The Experience of Acculturation from the Perspectives of Immigrant, West Indian, Female Educators

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Dedication

To my mummy Doris C. Samuel,

Your unwavering support and belief in me have propelled me. Your prayers have always clung to me.

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Abstract of Dissertation

The Experience of Acculturation from the Perspectives of Immigrant, West Indian, Female Educators

An increasing number of foreign teachers is recruited to fill vacant positions in rural and inner city schools that are generally considered hard to staff. These settings are unfamiliar to the foreign teachers and they face numerous challenges in adapting to the new way of life and to the education system. A lack of understanding of the acculturation process of these educators and how it may manifest in American classrooms can lead to stereotyping, conflict, and misunderstanding. This qualitative research examined the experience of acculturation as lived by immigrant, West Indian, female educators in an urban setting on the East Coast of the United States.

Eight immigrant, West Indian, female educators from five different countries in the West Indies were purposefully selected to participate in the study. Phenomenological hermeneutic interviews served as the primary data collection method. The data were analyzed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). Seven important themes reoccurred throughout the interviews: (1) culture shock (2) determination of the immigrant educators to succeed; (3) adjusting the way of speaking (accent) as a strategy to fit in; (4) differences in methods of discipline; (5) positive impact of acculturation on teaching practices; (6) teachers are held in higher esteem in the West Indies than in the US and (7) high value placed on education in the West Indies. Moreover, all of the participants offered a similar description of acculturation. The findings of this study should be shared with teachers and education students in the West Indies who are considering coming to the United States to work as educators. Further, the findings of this study can

support cultural competence training in schools and districts that hire educators internationally, including the West Indies. These findings can also be used as a starting point to supporting other immigrant educators through more deliberate orientation to facilitate their acculturation and success as educators.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Statement of Personal Experience

As an immigrant educator, I found that adjusting to the ways of life of the host culture here in the United States presented many challenges. Even though I had visited this country for short periods of time and completed most of my undergraduate studies at a university in Texas the full impact of my acculturation was not felt at that time because there was a large contingent of students from the Caribbean who were also pursuing studies at the same university. Consequently, immersion in the external culture during this period was stifled since almost all of my interactions were with other students from the Caribbean.

Upon graduation I relocated to the East Coast to work as a diplomat. During my tenure as a diplomat most of my interactions were with diplomats who were also from foreign countries. It was not until after I had left the diplomatic corps, five years after migrating to the United States, that my interaction with individuals from the dominant culture began. It was only then that the full density of the adaptation process became evident to me, because of the continuous first-hand contact associated with acculturation.

As a child, I attended Catholic schools, both at the elementary and high school level. As an adult in Grenada, I became a teacher, and taught in my native country for five years. In that setting, issues related to students' misbehavior were almost nonexistent, so I was unprepared for the challenges I faced teaching in a foreign urban setting where student behavior was more of an issue. My first class of third graders in the United States was a group of bright students, but I had a difficult time

trying to understand their classroom behavior, which seemed unruly to me. This new challenge compelled me to question my sanity. Why did I choose to teach when so many other opportunities were available to me?

My school of education work did not prepare me for this experience. The students' behaviors were like nothing I had experienced in the past, but I was determined to succeed. I was determined to be the best teacher I could be. In an attempt to acculturate and adjust to my new environment, I befriended some of my teaching colleagues and began socializing with them. In addition to that, I also visited my students' neighborhoods, had conversations with them, and listened to their stories and experiences. I read extensively about the challenges in urban education and attended a variety of workshops and trainings to develop skills in various areas. I collaborated with the teachers on my grade level and we shared strategies for motivating students and managing classroom behavior. As a personal charge, I made a concerted effort to speak American English as opposed to British English. I realized that my frame of reference for appropriate student behavior was very different from my current reality.

I decided I was going to be a successful teacher and my students were going to be successful learners. In the educational sphere and in my professional capacity, I needed to understand the challenges that many of my students faced. I needed to understand each of my students and their strengths and areas of growth, and I needed to connect with them. But before that could happen I knew that I needed to do some cognitive restructuring. It was essential that I adapt to the culture and practices of my new environment.

Introduction

Various researchers have studied the phenomenon of acculturation. In their effort to come up with a suitable meaning, different researchers defined the term acculturation in many different ways. Bhui, Stansfeld, Head, Haines, Hillier, Taylor, Viner, & Booy (2005) defined acculturation as: "the phenomenon which results when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first hand contact with subsequent changes in the original culture pattern of either groups; the process includes psychological, socio-cultural, and economic acculturation" (p. 296). In discussing the complexity of acculturation, Skuza (2007) noted that acculturation is best captured by individuals who experienced it, rather than by individuals who acquired knowledge about acculturation through research. In reflecting on the importance of investigating acculturation from different individuals' perspectives, Djuraskovic & Arthur (2010) commented that the pressure immigrants experience when faced with shifting their values and beliefs or maintaining them needs to be observed at the individual level, rather than assuming that what affects one person will affect another person in the same manner. In many studies on acculturation, variables such as gender, class, and past experience of immigrants prior to coming to the host culture, and subgroup differences and variations within subgroups, are often ignored. In referring to the practice of ignoring important variables that play a significant role in the acculturation process, Bhaita & Ram (2001) posit that gender issues usually are not given careful consideration, and issues that are closely related to female experiences are given even less attention. The researchers further asserted that immigrant groups that

share certain similarities are perceived as one and the same regardless of differences in subgroups (Bhaita & Ram, 2001).

Studies that investigated acculturation also closely analyzed phenomena such as adaptation, marginalization, assimilation, and traditionalization as related to the process of acculturation (Berry, 1997). In his discussion on the four typological identities of acculturation experience, Berry (1997) referred to integrated identity as "adaptation" with both the culture of the new home and the culture of one's homeland, whereas in the case of marginalized identity a person refuses to accept both his or her native culture as well as the culture of his or her new home. In the case of traditionalization, people maintain their native culture while refusing to accept the new culture. Finally, in assimilation, a person chooses the host culture over the native culture. A potential limitation of Berry's typology is that it may not encompass all variations of immigrants' experiences, particularly within subgroups within a culture. In general, rather than assuming that the acculturation process is experienced uniformly by all immigrants, the phenomenon is better understood, or one can make better sense of it, if one engages with immigrants who experienced the acculturation process and are willing to share their own perspectives.

Statement of the Problem

An increasing number of foreign teachers are recruited to fill vacant positions in rural and inner city schools that are generally difficult to staff. These settings are unfamiliar to these foreign teachers and they face numerous challenges in adapting to the new way of life and to the education system. A lack of understanding of the acculturation process of these educators and how it may

manifest in American classrooms can lead to stereotyping, conflict, and misunderstanding.

Acculturation refers to the adaptation process experienced by individuals or groups when settling into a new culture (Berry, 1997). While some migrating groups may seek to integrate with the host culture, others may choose to maintain their cultural roots and separate themselves from the "new" dominant culture. Acculturating groups face numerous challenges when adapting to a new way of life. These impediments can be particularly challenging at the onset of the acculturation process. Depending on the migrating group or individual, these challenges can include language difficulties, fiscal privation, homesickness, loneliness, and prejudicial treatment (Berry, 1997).

A lack of understanding of the acculturation process educators face and how it may manifest itself in classrooms of increasingly diverse school environments can lead to stereotyping, conflict, misunderstanding, and prejudice. A general example can be cited in regard to a group of immigrant teachers in New York. The New York City Board of Education was faced with grave teacher shortages in 2000 and "launched a Caribbean-wide recruitment campaign to hire foreign teachers to fill vacant positions in some of its most troubled inner-city schools" (AFT, 2009, p. 21). These schools are generally considered hard to staff and foreign trained teachers were recruited to fill the shortages. All of the countries of the West Indies are located in the Caribbean.

The AFT (2009) identified culture shock as one of the issues foreign trained teachers faced and provided an illustration of differences in expectations in schools

in different countries. According to the AFT (2009) in comparison to immigrant teachers' educational experiences in their country of origin, "in America, students do not stand up when their teachers enter the room, parents regularly challenge teachers' authority and there are metal detectors in many schools" (p.19). These differences require adjustments in behaviors and expectations on the part of the immigrant teachers. A lack of understanding of the differences in expectation and the acculturation process by the immigrant teacher and school community can lead to different kinds of conflict. Consequently, the adjustment includes both expectations in schools and society on a whole, which can be acute.

Although a number of studies have been conducted on immigrants and their experiences, most studies tend to omit the potential significance of each individual's unique experiences with respect to the acculturation process, and some areas of interest remain unexplored in published research. Consequently, this study aims to fill a void in the literature. Research has not been conducted on the acculturation experience of West Indian, female educators in an urban setting. Additionally, this study reveals perceptions of how immigrant female educators' acculturation experience impacts their teaching practices and ability to connect with the dominant culture.

Djuraskovic & Arthur (2010) posited that variables such as gender, class, and experiences of immigrants prior to coming to the host culture are often ignored in studies, which may lead to differential acculturation processes. In referring to the practice of ignoring important variables that play a significant role in the acculturation process, as mentioned above, gender issues usually are not given

careful consideration, and issues that are closely related to women's experiences are given even less attention (Bhaita & Ram, 2001). Bhaita & Ram further asserted that immigrant groups that share certain similarities are perceived as one and the same regardless of differences in subcultures.

Immigrant educators are assigned to classrooms that are sometimes very different from what they are accustomed to in terms of norms, mores, and student and teacher expectations of each other. Warikoo (2004) conducted a study on interpersonal connections between West Indian teachers and their students. The participants in the study shared that eye contact is an indication of defiance in the West Indies, where as in the United States "it signifies respect and agreement" (p. 141). Warikoo (2004) also found that West Indian parents "place full trust in their children's school and, although education is highly valued, parents are not as involved in schools" (p. 139). Warikoo (2004) further asserted that the West Indian educators in the study felt especially challenged by working in a school system with no punitive system for addressing student behavioral concerns. According to an AFT (2009) report learning to teach under conditions that are unfamiliar to those they have left behind can be a difficult process for many foreign-trained educators. These teachers are expected to adjust with ease to the new educational setting and society in general and implement the curriculum (AFT, 2009). As many of these immigrant educators negotiate these differences in their individual acculturation process, miscommunications and conflicts can arise.

Statistics show that the number of international teachers teaching in public schools is steadily increasing as school districts continue to recruit and employ

expatriate teachers (Hutchinson, 2007). According to the AFT (2009) report, there were approximately 19,200 teachers on work visas employed in the United States in 2007, however, "essential federal data for studying this trend is not available for public analysis" (p. 5). The United States Census Bureau's 2012 census reveals there are 2,624,392 West Indian immigrants living in the United States and thirty-three percent work in education, healthcare or social services (http://www.census.gov on April, 29, 2012). For the purpose of this research, the participants in this study are West Indian, immigrant, females who currently are either United States citizens or permanent residents. These individuals work in inner city education settings that are very different from their schooling and teaching experience in their home country.

The AFT (2009) report asserts that foreign teachers are being recruited and placed in difficult to staff inner city and rural schools. Two assumptions associated with the employment of international teachers are that they can be relocated from their native country to the host country readily, and that they possess the cultural competence to effectively educate students from diverse backgrounds that are often different from theirs (Peeler & Jane, 2005). According to the AFT (2009), concerns raised by students of foreign trained teachers and their parents include communication barriers. The AFT (2009) asserted "students have a tendency to get distracted and confused by unfamiliar accents, which can serve as an impediment to teaching and learning" (p. 20). These concerns may be nestled in a lack of understanding of the acculturation process of the immigrant educators.

The number of immigrant, West Indian, female educators working in schools across the United States is unknown. The research offers very limited data on the acculturation experience of immigrant West Indian, female educators in urban settings. To address this gap in the literature this research describes and makes meaning of the acculturation experience of immigrant, West Indian, women who work in public elementary schools in an urban setting in the United States. The study also addresses how their perceived degree of acculturation impacts their daily lives, including their instructional practice.

Purpose and Research Question

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the acculturation of immigrant, West Indian, female educators using the hermeneutic phenomenological methodology to humanize and describe the acculturation experience as lived by these individuals. Various researchers have studied the phenomenon of acculturation. In their effort to come up with a suitable meaning, different researchers defined the term acculturation in many different ways. Bhui, Stansfeld, Head, Haines, Hillier, Taylor, Viner, & Booy (2005) defined acculturation as: "the phenomenon which results when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first hand contact with subsequent changes in the original culture pattern of either groups; the process includes psychological, socio-cultural, and economic acculturation" (p. 296). In discussing the complexity of acculturation, Skuza (2007) noted that acculturation is best captured by individuals who experienced it, rather than by individuals who acquired knowledge about acculturation through research. In reflecting on the importance of investigating

acculturation from different individuals' perspectives, Djuraskovic & Arthur (2010) commented that the pressure immigrants experience when faced with shifting their values and beliefs or maintaining them needs to be observed at the individual level, rather than assuming that what affects one person will affect another person in the same manner. In many studies on acculturation, variables such as gender, class, and past experience of immigrants prior to coming to the host culture, and subgroup differences and variations within subgroups are often ignored. In referring to the practice of ignoring important variables that play a significant role in the acculturation process, Bhaita & Ram (2001) posit that gender issues usually are not given careful consideration, and issues that are closely related to female experiences are given even less attention. These researchers further asserted that immigrant groups that share certain similarities are perceived as one and the same regardless of differences in subgroups (Bhaita & Ram, 2001).

Studies that investigated acculturation also closely analyzed phenomena such as adaptation, marginalization, assimilation, and traditionalization as related to the process of acculturation (Berry, 1997). In his discussion on the four typological identities of acculturation experience, Berry (1997) referred to integrated identity as "adaptation" with both the culture of the new home and the culture of one's homeland, whereas in the case of marginalized identity a person refuses to accept both his or her native culture as well as the culture of his or her new home. In the case of traditionalization, people maintain their native culture while refusing to accept the new culture. Finally, in assimilation, a person chooses the host culture over the native culture. A potential limitation of Berry's typology is that it may not

encompass all variations of immigrants' experiences, particularly within subgroups within a culture.

Several intellectual disciplines have contributed to research on the acculturation process. Many of these studies have failed to capture how acculturation is lived and experienced. The phenomenological approach allows for new meanings of acculturation to be experientially revealed. Specifically, this research examines the perspectives on the acculturation process of immigrant, West Indian, female, educators working in urban elementary settings. This study is guided by the following question: *How do immigrant, West Indian, female educators who work in public, elementary schools in an urban setting of the United States make meaning of their acculturation experience?*

Statement of Potential Significance

Although many scholars have conducted research on acculturation there are many areas that remain unexplored. This study fills a void in the literature by exploring the acculturation experience of immigrant, West Indian, female educators. The study also allows for new meanings of acculturation to be experientially revealed since it explores the experiences of acculturating individuals as lived from their perspectives.

It is the belief of the researcher that this qualitative, exploratory study adds lucidity to the phenomenon of acculturation as lived by immigrant, West Indian, female educators who are charged with planning and implementing instructional activities for students with varying backgrounds, learning styles, and instructional needs. The findings may be useful to future immigrant, West Indian females who

desire to work as educators in urban settings in the United States, in addition to school districts and recruiting companies that recruit international teachers. Potential topics for future exploration could be comparing and contrasting the acculturation experience of male and female immigrant educators and the relationship between the degree of acculturation of the immigrant teachers and their students' academic performance.

Theoretical Perspective

This study is predicated on Berry's (1989; 1997; 2001 & 2005) research on acculturation and his acculturation model. According to Berry (2005) "acculturation is a dual process of cultural and psychological change that takes place as a result of contact between one or more cultural groups and their individual members" (p. 2). On the individual level acculturation involves changes in behavioral patterns. The cultural and psychological changes occur over time. According to Berry (2005), individuals experience acculturation in immensely different ways. These variations are termed acculturation strategies. Berry further asserted that the basic issues faced by acculturating individuals are (1) a preference to maintain one's heritage, culture and identity, and (2) a preference for engaging with and participating in the larger society. Because this study is predicated on Berry 's research on acculturation his work is explored in depth and referenced throughout this body of work.

This study is also grounded in hermeneutic phenomenology. "Phenomenological research is the study of lived experience" (van Manen, 1990, p. 9). van Manen (1990) defined hermeneutic phenomenology as composed of eight themes. van Manen (1990) specified that phenomenology "aims at gaining a deeper

understanding of the nature or meaning of lived experience." He further asserted that "phenomenological research is the explication of phenomena as they present themselves to consciousness" (p. 9) and his focus is on understanding and meaning. Here van Manen (1990) argues that phenomenological reflection is retrospective, that "it is reflection on experience that is already passed or lived through" (p. 10). As a description of lived experience is reconstructed, recalling that experience is de facto distanced from the experience, and in recollection and reconstruction we are elucidating and clarifying the experience as we relate it, which is an interpretive act. Additionally "phenomenological research is the study of essences," which van Manen (1990, p. 10) described as a "systematic attempt to uncover and describe the internal meaning structures, of lived experience." Phenomenological research is "the description of the experiential meanings we live as we live them" (van Manen, 1990, p. 11). van Manen (1990, p. 11) explains that phenomenological research attempts to "describe and interpret" the meaning of experience, to "explicate the meanings as we live them in our everyday existence" (p.11).

This study articulates that in order to interpret and describe an experience one has to become intertwined and cognizant of it by bringing experience to consciousness. Hermeneutic phenomenology "consists in mediating in a personal way the antinomy of particularity … and universality" (van Manen, 1990, p. 23).

Consequently, van Manen's hermeneutic phenomenology methodology is specifically oriented toward delving into and unfolding both the unique and the universal aspects of particular lived experience. As such, this methodology is well suited to this study as it explores how immigrant, West Indian, female educators

make meaning of their acculturation experience whilst living in the United States of America.

Acculturation Constructs

First hand contact between two or more cultures involves interaction between individuals and groups with different system of values, norms, customs and even language. The implications of acculturation are not uniform and cannot be precisely planned because acculturation depends on a multitude of factors.

Berry (2001) offered the following theoretical possibilities for acculturation:

Assimilation. This construct connotes the giving up or replacement of ones cultural heritage and accepting the cultural elements of the dominant new culture.

Integration. Members of one culture hold on to the elements of their native culture but embraces elements of the new mainstream culture.

Separation. The members of one culture preserve their own traditional culture and they avoid continuous contact with the members of the new culture.

Marginalization. In marginalization the members of one culture do not want to preserve their cultural heritage nor do they want to have contact with members of the other culture.

According to Berry (2001) assimilation can only be achieved when the process of acculturation is complete. Assimilation involves a change in membership or identity. The individual accepts the dominant cultural identity and recognizes it as his own.

Summary of Methodology

This study is guided by the following research question: *How do immigrant,*

West Indian, female educators who work in public, elementary schools in an urban setting of the United states make meaning of their acculturation experience?

Eight immigrant, West Indian, female educators from five different countries in the West Indies were purposefully selected to participate in the study. Phenomenological hermeneutic interviews served as the primary data collection method. Hermeneutic phenomenology is a "research methodology aimed at producing rich textual descriptions of the experience of selected phenomena in the lifeworld of individuals that are able to connect with the experience of all of us collectively" (Smith, 1997, p. 80). Hermeneutic phenomenology is concerned with exploring the details of lived experience with the aim of elucidating and understanding the experience; therefore, it is an appropriate methodology for this study on the acculturation experience of immigrant, West Indian, female educators in an urban setting.

Data collection consisted of 45-minute, individual, informal, interactive, and open-ended interviews that were conversational in tone. The interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. The data were analyzed using Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA). According to Smith, Flowers & Larkin (2009), IPA is predicated on phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiography. IPA was chosen because it is consistent with the epistemological position of the research question. Each case was analyzed in accordance with the principles of IPA: (1) reading and re-reading, (2) initial noting, (3) developing emergent themes, (4) searching for connections across emergent themes, (5) moving to the next case, and (6) looking for patterns across cases.

Delimitations

This study only includes a subset of immigrant, West Indian educators. It does not include West Indian educators who are men or West Indian, female educators who migrated to the United States as children. In addition, this study is limited to West Indian, female, educators who work in public elementary schools in urban settings. This study includes only West Indian female educators who have taught in their native country, migrated to the United States as adults and have completed at least one undergraduate or graduate degree in a United States institution of higher learning. The study was restricted to West Indian females because the researcher believes that there is variation in the manner in which West Indian males and females are socialized and those differences may have bearing on the acculturation experience.

Limitations

All of the countries of the West Indies were not represented in the study. In addition, because the researcher is an immigrant, West Indian, female educator, certain biases may have borne influence on the study findings. Furthermore, attestations about experiences present inherent limitations. According to Polkinghorne (2005) it depends on the individuals' "ability to reflectively discern aspects of their own experience and to effectively communicate what they discern through the symbols of language" (p. 138).

Definition of Key Terms

For the purpose of this study the following definitions are provided to ensure understanding of key terms used throughout the study. Definitions not followed by a

citation were developed by the researcher.

Acculturation. Acculturation refers to changes in the behavioral patterns, thoughts and values of the immigrant that are a result of firsthand contact with the host culture (Berry, 1997).

Assimilation. Berry (1997) defines assimilation as adopting the cultural identity of the dominant or host society. As such, in this study this definition has been operationalized to include an immigrant replacing his or her "native" norms and mores with those of the host culture.

Bracketing. Bracketing "describes the act of suspending one's various beliefs in the reality of the natural world in order to study the essential structures of the world. The term "bracketing" is borrowed from mathematics by Husserl (1911-1980), the father of phenomenology, who himself was a mathematician" (van Manen, 1990, p. 175).

*Culture***. "**The totality of socially transmitted behavior patterns, arts, beliefs, institutions, and all other products of human work and thought" (The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, 1996).

Cultural socialization. Cultural socialization is the transmission of cultural values and norms to one's children (Romero, Cuellar & Roberts, 2000).

East coast. "A region of the eastern United States along the Atlantic coastline, especially the urban corridor from Boston to Washington, DC" (The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, 1996).

Educator. "One who is trained in teaching; a teacher. An administrator of a school or educational institution" (The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, 1996).

Hermeneutic phenomenology. "Hermeneutic phenomenology tries to be attentive to both terms of its methodology: it is a descriptive (phenomenological) methodology because it wants to be attentive to how things appear, it wants things to speak for themselves; it is an interpretive (hermeneutic) methodology because it claims that here are no such things as un-interpreted phenomena. (van Manen, 1990 p. 180).

Hermeneutic Circle. " The hermeneutic circle is concerned with the dynamic relationship between the part and the whole, at a series of levels. To understand any given part, you look at the whole, to understand the whole, you look at the parts" (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009 p. 28).

Immigrant. **"**A person who leaves one country to settle down permanently in another" (The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, 1996).
Integrated Identity. The blending of both the culture of the new home and the culture of the homeland (Berry 1997).

Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA). "A qualitative research approach committed to the examination of how people make sense of their major life experiences" (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009).

Numeration. "Numeration reflects the frequency with which emergent themes appear throughout the transcript" (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009, p. 98).

Phenomenology "phenomenology is essentially the study of lived experience or the life world" (van Manen, 1990, p. 183).

Subculture. **"**A cultural subgroup differentiated by status, ethnic background, residence, religion, or other factors that functionally unify the group and act collectively on each member" (The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, 1996).

Subgroup. "A distinct group within a group" (The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, 1996).

Traditionalization. People maintain their native culture while refusing to accept the new culture (Berry, 1997)

Urban, inner-city settings. A school district located within the limits of a major city with a relatively high rate of poverty as measured by the percentage of students on free and reduced lunch.

*West Indian***.** A native of the West Indies.

West Indies. "An archipelago between southeast north America and Northern South America, separating the Caribbean Sea from the Atlantic Ocean and including the Greater Antilles, Lesser Antilles, & Bahama Islands" (The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, 1996).

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

Introduction

The topic of acculturation in a diverse society like the one in the United States is one that has captivated scholars over the years. In the present study, the experiences of acculturation as they pertain to women who migrate from the West Indies to the United States present an opportunity to explore and learn how they make meaning of their acculturation experiences. The purpose of this study, and thus of the literature review, is to explore and elucidate the acculturation experiences of immigrant, West Indian, female educators to better understand how these experiences influence their professional careers. Therefore, this literature review has the purpose of providing a conceptual platform for the study.

Acculturation refers to the adaptation process experienced by individuals or groups when settling into a new culture (Berry, 1997). This phenomenon will be widely discussed later in this literature review and will be studied from the perspective of immigrant, female educators from the West Indies who live and work in urban public schools in the United States. Understanding the acculturation experiences of the group in this study is important because the lack of understanding regarding these experiences may have an impact in the classrooms and educational experiences, both for the group in the study and for their students. A lack of understanding of the process of acculturation of immigrant, West Indian teachers by both the immigrant teachers themselves and members of the host culture may also lead to stereotyping and conflict. Culture shock has been identified

as one of the most prevalent problems among foreign born and trained teachers (AFT, 2009).

Xia (2009) posited that when people are in a new environment they have to navigate new values and practices. People experience culture shock when they encounter circumstances that are dissimilar to their previous cultural context. Xia (2009) went on further to assert that for expatriates this change makes them fail to comprehend the ideology and behavior of the host culture. They have difficulty understanding why people of the host culture behave the way they do or how they themselves as immigrants should behave.

As cities such as New York have launched recruitment campaigns in the Caribbean to bring teachers into their inner city schools due to a shortage of qualified US teachers, educators from the West Indies have been among those recruited. These international recruitment initiatives make it even more important to explore the phenomena of acculturation. This literature review looks at studies that have been conducted on acculturation to provide the foundation for the study.

Purposes and Methods of the Literature Review

This literature review focuses on the topics of culture and acculturation. These topics are defined and a discussion is presented on specific topics of migration, assimilation, and acculturation of West Indian women. The differences between the educational cultures of the United States and the West Indies, associations between acculturation and education, and acculturation strategies are also discussed. The result is a look into the process of acculturation and how this develops to unveil a unique experience of the individuals that experience it.

For this literature review, studies were retrieved using the following databases: JSTOR, ProQest, EBSCOhost and Google Scholar. The researcher used the following phrases and terms to identify potential studies for this review: culture and the cultural factors of human development; migration and assimilation, definitions and cultural issues; acculturation definition, process, and the process of acculturation; associations between acculturation and education, and acculturation strategies.

Originally, the search strategy for the literature review focused on studies that have been conducted in the last ten years. However, one of the discoveries during the search for the literature review is that many of the studies on culture and acculturation date back to the 1960s. Therefore, many works that date to the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s were included in this review.

Description and Critique of Scholarly Literature

The West Indies. The West Indies is a collection of islands south of the United States that dot the Caribbean Sea. The West Indies is comprised of the Bahamas, which is made up of 3,000 islands and reefs, the Greater Antilles and the Lesser Antilles. The Greater Antilles is comprised of Jamaica, Cuba, Haiti, the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico. The Lesser Antilles includes St. Kitts and Nevis, Antigua and Barbuda, Montserrat, the British Virgin Islands, Anguilla, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Grenada, Dominica, St. Lucia, the Cayman Islands, Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados, French Guadeloupe, Martinique, St. Martin, Dutch St. Marten, Curacao, Aruba, St. Eustatious, Seba, St. Thomas, St. Croix and St. John (Hine-St. Hilarie, 2006).

The territories of the West Indies had three fundamental colonists from Europe. The first ones to document their arrival at West Indian territories were the Spanish. However, their exclusivity over the territory was short-lived. Piracy, especially from England, mitigated the Spanish power in the region. Although the Spanish claimed the territory, the territory was too vast for the Spanish to keep control over it. Ultimately, England and France conquered some of the islands in the region, hence its diversity in languages and dialects (http://www.worldhistory.com on May 23, 2012). According to Hine-St. Hilarie (2006) the peoples of the West Indies include the "original inhabitants of the land as well as people who colonized the area or were brought over as slaves or indentured servants" (p. 49).

Migration of West Indian Women to the United States. When slavery was abolished on the sugar plantations in the West Indies migration was perceived as a vehicle for an improved quality of life (Hine- St. Hilaire, 2006). Therefore subsequent to the emancipation of slaves in the West Indies in 1838, West Indians began migrating to other islands (Hine- St. Hilaire, 2006). In their quest for better opportunities they migrated to many parts of the world including the United States (Foner, 2008). The migration of West Indians to the United States began in the early 19th century (Hine- St. Hilaire, 2006). However, most recently the number of women migrating from the West Indies has increased significantly, and as a result, gender has assumed greater significance in studies that involve West Indian migration (Foner, 2008). The following table presents demographic information on the number of West Indian immigrants living in the United States.

Number of West Indians in the U.S.	2,624,392
Females	53.7 %
Males	46.3%
Median Age	33.7 years
Percentage of females who are high school graduates or higher	83.4%
Percentage of males who are high school graduates or higher	82%
Percentage who work in education/health care/social services	35%

Source U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Census Data

According to Alfred (2003) the main reason why people migrate from the Caribbean to the United States is to pursue better economic and educational opportunities, as there is a substantial economic differential between the United States and the Caribbean (p. 243). Hine-St. Hilaire (2006) concurred with Foner (2008) in asserting that wealth is unevenly distributed in the West Indies and that many of the West Indians who migrate to the United States pursue it for economic reasons. Foner (2008) posited, "the desire for economic independence is a strong characteristic of West Indian women and a vital component of their self image" (p. 7). Foner (2008) asserted that more West Indian women migrate to the United States than West Indian men and it is not uncommon for West Indian women to migrate to the United States first then have the rest of the family join them.

Alfred (2003) also posited that in the Anglophone Caribbean immigrant women's pursuit of an improved quality of life in the United States they have pursued college degrees and a significant number of them hold professional jobs. This study involves immigrant, female educators from the West Indies who received

their teacher training in their native countries and have taught in the public school system there before immigrating to the United States. Therefore, it is pertinent to examine the education cultures of the West Indies and of the United States.

Education Cultures in the U.S. and West Indies

Culture. The concept of culture is one that is multi-dimensional and therefore, complex to define. Cravens (2005) offered the following definitions of culture:

> [Culture] is a complex whole that includes knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals, laws, customs, and any other habits and capabilities acquired by human beings as members of society. Culture refers to all those ways of thinking, feeling, and behaving that are socially transmitted from one generation to the next (p. 1).

The above definition encompasses culture as it pertains to a social context.

Similarly, Shen (2005) presented a myriad of definitions of culture based on the works of various scholars, which provide a well-rounded concept of culture:

> Culture embodies any socially inherited element in the life of man, material and spiritual; culture as the learned way of acting and thinking which are transmitted by group members to other group members and which provide for each individual ready-made and tested solutions for vital problems; the culture of society is the way of life for its members; the collection of ideas and habits, which they learn, share, and transmit from generation to generation; a culture is the socially learned ways of living found in human societies and that it embraces all aspects of social life, including both thought and behavior (p. 13).

Although the definitions presented by Shen (2005) provide a good foundation for the concept of culture in a social setting, Eliot (1961) provided a three dimensional definition of culture. Elliot asserted that culture has different definitions depending on its application. Individuals, groups or class, and the whole society all have different definitions of culture. Moreover, Eliot suggested that the culture of an individual stems from the culture of his group and the society as a whole. This notion is supported by Bodley (1994), who proposed that culture has "three senses," and that it consists of three basic components: what people think, what people do, and the tangible material products produced by the people. According to Bodley (1994) culture is shared and learned. Moreover, culture is symbolic, adaptive, integrated, and transmitted across generations. Additionally, Bodley (1994) observed that culture is a continuum that exists beyond its people. As such, culture exists before people are born and continues to exist after people have died.

Another aspect of culture that is worth mentioning is that culture proposes a set of adaptable behaviors for its members. Geertz (1973) proposed that culture suggests a set of behaviors in its members, a standardized way to solve problems, and a set of strategies to adjust and adapt to the environment and other people. This dimension of culture suggests that, although culture implies a defined context for its members, it also provides opportunities for adaptation from other members outside the culture. The guidelines, codes of conduct, and norms that culture provides to its members also prompt individuals outside the culture to implement strategies to adjust to the culture rather than attempting to change it (Geertz 1973).

Culture and human development. Culture provides a context for human development though socialization. Consequently, culture has an important role in the development and display of the behaviors of humans (Berry, 1997). According to Berry (1997), important positive associations have been established between cultural context and the behavioral development of individuals though cross-cultural psychology. Berry asserted that cross-cultural psychology has also studied what happens with individuals when they are socialized in a cultural context and then migrate to another, which will be further discussed later. Cultural socialization, thus, interacts with individuals to shape behaviors that stem from their immersion in their culture. As such, individuals behave according to the expectations set forth by the cultural context in which they are immersed (Berry, 1997).

Cultural socialization is the process by which members of a cultural group learn the behaviors, beliefs, norms, and what is expected of them based on the cultural notions in which they develop. Individuals learn culture by their interactions with their environment (Cravens, 2005). Giddens, Duneier, and Applebaum (2000) defined socialization as a process by which members of a cultural group become self-aware, knowledgeable and skilled in the ways of their culture by interacting with other human beings in their cultural nucleus. According to Leaper (2000), socialization is a process that lasts a lifetime. As such, the process begins in the early years of an individual and human interaction shapes this process throughout life (Leaper, 2000). Through the socialization process individuals learn the social roles that are expected of them, including social and gender roles.

Additionally, socialization imposes notions on ethnicity and race and how the members of a cultural group think and behave in the context of ethnicity and race (Leaper, 2000). Neisser, Boodoo, Bouchard, Boykin, Brody, and Ceci, (1996) postulated that culture is fundamental in establishing different notions of intelligence in individuals and that it also influences the acquisition of intellectual skills.

The assertion by Neisser et al. (1996) is worth mentioning in the context of this study. Previous works (Cravens, 2005; Geertz, 1973; Giddens et al., 2000; Leaper, 2000) posited the influence of culture in the formation of thought, and beliefs of individuals. Neisser et al. (1996) posited that culture may even influence the intellectual development of the individuals of a culture. At the same time, since culture attributes different values to specific sets of skills, the definition of intelligence may vary among cultures, thus making it very difficult to make conceptual comparisons of intelligence across cultures (Neisser et al., 1996). Similarly, Granato, Inglehart, and Leblang (1996) expounded that, contrary to preindustrial societies, in which culture is very much ingrained in religion and it changes very slowly over time, in industrialized societies culture becomes more secular, rational, and much more open to change. Therefore, culture may also be fundamental in the concept of economic development among individuals and groups (Granato et al., 1996). Consequently, culture also shapes political developments, which also influence economic growth.

Culture also provides the norms for gender designation among its members. Eagly and Wood (1999) offered that cultural factors lead to environmental factors

that influence role assignment among sexes. Specifically, sex-differentiated tendencies are built in our social structures so that there is sexual division of labor (Eagly & Wood, 1999).

The findings of the literature make it plausible to assert that culture has an inherent influence on the individual development of human behavior. As it has been discussed, culture provides a framework that shapes thoughts, behaviors, beliefs, expectations, and roles among individuals.

What is West Indian culture? According to Slocum and Thomas (2003) the Caribbean within which the countries of the West Indies reside is a heterogeneous but specific area that is "defined and distinguished by certain historical, ecological, cultural, and social patterns particularly colonization plantation structure, family structure, religion, and folk life" (p. 555). Narvaez and Garcia (1992) noted that the cultures of the countries of the West Indies are heterogeneous and cautions against generalizations about similarities of groups of the West Indies. Narvaez and Garcia went on further to assert, "class subculture and geographic area within each country must also be considered in understanding cultural identity" (p. 3). Differences exist in values, norms, customs and attitudes (Narvaez & Garcia 1992).

Waters (1994) identified some distinct elements of West Indian culture. These include: a high value on education, a willingness to work hard, a strong interest in saving for the future. Educational achievement is correlated with socio economic standing (Waters, 1994). McKenzie (1986) also asserted that "West Indians' numerical dominance back home, ownership of land and businesses, value

of education and upward mobility and work ethic have inculcated in them a strong sense of ethnic and cultural pride" (p. 40)

Consequently, culture is an important component of the West Indian identity and development. In addition, Alfred (2003 and Palmer (1983) support the idea that culture influences acculturation among migrants. This notion will be further discussed in the following section.

Educational culture of the West Indies as compared to the education culture of the United States. As this study is concerned with the acculturation experiences of immigrant, female educators from the West Indies in the United States, it is appropriate to examine both the educational culture of the West Indies and the educational culture of the United States. The literature may provide a good starting point to understand these cultural differences in the educational context.

Educational culture of the West Indies. A review of the literature suggests that the educational culture of the region differs from that of the United States. Roberts (1997) observed that the educational culture of the West Indies transitioned from oral to written over the course of its history. For instance, the vernacular evolved, reflecting the conditions of the culture over time. A variety of languages emerged from the historical events that took place in the region. The countries of the West Indies were colonized by either the British or the French, and in many instances by both the British and French at different times in history. Roberts postulated that a wide array of factors made way to West Indian English. These factors include the confluence between British dialects, Niger-Congo dialects,

and surrounding factors such as religion, formal education, plantation dynamics, literacy, migration, and ethnic identities, among many others.

In a close examination of the existing literature for works on the educational culture of the West Indies, it is evident that additional research on this topic needs to emerge. Much of the research speaks about the language and the evolution of the West Indian English vernacular. The mix of histories and cultures, languages and dialects, historical backgrounds, and current political and economic situations of the countries that comprise the West Indies may be too complex to generalize and examine as a whole. This plurality of the region makes it difficult to make a succinct summary of the educational culture of the islands that make up the West Indies. Froud (1988) and Roberts (1997) attributed some complexity to the culture of the West Indies that stems from its cultural diversity brought about by the colonization and fusions of peoples and groups in the region. There is great diversity among the population of the West Indies. The population includes original inhabitants, people who colonized the islands as well as people who were brought in as indentured servants or slaves (Hine-St. Hilaire, 2006). According to Hine-St. Hilaire (2006) the population can be divided into six broad categories: Caucasian European immigrants; West Indian blacks whose ancestors were from Africa; bi-racial people (a mixture of Europeans and blacks); Indians who were brought in as indentured servants from India; Chinese; and, Aboriginal Indians descended from the original peoples of the Caribbean. All of the countries represented in this study are former British colonies. Although this researcher is not attesting to a homogeneous

educational culture among the countries of the West Indies, there are some areas of parallel that will be highlighted.

One of the commonalities in terms of educational culture is that the educational system of many of the countries of the West Indies, and in particular the countries from which the participants in this study originate, is modeled after the British system of education. This is due to the fact that the countries were all former British colonies.

The representative school boards that are common tradition in the United States do not exist in the West Indies and education is highly centralized (Narvaez & Garcia, 1992). It is important to note that nine of the countries in the West Indies – Anguilla, Antigua Barbuda, St. Kitts and Nevis, Dominica, Grenada, Montserrat, the British Virgin Islands, St. Vincent and the Grenadines and St. Lucia - share a common core curriculum for primary and secondary education (Organization of Eastern Caribbean States Education Reform Unit, 2010).

The degree of parental involvement in schools is another area where there is similarity among the countries of the West Indies. Narvaez and Garcia (1992) posited that decision-making in schools is generally left to educational officers and the professionals in the schools. Narvaez and Garcia (1992) went on further to assert that in the United States context West Indian parents may be perceived as disinterested in their children's education because there is a tendency for them not to be actively involved in school. This is due to the fact that in the West Indian countries and culture educators are held in very high esteem (Narvaez & Garcia, 1992), so West Indian parents trust educators with their children. Similarly,

Palmer (1983) noted that education is valued highly in the Caribbean culture and particularly among Anglophone Caribbean immigrant women. Alfred (2003) further attests that this value of education is attributed "to a history of colonialism that dictated education as a vehicle for social mobility" (p. 8). According to Palmer:

> The need for a sound education has always been emphasized in the Caribbean. The European colonizers in the Caribbean declared education as the determinant of social mobility, and blacks who took over the islands have been even more emphatic. Parents too have drilled into the heads of their children the need for a sound education. It is no wonder then, that in the United States, Afro-Caribbean women have been so quick to take advantage of every educational opportunity—if not for themselves, surely for their children (p.8).

Alfred (2003) conducted a study on the sociocultural contexts and learning using a heuristic phenomenological approach: Anglophone Caribbean immigrant women in United States pursuing post-secondary education. The participants in the study originated from Antigua, Barbados, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Trinidad, St. Kitts, and St. Lucia.

The participants shared the common experience of having graduated from high school in their home country. In many of the countries up until the 1990s high school education was not universal. It was reserved for a select number of students based on age and academic promise. In that process, students took the common entrance exam and were assigned to secondary schools based on their scores. Early in their development the participants in Alfred's study were considered a special

class. The results of the study revealed that the early learning and socialization of the participants in their home country created a "disciplined structure and a solid foundation that enhanced adult learning in the host culture" (p. 249). The study also revealed that participants' ability to negotiate identity and language fostered their acculturation into the mainstream culture.

Alfred (2003) highlighted that because of the competitive nature of secondary schooling, the elementary school structure was designed with a heavy focus on direct instruction and content mastery. Learning was teacher driven, and teachers were expected to adhere to the British curriculum in preparing students to pass the high school common entrance exam. The women in Alfred's study believed that career opportunities were pegged to formal education and embraced the academic journey that would advance their careers. It is important to highlight that the participants in the study felt that while they were "allowed into the academic culture, they did not feel welcome upon entry" (Alfred, 2003, p. 252). Their feelings were associated in part with the position of silence they took in the higher education settings. An important aspect of the education culture of many of the countries in the West Indies is that early school culture did not readily foster classroom dialogue.

According to Alfred (2003) the participants identified speaking in class as one of the biggest challenges they faced in the host country. Alfred also acknowledged the ridicule they encountered from the American public as a result of their Caribbean accent, in conjunction with the cold, exclusive environment where they felt ignored by faculty and peers, as factors that made it particularly difficult

for them to verbally demonstrate their knowledge. Consequently, they became silent knowers.

Alfred, (2003), Palmer (1983), Narvaez & Garcia, (1992), Froud (1988) and Roberts (1997) suggest that Anglophone Caribbean immigrants possess a disciplined approach to learning, which is promoted by family, schools and the community. Therefore this disciplined approach to learning is a result of socialization and the value of education within their culture. There is consensus among Alfred, (2003), Palmer (1983), Narvaez & Garcia, (1992), Froud (1988) and Roberts (1997) that the West Indian culture nurtures and rewards academic success.

Educational culture of the United States. The educational culture of the United States has evolved over the last few decades. Brunner (1996) posited that the United States has undergone a cognitive revolution marked in part by the incorporation of electronic apparatus and computational devices. Another factor that Brunner proposed has impacted and changed the educational culture of the United States is the proposal that the "mind is both constituted by and realized in the use of human culture" (p. 1). The computational emphasis of education has led to processing information differently. As put forward by Brunner, information processing in the modern world emphasizes how data are acquired, processed, presented, collated, retrieved, stored, and managed, mostly using a computerized device. Therefore, education in the modern era is very much tied to technology.

The views by Brunner (1996) propose an interesting paradigm that is parallel to the culture of educational accountability. The No Child Left Behind Act of

2001, PL 107-110 was created to ensure that all children reached a minimum requirement standard of academic potential. According the U.S. Department of Education the purpose of NCLB "is to ensure that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education and reach, at a minimum, proficiency on challenging State academic achievement standards and state academic assessments." *No Child Left Behind* represents a shift in the educational culture of America's schools. According to Darling-Hammand (2007), this change in the cultural paradigm is expected to close the achievement gap, provide parents with more options, improved educational practices and accountability. Although Darling-Hammond argued that the NCLB Act of 2001 has led to many problems in schools and has not fulfilled its purpose, it is clear that there is an emphasis in the educational culture of the United States with accountability on education and ensuring that minorities are not syphoned out of the educational system, whether the initiatives in place to enforce that view have been completely effective or not. A review of NCLB reveals that accountability systems take a more prominent place in the United States education culture as compared to the West Indian educational culture. The educational culture of the countries of the West Indies differs from that of the United States in terms of governance, parents' involvement in schools and school decisions and accountability systems.

Acculturation. As it was previously explained, culture influences the behaviors of individuals within their cultural context. Individuals are socialized to conform to the norms of the cultural context in which they develop. The basic model of acculturation provides for interaction of a new culture group with the host culture

for a changed outcome. Berry (1997) posed important questions regarding acculturation, which are worth mentioning and discussing:

1. What happens to individuals, who were raised in one cultural context, when they attempt to live in a new cultural context?
2. If culture is such a powerful shaper of behavior, do individuals continue to act in the new setting as they did in the previous one, or do they change their behavioral repertoire to be more appropriate in the new setting and, is there some complex pattern of continuity and change in how people go about their lives in the new society? (p. 6)

Before attempting to answer the previous questions, I will examine some definitions of acculturation. According to Gloria and Rodriguez (2000), acculturation refers to the experience of individuals, members of a different cultural group concerning their interactions within the context of the predominant cultural group. As a result, acculturation means to what extent individuals change their behaviors and ways of thinking as a result of their interactions with the predominant culture. Therefore, acculturation is the extent to which the cultural values, beliefs, and traditions of an individual change or remain intact because of an individual's interaction within the context of the host culture (Gloria & Rodriguez, 2000). Berry (1997), defined acculturation as those phenomena that develop as a result of "groups or individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups" (p. 149). The interaction between individuals and groups from different cultural backgrounds may conduce to changes in either or both; however,

acculturation tends to predominantly produce more changes in one of the groups (Berry, 1997).

Figure 1.2. Types of Acculturation groups (Berry 1989)

		MOBILTIY	
		Mobile	Sedentary
FREEDOM OF CONTACT	Voluntary	Immigrants	Ethnic Groups
	Forced	Refugees	Native Peoples

According to Berry (1989), there are four types of acculturation groups. These groups are catalogued in two subgroups: mobile and sedentary. Within the mobile group, there are immigrants and refugees. Within the sedentary group there are ethnic groups and native peoples. This distinction is worth noting. Depending on the freedom of contact within the host culture, acculturation experiences and degrees will vary. This study is concerned with the acculturation experiences of immigrants that come to this country voluntarily, and therefore, their acculturation experiences may be very particular to them.

The psychological process of acculturation varies from individual to individual and may be influenced by social and personal variables (Berry, 1997). According to Berry (1997), the variables that interject with the individual in the process of acculturation may exist prior to and also arise during the process of acculturation. Moreover, acculturation has three basic components that are

constant in every definition: 1) its basic nature; 2) its characteristic course, 3) the level at which it takes place (Berry, 1989, p. 1).

Basic nature: acculturation needs to take place in two autonomous cultures when these two interact. In practical terms, one of the cultural groups becomes dominant as the result of the contact. Conversely, the other group, the less dominant culture, absorbs cultural elements from the dominant group. This interaction between the dominant and less dominant groups makes it appear as though the transition towards acculturation is reactive and conflictive. Additionally, the changes that take place to accommodate the new norms arise and assimilation may or may not be a predominant process.

1. *Course acculturation*: According to Berry (1989), there are three basic phases of acculturation; these are "contact, conflict, and adaptation" (p. 1). The first phase, contact, is necessary for acculturation to take place. The second phase, conflict, is a probable occurrence in the process of acculturation. Berry asserted that the third phase, adaptation, is inevitable. Acculturation, although thought to only happen by physical contact and immersion, can also happen through other interactions between cultures, such as trade, exposure to television or radio, and missionary activities. Although conflict may take place during acculturation, perceived value of the transactional nature of the acculturation process may increase or decrease the degree of resistance to change. For instance, interactions from trade in which there is a perceived benefit may result in little conflict. Conversely, hostile interactions through invasion or enslavement may increase the likelihood of conflict during

acculturation. Adaptation, thus, means to what extent conflict is reduced or stabilized and how.

2. *Level:* As previously stated, acculturation takes place both at the individual and group level. Individuals with greater contact with the predominant group may experience greater conflict. Moreover, individual characteristics may also influence the acculturation experience (Berry, 1997).

These components of acculturation have merit to be mentioned in this literature review in the context of the study. The acculturation process seems to be complex and could lead to conflict in both the dominant and less dominant group. As this study is concerned with the acculturation experiences of immigrant women educators from the West Indies into the United States, these notions of acculturation may transpire.

Ryder, Alden, & Paulhus (2000) proposed that there are two approaches to acculturation: a unidimensional approach and a bi-dimensional perspective. The unidimensional approach places individuals on a continuum of identities, which range from "exclusively heritage culture" to "exclusively mainstream culture" (p. 50). Conversely, the bidimensional perspective proposes that acculturation is a process in which both cultural identities-heritage and mainstream-freely and independently vary (Ryder et al., 2000). Ryder et al. (2000) also proposed that culture may have varied degrees of influence in the self-identity of individuals. Thus, some individuals may base their identity on their culture whereas for others their occupation or religion may play a bigger role. Additionally, individuals are

capable of having multiple cultural identities, which may each have different degrees of strength (Ryder et al., 2000).

The model below presented by Berry (1989) depicts the process of acculturation as it is experienced by immigrants. Integration, assimilation, separation, and marginalization will be further discussed in the following sections.

Figure 1.3. Process of Acculturation (Berry, 1989)

Valuable to maintain positive relations with the dominant group?	Reply	Valuable to maintain identity & culture	
		YES	NO
	YES	Integration	Assimilation
	NO	Separation (Rejection)	Marginality (Deculturation)

Questions about acculturation. Defining acculturation is important. Furthermore, some questions about acculturation are worth exploring in greater depth. Understanding acculturation in general terms may lead to a better understanding of the particular acculturation experiences of individuals, especially the ones that pertain to this study.

An important question that was posed by Berry (1997) was --"What happens to individuals, who have developed in one cultural context, when they attempt to live in a new cultural context?" (p. 6). The literature provides answers from different perspectives.

The migratory waves that take place worldwide and in great volume justify the need to understand the acculturation processes of the host and immigrant

groups. These acculturation processes need to be looked at from the perspective of the social contexts in which they evolve. Different models of acculturation exist which lends to viewing this phenomenon in greater detail.

The Berry acculturation model: Acculturation attitudes. Berry (1997) postulated that acculturation has been traditionally viewed as a process of progressive adaptation that leads people into a disassociation from their cultural group of origin to merge with the dominant host culture. According to this perspective, both the culture of origin and the host culture are at opposite ends of the same line. This approach suggests that acculturation has linearity. This linearity suggests that immigrants move in a lineal or a continuum, which takes them from their attachment to their cultural traits to the adoption of the dominant culture. According to this perspective, biculturalism is in the middle (Navas et al., 2005). This model of acculturation also suggests that in order to experience success within the dominant or host culture, immigrants must become assimilated within the host group.

Acculturation is not necessarily linear (Navas et al., 2005). Berry (1997) affirmed that the degree to which immigrants show adaptation to the new cultural group and the degree to which they hold on to their own cultural heritage happens in two dimensions rather than in the two extremes of the same continuum. Therefore, acculturation attitudes must be measured independently. Berry's model of acculturation leads to the exploration of four possible acculturation attitudes adopted by immigrants: integration, assimilation, separation, and marginalization.

Integration. In order for acculturation to take place, integration must be present. Boski (2008) suggested five meanings for integration in the acculturation process. Integration, as proposed by Berry (1997) considers integration in light of an attitudinal preference towards biculturalism. However, according to Boski (2008), culture perception and evaluation, specialization (functional and partial), identity switching, and ethno-constructive marginality are also constructs that derive from integration during acculturation. Boski (2008) affirmed that these constructs are separate and can also be negatively correlated.

Assimilation. Assimilation is a process. According to Berry (1997), assimilation can be reactive and trigger resistance to change in both the host and the immigrant groups; can be creative and stimulate new forms of culture that are not present in either of the cultural groups in contact; and it can be delayed, which means that changes can initiate that fully manifest years later. Additionally, assimilation is a process of fusion and interpretation in which members of both groups acquire new memories, sentiments, and attitudes that were previously exclusive to the members of each group (Teske & Nelson, 1974). According to Teske and Nelson (1974), through assimilation, both groups share their experiences and histories incorporate them into a "common cultural life" (p. 359). Just like acculturation, assimilation is not an end result but a process that varies in nature and degree. This notion is supported by Berry (1997) and Gloria and Rodriguez (2000).

Separation. During the process of acculturation separation occurs when members of the incoming cultural group reject the culture of the host group and

retain the culture of their origin and heritage (Schwartz, Zamboanga, & Szapocznik, 2010). According to Schwartz et al. (2010), separation is on the opposite end of assimilation.

Marginalization. Marginalization refers to the rejection of both the host and the heritage culture (Navas, Garcia, Sanchez, Rojas, Pumares & Fernandez, (2005); Ryder et al., 2000). According to Nevas et al. (2005), in the spectrum of acculturation, marginalization could be the least desirable. Consequently, rejection by both cultural groups may arise (Nevas et al., 2005). However, according to Schwartz et al. (2010), it is unlikely that a person could develop a cultural sense of self without being able to receive experiences from both the heritage and the host culture. Therefore, the likelihood of marginalization to happen as a result of acculturation is low.

These acculturation attitudes are worth mentioning because, as immigrants integrate and go through the process of acculturation, it seems that the most likely outcomes will lead them to maintain some degree of positive attitudes toward acculturation. As previously noted, acculturation cannot take place without integration (Berry, 1989; Berry, 1989; Nevas et al., 2005). Therefore, it is plausible to assert that all immigrants go through a process of integration into the host culture that is inevitable. It seems as though, after integrating into the host culture, immigrants can either develop an attitude of assimilation, separation, or marginalization. According to the literature (Nevas et al., 2005; Schwartz et al., 2010), an attitude for assimilation or separation may be more easily developed than marginalization. It seems plausible to assert that separation (rejection of the host

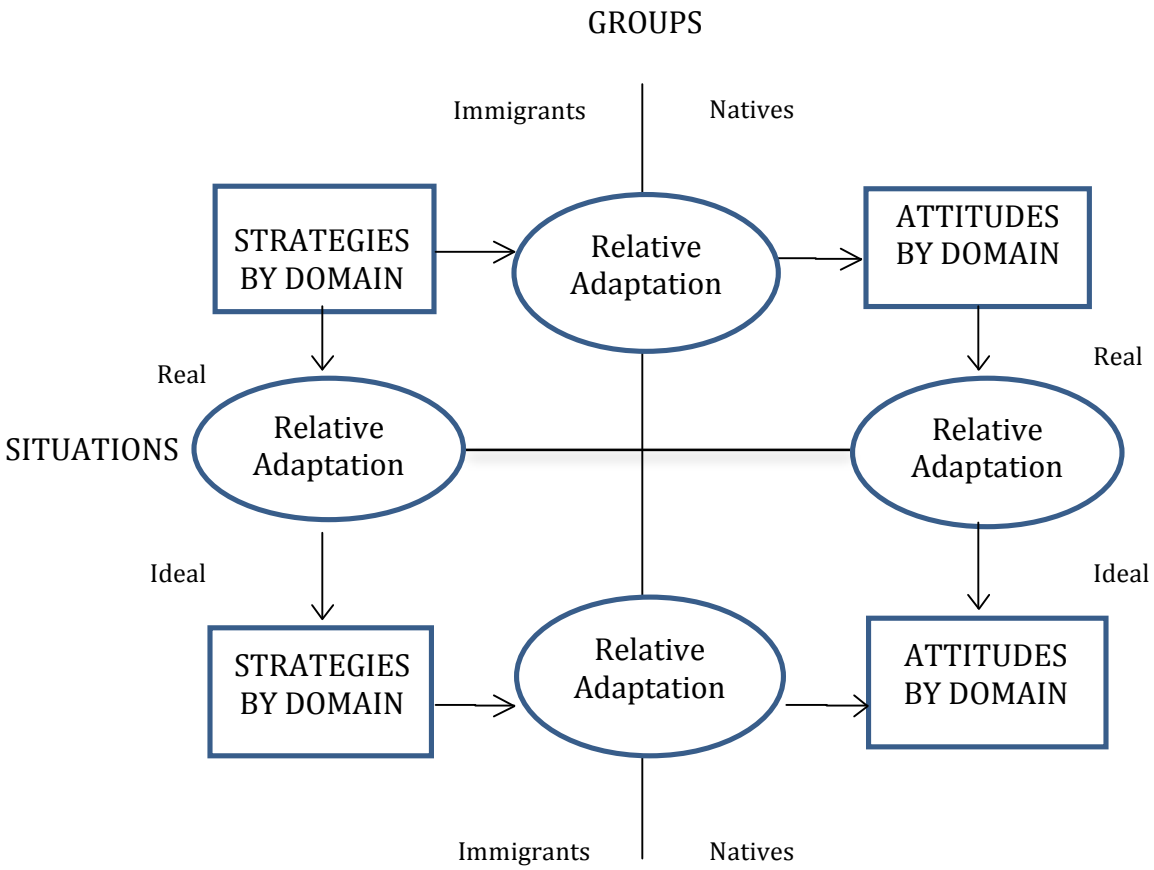
culture) may preserve the cultural identity of the self in the context of the heritage culture. Conversely, an attitude of marginalization may signify that the person would have to redefine his or her concept of self-based on a context outside of both the heritage and the host culture, which may pose greater challenges.

Relative Acculturation Extended Model (RAEM). According to Navas et al. (2005), other acculturation models leave some aspects of acculturation unstudied. Therefore, Navas et al. (2005) developed the Relative Acculturation Extended Model as a way to address the gaps that are not filled with the Berry Acculturation Attitudes Model. After applying the RAEM to populations in South Spain, where immigrant populations from North Africa and the Middle East are present, Navas et al. (2005) concluded that acculturation strategies are employed both by the immigrant group and the host culture. This notion differs with Berry's (1989, 1997) in which the acculturation process is viewed from the standpoint of the immigrant. Navas et al. (2005) asserted that the rationale for this concept of the Relative Acculturation Extended Model is that acculturation happens because of a confluence of both the immigrant and the host populations. Navas et al. (2005) supported notions presented by Bourhis et al. (1997), which stated that acculturation brings about a consensual, problematic, or conflictive relationship between the groups in interaction. RAEM also makes the distinction between the various non-dominant groups by their ethnocultural origin. Moreover, the model considers new psychosocial variables and several behavior indicators that check the predictive capability and modulating effect on the acculturation attitudes of both the immigrants and the host group. The psychosocial variables are supplemented with

sociodemographic data such as (1) age, (2) gender, (3) educational level, (4) religious orientation, (5) political orientation, (6) reasons for migrating, and (7) duration of stay in the host country, among others. RAEM also makes a distinction between preferred acculturation attitudes by both the immigrant and host populations and the ones that are finally adopted by both. Finally, RAEM proposes that there may be different acculturation strategies and attitudes in the sociocultural reality of the populations in interaction.

Navas et al. (2005) emphasized that both the immigrant and host populations would select a set of acculturation outcomes if they could. This notion is considered within the model, which Berry's (1989, 1997) lacks. RAEM presents a bidimensional model of acculturation as it is influenced by both groups, the immigrant and the host. Bidimensional models of acculturation take into consideration the duality of the acculturation experience from the perspectives of the groups that interact in it (Gloria & Rodriguez, 2000).

Figure 1.4. Relative Acculturation Extended Model (Navas, 2005)



After analyzing the above adaptation models, an important question remains. This question of acculturation was posed by Berry (1997) and will be the focus of this part of the literature review.

If culture is such a powerful shaper of behavior, do individuals continue to act in the new setting as they did in the previous one, do they change their behavioral repertoire to be more appropriate in the new setting, or is there some complex pattern of continuity and change in how people go about their lives in the new society?

Immigrants develop and implement strategies to attempt to interact effectively with the host culture. These strategies will vary depending on "(a) the

importance that immigrants ascribe to their own cultural identity (e.g., language, customs, and habits of the home culture) and (b) their relationships with the majority group in the host society" (Berry, 1989, p. 2). According to Berry (1997), there are six basic areas of the psychological operation of acculturation. These strategies of acculturation involve (1) language, (2) cognitive style, (3) personality, (4) identity, (5) attitudes, and (6) acculturative stress. These strategies will be discussed. However, it is appropriate to define what an acculturation strategy embodies. According to Schwartz et al. (2010), the process of acculturation and therefore its outcomes are mostly the result of the selection of specific choices or courses of actions by migrants. Nonetheless, some aspects of the acculturation are limited to the demographic or contextual elements of the acculturation experience. The context of the acculturation experience of migrants include their individual characteristics as well as those of the societies and countries from where they migrate; their socioeconomic status and the access or availability of resources, the characteristics of the host community, and their fluency in the language of the new country (Schwartz, 2010).

Language. During acculturation, a language shift occurs in the migrant group (Berry, 1989). Moreover, during assimilation, the individual switches to the new language. Schwartz et al. (2010) affirmed that when there is no adaptation on the language during the process of acculturation, the host culture may feel threatened. Consequently, not learning the new language imposes a barrier to assimilation (Schwartz, 2010). Conversely, in order to integrate members of the non-dominant group must also value and preserve the native language (Berry, 1989).

Cognitive Style. Cognitive style refers to the way an individual deals and copes with his or her environment (Berry, 1989). The cognitive style of the member of the non-dominant group interacts with the norms of the dominant group through formal education. Additionally, individuals may adopt a bicultural approach and use their biculturalism interchangeably depending on the situation.

Personality. Predominantly, members of the non-dominant cultural group acquire personality styles that better mimic or reflect those of the dominant group. Furthermore, some individuals may be able to switch personality styles according to the situation (Berry, 1989).

Identity. Members of the non-dominant group may be inclined to identify with the host culture (Berry, 1989; 1997). However, there is also a tendency to preserve both identities. For instance, there is the preference among some groups to hyphen both their national identities.

Attitudes. According to Berry (1989), assimilation is favored when there is an apparent similiarity between both the non-dominant and the host cultures. Conversely, when the two groups are seemingly different, rejection is more likely to be the outcome.

Acculturative stress. Acculturative stress refers to the behaviors that emerge from the conflict during acculturation. According to Berry (1989), migrant groups experience less levels of stress when they are integrated in multicultural societies. Conversely, unicultural societies lead to greater levels of stress. Unicultural societies have a single dominant culture which may lead to adoption or rejection by migrants. The results could lead to greater levels of conflict and pathological outcomes

Acculturation strategies. The adoption of an acculturation strategy by a particular individual is defined based on the answers to two fundamental questions: (1) what is the value of maintaining one's own cultural heritage? And (2) what is the value to maintain a relationship with other groups different from one's own? (Ryder et al., 2000). Based on the answers to these questions, an individual may choose to integrate, assimilate, separate, or marginalize (Berry, 1989, 1997; Navas et al., 2005; Ryder et al., 2000).

The strategies used by immigrants when interacting within the host culture may be different from individual to individual; however, based on Berry's (1997) acculturation model, it appears that the result will either be some kind of negative or positive attitude that will lead that individual to adopt some or many of the host culture's norms and behaviors or reject it completely. For the purpose of this study, it is important to understand the process of acculturation so that the attitudes toward acculturation of the participants of the study can be identified in the context of the existing literature. Although it has been established that those who experience the process of acculturation will develop certain attitudes and adopt strategies to acculturate, the question remains whether a person who integrates in the host culture can fully marginalize from the new culture. Although this study will not answer that question, future research should focus on exploring the concept of marginalization in more depth.

Association between acculturation and education. Acculturation may be an important component of success. As the culture in the United States becomes more ethnically and racially diverse it is imperative to understand acculturation.

Although acculturation may not be the sole predictor of achievement, acculturation may be an important factor in the educational outcomes of individuals.

Cabrera and Nora (1996) studied the acculturation experiences of Latino students in college campus settings. The authors proposed that acculturation is important for student success. Similarly, Longerbeam, Sedlacek, and Alatorre, (2004) found that Latino students may better acculturate in educational environments that are ethnically and racially diverse. Specifically, Nora and Cabrera (1994) found that the lack of acculturation to the campus climate may have detrimental effects in minority populations and lead minorities to drop out of school.

The acculturation experiences of expatriate educators can also influence the educational culture. Duff and Uchida (1997) posited that there is a confluence of sociocultural identities and teaching practices among expatriate educators that come to the United States to teach. Language and culture may create friction in the classrooms and affect transmission of classes. Duff and Uchida (1997) conducted a six-month ethnographic study to investigate how teachers deal with the institutional requirements and curricular expectations when teaching North American culture in English classes in Japan. The study also explored the understanding these teachers had regarding culture and how they viewed themselves within social and cultural roles. The themes that transpired from the study were paradoxes and complexities associated with the teachers' identities (professional, social, cultural), a quest for intercultural connection, a longing for control when confronted with cultural practices they opposed, and disjunctures

between the teachers' cultural understandings and practices (Duff & Uchida, 1997). Von Kirchenheim and Richardson (2005) also studied expatriate teachers and their acculturation experiences. Von Kirchenheim and Richardson (2005) investigated the adjustment experiences of teachers who had voluntarily left their home countries to pursue new teaching opportunities in new countries. The sample for the study consisted of 59 expatriates from North America and the United Kingdom and 128 from the Caribbean. The authors concluded that self-efficacy and flexibility are imperative for the success in the adjustment of educators working in new cultural contexts.

From the previous examination of Warikoo (2004), Narvaez and Garcia (1992), Foner (2008), The AFT (2009), and Faez (2010), it can be asserted that acculturation has important implications for education. Both the interactions of the educator and the student in the new cultural context are important in the acculturation process and therefore in the educational success of students and teachers. Although specific studies regarding the acculturation experiences of immigrant women educators from the West Indies is lacking in the literature, the available literature provides an important foundation to better understand the concept of acculturation and how it may affect education.

Inferences for Forthcoming Study

The topic of acculturation in a diverse society has captivated scholars for several years. In this particular study, the experiences of acculturation as they pertain to women who migrate from the West Indies to the United States present an opportunity to explore and learn how they make meaning of their acculturation

experiences. It also reflects participants' perceptions on how their degree of acculturation impacts teaching and learning. The purpose of this study, and that of the literature review, is to explore and elucidate the acculturation experiences of immigrant, West Indian, educators in order to better understand how these experiences influence their professional careers as educators. Moreover, understanding the acculturation experiences of immigrant, female educators from the West Indies is important because the lack of understanding regarding these experiences may have implications for the classroom and educational experiences, both for study participants and for their students.

The literature review first discussed the topics of culture and acculturation, where in Berry (1997, 1989) was found to have extensive works in the topic of acculturation. Culture provides a framework that shapes thoughts, behaviors, beliefs, expectations, and roles among individuals. Therefore, culture is an important component of human development. As such, it is plausible to purport that culture influences acculturation among migrants. Acculturation refers to the experience of individuals, members of a different cultural group concerning their interactions within the context of the predominant cultural group (Gloria & Rodriguez, 2000).

For the purpose of this study, it is important to understand the process of acculturation so that the attitudes toward acculturation of the participants of the study can be identified in the context of the existing literature. The findings in the literature have established that those who experience the process of acculturation will develop certain attitudes and adopt strategies to acculturate. This study will

explore which strategies have been commonly adopted among the participants. Therefore, the findings of this study provide a strong foundation for understanding the themes that may arise from the research.

Warikoo (2004), Faez (2010), Foner (2008), von Kirchenheim & Richardson, (2005) and Alfred (2003) support the idea that acculturation has important implications for education. The acculturation process in education, especially when expatriate teachers are involved, takes a different dimension. From the literature review, it can be inferred that both the interactions of the educator and the student in the new cultural context are important in the acculturation process of expatriate teachers. Moreover, the educational success of students and teachers may be influenced by the acculturation process of both groups. Although specific studies regarding the acculturation experiences of immigrant women educators from the West Indies is lacking in the literature, the existing literature provides an important foundation to better understand the concept of acculturation. Also important is to note that the literature review has also highlighted the need to further study the acculturation experiences of immigrant women educators from the West Indies. Since there is a lack of information available regarding the acculturation experiences of West Indies educators within the United States, the current study is significant for US educational administrators, since many West Indian educators are working in hard to fill positions in US education systems (AFT, 2009).

The information from this study might support educational administrators, international teacher recruiting agencies and school districts to better understand the acculturation process of immigrant women educators from the West Indies in

order to provide the necessary support, orientation and training to facilitate their adaptation and acculturation process. It is important to understand how the confluence of diversity in the teaching body and the student body may have an impact in the acculturation experiences of all peoples in the educational system. This understanding may lead to better cultural training for immigrant West Indian teachers, enhanced cultural awareness, and better educational outcomes.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

This chapter presents the epistemological framework, research question and procedures that were employed in this study. It also discusses participant selection, data gathering and analysis procedures in addition to human subjects and ethics precautions.

Epistemological Framework

This study is qualitative in nature and relies on hermeneutic phenomenology to examine the acculturation experiences of immigrant, female educators from the West Indies who currently live and work in the United States. The rationale for this theoretical framework is explained.

For many years, scholars have studied phenomena using a wide array of quantitative analyses and empirical methods. In contrast, qualitative research has been viewed as one that lacks the rigor of quantitative analysis and one that could increase the likelihood of bias (Laverty, 2003). Nonetheless, since the 1980s qualitative methods have become more widely used by scholars and researchers because of the flexibility allowed that leads to "discovery, description, and meaning rather than prediction, control, and measurement" (Laverty, 2003, p. 1).

Phenomenology and hermeneutic phenomenology have emerged as research methodologies that provide researchers with the rigor to ethically use them in positivistic psychological research. However, often these two methodologies are referred to interchangeably when in fact they are two different approaches. Husserl's phenomenology and Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology will be discussed as the precursor to van Manen's hermeneutic phenomenology.

According to Hopp (2008), phenomenology, as suggested by Husserl, has the basic task of acquiring new knowledge about the "essential characteristics of consciousness, intentionality, and, perhaps principally, knowledge itself" (Hopp, 2008, p. 1). Husserl, considered the father of phenomenology, argued that psychology had become rigorous on attempting to apply research methods from the natural sciences to human experience (Laverty, 2003). For this reason, Husserl suggested that human experiences need to be studied as they occur and are lived in the world. Furthermore, Smith and McIntyre (1982) recognized that the basic task of phenomenology is to discover the most intimate foundations of the beliefs of individuals as it appears in their consciousness. With that foundation, phenomenological research attempts to understand our world and the place of humanity in our world. The purpose of phenomenology is to understand the framework in which the thinking about the world that surrounds us takes place on a daily basis, the thinking that is derived from common sense, and the theoretical and scientific logical thinking of humans (Smith & McIntyre, 1982). According to Hopp (2008), Husserl claimed that all non-phenomenological sciences are rigid and dogmatic and that criticism towards them should come from a phenomenological approach

Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology. In contrast to phenomenology, hermeneutic phenomenology has to do with the life world and the experience of individuals as it is lived. According to Whitehead (2003), the key elements of the hermeneutic phenomenology approach are the "fusion of horizons, the hermeneutic circle, and the temporality of truth and dialogue" (p. 513). The hermeneutic circle,

metaphorically speaking, is the analytic interaction between the whole and the part and how both give each other meaning. The analytical aspect of this approach involves a long and profound period of reflection to situate the meanings derived from both parts of the data and the whole (Whitehead, 2003). According to Whitehead (2003), trustworthiness of hermeneutic phenomenological research is assured by following the trail between the theory, methodology, and the analytical choices of the researcher.

Laverty (2003) postulated that hermeneutic phenomenology, as conceived by Heidegger, emphasizes shedding light on what seem to be trivial aspects within the experience of individuals and that could be taken for granted so that the researcher can create meaning and achieve a greater level of understanding. The most important difference between the hermeneutic phenomenology and the phenomenology approaches are the perspective from which humans are studied. According to Laverty (2003), phenomenology assumes all individuals are knowers. Conversely, hermeneutic phenomenology assumes that individuals are concerned human beings, which place special concern to their fate in a world that is not entirely known to them. Therefore, hermeneutic phenomenology looks at consciousness as the cumulative of historical lived experiences of humans. Additionally, hermeneutic phenomenology seeks to understand our historicality in our background and situatedness in the world (Laverty, 2003).

van Manen's hermeneutic phenomenology. The researcher has chosen van Manen's (1990) hermeneutic phenomenology as the epistemological framework for this study. It is identified as appropriate because hermeneutic phenomenology is

about bringing to light details of one's life or experiences with the aim of creating meaning and understanding the phenomena under study (Crotty, 1998). An assumption of the interpretive paradigm is that human beings construct meaning in different ways based on their frame of reference and circumstances as they interact with the world they are interpreting. Hermeneutic phenomenology is attentive to the philosophies underpinning both hermeneutics and phenomenology (van Manen, 1997). In addition, hermeneutic phenomenology's methodology is aimed at producing rich descriptions of the experience of selected phenomena as lived by individuals that are able to connect with the experience. By delving into the experience of acculturation, a more profound understanding of the significance of that experience is sought (Smith, 1997). This understanding occurs through increasingly deeper and layered reflection by the use of rich descriptive language.

The aim of this phenomenological hermeneutic research is to reveal the essential meaning of the construct acculturation by distinguishing its features and to describe the meaning of the phenomenon within the context of how it is experienced by the participants in the study. The interpretive paradigm is considered suitable for this research because it lends itself to the formation of new understandings of acculturation as a multidimensional construct. The use of hermeneutic phenomenology in this research facilitated the exploration of participants' experiences with further abstraction and interpretation by the researcher, based on researcher's theoretical and personal knowledge. Consequently, hermeneutics adds the interpretive element to explicate meanings and assumptions in the participants' texts (Crotty, 1998).

Epistemology asks the following questions: What is the relationship between the knower and what is known? How do we know what we know? What counts as knowledge?

> …this is how you smile to someone you don't like too much; this is how you set the table for tea; this is how you set the table for dinner;... this is how to behave in the presence of men who don't know you very well, and this way they won't recognize immediately the slut I have warned you against becoming; be sure to wash every day, even if it is with your own spit; don't squat down to play marbles—you are not a boy, you know; don't pick people's flowers—you might catch something... (Kinkaid, 1994, p. 307)

The preceding text is a quote from *Girl* (Kinkaid, 1994) articulating some of her mother's lessons while she was growing up in the West Indies. Central to this quote is the cultural information that gets handed down. It also illuminates the epistemologies that exist in cultural contexts. "The conditions under which people live, and the knowledge we gain from our experiences also shape how we view and understand the world around us" (Beck, 2010, p. 52)

According to Crotty (1998), epistemology as "a way of understanding and explaining how we know what we know" (p. 3). The researcher's understanding of how she knows what she knows is rooted in the hermeneutic tradition. This tradition offers that a phenomenon cannot hold meaning in the absence of conscious interaction with that phenomenon.

In this research on acculturation the participants constructed meaning of the phenomenon under study through interactions with others and society. The

researcher's understanding of the participants' understanding of acculturation was facilitated by hermeneutic interactions with them.

Interpretive paradigm. The researcher also turns to the interpretive paradigm. According to the interpretive paradigm context and personal perspectives influence the meanings human beings as they interact with the environment they are interpreting (Crotty, 1996). Husserl offered that reality mediated through the lived experiences of individuals, and it is also mediated through the particular culture, chronicled period, and language in which we are placed. This researcher believes that reality is not fixed and cannot be fixed; it is indeterminate. The interpretive epistemology deems the subject and object as constituting an inseparable relation. Giorgi (1992) asserted that "there are not two independent entities, object and subjects existing in themselves which later get to relate to each other, but the very meaning of subject implies a relationship to an object and to be an object intrinsically implies being related to subjectivity" (p. 7). Descriptions of reality are influenced and interpreted by cultural conventions. This researcher contends that phenomenon of acculturation is contextually bound and there is an array of variables and circumstances in which acculturation is understood. This highlights how the experiences of the acculturation process are structured and experienced by individuals. Therefore, the researcher analyzed and interpreted the narratives of the participants for emergent themes. The researcher also interpreted the nature of the acculturation of the participants based on her own experiences as an immigrant West Indian female. However, the researcher honored the experience of acculturation by each participant and careful consideration was

given to safeguard the narratives from her fore-structures.

In delving into this study, the researcher's epistemological paradigm, her relationship with the nature of knowledge or the means of acquiring and understanding knowledge informed how she made meaning of the phenomena of acculturation as experienced by the participants.

Overview of Methodology

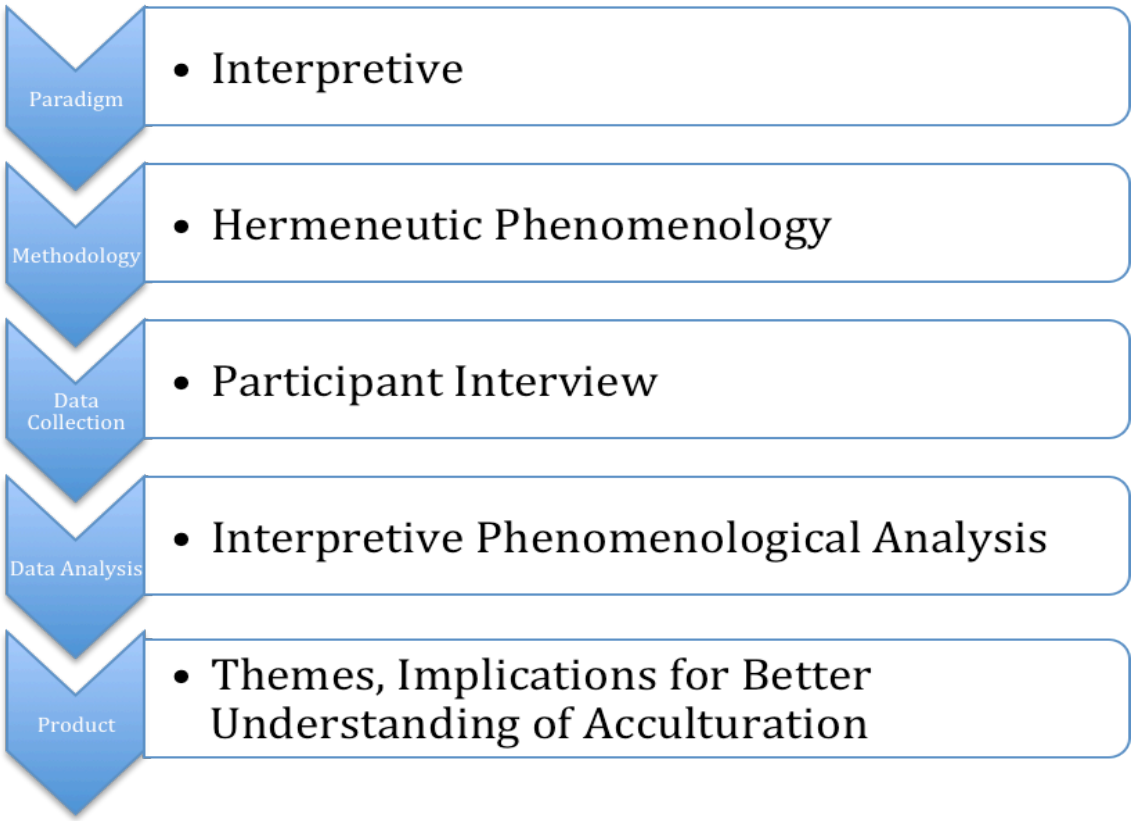
Qualitative inquiry is designed to study the life experiences of people. It is intended to describe and elucidate experiences as lived (Polkinghorne, 2005). This qualitative study on the acculturation experience of immigrant, West Indian, female educators utilized hermeneutic phenomenological methodology. Eight participants from diverse backgrounds were purposefully selected and interviewed about their acculturation experience. All of the participants are working in urban elementary schools and have earned at least one master's degree in education or a related field at a United Stated Institution of higher learning. They have also taught in their respective home country. "The adequacy of a research method depends on the purpose of the research and the questions being asked" (Seidman, 1998, p. 5). The data collection was individual, semi-structured hermeneutic interviews. Crotty (1998) described hermeneutic phenomenology as the investigation of the experience of individuals as it is lived. Its bent is on bringing to light details of one's life or experiences with the aim of creating meaning and understanding the phenomena under study. The researcher believes that the interviews provided access to the context of the acculturation experience of the participants in addition to providing a way to understand the meaning of acculturation. The research

question centers on illuminating lived experience of the participants, therefore hermeneutic phenomenology is an appropriate method of inquiry (Creswell, 2007).

The researcher holds the belief that this study not only explores and elucidates the acculturation experience of immigrant, West Indian, educators, but also adds to the body of research on acculturation as a whole.

The following figure depicts the research approach used for this study.

Figure 1.5 Overview of the research approach adopted in this research.



Foreign-born and trained teachers from countries across the globe including the West Indies teach in classrooms across the United States. Many school districts recruit international teachers to fill shortages in their classrooms. These foreign-born educators then have to discover how to work under conditions that are very different from those to which they are accustomed. In addition they are then

compelled to negotiate the adjustment to their new society, which can be very challenging (AFT, 2009). The process of negotiating differences in norms, expectations, language and society as a whole can lead to, among other things, conflict, stereotyping and prejudice on the part of the immigrant educator, the school community and society in general. There is limited research on the acculturation experience of immigrant, West Indian, female educators. To address this gap in the literature this study will explore how immigrant, female educators from the West Indies make meaning of their acculturation experience and how their perceived degree of acculturation impacts teaching and learning.

Exploratory Question

This research examined the perspectives on the acculturation process of immigrant female, elementary school educators. This study was guided by the following question: *How do immigrant, West Indian, female educators who work in public elementary schools in an urban setting on the east coast of the United States make meaning of their acculturation experience?*

Research Procedures

Justification of Design and Methodology

Classical phenomenologists like Husserl and Merleau-Ponty explicated the conditions of pure lived experience. They both concur that phenomenological research is descriptive and focuses on the structure of experience by including the organizing principles that give all existing matter its form and purpose. This classification clarifies the essences of these structures as they appear in consciousness by making what appears to be invisible, visible (Kvale, 1996;

Osborne, 1994; Polkinghorne, 1983). Phenomenology can be summarized as the study of lived experience or the life of the world (van Manen, 1997). Its emphasis is all encompassing of the life lived by the individual and it includes reality or the world as something cohesive to the existence of the person (Valle et al., 1989). This inquiry attempts to derive meaning of everyday life experiences and seeks to answer the question "What is this experience like?"

In hermeneutic phenomenology, Heidegger and van Manen address the art of interpretation. van Manen's hermeneutic phenomenology is a "research methodology aimed at producing rich textual descriptions of the experience of selected phenomena in the lifeworld of individuals that are able to connect with the experience of all collectively" (Smith, 1997, p. 80). According to van Manen hermeneutic phenomenology elucidates on how we understand and engage others and ourselves in the things around us in our human world. van Manen terms this approach as the "interpretive structures of the experience." (p. 25). However, this study goes beyond *description* (phenomenology) it embraces *interpretation* (hermeneutics) in both social and linguistic frameworks.

Hermeneutic research is also focused on developmental and cumulative effects of individual and social levels based on events derived from their personal and historical experiences. This interpretive process includes explicit statements of the historical movements or philosophies that are guiding interpretation as well as the presuppositions that motivate the individuals who make the interpretations (Barclay, 1992).

This qualitative study utilized van Manen's (1990) six research activities.

According to van Manen (1990) "hermeneutic phenomenological research may be seen as a dynamic interplay among six research activities" (p. 30). The following is a description of each of the six activities:

Turning to a phenomenon, which seriously interests us and commits us to the world. According to van Manen (1990) "lived experience is the starting point and end point in phenomenological research. The aim of phenomenology is to transform lived experience into textual expression of its essence" (p.36). Projects rooted in phenomenological inquiry are inspired by the researcher's commitment to turn it "onto an abiding concern" (p.36). The abiding concern of this researcher rests in comprehending immigrant, West Indian female educators' understanding of their acculturation experience and how they derive meaning from those experiences. The researcher is dedicated to exploring the meaning of the acculturation experience of the participants because of her commitment to highlight the importance of their stories, in addition to gaining a deeper understanding of her own acculturation experience.

The goal of this researcher was to explore the experiences in order to facilitate the understanding of acculturation. As an immigrant, West Indian, female educator the researcher brought to this topic under study a profound interest in how the participants in this study make meaning of their acculturation experience. The researcher's own experiences served as the impetus for this study.

Investigating experience as we live it rather than as we conceptualize it. van Manen (1990) postulated that "the world of lived experience is both the source and object of phenomenological research" (p.53). In order to study the experience of

acculturation the researcher needed to orient herself to the question of the meaning of acculturation. Van Manen (1999) advocates for the use of personal experience as the springboard of phenomenological research. He further asserts that "the point of phenomenological research is to borrow from other people's experiences and their reflection on their experiences' (p. 63). The goal was to arrive at an understanding of the significance of acculturation in the context of the gestalt of human experience.

The hermeneutic interviews allowed the participants to tell their personal acculturation stories which resulted in experiential narrative resource material for developing a richer and deeper understanding of the phenomenon. van Manen (1990) went on to offer that the experiences of others are harnessed because their experiences allow us not only to become more experienced ourselves but also to gain depth of insights into the phenomenon.

The researcher began the first chapter by providing a description of her own lived experience before turning to the experiences of the participants. The researcher's calling to awareness her own experience serve to orient her to the phenomenon of acculturation, by establishing who she is and where she is coming from in relation to the study.

Reflecting on the essential themes, which characterized the phenomenon. The purpose of phenomenological reflection is to try to grasp the essential meaning of something (van Manen, 1990, p.77). Phenomenological reflection and explication foster more interaction with the lived experience. The meaning of a phenomena is multi-dimensional and layered and the only mode of communication is "textually, by way of organized narrative or prose" (p.78).

Therefore in order to arrive at an understanding of the narrative data can be perceived in terms of meaningful units or themes. Phenomenological themes can be thought of as the structures of experience. When we conduct analysis of a phenomenon we are in effect discerning what the experiential structures or themes that make up the experience of the phenomenon are (van Manen, 1990). During the process of analysis and reflection the researcher identified recurring themes and phrases in addition to statements that illustrate them.

Describing the phenomenon through the art of writing and rewriting. A commitment to writing is essential to human science research. Writing allows researchers to make knowledge their own in a new and intimate way (van Manen, 1990). "We come to know what we know in this dialectic process of constructing a text (a body of knowledge) and thus learning what we are capable of saying (our knowing body" (van Manen, 1990, p.127).

According to van Manen (1990) in human science research the researcher does not engage in writing as the last step. Hermeneutical phenomenological writing was done throughout the research process. The researcher wrote memos as she reflected on the narratives of the participants and on the themes that were identified from the texts of the dialogue. The conversation transcripts were the main source of data for this study. In addition, writing was important as this research renders the experiences of the participants to text through reflection and interpretation. The primary objective of this recursive writing activity was to construct a description of the participants' experience by making meaning of and clarifying themes.

Maintaining a strong and oriented pedagogical relation to the phenomenon. van Manen (1990) offered that "to be oriented to an object means that we are animated by the object in a full and human sense" (p.33). The researcher believes that this type of orientation facilitates a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. In the absence of a strong and oriented base to the research question and phenomenon under study the researcher stands vulnerable to engage in ungrounded conjecture, to be distracted, "to settle for preconceived opinions and conceptions or become enchanted with narcissistic reflections or self-indulgent preoccupations" (p. 33). In an effort to maintain a strong and oriented pedagogical relation to the phenomenon of acculturation the researcher engaged in reflection through each stage of the research and each research activity through the writing of memos. The researcher believed that writing memos would help her maintain an orientation toward acculturation in addition to remaining focused on the lived experiences of the participants. It also facilitated the extrapolation of meaning of the participants' experience of acculturation that is grounded in data, literature and theory (Burns, 2011).

Balancing the research context by considering parts and whole. According to van Manen (1990) "one needs to constantly measure the overall design of the study/text against the significance that the parts must play in the total textual structure" (p.33). At major points in the study the researcher reflected on how each activity contributes toward the study as a whole. This recursive examination was done in order to maintain equilibrium between the research methods and responsiveness of methodology. The researcher contends that this reflection is

necessary to keep the research activities on track because procedures for human science research are not standardized.

Site and Participant Selection

The research interviews were conducted at the Gelman Library at The George Washington University. This site was selected because it is considered a neutral location and was easily accessible to both researcher and participants.

According to Polkinghorne (2005) "participants and documents for qualitative study are not selected because they fulfill the representative requirements of statistical inference but because they can provide substantial contributions to filling out the structure and character of the experience under investigation" (p.129). The objective of hermeneutic phenomenological research is to develop a rich description of the phenomena under investigation in a specific context (van Manen, 1997). The participants in the study were immigrant, West Indian, female educators. The purpose of this study was to explore the acculturation experience of immigrant, West Indian, female educators using phenomenological epistemology to humanize and describe acculturation as lived by these individuals. The participants have been living in the United States from 5 to 30 years, demonstrating different degrees of acculturation and experience. The advantages of this range include richness of the data, multiple points of views, different life experiences and motivations. In so doing this phenomenon of acculturation is further illuminated. Polkinghorne (2005) asserted that "individuals who can provide relevant descriptions of an experience are primarily those who have had or is having the experience" (p. 140). The participants were from five different

countries in the West Indies. This diversity contributed to the expansiveness and richness of the data, which is invaluable in hermeneutic phenomenological research. This study included a sample size of eight participants.

The participants in this study met the following criteria: they are (a) immigrant, female educators from the West Indies; (b) they have pursued at least one graduate degree in the United States; (c) they are elementary school educators in urban environments, (d) they share the same acculturation environment (east coast of the United States) (e) they have been living in the United States for 5-30 years (f) they are between the ages of 30-65. In addition, all of the participants in this study on the acculturation experience of immigrant, West Indian female educators are from countries in the West Indies which are former British Colonies and for which English is the native language.

There are various ways to locate and recruit participants to purposefully meet the data needs of qualitative research. The researcher put together a list of potential participants who have had the experience of acculturation from personal knowledge. These individuals were contacted for participation and provided with information about the study *(Appendix A).* The researcher read the list of criteria to the potential participants and they confirmed with the researcher. They were asked if they are aware of others who met the criteria for participation in the study. Those mentioned were added to the list. A brief questionnaire was sent to each of the potential participants to produce short descriptions of themselves (Appendix B). According to Polkinghorne (2005) "the richness and depth of qualitative findings depend on the quality of the sources from which the analysis is drawn. Sources are

chosen because they can provide clarifying accounts of an experience. Polkinghorne further asserted that "the focus of selection is not on individuals but the accounts of an experience" (p.141).

The researcher recruited three participants beyond the number identified as the sample size. The intent of the researcher was to create a diverse group of possible participants for purposeful selection for the hermeneutic interview. The additional recruits were intended to be used for iterative purposes if needed. Additional participants would have been selected if the researcher believed they might be able to add to or challenge the initial descriptions. Furthermore, in the event that someone who had been selected for participation in the study was no longer interested in doing so, that participant would have been replaced with someone from the pool.

Participant selection. The goal of qualitative research is to enhance or deepen the understanding of an experience. As a result, rich examples of the experience are needed for investigation. These exemplars are purposeful, based on a set of criteria and are not random.

The premise of qualitative research is to elucidate a phenomenon. Qualitative research does not seek to generalize information (Criswell, 2007). According to Criswell (2007) he has seen phenomenological studies that involve from one to 325 participants. However, the actual number included in the study ranged between one and ten. Dukes (1984) suggested a sample size of three to ten participants for phenomenological studies.

The researcher selected multiple participants representing different

countries in the West Indies in order to harness different perspectives of the acculturation experience. Through comparing and contrasting the perspectives the researcher was able to identify core elements that emerge or span the participants, in addition to deciphering variations in how the experiences come to light. According to Polkinghorne (2005) the use of multiple participants will in effect serve as triangulation of the acculturation experience by establishing its core meaning using different accounts. The rationale behind the triangulation was not to validate a particular account but to provide for different perspectives of the experience. "The use of multiple participants serves to deepen the understanding of the investigated experience; it is not for the purpose of making claims about the distribution of the experience in a population" (p. 140).

According to Polkinghorne (2005) "the unit of analysis in qualitative research is experience, not individuals or groups" (p. 139). The aim of this study was to describe and clarify the experience of acculturation as lived and constituted in the awareness of immigrant West Indian, female educators in an urban setting. The participants all immigrated from former British colonies and share the common experience of having graduated from high school in their home country. According to Alfred (2003) Caribbean immigrants are not empty vessels waiting to be Americanized upon arrival into the United States. "They come with perceptions, images, and values on issues of race, class, and gender relations that are shaped by the home country" (p.19). The researcher believes that West Indian females who immigrated to the United States as children may have a different cultural grid as compared to the West Indian females who migrated as adults. The researcher

assumed that the latter group may experience and recall their acculturation differently from the former group. In order to improve the validity of the findings, only individuals who emigrated from the West Indies to the east coast of the United States as adults were included in the study.

The researcher selected purposeful criterion sampling for this research. Purposeful sampling is a non-random method of sampling where the researcher selects information-rich cases that have met established criteria. The researcher read through the criteria list and confirmed with the participants.

Consequently, individuals who can furnish rich and applicable discourse about the acculturation experience are primarily those who have had or are having the acculturation experience. The researcher identified prospective research participants who met the criteria for participating in the study based on personal knowledge. In addition, these individuals were invited to recommend additional prospective participants whom they know that may meet the criteria for participation in the study. A letter was also sent to embassies and consulates of West Indian countries in Washington, D.C. for distribution to their nationals announcing the study and inviting individuals to participate in the study. *(Appendix C)*. The researcher read through the list of criteria and confirmed with the participants. The participants were given a small honorarium of a $25.00 gift card for their time.

Participants' profiles. The following is a description of the educators who participated in the study. The participants are discussed in-depth in chapter four.

Participant A: Grenada. Participant A is a single female from Grenada. She migrated to the United States to work and has been living and teaching in the U.S. for 13 years. Prior to migrating to the U.S she taught in her native country for two years, eight years in Trinidad and Tobago and two years in the Bahamas. Participant A holds bachelors degrees in French and Spanish from a Canadian university, in addition to a master of arts in education (TESOL) from a US institution of higher learning. She also lived and worked in Canada.

Participant B: Jamaica. Participant B is married female from Jamaica who migrated to the United States as an exchange student. She has been living and teaching in the United States for five years. She previously taught in her native country for ten years. Participant B holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in early childhood education and a Master of Arts degree in educational leadership.

Participant C: St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Participant C is a female from St. Vincent and the Grenadines. She migrated to the United States to further her studies and for work. Participant C is married and has three children ages, 20, 7 and 2. She taught in her native country for three years and has been teaching in an urban setting in the United States for seven years. Participant C has earned two graduate degrees in the United States. She has been living in the United States for 21 years and is also a board certified counselor.

Participant D: Jamaica. Participant D is single female from Jamaica. She has been living in the United States for 18 years. She attended graduate school in the United States, and has been working in education in an urban setting since 2000. She has worked as a school psychologist, special education coordinator, assistant

principal, and is currently the principal of an elementary school. Prior to migrating to the United States, Participant D taught senior high school English language and English literature in Jamaica, and subsequently worked in Nassau, Bahamas as a high school guidance counselor. She holds a bachelor's degree in arts and general studies from the University of the West Indies, a master of education in special education, a certificate in advanced graduate studies in administration and policy and a PhD. in school psychology.

Participant E: Grenada. Participant E is an educator from Grenada. She has been living in the United States for thirteen years. Participant E migrated to the United States to pursue studies at the graduate degree level. She taught for ten years in Grenada prior to migrating to the US and has been teaching in an urban setting in the Washington, DC metro area for the last eleven years. Participant E holds bachelor's degrees in accounting and business administration. She also holds two MBAs from U.S. institutions of higher learning, one in Accounting and the second in Financial Management. She has also earned sixty credits towards a master's degree in elementary and special education. Participant E earned all but her bachelor's degree from US universities.

Participant F: Barbados. Participant F is a single female from Barbados. She has been living and teaching in the United States for the past six years. She is currently a special education teacher. She initially migrated to the United States to pursue studies in special education at the graduate level. Participant F holds a bachelor's degree in English from the University of the West Indies and a master of arts in special education. She also holds a graduate certificate in professional

teaching standards. Both her master's degree and her graduate certificate were earned from a U.S. institution of higher learning. Participant F taught for ten years in the elementary school system in Barbados.

Participant G: Trinidad and Tobago. Participant G is a married female born in Trinidad and Tobago. She has been living in the United States for 12 years. She migrated in order to keep her family together and to allow her children to attend the colleges of their choice. She has been teaching for 25 years. Eleven of those years were spent teaching fourth, fifth or sixth graders in the United States. The other years were spent at middle school and at district level in her native country. She holds a bachelor's degree in elementary education, and a master of education in curriculum and instruction specializing in reading. Participant G is currently pursuing an education specialist degree.

Participant H: Jamaica. Participant H is a female educator from Jamaica. She has been living in the United States for five years and five months. Participant H migrated to the United States to work as a teacher. Prior to migrating to the Unites States, she taught for nine years in her native country. Participant H holds a graduate certificate in transformational teacher leadership and a Master of Arts degree in new professional studies in teaching.

Data Analysis Strategy

The data derived from the hermeneutic interviews was analyzed using Smith Flowers and Larkin's (2009) interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA). Interpretative phenomenological analysis is informed by phenomenology,

hermeneutics and idiography and was therefore chosen because it is aligned with the epistemological position of this research.

Verification and Trustworthiness

The researcher was unable to control for all validity issues in this qualitative research. However, potential threats like researcher bias and reactivity were addressed with a subjectivity statement that is provided at the end of this chapter. The subjectivity statement outlined the researcher's stance in the study. The researcher also wrote reflective memos after each participant interview to address bias and reactivity. In order to safeguard against potential researcher bias collaborative analysis was also be used to affirm the constructs identified as emergent themes. In addition, the researcher's epistemological perspective, theoretical framework and review of the literature frame her perceptions in the research.

The researcher utilized respondent validation feedback in an effort to increase the validity of the research during the interviews.

The member check technique was done during the interview phase in the data collection process. During the interview the researcher restated and summarized information to determine accuracy. The participants can either affirmed that the summaries reflect their feelings, views and experiences, or that they do not reflect same.

Collaborative analysis. van Manen (1990) recommends "hermeneutic conversations" on the themes. According to van Manen hermeneutic conversations "are helpful in generating deeper insights and understandings" (p. 100).

The researcher shared the themes with four colleagues, two who are not involved in the study but are knowledgeable about the phenomenon of acculturation, and two who are unfamiliar with the construct under study. The purpose of this consultation was to validate the emergent themes from an unbiased perspective. The feedback from the collegial reviews was incorporated into the study as appropriate.

Interview Protocol

The semi-structured interview questions were developed using Seidman's (2006) phenomenological interview guidelines. The guidelines encompassed questions about the life history, experience and meaning of the life experiences. The interview protocol consisted of 14 open-ended questions. The interview protocol was examined and critiqued by two qualitative research study experts. Recommendations for revisions and feedback were used to amend the instrument before it is used to collect data from the participants.

The interview protocol is divided into three sections. The first section consists of three background questions, the second section consists of eight questions that require the participants to describe the acculturation experience and the concluding section consists of three questions that provide the participants with the opportunity to give additional information that they would like to add and an opportunity to ask questions of the researcher (see Appendix D).

Management and Data Analysis.

Data collection. In hermeneutic phenomenology the interview serves very specific purposes. First, it is used as a means for exploring and gathering narratives

(or stories) of lived experiences. Second, it is a vehicle by which to develop a conversational relationship with the participants about the meaning of an experience (van Manen, 1997). According the Polkinghorne (2005) participants' interview is the most common method of collecting qualitative data. Kvale (1996) offered that "its purpose is to obtain descriptions of the life-world of the interviewee with respect to interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena" (p. 5-6).

There are various ways of conducting research interviews, including structured, semi-structured, and unstructured interviews (Minichiello, Madison, Hays, Courtney & St. John, 1999). Semi-structured open-ended questions allow the participants to respond elaborately and in great detail. These types of questions provide for the participants to respond to questions about their acculturation experience in their own words in ways that are meaningful and culturally important to them in addition to allowing the researcher the flexibility to probe their initial responses.

A semi-structured interview format was chosen in this research to provide the advantages of both structured and unstructured interviews. Semi-structured interviews provide greater breadth or richness in data compared with structured interviews, and allow participants freedom to respond to questions and probes, and to narrate their experiences without being tied down to specific answers (Morse & Field, 1995). According to Seidman (1998) an interest in understanding the experience of others is the core of interviews. Seidman (1998) further asserted that "interviewing provides access to the context of people's behavior and thereby provides a way for researchers to understand the meaning of that behavior" (p. 4). "

As a method of inquiry, interviewing is most consistent with people's ability to make meaning through language" Seidman (1998, p. 7).

Phenomenological hermeneutic interviews served as the main data collection method. Data collection consisted of a 45-minute informal, interactive, and open-ended interview conversation with the participant. An additional 25 minutes was allocated for any follow-up questions the participants or the researcher may have had after the interview has been conducted. The researcher piloted the interview protocol prior to its use in this study. The pilot involved three immigrant educators who are not participants in this current study. The average duration of the participant interviews in the pilot was 40 minutes. Based on the average length of the interview during the pilot and the rich narratives that were derived, the researcher determined that 45 minutes were adequate with an additional 25 minutes for follow-up questions if needed. The interviews took place at Gelman library in a private study room. The researcher will conduct the interviews in English. The data was collected over a five-month period.

Polkinghorne (2005) asserted that audio recording qualitative interviews is a routine practice where the recordings are transcribed from its oral to a written form. Transforming the audio of the interview to a written form or text provides for thorough back and forth reading during the data analysis. Mapp (2008) highlighted that audio recording of interviews helps to capture the subtle differences in the participants' expressions and responses that can be overlooked if the interviewer is taking notes while the interview is in progress. According to Seidman (1998) the most reliable way to work with the words of participants is to transform the spoken

words into written text. "The primary method of creating text from interviews is to tape-record the interviews and to transcribe them (Seidman, 1998, p.97). Tape-recording offers several advantages. It ensures that the researcher has the original data. This is important in the event that something is not clear in the transcript, allowing the researcher to go back to the original data and check for accuracy. In addition, tape-recording the interview assures the participants that there is a record of their conversation and that their words will be treated responsibly (Seidman, 1998). The interviews were audio taped then transcribed to create the text for the study. Two digital recorders were used to capture the interviews. The second recorder served as a back up to the first. Each interview was recorded in a separate folder on the digital recorder. The researcher labeled each cassette with the assigned participant pseudonym.

Data Analysis. The data derived from the hermeneutic interviews was analyzed using Smith Flowers and Larkin's (2009) interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA). Interpretative phenomenological analysis is informed by phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiography and was therefore chosen because it is aligned with the epistemological position of this research. Each participant interview was audio taped and transcribed verbatim by the researcher. The researcher conducted inductive analysis to allow for emergent themes. van Manen (1990) describes phenomenological themes "structures of experience" (p. 79)

Manen (1990) describes phenomenological themes "structures of experience" (p. 79).

van Manen (1990) offers the following about a theme:

1) Theme is the experience of focus, of meaning, of point.
2) Theme formulation is at best a simplification.
3) Themes are not objects one encounters at certain points or moments in a text. A theme is not a thing; themes are intransitive.
4) Theme is the form of capturing the phenomenon one tries to understand. Theme describes an aspect of the structure of lived experience" (van Manen, 1990).

Smith et al. (2009) interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) was employed for data analysis. According to Smith et al. (2009) "IPA is a qualitative research approach committed to the examination of how people make sense of their major life experiences. "Interpretative phenomenological analysis is phenomenological in that it is concerned with exploring experience on its own terms" (p.1).

As previously articulated, IPA is grounded in three areas of philosophical knowledge: phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiography. The aim of IPA is to focus on people's experiences and understandings of a phenomenon (Smith et al., 2009). Hermeneutic phenomenology, the theoretical perspective in which my research is situated has to do with the experience of individuals as it is lived. Its bent is on bringing to light details of one's life or experiences with the aim of creating meaning and understanding the phenomenon under study (Crotty, 1998). Interpretative phenomenological analysis is consistent with the theoretical perspective in which the research question is grounded.

IPA process. The following is a description of the analytic process in interpretative phenomenological analysis that was employed:

Step 1: reading and re-reading. The first step of the analysis was immersion in the data. The researcher read and reread the transcript. In addition, the researcher read the transcript while listening to the audio recording. The purpose of this process was to ensure that the research participant becomes the focus of the analysis. According to Smith et al. (2009) "the repeated reading allows for a model of the overall interview structure to develop, and permits the analyst to gain an understanding of how narratives can bind certain sections of the interview together" (p. 82).

Step 2: initial noting. During this step the researcher explored the "semantic language and content" of the transcript. According to Smith et al. (2009) this ensures familiarity with the transcript and the manner in which the participant articulates, comprehends and perceives the phenomenon. The researcher wrote comments and notes while reading the transcript. Descriptive comments focused on characterizing the content of the participants' interview responses. This was done using normal text. The researcher used italic to make linguistic comments, which focused on the participant's use of language, the manner in which content and meaning are presented, the use of idiomatic expressions etc. The final level of annotation was conceptual comments, which is more interpretive. These comments were underlined in order to distinguish them from the descriptive and linguistic comments. The conceptual comments focused on the participants' understanding of acculturation (Smith et al., 2009).

Step 3: developing emergent themes. In this phase of the data analysis the researcher focused on the initial notes rather than the transcript itself. There will be synergy between the notes and the original transcript because of the comprehensive exploratory comments (Smith et al., 2009). According to Smith et al., this process depicts an instance of the hermeneutic circle. The process of identifying emergent themes encompasses breaking up the narrative flow of the interview (Smith et al., 2009). After the researcher captured the whole experience the text was reread and broken into analytical units by numbering the lines of the text. The researcher assigned codes to each meaningful segment and then proceeded to categorize the codes. The inductive approach was used and as a result the codes were developed by the researcher through review and examination of the data. This process involved the researcher looking at the statements that can be deemed as consistent in most cases. The researcher also looked for commonalities between emergent themes then clustered the emergent themes around overarching themes.

Step 4: searching for connections across emergent themes. After the researcher generated a set of themes within the transcript, the themes were ordered chronologically in the order they came up. Smith et al. (2009) posited that the aim at his point is to look "for a means of drawing together the emergent themes and producing a structure which allows you to point to all of the most interesting and important aspects of your participant's account" (p. 96). The researcher used the two basic ways identified by Smith et al to look for connections among themes: (a) type the themes in chronological order, examine the list and move the themes around to from clusters of related themes, and (b) print out the typewritten list and

cut and divide up the list so that each theme is on a separate piece of paper and move the themes around. According to Smith et al. this allows the researcher to "explore spatial representations of how emergent themes relate to each other" (p.96). After this was done the researcher grouped the corresponding themes together. The researcher also employed abstraction, subsumption and numeration in looking for patterns and connections between emergent themes. The researcher subsequently created a table of the themes.

Step 5: moving to the next case. Upon completion of the preceding four steps, the researcher moved to the next participant transcript repeating the process. Each case was treated as separate and distinct from each other. The researcher bracketed the ideas that emerged from the analysis of previous cases. This was consistent with Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis' adhesion to idiography (Smith et al., 2009). This was done for each subsequent case.

Step 6: looking for patterns across cases. This stage is concerned with looking for patterns across cases. The researcher placed the table of the themes of each participant account on a large surface and look across them for connections across the cases. In doing so, the researcher identified the themes that were most potent.

The researcher also employed member checks, by reviewing final interpretations with the research participants to address any researcher bias and reactivity in the research.

Reflective memos. According to van Manen (1990) "the phenomenological method consists of the ability or rather the art of being sensitive- sensitive to the subtle undertones of language, to the way language speaks when it allows the things

themselves to speak" (p. 111). Polkinhorne (2005) offered that observational notes can be written during or after the interview has come to a close. "The immediacy is important to allow better recall of the observations and their contribution to an understanding of the experience "(p.143). The researcher wrote analytic reflective memos within 24 hours of conducting a participant interview. This provided the researcher with opportunities for reflection. The reflective memos also serve to highlight potential bias in addition to safe guarding against transference of the researcher's own experiences. (Miles & Huberman, 1994)

According to Miles & Huberman (1984) memoing is a salient source of qualitative research data. Reflective memos capture the researcher's field notes, impressions, feelings, experiences, and thoughts during the interviews. The field notes were dated and assigned a pseudonym that matched the audio recording so that it can be correlated with the interview transcript.

Polkinhorne (2005) postulated that observations could be used to augment and elucidate data collected from interviews. "One source of observational data in connecting with interviewing is the participants' behaviors, facial expressions, gestures, body tone, clothing, and other nonverbal indications" (p. 143). Reflective memos aid the researcher in attaining analytical separation from the raw data, in addition to providing an opportunity to conceptualize the experience under study. The memo is a tool for harnessing the flow of ideas, insights and observations and expands the density and transparency as the data analysis moves forward (Groenewald, 2008).

Human Subjects and Ethics Precautions

Ethical approval for this research was obtained from the Institutional Review Board of the George Washington University. Ethical considerations raised by this research include maintaining confidentiality. All participants were provided with an information sheet detailing the goal, the research, and the research process directly (see Appendix A). They were also provided with opportunities to ask questions about the research in person, via electronic mail or telephone and they were made aware that they can withdraw from participating in the research at anytime without any consequences.

A poignant ethical concern that the researcher faced was her own subjectivity as it relates to her background as an immigrant, West Indian female educator. The member check technique was done at different phases in the data collection process. During the interview the researcher restated and summarized information to determine accuracy. The participants either affirmed that the summaries reflect their feelings, views and experiences, or that they did not reflect same.

There were no physical risks associated with this study. However, there was a possible risk of loss of confidentiality and privacy of the participants. In order to minimize this risk, participants' names were not used. The participants were assigned pseudonyms.

Many people appreciate the opportunity to be heard. There were no direct benefits to the participants in the form of something tangible, however participants often feel honored that someone listens to their stories. This study provided a deeper understanding of the meaning of the acculturation experience of immigrant

West Indian female educators who teach in urban settings. It revealed their perceptions of how their acculturation experience impacts their teaching practices and ability to connect with the dominant culture. It also allowed for new meanings of acculturation to be experientially revealed.

Participants were assigned pseudonyms in lieu of using their names. The data was stored in a locked cabinet in the researcher's office. The data was then be transferred to the researcher's personal computer which was password protected. Paper files and audio recordings were destroyed upon completion of the study.

Consultation. The researcher consulted with her advisor and previous committee chair on the topic selected in addition to seeking guidance and feedback as the project progresses. The researcher also solicited a critique of the interview protocol by an expert in hermeneutic phenomenological research. The feedback was used to revise the protocol before it is used with the research participants. The researcher shared the data with four colleagues; two of who are not involved in the study but are knowledgeable about the phenomenon of acculturation and two who are unfamiliar with the construct under study. The purpose of this consultation was to validate the emergent themes from an unbiased perspective. The feedback from the collegial reviews was incorporated into the study as appropriate.

Subjectivity statement. The researcher is an educator and doctoral candidate who is a West Indian, female immigrant to the United States. The researcher was recruited by a U.S institution of higher learning and migrated to the United States for school. However, the researcher had visited the United States several times before emigrating and had family members who resided in the United

States. Although a number of studies have been conducted on immigrants and their experiences, most studies tend to omit the significance of the uniqueness of each individual's experience pertaining to the acculturation process.

As an immigrant, West Indian, female educator the researcher holds the belief that acculturation was necessary and pivotal to her professional success. Therefore the researcher embraces the opportunity to explore this phenomenon of acculturation, from the personal perspectives of immigrant, West Indian, female educators.

Cultural beliefs, personalities and experiences are factors that affect how individuals perceives occurrences, how they engage others and interact with the environment. These factors also have bearing on the acculturation process of immigrants and how they view the host country. As a result, this research is potentially biased by cultural beliefs and the experiences of the researcher, as an individual who is an immigrant. There is potential for the researcher to interject her point of view into the study or make assumptions about what the participants intended to communicate based on her personal experience.

The member check technique was completed at different phases in the data collection process. During the interview the researcher restated and summarized information to determine accuracy. This provided the participants with an opportunity to either affirm that the summaries reflect their feelings, views and experiences, or that they do not reflect same. The interviews were audio taped and transcribed verbatim.

Summary

In this chapter the researcher discussed the research methodology and procedures that will be employed in this study by exploring van Mane's (1990) human science research methodology and his six research activities identified for this study. The researcher also offered discourse on the epistemological perspective, research question and design, in addition to providing a subjectivity statement. Data collection and verification procedures, a description of the participants, data analysis and human subjects and ethics precautions were also discussed. The findings and summary are discussed in chapter four.

Chapter 4

Findings of the Study

Acculturation refers to the adaptation process experienced by individuals or groups when settling into a new culture (Berry, 1997). Acculturating groups may face numerous challenges when adapting to the host culture. This study strived to fill a void in the literature regarding the unique acculturation experiences of West Indian, female educators in an urban setting. Additionally, this study revealed the perceptions of how immigrant female educators' acculturation experience influences their teaching practices and their ability to connect with the dominant culture.

The guiding question for this study was: *How do immigrant, West Indian, female educators who work in public elementary schools in an urban setting on the east coast of the United States make meaning of their acculturation experiences?*

Questions 1-3 Participants' Background.

The eight participants of the study came to the US from different countries of the West Indies. Two of the participants were from Grenada, three were from Jamaica, one was from Barbados, one from Trinidad and Tobago, and one from St. Vincent and the Grenadines. The participants had been in the United States for a varied number of years ranging from five to twenty-four. All the participants had at least a bachelor's degree and one of them had a Ph.D. The participants will be referred to as "Participant A," "Participant B," "Participant C," and so forth, throughout the findings and discussion, according to the order in which the

interviews were conducted, and after being introduced as "Participant X" accompanied by their place of precedence.

The participants were asked three background questions to open the interview. This question, although not part of the research questions of the study, was pertinent because it provided background information about the participants. The following is a summary of the responses of the participants when they were asked to provide some background information about themselves, especially as it pertained to their family background, educational and professional experiences, and any other personal information they wanted to volunteer.

Participant A: Grenada. Participant A was born in Grenada and completed high school in her home country. Eventually, she moved to Canada to pursue three undergraduate degrees in French specializing in teaching French to native English speakers, and elementary education. Participant A has been living in the US for 12 years but she was familiar with the US because she had relatives living in the country, which she visited often while growing up. Besides her teaching experience, Participant A had held positions working in the Grenada government as a teacher and foreign service officer, and as a teacher in Trinidad and Tobago and the Bahamas before moving to the US.

Participant B: Jamaica. Participant B is from Jamaica, where she was trained and worked as an early childhood teacher. Participant B has ten years of teaching experience, five of those in the US. The participant described her upbringing in Jamaica as fun, and she was one of five girls (sisters) in her household. Participant B described her relationship with her sisters as very close and described

her mother as “very hardworking” and ensured that all her daughters went to school.

Participant B recalled that primary school was challenging for her. In fact, Participant B failed the primary school assessment exam, for which she had to go to a secondary high school instead of the traditional high school. Although she was disappointed, Participant B decided to work hard. She was at the top of the class so, although she questioned her failure at the assessment test, she excelled in her new school. Participant B recalled that she “even outperformed her fellow classmates who had gone to traditional schools.”

Participant B’s mother was the driving force behind her motivation to succeed. Although both her parents are married, Participant B reveres her mother as the backbone of the family. Moreover, Participant B’s mother was an entrepreneur and she was the main financial source of the household. Participant B’s father worked in a sugarcane factory but after losing his job, her mother became the principal breadwinner. However, Participant B assessed that her upbringing was “very poor” but that she and her sisters all managed to go and stay in school. Participant B recalled that she was noticed by her teachers for her academic performance, being nominated for an award for her academic achievements. She was also part of the cadet corps, which instilled in Participant B a sense of pride when she hoisted the flag every morning. The performance of Participant B was so good that years after graduating high school, the school invited her back to have a part in the graduation ceremony, an event that she recalled with pride.

Participant C: St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Participant C is from St. Vincent and has been in the US for 20 years. Participant C is the last of 14 children in her family and lived in St. Vincent prior to migrating to the United States. She described her personal experience, growing up in St. Vincent, as a very positive one in which "everybody took pride in the raising of children." Participant C shared that she felt very secure in her surroundings.

Participant D: Jamaica. Participant D was born in Jamaica and lived there most of her life. Participant D attended school in Jamaica and pursued training at the teachers college, which propelled her into her teaching career at various schools. Participant D started teaching 7th grade, which in Jamaica is considered high school. Her experience included teaching remedial and developmental reading, which led her to eventually develop a guidance education program for the school for children who were underperforming. Per her account, the program was very successful, which granted Participant D the title of guidance counselor. Participant D also worked as dean of students for a coeducational boarding school and later asked to become a homeroom teacher, which she did for six years. As a room teacher, she kept the same students from 8th grade through graduation from high school.

Participant D decided to return to school to further her education. According to Participant D, Jamaica offers study leave with full pay so teachers can advance their education, of which she took advantage. She specialized in language arts and English literature, and also took courses in sociology and politics. Upon completion of her college education, Participant D went back to teach English language and

literature at the senior school level at the school where she previously worked, which she thoroughly enjoyed.

Participant D accepted a job offer to work in the Bahamas shortly after going back to her old teaching job in Jamaica. Interestingly, Participant D reflected that, although the Caribbean may seem to have a common culture across the islands, she felt intimidated by the possibility of working as a counselor in the culture of the Bahamas. However, she moved and worked in counseling for five years in the Bahamas, servicing underperforming senior high school students. She subsequently pursued her interest of attending graduate school in the US. In the US, Participant D pursued a master's degree in education with a major in reading and eventually went on to earn a doctorate in school psychology. Her experiences in the US include working as a school psychologist for three years, special education coordinator, and she was responsible for introducing an autism program that became a model program for the school district. Eventually, Participant D became assistant principal and she is now the principal of her school.

Participant E: Grenada. Participant E lived in Grenada most of her life. An elementary instructional coach, Participant E describes herself as a lifelong educator. She described her childhood years as enriching and full of parental involvement and support. Participant E has been in the US for 13 years. According to her account, she left her teaching job in her native country, which proved to be a challenge. Participant E described going to school as "a conscious vow back into poverty," meaning that she had to be conscious of very minor financial expenses. Additionally, the coursework was very difficult and Participant E spent long hours in

the library; however, her determination to succeed in spite of the hardships proved to have paid off. By applying herself to a strict study schedule seven days a week without any entertainment, although challenging, was a commitment out of which Participant E was not willing to bail.

Participant F: Barbados. Participant F is a native of Barbados and has been living in the US for approximately six years. Participant F has been teaching for a total of 16 years; 10 of those in Barbados. Holding a bachelor's degree in English, Participant F migrated to the US to pursue a Master's degree in Special Education and upon completion of her degree, decided to stay to experience teaching in the US.

Participant F recalled her experience growing up in Barbados. From poor upbringing, the value of education was instilled in her throughout her life and expressed that being poor was not a hindrance to becoming whatever she wanted to be. Moreover, there was no question about going to college, and although the university work was hard, she saw it as a means of "moving from poor to maybe middle class and experiencing some of the better things in life."

Participant G: Trinidad and Tobago. Participant G was born in Trinidad and Tobago and migrated to the US in 2000. Per her account, teaching has been Participant G's work experience all her life. Coming out of high school, she entered teachers college. Participant G was part of the novel introduction of teachers college by the Prime Minister of her country, and the students selected to participate in such program were considered "a top group in the country." The high school graduates were selected based on test scores that qualified them for the experience; which turned out to be of great satisfaction to her. In fact, after completing the

program, Participant G expressed that graduates were able to choose the school in which they desired to teach. Participant G added that she started her career teaching sixth grade in Trinidad and that they did not need a specific training for primary or secondary education and placement in the grade level and the subject to teach was assigned based on personal preference.

Participant G explained that attending university to complete an undergraduate degree was optional. However, the teaching diploma (from teachers college) was sufficient and qualified teachers to teach for as long as they wanted. Nonetheless, an increasing amount of people decided to pursue an undergraduate degree.

Raising a family, teaching, and working on an undergraduate degree proved too challenging for Participant G. Rather, when she had her first child she dropped out of college and encouraged her husband to go instead. Eventually, after she had her third child, Participant G went back to the university to complete her bachelor's in Education. In the meantime, Participant G continued to work in middle school for a number of years. Later on, Participant G went to work for the school district as a curriculum officer for a couple of years until the program closed. Her working experience with the public school system ended with her resignation, which led to an experience as an external examiner for a local university, assessing teachers based on their instructional delivery and lesson plans. After a year of working at the university level, Participant G's family decided to move to the US. Participant G recalled that the decision to come to the US, greatly motivated by family matters, was not an easy one to make because she was happy in her home country.

Additionally, her children would have gone to college for free in her home country, which was a good incentive to stay.

Participant H: Jamaica. Participant H was born and raised in Kingston, Jamaica, and she attended elementary and high school in her home country. The participant went to what she refers to as "teachers college" after high school, which is a four-year program that trains and prepares high school graduates to become teachers. However, the teachers college did not grant an undergraduate degree. Participant B started her teaching career right out of teachers college, teaching in various capacities, from kindergarten to preparatory school. After some years of teaching Participant B decided to get a bachelor's degree, which she pursued in a Canadian university with campus in Jamaica. After three years, she earned her bachelor's degree and decided to come to the US, as a single mother of two children aged one and five at the time.

Participant H grew up surrounded by family and she described her family as an important element of her upbringing. Her arrival to the US was abrupt and full of challenges. Leaving her native Jamaica for the first time, she was detained in Jamaica by a hurricane, which delayed her arrival and almost jeopardized the teaching job she came to assume. The delay caused by the hurricane, not only started her at odds with the administration of the school that had hired her; it also imposed a financial burden that was difficult to overcome, she had exhausted all of her money while she stayed in the hotel that harbored her during the hurricane. In fact, the persons in charge of picking her up upon arrival in the US and transporting her to her hotel were not understanding of her situation, even casting shame on her by

reprimanding her for not having money to pay for her hotel room. Moreover, she did not find support with logistics upon her arrival, making her first few days in the US a challenging ordeal.

Participants' Answers to the Interview Questions on their Acculturation Experience

The participants were asked to volunteer information regarding the research questions that guided the study. Questions four through ten were formulated to gather rich descriptions of the acculturation experiences of the participants based on their own perceptions. The questions were open ended, which gave the participants the freedom to express themselves. The researcher only provided guidance when the participants needed to be reminded of the question; therefore, the depth of the responses varied according to what each participant provided.

The participants were prompted to respond to a series of questions to describe their acculturation experience in the US. The responses of the participants varied according to the information they recalled or that they were willing or able to volunteer. The following section will reveal the responses given by the participants to each of the research questions.

Question 4: Describe your initial experience when you moved to the US. The participants described their experiences upon their arrival to the US. Although not all of the participants used the word "culture shock" to describe their feelings when they arrived to the US, it is evident that perception met reality at a personal level for these immigrant women. Differences in food, the weather, financial

constraints, and not being used to the American system of education and the culture within the education system transpired as challenges for the participants.

Participant A described her teaching experience as being very different to her previous one in her native country. Participant A found significant differences in the education system as it relates to children's motivation to learn as compared to her home country and the US:

> Teaching in Trinidad was very different than teaching in the US. First of all, here the kids don't have much interest in school. The kids I taught were low income; a lot of the fathers were in jail. The kids were 'in the system' and I had to learn what the system was. I worked in a drug-infested area where people got killed all the time. I had the same high expectations for my students [as I had back home]; however, I realized I had to get used to teaching American kids. You can't talk too hard to them, there's no corporal punishment, and if they tell you they don't want to learn, they won't. My blood pressure went up as a result.

Participant B recalled having pressing difficulties that not only delayed her arrival into the US, but also made her arrival in the US one full of challenges. Moreover, her personal situation almost cost her job. In her own words:

> I came up by myself and my two boys, ages one and five. I came through a recruiting agency but things did not work out as I planned. A hurricane detained me and we were trapped in a hotel for three, four days, so I used up all the money I had to pay for our expenses while still in Jamaica. When I got to the airport, I explained to my escort that I did not have any money and

asked them to assist me. The people from the recruiting agency were very disappointed in me and even reprimanded me saying, "how can you come into this country without money?" I explained my situation as I burst into tears. One of the people from the recruiting agency helped me by paying the first night of my hotel stay. I was transported to the school by a lady from the recruiting agency the day after my arrival. The school was conducting a professional development session, for which I was already late due to the weather situation that delayed my arrival. The principal of the school scolded me for being late, in spite of having received communication regarding why I came in later than expected. She even mentioned she considered giving my spot to somebody else since I was not there. I had to borrow money from other teachers I met on my first day at the job, did not know my way around, and found my belongings waiting for me at the lobby of the hotel after I came back from my first day of the job because I was late bringing the payment. In fact, they did not want to give me another night at that hotel. A kind lady was referred to me, who allowed me and my family to stay in her spare bedroom for one week until I got an apartment.

Participant C faced a reality when she arrived to the US that was different from the one she had envisioned. Per her account, the media had influenced her perceptions about the US and her expectations upon her arrival:

I finished graduate school in the Caribbean and had high expectations of the US. I always heard about the glamour of the US and figures like Michael Jackson and Whitney Houston, which led me to believe that people of color

were prominent and able to advance in the US. I saw a different reality when I got here. I was expecting better houses than in the Caribbean; however, when I came to live with my sister in NY, she lived in a one bedroom apartment and she, my niece, and I lived there and she was still opening the door for newcomers from the Caribbean. The standard of living was lower than I expected.

For Participant D, the first experiences upon her arrival to the US were described as positive. Participant D had a brother in the US, with whom she lived before she decided to live on her own. However, the weather proved to be difficult to live through. In spite of her challenges, Participant D was able to excel and be noticed for her academic performance:

> When I first came to the US, I stayed with my brother in NJ. Having him buffered the fact that I did not have family around. I stayed with a friend and my sister later until I decided to move to my current city. My first winter experience was brutal. I was seeing ice on the ground for the first time. I did not know how to walk in the snow. I did not know how to walk on ice. Not having family around was one of the biggest challenges for me because we were so close. I stayed focused in spite of the fact that I was living on a shoestring budget; but I had my goals and I was determined to achieve them, regardless of what came in the way. Even the church worship was different to what I was accustomed to. I saw things that would be considered a sin in the Caribbean, like people lighting a cigarette on church grounds, which shocked me. I had to learn how to navigate the city, which included taking the

metro. However, I found the academic system easier to navigate and negotiate here than in my country. My performance got me rewards and recognition from my professors, which built up my confidence.

Participant E described her first experiences upon her arrival in the US as "rough." Her financial situation was difficult and she found the coursework to be challenging. Nonetheless, Participant E talked about her determination during that time of her life:

> When I came to the US, it was rough. I came directly to school and the school experience was very hard. I was conscious of every penny I spent, the coursework was rough; however, I came with the determination to succeed in spite of the hardships, I focused on my goal and gave my all to my studies.

Conversely, Participant F found a reality that was easier than what she envisioned before coming to the US. Navigating the system was a challenge for Participant F. On the other hand, the camaraderie with professors in college was deemed as a positive experience:

> I had reservations when I first got here; I thought it was going to be very difficult. It was not as hard as I envisioned at first but I did have challenges along the way. Trying to navigate the system, understanding things, seeing things for the first time in the classroom. Here, there is a lot more camaraderie with your professors and a more open relationship; they want you to succeed. You could always ask a question and it was surprising and rewarding. Professors in Barbados are considered superior and there is never a relationship in which you can ask questions and have them answered

outright. I saw a rubric here for the first time; something that actually tells you what it wants you to do in order to be successful. That was unheard of in my country.

Participant G shared her reluctance to come to the US. She described the professional experiences she faced when she came to the US. Her account is full of details about how she dealt with those first experiences:

> The truth is I never really liked the US and I never really wanted to come. I began to look for jobs immediately and started working at a department store. Being on my feet all day long and working long hours, working the hours other people did not want to work proved to be challenging. I had to clean up after people. One day my sister came to visit from Canada and visited me at one of the stores where I worked. She saw me folding clothes and she just marveled if that was what I had come here to do. I knew I was not staying there. I also found African American women the most difficult to deal with. They thought I knew nothing. Another African American coworker also looked down at me and used to say mean things to me, until one day I snapped.

Participant H said there was a "culture shock" when she first arrived in the US. Specifically in the context of the school where she worked upon her arrival, she found differences in duties she had to perform as a teacher, versus her role as teacher in her native country:

> There was a culture shock. For instance, in the school where I used to work in my country, the principal would go to the classroom prior to the first day

of school and she would make sure the chairs, desks, and everything you needed were there for you. Here, by the contrary, I was responsible for getting everything ready for the first day of school. I did not like the first school where I worked here in the US, I did not like the surroundings, it didn't look good. I asked to be changed to another school but they did not grant my petition. I had to wipe the tears and stay because I did not want to go back to Jamaica. However, the first day of school changed my perception. The principal and teachers were warm and supportive. In the beginning, one boy in the class used to laugh when I talked because I sounded funny. Although this hurt my feelings, I never showed it. I explained to my students that I was from another country and that's why I sounded different. After a few weeks, they got used to it. Also, I was not used to working with kids diagnosed with ADHD, I was not used to kids who would talk back at me, I wasn't used to the disrespect of parents. In Jamaica, parents are very respectful. The teacher was respected. Everyone knew me. I also had to adjust to the different technology in the classroom and life in general. It took me a while to get accustomed to the taste and types of foods eaten here. My accent has been an issue and I try to speak slower so people can understand me. The dress code in the classroom is different too. I brought my tailored suits but I cannot wear them because I look so different.

Question 5: Reflecting on your experience, what does acculturation mean to you? The participants provided similar descriptions of what acculturation meant for them. "Adjusting", "adapting", "fitting in", "adopting", and "new culture"

were common words to describe what acculturation meant. For the most part, the definitions of acculturation provided by the participants were neutral.

Participant A incorporated the word "new" in her definition of acculturation. In her definition, the topic of adjusting her name as a measure of acculturation was provided. Furthermore, Participant A specifically pointed out to learning as an acculturation strategy:

> Acculturation means adopting and adjusting to a new culture, a new society. To some extent, adjusting your names to really fit in. However, I resisted that. I realized I had to learn the kids' backgrounds and know why a kid is sleeping on his desk- it may not be that he is not interested but that he can't sleep because there are rats running around or because mommy has a boyfriend and there is too much noise going on.

Participant B described acculturation as "adapting to a new culture, lifestyle, people. It is sometimes to forsake familiarity of what you know and adapting to the culture I am now embracing." For Participant C, acculturation meant integrating herself into the dominant culture; however, she had negative sentiments about the process that she was undergoing:

> Acculturation is your way of embedding yourself in a new society and a new community. The acculturation process took me a long time. Actually, I am still undergoing the acculturation process because you never really find your footing. You never feel home. There are a lot of surprises for me.

Participant D provided a definition that merged both cultures: hers and the host's. The word "integration" was used to describe her experience, which she did not equate with changing some aspects of herself, such as her accent:

> Acculturation to me is realizing, in essence, that you are living in a culture that may be different from yours but you integrate your own cultural experience and you literally become part of the American society. It doesn't necessarily mean that you have to change your accent, which a lot of my people from home seem to think. It [acculturation] is adapting to the way of life of the place where you live.

Participant E used the word "absorbing" to describe acculturation. Participant E also referred to "the secondary culture" to the culture to which she moved. Participant E's description of what acculturation meant to her also contained the words "more or less" to describe the absorption of the secondary culture to which she referred in her definition:

It [acculturation] means absorbing the culture that you have lived in – the secondary culture; the culture you have moved in – more or less. [It is] what you have taken or assimilated as a result of being in the new culture.

Participant F's definition of acculturation had some ambiguity, which was evident in her description: "Acculturation [means] being able to fit in, I guess." Participant F's definition of acculturation included the words "navigate" and "function" as a way of describing what acculturation meant to her: "Being able to navigate your surroundings and begin to understand how it functions and to see yourself fitting in to that new and different society." Understanding how her new

surroundings function provided a rich description and highlighted her explanation of how she makes sense of the concept of acculturation.

For Participant G, acculturation included observation and fitting in: "You have to see what is there, how people are in the country where you have migrated and you have to fit in as best as you can." Her description also included an explanation as to why she is the one who has to fit in. Participant G argued that "they [the host culture] don't necessarily want to adopt anything that you have."

Participant H's definition of acculturation included the word "changing." In her description, acculturation required for one to change the way of doing things to be "effective."

> [Acculturation] is like changing or getting accustomed to another culture. It's learning a new culture and it's like adjusting to a new culture so you still have your things that you would do from your culture but then you have to fit in more to be effective. There are certain things you have to change the way you do them.

Question 6: Did you find anything challenging about your acculturation experience, and if so what did you find most challenging? The participants volunteered in depth explanations about how the acculturation experience influenced them once they arrived in the US. Based on the descriptions provided by the participants, it is evident that the acculturation experiences were stressful. Having to learn social norms and facing prejudice was prevalent in the acculturation experiences of all the participants. The language barrier imposed by the accent of the participants and its impact in the communication, as well as deciphering

differences in semantics and word usage with Americans also transpired as a challenge.

Participant A deemed the unfamiliarity of her experience being one of the most challenging aspects of acculturation: “The most challenging was I had never been in such an experience ever in my life. My experience in the Bahamas was very different from the US.” Moreover, Participant A asserted that the African kids were more responsive and the parents more involved than other ethnic groups she had represented in the classroom. Participant A “found that the African kids who were African immigrants, their parents were more responsive than the West Indian parents. It was difficult to reach African American parents to help the students.”

Participant B mentioned food and the way people responded to her accent as her biggest challenges when she arrived to the US. Furthermore, Participant B mentioned adjusting her accent to gain more acceptance from others. Participant B pointed out that, as a result of her accent, she perceived distrust from parents in her ability to teach.

“Apart from the food, how people responded to my accent. There were times that I felt that I had to try and speak with an American accent to be more accepted because once I started teaching, I could see the way parents would respond to me. It was as if they were thinking: “Oh! She’s not from here, so maybe she won’t know the right way to teach my child.”

Participant B deemed her accent as her most pressing challenge during the acculturation process. She provided that she “felt like I needed to show them or prove to them that I am more than what my accent,” and negotiated with herself

how to implement strategies to "have people look beyond my accent and constantly prove myself because I talk with an accent." Moreover, Participant B expounded that her accent altered other's perception about her qualifications for the job: "I know I am good at it [my job] and I can do a really good job if you would just give me the opportunity to."

For Participant C, being "treated differently" proved a challenge during her acculturation experience. Once again, Participant C pointed to her accent as an acculturation challenge when she moved to the US:

> What I found most challenging was, I think, being accepted, just not being treated as different. I tried to speak like an American and it didn't come out well. I tried to adopt the body language, the little cues that make you not look different, but all of that was very hard.

Although Participant D described her acculturation as "not difficult for me", she did encounter challenges. However, Participant D attributes her "gregarious" personality and the fact that she likes changes to the fact that she feels that the process of acculturation was not challenging. Conversely, Participant D provided an important challenge she faced during her acculturation process:

> Over the years, I have come to realize that it seems like in the American society you are supposed to be less than a sub-person if you are not born in the US. You speak with an accent and so people think you are stupid, for lack of a better word.

Although Participant D feels that the demeaning manner in which people may treat non-US born citizens is her perception, this is something she is "trying to

work through." Another challenge of the acculturation experience that Participant D pointed out was the usage of certain words in the US versus her home country. The words "stupid", "hell", and the expression "go to hell" are all accepted in Participant D's native country; however, she perceived that their usage is "not politically correct in the US society."

> I had to get accustom to some of the language, for example. I would say hell and I didn't know go to hell was a bad word here in this country and people look at me, especially at the school, like "what did you just say?" The "F" word really got me [here in the US]. It's interesting that in Jamaica, if you say the "F" word, the police arrest you. But here [in the US] people just use it. And every time I hear it, it just jerks me!

Participant D also found an important challenge in the difference the way teachers are treated in the US versus how they are treated in her home country. Educators, according to Participant D's perception, hold a different status in both countries. In her description of what she considers the most challenging aspect of her acculturation experience, Participant D provided an in depth explanation of the differences between how educators are treated in both the home and the host country:

> In school [in Jamaica], there's so much respect for your teachers and professors that you almost idolize them. When I came here, people just spoke to teachers and professors in the academic setting like you're all the same. And I was shocked. I did not know how people did that. So eventually I adjusted to a lot of that.

For Participant E, the most challenging aspect of her acculturation experience was to "have the ability to understand the people in terms of interactions." Perceptions of prejudice also permeated her description:

> I found it very hard trying to meet some of the expectations; social norms. Basically, being treated as a second-class citizen and really being accepted for who you are or what you are, but always being constantly reminded that you don't really fit in, maybe because of the way you talk. That for me was very unsettling.

Participant E's accent also transpired as a challenge she must face regularly:

> I'd be at work and someone invites me to some activity and there might be a comment when I speak. Someone would say "she's not from here, she's from somewhere else", and it's said in that tone that makes you feel that who you are is not really what is accepted because you are not American.

Moreover, Participant E had to negotiate with herself to overcome these challenges:

> The comments about my accent bothered me until I realized I had to just be me and appreciative of what I brought to the situation and not really bother with what people think of who I was because of my background and my own culture.

Participant F found that diversity and the interactions between the different races was among the most challenging aspects of her acculturation experience:

> I am coming from a society where roughly 95 percent of the people are Black, 5 percent other, so that's roughly 3 percent White and 2 percent diverse: Indian, Chinese, Asian. So the first thing we have to navigate is this whole

culture of diversity. Black and White relationships and maybe even some discrimination in certain circumstances were very new to me.

Specifically, Participant F offered an example of discrimination she experienced when he got to the US. Per her account, Participant F believed she had been discriminated against when she tried to apply for a part time job on campus. According to her description of the discrimination she suffered, she "could not see any other reason why she could not get a simple job in a book shop that was beneath me, coming to work here at such a low-end job for minimum wage."

Participant G expressed that the most challenging about her acculturation experience was the reciprocal lack of acceptance between hers and the host culture: "Just as they had problems accepting my [culture], I had problems accepting theirs." The fact that things were "very, very different" proved a challenge that permeated to different areas of the everyday life, including the food and eating habits:

> The food was very difficult at first because we eat differently [in my country]. We had a very big breakfast, we had a very big lunch and dinner was very little. Adjusting to the work situation [in the US], you had to adjust the times and your food. You couldn't cook your meals and your kind of food every day. So you had to adjust to the hurry-out breakfast, breakfast on the go, and then you had a light lunch, and then dinner is the bigger meal. And the meal isn't really cooked; you got a takeout meal.

Additionally, the dress code proved a challenge to Participant G. Dressing for the changes of season was something Participant G did not have to face in her home country:

> Apart from the food, I had problems with the dress code because I dressed for year-long summer [in my home country]. So when I came [to the US], I still dressed for year-long summer and just put extra clothes on when needed.

Challenges with the agency that brought her to the US are also mentioned by Participant G. Problems with the placement agency that brought her to the US made her experience "not very pleasant or welcoming for me because they had a lot of assumptions and prejudices about somebody who migrated from the Caribbean." Participant G noted that the placement agency "did not have experience meeting immigrants", which posed a challenge.

What to communicate during conversations and meeting communication expectations among colleagues in the US was a challenge mentioned by Participant H. Participant H described herself as "quiet;" therefore, "starting conversations" was difficult. Participant H said that where she is from "you don't really talk up to people and tell them your business just like that." Having "more conversations with people and walking up to people and starting conversations" is something that Participant H is learning to do.

Question 7: How did your acculturation experience affect you? The acculturation experience affected the participants of the study in diverse ways, ranging from positive to negative, according to their descriptions. From physical illness to having to dispel prejudice, the participants have felt the effects of acculturation in their lives and professional endeavors. In fact, for one of the participants, acculturation continues to affect her life.

Participant A has felt physical consequences as a result of the stress of acculturation. Per her account, Participant A's "blood pressure went up" and she had to take high blood pressure medication. What affected Participant A the most was the "drug trade around us." In Participant A's words:

> What affected me the most was the drug trade around us because my school was a smack dab in the middle of it. I had a journal writing exercise every day and I would ask the kids to write about something, like going to the beach. But they could not write anything. However, they could tell you about who was stealing and who was selling drugs and they would tell you about a drive-by shooting so I would ask them to write 60 sentences about those topics and they did. I learned about the street with these kids.

The stress of acculturation was fueled by the social conditions that surrounded the school. Violence was a common occurrence in the school, which prompted Participant A to learn to protect her safety and her students.'

> There were a couple of drive-by shootings. There were bullets in the back of my classroom. There was a lot of drug activity where kids lived [near the school]. We had to learn to hit the floor [to protect ourselves]. I remember one day, where we used to go across the street for recess, at about 10:30 in the morning a shooting happened right then and right there where we were out playing. That really disturbed me.

For Participant B, there were positive and negative experiences with acculturation. Once again, the topic of the accent when she talked came up as an

issue. Moreover, the perception of parents that stemmed from her speech was deemed by her as prejudice.

> Especially when I just started, there were some parents who I saw were not very comfortable with my accent; because I was different. And because I came from a third world country, where they think life is backwards for some reason.

Participant B tried to reason to find the source of the prejudice that she experienced from the parents in the school in which she worked. However, she admitted that the experience had a negative effect on her.

> I think it's a lot of ignorance more than anything else. After I started teaching [the prejudice] affected me emotionally because I felt like I was just judged wrongly because of my accent and that had a real negative effect on me, so I decided to start proving myself.

Participant B shared during the interview the strategies she implemented to cope with the situations she encountered regarding prejudice in the workplace: "I started working a little harder, staying a little later." Moreover, Participant B had to learn the "terminologies that were used within the American education system," with which she was not familiar. An aspect that affected Participant B in her professional performance was the fact that often times she did not understand the jargon and the acronyms that were used. "The biggest challenge was that a lot of times, whoever was conducting the meetings, assumed that a lot of us knew all these things already," complained Participant B about the communication issues she

faced. Another strategy that Participant B implemented to cope with the effects of acculturation was to modulate her accent:

> Not only did I try to hide my accent, I don't know how well I did, but I felt that was also a need; that I needed to try and hide my accent as much as possible just to let them look beyond my accent and look at the quality of the produce.

For Participant C the effects of acculturation are ongoing. When asked the question of "How did acculturation affect you?" Participant C promptly clarified: "I still want to speak about it in the present tense; how it affects and still continues to affect me." Moreover, Participant C had to learn about personal space and social norms in order to adapt:

> "I see the differences. In the Caribbean, we are very sociable people. In my culture, you talk to people, you touch them, you embrace them, you hug them and you laugh very easily. To understand that people you know don't want to be touched, it is kind of funny."

Additionally, Participant C has been affected by the way she enacts her culture in the classroom. For instance, Participant C recalled a specific incident in her classroom in which Caucasians were concerned about the racial connotation of a native song of hers she was singing to her class:

> "One of my teachers was talking about singing a song about picking a bale of cotton. I would sing that song in my early childhood. We had some visitors who were Caucasian and I went ahead and sang this song to my class as usual. The visitors told me I should not sing that song because I did not know if it has any racial connotation. It is embarrassing when someone tells you,

you can't sing this song in front of Caucasian people. I mean, what is wrong with this song? I have sung it in the Caribbean and always sing it here, so why can't I sing it while Caucasians are here? They told me it was not politically correct and that embarrassed me."

Participant D described a positive experience with acculturation. Per her own account, "she has adjusted very, very well" and said that she is "she is so integrated to this society that this is home." Interestingly, Participant D recalled an experience with other Jamaicans that were shocking to her:

I went to New York to do my data collection for my dissertation and I was shocked when I went to Brooklyn and stayed with a Jamaican family. I'll tell you one thing: they were more Jamaican than the Jamaicans in Jamaica! They ate Jamaican food only; they played Jamaican music all the time. Some music I had not heard of since I was a child, I heard for the second time in Brooklyn, NY. They were not really Jamaicans living here but Jamaicans living in Jamaica, here. This is home for me. When I go home [to Jamaica], after three days I want to go home, and home means the US.

When Participant D reflected on what effect the perception of others has on her, she talked about it with confidence:

People think they can look down on you because you speak with an accent. But those things don't bother me. I know who I am. It just doesn't bother me one bit. And if they want to challenge that, I'll challenge them on it too.

Participant E also accounted a positive effect of acculturation in her life. For Participant E, she has had to put both cultures, her own and the American, in perspective:

> [My acculturation experience] has made me stronger from the perspective that I knew that there was actually no way that I would give up my upbringing. It made me put my culture in a better perspective because it made me realize what I bring to the table in terms of my background experiences and who I am, so it made me embrace my culture deeper.

Participant E added that she was "not going to accept the American way of doing business as something to aspire to," as she became more appreciative of her own culture.

Participant F talked about the strategies she implemented to mitigate the effects of acculturation. Primarily, learning the system and adapting her language were the strategies she pointed out:

> There are several things that we [people in Barbados] would say that I thought was ok because it is standard English. But I guess that, because Barbados has a British background, certain terminology is not used in the US. For instance, I would use the word "vex" and people in the US would ask me what I was saying. I had to keep a running record on my head of what to say and what not.

Participant G provided a positive effect of her acculturation experience. Participant G asserted that acculturation has made her "a better person." In detail, Participant G expressed that if she were to move into another culture, she would

"understand the problems that may arise." Likewise, if someone migrates to her surroundings, she "would be able to be more accepting and give them advice on how to fit into our culture, to meld, to mix in."

Just like Participant G, Participant H finds her acculturation experience "very positive." The acculturation experiences have prompted Participant H to be "more open." In her own words: "I try to be more open and talk to more people. I was not very good at that. I have learned to build relationships with people and it has been very good."

Question 8: How do you think your acculturation impacted your access to professional opportunities and resources? The participants reflected on their decision to leave their home countries to pursue professional opportunities in the US and how their acculturation experiences had influenced their access to opportunities. The responses of the participants were mixed. Along the spectrum of responses, some participants perceived professional opportunities to be within reach and a reward to their hard work. For other participants, the reality that they come from another country hindered their professional opportunities.

Participant A deemed education as her access to opportunity. According to Participant A, when she was being assessed for her teaching license, she decided to do a master's degree. Her decision to further her education came because she thought how her education would help her meet the needs of her children. In her academic research, she would try to "apply her knowledge to help" the students with which she was working in the classroom.

Participant B recalled difficulties regarding access to opportunity. According to Participant B, her biggest problem with access to opportunity was that she "didn't even know where to go to find resources." Moreover, she encountered some personal barriers that hindered her access to opportunity: "I really didn't want to look stupid so I would try not to ask for the things that I needed." Participant B also mentioned not having access to professional development opportunities in her first job in the US. However, she asserted that "the opportunities are there, the doors are open, but you have to be willing to prove that you are capable of anything."

For Participant C, access to opportunity depends on the level of education of the persons around her. Participant C's perception is that more educated people are more accepting; thus that factor affects her access to opportunity. Although the response of Participant D differed in detail, education gave Participant D access to opportunity and resources and boosted her confidence. Moreover, her involvement in the social spheres and leadership of her school allowed Participant D to network, which in her perception, created an advantage. When asked about how acculturation has impacted her access to opportunity and resources, Participant D provided a rich explanation about her experience:

> The university paid for my master's degree and they paid for my Ph.D. degree and I subsequently worked for them. In addition, I got to know all the people who run the government and society. I was very, very involved in student government and I got so involved in the university that I as selected to be in the committee to choose the dean of the school of education. So I got to know

people within the society so naturally if I'm applying for scholarships and this kind of thing then people know who I am.

Participant D also pointed to her own determination as a key to her success:

> Nobody is going to come and hand you everything in a silver platter. People back home have the perception that I am a go-getter; that I get out there and get what I want done. If I needed a scholarship, I found it. If people didn't give it to me, I found out why not. You just have to take initiative and go for what you want. You have to get out there and get what you want. It's out there. Why can't you get it?

For Participant D, there are rewards for performance in the US. Additionally, Participant D recognized the importance of attitude on having access to opportunity and resources:

> My philosophy is that this place [the US] rewards you if you do things well. Competence surpasses color. I really, really think so and if you get out there with the right attitude and respect people, you make the right impression on people and you do what you have to do and you go for it, you get, but nobody is going to hand it to you.

Participant E believes not being from the US puts her at a professional disadvantage when it comes to access to opportunities and resources. Her response to the question provided a candid response of how she perceives that the fact that she is not an American hinders her professional opportunities:

> I think it puts me at a disadvantage because, for one, knowing that I am not an American doesn't put me at the top of the line or head of the class as far as

> getting opportunities is concerned. For example, showing up to a job interview, I know I have to compete because I am not from here and people take for granted that because I am not from here I may not be as skilled or qualified as the first American showing up. Even if I think I am more qualified at times, not being American blocks me some of the opportunities that I could be afforded."

Participant E continued to reflect on the question and offered an honest response to why she thinks she may access to opportunities and resources may be limited for her, in spite of the fact that she believes to be qualified for such opportunities: "Because I have not totally engrained myself in the whole scheme of American living, I think this has held me back in terms of opportunities I could have accessed."

Participant F contrasted the American society with the society of her home country and how their cultural differences impact access to opportunities and resources. For Participant F, access to opportunity seems easier in her home country:

> I think the society where I come from is a very reserved and laid back type of society. Think almost happen because of your position. Things just fall into place, because of education, things would almost come and fall on you. It is not the same in the US. You have to have personal drive to get up and go because nobody is out there looking for you so you have to get up and get it for yourself. I have learned that I have to have my own personal drive for success, go out there and find things and get things happening for myself. Opportunities are out there.

Additionally, Participant F asserted that in order to reach opportunities and access, learning is imperative: "It's all about learning. You have to be willing to learn how things are done differently and be are open-minded and inquire."

Participant G explained her strategies for increasing her access to opportunities in the US. Adapting her language and furthering her education in the US are perceived by Participant G as effective strategies for having access to opportunity:

> The closer you speak to the language, the better it seems to become for you. Also, always try to get your education in the country to which you migrated because in the US they value degrees that are earned or schooling that is had in the country itself more than any other country. Someone with a medical doctorate or a doctorate from another country, for example, is not accepted for what he's worth in the US. You find people who were doctors and lawyers in their own countries working in department stores.

Participant H, on the contrary, perceived that the US gave her increased access to opportunity. Furthermore, Participant H decided to leave her country to pursue those opportunities she perceived to be within easier reach in the US: "I decided to leave my little community where I'm from because there wasn't much opportunity to move up." Additionally, Participant H acquired her Master's degree in the US and believes "there's more opportunity [in the US]" and she has acquired valuable knowledge that has made her a better teacher. Participant H asserted that "there's still more opportunities to come."

Question 9: Do you think your acculturation impacts your teaching practices, and if so, how? Participants responded to how they think their acculturation experience influences their teaching practices in the US. For all of the participants, their experiences in the US have led to learning. Inevitably, the participants felt that they had to make adjustments in order to become effective teachers in their new environment. Most of the participants deemed their acculturation experience as one that has made them better educators.

Participant A says that she always like to be well prepared as a teacher. Moreover, she finds satisfaction in seeing her students' progress: "I like to be at the top of my game and I have to be clear and feel what I'm teaching so that I can look for the growth and once I see growth, I'm good."

Participant B believes to be a "more competent" teacher after all the experiences she's had over the years. Moreover, she credited her culture as a factor that has given her a professional advantage:

> I like the fact that I tend to my culture and it has now become like the little flavor I add to my classroom, which makes it my unique space. Before [when I first got here], I was trying to learn as much as I could about the American culture and incorporate a lot of that into the classroom, as much as I could to make my classroom more American. But now, since I've gained so much over the years, the fact that I am from Jamaica, I think it adds more to the room to make it a little bit more culturally diverse. I got older and wiser. Instead of trying to run away from my culture, I embrace it as well as making it that unique thing that I will bring to my classroom. I think I'm more effective.

Participant C also responded positively about how her acculturation impacts her teaching practices in the US. Participant C also referred to bringing cultural elements to the classroom to be more effective as a teacher: "I was able to bring a lot from the Caribbean. I think children really enjoy me because I respect them and treat them like I was treated back home." Moreover, Participant C responded to make an effort so her cultural differences are not an issue.

Participant D admitted to having to do some adjustments in order to become a better teacher in the US. Moreover, Participant D shared some of the strategies she has implemented to be able to become a better educator in the US. Her strategies included (1) listening, (2) treating people the way you want to be treated, (3) adapting to what works for children, (4) becoming a part of society, and (5) developing partnerships in the community.

In summary, Participant D asserted:

> I listen a lot because things are different than in my country. I operate from the philosophy that you treat people the way you want them to treat you. I try to adapt to whatever works. In my book, children are children, anywhere in the world. I've been able to get out in the community and establish several, several partnerships with corporations. You have to become part of the society and show people that you understand or try to understand the society so that you are making sure you are integrating the culture of the children, of the people that you serve so that they can see that reflected on what you're doing.

Participant E also views the way her acculturation experiences have impacted her teaching practices as positive. Specifically, Participant E believes her acculturation experience has made her more culturally aware and open. In her descriptions, she shared:

> Acculturation affects my teaching practices positively from the perspective that I take what I think is necessary from my acculturation experiences to bring into the learning situation. And, at the same time, it gives me the opportunity to see what differences there are in the way I would have educated at another culture, like my own. Being here [in the US] has made me more prepared for dealing with a different experience.

Participant F has found the need to adapt to be able to maximize her teaching practices in the US. However, Participant F shared something that was different from the responses of the other participants. Specifically, she uses her acculturation experience to call the attention of her students and encourage them to excel:

> I am always saying to my students that I may not get this right because I did not grow up in this culture; I am still learning. So because I take that approach I think they are more supportive. I expect achievement and respect from my students. Also, I see how acculturation can be very difficult. If I had chosen to hold on to all the practices I had as a teacher in Barbados, I couldn't work here.

Participant G shared that she has learned to be more sympathetic as a teacher because of her acculturation experience. Moreover, Participant G has

adjusted her approach to use her experience to help her students, especially those who come from different cultures. In her own words:

> I am more sympathetic to students in my class that come from different cultures, who come from different countries. I understand some of the problems that they are having, and I understand how to empathize with them. I can't correct the problems but I would be more inclined to sympathize with them and to help them in some way, rather than seeing it as a native would see it. So I can help them from my own experience.

Participant H also pointed to the fact that acculturation has changed her positively and that her teaching practices have also changed as a result. Participant H admitted that her teaching experience has become very rewarding. Specifically, Participant H shared her strategies for becoming a better teacher in the classroom:

> I've changed; there's so many strategies that I've learned. There's so many different ways I've learned to do things. I've learned to teach reading and language arts in many different ways. I've learned how to socialize more with the kids, different kids from different backgrounds, different cultures, kids with learning disabilities, behavioral challenges, and I've learned to interact with parents more and how to get them to work with their kids at home. It has been a very rewarding experience.

Question 10: How to you think your acculturation experiences impact your ability to connect with students of the dominant culture? The participants responded to the question of how they perceive their acculturation experiences have influenced the way they interact and connect with students of the dominant

culture. All of the participants have positive experiences to share and deemed their experiences as essential to help them connect more effectively to their students.

Participant A shared that she has witnessed violence that has affected her students. That violence has prompted her to become more empathetic and involved to be able to provide her students with the tools they need to succeed.

> I know where my students are coming from. I'm in the neighborhood. I don't want to press their lives. I have seen some of my kids already shot. I want to fight for them so that they can be successful citizens down the road. This [my acculturation experience] has given me the tools and resources and I will fight for them.

Participant B was optimistic in her response. Specifically, Participant B pointed out to hiding her accent effectively as one of the strategies that have helped her connect with students. Moreover, growing up in poverty has helped Participant B relate to students with similar backgrounds. Participant B shared her opinion:

> I'm doing a good job in hiding my accent that kids don't even notice that I'm not from America. The first thing I tend to tell parents in my bio is that when they speak to me they will hear a Jamaican accent. And that has opened the door for a lot more parents to tell me that they have relatives from Jamaica. I can relate to the students because I am more culturally aware and I tend to look beyond the fact that these are all American kids. I tend to go deeper into family situations and finding out their needs, if they have the proper resources. Growing up in Kingston, I know what it is like to be without so

having those kids who are facing all these needs, I have that conversation with a lot of the mothers and say "I understand; I definitely get you".

Participant C asserted that the fact that she comes from the Caribbean has helped her become a better teacher. She described herself as "very sociable" and affirmed that her personality has helped her connect with her students. In fact, Participant C said that she needs to develop those strong bonds with her students because she considers that important to break the cultural barrier and earn the respect of her students. Specifically she said: "My upbringing and even my background in my education experience in the Caribbean has helped me."

Participant D asserted that she just sees "people as people", which has helped her gain respect. Moreover, Participant D shared passionately that the success of her students is her main concern. In her opinion, she shares the same interests when it comes the academic performance of the student as their parents:

> It doesn't matter if you are White, you are Black if you are Hispanic or wherever you are from. You are still a person with a child who wants the best for your child. And that's where I operate from. Every single parent who comes in here wants the best for their child no matter what race the child is."

Participant E considers that her acculturation experience has allowed her to be prepared to better address the needs of her students. In her own words:

> "I think I'm really more effective as an educator, beyond what I have learned in school and being in the school system.

Participant F learned that as a teacher it was more effective for her to connect with her students in order to be more effective. Moreover, Participant F

admitted that when she did not try to connect to her students, things were more difficult:

> I think with American students you have to connect with them more on their level. American students will not truly embrace you because of who you are in terms of your position. When I didn't connect to students in here [in the US], they opposed everything I said or did. So you have to find a different way to connect to students.

Participant G pointed out to significant differences between American and students from other countries. Participant G shared barriers to her ability to connect to American students at a deeper level: "American parents don't always accept us because our accent and because we are foreigners. Parents convey certain attitudes to their kids regarding foreign teachers and kids come into the classroom with those attitudes."

Participant H admitted that sharing her culture helps her connect with her students. However, she mentioned that communication and learning from every situation helps her connect with her students. "Communicating with students more" has been an effective strategy for Participant H to perceive that her students are more receptive.

Question 11: What are some differences in teaching in your native country versus teaching in the United States? The participants responded to the differences between teaching in their native countries versus their teaching experience in the US. The participants had concrete examples of these differences, especially when it pertained to the interaction between students and teachers in

both cultural settings. Specifically, the use of physical discipline and the status of teachers in both cultures came up as significantly different, according to the participants' descriptions.

Participant B made the observation that there are more resources in the US than in her country when it comes to teaching. Teaching materials and professional development opportunities were highlighted as different in both cultural settings. Also, the US requires more formal education than the one that Participant B needed at home to work as a teacher.

> We had to create our own teaching materials in Jamaica and we were not reimbursed. In America, we have much more in terms of resources. We have more opportunities for professional development here. In my country, with a four year diploma you have the power to become a principal and have your own school.

Participant C referred to the status of teachers in the Caribbean in her answer. According to Participant C, "teachers in the Caribbean are like Gods; parents respect the teachers, they support them, they work with teachers to make sure their child gets the best education. They build relationships with the teacher." Participant C expressed that students absorb the attitudes of parents towards teachers and that could lead to disrespectful behaviors from students, which contrasts with how students behave in her native country.

Participant D perceives significant differences between the education system of the US versus the Caribbean. Like Participant C, Participant D spoke about the high regard with which teachers in her native country are held, which is in contrast

with the status of teachers in the US. According to Participant D "in the Caribbean, as teacher, you are set up on a pedestal." Moreover, teachers are revered as public figures and persons of great influence in the community: "As a teacher, you become the village lawyer, people ask you to write letters, to do wills, to speak at programs; it is a reverential experience." Another difference that Participant D highlighted was the special considerations teachers need to have for students with special needs. Moreover, the way discipline is handled in the US versus the Caribbean poses a great difference. Participant D also pointed out that she perceives children in the US are not as education-driven as Caribbean students: "There is such emphasis placed in education in my country that it blows my mind and to a very large extent, I don't see that here."

Participant E also referred to disciplining methods as one of the biggest differences between teaching in her country and teaching in the US. "Corporal punishment is not accepted here." And just like Participant D, Participant E expressed that students were more willing to learn in her country: "I had less contact with parents [in my country] because students came in with a lot of respect and more willingness to learn." Additionally, Participant D incorporated more cultural aspects to her teaching experience in her native country than she does in the US: "I had the opportunity to incorporate social aspects of culture, like singing and dancing, because it was all part of life back there."

Participant F referred to a particular difference in the practice of teaching that she used to implement in her country and that she does not believe is transferable in the US. Specifically, Participant F explained that in her country she

was able to take students on field trips to different islands with parental consent. However, she expressed that "I can see how something like that happening here, the system will have to negotiate so many barriers that it would be very difficult to do something like that."

Participant G pointed out to the fundamental difference that in her country the education system follows the British education system, which is very different from the education system of the US. The content that is taught is very different, according to Participant G. The emphasis on testing was also another difference highlighted by Participant G. According to Participant G, in her country, standardized tests "don't always have the kind of high stakes that the tests in the US have."

The researcher asked the participants three concluding questions:

1. *Is there anything you would like to add?*
2. *Is there anything I haven't asked that you think is important for me to know?*
3. *Do you have any questions that you would like to ask me?*

Six of the eight participants in the study responded no to all three concluding questions. Participant C respond to the question "*Is there anything you would like to add?"* by saying that she was "happy that I was doing this research because no one talks about these things, people need to know this." Participant A responded the question *"Do you have anything you would like to ask me?"* by asking if she could have a copy of the audio recording of her interview.

Themes Throughout the Study

The researcher established the criterion for determining what constitutes a theme. Constructs that appeared in the narrative of five or more of the participants were identified as emergent themes. The participants of the study offered valuable descriptions about their experiences with acculturation in the US. There were commonalities in the experiences of many of the participants. Important themes came up during the interviews that are worth highlighting. The following table summarizes the themes that were prevalent among the answers of the participants regarding their acculturation experiences in the US.

Theme	Illustration
Culture Shock	"There was culture shock. Um, some things that I expected were different 'cause, um, coming from Jamaica."- Participant B "My first winter experience was like oh my God, this cannot be for real. I was seeing ice on the ground for the first time. I didn't know how to walk in the snow. I didn't know how to walk on the ice and so I remember very distinctly the – my landlady took me out one evening to show me how to walk on the ice and how to walk in the snow. And I had an experience."- Participant D "The food was very difficult at first because we eat differently [in my country]. We had a very big breakfast, we had a very big lunch and dinner was very little."- Participant G "I found it very hard trying to meet some of the expectations; social norms."- Participant D "I see the differences. In the Caribbean, we are very sociable people. In my culture, you talk to people, you touch them, you embrace them, you hug them and you laugh very easily. To understand that people you know don't want to be touched, it is kind of funny." Participant C "I think the most challenging part for me was

	understanding the people in terms of interactions. I found it very hard trying to meet some of the expectations, uh, social norms. "- Participant E "However, I think there's a lot more that I need to learn to be more effective at what I do. Not that I don't think I'm an effective educator, but there's so much I think I don't know about this culture that has limited my ability to be– to reach the students more than I think I should have."- Participant E "Um, the whole approach is totally different as a teacher when I went to work in Barbados in our hot claimant I wore a suit every day. That alone is almost again, it comes back to that respect and authority type figure and you being a person who has to be looked up to you dress for the job regardless of your position as a teacher. Infant school, primary school, high school it doesn't matter." Participant F "That, that really was new for me to have students question me and, and having to answer and give a response that was new. "- Participant F "In Trinidad and Tobago, the teacher is looked upon as someone you look up to. The teacher is very well respected. Students will respect the teacher." – Participant G "I just think it's important that– that when– when– ooh, when– when teachers are coming from another country to be aware of the culture shock that they are gonna be experiencing and to be prepared for it.'- Participant H
Determination to Succeed	"Nobody is going to come and hand you everything in a silver platter. People back home have the perception that I am a go-getter; that I get out there and get what I want done. If I needed a scholarship, I found it. If people didn't give it to me, I found out why not. You just have to take initiative and go for what you want. You have to get out there and get what you want. It's out there. Why can't you get it**?"** Participant D "I think I have basically adjusted very, very well with

	people, people who want to think they want to look down on you because you speak with an accent. Those things don't bother me. I know who I am. It just doesn't bother me one bit. And if they want to challenge on that, I'll challenge them on it, too."- Participant D "I came with the determination to succeed, so despite the hardships in terms of financial, um, stretches, I was sort of focused on my goal and in focus of my goal means giving all my– my– my all to my studies and I was very-very, uh, very rough." Participant E "You have to have personal drive to get up and go because nobody is out there looking for you so you have to get up and get it for yourself. I have learned that I have to have my own personal drive for success, go out there and find things and get things happening for myself. Opportunities are out there." Participant F "I started working a little harder, staying a little later." Participant B "And– and this was the Thursday, the Friday morning I got up and I got up extra early because I was, like, if it took me three hours to get home, it's gonna take me a couple of hours to get back to work." Participant H So I felt like I needed to show them or prove to them that I am more than what my accent might perceive me to be, that I know my stuff and I know I'm good at it and I can do a really great job if you would just give me the opportunity to."- Participant H
Adjusting the way of speaking (accent) to fit in	"There were times that I felt that I had to try and speak with an American accent to be more accepted" – Participant B "I tried to speak like an American and it didn't come out well." – Participant C "[In the US] you speak with an accent and so people think you are stupid, for lack of a better word."- Participant D "Being treated as a second-class citizen and really

	being accepted for who you are or what you are [was a challenge], and always being constantly reminded that you don't really fit in, maybe because of the way you talk." – Participant E I felt that I had to try and speak with an American accent to be more accepted because they– I've had, like– once I started teaching I could see that the way the parents would respond to me, it was as if oh, she's not from here, so maybe she wouldn't know the right way to teach my child kind of thing."-Participant H Not only that try and hide my accent, I don't know how well I did, but I felt that that was also a need, that I needed to try and hide my accent as much as possible to– just to– to let them look beyond that and just to look at the quality that I could produce" Participant H
Differences in methods of disciplining students	"You can't talk too hard to them [American students], there's no corporal punishment, and if they tell you they don't want to learn, they won't. – Participant A "I have a friend [from the Caribbean] in NY who lost his job because the administration of the school did not like the way he handled a child." – Participant C "In the US kids are handled different. You can't beat, you can't hit, and you can't discipline and I see a contrast in student behavior than in the Caribbean." – Participant D "I came to this country and kids are looking in my face and telling me F you and I had a little boy who literally spat in my face. And this whole business of special education and special needs and the individualistic way in which some of these kids are handled and you can't beat, and you can't hit and you can't discipline, you know, I know there is a different focus on that, but I really, really think I see a contrast in student behavior and what it was in the Caribbean at that time."-Participant D "Corporal punishment is not accepted here." – Participant E

	In our system, we will practice some level of corporal punishment." – Participant F "Or maybe you know you did – you have to understand that you can't say to the students shut up like we would up, in, in, in the Caribbean and not infringe on, on their basic rights. So there is a, there is a whole lot that you would need to understand these are little human beings and they're almost on the same level as you are. "- Participant F
Positive effect of acculturation on teaching practices	"I like the fact that I tend to my culture and it has now become like the little flavor I add to my classroom, which makes it my unique space." – Participant B "I was able to bring a lot from the Caribbean. I think children really enjoy me because I respect them and treat them like I was treated back home." – Participant C "Acculturation affects my teaching practices positively from the perspective that I take what I think is necessary from my acculturation experiences to bring into the learning situation." – Participant E "I am more sympathetic to students in my class that come from different cultures, who come from different countries." – Participant G "And I think once I bring that up they get a chance to– to be more comfortable, to share things with me and to– to– to ask for the things, the resources that they need and I think that has helped me to have a great relationship with the families in general, not only the students, but the families in general."-Participant H
Teachers in the West Indies are held in high Esteem	"I wasn't, um, used to kids that would talk back at me to the face, um, I wasn't used to being – parents being so disrespectful to me, you know, when I'm really trying to do my work and trying to help their kids. So, you know, in Jamaica, parents were like very respectful. You were the teacher. I taught in my community. Everyone knew me." Participant B "Definitely in, um, in the Caribbean children have like a

	greater respect for authority and they would not say certain things in front of authority. "- Participant C "One of the other things is in school, there's kind of like – I don't want to call it respect – so much respect of your professors that you almost idolize them." Participant D "Because in the Caribbean, as I made reference to it at some point, I need to see you, as a teacher, you're set up on a pedestal, you know, and people almost want to pay homage to you at the time that I was a teacher there"- Participant D "In Trinidad and Tobago, the teacher is looked upon as someone you look up to. The teacher is very well respected. Students will respect the teacher." – Participant G "In Trinidad and Tobago, the teacher is looked upon as someone you look up to. The teacher is very well respected. Students will respect the teacher." – Participant G "In Jamaica, the principal does the setting of the classroom for the teacher before classes begin." – Participant H "I just that, um, for– for the teachers just coming– coming up from, ooh– coming up from– from Jamaica here, the big difference that I've noticed is that **[pauses]** I think coming from Jamaica I realized that we we– we– we honor education a lot more, the teachers especially, a lot more than– than they do here in America." Participant H "…basic respect we were taught we needed to respect our teacher's mister and misses and always sir, ma'am. "- Participant F "That alone is almost again, it comes back to that respect and authority type figure and you being a person who has to be looked up to you dress for the job regardless of your position as a teacher. Infant school, primary school, high school it doesn't matter."

	Participant F
High Value Placed on Education in the West Indies	"In the US, as opposed to the Caribbean, children don't have much interest in school." – Participant A "we grew up very poor, you know. And, but we – we still went to school. We went to school. And I – my days at my secondary school were very, very rewarding. I was, um, a prefect for a number of years."- Participant B "In my country, children have a greater regard for education." – Participant C "That education is the best antipoverty solution is a strong belief in the Caribbean." – Participant D "In my country, students came in with a lot of respect and more willingness to learn." – Participant E "We put a lot of emphasis on education in terms of going to school, secondary school, going to university; there was no question about it." – Participant F "Um, if we began with this students I think our students for the most part they have a, uh, uh, a drive to succeed. Maybe it comes from home, it comes from the school, I think its society driven you, you, you go to school and you have to be successful. I mean even though even the worst student you could see the drive, they want to do better and so as a teacher you're willing to push and work and work and really push them to their maximum potential."- Participant F "In the US, children don't feel the joy of learning as they should." – Participant G

Summary

A total of eight female educators from the West Indies participated in the study. The educators spoke openly about their acculturation experiences in the US and all of them described their acculturation experiences as challenging; however,

they shared how they overcame those challenges in order to meet their goals of becoming successful educators in the US. Seven important themes reoccurred throughout the interviews: (1) culture shock (2) determination of the immigrant educators to succeed; (3) adjusting the way of speaking (accent) as a strategy to fit in; (4) differences in methods of discipline; (5) positive impact of acculturation on teaching practices; (6) teachers are held in higher esteem in the West Indies than in the US and (7) high value placed on education in the West Indies. Moreover, all the participants offered similar description of acculturation.

In chapter 5, themes are discussed, along with how the findings of the study compare to the findings in the existing literature. Recommendations to prospective West Indian immigrant educators, school districts and recruiting agencies, in addition to recommendations for future research are also discussed in chapter 5. Specific strategies to mitigate the impact of acculturation among educators that come from the West Indies to work in urban schools in the US and to increase cultural sensitivity among the school systems in the US are also included in chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5: Interpretations, Conclusions And Recommendations

The researcher strived to fill a void in the literature regarding the acculturation experiences of immigrant, West Indian female educators in an urban setting in the US. This study revealed the perceptions of how immigrant female educators' acculturation experience influences their teaching practices and their ability to connect with the dominant culture. The participants shared their acculturation experiences openly during the interviews and also shared their strategies for overcoming the challenges they faced during their acculturation process and working environments in the US.

Emergent Themes

The participants provided vivid, explicit illustrations that supported the emergent themes. Seven important themes reoccurred throughout the interviews: (1) culture shock (2) determination of the immigrant educators to succeed; (3) adjusting the way of speaking (accent) as a strategy to fit in; (4) differences in methods of discipline; (5) positive impact of acculturation on teaching practices; (6) teachers are held in higher esteem in the West Indies than in the US and (7) high value placed on education in the West Indies. Moreover, all of the participants offered similar description of acculturation.

Culture shock. All of the participants described experiencing a sense of confusion, uncertainty and anxiety when they arrived in the US. Several participants even explicitly used the phrase "culture shock" to describe their experiences. Factors that contributed to the participants' experience of culture shock included differences in the physical environment, interaction patterns- culture specific body

language, linguistic nuances, and personal space requirement, food, weather conditions, expectations of teachers working in schools in the US, in addition to their perception that teachers in US schools are not as valued as teachers in the West Indies.

Determination of the immigrant educators to succeed. All of the participants in the study provided illustrations that exemplified determination on a personal and professional level. This included their approach to university studies, overcoming personal challenges and obstacles for example, separation from their immediate family, difficulty securing housing, lack of financial resources, challenges with navigating systems, lack of a social support network, challenges with understanding expectations with regard to interpersonal communications and interactions in their new social context, understanding the educational culture and expectations in their work setting in the US and at times prejudicial treatment. The participants all described sacrifices that they made for bigger future gains, in addition to becoming more effective educators. They also asserted that they have a better quality of life now than they did when they first arrived in the US. The participants in the study contended that their personal and professional accomplishments are a direct result of they sacrifices they have made, in addition to their determination to succeed.

Teachers have had to adjust the way of speaking (accent) as a strategy to fit in. Each of the eight participants in the study made mention of their own accent. They have articulated that they were conscious of it and they felt that members of the dominant culture perceived them as not as competent as their

American peers because of their accents. Additionally, they all indicated that they made deliberate attempts to modify their speech. Seven of the eight participants either indicated that they tried to speak in a less accented voice or tried to speak like an "American." One participant indicated that she spoke much slower than she normally would, however, she is proud of her accent and would not do anything to change it. All of the participants in the study shared that they felt that they are either not accepted or not fully accepted in schools and in the American society in general because they are not Americans.

Differences in methods of discipline. All of the participants pointed to the differences in disciplining students in US schools compared to when they were students themselves, and subsequently teachers in the West Indies. They all mentioned that corporal punishment is not permitted in the schools in which they work in the US. Corporal punishment was permitted in schools in the participants' native countries when they were students and teachers in the West Indies.

Positive effect of acculturation on teaching practices. Most of the participants felt that acculturation has had a positive impact on their teaching practice. Their learning about and adapting to the host culture helped them to understand the challenges their students face and in doing so were better able to connect with and support their students. According to Berry (2005), individuals experience acculturation in immensely different ways. These variations are termed acculturation strategies. Berry further asserted that the basic issues faced by acculturating individuals are (1) a preference to maintain one's heritage, culture and identity, and (2) a preference for engaging with and participating in the larger

society. Berry (2005) asserted that some individuals value holding on to their heritage culture and have little interest in participating in the larger social network. This idea came to life in the narrative of Participant E. Participant E who has been living in the United States for 13 years asserted that she would not give up her values from her native country and that she will "in no way accept the American way of doing business." She also shared that she believes that if she had absorbed more of the American culture she would have had more opportunities and made more progress professionally. Participant E also shared that she has had limited exposure to the dominant culture outside of the school setting and at times feels unprepared to meet the needs of students beyond what she has learned in the school setting.

Teachers are held in higher regard in the West Indies than the United States. The participants highlighted what they thought was a significant difference between the status held by teachers in the US compared to the status held by teachers in the West Indies. Each participant in the study shared, almost in resonance, that teachers in the West Indies are held in very high esteem in addition to speaking to the respect that is shown to teachers both in the school and in the larger community. The participants asserted that teachers, and in effect the teaching profession, are not as well respected in the United States as compared to the West Indies. The feeling of not being as well respected as they were used to was a factor in their experience of culture shock.

High value placed on education in the West Indies. The participants' perception of the value placed on education in the US as compared to the West

Indies was two-pronged. The participants expressed the idea that a high value on education is part of West Indian culture, and the value of education was instilled in them from a very early age. Further, each of the participants spoke about the importance of education and experience of attending school in her native country. Seven of the eight participants indicated that they grew up poor, however they were expected to attend school and college. The participants' perception that "Americans" did not place a high value on education surfaced when they spoke about their students. They offered that many of their students were not motivated to learn and that many parents were often unsupportive of their efforts to help their children.

Interpretations: A Return to the Literature

Culture shock and fitting in. According to Berry (1997), acculturation refers to the adaptation process experienced by individuals or groups when settling into a new culture. Moreover, culture shock has been identified as one of the most prevalent problems among foreign born and trained teachers, according to the American Federation of Teachers (2009). The finding on the experience of culture shock in this study supports the findings of Berry (1997) and Xia (2009). The participants in this study experienced culture shock upon their arrival to the US. The culture shock ranged from the initial exposure to American food, which is different from the food of West Indies, to differences in social interactions between students, teachers, parents, and school administrators. Teachers coming from the West Indies have to not only live without the foods to which they are accustomed; they also have to adapt their eating habits and routines to fit the American schedules, which are also new to these educators. The weather was also mentioned

as an element of shock and something that some of the educators were not prepared to face upon their arrival to the US. The weather in the Caribbean is warm year round; therefore, it is comprehensible that these educators found that the weather was such a shock when they moved to the US. Being unprepared to operate within the new weather conditions was something that permeated the participants' narratives. Not having appropriate clothing to withstand the weather conditions was mentioned as an issue for some of the participants. Additionally, differences in the dress code of teachers in the Caribbean versus the US caught some of the participants off-guard. The more formal way of teachers conducting themselves in the classroom was quickly identified as a different cultural element that needed to be changed in order for the educators to fit in and gain access to the students in the US, who are not used to seeing their teachers dress so formally and which therefore, could pose barriers to the interactions between teachers and students.

Generally, the participants of the study provided the phrase "fitting in" as a measure of acculturation. One of the ways that the teachers in the study coped with their acculturation experience was to change their communication strategies, specifically, most participants mentioned their accents as a challenge in the acculturation process and being accepted by members of the mainstream culture. For the participants, their accents put them at a disadvantage and increased the likelihood of prejudice among their students, the parents of their students, and administrators. According to Roberts (1997), a wide array of factors made way to the West Indian English, as the West Indies were colonized by French and British with Niger-Congo dialects. Understandably, West Indian English will be different

than American English; however, it seems that the education culture in the US is not open to accept West Indian English because it sounds different. As a strategy to cope with this reality, and to dispel myths and prejudice regarding their accents, some participants sought to acquire a more American accent. Some participants shared that they believed if they adjusted their accents to sound more American, they would mitigate potential prejudice and stereotype. The participants had strong opinions regarding the effect of their accent on others and how that effect negatively impacted their image as competent professionals. For instance, participants pointed out that children laughed at them in the classroom, some parents believed West Indian teachers were less qualified to guide their children's learning, administrators apologized for their accents, and feeling in general that society had not deemed them as qualified professionals. Thus, they felt that they faced increased discrimination just because of their speech patterns and accents. Alfred (2003) supports these notions held by West Indian educators regarding the way their accent is received in the US. Alfred acknowledged that Caribbean people are ridiculed by the American public, because of their accent.

Educational culture of the West Indies versus the educational culture of the US. There are significant differences between the educational culture of the West Indies and the US. One significant contrast is the school structure. The education system in the West Indian countries represented in this study is modeled after the British education system, because all of the countries were former British colonies. Educators coming from the West Indies will encounter a significant difference in the education system and its implementation when they are hired to

work in the US. The difference in education systems was evident during the study. For example, the education system in the West Indies is highly centralized (Narvaez & Garcia, 1992), as opposed to the education system in the US, which is organized by independent school boards. However, the study revealed that participants felt they had more freedom to be creative in the implementation of the curriculum in the West Indies than in the US. Participants noted they found the education system in the US to be test driven and punitive if students did not make the expected or desired gains as measured by standardized tests.

Respect also emerged as a considerable difference between West Indian and American schools, which fed into aspects of culture shock. West Indian teachers are held in very high esteem in their respective home countries, as opposed to how they are valued in the US (Nervaez & Garcia, 1992). The participants of the study all agreed that there's a culture of honor, respect, and veneration of teachers in the West Indies, which does not occur in the US. This finding is consistent with the findings of (Nervaez & Garcia, 1992). Teachers from the West Indies are faced with discrepancies between their expectations their notions of respect and the realities they face when they begin teaching in the US. As participants pointed out, the behavior of students in classrooms in the US can be deemed as disrespectful and even unacceptable by educators from the West Indies. This fact can be disconcerting, as well as an important challenge to overcome in American classrooms by West Indian educators, which was validated by the responses from the participants.

The high value and place education held in the West Indies, as compared to the US was an aspect of culture shock, which was discussed by the participants. According to Alfred (2003), the value of education in the West Indies is attributed to "…a history of colonialism that dictated education as a vehicle for social mobility" (p. 8). Furthermore, the need for educational advancement as a means upward social mobility is a phenomenon that is shared throughout the Caribbean. The notion of the importance of education is then brought to the US by West Indian educators, who find a significant difference in the value placed on education in the US. Specifically, the participants contrasted the educational motivation of American children and West Indian children. The responses offered by the participants conveyed a sense of disappointment regarding what they qualified as low motivation to learn among American children. The participants perceived West Indian children as more committed to learning, which is supported by Alfred (2003), Froud (1998), Narvaez and Garcia (1992), and Roberts (1997), who attested that Caribbean immigrants possess a disciplined approach to learning that is promoted by family, schools, and the community at large.

The incorporation of technology in the classroom was also a new educational experience for West Indian teachers. Brunner (1996) posited that education is greatly tied to technology in the US. The participants in the study had to adapt their teaching strategies to learn new technologies and incorporate them in the classroom. Moreover, an emphasis on accountability in American schools based on standardized measures is something that West Indian teachers must adapt to in order to be effective educators in the US.

Waters (1994) identified some characteristics of the West Indian culture, which include a high value on education, a willingness to work hard, and a strong interest in saving for the future. Therefore, when teachers from the West Indies come to the US, they expect these same cultural characteristics of their countries within American classrooms, which, based on the descriptions offered by the participants, was not always the case. Conversely, it is imperative that educators coming from the West Indies be willing to learn and adapt to new educational and cultural paradigms in order to make sense of their acculturation experiences in the US.

The findings of this research have supported the notions presented by Berry (1989) and Nevas (2005) in which the authors asserted that in order for acculturation to take place, integration into the host culture must occur.

Acculturation Strategies Implemented by the West Indian Educators.

According to Berry (1989), there are six basic strategies of acculturation, as discussed in the literature review. These strategies of acculturation include language and attitudes, among others. Based on the findings of this study, the participants are aware of the importance of language in order to acculturate. Furthermore, many of the participants admitted to adjusting their language (accent, speed of speech, and voice modulation) as an acculturation strategy. The finding of this study supports Berry's finding that immigrants modify their language as an acculturation strategy. Seven out of the eight participants in this study also identified having a positive attitude toward integration into the host culture as an important strategy to overcoming the challenges posed by acculturation. This is

consistent with the findings of Berry. Although Duff and Uchida (1997) asserted that language and culture might create friction in the classrooms and affect transmission of classes, which was supported by the findings of this study on acculturation of immigrant, West Indian, female educators, the findings also revealed how these educators were determined to voluntarily adjust in order to enhance their acculturation experiences and outcomes. Von Kirchenhiem and Richardson (2005) posited that self-efficacy and flexibility are imperative for the success in the adjustment of expatriate educators. Most of the participants in this study modified their behaviors and attitudes and embraced elements of the dominant culture as acculturation strategies. From observation, and based on the responses of the participants, those who demonstrated more self-efficacy and flexibility appeared to be those who had more positive acculturation experiences and outcomes. Although this study did not make an attempt to measure the influence of personality and self-efficacy in the acculturation outcomes of these educators, the notion may be an adequate recommendation for future research.

Additional Findings

Unmet Needs of the West Indian Educators

The idea of unmet needs of the immigrant, West Indian, female educators who participated in this study emerged. Throughout this study on acculturation it appeared that most of the participants did not feel they were adequately prepared to work in inner-city schools or that they had a strong support system upon arrival in the US. The emergent theme of culture shock also points to inadequate orientation training in preparing these immigrant educators to live and work in the

US. The participants in this study came to the US with preconceived notions that hindered their performance in the new educational culture. The acculturation challenges described by the participants had to be navigated through self-identified and self-imposed strategies. The dominant culture, conversely, did not have mechanisms in place to foster understanding and sensitivity to the cultural differences brought by these West Indian educators. From support with logistics upon the arrival of some of the West Indian teachers to this country, to cultural sensitivity training for both expatriates and members of the host culture, basic strategies provided by the host culture to enhance the acculturation experiences of West Indian teachers were not reported to be in existence.

Uniqueness of the Acculturation Experience

The immigrant educators in this study migrated to the US for different reasons. Some of the educators emigrated to pursue higher education; some migrated to join family members already residing in the US; and others were recruited from their native country for employment in US schools. The participants who were recruited from the West Indies to teach in US schools appeared to have had the most challenging acculturation experience. Although they were teachers in their native country, the educational and social contexts were different from that of the US. Aspects of these immigrant teachers' existing schema were not transferable in the US setting which resulted in confusion and misunderstanding on both the part of the immigrant teachers and their American counterparts.

Further, for the participant who migrated to the US to join her family the experience of working as a store clerk in the US and being treated in ways that she

perceived were disrespectful and prejudicial by customers and co-workers was especially challenging for her. She had left her professional job as a university instructor in the West Indies, a position in which she felt respected and valued. Her acculturation experience was punctuated by distrust for members of the mainstream culture.

Two of the immigrant educators who participated in this study lived and worked in countries other than their native countries prior to working in US schools. While they both shared experiences of culture shock, their transition to the US social context seemed to have been smoother than that of the other participants.

Although the acculturation experience was challenging for all of the participants in this study, the single participants who had emigrated to the US specifically to pursue higher education seemed to have been more aware of the challenges associated with working in inner-city schools in the US. Although they had a greater sense of awareness they were still unprepared for the experience of teaching in inner-city school settings. They also appeared to have been more deliberate in their acculturation strategies. This researcher believes that greater sense of awareness that they had could be attributed to the experience of navigating and participating in higher education in the US, which may have aided the acculturation process of these participants.

In conclusion, personality characteristics seemed to have played a role in the acculturation experience of the participants in this study. Some of the participants were assertive, driven and clearly demonstrated a willingness to take risks. These personality traits seemed to have served these participants well in terms of

advocating for themselves when they perceived that they were being treated unfairly, actively seeking out professional opportunities, setting goals and aligning their activities and finances with those goals. The more extroverted participants in this study seemed to have made the most professional progress.

After discussing the major findings of the study, it is necessary to discuss potential implications of this study. In the next section, recommendations for future research will also be provided. A summary and conclusion will finalize this chapter.

Conclusions

Although a number of studies have been conducted on immigrants and their experiences, most studies tend to omit the significance of the uniqueness of each individual's experience when it comes to the acculturation process; thus some areas remain unexplored. Consequently, this qualitative study strived to fill a void in the literature regarding the unique acculturation experiences of immigrant, West Indian, female educators in an urban setting. Additionally, this study revealed the perceptions of how immigrant female educators' acculturation experience influence their teaching practices and their ability to connect with their students from the dominant culture.

The responses of the participants revealed important findings. Culture shock, fitting in as a measure of acculturation, especially as it pertains to language, and the culture of the education system of the US versus that of the West Indies were among the principal themes that reoccurred among the participants. The findings of this study should be shared with teachers and education students in the West Indies who are considering immigrating to the US to work as educators.

Moreover, the findings of this study can inform cultural competence training in schools that hire educators from West Indies and the recruitment agencies that bring them to the US. Acculturation is a phenomenon that is lived individually as well as within the context of a community. There are forces of interaction that not only pertain to the newly arrived individual, but also affect all in the community. Especially in the educational context, acculturation should be a process that is supported with information and compassion. Teachers coming from the West Indies may immigrate in the pursuit of better professional opportunities, and in doing so encounter diverse challenges and rewards along the way.

Recommendations

This study added to the available body of knowledge regarding the acculturation experiences of immigrant, female, West Indian educators in the US. The findings of this study revealed that West Indian educators undergo acculturative stress in the host country as a result of their interaction with the new environments and educational culture. This study has important implications for West Indian teachers considering coming to the US as educators in our school system, both for schools in the US, and for recruiting firms that hire and bring these educators from the West Indies.

Recommendations for West Indian educators who desire to work in the United States. West Indian teachers and education students who desire to pursue teaching careers in the US can benefit from this study. The researcher believes that it is important for West Indian teachers to know and understand the differences between the education system of the US as compared to the education system of the

West Indies before coming to the US. As there are significant differences between both education systems, educators coming from the West Indies can come with realistic expectations of what they are likely to encounter in the broader society and classrooms upon their arrival in the US. That knowledge may mitigate some of the acculturative stress experienced by these educators. Realistic information on the weather and climate, transportation logistics, housing options, and associated costs of moving to the US must also be fully disclosed to the West Indian educators before they arrive in the US. The outcome of doing so may also be lower acculturative stress and a smoother transition and overall a more positive acculturation experience.

Recommendations for schools in the United States that hire West Indian educators. At a very basic level, administrators and teachers in US schools that hire teachers from the West Indies should undergo cultural sensitivity/competence training to become aware of some of the differences they are likely to encounter in their interactions with teachers from the West Indies. This cultural training should include sensitivity training so all in the school community are open to and understanding of cultural differences. Ideally, this cultural training or at least cultural information on West Indian culture should be shared with students and parents of the school community. This strategy can be implemented formally among educators and administrative staff of the school system and informally throughout written literature and reinforcement of cultural awareness messages. Education is a valuable tool to dispel myths, prejudice, and discrimination, and the

school system seems like the ideal place to foster this openness towards embracing cultural diversity.

Recommendations for recruiting agencies that recruit West Indian educators. Recruitment agencies that seek West Indian educators to bring them to the US should also undergo cultural training so they are better equipped to be partners in the transition and initial acculturation experience of teachers coming from the West Indies. These agencies can greatly benefit from the findings of this study so they can focus on meeting the needs of expatriate teachers when they arrive in the US. Helping the teachers navigate the new acculturation experience should be one of the main goals of recruitment agencies. A collaboration and alignment between recruitment agencies and schools regarding orientation would provide the West Indian educators with the skills necessary to successfully navigate their new cultural reality.

Recommendation for Policy Makers

This researcher believes that teacher education programs should be responsive to the increasing diversity among both students and educators in the US. Therefore, coursework on cultural competence should be a part of teacher preparation programs.

Study Limitations

Only five countries of the West Indies were represented in the study. Additionally, the sample consisted of only female, immigrant educators. The aim was to explore how these educators who work in urban settings made meaning of their acculturation experience. Because of the purpose and nature of the study the

findings cannot be generalized to the West Indies as a whole or to other immigrant groups or populations.

Recommendations for Future Research

This topic of acculturation of immigrant educators is ripe with opportunities for future exploration. The researcher makes the following recommendations:

1. As this study explored the experiences of eight female educators from the West Indies, further studies. As such, the sample does not include male educators. There are differences in the manner in which West Indian males and females are socialized as children. Differences in interaction patterns of West Indian males and females also exist. As a result, the researcher recommends the exploration of potential differences in the acculturation experience of male and female immigrant educators as a topic for future research.
2. Another opportunity for future research is the exploration of potential relationships between the degree of acculturation of immigrant teachers and students' academic performance.
3. Potential association between self-efficacy and personality and acculturation of West Indian, female educators is also an area for research to explore whether or not there is a relationship between these variables. The study can also be contrasted with one in which self-efficacy and personality characteristics of male educators from the West Indies to the United States are explored.

Summary

This hermeneutic phenomenological study elucidated the acculturation experiences of West Indian, immigrant female educators in an urban setting, in addition to their perceptions of the impact of acculturation on their teaching practices. Seven important themes reoccurred throughout the interviews: (1) culture shock (2) determination of the immigrant educators to succeed; (3) adjusting the way of speaking (accent) as a strategy to fit in; (4) differences in methods of discipline; (5) positive impact of acculturation on teaching practices; (6) teachers are held in higher esteem in the West Indies than in the US and (7) high value placed on education in the West Indies. The importance of acceptance by members the dominant culture was articulated by all of the participants. Additionally, difficulties understanding the education system and adjusting to the way of life of the dominant culture were echoed by all of the participants. This study also highlights the need for deliberate orientation of immigrant teachers to prepare them for an easier transition to teaching in schools in the United States, because contextual factors appeared to be an important part of the culture shock that they experienced. This researcher holds the belief that a well-designed orientation process will support the teachers in developing realistic expectations and doing the cognitive restructuring that is necessary to be successful educators in urban settings in the United States.

This study offered recommendations for educators in the West Indies who desire to migrate and work in urban settings in the United States and to school districts and recruiting agencies who recruit international teachers.

Finally, recommendations were made for further research. Researchers can expand on this research by replicating it with other immigrant groups, including additional constructs, using different research methodologies and reorienting it to other epistemological frameworks.

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Appendix A

Information about the Research Study

Title: THE EXPERIENCE OF ACCULTURATION FROM THE PERSPECTIVES OF IMMIGRANT, WEST INDIAN, FEMALE EDUCATORS.

IRB # 121121

You are invited to participate in a research study under the direction of Dr. Carol Kochhar-Bryant of the Department of the Graduate School of Education and Human Development, George Washington University (GWU).

Taking part in this research is entirely voluntary.
The purpose of this study is to explore the acculturation experience of immigrant, West Indian, female educators as lived by these individuals.

The research will be take place at the Gelman Library at George Washington University. A total of 8 participants who are immigrant, West Indian, female educators will be a part of the study. Each participant will participate in a 45-minute interview. The interview will be audio recorded.

If you choose to take part in this study, the total amount of time you will spend in connection will be one hour. The additional 25 minutes is allocated for any follow-up questions the participant or the researcher may have after the interview.

There are no physical risks associated with this study. There is, however, the possible risk of loss of confidentiality. Every effort will be made to keep your information confidential, however, this cannot be guaranteed.

You will not benefit directly from your participation in the study.
You will be paid $25 for taking part in this study.

If results of this research study are reported in journals the people who participated in this study will not be named or identified. GWU will not release any information about your research involvement without your written permission, unless required by law.

The Office of Human Research of George Washington University, at telephone number (202) 994-2715, can provide further information about your rights as a research participant. Further information regarding this study may be obtained by contacting Dr. Carol Kochhar-Bryant, principal investigator **202 994 1536 OR** Michaele Samuel, doctoral candidate at telephone number (202) 210 8656.

To ensure anonymity, your signature is not required in this document. Your willingness to participate in this research study is implied if you proceed with completing the survey/interview.

*Please keep a copy of this document in case you want to read it again.

Appendix B

Dear Educator,

Thank you for your interest in participating in my doctoral research on *The Experience Of Acculturation From The Perspectives Of Immigrant, West Indian, Female Educators*

I would like to include short piece of biographic information on each potential research participant in my dissertation proposal. To protect your privacy and in accordance with my agreement with The George Washington University Institutional Review Board, your names will not be used in the research.

I would be grateful I you would provide me with the following information:

Country or origin
Number of years in the United States
Reason for migration
Age
Number of years teaching in an urban setting
Prior teaching experience in your home country
Degree(s) attained in the United States
Any other information you would like to share**.**

I am available to answer any questions you may have. I can be reached at 202 210 8656 or Msamuel@gwu.edu.

Sincerely,

Michaele Samuel

Appendix C

Dear _____,

My name is Michaele Samuel. I am a doctoral candidate at The George Washington University. I am conducting a research study under the direction of Dr. Carol Kochhar-Bryant of the Graduate School of Education and Human Development. The purpose of this study is to explore the acculturation experience of immigrant, West Indian, female educators as lived by these individuals.

I am currently recruiting female educators from the West Indies for participation in the study. I am writing to inquire if you can share the information about my study with your constituents. I have attached an information sheet on my study.

I am available to answer any question you may have. I can be reached at 202 210 8656 or Msamuel@gwu.edu.

Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,

Michaele Samuel

Appendix D

Interview Protocol

Topic: The experience of acculturation from the perspectives of immigrant, West Indian, female educators in an urban setting.

Research Question: How do immigrant, West Indian, female educators who work in public, elementary schools in an urban setting on the east coast of the United States make meaning of their acculturation experience?

1. Warm-Up: Background

Could you tell me about yourself?

How long have you been living in the United States?

What was your experience like when you first arrived in the United States?

2. Describing Acculturation Experience

Describe your initial experience when you first moved to the US.

Reflecting on your experience, what does acculturation mean to you?

Did you find anything challenging about your acculturation experience, and if so what did you find most challenging?

How did your acculturation experience affect you?

Reflecting on the meaning of acculturation, how do you think your acculturation impacts your access to professional opportunities and resources?

Reflecting on your experience, do you think your acculturation impacts your teaching practices and if so, how?

Reflecting on your experience, how do you think your acculturation impacts your ability to connect with students of the mainstream or dominant culture?

What are some differences in teaching in your native country as compared to teaching in the US?

3) Concluding Questions

Is there anything you would like to add?

Is there anything I haven't asked that you think is important for me to know?

Do you have any questions that you would like to ask me?