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We navel-string bury here: Landscape history, representation and identity in the Grenada islandscape

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Conceptualizing Landscape in Creolizing Caribbean Islandscapes

*“I saw what I saw very clearly. But I didn’t know what I was looking at.
I had nothing to fit it into. I was still in a kind of limbo.”*

V.S. Naipaul, *The Enigma of Arrival* (1987:3)

The Caribbean (i.e. Indies/West Indies/Antilles) began as a misnomer, an archipelagic dreamscape strung together by European myths, desires, pleasures, and fancy. Imagining himself in the mythical land of the Great Khan, the island of Cipango (Japan), or the riches of the spiced (East) Indies, Columbus stumbled upon his dream of the Garden of Eden peopled with fantastical beings of grotesque human “savages,” in this New World that was ripe for the picking. For the Indigenous peoples of this romanticized archipelago, however, it was the beginning of a cannibalistic nightmare that would consume them, leaving only denigrating caricatures and stereotypes (Sheller 2003). Those who followed in Columbus’ wake imagined a landscape shaped by their belief in an earthly paradise—a bountiful, verdant promised land foretold and bestowed on them by Providence (Dillman 2015). These ambiguous images of the Caribbean landscape, of diverse islands and peoples, were rendered in the ways European writers, colonists, sojourners, and visitors wrote about, drew or painted the landscape, creating novel imaginings of peoples and places that often reflected more of their own origins, fears and biases than actual representations of this “New World.” They set about fashioning this ideal of an earthly paradise, despite the incongruous presence of genocide, indenture, slavery, colonialism and the inherent brutality and exploitation of the colonial enterprise of both peoples and the environment. The (mis)representations of this fantastical New World inhabited by noble savages was brought to you by the “imperial gaze” or the “tropical gaze” that came to dominate the way places and peoples were/are perceived, imagined, and even self-identify across the region today¹ (Arnold 2006; Crowley 2003;

¹ For example, in 1970, Grenadian Premier Eric Gairy, during the height of “Black Power” protests against his government, vowed not to allow “any racial disharmony in this ‘Isle of Spice’-the Caribbean Garden of Eden,”

Mcaleer 2010; McClintock 1995; Pratt 1992; Sheller 2003). It begs questions like: What is it about islands and their peoples, in this case the Caribbean, that have fascinated people from across the globe to imagine, dream, desire and distort them, for centuries? Is it their separateness and perceived boundedness that make them appealing to mythmaking and fantasizing (Baldacchino 2005)? What is it about these islands that makes us believe they are special, and thus their identities unique? How can we better understand societies scattered across these small archipelagic islands like Grenada—these “maritime landscapes”—and the role they played in creating new societies and forging new identities over time? How do we understand them from without? How do we reimagine them from within?

This chapter discusses various theoretical concepts with the objective of conceptualizing landscape in an island landscape, specifically of the smaller islands of the Caribbean archipelago. It highlights various theoretical approaches that have been used to study and understand Caribbean society, and their idiosyncratic historical landscapes. It examines the concepts of landscape, landscape biography, and landscape change in the *longue durée*, within the context of specific historical and social circumstances experienced in these small islands (Antrop 1998, 2005; Bender 2002; Braudel 1949; Guldi and Armitage 2014; Ingold 1993; Kolen et al. 2015). It utilizes aspects of the phenomenological approach of landscape to examine “landscape representations,” “*memory-traces*” and “landscape identity” as a way to understand how diverse groups of people interact and create landscapes under specific conditions, and fashion a sense of place and identities in these islandscapes (Hay 2006, 2013; Ingold 2013; Stobbelaar and Pedroli 2011; Tilley 1994). It ultimately aims to conceptualize the characteristics of landscape changes brought about by the process of creolization due to European invasion and colonization of the Indigenous space, the institutionalization of plantation slavery using captive Africans, centuries of colonialism, and in, out and return migration of diverse peoples in order to understand the parallel issue of intense contestation that continues to impact and define the creolized cultural landscape in these small island spaces. It is in this vein, therefore, that the Caribbean island landscape, particularly of smaller islands like Grenada, is reimaged and retold from the inside out, allowing for the (re)emergence of new perspectives on history, landscape, memory, and identity.

echoing the colonial view of the Caribbean paradise despite the social and political chaos that characterized the period, and its deep history of genocide and slavery (Martin 2022:25).

3.1 “An Island is a World”²

I am not sure at what age I realized I was living on an island, specifically a tiny island denoted as a mere dot on the globe. However, I was always aware that the space I inhabited was close to and surrounded by water, vast amounts of water, as far as the eyes could see. Since my first memory of heavy rains gushing down the hillside and emptying into the sea, I cannot tell you that I understood the larger picture of islands, archipelago, continents, (bio)geography, waves, currents, and oceans. But from an early age, I surmised that my space comprised a verdant landscape, interspersed with rivers, streams, and mountain lakes, steep hills and lofty mountains, deep valleys submerged in a wash of tress, bushes and houses, and beaches—beautiful, white and black sandy beaches where we swam and from where we saw the expansive sea dotted with fishing boats, schooners, yachts, and even cruise ships carried on the waves toward the shore or the distant horizon. It was idyllic in many ways, for most, especially a child, yet it was also in stark contrast to the challenges that many faced on the island on a daily basis. And then there were the times when the threat of storms or hurricanes in the hot, sweltering months of the rainy season, or of the nearby sub-marine volcano threatening to finally erupt from the seabed made all feel vulnerable to the unpredictability of the power of natural forces circling all around this tiny island, seemingly adrift on a tumultuous sea reflecting off the dark sky.

And although I learned that I lived on an island of 344 km² (123 mi²), 19 km (12 mi) across and 34 km (21 mi) long at its extremes, it appeared rather large to me because I knew so little of it, and I had nothing to compare it to. The furthest I had traveled was to my grandmothers’ houses in the countryside, or the small airport in the mountain, and getting there seemed to take forever (through a child’s eyes). As you passed scattered, sleepy villages, across rumbling, narrow bridges and up hills along steep, winding roads hung with creeping ferns that disappeared into the mist-covered treetops. It was not until a teenager, when I traveled by (Coastguard) motorboat to the sister island of Carriacou in the Grenadines as a Sea Scout that I began to realize the extent of the place where I was born and grew up, and how it connected to these even smaller islands and islets that seem to create a familiar path across the sea (Martin and Hanna 2020). For the first time in my life I had left the island and could see it from afar, as it came into panoramic view in the distance, this mountainous expanse of green with intermittent, small, clustered patches of tiny, multicolored buildings all splashed against

² Title of Trinidadian writer Samuel Selvon’s 1955 novel about “identity, self-awareness, and wholeness in a colonial, pluralistic society crippled by self-contempt and the psychic scars of slavery, and the equally dehumanizing Indian indenture system” (Barratt 1996:26).

a blue and white sky, and surrounded by a vast sea of churning waves that originate on neighboring, connected shores. And a few years later, when I left the island on my first airplane journey to a neighboring island, I got this fleeting birds-eye view of my tiny island as it disappeared beneath a puff of cumulus clouds. This island, this tiny island buffeted by the Caribbean Sea and Atlantic Ocean, had been my home (till then), my entire world of family, community, place, learning, exploration, adventure, celebration, history, memory, poetry..., and identity. Grenada had been my islandscape, a unique island world that Poet Laureate Derek Walcott (1993:52) muses "...can only exist / If we have loved in them."

Islands, particularly small (tropical) islands like Grenada, have been recorded in history, literature, poetry, and folklore in their many forms, from the majestic to the sublime, the beautiful to the bizarre, and the fantastical to the fearful (Baldacchino 2018; Ratter 2018). Islands have been described as possessing idyllic and poetic landscapes, sometimes paradise, and even the Biblical Garden of Eden. From the Ancient Greeks of Homer's *Odyssey* (2011) to the early European explorers like Charles Darwin (1859) in the Galapagos and Captain James Cook in Tahiti, islands have captivated and enthralled, educated and inspired, and even provided novel vegetables like the breadfruit and several Asian fruits via the (*HMS*) *Providence* to our provision gardens despite the mutiny on *The Bounty*.³ These views of islands as magical and wondrous, beautiful but mysterious, liberating yet isolating, idyllic and abounding with unexpected treasures are as old as the stories told of them—from the tales of Thomas More's (1516) *Utopia*, William Shakespeare's (1623) *The Tempest*, Daniel Defoe's (1719) *Robinson Crusoe*, Robert Louis Stevenson's (1883) *Treasure Island*, William Golding's (1954) *Lord of the Flies*, Jamaica Kincaid's (1988) *A Small Place*, and Derek Walcott's (1990) *Omeros*. What is it about islands—small tropical islands like those of the Caribbean archipelago and their surrounding seas—that so intrigue us, that so captivate us?

Many years ago, I read somewhere that the best or only way to truly see and experience islands is from the sea. The idea of sailing through the Caribbean aquapelago and experiencing each of the islands in turn has remained with me all these years, especially now that I write about islands. And until quite recently, seeing these islands from the sea was the only way to experience them, these archipelagic mounds strung together like verdant (three-

³ In 1793 the British via Captain Bligh aboard the *HMS Providence* brought the breadfruit plant and many other Asian fruits and vegetables from the Pacific to the Caribbean, finally succeeding after the infamous mutiny aboard the *HMS Bounty* in 1787. The breadfruit was first recommended by Sir Joseph Banks, a member of the Cook expedition, as a food for the enslaved in the region, though it was not readily accepted by them. The breadfruit is today the main ingredient in Grenada's national dish, the one-pot *Oildown*.

pointed) *zemis*⁴ on a string winding their way in a crescent across the Caribbean Sea, almost as if bridging the outer bounds of two continents, and literally binding them together. These oceanic islands, with their mountaintops barely discernable from each other in the misty distance, were first seen from the bows of Indigenous pirogues arriving from the mainland in search of new shores and refuge from long journeys. These islands, though bounded by the sea, remained connected to each other in the chain, and to the (Spanish) Main, centuries after they were first invaded and colonized by Indigenous peoples (Hanna 2018, 2019). So too the Europeans who happened upon these inhabited islands, sighted from the crow's nest or the bridge of mast ships, and in turn invaded and colonized them, reimagining them as part paradise and part exploitable space, including their Indigenous inhabitants (Martin 2013; Murphy 2021). Now, these islands are best viewed from bird's eye drones or planes, as the crow flies, creating new and evolving perspectives of these small archipelagic islands like Grenada.

An island is defined simply as “a piece of land surrounded by water” (Simpson and Wiener 1989). That is where the commonality among islands ends as the diversity of their size, location, geography, geology, and ecology, and therefore their exploitation by humans prohibits any other binding comparisons (Hache 1998; Hay 2006). This diversity, of course, has led to extensive debates on islands, their particular characteristics, and the role those play in the perceived uniqueness of their ecology and cultures. The most obvious observation of islands is their apparent isolation due to their physical separation from other land masses by surrounding seas or oceans. This perception of isolation—physical, ecological and cultural—and its implications regarding its insularity have been central to the debate on islands for decades, especially within the disciplines of ecology (biogeography) and anthropology (Boomert and Bright 2007). In an attempt to shift the debate surrounding islands, the idea of redefining what it means has been proposed in the form of islandscape. Islandscape, or islescape, is more encompassing than the limited perception of island with its basic definition. Islandscape, first coined by Broodbank (2000), “encompasses all of the constituent components of an island, in a holistic manner,” that is its “sea, coast and land, all attributes to an island's character” (Vogiatzakis et al. 2017).

⁴ A *zemi/cemi* is a sculptured object believed by the ‘Taino’ to possess an ancestral spirit or deity. One of the most popular of the various forms is the three-pointed stone, shell or coral *zemi*, a sculpted or plain triangular shaped object (see Swogger 2021).

That Grenada is part of an archipelago of small islands, itself one of its smallest inhabited islands, and only 161 km (100 mi) from the South American mainland are all important in the analysis of its changing landscape over the *longue durée*. Murphy (2021) also designates Grenada as the southern boundary of the “Creole Archipelago” that occupied a distinctive area of colonization in the 17th to 19th centuries. As with most other oceanic islands, Grenada’s “topography and biogeography, and that of the surrounding marine ecosystem, provides both limitations and opportunities for the distinctive human activities that can be practiced on the island” (Bevan and Conolly 2013:44). These topographical characteristics of size, and distance to other islands in the archipelago and the mainland, have social implications of isolation, insularity, and connectedness that have defined small islands across the globe, but specifically across the Caribbean’s “Sea of Islands” or “Continent of Islands.”⁵ Though these characteristics have influenced their settlement, cultural aspects like maritime technology and navigational ability may have played greater roles, and have called into question the emphasis on island biogeography as a paradigm for understanding island societies and environments (Boomert and Bright 2007; Broodbank 2000; MacArthur and Wilson 1967). In recognizing the uniqueness of island societies, however, some like Patton (1996:25) and Hay (2013:209) respectively suggest that new approaches to the study of islands should focus instead on the “cultural dimensions of island life,” or “an engagement with psychologies of island experiences” to better understand them, to better know and explain them.

Grenada, and other small Caribbean islands, are of course similar in many respects to mainland landscapes despite their boundedness, but it is specifically their *islandness* that makes them what they are and what they have meant and mean to the many peoples who have, and continue to inhabit them (see Telesford 2021). But as Ratter (2018:3) insists, their smallness and isolation are not enough to explain islands and their populations, it is the results of “how they deal with the spatial facts they have been dealt” that creates their uniqueness. For islands like Grenada, it is its location within this archipelago of islands, connected to its island neighbors and associated with two continents, Europe and Africa, that created its diverse chronologies and thus definitive yet changing Caribbean identity through time. It is its interactions with its smallness and boundedness that have created its complex heritage and culture, and thus island identities that are celebrated by its inhabitants, even by

⁵ “Sea of Islands” was coined by E. Hau’ofa (1994) in an article titled “Our Sea of Islands.” A “Continent of Islands” was made popular by Mark Kurlansky (1992) in his book *A Continent of Islands: Searching for the Caribbean Destiny*.

those in the Caribbean Diaspora. It is its distinct island history that has left it susceptible to its particular social issues, while its boundedness has left it exposed to environmental hazards like coastal erosion. It is its smallness that has left it vulnerable to global environmental threats like climate change, an unequal international economic system, particularly of trade, and the very economic endeavors—agriculture and tourism—that have sustained it over the centuries, but have nonetheless diminished its environment and its sustainability. It begs the question: What are the best approaches and methods we can use to analyze and better understand the landscape or rather islandscape of these small islands, with their complex histories, cultures, and identities?

3.2 Theoretical Approaches to the Study of Caribbean Societies

The islands of the Caribbean archipelago have intrigued many with interests in various academic fields for centuries, though serious research into its economy, ecology and society only developed in the late 19th century, and especially in the beginning of the 20th century (Hurbon 2003). Much of this research, however, have been carried out from the periphery, with varying perspectives that oftentimes depict the islands as places of fascination, and portrayed its peoples as objects of study (Higman 2003; Smith 1955). The islands themselves lacked the resources to pursue research of interest until the mid-1900s when the changing politics and social dynamics led to the emergence of multiple Caribbean voices, many emerging from nascent academic institutions (Higman 2003). These voices have been most vocal in the region's literature that has a longer history, allowing for the portrayal of lived perspectives that have shared the Caribbean island experiences, and like in other post-colonial societies plays a primary role in the creation of “national and nationalist discourse” and “reflects and contributes to changing understandings of national identity” (Hogan 2015:1). Caribbean fiction writers and poets were the first to make the world take notice of these islands, changing the view that they were only the periphery or even backwaters of European colonial empires. Additionally, studies by C.L.R. James (1933, 1938), Dr. Eric Williams (1942, 1964, 1994), Dr. Elsa Goveia (1956, 1965) and Kamau Brathwaite (1971) in the English-speaking Caribbean; Aimé Césaire (1955), Frantz Fanon (1963, 1967) and Édouard Glissant (1989, 1997) in the French Caribbean; Cola Debrot (1935) in the Dutch Caribbean, and José Martí (1891), Fernando Ortiz (1950, 1951, 1995) and Alejo Carpentier (1946, 1949) in the Spanish Caribbean are some of the early writers whose works changed

the way the Caribbean islands were portrayed and portrayed themselves and the Caribbean landscape to the world (see Kamugisha 2019). The latter half of the 20th century and the first two decades of the 21st century witnessed the blossoming of Caribbean voices in literature, art, politics, society, and economics exemplified by Nobel Laureates Derek Walcott (of St. Lucia), Sir Vidiadhar S. Naipaul (of Trinidad/UK), Sir Arthur Lewis (of St. Lucia), and Saint-John Perse (of Guadeloupe), to name a few.

Caribbean scholarship came of age in the latter half of the 20th century, and its writers, living in independent states with their respective universities and institutions of higher learning, or the Caribbean Diaspora, placed them on an equal intellectual footing with European and North American academics, despite unequal access to resources. In the 1960s, with the socialist revolution in Cuba, the Black Power movements in the US and the Caribbean, and the growing anti-colonial struggles across the world, there was an emerging shift in emphasis from politics and institutions to social history or “history from below” (Higman 2003). This new approach to postcolonial theory resulted in the expansion of the study of Caribbean history and culture, with emphasis on the often forgotten enslaved and slavery, the emergence of a peasantry, and the development of contemporary Caribbean Creole societies; it would be decades before the contributions of the Indigenous populations would be acknowledged and thereafter incorporated into the study of Creole societies (Murphy 2021). To explain Caribbean societies through analyses of structural relationship and processes of change, several models—plantation (Beckford 1972), plural (Smith 1965), and Creole (Brathwaite 1971) society models—were developed, debated and utilized by academics in the region and beyond.

These three models have dominated the academic discourse on Caribbean society since. The plantation model, derived from the long history of the plantation complex that still structurally impacts the region, recognized Caribbean society as characterized by a rigid social hierarchy, dependence on a single or few crops for export, structural dependency, monopolistic tendency, marginality of the peasantry, emphasis on race and class, and negligent of social change (Beckford 1972). Many Caribbean academics utilized Marxist theory as part of their application of the plantation society model, and it would have probably the greatest influence on the early scholarship and since. This economic-centered model was a primary prism through which slavery, colonialism, and post-colonialism were analyzed and debated, and as a result, was criticized as being overly economically deterministic on the

other aspects of society, as well as negating the complex relationship between social variables (Harris 1995). Brathwaite (1975:4) adds that as the plantation model derives from the plantation, it runs the risk of “becoming as much tool as tomb of the system that it seeks to understand and transform.” The plural society model, developed by Furnivall (1944, 1945), was promoted by M.G. Smith (1960, 1965) as a way to explain the social and cultural divisiveness, conflict and thus disunity evident in Caribbean societies in the mid-20th century (Léon and Léon 1977; Smith 1965a,b). Smith (1960) saw these groups, separated on racial and ethnic lines, as leading distinct and separate lives with their own institutions, but held together only by the colonial state (Léon and Léon 1977). Its overemphasis on race and class, and conflict has led to much criticism, and it is seen as unable to explain the continuing changes via creolization that have taken place across the region. The Creole society model (Brathwaite 1975; Hall 1977), on the other hand, views Caribbean society as a “process of change and adaptation that occurs over time” (Mustapha 2009). More will be said about creolization below as it is utilized as a theoretical approach in this study.

As part of the postcolonial critique, several scholars have proposed that instead of the widespread use of strictly Western theoretical approaches in analyzing and understanding the complex historical and changing Caribbean societies, scholars should explore indigenous approaches because of the uniqueness of the region’s history of invasion, colonialism, and dependency; others have called for the rejection of these theoretical approaches altogether (Lalla et al. 2013; Lionnet & Shih 2011; Nakhid & Nakhid-Chatoor 2018). Unfortunately, a viable theoretical approach from a specific Caribbean perspective has not emerged, although the theory of creolization is probably the closest to being recognized as an indigenous approach, with some arguing that the works of Édouard Glissant (1989, 1990) and “Francophone thought” on *Métissage* and creolization are its beginnings (Burton 1993; Clarke 2000; Dash 1995; Kamugisha 2019; Searly 2020).

Though these larger theoretical approaches dominated the debates on Caribbean society, smaller, yet important discussions on the changing Caribbean landscape began to surface as well. In 1987 historical geographer David Watts (1987) published *The West Indies*, an extensive historical analysis of the region within a geographical emphasis. It was the first study to provide that perspective in examining the role of landscape in the last 500 years of the region’s history of European colonialism (Hauser and Hicks 2007). In the 1990s geography also emerged as an approach to examine the environment and development of the

region with the British-Caribbean Geography Seminar held in Jamaica in 1992. Though its emphasis was on the environment and economic development, it recognized that there was a reciprocal relationship between the two as “each shapes the other, whether it be in nurturing the history of a people, fashioning the evolution of a cultural landscape or in the channeling of patterns of economic activity” (McGregor and Barker 1995:4). But the approach was slow to gain popularity among scholars. Almost two decades later Higman (2003:17), in his review of the “Development of historical disciplines in the Caribbean,” concluded that “the evidence of material culture, the landscape, and historical archaeology, have received little attention from the mainstream of Caribbean history-writing” (except, for example Clement 1997; Cray 2015; Higman 1988, 2000; Satchell 2009, 2012). However, practitioners of Caribbean archaeology, especially in the last two decades, have utilized the landscape approach to enhance the story of Caribbean society in a spatial perspective. But Hauser and Hicks (2007:251) still view it as “remarkable that the study of colonial landscapes remains a relatively undeveloped area of archaeological research. And historians have slowly begun to use the approach to provide a more detailed and encompassing understanding of the region’s history...” (see Armstrong et al. 2007). This thesis approaches the study of Grenada from an interdisciplinary perspective, utilizing creolization theory and landscape studies to delve into how identities are created in these changing islandscapes. But before we get into that discussion we will explore the concept of landscape from a historical perspective.

3.3 Defining Landscape: From *Landschap* to Humanistic Geography

The exploration of the theoretical framework for a study on landscape, like this one, usually begins with the fundamental question of what is a landscape, or what is landscape? For many of us, that has something to do with a painting, a painting of a scenery, a large painting, a wide view, all encompassing, all engaging. Sometimes it captures people, other times not at all, or maybe they are portrayed in diminutive form, but it is an urban or rural, even rustic scene, a seascape or taskscape perhaps, that can take us back to a time long ago, or a pleasant time remembered (Cosgrove and Daniels, eds. 1988; Olwig 1996). It can often be nostalgic, or reminiscent of a place. This aesthetic meaning, representing a genre of art known as landscape painting, dates to the 16th century, and made popular particularly by Dutch and English painters (Cosgrove and Daniels, eds. 1988; Tuan 1979). Landscape as a field of study saw its emergence in Europe coinciding with the Renaissance and the ‘Age of Discovery’ that

brought Europeans to the Caribbean to occupy new landscapes (Antrop 2013). These narrative scenes were often panoramic in their expanse, but could also be narrow, focusing on a European country estate or a village, but later of Caribbean landscapes, oftentimes imaginary, but nonetheless representing new views of islandscapes. That view, that glimpse of a landscape remains an integral part of the overall meaning of landscape, but is only a part of it, a beginning of sorts, a place to initiate the exploration of what is a landscape and its multiple meanings.

The origin of the word landscape or rather *landship* in English is directly derived from the Dutch *landschap*, which is closely related to the German *Landschaft* meaning “shaped lands” as in “shaped by natural forces,” as these scenes were the subject of landscape paintings (Gibson 1989). The earliest Dutch reference to *lantscap*, however, dates to the early 13th century with reference to “land region or environment,” with its subsequent meaning of “scenery” deriving from the 17th-century Dutch painting genre, replacing that of “territory” (Antrop 2013) (Figure 3.1). Thus, it was the paintings of landscapes that were the basis for the concepts of natural and cultural landscape (Pannell 2006). Though it would take centuries before the idea of cultural landscape was institutionalized within academic disciplines like geography, its scientific basis began in the late 1700s and early 1800s with the likes of European explorers, including Alexander von Humboldt (1769-1859) and Charles Darwin (1809-1882), both of whom explored landscapes across the Americas, with Darwin finding evidence for his theory of evolution by natural selection, and Humboldt making contributions to natural sciences and ecology (Antrop 2013).

At the end of the 1800s, the German geographer Alwin Oppel introduced the term “landscape science,” and in 1908 geographer Otto Schluter suggested that cultural landscapes, as opposed to original (natural) landscapes, were created by human culture (Antrop 2013; Antrop and Van Eetvelde 2017). The presumed dichotomy between the natural and cultural landscapes has been part of the debate ever since. Much of the early development of the study of landscape took place in Europe until the early 1900s when the German concept was introduced to the United States by the well-known geographer Carl O. Sauer (Antrop and Van Eetvelde 2017). He expounded on the idea of cultural landscape, defining it as “fashioned from a natural landscape by a culture group. Culture is the agent, the natural area is the medium, the cultural landscape is the result” (Sauer 1925). By the mid-20th century, the study of landscape had “became a core topic in geography and was seen as a unique synthesis

immediately to mind some pleasant prospect: a piece of the countryside, the particular setting of some memorable place....”), and important (“because it does carry all these connotations and more, and is thereby involved in many matters of professional interest and of public concern”), he adds that “because landscape is used by so many different people for such a variety of purposes, it is inevitably an ambiguous term,” even arguing that its meaning can be uncertain between and within academic fields. He concludes that the term landscape does not “aspire to a clean and clear definition.” The geographer J.B. Jackson (1979) writes that despite his over two decades in the field writing, lecturing and observing the landscape, he has to “admit that the concept continues to elude me.” Antrop (2013) adds that the meaning of landscape varies by the context and background of the specific user, with landscape not only referring “to a complex phenomenon that can be described and analyzed using objective scientific methods, it also refers to subjective observation and experience and thus has a perceptive, aesthetic, artistic and existential meaning” (Antrop 2013). Despite the ambiguity over the meaning or definition of landscape, we can follow Meinig’s (1979) example by juxtaposing landscape with closely related concepts to signify what it is not. Landscape is related, sometimes closely related to the concepts of nature, scenery, environment, place, region, area and geography, but is in no way identical to any or all of them, with which there is often confusion. Others have used various ways to describe what landscape is by way of analogy as done by Crawford (1953:51) who compared landscape to a “palimpsest” – a piece of vellum used many times for different texts, adding that:

“...a document that has been written on and erased over and over again; and it is the business of the field archaeologist to decipher it. The features concerned are of course the field boundaries, the woods, the farms and other habitations, and all the other products of human labor; these are the letters and words inscribed on the land. But it is not always easy to read them because, whereas the vellum document was seldom wiped clean more than once or twice, the land has been subject to continual change throughout the ages.”

As the theoretical basis for this study on landscape, a working definition that fits with the overall premise is desired to provide a holistic approach. As such we may look to important figures like Dennis Cosgrove who “advanced the concept of landscape” as more than a simple representation of physical geographical space, but “a way of seeing.” According to Cosgrove (1985), landscape “appears to point towards the experiential, creative and human aspects of our environmental relations, rather than to the objectified, manipulated and mechanical aspects of those relations.” Thus, this study will work within an overarching view

of landscape that incorporates the diversity and multidisciplinary methodology that produces a more holistic landscape approach.

3.4 The Life Story of Islands

The idea of creating in-depth portrayals of the landscape via a detailed biography or life history dates to the 1960s, but it was not until the late 1970s, with Marvyn Samuels' (1979) "The Biography of the Landscape," did the concept take root. Samuels had proposed the idea as a response to the quantitative nature of landscape research and "the insufficient attention to the role of people as the authors of the landscape" (Fairclough 2016). In advancing the idea, Samuels (1979) located two central ideas as a way to understand the concept –"landscapes of impression" and "landscapes of expression." Placing what he viewed as the central role of humans, or the authors of the landscape, in creating landscapes, Samuels looked at the "impact of individuals on the world" and "the impact of the world on their mentalities," connecting the two as the vital components of the landscape biography (Fairclough 2016).

It was not until the mid-1990s, however, that the concept of landscape biography was truly developed and promoted by Jan Kolen (1993) and others in The Netherlands "as an answer to reductionism and the growing gap between objectivist and constructionist approaches in landscape research" (Fairclough 2016). Landscape biography "tells the layered story of a landscape," how it has developed and changed as a result of the continuous interactions between humans and nature (Fairclough 2016; Kolen et al. 2015). Its emphasis is that of the *longue durée*, examining the "genesis of the landscape" from prehistoric times to the present, and involving "both the physical and the immaterial dimensions" (Fairclough 2016). Its core value or strength is its interdisciplinary approach, "characterized as an umbrella concept able to bridge analytical stories across disciplines, in particular geography, anthropology, archaeology, and history" (Garcia 2016). The goal of creating the landscape biography is to establish a body of knowledge of the long-term uses of landscape that will allow analyses of challenging issues of cultural heritage and identity (Jean et al. 2021; Kolen et al. 2015). Landscape biography also provides the tools necessary to better approach dealing with challenging issues like climate change and long-term planning for the management and protection of heritage as a societal need (Jean et al. 2021).

Like Finneran and Welch (2019), this study takes as a basic premise that islands like Grenada have a distinctive biography that provides the basis to explore the specific characteristics of islandness or a sense of place, thus the emphasis will be on authorship as it presents the greatest advantage. As Kolen and Renes (2015:32) suggest, “The authorship of landscapes has been one of the most prominent issues in all biographical approaches.” The biography of islands can be told through the authors of the islandscape, not only the authors of authority as shown by Samuels (1979), but the wide spate of players who have authored this landscape as suggested by de Certeau (1984). The authorship of landscapes should be told by both its “influential figures” and the “ordinary practitioners,” or “people who are actively engaged in the continuous production of living space” (Kolen and Resen 2015). Thus the emphasis on authorship as it is viewed as being able to explore a more thorough telling of the landscape biography, inclusive of the often forgotten or neglected local, sometimes subjected communities and their inhabitants.

This emphasis is pursued in this study because it allows for a more complete telling of the island’s life story as there are many ways to tell this story of a place, of a community, of many communities scattered about the hills and valleys of this volcanic island, afloat on a sea of waves in this turbulent aquapelago. This story will be told by assembling lost ethnographies recorded long ago by anthropologists who believed these voices should speak because they have been silenced for too long (see Brierley 1974; Smith 1953). By retelling the bloody events orchestrated by notable men across time that have been chronicled as “History” (Brizan 1998; Martin 2013; Steele 2003). By archaeologists unearthing buried artifacts from discarded lifeways and deathways (see Hanna 2017, 2018; Hofman et al. 2018, 2019, 2020; Holdren 1998). By the ancestors called to the dance circle of the African Nation Dance to sing and dance the rhythms of their labored ancestry (see MacDaniel 1998). This story will be fashioned in the grand style of a tropical landscape painting, rendered by the multiple hands that have painted these island lives. This story will be told the way it is told to me, deliberately, and in the voices echoing within the traditional knowledge of the Kali’nago, Anansi stories, French Creole, and the collections of folk memories that haunt the landscape today (see David 2004; Hill 1977, 1998, 2002). This story of landscape, like a ballad, has to be told by my two grandfathers, their “shadows that only I can see” (Guillén 2003). This story has to be told by my father who taught me how to see and inhabit landscapes. By my mother who made sure I remembered the ancestral stories of the rural landscape of her childhood. By Uncle Nadley who narrated stories of a landscape populated with myths and

legends, of malevolent spirits roaming the forests that scared the living daylights out of me in the dark rural nights. By the cartographers who recorded topography in two dimensions and toponyms in many languages, and by the “old heads” who repeated and embellished the stories generation after generation like good storytellers do. And, by the fishermen who possess that complete view of the seascape as they meandered daily along the coastlines.

This story, this tale of an island, this narrative of authorship of this islandscape, has to be told by the diverse voices that fashioned this landscape (Kolen and Resen 2015). This story is about landscape, how to read the many tongues silenced by time, how to excavate the memories buried deep under centuries of crusted bones and pottery, how to touch the emotional depths of countless beings, how to hear the echoes of hushed voices in the landscape, how to read the landscape as primary documents, and above all, how to see and understand this bounded islandscape across the centuries (Meinig 1979). This is the story of a changing islandscape as it was told to me by my father, and to him by his mother, and now I tell it to you. This is the biography of an islandscape through its many layers of the entangled palimpsest that is waiting to be read despite its contestation, or maybe because of it.

3.5 Creolization and Contestation of Caribbean Islands

The Caribbean islands, especially in the last century, have been in search of identities after centuries of colonial (mis)rule, slavery, indenture, and colonialism. In asserting their new-found independence, particularly in the last half century, many have embarked on the search for national identities that would bind their diverse populations together in a common national endeavor, illustrated by Jamaica’s “Out of Many, One People” and Guyana’s “One People, One Nation, One Destiny” mottos. Though they have explored several approaches, the Creole identity or creolization has probably been the most applied across the region as a way to unite their diverse populations in a singular cultural identity (Brathwaite 1971, 1974). But despite its widespread acceptance as a way to define the identity of the individual nations and their peoples and the region as a whole, creolization has its critics, and its complex history in the Americas provides lessons in adopting a concept that comes with historical baggage (Kamugisha 2019).

The term *criollo* was first used by the Spanish to identify descendants of the Spanish born and bred in the “New World” as distinct from those born in Spain. The Spanish *criollo* is after the Portuguese *crioulo*, (derived from *criar*: “to create/raise”), and may have implied a lesser status by distinction as the colonies were often regarded as lesser societies to Old World or European societies (Allsopp 1996:176; Bauer and Mazzotti 2009).⁶ Though continuously attached to white colonial identity with implications of class and color, *criollo* would be by extension identified with animals and plants, utilizing part of the original definition of local domestication or adaptation as opposed to imported from Europe or the Old World. Hence, the subsequent attachment to the colonial-born enslaved as opposed to “salt-water Negroes” or captive Africans brought directly to the colonies via the Atlantic Slave Trade, with the latter regarding the designation for their enslaved children as less honorable (Allsopp 1996). By the time northern Europeans established colonies in the Lesser Antilles they would also adopt the term and expand its meaning.

The process of creolization, however, began long before it was identified and named as such, with the invasion of Europeans into what became known as the Bahamas and the northern Caribbean or the Greater Antilles. It began with the naming, or rather renaming of the peoples settled there and the Indigenous landscapes they had created over millennia. Curet (2011), Khan (2011), Hofman et al. (2022) and Jacobson (2023) argue that the idea of creolization is universal and can be applied to the extensive cultural interactions and mobility and exchange of goods and ideas between the precolonial peoples of the Caribbean. Particularly in the southern Lesser Antilles, with its toing and froing of peoples, ideas and objects from the Greater Antilles and the northern South American mainland (Hofman et al. 2022). Camáhogne, as part of the later named Windward Islands, was at the crossroads of an active sphere of intense interactions between diverse Indigenous groups, with waves of invasions of multiple peoples that created new cultures that can best be described as Creole or having undergone the processes of hybridization, transculturation and interculturalization, and identifiable in their material cultures. So the process of creolization is not viewed as being restricted to the (European) colonial period, but also instrumental in the precolonial era (see Jacobson 2023). The invasion of Europeans, together with the forced migration of captive

⁶ This lesser status is explicit in the statement of the new British Governor Macartney in 1778 when he characterizes the French “New British Subjects” as “long residence in this climate [having] contracted an indolent Creolian-cast, which tho’ easily irritated to do mischief, is seldom to be roused to do good” (Macartney 1778).

Africans, new technologies, etc. would intensify the process after 1492, and create the multiple Creole societies that define the region today in their stunning diversity.

At the beginning of the 20th century, the term Creole (English)/Créole (French) had come to encompass multiple aspects of Caribbean society and culture with diverse meanings, including people (*Créole(s)* or Creole white; mixed race; African-descent blacks; white French Creoles in Trinidad), languages (French Creole, English Creole, Papiamentu, Keywòl), animals (like horses, mules, etc.), plants (Creole arrowroot/cane), foods (Creole coffee/cocoa/bread), lifestyle, habits, and even ideas like identity, with it almost being a substitute for West Indian or the later applied Caribbean (Allsopp 1996; Bauer and Mazzotti 2009; Lowenthal 1972). It had also spread across the globe, particularly in application to Creole languages and people like Krio/Krios of Sierra Leone, or Kriol peoples of Alaska, Creoles of Louisiana, the Indian Ocean, and beyond. According to Lowenthal (1972), the term, in the English-speaking Caribbean, had gone out of style in the 1960s and the early 1970s “where independence and black power now favour national and ethnic appellations, the term ‘Creole’ is today considered old-fashioned, self-conscious, or ‘arty.’” Creole and Creole identity, however, did not disappear, but is instead experiencing a rebirth of sorts across the region and world in its application to cultural contact and change.

The 1970s, because of the desire to create national identities in the newly independent countries of the Caribbean, witnessed a rehabilitation of the concept of creolization as it was seen as a process to understand the hybridization or blending of multiple cultural influences on the Caribbean landscape, and support a unique form of national identity within countries and among them. The publication of Edward Brathwaite’s *The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica, 1770-1820* (1971) would signal a new approach to the study of Caribbean change, challenging the existing paradigms of the “plural society” and the “plantation society” models. For Brathwaite (1971:307), creolization allowed us to see the Caribbean “not in terms of white and black, master and slave, in separate nuclear units, but as contributory parts of a whole” (see also Sheperd and Richards 2002). As Balutansky and Sourieua (2017:3) write, “Creolization is thus defined as a syncretic process of transverse dynamics that endlessly reworks and transforms the cultural patterns of varied social and historical experiences and identities.” Many see the process of creolization in the Caribbean as creating new and whole societies out of the “violent, fragmented, and disjunct past” (Mintz 1996:302) as a result of invasion, slavery and colonialism. It is echoed in the words of writers

like Naipaul who described them as “half made societies,” and Walcott as “this shipwreck of fragments” (Balutansky and Sourieua 2017). Colonialism resulted in the broken pieces or fragments of diverse Caribbean histories, cultures, genealogies and memories that, ever since the first rending of the Indigenous landscape, have been pieced together by many contributors via the process of creolization, nonetheless, without an end product in sight, but a constantly changing continuity.

The process of creolization can be used to more fully understand landscape change in the Caribbean that occurred under the conditions of European invasion of Indigenous spaces, plantation slavery, colonialism, and later tourism development (Murphy 2021). This change is characterized by the process of continuous hybridization and transculturation with particular and diverse variables influencing and dominating at specific periods and in different magnitudes. It grants agency to not just the dominant power, but also to the subjugated as there is a shifting dominance over time and place. In the beginning, particularly during the frontier period of settlement, it would have involved greater interplay between the Indigenous peoples and Europeans. Here, European settlers took much from the Indigenous landscape in order to survive, and in turn dominate it. In many cases, the Indigenous populations were slowly replaced by captive Africans who would come to dominate the population, but not before creating a triangulation of interactions among them that preserved essential Indigenous practices and traditional knowledge that nonetheless changed with the landscape (Honychurch 2000; Murphy 2021). Thus enslaved Africans would carry on Indigenous traditional knowledge in combination with their own within a European dominated social and political sphere, thus creating new cultures across the region (Abrahams 1967). As Witt (2013:3) posits, despite the fact that the process of creolization happens in “a nonegalitarian social context of asymmetrical power relationships,” it nonetheless is one of “resistant adaption,” resulting in mixed cultures that can be seen in the “multiple and various uses of material culture, and not a singular, normative colonial culture.”

In the case of the Caribbean, landscape change is overlaid with the particular process of creolization—a primarily social exchange that impacts all aspects of the changing society. Creolization is an important approach to explore and explain landscape changes, particularly the cultural landscape that resulted from the interactions of various peoples during colonialism and after. The interplay of these diverse populations under the conditions of European colonialism created specific economic and cultural outcomes that impact these

landscapes in specific ways, with each resulting island culture unique because of its particular mix of people: Indigenous (“Taino” and/or Kali’nago and Kali’na), enslaved Africans (multiple West and West-Central African ethnic groups), and European colonizer (French, Spanish, Dutch, English, Danish), and in some cases like Grenada two in succession, the French and British. Today, globalization creates a diverse mix that totally impacts these SIDS in multiple ways. The resulting landscape at any given time will therefore be influenced by these island specific characteristics, thus creating unique outcomes that are often identifiable in the various cultures and identities across islands and the region.

Despite the widespread acceptance by scholars, poets and intellectuals of Caribbean creolization or *creoleness* as fundamental to forging island and regional identities, it remains highly contested in both intellectual and lay segments of the Caribbean community (Kamugisha 2019). Ever since the emergence of political independence across the region, ideas like ‘Black Power,’ Pan-Africanism and *Négritude* have promoted a more Afro-centric or black nationalist identity that seeks (re)connections to a severed ancestral Africa, thus rejecting or minimizing the hybridized identity of creolization and the diverse journeys of the people of the region (see Césaire 1955; Garvey 2004).

3.6 Defining the Landscape of Identity Creation in Caribbean Islandscapes

“I can give you that historical bird’s eye view. But I cannot really explain the mystery of . . . inheritance. Most of us know the parents or grandparents we come from. But we go back and back, forever; we go back all of us to the very beginning; in our blood and bone and brain we carry the memories of thousands of beings.... We cannot understand all the traits we have inherited. Sometimes we can be strangers to ourselves.”

V.S. Naipaul, *A Way in the World* (1994:9)

Despite its mundane and purely accidental nature (as to the parents, family and place) for the one being born, birth remains an important event and celebrated in every culture. It connects you to the place of your parents that endows you with the characteristics that will allow for the creation of identities—history, culture, heritage, set of beliefs, and a way of the seeing the world, all encompassed within one’s cultural landscape; it can also allow for the creation of identities in opposition to one’s place and culture. This will influence who you are at any given time, and furnish you with a sense of belonging (or not), for the rest of your life as

“people derive a significant amount of their identity from the landscape in which they were raised or lived” (Stobbelaar and Pedroli 2011:323; Paasi 2002). That relationship between individuals and the landscape is described as landscape identity, which Stobbelaar and Pedroli (2011:324) characterize as “the unique psycho-sociological perception of a place defined in a spatial-cultural space.” They go on to suggest that “people can have a sense of belonging to a specific landscape, often in the region where they spent their youth or where they experienced a crucial period in their biography,” thus “place identity” or “existential identity” (*place-existential identity*) that incorporates “objects and the physical environment... but also the associations, memories and symbolic meaning attached to the physical landscape” (Stobbelaar and Pedroli 2011:323). This personal-existential landscape identity, identified in Stobbelaar and Pedroli’s “Landscape Identity Circle,” sees specific places as unique because they are attached to people’s lives, with each person possessing their life-world that is “composed of sites with a personal meaning” and “associations and memories attached with sites within it” (Stobbelaar and Pedroli 2011:326). Though cultural-existential landscape identity is concerned with the larger group identity as well, it nonetheless is part of the cultural landscape and thus forms part of personal identity. So how is personal-existential landscape identity created?

“Who am I?” is probably the most asked question as almost everyone has asked it at least once in his/her life. For most people, it derives from a strong desire to understand one’s place in their family, community, country and/or the world as they fashion the view of themselves in relation to that created of them by others around them. For others, it can be an existential question about their place in the universe, and often attached to the question “Why am I here?”⁷ At least, beginning in adolescence, many will ask the question “Who am I?” in the hope of figuring out how one defines who s/he is in relation to the people and places around them, in essence what is one’s identity? What makes one similar and/or different to others in his/her immediate community, or in the larger world (Rovira 2008)? The exploration and construction of identities, especially beginning in adolescence, is essential to one’s growth and personal development, laying the foundation for life as an adult, and ensuring confidence through a sense of belonging and connection to specific places, people and relations.

⁷ See, for example, some of the books that have influenced my thinking about identity in my teenage years: Achebe (1958), Buscaglia (1973, 1978), Drayton (1959), Gibran (1923), Lamming (1953), McDonald (1969), Mittelholzer (1950, 1952, 1963), and Naipaul (1961).

The question of how one even begins to explore the process of constructing personal identity is varied and different for everyone and depends on multiple factors. But at its core one is influenced by a relationship web of people and places around them—family, society, community, friends, experiences, history and culture, with each exerting a different sway and intensity on individual identities. These multiple variables and their many interconnections with each other through feedback loops create a complex and dynamic process that few are even aware of even as they engage with the continuous and ever-changing processes of identity creation, contestation and alteration throughout their lives. Sirek (2013:29), referencing Hall (1996), eloquently insists that identity “is a process of becoming, not of being.” Hall (1990:222) further adds that “Identity is not as transparent or unproblematic as we think. Perhaps instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished fact, which... cultural practices then represent, we should think, instead, of identity as a ‘production,’ which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation.” Sirek (2003:29) continues “that people may travel back and forth and across identities, choosing and not choosing (or being made to choose or not to choose) the many identities that exist and that are constantly being claimed by us, ascribed to us, and negotiated within us.” The process of identity formation can be viewed primarily through “relationship experiences” with “imagined or real others” (Sirek 2003:30) via landscape, which is viewed here as instrumental.

Figure 3.2 presents a detailed identity map or chart of the primary variables and sub-variables or attributes that can affect one’s identity in varying degrees over time. It illustrates the multiplicity of influences that can affect identity at any given point in time, but not explicitly in the hierarchical or straightforward form illustrated in the figure. Its operational mode can be conceived, as Sirek (2013) suggests, via the metaphor of the rhizome as envisioned by Deleuze and Guattari (1987) as a more chaotic yet cohesive process of interactions with the other in a relational web of connections (Glissant 1989).

Surrounding and enveloping all of the elements of identity formation is the landscape that is constantly being (re)created by the interactions of humans (via their history) with the environment/landscape (Kolen et al. 2015). The landscape is emphasized here in its overarching role as the vessel that retains and transmits the core of human activities over and across time. As an anchor, the landscape is in a continuous dialog or loop with these variables as it furnishes the ecosystem where all of these processes take place. In so doing, it remains the place where all of these processes are continually observed and (re)read across and

through time. In a fundamental way, it remains the only “constant” in its interactions with these changing variables, and maintains the record of exchanges with all of these as they change over time, and thus it too constantly changes as it retains traces of earlier experiences like a palimpsest. Berberich et al. (2012:21) notes, “landscape is the visible and invisible meeting ground of culture, place and space—where identities are exchanged, performed and constructed.” Landscape, therefore, encompasses the means to create and explore our identities because it preserves “the sum total of history” (Chamoiseau and Reeck 2020:6), and as Thomas (2004) suggests, it allows us to think beyond the limitations of history and culture. Thus, as we create landscapes that are “deeply imbued with meaning,” they, in turn, create us, providing “the existential means for understanding and managing the self and our place in the world” (Farrel 2012:117). And Smith (1991:22) adds, “the sense of [from] ‘whence we came’ is central to the definition of ‘who we are.’”

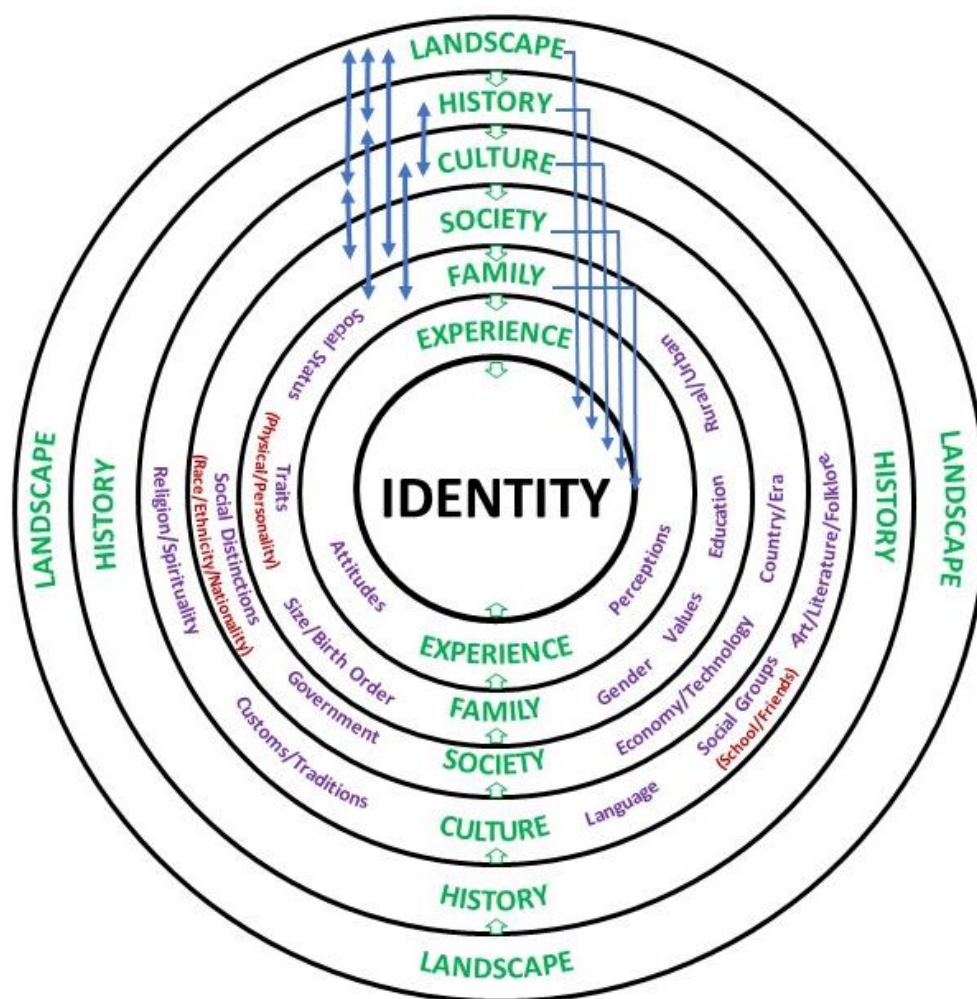


Figure 3.2: Identity chart showing the major influences on personal identity (adopted from John K., 2014)

History, often determined from multiple perspectives and/or the erasure or suppression of others, plays a primary role in creating cultural landscapes. For much of its modern history the experiences of the Caribbean and its people have been written, mapped, painted, and framed from the outside, with most of the authors mere visitors who arrived on these shores for short stays and fleeting glances. These impressions of the island, its people and its landscape, were recorded in narratives, paintings, maps and photographs by explorers, naturalists, cartographers, colonial officials, artists and adventurers who left their fleeting gazes that have endured, and today provide views of the changing landscape and how it was represented, remembered, and historicized. Many of these biased or at least suspect narratives, however, should be used with the necessary caution in regard to painting a balanced picture of the evolution of these islandscapes, then and/or now. These representations have impacted the views others, as well as “West Indians,” have of the Caribbean landscape, history, and thus, their identities. As Sheller (2003:37) notes, “contemporary views of tropical island landscapes are highly over-determined by the long history of literary and visual representations of the tropical island as Paradise.” A landscape perspective allows for a more thorough representation of the region and its people’s experiences in it over time, not just what others recorded of them. Though the implication of the landscape as more objective looms large, it should be noted that it is the combination of these various approaches that presents a more holistic and encompassing view of history.

History records the actions by which various and diverse peoples, in the course of inhabiting environments, create landscapes through their settlement and dwelling processes. This geographic-specific historical process has produced unique landscapes that have come to define the peoples who inhabit them. That over 500-year history—illustrated by invasions, genocide, slavery, colonialism, oppression, rebellion, civil unrest, natural hazards, subsistence, plantation agriculture, tourism and multiple other activities—is complex, contested, and continuously (re)read and (re)written. Its interpretation is nuanced because, as Marx (1852:5) notes, “Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living.” This is starkly illustrated by the history of the Caribbean and how it affects the people who today call these islandscapes home. As the often repeated cliché admonishes, “if you don’t know your history, you don’t know who you are,”

thus the knowledge of history, no matter how biasedly recorded and thus contested or influenced by others, is essential to the forging of personal and social identities, or in opposition to it. It allows us to see or not see ourselves reflected in the chronology of a place, particularly through its heritage—its monuments and *memory-traces*. Thus, histories, despite their constant contestation, play a primary role in constructing the umbrella under which cultures emerge.

Culture and history are thus deeply intertwined, but culture is the product of multiple and diverse historical processes. As Amilcar Cabral (1973:43) beautifully puts it, “Culture is an essential element of the history of a people. Culture is, perhaps, the product of this history just as the flower is the product of the plant.” Historical processes take place in particular landscapes over the *longue durée*, generating a story or series of stories of a group or groups of people, and often these can create shared experiences and thus a shared culture and heritage. That story or stories become the basis for culture creation depending on the interpretation of that history and the celebration of heritage, illustrated most notably in particular languages, social groupings, customs and traditions, religions or spirituality, and folklore and/or art and literature. As such, culture is a defining feature of an individual’s identity since it determines “how a person behaves, thinks, and views the world” (Rovira 2008:66), with Berberich et al. (2012:35) adding that “identity is inherently interlinked with culture.” This process is rather complex, often resulting in multiple cultural expressions due to historical processes like European invasions of Indigenous spaces and the enslavement of captive Africans, with individuals or even groups within these having very different personal and group identities (Patterson 1975; Smith 1965,1965b).

In examining culture, it is evident that the effect these can have on any individual identity is tremendous. Of these attributes, however, language is probably the most important as it allows one to create reality by the way s/he thinks, or as Henke (1996:57) notes, “one needs to conceive of language as the foundation of social interaction and the basis for the establishment of order through comparison, priorities, taxonomy, denomination, etc.” (see also Premdas 1996). Rovira (2008:66) emphasizes that “Language is intrinsic to the expression of culture... and a fundamental aspect of cultural identity.” And thus, as Chaudenson (2001:195) adds, “the greater the role of language in a cultural system, the more the system is influenced by the dominant social group whose language is imposed on all.” Jordan (2015:37) continues that “In a creolization context, then, it would be expected that the

group whose language was most prevalent would also have the dominant material culture,” which was French (and its Creole) and later English (and its Creole), in the case of islands like Dominica, Grenada and St. Lucia.

Thus, language becomes the medium through which one accesses his/her particular history and culture, and specifically its customs and traditions, beliefs, folklore and literature (Khokhar et al. 2016; Rovira 2008). These in turn reflect specific identities and status in society. How one speaks a particular language like Grenada Standard English (GSE) and/or English Creole, in the English-speaking Caribbean, says a great deal about him/her as it can identify them with a particular social or economic group, and/or geographical space, and thus customs and traditions, religion(s), folklore, and art and literature. Hence language, through culture, as a defining attribute, plays a primary role in the creation of identity as it is fundamental to every individual, creating the ability to think and thus construct a sense of self from an early age. One’s identity can be formed in opposition to one’s culture as well, a definite result in the Caribbean because of its contested histories.

Culture, via history, in turn fashions society, a collective that bounds groups of people in a specific space under forms of government and economy, but through social distinctions exhibits a tremendous impact on individual identities. Like culture and history, one is born into a society not of his/her choosing, but it will play an important role in determining how s/he sees her/himself and how others see her/him. Society presents the counterpoint to identity creation as it represents a mirror through which one views himself/herself. Society, through its specific location and era, but particularly through its social distinctions, will impact individual identities by providing the lens through which one sees himself/herself in juxtaposition to how others may see her/him. Race and ethnicity take on particular importance in the Caribbean context as these two factors, particularly race, have a strong historical precedence in determining identity, status and belonging in the region since the advent of European invasions, African slavery and colonialism (Kamugisha 2019; Premdas 1996). Race, and/or skin color (i.e., colorism), continue to play an outsized role in determining individual identity across the Caribbean because it is embedded in the cultural landscape, despite the fact that it is of little or no scientific consequence (Fanon 1952; Kamugisha 2019).

Family is the first and most influential component of personal identity formation. From birth, through subsequent development, and especially in adolescence, interactions within the

family create the necessary conditions that can aide or hinder successful identity development (Grotevant 1983; Scabini and Manzi 2011). Though the formation of identity is a singular journey it is often guided and supported by parents, siblings, cousins and other family members around you. The family contributes factors that are specific to them at any given time like social status, education (of its members, particularly parents), location (rural/urban), family size and values that interact with one's gender, birth order, and physical and psychological traits to create experiences that establish the basis for one's emerging personal identity (Figure 3.2). It is also through the family, often acting as a filter, that influences one's initial exposure to society, culture and history, and hence the impact on social identity. The family thus creates the conditions for individual members to learn about their defined roles in the larger society by establishing a positive self-identity, and transition from adolescence to adulthood. Identities can also be constructed in opposition to one's family.

Across the Caribbean, the specifics of the history of the family can shed light on its influence on personal identity formation. The region's history of slavery, colonialism and creolization has created unique and sometimes different conditions under which families were established and evolved. These factors include cultural disruption or deculturation (affecting child rearing and family stability), poverty, low levels of education, social status (influenced by so-called illegitimacy, female-headed and single-parent heads of households), family size (due also to intergenerational and extended family members), and emigration. As much of the enslaved Africans' culture was denigrated, disrupted or suppressed, and the imposition of European-derived family structures, the Caribbean family went through a process of transformation that continues to impact its changing identities and that of its members. As a result of generational slavery, very few Caribbean families have knowledge of their ancestry beyond parents and grandparents, thus lacking the stability and a sense of history and ancestry that can positively contribute to identity development (see Haydon 2010).⁸ The only thing passed down was a faint, disconcerting memory of enslavement or rather the trauma of it that many have chosen to minimize or even forget altogether, but yet have internalized.

Identity formation is essential to the growth of all human beings in order to live stable and fulfilling lives, especially within their own and other societies. However, the process is very complex and influenced by diverse variables and attributes that may be unknown to many as

⁸ See Ashie-Nikoi (2007:132) and McDaniel (1998) for discussions of the Big Drum Dance of Carriacou and its role in providing "knowledge of personal and family legacies" of the descendants of enslaved Africans who lacked the agency and resources to pass on traditional family genealogies.

illustrated in Figure 3.2. Yet, it is a process that all members of society will engage in as it is fundamental to social continuity. Each society, therefore, due to its specific and complex histories and cultures, creates various approaches that determine how its members might engage with identity formation and contestation, particularly through its family structures. Thus, countries in the Caribbean like Grenada have to contend with their unique histories that create the basis of identity formation across time and space in contested landscapes.