

Being British vs. Being American: Identification among Second Generation Adults of Nigerian Descent in the US and UK

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ACCEPTED AND FORTHCOMING IN THE JOURNAL OF *ETHNIC AND RACIAL STUDIES*

ABSTRACT

This paper explores the important roles national identity and legacies of the past play in shaping the meanings the adult second generation of Nigerian descent attach to being British or American. Whether a country's national identity is inclusive or exclusive of immigrants, and whether its national myths have emotive appeal affects the sense of welcome and belonging that the second generation feel. Comparing the US and UK, I find that, although the US has taken a laissez-faire approach to multiculturalism, its national identity has strong emotive appeal and engenders majority buy-in by these immigrants. The UK has a problem however; despite its official policy of multiculturalism, it has not seen widespread articulation of shared national sentiments and myths among its second generation. From careful analyses, it is not clear that multicultural policies are making a big difference.

KEYWORDS: AFRICAN, SECOND, GENERATION, NATIONAL, IDENTITY, MULTICULTURALISM, NIGERIAN

INTRODUCTION

This article seeks to explain how national identity and legacies of the past affect belief in national identity myths and assimilative national identification (identifying with the country of birth or main residence) among the second generation. It draws examples from second generation adults of Nigerian descent in the United Kingdom and United States. Because multiculturalism, which accommodates ethno-cultural diversity, is official U.K. policy at the federal level while it is not in the U.S., the U.S. has chosen to take a more laissez faire approach (Yuval-Davis 2004; Bloemraad 2006), one would expect U.K. immigrants to have higher rates of incorporation, for this article, identifying with national origins of the settlement country, compared to U.S. immigrants. This was found not to be the case. Rather, second generation adults of Nigerian descent in the U.S. are more likely to identify with their national identities as Americans compared to their U.K. counterparts.

Therefore, examining official multicultural policies is not an adequate explanation for second generation incorporation contrary to the argument tendered by some scholars who argue that more multicultural countries have better integrated immigrants than less multicultural countries (see Bloemraad 2006). My findings reveal that multiculturalism, by itself, cannot deliver better integrated immigrants.

I offer an alternative explanation which focuses on how varied institutional contexts related to ethno-racial histories, national identity, and national myths about immigrant inclusion in the U.K. and the U.S. offer a better explanation for the differences found within my case. In particular, due to race sensitive policies such as Affirmative Action and a more open and inclusive public discourse about race and immigration, Black immigrants in the U.S. enter a context where they are primed for more positive outcomes. In contrast, the U.K. has not comprehensively addressed racism and immigration from its ex-colonies leading to a more hostile reception to immigrants from these ex-colonies (see Gilroy 2002), especially when compared to the U.S.

1. LEGACIES OF THE PAST, NATIONAL IDENTITIES OF THE U.S. AND U.K.

This article focuses on the present-day impact of past ethno-racial traumas (Foner and Alba 2010) on the second generation, especially the black second generation. The ethno-racial traumas of focus are slavery and colonialism in the U.K., and slavery and legal segregation (Jim Crow) in the U.S. ‘The past, memories of, and institutional responses to’ these ethno-racial traumas shape a country’s national identity and ‘public perceptions and policies that affect contemporary immigrants and their children’ (Foner and Alba 2010, p. 798). National identity, belief in, and articulation of national myths are important because ‘some sense of commonality or shared identity may be required to sustain a deliberative and participatory democracy’ (Kymlicka 2001, p. 212). Therefore, how inclusive or exclusive a country’s national identity is to immigrants and its emotive appeal—in its ability to define and inspire a people (Smith 1999) especially in the face of increasing ethnic, racial, and historical diversity—plays a central role in shaping identification among the second generation. National identity and legacies of the past are rarely foregrounded as factors that affect immigrant incorporation. I argue that both play important roles in understanding identification among the second generation.

The U.S. and U.K. are used as the cases because both countries are advanced, English-speaking Western democracies. They both have racially and ethno-culturally diverse populations. African immigrants are a fast-growing population in both countries and are becoming more visible because most are highly educated (Bhattachayara et al. 2003; Takyi 2009). African immigration to the U.S. and U.K. commenced in earnest from the late 1960s (Daley 1996; Takyi 2009). More significant numbers of Africans have migrated to the U.S. and U.K. since the 1980s, mostly as economic and political migrants due to growing economic privation and political and regional instability in many African countries. The Nigerian national group is the best group to start any study of sub-Saharan African immigrants from because they are the largest national group of sub-Saharan African immigrants in the U.S. and U.K. (Logan and Deane 2003; 2001 U.K. Census).

The U.S. and U.K. have had very different institutional responses to their ethno-racial traumas (Foner and Alba 2010). The U.S. passed the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and Fair Housing Act of 1968 as part of the process to redress longstanding racial inequities. These laws banned discrimination against black people in education, employment, public accommodation, renting and selling of housing, and enfranchised and protected their political rights (Kasinitz et al. 2008; Foner and Alba 2010). Affirmative action programs were established to redress past injustice, but their goal has since evolved to become one of achieving diversity (Kasinitz et al. 2008). Kasinitz et al. (2008) state that 'ironically, affirmative action and other policies designed to redress longstanding American racial inequities turn out to work better for immigrants and their children than they do for the native minorities for whom they were designed' (p. 303).

Black immigrants and their children, who because they are of similar race, have been able to benefit from expanded opportunities in the education and economic sectors created by these Laws. Even the historical inconsistency of the national myth of freedom in a country that once owned black people as property with no rights is given legitimacy by the prevailing consensus that America has made great progress in race relations even though more has to be done to reduce racial gaps in education, income, wealth, and health. In short, the entirety of corrective policies and programs validate U.S. national myths among contemporary non-white immigrant groups. Especially among black immigrants and their children, and even more so because they are not the contemporary immigrant groups that are currently being racialized and discriminated against: Mexicans and Spanish speaking immigrant groups are those groups (Massey et al. 2002). The elements of U.S. national identity, a nation of immigrants, freedom, and the American Dream, are clearly articulated and widely disseminated in the public space. Finally, black immigrants and the black second generation have entered a more racially mature America that has a 'new, more sensitive, etiquette about race in public discourse' (Foner and Alba 2010, p. 799).

The 1965 Immigration Act which abolished country-specific quotas and opened the door to increasing flows of non-white contemporary immigrants from Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean, and Africa has strengthened the conception/national identity of the U.S. as a nation of immigrants (Foner and Alba 2010). The national myth of the American Dream that the U.S. is a land of opportunities where individuals can achieve success if they work hard is affirmed among non-white immigrants groups because of the increased opportunities created by Civil Rights legislation. As Kasinitz et al. (2008) put it,

affirmative action has worked exceptionally well as a second generation integration policy (p, 303). A result of the U.S.'s efforts to redress its racist past is that U.S. national identity of a 'nation of immigrants,' 'freedom,' and 'a land of opportunities' has retained its power to define and inspire an increasingly diverse population.

In contrast, the U.K.'s attempt to redress its racist past has not been as comprehensive and as precisely targeted as the U.S.'s. Gilroy (2004) argues that the U.K. has not confronted its poor black history in a similarly open manner. Because slavery and colonialism occurred away from its borders, it has been easy for Britain to ignore its racial problems. Hostility to ex-colonial subjects and black immigrants, in public and private spheres, in national discourse, and in institutional racism are never truly confronted and dealt with (Gilroy 2004). Britain has long seen immigration 'as being akin to war and invasion' (Gilroy 2004, p. 102). The current conservative government headed by David Cameron has a stated goal to reduce net migration to the U.K. and is currently reviewing all immigration policies and points and ports of entry in order to make it more difficult to migrate to the U.K. Ethnic minorities, including the black second generation, are relegated to outsider status and discriminated against (Modood et al. 1997).

Furthermore, U.K. national identity is an identity in transition. In the period up to the Second World War, Britain was an imperial empire, and Britons saw themselves as a conquering people called to civilize other nations and populations (Weight 2002; Gilroy 2004). During the twentieth century, Britain's victory in the Second World War (the anti-Nazi war) was the core of Britain's identity (Gilroy 2004). Post World War II also saw the rise of devolution programs with Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland fighting for minority rights, and these programs undermined what was once understood as Britishness (Weight 2002). The presence of the European Union has further undermined U.K. national identity as Britons adopt continental habits and patterns of consumption despite the U.K.'s resistance to becoming Europhile (Weight 2002). All these events have caused constant reformulation of what British national identity should be, and Britain has decided that its national identity in the twenty-first century will be based on the English language and adherence to European Human Rights Acts (Yuval-Davis 2004). In its current iteration, British national identity has four component parts: democracy; cultural diversity; Britain's European, Atlantic, and global orientation; and liberal values of 'individual liberty, equality of respect and rights, tolerance, mutual respect, a sense of fair play, and the spirit of moderation' (Parekh 2009, p. 38).

Despite settling on an official national identity that in theory is inclusive of all groups and people, disconnects exist between the official rhetoric of national identity and the experiences of ethnic minorities on the ground. Gilroy (2004) traces this disconnect to the consequences of colonial and postcolonial politics. He sees Britain as suffering from 'postcolonial melancholia,' an 'inability to mourn its loss of Empire and accommodate the Empire's consequences' (p. 111). An ideology of white supremacy was needed to sustain the institutions of slavery and then colonialism. Since both occurred away from British home soil, Britain has a second legacy that understands immigration 'as being akin to war and invasion' (Gilroy 2004, p. 102). These two legacies influence present day social-political contexts. They undergird institutional racism found in Britain today. Black people and other ethnic minorities are disadvantaged in the British judicial system (Gilroy 2004).

Ethnic minorities suffer an ethnic penalty in the labor market as evidenced by lower wages (Heath and McMahon 1996). Immigrants, especially black immigrants, are blamed for destroying the homogenous culture of what it means to be British. Black people are seen as having a culture that is inimical to success (Gilroy 2004). And many individuals and organizations such as the British Nationalist Party (BNP) believe that the expulsion of black immigrants will contribute to Britain being great again (Gilroy 2004). There is also constant boundary maintenance against second generation ethnic minorities: Modood et al. report that Asians and Caribbeans discover ‘through hurtful ‘jokes’, harassment, discrimination, and violence that their claim to be British is all too often denied’ (1997, p. 330). I argue that the U.K.’s national identity, in its current iteration, lacks sufficient emotive appeal to define, inspire, and unite an increasingly ethnic, racial, and historically diverse population, especially in the face of overt and ongoing government efforts to limit immigration and perceivable discrimination, which makes some of the second generation feel that their position in British society is tenuous.

[INSERT TABLE 1 HERE]

Taken together (see table 1), these varied legacies allow for a more inclusive context of immigration and emotive appeal for the second generation in the U.S. as compared to the U.K. despite the differences in multicultural policies in the two countries. What I will show is that multiculturalism in and of itself cannot deliver better integrated immigrants, but that legacies of the past and how these play within institutional contexts and in national identity must be considered in order to provide a better and more comprehensive explanation of second generation integration.

2. METHODOLOGY

The analyses that follow use qualitative data from a larger project on the experiences of adult 1.5, 1.75, and second generation immigrants of Nigerian descent in the U.S. and U.K. Seventy-five individuals each were interviewed in the US and the U.K. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted from June 2008 to November 2009. The sample was collected in two ways. First, subjects were sampled from visitors at Nigerian Embassies in London and New York. A screening questionnaire was utilized to identify individuals who met the sampling criteria and indicated a willingness to be interviewed, and such subjects were followed up. There were three main types of visitors to the embassy; those engaged in frequent transnational activities; those who were not, who had never visited Nigeria or were infrequent visitors but needed to go because of a critical event in the life-course cycle such as a death or wedding in the family; and those who had no business in the embassy or in Nigeria but were serving as escorts to members of their social networks. With this mix of visitors, a good representation of the second generation was obtained. In the U.K., 62 per cent of subjects came from the embassy, and in the U.S., 32 per cent where from the embassy. Embassy sampling worked better in the Britain than in the U.S. because consular clients had to come personally to the embassy compared to the U.S. where 80-90 per cent of consular business was done by mail.

After the embassy as a site was exhausted, snowball sampling was used. The two different points of entry in the U.S. and U.K. were churches and Nigerian organizations.

Key informants referred me to others in their organizations and social networks. Care was taken not to oversample from any one social network. The sample was diversified so as not to sample on identity issues and to control variation in community involvement. In the U.K., 73 subjects came from London, 1 from Liverpool and 1 from Manchester. In the U.S., 66 out of 75 subjects came from Boston (25), New York (20), Texas (12), and Maryland (9), which are 4 of the 5 cities/states with the largest populations of first and second generation Nigerians in the U.S. The remaining 9 came from Atlanta (2), Philadelphia (2), North Carolina (1), Oklahoma (1), Missouri (1), Illinois (1) and California (1). Consequently, almost all U.S. and U.K. subjects came from cities with sizeable and vibrant Nigerian communities. No regional differences were observed on the questions analyzed for this article.

In the U.K., 40 sit-down interviews and 35 telephone interviews were conducted. In the U.S., 20 sit-down interviews and 55 telephone interviews were conducted. Interviews ranged from 35 minutes to 2 hours and 9 minutes. The average length was 1 hour. Interviews were transcribed and analysed thematically using Atlas.ti.

Comparing the U.S. and U.K. samples, 56 per cent (N=42) of the U.K. sample are female, 44 per cent (N=33) are male. In the U.S. sample, 61 per cent (N=46) are female and 39 per cent (N=29) are male. Subjects' ages ranged from 21-62 years. In presenting the findings, subjects who were born and who have lived all their lives in their country of birth are tagged as U.S. or U.K. born and raised. Subjects who were born in either country but have spent more than one calendar year outside their country of birth are tagged second generation.

Subjects in both the U.S. and U.K. are middle class. In the U.K. sample, 91 per cent of subjects had at least a bachelor's degree and 84 per cent had jobs in the service class, the highest class in Goldthorpe's (1992) class schema. Seventy-eight per cent of their fathers and 71 per cent of their mothers had at least a bachelor's degree. In the U.S. sample, 93 per cent of subjects had at least a bachelor's degree and 86 per cent had jobs in the service class. Eighty-four per cent of their fathers and their mothers had at least a bachelor's degree. Most have replicated their parents' high educational attainment or improved on it.

3. FINDINGS: U.K. SUBJECTS

What does being British mean to you?

Table 1 shows the top 13 response categories (in frequency of mentions). Subjects are not double counted in any one category, but, based on coding, could fall into one or more categories. Very few of U.K. second generation espoused the official British national identity narrative.

[INSERT TABLE 2 HERE]

Their answers are grouped into two main categories; (1) Low feelings of allegiance/emotional connection to Britain (e.g. those who view Britain in an instrumental manner and or state that being British means nothing in particular to them); and (2) those who hold a neutral view of Britain and or those who espouse a multicultural narrative. Over eighty per cent of subjects' responses fell into the category that held no allegiance or

identification with Britain and or held an instrumental view of Britain. A few subjects felt that the question was abstract and that there is no consensus on what it means to be British.

Instrumental view of being British

For the majority who held instrumental views, being British is more about the advantages that accrue to them from being a citizen. Most subjects who held this view did not have an emotional attachment to Britain.

Interviewer: What does being British mean to you?

Respondent: I don't know. It just means that I have got..... nothing in particular. I think African means a lot more to me. Being British is the fact. It is the way the world is. It can open some doors to me. That is the only thing for me. It opens some doors. Having a British passport makes it easy to travel around. Then it is easier to get jobs around the West. So that is what it means to me; nothing particularly.

Male, 29, second generation

The instrumental view sees being British as conferring a sense of security: security against deportation, against workplace discrimination, and guaranteeing rights and access to resources.

Being British means nothing to me

By answering nothing in particular, subjects were expressing non-identification with Britishness. There was resentment among some subjects on what they viewed as Britain's past and present exploitation of her ex-colonies and its people. To those who felt strongly about this, they rejected a British national identity. A common combination of sentiments was having no nationalistic pride and having an instrumental view of British citizenship.

Interviewer: What does being British mean to you?

Respondent: It means that I have got a passport. I have got a British passport with all the rights and privileges that it allows me to have. But as for loving the country, loving the culture, the queen, the history, not interested.

Interviewer: Do you think of yourself as British?

Respondent: No, I see myself as Nigerian. Britain is where I have got my passport. Where I was born, but it is not where I align my allegiance.

Male, 41, U.K.-born and raised

Subjects who held instrumental views of what it meant to be British made a distinction between legal status of holding a British passport and an emotional attachment to Britain.

A neutral position and or a multicultural narrative

A tiny minority (N=5) held a neutral view of what being British meant and some of them used a multicultural narrative to describe what being British meant. They saw Britain as a country of laws, as a multicultural society, and as a country and people that are 'tolerant, respectful, and accommodating.' A few saw being British as being in a country that accommodates ethno-cultural diversity even as it struggles to achieve racial equity. The other multicultural frame saw being British as an opportunity for acceptance of difference and the opportunity to incorporate global and localized elements into one's identity.

Subjects' Narratives to Explain their Views of Feeling or not Feeling British

Trying to explain how the U.K. second generation view Britain is a complicated exercise. There is a high correlation between answering no to the question of do you think of yourself as British and not having a British or hyphenated British identity. Also, some subjects who did not identify as British or Nigerian-British nevertheless thought of themselves as British.

Over eighty per cent did not express British national identity narratives. The next task is to try to understand why this is the case. British-born and raised, Matthew touches on the main reasons subjects gave as to why they, on the whole, do not identify with Britain. The reasons include discrimination, institutional racism, exclusion by whites, and Britain's colonial and postcolonial politics.

Interviewer: Well, you said I am not British because of *ABC*. Can you give me the *ABC's*? The reasons why you don't feel British?

Respondent: (*long silence*) this.....I wouldn't call it an infrastructure, but this institution, historically, has not welcomed people from other nations openly, except they have a particular service in mind. If Britain wants a particular service from you, then they would welcome you with open arms. As long as you do that particular service, as long as you stay within that particular remit, within that particular box, then you are fine. Because, basically, from my understanding, that is how the British Empire was so strong. They went into our country and dominated. So they put you in little boxes; you do this, and we do this. This is your place, and this is our place. And so, from that, that is what they have carried on. For example, when they went on recruitment drives in the West Indies, they did that after the Second World War, that is the reason why they came over in the first place, and if not for that they [Afro-Caribbeans] would not have been welcomed. And they were not welcomed by the people. They were welcomed by the government who needed them at the time. And when they no longer needed them, when the government felt that they could do without them, then the situation changed. This institution or British institution has put certain blockades in the way for a particular progression for people that they have previously

dominated. So, once you have come over, [they say] okay this is your job, this is the job that we want you to do. So, if you stay here and do your job everything will be okay. But that job there is no opportunity there for growth and development unless you break out of that box, but to break out of that box means that you will be isolated. And then you will be seen as a trouble maker. So, that is my answer to that.

Male, 27, U.K.-born and raised

In his long answer to the question, Matthew touches on several key reasons why many subjects do not feel British. In his view and in the view of other subjects, Britain has in the past exploited people/labor from its colonies (see Rodney 1972; Gilroy 2004), and this exploitation continues to present day. He mentions that barriers have been placed in the British workplace to prevent several groups from progressing beyond a certain point. He mentions that to buck against the discriminatory system is dangerous because such individuals will be labeled as troublemakers. He mentions the fact that many immigrants, especially black immigrants, are not fully accepted by the British people even though the British government recognizes the importance of their labor.

The points he makes are supported by scholarly literature and our understanding of current and past events. The British government did encourage Caribbeans to migrate to the U.K. pre 1967 to fill government jobs such as rail-car drivers and post-office workers. Currently, the British government has several immigration policies such as the Point Based System (PBS) that allow highly educated migrants to migrate and work in the U.K. But alongside this policy, the British government has begun to institute strict hiring laws which instruct that jobs can only be offered to non-British and non-European Union citizens upon conclusive evidence from the hiring employer that the position cannot be filled by Britons or European Union citizens. This law commonly affects foreign medical doctors in the National Health Service (NHS). The effect of this hiring law is increasing job discrimination against African and Asian immigrants who are well qualified and, in many cases, more qualified than their British and European Union peers.

This discrimination in the U.K. labor market is confirmed by Heath and McMahon (1996) who, using 1991 census data, found that second generation ethnic minorities are less likely to be found in the British 'salaried' compared to their white British peers. The salariat or service class consists of salaried employees such as managers, administrators, or professionals that have relatively secure employment, an incremental salary scale, fringe benefits (e.g. pension schemes), and significant promotion chances.

A sense of not belonging

A common narrative among the U.K. second generation was a sense of not belonging or being fully accepted by British society. Some subjects saw the increasing acceptance and rising platform of the British National Party which calls for expulsion of black immigrants as a threat to their continued presence in Britain. The potential threat of expulsion and hostility from white Britons has caused them to articulate a sense of not belonging. Other

subjects gave racism as their reason for not feeling British.

No. Why should I [feel British]? They don't think of me as British. I see some people who have lost their identity, and I look at them and go why? You don't belong here. They don't see you as one of them

Female, 43, 1.5 generation

All subjects did not see themselves as English; to them, 'you have to be white to be English.'

From living through the race riots of the 1980s, from overt racial incidents, from covert racial ones which straddle the line as one subject put it 'between paranoia and fact,' and from constrained career advancements, subjects have been made increasingly aware that they are racially black. A common response to discrimination is to close ranks and associate only with other Nigerians and, to a limited extent, other Africans—people they feel more comfortable with, and who they feel can be trusted.

Being born and raised in Britain, with no experience of living outside the U.K., did not guarantee that subjects would identify as British or have strong feelings of allegiance to Britain. To summarize, despite the official policy of multiculturalism in Britain, most of the U.K. second generation feel excluded and discriminated against and thus show a lack of emotional connection to a British national identity.

4. FINDINGS: U.S. SUBJECTS

What does being American mean to you?

Table 3 presents the top 13 and ties response categories (in frequency of mentions). Subjects are not double counted in any one category but could fall into one or more categories. Most subjects identify with U.S. national identity narratives. Their responses are collapsed into two main categories: (1) Strong identification with U.S. national identity (being American means opportunities, the American dream, and freedom); and (2) not being really 'American.' Over seventy per cent of the sample had strong identification with an American national identity.

[INSERT TABLE 3 HERE]

The American Dream, a land of opportunities

The commonest response given, (N=37), was 'it means opportunities.' These subjects believe in the American Dream.

It is a state of mind. It is almost defined by the American dream. I can do anything. It is more about individualism than collectivism. I am seventy per cent individualism. We believe in freedom. We believe in rights for everybody. That you can do anything you want to do if you work hard for it.

Male, 32, U.S.-born and raised

America means freedom

The next common response given to the question is ‘the U.S. is a land of freedom.’ To these subjects, freedom encompasses freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom from injurious discrimination, and freedom to pursue opportunities and self-advancement.

Based on the constitution, a free man who has the liberty to speak his views, not be discriminated against, be who you want to be without any prejudice. It is a freedom I am more sensitive to. It is a blessed thing; the fact that I can travel out of the country without thinking about a visa. It is a great gift.

Male, 28, U.S.-born and raised

While the subject above knows that having a U.S. passport makes travel easier, a similar sentiment to that of many U.K. subjects; he, in addition, exhibits positive emotion to being American.

Subjects who spoke of being American as meaning having opportunities and having freedom all thought of themselves as American, if American was not their primary identity, it was one in their slate of identities. Unlike the African-Americans in Patterson’s (2001) study for whom security, negative freedom, and inner freedom were the commonest responses, the freedom these subjects speak of is freedom to pursue opportunities and freedom for self-actualization. Although Patterson’s subjects were describing lived experiences of freedom, in my opinion, the differences in theirs and my subjects’ freedom narratives are worth highlighting because it suggests that these subjects identify with the immigrant American story and not with the African-American history of slavery story.

Can’t say, I am not really American

Some subjects found it difficult to answer this question because they did not see themselves as American or fully American. Others did not see themselves as American because to do that was to deny their Nigerian heritage, something they were not willing to do. A few other subjects who felt neither American nor fully American knew the tropes used to describe America and could produce them. For example, one subject in response to the question said, ‘it means freedom, but I am not the right person to ask.’ This subject did not think of himself as American but could give the appropriate response.

A few subjects used the word citizenship when answering this question, and they used it in a similar manner to the U.K. subjects, making a legal status distinction, separating legal status from feelings of emotional attachment.

Subjects Narratives to Explain their Views of Feeling or not Feeling American

Most subjects think of themselves as American because they feel that the U.S. allows them to be themselves, to be individuals that happily straddle two worlds—parental culture(s) and mainstream American culture(s). They formed their narratives of what it means to be American from the U.S. K-12 schooling system, from their parents’ stories of the U.S.

presenting expected and unexpected opportunities, from common usage of U.S. national identity tropes in the mass media, and from U.S. politicians, whose use of national identity rhetoric is commonplace, especially during election campaigns. The presence of affirmative action policies and their view that they also should be beneficiaries of the policy colors their responses. The election of President Barack Obama was also a seminal moment in their conception and belief in what it means to be American and what being American meant to them. His election opened up previously unimaginable possibilities and gave them a strong sense of acceptance and belonging. In summary, the efforts by the U.S. government to address past racial inequalities, which in turn has led to increased opportunities and advantageous benefits to contemporary non-white immigrants, especially black immigrants and their children (Kasinitz *et al.* 2008), has created a context that has and is nurturing close identification with an American national identity among this black second generation group.

5. COMPARING U.S. AND U.K. ETHNIC IDENTIFICATION PATTERNS

[INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE]

From figure 1, thirty-seven U.S. subjects have either an American or Nigerian-American identity, and just 10 U.K. subjects have either a British or Nigerian-British identity.¹ Some U.S. subjects saw their identities as Nigerian or Nigerian-American as interchangeable. More of the U.K. second generation identify as Nigerian compared to the U.S. second generation. Hyphenated identities were less common in the U.K. than in the U.S. largely because hyphenated identities are not a common convention in the U.K. as they are in the U.S. The pan-ethnic African identity is more common in the U.K. than in the U.S. because Black-African is now in the U.K. racial/ethnic lexicon; it is an official racial/ethnic category on U.K. census forms while the U.S. does not disaggregate the Black/African-American category on its census forms. Important predictors of having a Nigerian or hyphenated identity include living in Nigeria, being immersed in Nigerian culture(s), strong religious beliefs and attending Nigerian-centric churches, and significant experiences of discrimination. If these mechanisms work in the opposite direction, subjects are less likely to identify as Nigerian and are more likely to hold assimilative national or African identities. This question on primary ethnic identification confirms what was observed in the previous discussion on what it means to be British or American by showing that the U.K. second generation have lower levels of identification with a British national identity compared to the U.S. second generation who have significantly higher levels of identification with an American national identity.

Those who identified as British or American exhibited the greatest drift from parental (Nigerian) culture(s). In the U.K., 5 out of the 8 were encouraged by their parents to become as British as possible. None can speak a Nigerian language and none engage in transnational activities. In the U.S., only 1 out of 9 could speak a Nigerian language; 3 of the remaining 8 understood but could not speak. An almost complete loss of Nigerian

¹ Range of ethnic identities, assimilative national identity, national origin identity, hyphenated identity, and pan-ethnic identity are borrowed from Portes and Rumbaut (2001).

ethnic languages has occurred among this group.

In the U.K., growing up with little to no exposure to a Nigerian community and Nigerian culture(s), having social networks devoid of other Nigerians, growing up in a different household from that of one's parents, having parents who are more affluent than middle class; and, not being very religious increased the likelihood of identifying primarily as British. Those who identified primarily as American, apart from all expressing U.S. national myths, shared no other commonalities.

The ethnic choices of U.K. subjects in this sample differ significantly from the ethnic patterns of British-born Caribbeans. Modood et al. (1997) found that over half of British-born Caribbeans thought of themselves as British, a quarter did not think of themselves as British, and one in six did not think of themselves as being part of a Caribbean ethnic group. They report that the perception among this group is that one must give up one's 'blackness' and blend in—become white, especially middle class white,—in style of dressing, speaking, and behavior to be successful in Britain.

So, why are the identification patterns of the U.K. second generation of Nigerian descent so different from second generation Caribbeans? First, Caribbeans have been in Britain considerably longer than African immigrants—a difference of at least one generation. Second, for the second generation in this sample, being black is something that they are; they do not see it as a classificatory label. Third, the British Caribbean race and class system is constructed in such a way, due to British slavery and colonialism for over 300 years, that being more British than the British is a way to improve class status. In contrast, the British presence in Nigeria was not as dominant as in the Caribbean because of the absence of British (white owner) slavery and because the number of white British colonial administrators to Nigerians was minuscule. Consequently, those of Nigerian descent do not seek affirmation from Britons to have high self-worth and esteem.

These findings contribute to existing literature on the U.S. black second generation by firstly, increasing our knowledge of the under-researched African second generation. Secondly, these findings advance our knowledge on ethnicities within the black category showing that a middle class black second generation group does not have to choose an African-American identity as argued by segmented assimilation theory (Portes and Rumbaut 2001). While the U.S. second generation do not contest being black, none of them, as adults, identified as African-American. A few identified as African-American during adolescence, which is in line with Waters (1999) and Arthur's (2008) finding about identity patterns among black second generation youths, but outgrew the African-American identity upon reaching adulthood. Being middle class made the subjects in the U.S. sample reject an African-American identity that is frequently synonymous with a lower/underclass African-American culture.

These findings also show that the black second generation can be black and have an ethnic identity. This is similar to Butterfield's (2004) finding on adult second generation West-Indians in New York. This is a departure from Waters (1999) who theorized an either/or proposition in her study of second generation West Indian youths in New York. For the U.S. second generation of Nigerian descent, not self-identifying as African-American comes with minimal cost since they still enjoy the benefits of affirmative action and the

advantages, particularly in the labor market, of not being African-American (see Waters 1999).

6. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This paper has shown that the past, the memories of and institutional responses to the past play an important role in second generation identification. The policies and structures the U.S. has put in place to address its racist past have conferred increased opportunities and a more welcoming environment to contemporary non-white immigrants, especially black immigrants and their children (Kasinitz et al. 2008; Foner and Alba 2010). And these opportunities have validated U.S. national myths among the black second generation, of which the second generation of Nigerian descent are a part of. Black immigrants and their children are fortunate that they have not fallen on the contemporary fault lines of immigration in the U.S. and Europe: Mexican/Spanish speaking in the U.S. and Islam in Europe (Alba and Foner 2008). This would have been a double strike against them because black people face ongoing racial discrimination and have been conflated with poverty and criminality in both countries (Gilroy 2004; Lacy 2007). Whether second generation Mexicans have similar high levels of assimilative national identification as do the second generation of Nigerian descent because they are also beneficiaries of policies and programs designed to redress racial inequities or whether they have lower levels of assimilative national identification because they face increasing racialization and hostility, and for the undocumented 1.5 and 1.75 generation increasing marginalization, is a question for future research. Contrastingly, frequent assertions that the U.K. does not have entrenched and significant ethnic minority issues have prevented the U.K. from aligning national rhetoric of immigrant inclusion to practice which has led to skepticism about its national myths among the second generation in this sample. Another question for future research is the degree of identification to Britain among second generation South Asian Muslims who are facing increasing racialization and radicalization in the U.K.

It is not contested that these second generation adults of Nigerian descent are citizens of the U.S. and U.K., in the formal definition of the word. It is clear, however, that formal status of citizenship is not enough. If identification and belonging are necessarily a matter of degree, subjects in the U.S. have stronger degrees of identification and emotional attachment to the U.S. than subjects in the U.K. If we imagine an axial line, with one end (the left end) indicating passionate commitment to country and belief in country's myths, and the other end (the right end) indicating low identification with country, seeing little to no elements of the country's way of life in oneself, and only feeling at home in the country just enough to want to continue to live in it, subjects in the U.S. will cluster around the left end to the middle, and subjects in the U.K. will cluster towards the right end, a bit removed from the middle (several value points on the axial line are from Parekh 2009, p.33).

It does not appear from the responses of these respondents on both sides of the Atlantic that multicultural policies are making a big difference. On the one hand, the U.S. takes a *laissez-faire* approach to multiculturalism—taking the stance that immigrants groups should figure out for themselves how they will integrate and incorporate—and sees results

of widespread articulation of shared sentiments and national myths among its immigrant population. On the other hand, the U.K. makes multiculturalism its official policy in dealing with diversity, has invested in multicultural education in school curricula and debated and called for citizenship education, but has not seen widespread articulation of shared national sentiments and national myths among its immigrant population. This difference in both effort and outcomes indicate that, indeed, multiculturalism is really just a part of a slate of projects that foster immigrant integration.

Britain has to find a way to strengthen its national identity, has to find national myths that are powerful enough to unite and inspire an increasingly diverse population, especially among immigrant groups who have negative memories of Britain's role in major historical events and who are more sensitive to Britain's responses to these events. There is something about American national identity, about the American Dream, that this black second generation and other black people including African-Americans buy into (Hochschild 1995). There isn't an analogous British dream. The majority of the second generation are quite content to stay and live in the U.K. The historical fact that Nigeria was once a British colony does not serve as a unifying myth. It may be that policy cannot fix this problem, but, clearly, Britain's national identity does not facilitate immigrant integration in the same way that American national identity does.

Table 1. Major Contextual Differences between the U.K. and U.S.

U.K.	U.S.
Not so strong anti-discrimination policies	Strong anti-discrimination policies
National identity sees immigration as akin to invasion, national identity based on shared language and Human Rights	National identity based on being a nation of immigrants
Non-validated national identity with low emotive appeal to the black second generation	Validated national identity with high emotive appeal to the black second generation
Multiculturalism is official policy	Multiculturalism is not official policy

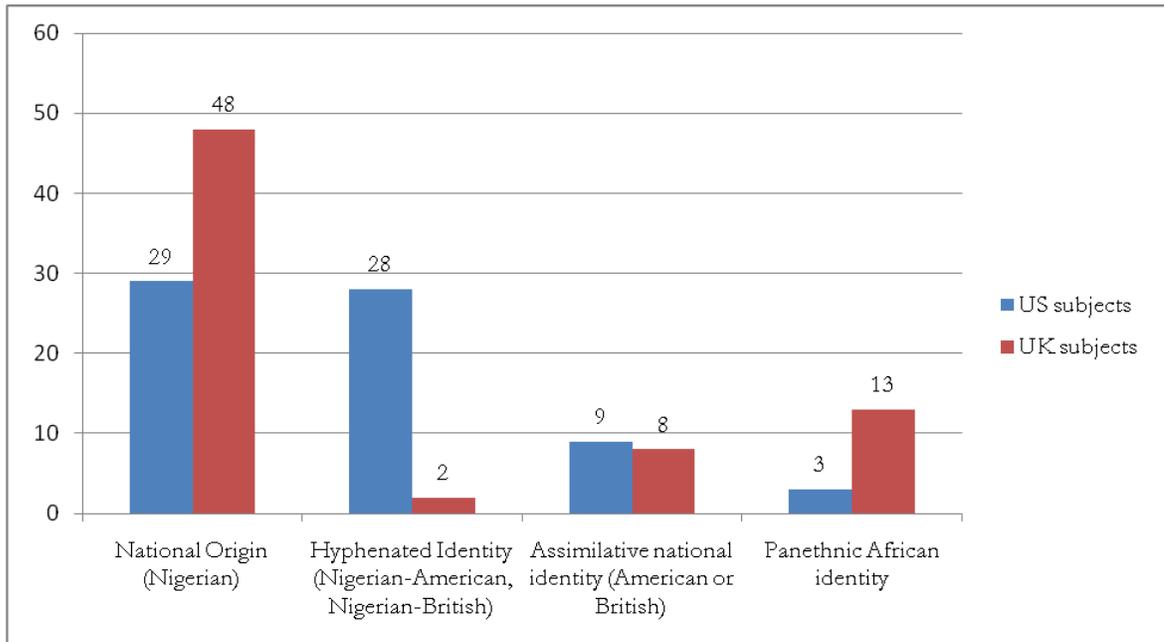
Table 2: How second generation adults of Nigerian descent define ‘being British’

What does being British mean to you (presenting the top 13 response categories)	Number of subjects who gave response
Having a British/Red Passport	25
It means nothing to me	22
Being born in Britain–used in a geographical sense.	13
I don’t feel British, I am not accepted, being British is not for black people	12
I don’t know	10
Being able to travel without restriction	9
I have the same entitlements as other Britons	8
Being British guarantees my rights; I am safe from deportation or discrimination because of my race	7
It means a multicultural society	5
Being cultured, well-mannered, and knowledgeable of people	5
It means room for personal growth	3
A nation of manners, of rule of law	3
Negative cultural symbols: too much drinking, sex, drugs, laziness, etc.	2

Table 3: How second generation adults of Nigerian descent define ‘being American’

What does being American mean to you? (presenting the top 13 response categories and ties)	Number of subjects who gave response
It’s a land of opportunities	37
Freedom <i>(includes freedom; to succeed, of speech, from discrimination, of movement, of the press, of choice, rights for everybody)</i>	20
I am not fully ‘American’	9
It means living in America, but your identity is drawn from parents’ country of origin	8
The American Dream	7
A prosperous country, has high standards of living, and luxury	6
Being a citizen—rights, duties, and responsibilities	6
It means being mixed, combining two cultures	6
It means nothing to me	6
It means everything to me. I love this country. It’s the best country in the world	5
It means too much work, too much stress, working too hard to pay bills	5
Multicultural society that allows people to be themselves	4
Being born in America	4
Eases travel	4
Having a U.S. passport	4

Figure 1: Comparing Primary Identities of U.S. and U.K. Subjects (self-identification)²



² Figure 1 uses actual subject counts. The other category was dropped. There were 6 U.S. subjects and 4 U.K. subjects in the other category.

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