature. London: Heinemann, (p. 27).

⁹⁰ Said, E. (1993). *Culture and Imperialism*. Vintage Books: New York, (p. 211).

complexities of ethnic identity in a postcolonial country such as Belize? In particular, the questions I wish to address are:

- 1) What is the historical meaning of race as it relates to colonial process and concerns of power?
- 2) How does race, as a mode of representation and classification, affect the way Belizeans view themselves?
- 3) What does classification mean for Belize in the broader context of the global community?

Using these questions as guides, I hope to have a discussion in which I will discover the social and political consequences race has on the construction of national identity; perhaps to show that as an intriguing point of application, racial identity is paradoxical, convoluting and disruptive in the description and representation of national identity.

It is my argument that the mention of race in the Belizean Constitution keeps Belizean national identity connected closely to its colonial past, and thus recognized as still being defined by colonial discourse. As such, Belizean national identity is still shaped and influenced by classification feature that allowed colonial power to remain a leading and significant part of history. To justify the relevance of doing a rhetorical analysis of identity on the Belizean Constitution as a postcolonial document, I turn to the rhetorical and postcolonial perspectives and writings of authors like Chinua Achebe (1988) in *Colonialist Criticism* who looks at Western writing in the colonial and postcolonial era as automatically informed by universality.

I use Achebe's interpretation of colonial influence to address not only the cultural center from which the idea of race emerges, but race has determined the vernacular conceptualizations of identity on a global scale. There are perspectives reflecting a position like that of Gareth Griffith (1994) who writes in *The Myth of Authenticity*, that colonial and postcolonial

institutions, no matter how liberal they seem, are characterized by the psychological violence inflicted through their feature of discourse. Griffith provides a significant contribution to this discussion where she explains that colonial power does not only come from imposing features of national identity, but also controlling the ways national identity is perceived and discussed. She explains that race and its relationship to social hierarchies involves the acquisition of control and maintenance of political power.

Ultimately, I look to the idea of race as a rhetorical concept, which Michel Foucault (1975) says in *Society Must be Defended* comes from a historical and political divide:

...the term 'race' is not pinned to a stable biological meaning. And yet the word is not completely free-floating. Ultimately, it designates a certain historio-political divide. It is no doubt wide, but it is relatively stable. One might say – and this does say – that the two races exist whenever one writes the history of two groups which do not, at least to begin with, have the same language, or in many cases, the same religion. The two groups form a unity and a single polity only as a result of war, invasions, victories, and defeats, or in other words, acts of violence (p. 77)

Social interaction, according to Foucault, comes in the form of “barriers created by privilege, customs and rights, the distribution of wealth, or the way in which power is exercised” which has been traditional and historically indicated by dichotomy of race in colonial societies (p. 77). As argued earlier, from its inception in Belize’s colonial history, race has been used to constitute and determine ranking in social hierarchies. So then, the feature communicates a deep feeling of belonging to the *other*; a deep feeling associated with, and not divorced from a low or high estimation of character and human potential.

In terms of establishing racial identity, psychological violence to a lesser or greater degree is fundamental to each process and stage of domination, whether domination is experienced socially, academically or politically. From the postcolonial standpoint, it is the tendency to allow race to establish normative judgements so that the perception of difference is more easily grasped, rather than hold in higher regard the distinguishing qualities of different ethnicities. Some theories and disciplines (e.g. Critical Race Theory and Cultural Studies) recognize the use of race to discuss identity in different fields as an incessant practice. Even in the era of modern communication where communicative platforms at first glance seem to alleviate the waywardness of race as a social and rhetorical construct, race is intrinsically linked. Scott, Longo and Wills (2006) in *Critical Power Tools: Technical Communication and Cultural Studies* identify the need to embrace this approach to changing modes of communication and social interaction, suggesting that there needs to be a “response to the field’s need for more research and teaching approaches that historicize communication’s role in hegemonic power relations – approaches that are openly critical of non-egalitarian, unethical practices and subject positions” (1). So then, the effect of race goes beyond being a historically enshrined perception of people’s physical differences, but in effect normalizes exclusion by determining who gets recognized in certain social forums. In short, a critical eye should be given to race because not only does it determine who speaks and what is said about identity, but how those ideas are framed and for what purpose.

The intellectual work provided by these scholars suggests the need to understand and further interrogate the shifting practices of discrimination, especially when it comes to the struggles against legitimizing and accepting racial identity as positively progressive. Specifically, in the case of postcolonial countries like Belize, one needs to investigate the constitutionality of

race, the possible meaning and theoretical outcomes as it applies to national identity. From the readings mentioned above, and the others with similar positions, this section hopes to show that the monolithic interpretation of identity offered by race ignores ethnic diversity and encourages perceptions of identity as it was in the colonial era. In the context of postcolonial studies, understanding race and its political functions is a matter of analyzing the historical origins of the term, which has been done in the chapter regarding Belize's colonial history. This is not to say that a thorough and comprehensive review of race as a concept needs to be provided from a global perspective in order to ascertain how race became included in the constitution of colonized or previously colonized countries like Belize. Such an exploration would be far too expansive to include in a project so narrowly focused as a dissertation. Rather, this section offers a narrow focus on the rationale of the Constitution as it written, and national identity as it is constructed through a historical understanding of race and whether that understanding encourages communication across ethnic lines in Belize.

The Constitution and the Supremacy of God

The matter of conferring social and political legitimacy of people through a Constitution, when that Constitution uses the measure of race to determine the value of people, requires the constant consideration of sociohistorical context. In looking at such context, the purpose and function of Constitutions needs to be emphasized, which is that Constitutions establish who citizens of a given nation are. As such, they use language and a specific form of political discourse to rhetorically construct national identity. In the effort to have rhetorical constructs of identity be deeply ingrained concepts, Constitutions rely on systems and modes of classification which have powerful legal and social implications. These in turn provide the context for how

individuals, groups and the nation governed by a particular Constitution identify themselves, talk about themselves, and are able to present and conduct themselves within the related society.

From this comes the definition of national identity and the political and rhetorical parameters within which people interact and function as a whole. The question then holds as to how does race, repeatedly used as rhetorical feature by the Belizean Constitution, affect the understanding of Belizean national identity. Race is mentioned five times in the Constitution:

- 6) Protection from discrimination on the grounds of *race*, etc.⁹¹
- 7) Constitution as Supreme Law section says the “policies of state...eliminate economic and social privilege and disparity among citizens of Belize whether by *race*, colour, creed or sex...”⁹²
- 8) Protection of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms section explains “every person in Belize is entitled to the fundamental rights and freedoms...whatever his race, place of origin, political opinions, colour, creed or sex...”⁹³
- 9) Section 16, subsection 3 defines “discriminatory as affording different treatment to different persons attributable wholly or mainly to their respective descriptions of sex, *race*, place or origin...”⁹⁴
- 10) Section 16, article 5 explains “nothing contained in any law shall be held to be inconsistent with or in contravention of subsection (1) of this section to the extent that it makes provision with respect to standards or qualifications (not being standards or qualifications specifically relating to sex, *race*, place of origin...”⁹⁵

⁹¹ The 1981 Belizean Constitution, Arrangement of Sections, Cover Page (p. 1)

⁹² *Ibid*, Constitution as Supreme Law section (p. 2)

⁹³ *Ibid*, Protection of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms section, Part 2 (p. 4)

⁹⁴ *Ibid*, Protection of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms section, Part 2 (p. 12)

⁹⁵ *Ibid*, Protection of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms section, Part 2 (p. 13)

In these instances, race is featured as a form of knowledge, moral evaluation and political act of national identity. Considering Belize's colonial history with race as a concept that divides people, the question must be asked as to whether or not race is still used as a divisive feature to marginalize and deny privileges to other people. In his paper *Reflections on Ethnicity and Nation in Belize*, Belizean writer and researcher, Assad Shoman (2010) reminds us that before the nation's independence, the need for racial classification was "felt, and the determination taken, in order to provide a consequence, which has usually been to dominate or to have some advantage over the person categorized" (p. 21). Similarly, Sofia Nasstrom (2007), in *The Legitimacy of the People*, also reminds us that "The constitution of a people is typically brought up as a question of identity [and] who get to be included in the people is not a democratic, but a historical question. It results from the contingent forces of history" (p. 625).

The perspectives of Shoman and Nasstrom explain to us how colonial authority is involved in the constitution of racial identity, when the constitution is written from the basis of historical and sociopolitical factors. In relation to the creation of marginalized identities in Belize, Shoman and Nasstrom direct our attention toward the idea that Constitutions help produce a sense of what is accepted as norm, normal and normalizing, in that it provides a solution for the broad technical differences among different groups sharing the same geographical space. The Constitution maintains and enforces the aspects of identity its authority deems normal, which through law, becomes an empowered concept. Because it is reinforced by its legal status, it is then difficult to understand race outside the idea of being legally defined, enforced and legitimized constructs.

In *Truth and Power* (1980) Foucault reminds us that such a concept of power can be seen in the construction of race as a political conduit:

...what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it doesn't weigh on us as a force that says no, but it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge and produces discourse. It needs to be considered as a productive network which runs through the whole social body. Much more than as a negative instance whose function is repression (p. 119)

From Foucault's point of view, power in the context of race is a means and measurement of control over people. Race being at the center of political ideology and practice determines people's social interaction, the way people view themselves as subjects, and thus affect the way groups and individuals understand themselves as possessing and being a part of a collective. As it relates to the Belizean Constitution, the recognition of race as a feature of national identity indicates that the power of law determines what constitutes national identity and what does not.

Yet, it is difficult and rather unlikely that the Constitution would make it explicit that 'race' is imposed on people's individual and ethnic identities in order to regulate people's perception of themselves. The difficulty in regarding race as explicitly marginalizing comes from the fact that race is surrounded by democratic ideals and advocacies: fundamental rights, freedom, no different treatment, etc. It is not surprising that a discussion concerning the constitutionality of race in Belize's Constitution has not occurred before now. So, aside from its legality, race needed to be attached to another form of 'truth', so to speak.

In *The American Indian and Western Legal Thought*, Robert Williams Jr. explains that the British brought their beliefs, religions and the conceptions of what was true and hence right, with them in the New World.⁹⁶ As a colonizing force, it is expected that an encounter with people having alternative belief systems would be labelled different, inferior and so needing the

⁹⁶ Williams, R.A. Jr. (1990). *The American Indian in Western Legal Thought: Discourses of Conquest*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, (p. 15)

guidance and direction of the British/Christian belief. And so over time, the ‘Supremacy of God’, ‘fundamental rights and freedoms’, and ‘no different treatment’, become features of the Constitution that either justify or veil the effects of racial classifications and given considerable influence over the construction of national identity.

In what appears to be an effort at political inclusion, the Belizean Constitution of 1981 offers a rhetorical premise that demonstrates the fundamental view of the colonial enterprise, affirming “that the Nation of Belize shall be founded upon principles which acknowledge the Supremacy of God” (1). Discussions on the religious implications about whether or not the ‘Supremacy of God’ is a racialized concept may abound at this point – as it is featured in the previous chapter in referencing elements of and responses to colonialism. Religious dissidence is after all a major viewpoint from which postcolonial theory draws its logic and appeal to the discourse on and rhetoric about ethnic and political identity. The idea that the Constitution specifically states that “the Nation” is founded on this principle affords the phrase considerable clout, position of authority and centralizing effect on other features of constitutional and national identity.

This is not a subject matter that is explored in detail here. However, some thought must be given to how the discourse around Belizean national identity becomes formulaic and racialized at this instance, given the political and religious meaning through of the phrase within the context of the Constitution. In *Rhetoric of Empire*, Davis Spurr (1993), for instance, tells us that the function of religion was a “necessary condition for the peaceful commerce among nations that would allow the exploitation of [colonized places] according to God’s will. Christian conversion would therefore improve the social as well as spiritual condition of the [colonized people]” (p. 33). The form of compliance that comes through spiritual oath between the colonizer

and the colonized remains an act demonstrating the ability of political will that establishes and uses the illusion of comradery, when in fact the beliefs of colonized people have been entirely removed from the political process. So then, religion in its relationship to race and English European culture has been and continues to work as a system for assimilating a distinct element of English European identity.

A political system that is able to provide and enforce a concept of spiritual identity, while at the same time legitimizing the sociological context from which the meaning of identity can be drawn, is one that potentially controls all the variables and forms of agency in the recognition of national identity. As a racialized approach to national identity, the 'Supremacy of God', from the colonized point of view, marginalizes an identity that is ethnically and traditionally attached to other, alternative spiritual systems.

It is curious enough that, according to Vernon Bogdanor (1988) in *Constitutions of Democratic Politics* Britain lacked an enacted constitution at the height of its colonial power, but equally curious is that it would find legitimacy of its regime through the essential use of Constitutions in their dominance of others (p. 53). Given the fact that there are multiple belief systems available from the different ethnic groups in Belize, the 'Supremacy of God' can be interpreted as an embedded religious authority that comes through from Belize's colonial past. The purpose of naming the 'Supremacy of God' in fact reveals itself as the first act of racializing national identity because of its clear un-relatedness through diversity and ethnic context. And, while it is not particularly useful to enter a theological perspective into a rhetorical analysis, it is both interesting and necessary to note that the radical inclusion of the phrase performs at once the dissemination of both value and authority among a community of difference belief systems. On this ground, Bogdanor asserts that the

...analysis of a constitution cannot be restricted simply to the document called ‘the constitution’, or to constitutional law. For a working constitution in a democracy implies reference to certain norms and standards which lie beyond and outside the document itself, and which cannot be easily be inferred from it by someone who is not steeped in the history and culture of the country concerned (p. 5).

Drawing from Bogdanor’s point, the ‘Supremacy of God’ implies an immediate norm and expectation of religious authority that was a dominant feature in Belize’s colonial history. Correspondingly, Belizean writer Peter Hitchen makes the case that, in Belize, the British Government allowed the church to retain their hold on the system to a large extent. Such confidence in the church established deep-seated power relations between the British government and the church which then helped develop multiethnic compliance across the different communities in Belize.⁹⁷ And in this regard, the idea of race becomes a precarious multifaceted element, as it becomes all at once social, constitutional and religious. This should require deeper interrogation of historical norms and traditions that force themselves upon the social behavior and thinking of ethnic people in Belize.

But, the oversimplification of national identity in a complex community, through the constitutional use of race, is exactly what its inclusion is meant to achieve from the colonial point of view. For instance, what makes the concept of the ‘Supremacy of God’ racial is not only the decisive and deliberate political position from which it was written, but its legal representation of national identity of an ethnically diverse people whose belief systems are vastly different from that of monotheism. Similarly, race brings people of a multiethnic society in the

⁹⁷ Hitchen, P. (2002). *Education and Multicultural Cohesion in the Caribbean and the Case of Belize*. LULU Press Incorporated, (p. 16)

dichotomies of skin colour; being either black or white from the context of Belize's colonial history. The implied meaning here is that there is little or no social or political agency for other spiritual belief systems or ethnic composition beyond what is named in the constitution. As far as the political implications go in terms of belief systems and race, there is a declaration of religious orthodoxy and racial identities made through the political authority of the constitution imposed on ethnic groups that are subject to that authority. The position of this phrase and the meaning it gives to the Constitution is a testament to the idea that permanency and power of laws in the colonial era have historically shaped the identity of colonized people. As a declaration made on behalf of "the Nation", the phrase suggests the vernacular understanding that national and constitutional identity is contingent on this belief, which on the surface is rigid, marginalizing and unaccommodating of other spiritual or religious beliefs systems.

Race, Colonial Ideology and Social Status

In the same way that the 'Supremacy of God' is racialized, later in this section I examine race as a constitutional anomaly that indicates the survival of colonial ideology, arguing that even what appears to be the denunciation of race in the Belizean Constitution, is in fact an imposed concept of national identity which finds its roots in British colonialism. To be clear, I am not interrogating or rhetorically analyzing race as a form of public discourse. Such a premise would make a multifaceted analysis necessary, which looks at race as a concept saturated with meaning from a sociological, cultural studies and a historical discipline too broad to include at this point. The critical discussion about the political effects of race, which is ongoing across academia, is extensive and interconnected, and enters the domain of psychology in the new categorization of race as a mark of collective social and cultural trauma.

Rather, I perform a rhetorically close reading of the term to determine whether it represents ethnic identities, perspectives and experiences as diverse and divergent as they are in a multiethnic country such as Belize or whether the term robs Belize's ethnic communities of their own ethnic specificity. The focus is limited further in this section, in that there is not a contrastive analysis as to how race affects each aspect of or group of ethnic people in Belize. The broad scope of such an endeavor was comment upon in the previous chapter recognizing Bolland (2003) as saying "historical preoccupations with the idea of race has left its powerful mark in the prevailing conceptions of ethnicity...in the widespread assumption that ethnic identity is an ascribed characteristic [of race]" (p. 200).

However, through a closer look at how race is included as a feature of national identity, I want to explain how race as a rhetorical concept functions as a tool which provides an implicit and explicit sense of normalization. I use the idea of normalization here to explain what Francois Ewald (1990) in *Norms, Discipline and the Law* describes as an "implicit logic that allows power to reflect upon it strategies and clearly define its objects" (p. 139). In other words using simple classification methods to describe people with more complex backgrounds. Following this definition, race as a rhetorical concept attached to Belize's Constitution not only functions as a tool of political order, but also an idea that imposes a degree of competency in the way colonized people self-identify. Simply put, I argue that race is included to control the social and constitutional definition by determining how ideas of national identity should be viewed, essentially determining the ways identities are socially and politically discussed.

From this approach, I make the argument that the decision to include race as a political and rhetorical feature of national identity gives the assumption that colonized people require a different sense of political order. With the assumption that colonized people are incapable of

organizing and figuring national identity for themselves, comes the notion that colonized people need a sense of self that comes from a Eurocentric understanding of the value, the innate potential and understanding of national identity. Earlier, in the Methodology section of this project, I mentioned and defined race as a rhetorical construct, which when included in the Belizean Constitution provides a single, one dimensional or dichotomized line of interpreting or understanding difference between people. This is to say that when race is used as a system of classification, it is not simply suggestive. It represents not only the possibility, but the real consequence of colonial history, and a rhetorical procedure that produces an ideologically charged perception of non-Western or colonized people as incapable of formulating national identity to their benefit. The theoretical challenges and paradoxes posed by the idea of race almost guarantees that the real and imaginary differences between people will not be reconciled because race is inherently polarizing.

In fact, the marriage of race and the Belizean Constitution almost invariably leads to the simplistic notion of celebrating the theoretical threads of oppression. I find that the celebration of rhetorical inquiry that comes from and is witnessed in postcolonial theory, is in many ways premature. While postcolonial theory is necessary to understand the position of anti-norm identities in the dichotomies of race (*white* and *black*, *center* and *periphery*, for example), there is much more to be said about the ethnic experiences. I say premature because for all its superficiality, race remains mobile, progressive and positioned to offer an uneasy state of relation between people that are politically marginalized and those that are the powerful political minority.

Writing about Belize in particular, Karen Judd (1998) explains in *Populist Ideology and Expatriate Power in Belize*, that power:

“...whites, local[s] and expatriate[s] stay above the fray. Unlike most Belizeans, for whom [political] affiliation is a major part of their identity, they stay out of politics, contributing funds to whichever party is in power and keeping their economic interests free of national and ethnic commitment. In this, they are continuing a long tradition” (p. 134).

The political distance and power among Belizeans that Judd explains here is not an unusual and uncommon occurrence among and within postcolonial countries like Belize. The powerful social and political elite establish themselves as the powerful racial norm or normal by the virtue of the power held over governments. In a sense, a declaration of normalcy among elite members establishes other ethnic identities as not normal, or the anti-norm. It is the power practiced over the position of others that reify these norms as historically and socially acceptable, which is in fact an attitude that the Belizean Constitution does not reject.

Judd’s recognition that race or being ‘white’ remains a mark of identity still associated with wealth and power in Belize is the more telling and revealing aspect here, suggesting Belize’s difficulty in overcoming its colonial past is continuous and on-going. That said, the idea of race mixed with the powers of economic and politics, maintains this duplicitous, polarizing relationship between people who have been historically privileged by the idea of race, and those that have been marginalized or colonized by the idea of race. As such, race becomes a concept that signifies and symbolizes social conflict and interests between people of different colour and economic position.⁹⁸

According to Spurr (1994), postcolonial countries like Belize are the inheritors of this particular brand of social distrust and the resulting political instability. He writes that the

⁹⁸ Omi, M., Winant, H. (1994). *Racial Formation in the United States: from the 1960s to the 1990s*, (2nd Edition). Routledge: New York, (p.55).

classification of other peoples' identity through race by colonial administration, must be thought of as an act of violence enacted upon the world, a violence which includes conquering land, naming places and establishing systems of government. Spurr theorizes that through the discipline of governing, using race is ordering the realm of discourse, which "performs a policing function, assigning position, regulating groups, and enforcing boundaries" and that "therefore means no longer simply to arrange the visible, but to perform a circular analysis that [relates] to the visible" (p. 63). In other words, the classification of other people, as they are colonized, means assigning a specific set of virtues and values they are thought to possess, either arbitrarily or specifically assigned through observation. As a consequence, such systems of understanding through the concept of race serve ultimately as an analysis of the Third World societies in Western writing (p. 63). As it relates to Belize, a Third World country itself, the emphasis on race as an aesthetic only reinforces the political distance between identities that are supposedly normal and those that are not normal, or rather, ethnic identities that are not acknowledged in the Constitution. In a manner of speaking, those identities that are not *racial* in their constitution.

Foucault (1980) insists that such rhetorical practices of exclusion such as is seen in the matter of race and the Belizean Constitution, be questioned according to the history and conditions that enable their presence in the first place. Race becomes a mechanism out of a history that produces and legitimizes the separation of people by physical and economic differences, to portray such knowledge as accurate, true and representational, which Foucault says becomes:

...relations of power which permeate, characterise and constitute the social body, and these relations of power cannot themselves be established, consolidated nor implemented without the production, accumulation, circulation and functioning of

a discourse. There can be no possible exercise of power without a certain economy of discourse or truth which operates through and on the basis of association. We are subject to the production of truth through power and we cannot exercise power except through productions of truth...we are forced to produce the truth that our society demands...In [the same] way, we are also subject to truth in the sense in which it is truth that makes the laws, that produces the true discourse which, at least partially, decides, transmits and itself extends upon the effects of power” (93-94)

Looking to Foucault’s claim that “we are subject to the production of truth through power” the argument can be made that classifying and misrecognizing of Belizean ethnic identities as racial becomes a strategic act of power by the Belizean Constitution. So then, national identity is learned under the rules of classification and under the ideology that informs such classification. For Belize, that fact that race is constitutionalized, means that the discursive and representational means are provided within the historical context of the Constitution and that race is signified by its complex and polarizing meanings that come from the history of Belize’s colonial experiences.

**‘RACE’ FROM IDEOLOGY TO THE CONSTITUTION: The Scientific Approach,
Political Legacy, and Social Behavior**

Belize being globally classified as ‘Third World’ is no doubt named so because of its history with British colonialism. Postcolonial interpretations of the ‘Third World’ designation abound with critical insight rejecting the term because of it seems to suggest people intellectual capacities as well as the state of their economy. For one, the idea continues the tradition of global forces classifying and essentially naming people with less global political power and less advanced technologically. It continues the colonial tradition of bringing imperial culture’s modes of representation into situations already exacerbated by colonial experiences.⁹⁹ Spurr points to a specific moment in Western colonial expansion and scientific exploration of other worlds in the research of Charles Darwin.

In this context, it is easy to locate evidence in the past that justifies the criticism of the British colonial enterprise. But as Spurr points out, the survival of dogmatic components, almost as autonomous elements, suggests that race is situated as it is through a series of historical moments in which physical appearance becomes the basis for organizing social and political structures. Perhaps in a sense of irony, this is the reason the Darwinian approach to understanding the origins of race remains convenient for the interpretation of colonial legacies and the exaggerated focus given to skin colour in the present.

In the *Journal of Researches* published in 1839, Darwin’s observations of a group of an indigenous people in South America seem to move from assessing strictly physical aspects of the community, to associating physical description with the group’s psychological capacity. In his description, Darwin observes “their skins filthy and greasy, their voices discordant, their gestures

⁹⁹ Mitchell, W. (1992). Postcolonial Culture, Postimperial Criticism. *The Postcolonial Studies Reader*. Routledge: London, (p. 478)

violent and without dignity...How little can the higher powers of the mind be brought into play? What is there for imagination to picture, for reason to compare, for judgement to decide upon?" (p. 64).

By focusing on the eccentric and the abnormal as a detached scientific observer, Darwin's ideas designate themselves as an appropriate, objective subject position, thus postulating itself as the equivalence of reason and objectivity. For Darwin and the political philosophy that follows his ideals, the observation of skin colour and conclusions on language come to categorize people as living in different stages of psychological and communicative development, which then translates into the representation of their staggered or thwarted evolutionary process, and hence their lives reflect "zero in the scale of government" (p. 64). Through Darwin's scholarship two themes in particular emerge as ideas that would inform British exploration and the ideology that would determine British interaction with the rest of the world. First is the idea of British essentialism in producing and giving authority to the then contemporary colonial rhetoric on the collective identity of others. Second is the reification of racial identity by virtue of the observer's objectivity and authority in that objectivity as a socially acceptable position that would later inform colonial rhetoric towards other groups in the world.

Over time the supposed objectivity of Darwin's scientific observation formed the essential view in British global expansion and also subsequently provided the ethical dimensions through which the differences of people are assessed. The *Honduras Almanack* written and published by the Authority of the Legislative Assembly of Belize 1829, around the time England debated emancipation, offers some insight and description of Belize that reflect Darwin's powers of observation. In this description, the ethnic groups in Belize appear to display fundamental similarities connecting their physical features to psychological capacities:

Though they are many free blacks, yet for the most part they either are the children of slaves, or have been slaves themselves; and few of them are to be found entirely exempt from those low propensities which are exhibited in a state of barbarism... They, however, possess upon the whole, but little intelligence, their dullness of comprehension, and the difficulty of picturing on the minds of others the idea present in their own are at once remarkable and distressing. They seem to perform everything they take in hand, less mechanically in their movements than in their notions; and generally contrive to effect their objects with as much instinct as of reason” (7-8)

There are several rhetorical factors represented in the writing of and reflections in the *Honduras Almanack*.

For one, the Almanack establishes that there is a tradition of racial ideas written and inherited as part of Belize’s cultural and political legacy. Second, is that this legacy either informs the contemporary logic and discourse on identity simply by the acknowledgment and assumption that race is an acceptable and rational form of thinking about national identity. As a rhetorical construct and as a misleading formulation of identity, race remains difficult and perhaps impossible to separate from its historical context. To be constitutionally identified by race means that identities of colonized people are “quintessentially ideological and inserted into a comprehensively racialized social structure – thus race becomes common sense, a way of explaining and acting in the world”.¹⁰⁰ As such, both in the historical and contemporary political context, race is all at once integrated into the awareness and unconscious interaction with people.

¹⁰⁰ Omi, M., Winant, H. (1994). *Racial Formation in the United States: from the 1960s to the 1990s*, (2nd Edition). Routledge: New York, (p. 55 – 56).

Spurr (1993) also cites the position of European diplomat Joseph-Arthur, Comte de Gobineau, who explains the authority with which the British colonial government explored, settled in different areas, and the attitude with which they created ruling governments in other parts of the world. Gobineau determines that the white race, “From the beginning, it appears as relatively cultivated and in possession of the principle elements of a superior state which, developed later in its multiple branches, would become diverse forms of civilization” (p. 66). In other words, race not only implies implicit and explicit awareness of *white* and *black* skin, but the supposed superior intellect and advanced civilized state of European cultures, providing the justification to improve the character of others through civilizing methods of colonial education and law. The Belizean Constitution is arguably one “later branch” and “form of civilization” which Gobineau references, in that the Constitution is that representational and colonial document through which race is effectively institutionalized, and national identity is signified.

The subjective ideas of Darwin’s and Gobineau’s are crucial to grasp in order to understand how the logic of race worked in the colonization of places like Belize, only to eventually find its way into the political documents like *The Portfolio*, the *Honduras Almanack* and eventually the *Constitution*. The expansion of the British Empire through the exploration of new territories brought along these Darwinian principles of observation, which offered the intellectual convenience of pre-determined categories toward the complexities of other groups. This in turn provided the rhetoric for colonial administrations with language or descriptions that would assure the coherent understanding of different ethnic groups the British would encounter in their expansion.

Informed by this logic, the concept of racial difference became marked as a symptom and consequence of British exploration and political expansion, and officially the way British

explorers and settlers would view and understand themselves in relation to the rest of the world. This makes being identified by race not only the imaginary production of British thought, but having that product perceived as an intrinsic and essential element. The underlying question becomes whether exaggerated importance given to race means, that to a large extent, Belizean national identity, is largely detached from the social and ethnic realities of people's everyday lives and experiences – which, in truth, is a unsettling notion to contemplate.

As a result and ability of the 1981 Belizean Constitution to fix the meaning of national identity through race, Belizeans engage in identity discourse and behavior based on the implied social and historical meaning attached to skin colour and ethnic experiences and interaction across ethnic lines. In her ethnographic study on Belize's ethnic groups, in *The Co-construction of race, ethnicity and nation in Belize* (1997), Laurie Kroshus Medina writes about and observes the interaction between a Black Belizean Creole man and a Spanish woman at a football (soccer) game. As the Belizean team trailed the other team, which was predominantly individuals of Spanish descent "...a black man stopped in front of the bleachers, turned and shouted at the Spanish fans, 'Aliens! Go back where you came from!'" (p.758). Moments after this statement was barked in the direction of the Spanish fans, a Spanish woman in her anger toward the man's words, returned "I'm as Belizean as you are! We're from Benque! If you ever come out to Benque you would see that there are no blacks there, but it's still Belize, and we are Belizeans...my people were here in Belize long before the white man brought you as a slave" (p. 759). The challenge presented by both the man and woman presents, or rather, exposes some assumptions and difficulties Belizeans face when it comes to understanding the ethnic composition of national identity through race.

The first point of scrutiny here, is the Creole man's peculiar use of the phrase and framing of the Spanish fans' identity as 'alien'. Medina does not elaborate on its similarity with that of racist chants of 'nigger, go home' between the 1950s and 60s in North America. But, the Creole man's adage "Go back where you came from" holds similar undertones and resemblance in the social practice and history of social interactions through racial classifications. The Spanish woman's response, on the other hand, is revealing in the way Belizeans of different ethnic backgrounds hold rhetorical positions on identity, which is through physical and geographical representations saying, "I am from Benque". What is revealed in this moment is a somewhat high degree of ignorance as to what constitutes Belizean national identity, almost as if being Belizean is not defined through common origin and common experiences, when colonial history illustrates otherwise.¹⁰¹

Along with the Creole's man assumption that anyone who doesn't look like him is an 'alien' (i.e. light, clear skin colour suggesting Spanish *European* white ancestry), is the Spanish woman's claim and recognition that 'there are no blacks there' in Benque, which is at the west of Belize bordering Guatemala. The accuracy of the woman's claim is not in question at this point for the simple fact that such claim hinges on a demographic, statistical survey of the area she mentions – which might be proven ill-informed given the interactions among the different ethnic groups in Belize. Rather, the racial filters based on physical appearance in the way Belizeans understand themselves are clear in this instance, and are evidenced as disruptive in the man's assumption of 'alien' and the woman's assumption of the man's slave ancestry, and the unsubstantiated response that there are no black people living here area. By in using specific rhetorical filters for national identity, alien and black, both individuals who happen to be

¹⁰¹ Belizean history reveals that African slaves worked closely with the Spanish countries to the North and West as a means of escaping the extreme conditions and treatment in rural Mahogany camps and harsh treatment in urban settlements.

Belizean exhibit the effect of racial identification, ironically spoken from ethnic positionalities. This instance suggests what is disparaging about the effects of racial categorizations in Belize, which is that national identity itself is a struggle against the particular negative perceptions and constructs of race.

With this kind of socio-historical context, classification by race can only exist socially and be understood domestically as a term that has a duplicitous effect, being cognitively ingrained as an element of colonial history and functioning as a *trope* that represents itself as self-evident. Given that both the Creole man and Spanish woman were vying for positions of power in Medina's account of the event, it is safe to argue that such an exchange exposes the ability of race to define and assert irrational counter-positions within an imaginary social hierarchy of colour. The more explicit achievement of race is its tendency to historically define and separate people along social and ethnic borders.

Stuart Hall (1996) argues in *New Ethnicities* that for ethnic people to define and separate themselves by race, was and remains the objective of the colonial enterprise. Racism, he says "...of course, operates by constructing impassable symbolic boundaries between racially constituted categories, and its typically binary system of representation constantly marks and attempts to fix and naturalize the difference between belonging and otherness" (p. 445). Through Hall's explanation, and from what Medina observes among the Creole man and Spanish woman, race has evolved beyond domination and subjugation practice. The Creole man's 'alien' and Spanish woman 'slavery' filters tell us that race as a previously classificatory exercise, has become self-regulatory and self-containing; with people pointing out fragile similarities (being Belizean), and at the same time realizing the rhetorical strength of their physical differences.

It is possible to draw the conclusion that the concept of race not only draws from the value system of a colonial administration, but strengthens its position through the evolution of social interaction over time, invariably finding its way into the logic of postcolonial governments and the documents which reify their laws. Davis and Gross (1994) remind us that when the idea of race is embedded in colonial and postcolonial documents, these documents become signifiers in legal codes that serve specific ideological functions, to make the locals socially visible, politically contained and easy to understand, ensuring ethical complicity of locals and steady engagement with the remnant structures of colonialism (p. 66). In other words, the Constitution as a colonial document, allows racial categorizations to not only be a legitimate, but legal way of understanding national identity, which invariably filters through the way people understand and speak to and about each other. The construction of national identity and the classification of ethnic identity through racial paradigms are at once the confusing act of embracing a multiplicity of identities through the single agency of racial interpretation, while regarding those identities as incomplete and in process, when *race* perceived as whole and solid is brought into conflict with ethnic identities.

The problem for Belizeans is that the Constitution is supposed to represent and recognize the legal *ethos* of people of different ethnicities to be critical or responsive to classificatory practices within their government. The classification of people by and according to the political context of race ironically remains suited to the colonial enterprise, reflecting the problem of being a self-contained and self-monitoring element, thus lessening the ability to replace race as a rhetorical feature. This has the effect of withholding any recognizable platform for political engagement on the basis of ethnic authority, unique thinking about national identity and localized ways of rhetorically engaging other groups of people. So, when it comes to

understanding Belizean national identity, the concept of race is never free of the value it imparts and imposes on the people whose self-perception it governs.

Spurr explains this mechanism to be the “order that classifies non-Western peoples according to the paradigm of modernization [which] contains within it already, and as a given, the judgement of the characters of colonized people” (p. 71). In a multiethnic place such as Belize, using the standard of race as the measurement by which different groups of people determine their identities is seen, from Laurie Medina’s account, as a rhetorically and inherently disruptive process. In a way, it reminds us that the invocation of race reinforces the disposition and position of previous colonial administrations, which ostensibly essentializes the position of political ethnic minorities and causes broad misunderstandings between them. Spurr points to the circumstance that reflects the outcome of the Belizean Constitution, which is that race provides the context through which people speak of and construct their identities. Thus, race becomes the archetype through which any possible arguments and challenges to constitutional identity are presented, as we see in Medina’s example, which only perpetuates multiethnic deviation away from the issue constitutional of identity, and the fact that on a local level the constitution preserves the colonial tradition of ‘divide and conquer’.

The recurrent mention of race in Belize’s Constitution works for the continuance of colonialism not only in the way it provides a comprehensible paradigm of judgement of people among themselves, but also a coherent policy of identity and form of civilization that is identifiable by other colonial enterprises and through which other world powers can engage the government of the country.

WHERE CONSTITUTIONALITY MEETS NATIONAL IDENTITY: Race, Language and Legitimacy

A careful analysis of the ways in which words and concepts are used in Constitutions, and the relationship words and concepts establish between people and their government, reveal fundamental characteristics in historical narratives and political practice. Indeed, a Constitution can be reactive, progressive or preventative according to the history and needs of any country. But the image of a country that comes through the details of a Constitution, especially through the history of a previously colonized country, typically and historically feature the colonizing culture in the position of political and economic power. Since most groups were transformed from oral to literate cultures, using the transformative powers of a written Constitution further determined the social and political realities of others. Professor of Political Science at the University of Wisconsin Law School, Howard Schweber (2007) agrees in *The Language of Liberal Constitutionalism*, where he analyzes concerns of constitutional legitimacy and power, saying that we must think of:

...the effect that the creation of a constitutional regime must have on the relationship between [power of language] and legitimacy thereafter. The creation of a constitutional regime alters the terms in which claims to legitimacy are asserted, including claims to the legitimacy of the constitutional regime itself (p. 11)

The colonial history of Belize shows that the people, their government, and the Constitution which determines interaction between them, are no exception to the dynamic of legitimacy. The fact that race was introduced to Belize as a colonial mechanism of control clearly indicates its preconceived function. As a rhetorical feature of identity in the Constitution, race determines the platform upon which citizenship in Belize can be claimed. Recall at the opening of this chapter,

there was not mention of ethnic parties in the Constitution, thus no ethnic citizenship as opposed to racial citizenship.

Where the names of ethnic groups are not mentioned, the evidence of institutionalized racism becomes more apparent, and the implications of their meaning, their labels and their histories are conveniently not dealt with. This idea, of course, questions the entire legitimacy of the Belizean Constitution because a Constitution that employs the stagnant categorization of race, and is written in English, could possibly ignore claims to citizenship of other ethnic groups by their names alone. While the sociological debate about inclusion is not fully explored here, it is a matter worth examining as to how colonial circumstances completely removed the authority of ethnic groups, ignoring completely the circumstances, details and features that rhetorically inform identities of each ethnic group.

Briefly turning to the matter of how the ethnic identity of others were marginalized by the protracted use of written language in Standard English as an extension of racism, Bolland (2003) tells us that since the 1700s when Belize was still a British settlement only, in letters to the regional colonial administration in Jamaica, British settlers have been writing of slave experiences and slavery in way that misrepresented conditions and perceptions of slaves. Bolland cites one such correspondence from Superintendent Hunter in 1790 which slaves in the Belize Settlement are so conditioned by choice (p. 28). Bolland cites later attempts to mask the impact slavery had on slaves in Belize by citing Monrad Metzgen (1928) suggesting “the devotion and zeal of the Negroes in the Defense of their Masters’ lives and properties” (p. 25).

Later, a similar sentiment is echoed through the writing of Stephen Caiger (1951) in *British Honduras: Past and Present*, who writes that Belize’s colonial history was known for the “good treatment, the extraordinary good Provision, & the attachment the Slaves shew to their

Owners” (p. 25). Caiger describes the “humanity, egalitarianism of the masters and the attitude of mutual esteem, loyalty and even affection” between slaves and their Owners (p. 25). Such perceptions echoed as recent as 1951 demonstrates either the deep-seated misrecognition of colonial experience in Belize or the deliberate act of misrepresentation through writing. Either way, such description performs the vintage colonial approach which is to identify people as single and immobile designations of lower classed human beings, accepting a resolute station in social and political hierarchies. Though Caiger claims about slavery in Belize are widely inaccurate, he does point to the tradition of colonial authorities to articulate or subject colonized people to descriptions of identity. In the absence of other ethnic identities, the racial designation of identities achieves a similar objective.

My exploration of this topic in earlier sections explains why and how these written attempts to conceal the atrocities of slavery were largely unsuccessful. In the section that focuses on Belize’s colonial history, I explain that the characteristic feature of power in colonial administration is organizing and *writing* the reality, the lives of local enslaved groups, mainly and mostly African slaves.

Given that the context of race has a similar effect and outcome, in that the term imposes a particularly fixed awareness of the physical person, one can say that the colonially informed knowledge and awareness of skin colour alone divides people from each other. But the attempt to describe, control and determine the ways people were viewed in Belize is not a phenomenon that is different or new to countries with recent or distant histories of colonialism. In fact, in the introduction to *Constitutions of Democratic Politics* Vernon Bogdanor (1988) writes that “the constitutions of the New Commonwealth countries drawn up after 1945 [are] replete with statements of what had previously been left to convention – often with unhappy results” (p. 6).

He goes on to explain that there is a wider meaning to the words and ideas in Constitutions, which is why there are pre-constitutional norms regulating governments, and it is upon these pre-constitutional norms that the health and viability of democratic systems will depend. In the matter of Commonwealth constitutions, Bogdanor makes a point that is especially relevant to the constitutional circumstance of Belize, saying that:

Constitutions cannot be understood without looking at what lies behind them – at the political processes which gave them birth, and at the historical experience which conditioned the thinking of their founders. The constitution itself will be an expression of these concerns rather than a generator of constitutional values. Its meaning and its purpose for stability will depend upon factors outside itself (p. 10)

In noting these items, Bogdanor points to the idea that process of national identity formation in Constitutions, inadvertent or not, cannot be ignored for the way it imposes discipline on the way people view themselves.

In terms of social practice and social interaction, the Constitution sets the relations of power based on knowledge drawn from experiences. In the case of the mid 1800s in Belize, Bolland surmises these pre-constitutional norms and circumstances that informed thinking of Belize's Constitution were placed by "white settler oligarchy that controlled the institutions of the settlement's government and administration, to a degree that was unusual among British colonies" (p. 160). In fact, in the moments leading up to British emancipation of slavery in 1838, the fundamental structures and practices of the colonial administration in Belize were further entrenched instead of being more inclusive.

Legislation in *Honduras Almanack* of 1930, for example, limited the political and economic potential newly freed blacks and ‘free people of colour’. Bolland (2003) makes specific reference this moment in Belizean history, mentioning that all the institutions of British settlers in Belize resulted:

...in the “acculturation” of the slave population and the subsequent development of Belizean Creole culture. It is worth repeating in the words of the 1830 *Almanack*...that the free blacks could organize their “nations” only as far “as they can be allowed consistently with the regulations of civilized society”, that is, within the limits imposed by the colonial administration (p. 92)

The decision to include race is one worth questioning simply because race, as a part of Belize’s political discourse, has historically been a volatile and unstable means of social classification. As Bolland implies in his mention of the *Honduras Almanack*, imposed racial identity and its use in political processes undermines, and all together ignores the complex process of forming ethnic identity. As far as it is expressed and used in the *Honduras Almanack*, race becomes representative of a commitment to a moral evaluation of colonized and ethnic people as an appropriate and reasonable action.

The Constitution, along with a colonial history of oppressive political practice, allows the easy and often unchallenged acculturation of western ideals, which makes it somewhat easy to understand race would be at the center of national identity being in crisis. Charles Taylor (1994) famously explains in his essay *The Politics of Recognition*, that adopting anxieties about skin colour or *race*, the West seeks to own the identities of Third World countries while transcribing Western doubts and concerns within the thoughts of those who are subject to Western political will. Taylor explains to us that:

...our identity is partly shaped by recognition [of people's collective identities] or its absence, often by the misrecognition of others, and so a person or group of people can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror back to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves" (p. 25).

The orientation of constitutional and national identity, far from being a strength in political logic, becomes both the approval of colonial ideals and colonial administration of the past.

Racialized identity reflected on and coming from the political center can be considered a preemptive act to contain an authentic and inclusive sense of national identity within disciplinary boundaries of a democracy. The legal implication here is that the Constitution encourages the development of national identity within a specific racial context and discourages, or even rejects any ethnic perspective that violates constitutional vernacular or legal description.

Bolland reminds us that, as a case in point, Belizeans also display this remarkable confusion in the way groups relate to each other socially, because of the constitution's inclination toward historical racial classification. Bolland tells us that, in the case of Belize:

The ways in which people identify themselves and others in terms of race and ethnicity [are] profoundly affected by their positions and relations in the power structure. [The] colonial hegemony, which influenced the ways people think of themselves and others [was affected by institutionalized ideas of race] (p. 201).

In fact, it is the result of race that Belizeans have misleading perception of identity with exaggerated significance placed on skin colour, which questions the political relevance and influence of ethnicity in Belize.

UNDERSTANDING THE CONNECTION BETWEEN RACE, THE CONSTITUTION AND NATIONAL IDENTITY

The problem with race classification in Belize, according to Bolland is while it

...contributes towards a kind of orthodoxy and rigidity...the racial concept of Creole, for example, refers to a spectrum of African and European ancestry in which a variety of physical features, including hair texture and facial features as well as shade of skin, co-exist in prolific mixtures (p. 209)

And while the ethnographical outcomes and implications are not points that I am necessarily arguing at this point, Bolland confirms that the racially segmented model of identity presented to Belizeans historically and constitutionally “is an oversimplification that ignores the dynamics of Belizean culture history and obscures the complexity of the social structure” (p. 210). This way of conceptualizing ethnic and constitutional identities not only further justifying the form of colonial politics that existed before Belizean independence, but also appropriates the ethnic point of view, as in allowing the constitution to speak for ethnic people through the racial principle of the Constitution.

Under the *Protection of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms* section 3, for example, The 1981 Belizean Constitution mentions:

Whereas every person in Belize is entitled to the fundamental rights and freedoms of the individual, that is to say, the right, whatever his race, place of origin, political opinions, colour, creed or sex, but subject to respect for the rights and freedoms of other and for the public interest (p. 6).

This section of the 1981 Belizean Constitution is heavy with English European language of enlightenment and sense of sociopolitical awareness. Prefacing the idea of *race* with

fundamental rights and freedoms is meant to communicate the idea of absolute equality. The focus of the Constitution in this instance is the idealization of democratic principles and a regeneration of English European values within a colonized space. But the presence of *race* in the formation of constitutional or national identity becomes inherently paradoxical in terms of providing dichotomies of *black* and *white* when viewed from a postcolonial context. So, the Constitution advocates not the rejection of race as a classificatory principle, but the rejection of discrimination by race – which means that the possible discrimination by ethnicity could be entirely justified because the practice of doing so is not specifically mentioned in the Constitution. This is a shortsighted, ineffective approach to national identity. With the non-mention of other ethnic groups in the Constitution, what the racial dichotomy achieves is limiting the ability to discuss and participate in the construction of constitutional and national identity in a rhetorically meaningful way.

In regards to the Constitution and political processes, national identity must be expressed in and through the language and definitions that are provided. As a matter of fact, such limitations in the discussion of national identity are played out with much tension among Belizeans, as pointed out earlier in Kroshus Medina's (1997) *The Co-construction of race, ethnicity and nation in Belize*. The author explains that notions of black and white are inclined to create divisions and misunderstandings as to the composition and history of Belizean national identity. As Medina describes individual claims and connections to white and black in the scenario she uses, the opposite question must be asked in terms of ethnic identity; especially in regard to the constitutional status of ethnic identities. Do ethnic groups in Belize see the political potential of their unique ethnic identities, or do ethnic identities find significance only within the margins of internal structures, knowledge and legacy?

To point to scenario as a mental exercise, if a Belizean individual makes a claim of being discriminated against because of his ethnicity, there is nothing in the 1981 Constitution which discredits this particular form of prejudice. If that individual then claims to be discriminated against because of their race, whether that person is Creole, Garifuna or Maya (which are all ethnic groups of mixed ancestry) the legal and constitutional issue then becomes deciding what racial classification that individual comes under. In spite of mixed ethnic ancestry, that individual may be legally forced to claim a racial identity for the sake of a legal issue. To make matters even more convoluted, the 1981 Constitution does not acknowledge mixed-race or mixed-ethnicities as forthrightly as it acknowledges the solid agency of race. This means that the Constitution shape and expresses the normative monoracial value of identity, and as such, is not bound to other methods of classifications, but to that which is specified it is hierarchy of values. A similar argument can be made if an individual or group believes they are being discriminated against based on their ethnic identity, or ethnically mixed identity for that matter. The Constitution neglects to address whether these descriptions are legitimate or accepted as Belizean.

The decision to include *race* as necessary constitutional jurisprudence invariably becomes that concept which represents the political anxieties of English European thinking, simply because race, in terms of designated black and white rhetorical constructs, had not existed in the discourse and understanding of Belizean ethnic groups. As Bolland (2003) points out, Belize is a place where, outside the auspices of race, distinctions exist culturally and linguistically. Many Belizeans, Bolland says, “not only practice or participate in more than one cultural tradition, but are coming to share an overarching national identity as they interact with people from different ethnic groups” (p. 211). So, not only ethnic, but mixed ethnic identities are

more representative of the relationship between people in Belize, which means that the idea of *race* as it is written in the Constitution, potentially deems cross-ethnic communication and interaction as racial act of identity.

In the section of the Belizean Constitution described as *The State*, of Belizean national identity supposedly, the concept of race emerges surrounded by familiar standards of English European political judgment which requires the state "...to protect and safeguard the unity, freedom, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Belize; which eliminate economic and social privilege and disparity among citizens of Belize whether by race, colour, creed or sex" (p. 2). Here the feature 'race' is again mentioned amid constitutional guarantees *freedom* and *sovereignty*. The fact that wherever 'race' appears, the ideas of *freedom* also appears, might be construed as rhetorically strategic in attempts to deflect critical engagement with the idea of race. But the paradox is difficult to ignore in this instance.

The fact that race appears more than once as a rhetorical feature is telling, is revealing in that it refocuses the attention of ethnic people on the dichotomy race produces, and then reinforced in other sections of the Constitution. Strategically repeating the idea of race, for the ethnic person, produces the feeling of being confronted with the unfamiliar thought of racial dichotomy in the structure and context of political hierarchy. As a result, ethnic people become comfortable with the misrecognition and false sense of national identity given the political authority of the Constitution.¹⁰² The contextual exclusion of ethnic people makes it difficult for them to insert their identities, as interpreted by them, as a way of feeling and being included. In this way, the Constitution remains an external constraint; a document which performs functions similar to colonial administrations in Belizean history.

¹⁰² Poulet, G. (1998). *Phenomenology of Reading*. Contemporary Literary Criticism: Literary and Cultural Studies. (Eds. Robert Con Davis and Ronald Schleifer), Addison Wesley Longman, Inc., (p. 171).

As a rhetorical feature of national identity, race as a construct is more disruptive than unifying for the simple fact that it allows national identity to be written and recognized in a way that does not acknowledge diversity. Bolland (2003) makes the argument that the politics “constitutes an identity that often cross-cuts rather than reinforces ethnic identity, because party politics is not organized along ethnic lines” (p. 211). Rather, a racial component of national identity is reinforced in the Constitution, which reduces the significance and potential of conversations across ethnic lines in terms of how these conversations can shape and determine the uses of political structures in Belize. Being able to socially and ethnically identify with each other is key to forming a more inclusive national identity, and such a significant aspect of formation should be reflected in constitutional processes. But the idea of race makes the recognition of others, based on racial designations, an ambiguous and problematic process.

If the Belizean Constitution acknowledges and recognizes the essential existence of race, but on the same chord ignores ethnicities, mixed ethnicities, or for the sake of argument, mixed race people, the possibility of determining whether or not a person is being discriminated against is dependent on how people fit within the description of identity or national identity the Constitution provides. And still, that definition further is burdened by the notion that there is a universal understanding of race, which plays out in daily political circumstances in places like North America and Britain. The real possibility of such circumstances suggests the durability of the Constitution as a form of colonial rhetoric itself and evocative of what Achebe suggests as colonial rhetoric “automatically being informed by its universality”.¹⁰³ As Foucault would put it,

¹⁰³ Achebe, C. (1988). Colonialist Criticism. *The Postcolonial Studies Reader*. Routledge: London, (p. 59).

the Constitution takes up the position of and “discourse of him who sets forth the norm, of him who engages in surveillance, who undertakes to distinguish the normal from the abnormal”.¹⁰⁴

Yet, history would show that creation of race, as a social construct and concept of classification, was based on the ideals of separating people from each other and the logic that people *should* be separated from each other. Returning briefly to the history of race and how the idea informed the rhetoric of colonial administration, a deeper and more comprehensive view of how race became a means of classification comes from Nicholas Hudson’s (1996) explanation in *From Nation to Race: The Origin of Classification in Eighteenth Century Thought*. According to Hudson, the idea of race emerged from European scientific discipline and thinking in the first recognizable dictionary definition of race as a means of classification in *Encyclopédie* (vol. 13, 1765), where the term was associated with nobility – a multitude of men originating from the same country, and resembling each other by facial features and by exterior conformity (p. 247). In the same research Hudson notes how the definition of race changed through anatomist Robert Knox in 1850 where he asserts that “Race or hereditary descent is everything; it stamps the man” (p. 248).

While theories may vary as to the ways race developed as a functional and accepted standard of rhetorically assessing the quality of others, over time the concept of race grew socially relevant to the point of being a necessary part of policies of colonial administrations. As I have shown in the *1981 Belizean Constitution*, the *Honduras Almanack*, and will later argue using the *Portfolio on British Honduras* in the subsequent chapter, the decision to include race into the configuration of Belizean national identity shows not only the inheritance of this logic of

¹⁰⁴ Foucault, M. (1979). *Power and Norm: Notes, Power, Truth, Strategy* (Eds. Meghan Morris and Paul Patton). Feral Publications, (p.66)

race from British culture, but presents the challenge of understanding identity outside the one-dimensional discourse presented by the logic of race.

The Inevitability of Race

The challenge of displacing racialized identity is made even more difficult by its use in the Belizean Constitution because race is presented as, and therefore remains *the* idea through which a radical rethinking of difference is constituted. The symbolic order and service of race as an organizing principle is extended and elected further into existence. Davis and Gross (1994) recognizes this sense of duplicity in a critique of the intellectual powers of westernized politics, in their reflection on the relationship between race and ethos. The authors say that the social impact of marginalization comes from the new relationship between ethos and race, which promotes [and] affords others the authority of a political voice, but a voice “constituted by race and ethnicity as signs which function as markers within late capitalist society and culture” (p. 67). These markers, they explain, “together with all that is signified by color within a chromatological and ideological frame – suggests the ethos of those who speak while positioned at the site of social oppression” (p. 67). Drawing a parallel in the case of Belize, as inheritors of racial ideology through colonial history and the Constitution, the difficulty in representing ethnic diversity through race is acknowledging the problem of race in a way that is responsive to and critical of colonial and postcolonial administration.

The problem, directly put, is that the constitutional recognition of race and its effects on people’s understanding of themselves continues to be represented as a genuine form of discourse about identity. Race is therefore viewed as an essential part of the intellectual framework in the analysis and justification of national identity. In the matter of how identities are constituted

political, David Theo Goldberg offers some perspective on how racial identity could be neither accurate nor acceptable in a multiethnic society. Goldberg contends that:

In naming or refusing to name, existence is recognized or refused, meaning and value are assigned or ignored, people and things are elevated or rendered invisible. Once defined, symbolic order has to be maintained, serviced, extended, [and] operationalized. In this sense, the racial Other is nominated into existence. As Said makes clear in his book *Orientalism*, the Other is constituted through the invention of projected knowledge. The practices of naming and knowledge construction tend to deny any meaningful autonomy to those so named and imagined, extending over them power, control, authority and domination (p. 29)

Race, viewed in this context, is nothing more than a social construct and product of the imagination that has been taught as being real, giving merit to ideologically infused scientific claims, as in the case of Darwin – which was found to be socially and politically convenient for the objectives of the colonial enterprise.

In the case of Belizeans and their relationship to the constitution, it is important to understand that naming race as the function and value of national identity achieves the degree of power and control Goldberg exclaims. Race, in how it determines human interaction, and in its development of character, critical awareness and judgment, and recognition of other people fosters the idea of power relationship, which was such a prominent feature in colonial politics. In other words, when race becomes the rhetorical instrument through which an individual sees their presence in political processes and political discourse, the dominant intellectual and ideological position a person would take has been determined from every constitutional and sociopolitical angle.

In her research on the educational history of British Literature, Gauri Viswanathan (2000) in *Masks of Conquests*, looks at the institutionalization of rhetorical concepts like race, where the concepts continue to contribute to the intellectual and moral leadership of colonial powers. Gauri explains how the ideological content of race would function at different levels of mediation, saying that:

Critical consciousness in matters of [politics] is entirely dependent on perceiving and illuminating the unique role of such representations in producing and sustaining structures of domination. In specific terms, it involves determining the degree to which representation of moral and intellectual ideals form the substratum of education [and political] discourse and then linking such representation to the structure of relationship between those for whom...the prescriptions are made and those who arrogate themselves to the status of prescriber (p. 62)

What can be drawn from Gauri perspective here is that the relationship between the Constitution as legal document and society is clear, in that the Constitution lays out the form of identity discourse, which poses immediate issues in political engagement for people who do not consider themselves racial.

The argument can be made, however, that in the case of Belize the inclusion and the representation of race in the constitution does not warrant such deep analysis as to determine who is “prescriber” and for whom the content is being “prescribed”. This position may be grounded on the simple reason that the constitution advocates the rebuke of race as a form of discrimination. While this may at first seem politically altruistic, recall that a definition of ethnic identity or what it means to be ethnic is not mentioned in the Constitution, which is an absence

reflective of the entire colonial experience in Belize. When identity performs an organizational and rhetorical function, and is determined to be the intellectual rubric that provides answers to questions about differences, the real possibility exists that the order and function can be politically restrictive. In other words, people are forced into that framework removed from knowledge of themselves, knowledge that comes from their own interpretation of experiences.

When speaking of identity, the colonial experience and the methodological practices of colonial administration, Linda Smith (1999) tells us in *Decolonizing Methodologies*, that people who were subject to colonization suffered the denial of sovereignty over their language and culture. The lack of control over definition is a circumstance that came to shape and determine the quality of their lives, even after those that dominate were no longer physically present (p. 7). Race, in this instance, becomes part of the methodology that reframes that authority of colonialism back into the postcolonial rhetorical framework, allowing similar anxieties experienced in Belize's classic colonial period.

These feelings of anxiety felt by some Belizeans around the time of independence should have been taken into account, according to Dr. Peter Ashdown (1981) in *The Belize Elite and Its Power Base* published in the ninth volume of the *Belizean Studies Journal* in 1981. While Ashdown's diagnosis at the time of Belizean independence was that Belize seems to be off to a "good start", he does concede that not all the forces in and around Belizean independence appear to function in the best interests of Belizeans, particular in the way national identity is constructed (p. 2). In *Populist Ideology and Expatriate Power in Belize*, Karen Judd (1998) comments narrowly on how the idea of race complicates the relationship between Belizean ethnic groups, saying that while local whites and expatriates stay above the fray, "charges of collaboration persist, revolving around images of Creole 'mimic men,' more British than the British, imitating

British occupations and celebrating a British dominance in the country” (p. 134). The idea of race, according to Judd, was used in more socially unscrupulous ways by Belizean elites, in that “Over generations they have married well, adding British and American capital and avoiding Creole colour [and who] often saw themselves, and endeavored to get the British to see them, as the rightful inheritors of the right to rule their country” (p. 144 – 147). From this point of view, the race concept attaches Belizeans to a theoretical and social framework which changes identity into a social self-regulatory system that is always present and always affecting the ways people understand themselves.

To classify Belizean identities through race means to perform and impose an analysis and system of understanding which ignores most other wholly legitimate forms of understanding national identity. This is to say ethnic *ways of knowing*, which are likely to be outside the auspices and crafted nuances of race, are forfeited and erased for the principles and awareness that comes with racial identity. In *Belizean History: It's Role in a Cultural Revolution* (1981), written in the *Belizean Studies Journal*, Leo Bradley reflects rather poignantly on the rhetorical and social challenges of Belizeans. He writes specifically about the challenges brought on by facing new forms of identity classification and governing in the Belizean Constitution. Bradley challenges the constitution as unifying document, asking

...has Belize found its soul? The most we can say is that she is searching for it. Belize is a multiple of different ethnic groups, each with its own language, tradition and way of life. In spite of improved communications and superficial adhesion we are a divided people. Primarily only a few factors unify us, or better said, contain us in a unit: (i) common frontiers (ii) adopted lingua franca (iii) legal equality; and (iv) the name “Belize” (p. 2).

Understanding the need to address the ways the constitutional view of Belizean identity is more divisive than showing solidarity, Bradley questions whether Belizeans “as a conglomerate of people act together as a nation with a soul and an identity of its own?” (p. 2). Bradley reflects on the particular concern specific to the function of a constitution, which is whether the Constitution provides an adequate understanding of national identity.

As part of the colonial enterprise, the constitution serves the purpose of placing strategic economic value on geography, policies that encourages assimilation, but fails to notice the value and relative understanding of ethnic identity and unique administrative tactics that might come from internal practices of ethnic groups. The model 1981 Belizean Constitution exposes itself as less integrating, not as the hope of liberation and independence of people, but part of the rhetorical machinery that maintains the previous and fundamental aspects of power seen in colonial administrations of the past – now seen within discursive features of postcolonial government. Spurr reminds us that keeping the feature of race as part of national identity and as constitutional practice:

...reflect[s] an early form of the ideology of modernization that still governs the classification of Third World nations in the postcolonial era. Although the ideology of the modern has replaced an earlier ideology of the civilized, this newest system of value performs essentially the same function of classifying human societies according to Western standards (p. 69)

In its recognition of race, and not ethnic groups as part of constitutional processes and classification, the Constitution simply displaces ethnicity as a legitimate form of political discourse. The idea of race becomes possessed of the political authority with which national identity is informed and discussed, thus making the behavior, understanding and the viewing of

other identities predictable, ignoring any knowledge that can come from ethnic ways of viewing political and social structures.

The clear inappropriateness of racial identities as part of constitutional legitimacy is a point that comes through when considered how simply not mentioning ethnic groups affects the way people participate in nationalistic discourse. It would be interesting as a practical measure, to see what kinds of sociological shifts occur with actual encounters with constitutional processes, either in speaking, writing or protest of some kind. In spite of the ethnicity being an appropriate and more adequate feature to constitutionally declare the state of identity in Belize, race is the methodological approach and discursive form which commands the particular vision of colonial and postcolonial politics. Taking into account the fact that race provides a principle of division which is based primarily on colonial administration and the legacy inherited by postcolonial governments, the idea of race as political form of classification is immediately inappropriate and offers an inadequate and cultural lapsed understanding of national identity.

At the beginning of this section I set out to identify the areas where race was mentioned in the Belizean Constitution, look at the evolution of race from the perspective of European history and explain how those perspective grew to rhetorically frame knowledge and ideology of the western world. I sought to give an account of and reasons for why race is etymologically inappropriate for the function of explaining and classifying national identity in the Constitution. Yet, in spite of its various and historical inconsistencies, the rigidity of race appears convenient for colonial and postcolonial governments to efficiently engage legal questions of national identity. Also, in spite of race being a rhetorical construct only represented by a significantly flawed worldview, its appearance in postcolonial constitutions, as it appears in Belize's, means that it operates in and affects people's lives in specific ways. The critical discussion about race in

social, academic and political spheres is going to remain with us for a considerable time longer. As Keith Gilyard (1994) puts in *Rhetoric and Ethnicity*, given how saturated our society has become with concepts of race, using the “semantics of the term race is unavoidable if one is truly interested in communicating with larger numbers of people not only to contest racial reasoning but also to contest, in a concrete way, racial hierarchies” (ix).

Chapter VI: The Language, Identity and the Belizean Constitution

INTRODUCTION: on Standard English, Ethnic Languages and National Identity¹⁰⁵

Standard Written English, which was the language of academic instruction and education offered at tertiary institutions in Belize, is not spoken in the households of ethnic people. Belizean Creole, Maya and Garifuna, which are the oral languages of daily communication, are discouraged in the classroom, and are the source of ridicule in the classroom – considered unintellectual and unpolished by academic standards and unfit as communicative medium by political standards. The form of Standard English gleaned from American television, while strangely familiar is also peculiarly nuanced, in that it more easily grasped by most Belizeans as opposed to other ethnic languages in neighboring districts and villages. The Standard English books assigned from classroom curriculums are sourced in the United Kingdom and America. The language spoken in the household is mostly Creole, often mislabeled ‘Broken English’ in academic settings, which deepened feelings of linguistic awkwardness and inadequacy among native speakers of the language. Belize’s colonial history with language is further marked by the irony of this work, that Standard written English, and not Creole or Garifuna, is required to reach both an American and Belizean audience. In fact, the skill of writing in Creole or Garifuna languages is not possessed by the writer to the degree where a translation of this study would be

¹⁰⁵ My academic tone in this section is necessarily and unapologetically aggressive towards the Standard English language, for the reason that even now the academic and political reality find the imposed use of Standard Written English as a postcolonial fact in education, politics and is often the case social interaction and various forms of media. Where theorizations fail to capture the gravity of loss, my experience as a Belizean living in the years before and after independence remains a matter of questioning the purpose ethnic identity as a part of economic survival, determined by moral and ethical obligations to learning and communicating in Standard English as a means of survival. Code-switching, as the term is known within the linguistic discipline, was and remains a common feature of social interaction, academic and political situations in Belize. Aside from the arguments surrounding the institutionalization of Standard Written English, which I bring into discussion here, I find that a synopsis of how people are affected by Standard English an appropriate start in order to convey how individual dignity and collective integrity of ethnic groups are affected; and to hold those institutions accountable that ignored the intellectual challenge of questioning the naming of English as ‘official language’ of Belize.

possible and as such made available to users of native languages in Belize. In the fact, this study encounters some immediate limitations.

Weh ah di tri seh dah dis rait ya; lata unu nuh wa andastan weh ah di tri fi seh if ah rite dis eena Kriol. Even if yuh andastan wah lee bit, ih nuh wah soug smaat enuf. Den unu wah hav lata question bout words weh spel di saym, soug di saym, but nuh mean di saym ting. Even eena dis electronic document rait yah su, lata my words hav wah red lain anda it. Dat di tell me an unu sumting raang wit my words and dih mek I tink sumting raang wit me¹⁰⁶, which brings the first criticism of this paper into focus, that the legal and official status of Standard English, made so by the Belizean Constitution immediately affects the way speakers of other languages are perceived and received. This is to say that a meaningful discussion on constitutional and national identity cannot be had without understanding that people within democracies embody political norms of interaction, which means language plays an important role in how interaction occurs. Similar to the argument surrounding the qualifications of African American English as a legitimate form of intellectual discourse within and outside academic and political structures, ethnic languages in Belize find challenges in constitutional dilemma, with the use of Standard English preventing and diminishing the scope of meaning and agency for people who were colonized. In other words, Belizeans nuh si fiwee self no way eena dah peecca papa.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶ (An attempt at an accurate phonetic translation is provided to show and help explain how attempting to match words and meaning can affect comprehension of languages. Words might be found spelt differently in the one Belizean Creole dictionary that is known in Belize. Also, the writer received no formal education in reading and writing Creole) In other words, what I am trying to say is that most people won't understand Creole if the language were to be used to write this document. Even if people were to understand little of what is said, written Creole is not a language considered to be reflective of deeper intellectual exchanges. Questions are likely to arise about the phonetic quality and the supposed arbitrary meaning of word certain words. Such an argument is common placed in the production of word processing programs and their recognition of non-standard English spellings. For native users of native languages limitations the protracted of their language, in a land of their independence suggests a low estimation of their characters, language and identities.

¹⁰⁷ Since Standard English is the language used to write the Belizean Constitution, where all other languages are oral in Belize, it is difficult for people to see themselves linguistically as part of the Constitution. Perhaps the Constitution is becomes representative if a person sees themselves as a colonized individual. People do not see ethnic identities reflected in and by the Constitution.

In effect, language plays an integral role in the rhetorical construction of national identity in postcolonial places like Belize. If one can glean the social norms, attitudes and values of a people by their language, as Ngugi¹⁰⁸ puts it, then does the Constitution best reflect Belize's ethnic composition through the use Standard English? If values, social norms and attitudes are embedded in language, what does it mean for Belizeans that the population is identified locally and globally by a Constitution written in Standard English? The use of Standard English in the Belizean Constitution has consequences in terms of understanding national identity and political power afforded to ethnic people living in Belize today, who identify themselves as Belizean. To this end, with considering its relationship to the feature and history of race, this section investigates the implications of this constitutional decision in relation to ideas of national identity in Belize.

In the colonial experience with Standard English, construction of national identity seemingly moves progressively from the unethical implications of skin colour to the psychological rigors of acquiring the English language as a dominant form of spoken and written communication. Donna M. Bonner's (2001) research on language and identity in Belize provides some scope to this issue. In *Garifuna Children's Language Shame* she points out that local ethnic languages, in academic settings in Belize, are viewed as a particular source of shame in specific social and academic settings. In addition to Standard English having a hegemonic status among Belizeans, Bonner explains the general insecurity and pressures Belizeans experience with the position and sense of control Standard English imposes upon them, saying Belizeans "commonly defer to the superiority of speakers of foreign varieties of English, like those associated with the United States and England, and accord them greater prestige" (p. 82). The important and

¹⁰⁸ Thiong'o, N.W. (1986). *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*. Heinemann: London, Nairobi, Portsmouth N.H., (p. 8).

underlying rhetorical inquiry here is identifying the historical context and source of linguistic insecurity, and knowing the potential effects Standard English has on the identities of local ethnic people.

In this section I consider the theoretical implications of language on national identity in Belize. Specifically, I look at the influence of Standard English in Belize's colonial history, its influences on and through political documents such as the *1981 Belizean Constitution*, *1980 Belize Bill*, and *The Portfolio of Information on British Honduras*; and finally how the historical context and political content of these documents being written in standard English are at the center of general insecurities and anxieties felt by speakers of ethnic languages in Belize. I also rely somewhat consistently on Sir Colville Young's book *Language and Education in Belize* (2002) as he looks at the anxieties Belizeans experience academically and socially when learning and using Standard English. The anxiety and feelings of incompleteness and general inadequacy, Young argues, come from Belize's colonial experience with the imposed use of Standard English. As with the chapters before that focused on Belize's history and national identity, I use David Spurr's (1993) *The Rhetoric of Empire finds* to look at specific monolithic aspects of colonial structure that have relevance to the ways language was used to affect the social and political realities of colonized people. For instance, Spurr argues that writing from the perspective of English European culture before and after colonialism, reinforces misguided ideas about places that were colonized – which then became a form domesticating colonized areas. Spurr makes the point that the continued academic and professional use of Standard English in colonized areas by those who were colonized suggests the permanence of colonial structures and colonial ideals, which resulted in a feeling of fundamental instability for local people (p. 7).

Essentially, because of language and the maintenance of the structures and practices supporting the use of the dominant language, colonized people to large degree remain colonized.

To be clear, this section does not perform a linguistic analysis of the Belizean Constitution. In such a case, an analysis would look at specific components in the field of linguistics which are syntax, morphology, phonology, semantics and pragmatism. This would allow language to be viewed as an autonomous system, which develops so long as there are people consciously contributing to its development. This section largely focuses on the idea that Standard English, more than simply a tool for communication, is the carrier of ethnic identity in the way that ethnic identity is felt through nuances, learned through meaning and transmitted to other generations. The authors mentioned in this section focus on colonial effects on language, whether it is Standard English, Native English/Creole or Ethnic (Creole, Garifuna or Maya), as representative of the collective experience. As Ngugi (1986) puts it in *Decolonising the Mind*, language is “a collective memory bank of people’s experience in history and therefore embodies those moral, ethical and aesthetic values...through which [people] come to view themselves and their place in the [world]” (p. 14 – 15).

Language from this point of view embraces a reality in the world that distinguishes people from each other, not only in the technical sense of structure and sound, but through a system of values through which people analyze and interpret the world around them. In this sense, the question then holds as to what the Constitution written in Standard English represents to ethnic groups whose identification with the English language comes through the vehicle of colonial experiences. As such, this section looks at how the decision to use Standard English to write the Belizean Constitution affects a rhetorical understanding of national identity. In

adopting Standard English, the Constitution as a political and postcolonial document, forces Belizeans to adopt the rhetorical uses of Standard English in ways that are recognized as official.

RESPONDING TO THE INFLUENCE OF STANDARD ENGLISH IN POSTCOLONIAL DISCOURSE: A perspective on Recognition, Status and Participation

So what does understanding national identity from the perspective of a foreign language achieve in a postcolonial environment? It was the objective of colonialism to acquire and control land, wealth, and people, what they produced, how they produced it, and how it was distributed – as was the case with Belize and the Mahogany/Logwood industry.¹⁰⁹ In the Marxist sense, language determines the efficiency of production in industry, as well as the kinds of relationship people establish with each other. So what does it say about the industry of colonialism and the politics of postcolonial governments that the written language of industry and production does not represent spoken languages of others whose realities are determined by industry and structure of government? The proper response to such questions is far from simply evaluating binary oppositions, but in the case of Belize, the constitution offers an interesting rhetorical dynamic in the evaluation of such circumstances. The Belizean Constitution is written in Standard English and nowhere within the pages of the Belizean Constitution can a word or concept from any ethnic language be found. In fact, as mentioned before, most references to government titles and belief systems are written in Standard English and reflective of English European form of colonial government (*The Executive, The Legislature, The Judiciary, The Supremacy of God*, etc.). One can make the argument that there is an immediate line drawn in this instance, that whatever relationship exists between the postcolonial government and other ethnicities is to be prefaced by learning to write and speak English and understanding the culture it reflects. As such the first act of political subjugation occurs in recognizing the Standard English component of national identity as it is used in the Constitution.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid*, p. 16

The absent recognition of ethnic languages in the Belizean Constitution, especially when their use would be more epistemologically suitable, calls into question the role of Standard English in Belize's history, alongside the rhetorical limitations and political logic of constitutional and national identity. On the political spectrum, Standard English becomes both an act of embracing the democratic principles of inclusion and at the same time asserting that ethnic people are linguistically invisible. People aiming to participate in political discourse need to acquire the language that would have them be included in political processes. The concern for speakers of native languages is one of rhetorical sovereignty in the form of using their own languages as a means of political engagement. Lacking the opportunity to do so, their own ethnic languages become the source of feeling out of place, displaced, or excluded. If Standard English is represented as a constitutional barrier, how can concerns of national identity be fulfilled beyond that mark of exclusion?

While the Belizean Constitution may not forthrightly declare English as its formally approved language of authority, the implication and convention supporting the power behind its use are hardly ambiguous. The political demand of understanding Standard English creates an atmosphere where the need for controlling access to the government and the principles of government is affirmed. In *Constitutions in Democratic Politics*, Vernon Bogdanor (1988) reminds aspiring democracies that formative conventions “may not be written down; yet they exert a normative influence upon those concerned with central/local relations comparable to, perhaps greater than, the influence exerted by a constitutional document” (p. 5). As it pertains to ethnic languages, this aspect of constitutions works deliberately to marginalize people without explicitly appearing to do so especially when the dominance of Standard English forces others into relative obscurity, reducing the ethical obligations and values of ethnic multiplicity. Yet

Standard English, by virtue of its use in the written constitution, is defended by constitutional terms, in spite of the metaphorical and political distance it creates between ethnic people and the government.

With this thought, there are what would be perceived as drawbacks to a rhetorical analysis that expresses motivations of denouncing Standard English as the dominant communicative medium in a multiethnic environment. The challenge comes from the idea that Standard English has acquired linguistic neutrality, meaning that Standard English provides a linguistic platform upon which and through which a normative commitment and order in communication is achieved; in spite of communication barriers that are likely to show up in a multiethnic country.

Peter A. Roberts (1997) looks at this perspective in the linguistic history of the Caribbean in *From Oral to Literate Culture*, saying that the widespread teaching and practice of Standard English comes from “the greatest need for a language policy, if it could be called such, [that ensured] the slave could understand enough of the European language to carry out his tasks” (p. 77). Roberts touches on a linguistic feature of colonial history in the Caribbean in his research, explaining its link to economic power, methods of communication and as a means of evaluating people’s social and intellectual worthiness to “carry out tasks”.

The institutionalization of Standard English as part of colonial administrations, and subsequently in postcolonial administrations, ensured “the English language as an instrument of control and an index of prestige” (ix). Institutionalized Standard English then becomes a collective means of subjectivity, affirming its own political value, where that value is expressed by gaining opportunities to work, participate in the prestige of society and accessing the laws as determined by the form of English European culture adopted by that Caribbean country. While

viewing Standard English for its supposed benefits for the users of that language, its socio-politically subjective positioning confirms and reinforces the lack of political power in the use of ethnic languages.

Roberts explains, contrariwise, that in spite of the radical loss of traditional languages among colonized people, the acquisition of Standard English was so desired, that the “British education system could move away from a philosophy in which English mono-culturalism [in the colonial era]... to a philosophy of multiculturalism and multilingualism within a dominant British culture” resulting in Standard English having a high language status, with ethnic languages and other forms of English acquiring low positions with a sociopolitical context (p. 8). So, the idealization of Standard English calls attention to its status and rhetorical situation, which makes the obligatory distinction between what is politically empowering and civilized, to what is not.

In the *Masks of Conquest*, Gauri Viswanathan (2000) views the presence and dominance of English language in communication and education as a de-ethnicizing method of the colonial era, which is experienced further and with equal cynicism in the postcolonial era. The Standard English served as a:

...discourse activity, process, as one of the mechanisms through which knowledge is socially distributed and culturally validated... [Where] the shaping of character or the development of the aesthetic sense or the disciplines of ethical thinking [contribute to essential] processes of sociopolitical control (p. 62).

Gauri brings to the argument that Standard English remains a specific mechanism of controlling the political platform and who participates in sociopolitical processes. While the complex linguistic encounter in Belize’s colonial period might offer an opportunity to understand enough

about how each ethnic group might have been affected, the struggle for marginalized people is that the use and dominance of Standard English marks what Stuart Hall calls “a formative, not merely an expressive, place in the constitution of social and political life”.¹¹⁰

The changes in social and political dynamics that occur through using Standard English affect the ways much of the Third World is understood and engaged, including Belize. From a rhetorical point of view it makes sense to look at the Standard English of the Constitution as a continuation of nineteenth and twentieth century practices of colonial administrations. This is to say, that through language alone, colonized people are propelled into the modern capitalist mechanism, which emanates from the cultural core of English speaking, Western metropolitan centers such as England and the United States of America. But a Constitution supported by supposed reflections of modern humanism (fundamental rights and freedoms, etc.) also reflected in practices of global metropolitan centers, does not mean that the Constitution is not subject to be tested for the substance and validity it offers, or does not offer toward ethnic citizens.

The colonial and postcolonial control of people through Standard English is not entirely different from what is accomplished through *race* as I argued in the previous section, in that Standard English facilitates interaction as an imposed mechanism that projects a system of value as expressed by Ngugi in the opening of this chapter. Alongside appropriating the value of language, is the idea that the advocacy and meaning of liberty and freedom, ideals which the Belize Constitution of 1981 espouses, are meant to genuinely reflect the political reality of ethnic people in Belize through a language not yet removed from its colonial influence. Belizean writer Joseph A. Bennett (1979) in *Goals, Priorities and the Decolonization of Education in Belize* recognizes that around the time of Belize’s independence, Standard English in education and politics held the potential to move Belizeans further away from opportunities for cross-class and

¹¹⁰ Hall, S. (1989). *New Ethnicities. The Postcolonial Studies Reader*. Routledge: London and New York, (p. 224)

cross-ethnic social engagement. His research explains that the use of Standard English as the primary means of documenting history, in education and communicating official spaces of government heavily implies the:

...political and economic control by a metropolitan [British] country [through] an administrative system which reflects this control. One's thoughts are also drawn to the concept and reality of mercantilism, according to which the whole economic and commercial life of the colony is directed to meet the demands of the colonizing country (p. 18).

As Bennett points it, the acquisition and dominant use of Standard English in Belize's institutions and government systems represents not only the appropriation of territory. The creation of hierarchy of languages means that Standard English becomes a system by which such dominance and creation of national identity should be understood and engaged inside and outside the system of government. In other words, the lives of people, ethnic or otherwise, are engrossed by a paradoxical reality in the use of Standard English and the system of government that gives it meaning. In meeting the demands of the "colonizing country", Standard English is made a pre-condition of political power and a requirement under which control is transferred in independence. So Standard English itself becomes a rhetorical feature of control.

Similar anxieties about language is expressed by Belize's current Governor General, Sir Colville N. Young (2002), in his book *Language and Education in Belize*, who writes about the consequences of having English being Belize's official language of communication and official language of documentation. The current Governor General of Belize writes that:

It was part of the old colonial ethos that the foreign, metropolitan product was invariably better than whatever was indigenous, and this attitude included

linguistic values. Even the “best” usage of highly educated Belizeans was measured against the yardstick of British standard English and was found to be not merely different in many ways, but where different, inferior (p. 5).

Colville Young’s reprimand toward users of Standard English in Belize points to the linguistic and rhetorical appropriation of Belizean national identity in more ways than one.

For one, the commitment to stabilized constitutional and national identity meant forfeiting the linguistic potential of ethnic languages, while cultivating the social and educational promises of English. Secondly, the intellectual compliance of ‘highly educated Belizeans’ suggests the sympathetic position of Belizeans toward the use of Standard English. Such a position further and heavily implies, or rather, insists on the identification of Western values, colonial systems and ideals. Or as Spurr (1993) explains in *The Rhetoric of Empire*, that in some instances “colonized people choose inclusion and the illusion of full domestication rather than recognizing or being burdened with the vast responsibilities of realizing an independent identity in the modern environment” (p. 32). In this moment, a paradox is born, in that, with the opportunity to choose a national identity independent of British colonialism, educated Belizeans choose the language most influential and deterministic in their colonial history. This points to the idea that rhetorical use of Standard English by educated Belizeans remains consistent with an ‘official’ status, allowing access to institutions that still use and regard Standard English as the primary aspect of education. The veneration of Standard English leaves the question of whether ethnic languages would be more suitably titled unofficial languages.

Apart from not questioning the position of Standard English in the Constitution, Belizeans accepting ethnic languages as inferior or secondary – only to be used in households and with people of similar ethnic backgrounds – not only compromises the linguistic ecology of

the community, but also appropriates a nationalistic point of view. The idea does not escape the Belizean gaze, as Bennett (1979) later acknowledges that the prominence of Standard English in education and political structures in Belize allows “local levels of administration of the colonial system to take cues from the officials of the Colonial Office practically in all aspects which in turn means that people will perpetuate colonial patterns, either because they are citizens of the mother country [The United Kingdom] or have been schooled to do so” (p. 19). The rules of division seen in the institutions of colonialism, where the social status and value of people was determined by language or skin colour, has rhetorically shaped the realities of colonized people in Belize. Bennett acknowledges as much. So, as a gesture of appropriation, Standard English in the Constitution is a “colonial pattern”; one that creates national identity in the context of English European political values.

Bennett and Young summarizes the classical dictum of the colonial period located in what is supposedly a liberated and free multiethnic society; a form of governance obligated to and characterized by the discriminatory effect of Standard English. The resulting fluency in Standard English becomes not merely privilege extended to ethnic people, but promotes the extension of a linguistic norm which makes it necessary to learn the language and not simply view Standard English as optional. The immediate conflict is marked by the exclusion of others who do not or find it difficult to learn English. The reward of English is access to education and understanding a new form of government leading ethnic people into modernization.

But, the conflicts and rewards of English is not a polarizing effect that is easy to overcome. In fact, in both instances of conflict and reward, there is an awareness of power that endeavours to rhetorically deepen the divides and complications between a colonizing administration and colonized ethnic people. Where Standard English is not explicitly mentioned

as the language of power, it is heavily implied. As such, the implication of authority performs an act of evasion; not explicitly mentioned, but unequivocally present. The intended effect is that of a regulatory apparition, surveying colonized spaces through the authority of established doctrine while remaining out of reach from people who do not speak or write Standard English. In other words, the implied constitutional authority of Standard English has real effects on the social, academic and political lives ethnic people because people who acquire fluency in Standard English are able to understand and have access to governing laws, while those that are unable to do so, remain unaware and marginalized by the lack of such knowledge. What may seem a regulatory apparition in ethnic environments, has real consequences in political spaces. The result is that “colonial patterns” of the past continue to thrive, where language becomes a means through which English European culture establishes an authoritative presence, without actually being physically present.

Similar to the rhetorical position previously argued on race, this perspective on Standard English illustrates the use of the language as politically and rhetorically strategic, in that it valorizes the academic and political landscape. Given value and status from an external source, for ethnic people, becomes a form of psychological aggression bearing some similarity to the economic values of enslaved people during colonialism. Writing about linguistic concerns in the authority of Standard English in postcolonial societies, Jenny Sharpe (2000) observes in *Figures of Colonial Resistance* that:

To think of the relation between the discourse centering on the production of the colonial subject and what it occludes as an eclipse is to see that [affected people] are not situated outside the civilizing project but are caught in the path of its

trajectory...For the colonial subject who can answer the colonizers back is the product of the same vast ideological machinery that silences (p. 100)

According to Sharpe, the situation for people needing to learn Standard English to access knowledge of law is all-encompassing. The fact the Constitution is written in Standard English means that the political landscape that defines national identity is an appropriated territory, while the Constitution provides the means through which the act of appropriation is to be understood.¹¹¹ As a document that determines the structure of government, the context of national identity, the Constitution acts to preserve and perceive Belize as a colonial territory. The notion suggests that a Belizean Constitution written in Standard English is analogous to classic justifications of the colonial period, which focused on a moral imperative to civilize the rest of the world.

¹¹¹ Spurr, D. (1993). *The Rhetoric of Empire: Colonial Discourse in Journalism, Travel Writing and Imperial Administration*. Duke University Press: Durham & London, (p. 28).

COLONIAL DOCUMENTS, STANDARD ENGLISH AND POLITICAL PATTERNS IN CREATING NATIONAL IDENTITY: On Position and Placement, Interaction and Access

Belize has not been a Central American country known for civil disobedience and political conflict in Central America and the Caribbean. In spite of Standard English being an imposed democratic constituent, it's a measure of success to say that Standard English has created the appearance of human solidarity, in that books written in Standard English provide the canon for intellectual development and is the language of governing documents, like the Constitution. But the linguistic limitation also means either a marked exclusion or conditional participation of ethnic people, and thus the condition specifically determines the status of national and constitutional identity.

The idea of a Constitution written in Standard English does not merely assume that the majority of the country's population has an acceptable command of the Standard English, but also exposes a colonial situation where institutional processes hold control over the instruments of engagement. This is to say that Standard English, as a colonizing tool also becomes an economic tool in the Marxist meaning of production, standardizing and stabilizing communicative methods of work. In the Marxists sense Standard English reflects the moral, intellectual underpinnings and modernizing efforts in colonial expansion. Because Belize remains a part of the Commonwealth of Nations, keeping political conventions of the colonial era, of which the Standard English is an integral part, was actually a precondition of independence. In the opening remarks of the *Belize Bill* presented to British Parliament on July 10, 1981 for the justification of Belize's independence, Lord Skelmersdale¹¹² presented a

¹¹² Lord Skelmersdale was a member of the delegation advocating for Belizean independence in the 1970s during the moments when the sovereignty of Belize as a self-governing nation was threatened by the possible invasion of the neighboring Spanish country, Guatemala.

comprehensive view of what would ultimately determine British policies towards Belize; the basis on which Belize was eventually granted independence:

...report of the constitutional conference to which I have referred, contains comprehensive provisions for the protection of fundamental human rights and freedoms, which will be specially entrenched, and other institutional provisions which will essentially preserve the basic institutions and procedures to which Belizeans are accustomed and which have served Belize well. Belize will be a constitutional Monarchy with the Queen as Head of State (p. 2).

Lord Skelmersdale's proposals reveal the complicated position of Belizeans under the gaze of colonial authority and constitutional certainties, such as "the protection of fundamental human rights and freedoms" (p. 2). The effect of the Belize Bill is that it reinforces English European interpretations of these concepts, and therefore creates a Belizean identity that is suggestive of English European colonial imagination.

Attaching the Constitution to the most 'basic institutions' of the colonial period exposes Belizeans to the penetrating and affective inspections of Western idealisms. While the English language is not explicitly mentioned as representative of a basic colonial institution of the Commonwealth, Bolland (2003) reminds us, the use of Standard English as the official language and language of instruction is one unwritten constitutional provision left deliberately vague and indeterminate in order that real authority remained in the colonial power structure.¹¹³ In other words, it becomes difficult to describe and respond to a system of confinement once that is not given a name. Again, while Standard English is not explicitly named by the constitution as a 'basic institution', the use of Standard English throughout the text signals the language as

¹¹³ Bolland, N. (2003). *Colonialism and Resistance in Belize: Essays in Historical Sociology*. Cubola Books: Belize, (p. 220)

constitutionally basic, and so renders the Belizean Constitution as a language-defining text. So what first appears to be the amalgamation of different ethnic groups through independence, is rather revealed to be an act of linguistic territorialism, with an English European sense of identity dominating by virtue of its attachment to idea of British ‘constitutional Monarchy’.

Standard English as a constitutional convention, and as an inherent rhetorical component that arranges the local environment comes through with the inconspicuous rejection of pluralism. But, among several specific areas of emphases in the *Belize Bill*, Lord Skelmersdale stresses that the provisions in the propose Belizean Constitution “provides for the continuance, after independence, of laws operating in respect of Belize before independence”, which speaks more directly to the point of validating the ways Standard English was institutionalized by law prior to independence. Again, Skelmersdale makes no mention of the English language as specific ordinance in respect to the governing of Belize. However, the continuance of laws Lord Skelmersdale mentions in this regard is specifically regarding declarations written and made law in the *British Honduras Constitution of 1960* or *The Portfolio of Information on British Honduras*.

The section on *External and Internal Communication in British Honduras*, offer some rhetorical insight, where the document specifies the position of English as the official language communication in the region; in this case, the official language of technical and broadcast communication at that time. The document stipulates that the “government owned and operated broadcasting station in Belize City transmits programmes in both English and Spanish [which] covers most areas in the territory” of Belize (p. 6). The inclusion of Spanish is politically strategic, in that it identifies the growing population of Spanish speaking immigrants from neighboring Guatemala and Honduras in the 1950s and 1960s.

That fact that Spanish is also a colonizing language from European Spain becoming a dominant feature in the rest of Central America, may have played heavily in the linguistic colonizing practice of the administration of the time. As a feature within an official political document, Spanish signals the potential interplay of colonizing forces in the Central American regions. This thought is not investigated here, but provides some scope for the exclusion or disregard for languages from Belize's ethnic communities, such as Creole, Garifuna or Mayan languages. These would have little need and impact on diplomatic relations with the Spanish governments and countries that bordered Belize. The identification of English and Spanish implies political commitment to their positions, while ignoring the possibilities of finding any positive political value in the communicative potential of ethnic languages; also ignoring whatever potential lies in the formation of an alternative sense of national identity to which other countries would find the political need to adjust.

While the connection between forms of technical communication and colonialism is not the chief focus here, the ethical implications of Standard English's commanding view, in terms of the *Portfolio on British Honduras*, is one which conveys the density of economic and cultural meaning in the language holds. The position of Standard English 'literally' has a circumscribed view of the Belizean landscape through communication in terms of the potential and promise of educational development. Standard English manages to move from a form of communication to a form of communicative dominance; providing frames of interpretive references as a symbolic gesture and principle. But, in *Global Rhetoric: Using Rhetorical Concepts to Identify and Analyze Cultural Expectations*, Kirk St. Amant (2006) calls attention to particular point of a contention in discursive situations similar to what the *Portfolio on British Honduras* causes, in terms of how and what intention is suggested and meant by linguistic designations. St. Amant

tells us that documents that communicate values between different groups through specialized *knowledge* is likely to be center of inconsistencies and confusion in communication among different groups of people (p. 2). In this sense, the *Portfolio on British Honduras* specifies the domestic and communicative value of Standard English as the standard and form of efficiently communicating across and in-between ethnic groups. However, there is the problem of each ethnic group interpreting spoken and written Standard English based on their own particular linguistic framework. The issue then becomes a matter of communicating conceptually or translating concepts from political forums into ethnic spaces.

In *Rhetorical Sovereignty*, Scott Richard Lyons (2000) reminds us that the potential inconsistencies in communication and neglect of ethnic languages in colonial administrative processes are intentionally disruptive, saying that the authority that writes terms of national identity sets the limits and terms on which the issues of national identity and rhetorical sovereignty are engaged and discussed (p. 452). This means, that in the postcolonial situation there is a hierarchy of languages, writing in Standard English limits colonized and ethnic people's ability to express themselves and rhetorically participate in political discourse. So *knowledge* is framed in a way suitable and directed toward the sense of a dominant national identity and discourse. Drawn from St. Amant's and Lyon's perspectives on power and communication, the argument can be reasonably be made that, especially in postcolonial settings, Constitutions facilitate political forums that remove or exclude traditional languages of ethnic people, thus centralizing a form of political engagement that is rhetorically distant and culturally apart from other linguistic modes of communication.

The use of Standard English as the standard means of communication in the way that St. Amant and Lyons describe, indicates not only how postcolonial countries represent themselves

in terms of linguistic enculturation, but how Standard English essentializes the national identity of others; establishing a grammar that excludes by creating knowledge and meaning in a form that is specific to English European culture. For instance, Standard English becomes economically and politically tactical in area of telecommunications specified in the *Portfolio on British Honduras*, where the document identifies either specifically English speaking countries or colonized places of interests, and the dollar amount charged to Belizeans to communicate with people in these places:

British Honduras is connected to Kingston (Jamaica) and Miami by radio telegraph and telephone, These services are at present operated by the Government, but will shortly be handled by an overseas company...Rates to London and New York are 20 cts. (US) and 23 cts. (US) FULL RATES respectively and 10 cts. (US) and 11½ cts. (US) per word night letter (deffered) rate for a minimum of 22 words respectively (p. 5)

The specifications on places here indicate colonial authority over communication to and from areas where English language dominates. With pricing determined by the number of words there is a systematic quantifying and spatializing of economic strength and form of communication. All the while, as Spurr (1993) tells us, an ideological gaze is kept from the secure position where language is represented as having economic and communicative value and other languages do not (p. 23). In case of *The Portfolio*, Standard English is used in a highly and strategically rationalized form, where it is presented as having instrumental and organizational value. In this case, Standard English is shown to have practical function and communicative value within the landscape which it dominates.

Communication with other English-speaking places becomes available and accessible for people who understand and are capable of functioning within the linguistic center of the colonized territory. Supposedly sophisticated forms of communication being one facet that indicate the ideals of progress in modern civilization, communication in Standard English with technical and economic value placed upon it becomes a framing device for Belize, telling the rest of the world Belize has begun the process of embracing a modernist sensibility. Spurr (1993) determines the gesture of command over forms of linguistic communication to reflect an exploratory feature of colonialism, offering a sense of “aesthetic pleasure on one hand, information and authority on the other” (p. 15). This commanding view over the linguistic reality and social orientation of other people makes “possible the exploration and mapping of territory, which serves as the preliminary [and fundamental] to a colonial order” (p. 16).

But, perhaps the argument of establishing knowledge does not become entirely apparent through the control of communicative and linguistic mediums such as an English based radio broadcast in the colonial when *The Portfolio* was written. In spite of colonialism taking on a clear, practical and ideological form, linguistic determinism through broadcasting only indicates the aesthetic of communication and socio-economic value of Standard English held by colonial and postcolonial administration. There might be little in the way of evidence that ostensibly marks Belize as having and maintaining a colonial order through Broadcast communication. Unless the fact remains that broadcasting is still done in Standard English is a clear mark of linguistic marginalization, which it may be for people who are unable to understand Standard English when it is spoken. However, particularly in the context of education, the rhetorical constraints of Standard English in *The Portfolio* can be construed as having more lasting local and global implications. The Portfolio, in its representation of Belize political structure at the

time, communicated to the rest of the colonized world of the time, that Belize was English-speaking or at least fully colonized by English European culture.

Where the history of education is concerned in Belize, Standard English is critical and positioned as a key methodological feature of *The Portfolio*. The naming of the Standard English as a subject matter by the colonial administration in the 1960s suggests the desire for Standard English to become the method of social analysis and engagement. Such a desire reflects the authority and commanding view of the colonized area, which has the result of reducing the importance and social impact of other ethnic groups and languages in terms of their potential to be in rhetorical processes of government. The problem attached to this colonial form of socio-academic order is that ethnic identities and language are relegated to peripheral fringes of society.

The connection between education and Western thinking becomes clear where *The Portfolio on British Honduras* indicates its broadcast command over most of the areas in the territory of Belize. The control of language reveals and transfers the “locus of desire onto the colonized object itself” according to Spurr (p. 28). So, the appropriation of linguistic identity tells us that social and rhetorical constructs of identity are based on how the authority of Standard English is reinforced and empowered by political forms of representation. In the case of *The Portfolio*, it allowed an aggressive expansion and desire of British cultural and political value among people colonized to the point of believing in Standard English’s structural authority. In other words, the potential and inevitable problems for ethnic people becomes the issue of political agency, representation, which further exacerbates the matter of interaction among the different ethnic groups using their own languages for the purpose of constitutional integrity.

In its Education in British Honduras section, the *Constitution of 1961* identifies the following subject matters as integral to education:

The curriculum of the primary schools is as follows: - English, Spanish, Arithmetic, Social Studies, Art and Craft; Literature and Music; General Science, Physical Education, History, Geography and Religion (12)

The mention of Spanish in this list still garners some curiosity. Perhaps the reason to include Spanish as a language to be learned has something to do with the fact that Belize is surrounded by Spanish – speaking countries like Mexico, Honduras and Guatemala, which have had enduring political tensions over land claims. As mentioned before, the purpose of Spanish might have been and was likely political in nature. The Portfolio is a colonial political document after all. Perhaps, the position of “English”, before “Spanish”, in the list is also strategic as if to affirm its value in the face of neighbouring Spanish countries to the north, south and west. The position of “English” as first language on the list may perhaps use Standard English as a symbolic act that communicates the presence of British colonial influence and control over the education and geographical space that is Belize.

Just as curious, is the fact that there is no mention of ethnic languages in this official document. That is to say, there is mention of Maya, Garifuna or Creole as languages that should be learned by local and native people for there to be better and more transparent communication between these local ethnic groups. The arguable result of Standard English being at the center of education is the disassociation or a lack of communication between local ethnic groups using their own languages to ‘officially’ communicate with each other. For communication to occur, Standard English would be employed by people who are able to use their own or other ethnic languages as a means of speaking and writing to other people from other ethnic groups. For the

colonized groups and individuals, the language of social interaction is not the language of education. The language used in the structure of the household is not the language used to engage political structures. The inefficiency in the bureaucratic position of Standard English becomes apparent in these instances, where the conflict in the use of ethnic languages demonstrates a degree of ethical and political neglect.

First, the direct association of Standard English with education eliminates the possibility of the argument which assumes that Standard English is not an aspect of colonial domination. Second, the individual items named in the curriculum (Arithmetic, Literature and music, History, Geography and Religion) represented as fixed and accomplished bodies of work, only helps to change an individual's sensibility toward their environment in a way defined and expressed through the structure of Standard English and the psychological influence behind its continued use in these subject matters. The structure and content work to disassociate and alienate people from their unique way of creating knowledge and "their immediate environment is perceived differently when you think of language as the carrier of culture".¹¹⁴ Secondly, and again, the exclusion of ethnic languages implies a distance and opposition to the systemic value of Standard English. That is, according to this list, all aspects of education, and as such, identity, are to be discussed through the use of Standard English, within a body of work steep in the structural use of the language, with subject matters providing other means of assimilation knowledge. Colonized people are forced to rhetorically construct ideas of the environment, education and their own sense of identity using a linguistic and educational structure external to themselves.

Belizean writer, Sir. Colville Young also acknowledges this point of view and problem with Belize's linguistic identity, saying that "It is true that the social status of Belizean [Creole]

¹¹⁴ Thiong'o, N.W. (1986). *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*. Heinemann: London, Nairobi, Portsmouth N.H., (p. 16).

may be considered low, not least among its most persistent and/or exclusive users. But...this is the result of old colonial attitudes based on self-contempt” (p. 9). Where education may seem a particularly apt structure to help reverse or remove the stigma associated with ethnic languages like Creole, Maya and Garifuna, the use of Standard English in the Belizean Constitution reinforces and regularizes the stigma toward ethnic languages. Since language is such a critical components of people’s identity, it is entirely possible that stigma is encouraged toward ethnicities as well, as similarly argued from the perspective of race as a rhetorical feature of the Constitution in the previous chapter.

The institutional practice of teaching Standard English in Belizean education creates a space in academic structure where colonial thinking can prevail according to the law of local administration. Even in postcolonial Belize, laws constitute and may in fact reproduce a particular colonial point of view. As an argument that is critical of this postcolonial practice and exposing the authority of language over space and time, Pierre Bourdieu (1984) offers a telling insight in *Distinction: A Social Critique of Judgement and Taste*. The postcolonial point of view can be equated to what Bourdieu contends is the authority of objectivism. Objectivism, he says:

...constitutes the social world as a spectacle presented to an observer who takes up a “point of view” on the [act of observing], transferring into his object the principles of his [authority over the land] and conceives of it as a totality for cognition alone, in which all interactions are reduced to symbolic exchanges (p. 96).

Read from the postcolonial context, Bourdieu makes that point that orientations toward the use of Standard English is the key principle of imposing a certain analytical view of the environment and transferring authority at every level of social awareness and engagement. The concepts of

home, family and community are produced through symbolic representations and fixed points of references (The size of town, the size of village, the nuclear family, the location of parks, etc.) so as to give meaning to concepts of home, family and community. The authority given to the description of these concepts through Standard English communicates the promise of Westernized development and the acquisition of English European sensibility toward these concepts.

Yet, where the privilege of the use of Standard English is removed from people who refuse or are incapable of accessing the language, the colonial understanding of these concepts are marked gaps in logic, absence of meaning and a generally incomplete understanding of and ability to participate in the functions of a community. Standard English therefore becomes a means of social interaction associated with the privilege sense of being a part of the collective, invariably influencing the sense of worth people attribute to themselves and others. This approach to authority is what many critics of globalization and Belizean writer, Assad Shoman (2010) in *Belize's Independence and Decolonization in Latin America* calls “the new imperialism” or “the second colonial occupation” (3).

Postcolonial writer and critic Ngugi Wa Thiong'o (1981) writes about similar experiences and conflicts with language and colonialism in his native Kenya, an African country that was colonized by the British. In his estimation there can be no meaningful discussion about language and identity in postcolonial worlds without taking into account the radical negative effects of the Standard English in education and the rest of society. Ngugi theorizes in *Decolonising the Mind* (1993) that:

English is seen as having the capacity to unite, which marks its most important aspect of domination over the geography as well as the mental universe of the

colonised. The control, through language and communication, of how people perceived themselves and their relationship to the world (p. 16)

The control over language becomes mastering the perception of local ethnic people and the neutralization of alternative world view. To control people's language, mode of writing and communication, Ngugi says, is to control their tools of self-definition in the kinds of relationship formed with others (p. 16). In view of Ngugi's position the position of Standard English in the Constitution, and the way Standard English determines social interaction among colonized people, can be understood as a rhetorically convention that influences radical transformation of the area into an object colonial possession.

From a colonizer's point of view, this perspective features English as a valued element of cohesion and control, and as forming a domestic order and clear sense of political direction that would otherwise not be had. From the colonized person's point of view, the ultimate and sometimes inevitable loss in the value of ethnic language is a more devastating outcome, simply because ethnic languages are not taught in institutions so that people are able to realize the potential of cross-ethnic communication. To reiterate Young's (2002) position, a sense of reverence and intellectual value of writing and speaking placed on the language aspect collective identity is no longer associated with or found in ethnic languages, but is replaced by the value of an education in Standard English.

The colonial achievement in the authority of Standard English is compounded by more than the rhetorical silencing or non-acknowledgement of oral languages in political documents, such as the *Constitution* and *The Portfolio of Information on British Honduras*. In their non-mention of other ethnic languages, the Portfolio on British Honduras and the Belizean

Constitution *speaks* or *writes* from the subject-position of an outside British culture or colonized people that are able to identify because of their ability to speak and write Standard English.

The notion of *speaking for* and *writing for* people is a form of appropriating identity commonly addressed in postcolonial discourse and most commonly embraced by Spivak's *Can the Subaltern Speak* (1988). As observed by Davis and Gross (1994) in *Spivak and the Ethos of the Subaltern*, the well-known postcolonial critic argues that the construction of people's identities under a colonial system "is an expression of the ethos constructed by colonial discourse. The dominant discourse speaks through the subaltern, and the subaltern in itself cannot be empowered to speak except through ventriloquism" (p. 79). Having been given a sense of national identity through the Constitution and the language from which the people are able to participate in the rhetorical construction of identity prevents ethnic people from fully engaging in dominance discourse. The tools of producing national identity remains an external activity, outside parameters of oral languages like Creole, Maya and Garifuna which means that process of constructing identity moves in one direction; people being *spoken to*, rather than being *spoken with*. If national identity is written in another language, Standard English, then the way people try to understand themselves is altered according to the descriptive limitation of that language. In effect, Spivak explains that colonized people, people who have adapted to conventions of colonialism, are unable to realize the potential and ability to create a society by using their own form of written and spoken languages.

UNDERSTANDING THE CONNECTION BETWEEN STANDARD ENGLISH, THE CONSTITUTION AND NATIONAL IDENTITY: Knowledge and Control in the Prospect of Participation

As mentioned earlier Sir. Colville Young's critique of language and constitutional identity in Belize shows that the unchallenged embrace of Standard English means the embrace of the practice of British institutions that support its position during the colonial period. On the one hand, the embrace of Standard English as the language of policy is to hold in confidence the potential of the language to deliver the moral and political improvement that are implied by a democratic constitution. On the other hand, the absence of ethnic languages in the constitution communicates distrust in their ability to fill the spaces of written and spoken communication between different ethnic groups; and an inability to provide sophisticated, intelligible frame of references that would connect people across ethnic lines.

But being the primary communication tool for ethnic groups is not the only colonial achievement in the use of Standard English. Spurr (1993) reminds us that colonial administrations deployed Standard English as tool of imposing knowledge and establishing power over colonized people, saying "Language [came with] the power of enframing realities, or ordering [and naming] forth the world in such a way as to establish claim over it, and to secure it as a standing reserve" (p. 184). Spurr's perspective shows that in colonialism, Standard English, power and the idea of controlling knowledge were ultimately joined, where Standard English was deployed with the similar objective of laws, providing "frameworks [involving] principles of limitation and exclusion" of ethnic languages which leads to the lack of knowledge and political awareness (p. 185).

The condition, or position of Standard English is a reflection on the social status and political position of ethnic people who have not and could not learn to speak, write or have access to Standard English. Political knowledge is presented in such a way that prevents ethnic people from understanding and participating in the rhetorical process that affects them socially and politically. In Belize then, ethnic people experience the underlying principle that defined the inherent advantages of the colonial era, which is the use of sociopolitical structures to prevent ethnic people from fully participating in the process of government. It then holds that full awareness of national identity in Belize is determined by the ability to have access to the knowledge of and within the Constitution.

The non-existing relationship between ethnic languages and constitutional authority is contradictory with the notion of democracy. This is the case because people who speak ethnic or native languages exclusively are not able to participate in rhetorical and political processes in which knowledge of Standard English plays a pivotal role. The non-representation or invisibility of ethnic languages, as a key principle, represents rhetorical traditions that come from the classic colonial situation, and offers a distinct manifestation of constitutional identity that reflects patterns of exclusion associated with Belize's colonial past.

Aside from representing or suggesting the continued authority of the classic colonial period, Standard English being accepted as part of educational and political processes may represent an approval of Western structure over realizing the potential and possibility of native linguistic intervention. The relationship between language and education embedded as political policy as pointed out in *The Portfolio of on British Honduras* suggests the importance of language as an instrument of colonial enterprise. Therefore, the requirement to learning how to write and read Standard English suggests that colonialism in terms of its linguistic impact, in fact

never left simply because so far as *The Portfolio* and the *Constitution* reveals, national identity must always be discussed in the way it is defined in and by Standard English. Which means to insert changes, or to protest a national change in written communication becomes a constitutional matter.

The use of Standard English in the Belizean Constitution makes it an active mechanism of construction, order and rhetorical means of forming identity. The use of Standard English conveys the notion that the identities of ethnic groups in Belize are based upon this document. Yet, if the Constitution is written in a language that holds different literary standards than oral languages like Creole, Garifuna and Maya, it imposes an alternative form of thinking and understanding, and thus of constructing national identity. Ngugi (1993) reminds us of this aspect of the colonial situation across colonized areas, Standard English still promotes the colonial agenda of excluding the participation of people who write and speak in their native languages (p. 26). The result of this process, as pertains to the Constitution, is that ethnic people are rhetorically removed or situated outside the process of national building. Ethnic people are affected, more so than being effective. The rhetorical appropriation of Standard English into the world view of others through the Constitution becomes evidence of disequilibrium and anxiety toward national identity. Because ethnic people are unable to participate or respond to the Constitution as a written language, their identities become fully determined by it – at least as far as politics matters. Constitutional and national identity becomes, what Walter Ong refers to as “text-dominant” effectively excluding those whose languages are not.

Returning to Young (2002) once more, he reminds Belizeans of the diffident state of their linguistic identity, saying “Another powerful argument against Belize [Creole] as an official language has been that there are no books” written and taught in schools legitimizing Creole as

an acceptable and sophisticated way of thinking about Belizean identity and interpreting the world (11). Where “Languages like English or Spanish have had long traditions of literacy use and have amassed a wealth of books of every description (11).

As a case in point, Young also reminds Belizeans that their long established reverence for English is misplaced, recalling moments in history when “both English and Spanish were regarded as rough vernaculars, unsuitable for any writer whose aim was permanence” and as standard languages “has to pass through a struggle to overcome linguistic prejudice and thus establish themselves as having the expressive potential of Latin” (11). With that, there is little to no reason to defend the thought that Belize’s Constitution and education in Belize cannot be achieved through written forms of Creole, Maya or Garifuna. Such work would involve examining cross sections of written Standard English and verbal devices from the oral practices of ethnic people. The possibility of locating and using such a cross section would mean moving towards a linguistic and national identity that is less or anti – hierarchal and inclusive of other rhetorical practices in Belize that are not determined by the structure Standard English.

But the continued perception and recognition of Belize as a country of people speaking and writing in Standard English is a postcolonial phenomenon and form of linguistic appropriation that represents the command of Western power using Standard English as an interpretive apparatus projecting Western ideals. The subsequent wholesale acceptance of English as entrenched into the constitution thus extends colonization beyond local ethnic sociological dynamics. Spurr (1993) tells us that the persistent occupation of western idealism, which Standard English achieves, is similar to colonialism in that it allows people to become more than a source of labour and religious conversion, but produces a form of self-affirmation

surrounded and supporting by a series of concepts (history, race, religion, geography), the substance of which are already known and supposedly beyond contestation (p. 31).

In cases where non-Western people themselves become linguistic and ideological carriers of western culture:

...the object of appropriation is no longer the human body nor even the individual soul, but the very nature of reality in the Third World, now seen in its potential as an image of the West. This form of appropriation gives rise to a curious phenomenon: the West seeks its own identity in Third World attempts at imitating it; it finds its own image, idealized, in the imperfect copies fabricated by other cultures (p. 36).

So, though the idea of independence might be the ideological premise on which the constitution was written and institutionalized, Standard English presents problems of identification that are particularly, and all at once sociolinguistic, ethnic, political and ideological. The non-mention of any specific language as part of constitutional identity becomes a powerful signifier that political means and agency for these groups are either reduced, simply do not exist, or removed or neutralized from affecting conditions of government in the present and future. What becomes clearer, is that the notion of independence from a linguistic point of view, is a form of pacification and passive reconstruction of Western ideals that obscures another, less explicit form of colonization.

OF LANGUAGE AS SYMBOLIC REMINDER

A reasonable opposition to the claim of the Belizean Constitution socio-linguistically reconstituting old forms of colonizing practicing might come in the form of identifying other constitutional provisions that appear genuinely to invoke ideas of freedom and liberation for the population. As if to suggest that forfeiting rhetorical sovereignty is an acceptable recompense not only for the political order of a constitution, but also for the principle self-governance and individual rights that are nationalized. As Howard Schweber (2007) reminds us in *The Language of Liberal Constitutionalism*, that the reasoning behind constitutional acts of legitimizing and interpreting identity is the willingness to “act *as if* everyone were equal in order to achieve peace [and] overdetermine the validity of the rules that would guarantee political order” (p. 44).

As a rhetorical instrument that helps form national identity and as symbolic reminder of Belize’s colonial history, Standard English cannot be separated from the way it limits people’s social interactions, and thus limits how people are able to engage with political processes. So among non-English speakers, the dominance of Standard English in the Belizean Constitution causes a disruption in communication patterns among the different ethnic groups, promotes a hierarchy of languages within Belize’s educational system, and therefore encourages a fundamental misunderstanding of national identity, or at least the democratic way national identity should be constructed.

CONCLUSION

In this dissertation I have argued that the existence of the term race and the use of Standard English in the 1981 Belizean Constitution is fundamentally a matter of political power and the continued presence of British idealisms in Belize. Through looking at moments in Belizean history I argued that the creation of national identity, its existence, and various and multiple manifestations under British rule, has largely been accomplished by keeping the key principles of race and language use as central attributes of belonging to a Belizean nationality. In terms of their consistency over time, becoming key rhetorical features of the Belizean Constitution, these variables of national identity allow one to draw the possible conclusion that the Constitution expresses an inadequate understanding of the ethnic composition in Belize.

The writer understands that such an assertion is a bold claim to make in the face of Belizean pride in the fact that Belize has not seen and experienced nationwide disruptions and tensions because of the contents of the Constitution; in the fact that Belize has not experienced radical disruption of the courts because of ethnic or sectarian violence over education, language and religion, which is at the center of tumult in other places. Indeed, the fact the Belize has not encountered such disputes is a remarkable feat and is worth remembering and acknowledging constantly.

Yet, the fact that there have not been radical states of civil unrest in Belize may not indicate a nationwide inclination toward civility, but success in the tradition of compliance towards institutions and ideas that have governed the country throughout the colonial era, and into the state of independence. As my position on race and Standard English in the Belizean Constitution has shown, the act of providing rhetorical features of identity and having those features be the way people engage and speak about themselves is demonstrative of political

power. While providing rhetorical features as principles to which different people may relate is not a wholly negative act of constructing national identity, the sociohistorical context of race and Standard English show that these features have been used specifically to exercise power over ethnic people. I have provided a context using arguments from Nigel Bolland (2003), Assad Shoman (2011), and Sir. Colville Young (2002), who individually agree that national identity in Belize holds a sense of incompleteness precisely because of using race as a concept for classifying national identity, and the use of Standard English to determine the linguistic reality of ethnic people.

I have used Bolland, for instance, to point out the fact that race remains an inherently disruptive concept and feature of national identity, drawing boundaries between ethnic groups. Boundaries that were conceived in Belize colonial era. To draw from *Colonialism and Resistance in Belize* (2003) once more, he says:

Ideologies about “race,” which are conceived in biogeneric terms, are part of the contested social process of identifying “cultures” and drawing boundaries between “ethnic groups”. Not only are cultures defined by racial terms, therefore, but “racial groups” also claim more or less exclusive ownership of culture. It follows that if one or more of these groups tries to establish its political dominance in a culturally heterogeneous society, they will engage in an ideological struggle with others over [national identity]. (p. 199)

In fact, as I mentioned in the chapter “Postcolonial Discourse: Responses to Representation”, Belize has experienced this struggle to determine national identity based on racial division or based on racial terms. Where I mention the efforts of Evan X Hyde to create the UBAD national party suggests that race is a socially divisive construct producing identity and discourse from the

sense of being polarized. So, to encourage the use of race in a politically significant document such as the Belizean Constitution illustrates an attempt to maintain a monopoly on the creation of national identity. Perhaps even regulating what sort of political action can be taken on the very basis of individual and groups identities' resemblance to racial archetypes.

In using Young's (2002) *Language and Education in Belize*, I have argued that the use of Standard English in the writing of the Belizean Constitution for alienates and marginalizes ethnic groups in Belize. In regard to Standard English holding 'official' status in Belize, Young posits that the position of Standard English as a "Central American anomaly that is a reflection of Belize's continuous occupation by Britain [since] the seventeenth century" (p. 36). Young upholds the notion that the position of written Standard English in education is a racial practice from the colonial period that has continually communicated to Belizean ethnic groups an "acceptance of a negative self-image" (p. 7). The fact that the Belizean Constitution uses written Standard English, while completely ignoring other ethnic languages, only reinforces that idea that "official acceptance of our way of speaking [and] parallel acceptance of our varied skin color or colors, of our history and traditions" will unlike happen if ethnic groups in Belize do not exercise the power and potential of these variables to represent them on a national level (p. 7).

Invariably, the presence of race and the use of written Standard English in the Belizean Constitution permeates social interaction in Belize. As rhetorical features based on Belize's sociohistorical and political factors, they create a sense of national identity that is removed from ethnic realities, potentially creating a sense of powerlessness.

The fact that these variables are incorporated into the Belizean Constitution, a politically significant text that should be representative of a democracy, does not communicate the notion that these variables are in fact forceful, but acceptable forms of perception and interpretation. In

fact, the opposite is true – these variables promote the illusion of acceptance. Foucault (1989) in *Truth and Power*, reminds us that the constitution of identity within social structures of power is an act of repression. He says:

“If power were never anything but repressive, it is never had anything to do but say no, do you really think one would be brought to obey it? What makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is the simple fact that it doesn’t weigh on us as a force that says no, but it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge and produces discourse. It needs to be considered as a productive network which runs through the whole social body” (p. 119)

In regard to the constitutional use of race and Standard English, Foucault confirms that there is power inherent in the normalizing effects these variables have on people of different ethnic backgrounds.

As Belize stands at the brink with the rest of the world, looking at the chances of being incorporated in the global economic market systems, an understanding of what it really means to be Belizean has not been a more moral and ethical imperative. The reification of race and written Standard English, shown through the country’s history and the content and context of the Constitution, has not revealed the path through which ethnic groups in Belize can foster open interaction with the purpose of dissolving colonial barriers. The fact that race and Standard English remain prominent features of the Belizean Constitution means that future discussion must be had on how to properly engage concepts of national identity that produces a new, different and acceptable norm. This is not to say, a deviation from race and the use of Standard English means a complete rejection of these variables as potentially representative of other people in Belize. Wholesale rejection of national identity concepts has continuously been the

cause of civil unrest within postcolonial countries and political discontent between newly independent countries and their previous colonizers. Rather, the most likely amicable path seems to lie, not in deviation, but with the incorporation of ethnic identities. A thought of a Belizean Constitution that embraces national identity that is governed by ethical principles of equality and inclusion across ethnic boundaries.

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