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A

The Forging of A Caribbean Ethnic Identity in New York City Politics

by

Carol Dean Archer

**A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Political Science in partial fulfillment
of the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy,
The City University of New York**

2000

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Political Science in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Abstract**The Forging of A Caribbean Ethnic Identity in New York City Politics****by****Carol Dean Archer****Adviser: Professor John Mollenkopf**

This study examines how various forms of identity are being negotiated by the Caribbean immigrant community in New York City. It also examines the relative roles of the political elites representing the Caribbean community and the mass constituencies in this process. It asks how this process of identity formation relates to political participation and tries to determine how the various forms of identity are used to access power and resources for the larger community. In addition, it examines the role of community-based organizations as vehicles for facilitating group identity formation and interaction within the group, with outsiders, or both.

Forty community leaders, including elected officials, and 103 community residents were interviewed for this study. The responses of the residents and community leaders/elected officials were analyzed to assess relationships among income, date of migration, educational level, labor force participation, group identity, and political participation among Caribbean immigrants. The analysis also examines the similarities and differences between the community residents' and leaders' views on the development of a Caribbean group identity and it's relevance to the political process in New York City.

This research highlights the disjuncture between the identity being forged by the

leaders and that of the community residents. The two have quite different approaches to forming a group identity. In the context of New York City's political milieu, the leaders see developing a Caribbean identity as the most effective way to create political gains for the community as a whole as well as for advancing their own interests. For the residents, race is more important.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Social scientists and political scientists in particular have agreed that immigrants have significantly affected New York City's political landscape over the last century, largely through the construction of ethnic identities as a basis for electoral behavior. In recent decades, immigrants from all areas of the globe have continued to shape the composition of the city's population. However, the racial characteristics and national origins of today's immigrant groups differ noticeably from those of the last great wave of immigrants, who came between the 1880s and 1920s. The latter were almost exclusively from Central and Eastern Europe, while the post-1965 immigrants are coming from Latin America, the Caribbean and Asia.

Prior to the 1960s, machine politics dominated in New York City. This form of clientelism enabled the ethnic political elites to control new immigrant voters by rewarding their political loyalty with patronage jobs, services, and contracts. For example, through group political mobilization, Irish immigrants were able to increase participation in New York City party politics. Reformers of the 1930s and 1960s, who helped to undermine machine politics, recognized the importance of immigrants in the political process. Through various means of coalition building, the reformers were sometimes able to capitalize on the dissatisfaction among Jews, Italians, and other European immigrants in New York City (Lowi 1964 and Shefter 1994).

In the 1990s, political scientists have been debating the role of coalition building across racial and ethnic boundaries as a means of increasing participation of various groups

in the political process. Mollenkopf (1997), one proponent of coalition politics, argues that in the context of New York City, one must understand how the political system shapes the expression of group interests in order to assess the feasibility of constructing multiracial coalitions.

Fundamental to both reformist/coalition and machine strategies for increased political mobilization is the notion of group identity. These strategies recognize that immigrants from various socio-political, economic and cultural backgrounds identify with a larger group. Immigrants are drawn to the larger group because of shared historical, cultural, social, and political commonalities. Established actors in the political system selectively encourage some aspects of this identity while discouraging others.

Immigrants from the non-Hispanic Caribbean, although they come from different nations, have demonstrated that once in New York City, they can assume a larger group identity. Commonly, these immigrants identify themselves not only as Jamaicans, Haitians, or Trinidadians, but also as “Caribbeans” or “West Indians.” This is evident by the formation of various community-based organizations with a regional, rather than a country-specific focus. Within the past five years, several community-based organizations with “Caribbean” in their titles have emerged in the Caribbean communities throughout New York. In addition, the West Indian Labor Day Parade, in Brooklyn, is the largest manifestation of group identity now taking place in New York City.

The formation of a group identity among Caribbean immigrants is not a new phenomenon. In fact, non-Hispanic Caribbean immigrants have exhibited various forms of group identity since this group began migrating to the United States and other areas in the

Americas in the late nineteenth century. The increase in the number of Caribbean immigrants in New York City, and the longevity of the community, make it necessary to examine, at this historical juncture, how the notion of group identity has changed over the years and what relationship it has with political participation.

This research will examine immigrants from non-Spanish-speaking countries of the Caribbean region. The largest of these include Jamaica, Haiti, Guyana, and Trinidad and Tobago, among others. These Caribbean immigrants, particularly those who are of African phenotypes, have a group identity which might be based on race if not regional commonalities (coming from the Caribbean and circum-Caribbean region). At the community level, leaders certainly distinguish between non-Spanish-speaking immigrants and those from the Spanish-speaking islands of Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic and Cuba. The host society also categorizes Spanish-speaking immigrants from the Caribbean together with the larger "Hispanic/non-Black" ethnic group, regardless of their skin tone. Haitians were included in this study because, even though they do not speak English as a native language, they associate closely with others from the Caribbean. Jones-Correa points out that, nationwide, more than half the immigrants from the Spanish-speaking Caribbean self-identify as White and only 3 percent see themselves as Blacks (Jones-Correa 1998:141). Spanish-speaking Caribbean immigrants often identify as Whites as a means of escaping the double minority status of being classified as immigrant and Black. The self-identification as Whites among Spanish-speaking Caribbean immigrants influences their settlement pattern in New York City. They are more likely to live in neighborhoods with other Latinos, even those who are racially mixed (of African and European ancestries) and

less likely to live in neighborhoods where a majority of the people are of African ancestry. Immigrants from the English and French-speaking Caribbean are more likely to live in neighborhoods where a majority of the residents are Black.

Research Objectives

This study will examine how various forms of identity are being negotiated by the Caribbean immigrant community. It will also examine the relative roles of the political elites representing the Caribbean community and the mass constituencies in this process. It asks how this process of identity formation relates to political participation. I will try to determine how the various forms of identity are used to access power and resources for the larger community.

This research posits that Caribbean immigrants may choose among four different types of identity as they negotiate the political, economic, and social arenas in New York City. The first is a national identity. It would be logical to think that those who assume this identity are more active in the politics of the sending country and less active in the politics of the host society because of their allegiance to their country of birth. The average resident might see participating in New York City politics in contradiction with their allegiance to the home country. The second is a Caribbean/regional identity. Immigrants from the various Caribbean countries may experience “segmented assimilation” into a large “Caribbean” ethnic group in New York City and form a distinct political block separate and distinct from other ethnic and/or racial groups (Portes and Zhou 1993: 76). The third identity is based on race. Caribbean immigrants may assimilate into the larger African

American community and participate in politics according to the dictates of that community. Finally, Caribbean immigrants may assume a larger “American” identity, what is commonly referred to as straight-line assimilation (Waters 1994: 798). Caribbean immigrants assuming an “American” identity would participate in politics in a “non-racial” and “non-ethnic” fashion. While this research looks at these four possible outcomes, it does not deny the possibility that immigrants would use two or more of these identities simultaneously or in succession as they negotiate the political landscape of New York City. The point is to determine the circumstances under which a particular identity is deemed functional to group advancement and why.

Toward an Understanding of Caribbean Identity Formation and Political Participation

Understanding the development of group identity and its relationship to political participation among Caribbean immigrants is and will continue to be of significant theoretical concern for the field of political science and for the study of New York City politics. One aspect involves the political leadership or political elite representing the Caribbean immigrant community. The question becomes, “Who are the political elite and what are their strategies for developing an ethnic, national, and/or racial identity among Caribbean immigrants for greater political gain?” Another concern is the ability of the current political establishment of New York City, including the regular Democratic party, to incorporate or shape Caribbean political participation, in ways similar to the Irish, in the latter half of the 19th century and Italian and Jewish immigrants in the first half of the 20th.

Key to this concern is the issue of race. As Katznelson (1973), Shefter (1994), Erie (1985), and Jones-Correa (1997) point out, race differentiates the incorporation of new groups in New York City politics from that of the old groups. During the period of machine politics, people of African ancestry delivered votes, but they had limited power within the machine (Katznelson 1973: 143), with the possible exception of J. Raymond Jones who was also referred to as the "Harlem Fox."¹ In addition, many scholarly observers believe that the spoils from political victories were used as a means of control rather than reward the African American community.

Given the fact that immigrants from the Caribbean are predominantly of African ancestry, the question of incorporation takes on three added dimensions: (1) How does the racial context shape the process by which Caribbean immigrants are incorporated in New York City politics? (2) What roles do political elites from outside of the Caribbean community, particularly African Americans, play in facilitating or impeding this incorporation? (3) Are notions of group identity being forged by the elites and transmitted to the populace, or are they being forged among the rank and file and transmitted to the political elites?

As Yinger (1994) noted, it is not enough to be able to identify one's ethnicity. More information is needed about the effects of the various contexts on the salience of ethnicity. As a result, this research will focus on the ways in which the different paths of

¹ Jones, a native of St. Thomas in the U.S. Virgin Islands, migrated to the United States in the early 1900s. He became involved in New York City politics, more specifically Harlem politics, in the 1920s. Between the 1930s and the 1970s, he served at various levels in national, state and local politics. In 1963 he was elected as the first Black boss of Tammany Hall (Walter 1989: 21).

identity formation affect how the Caribbean immigrant community organizes to access services and information; plans for its future; and shapes the way it gains political, social, cultural recognition from the larger society. To understand this process, this study will examine such issues as group identity formation, group interaction, leadership development, political representation and participation, community participation, and the role of community-based organizations in addressing these issues in New York City.

It can be argued that Caribbean immigrants might assume an identity based on race, in addition to or instead of a broader “Caribbean” group identity based on a historical, socio-political, and cultural commonalities of the people from that region. In addition, it can be argued that Caribbean immigrants might retain their separate national identities (i.e., Jamaican, Haitian, Guyanese) and/or an “American” identity in addition to or instead of a larger “Caribbean/West Indian” or racial identity. This argument can be made based on the initial observation of the settlement patterns, the voting patterns, the rhetoric espoused by the political elites and the general population, and self identification of Caribbean immigrants over the years. The arguments for the Caribbean immigrants adopting the “American” identity are based on the “straight-line” model of assimilation of earlier immigrants (Warner and Srole 1945). In essence, immigrants become “Americanized.” The following diagram illustrates the possible identities used by Caribbean immigrants as they negotiate the political landscape of New York City.

Diagram 1

Factors Influencing Identity

Internal
-Leadership
 Choices/strategies
-Community
 organizations
-Settlement patterns

External
-How whites sort/discriminate/
 stereotype Caribbean immigrants
-Choices made by the white political
 elite
-Choices made by the African
 American political elite



Possible Political Identity Formation

National Identity
-Active in politics of home
 country
-maintain strong national
 identity (i.e. Jamaican,
 Haitian, Trinidadian)

**Caribbean (Pan-ethnic /group
identity)**
- Segmented assimilation become
 distinct political block

Racial Identity
-- Segmented assimilation
 into African American
 politics

Larger American Identity
-Straight-line Assimilation
- Assimilate into larger New
 York/American politics (non racial)

Theoretical Overview

Group Identity Formation

Social scientists recognize the fluidity of group identities. Fox (1996) asserts that human identity is negotiable and is based on categories that individuals makes up and/or others impose on them. According to Fox, to give meaning to and to preserve one's identity at the collective level, a majority in the group must accept and actively defend that identity.

The individual ability to identify with a larger group, especially an ethnic group, is forged early in life and is carried throughout the life cycle. This learned identity becomes second nature because early group identity is often built into self definition. Alban (1985) noted that this larger group identity, particular ethnic identity "cannot stand on its own because it is draped over the skeletal structure of inequality" (Alban 1985:12). In other words, group identity becomes pronounced when viewed from the context of power and the distribution of resources (Barth 1969).

For this research, group identity goes beyond individual and national identities. It submerges ethnic, national, and sometimes racial differences to encompass a more expansive identity based on a region of the world which would rest on regional, cultural, social, economic, political, and historical factors. Such a regional view of group identity might combine the primordial, instrumentalist, and situational elements. The primordial theory proposed by Geertz (1963) states that individuals identify on the basis of collective sentiments and action. The instrumentalist view, as proposed by Barth (1969), Olzak and Nagel (1982), and Jones-Correa (1996), states that ethnic identity is formed by contact and

conflict with other groups and is expressed in the differentiation and maintenance of borders between them. The situational approach developed by Espiritu (1992) contends that ethnic group identity is not a matter of choice as posited by the earlier theorists. Instead, society ascribes categories to these ethnic groups. This categorization serves to organize the universe of immigrants from all parts of the world.

Research conducted on the pre-1965 immigrant communities in the United States assumed that, after several decades, these immigrants would become Americanized, with each succeeding generation becoming more assimilated. Robert Dahl, in his seminal work, *Who Governs?* argues that, over time, each ethnic group would play a central role in the governing process (Dahl 1961).

Dahl's political and moral argument in support of assimilation is based on the notion that immigrant incorporation fosters greater equality, especially in terms of political and economic empowerment, weakens discrimination, increases individual freedom, and creates a more flexible society (Yinger 1994). These assimilationists fail to recognize that immigrants often have to abandon their cultural distinctiveness to become assimilated and this can often lead to alienation, especially from the political process. Limited assimilation may allow for the preservation of culture and to reduce the feeling of alienation, thus allowing the immigrant to participate more in the political process. What is more important, neither those in favor of assimilation nor those against it consider whether the Caribbean ethnic group identity or the African American group identity (racial identity), which are associated with segment assimilation, can lead to political and economic empowerment, in addition to or instead of, the straight-line assimilation identity of

“American.” The experience of immigrants from Latin America, Asia, and the Caribbean have led some social scientists of the 1980s and 1990s to challenge the traditional assimilationists’ “straight-line” view. For example, Mary Waters (1994) and Portes and Zhou (1993) argue that some post-1965 immigrants seem to adopt an identity similar to that of native minority groups or the underclass instead of the larger American society while others hold on to an immigrant identity to keep the larger society from classifying them. Similarly, Kasinitz (1992) points out that Caribbean immigrants did not “wait their turn” to enter the political arena as a distinct ethnicity. Instead, immigrants from the Caribbean promoted their “Africaness or Blackness” and served as political leaders in the African American community from the 1920s until the 1970s. Green and Wilson argue that West Indian politicians embraced the “Africaness or Blackness” because it was politically expedient to do so. However, Caribbean immigrants in general did not make this embrace. Neither Wilson and Green nor Kasinitz discussed reasons why some Caribbean immigrants did not embrace the “African or Blackness” or Caribbean (ethnic identity). Unlike these earlier studies, this research will discuss the political implication of embracing or repudiating these identities.

The notion of a regional ethnic identity is not new. Immigrants from Naples and Sicily adopted a more expansive Italian or Italian-American identity in the United States. Similarly, immigrants from Prussia and Saxony became members of a larger ethnic group--Germans--in the United States. Herbert Gans’s (1962) study of Italian Americans in Boston, and Bayor (1978), writing on ethnic group conflict in New York City, argue that Italians, Germans, and Jews adopted ethnic identities as these groups came under attack

from nativist movements and other ethnic groups. Germans, Italians and other European national origin groups consolidated their “ethnic identity” in the process of competing for space and place in New York City’s political, economic, and social landscape. Bayor notes that fights at job sites occurred frequently, particularly between Irish and Italians. He also notes that streets became battlegrounds, as neighborhoods were transformed by the mass entry of Jews and Italians into formerly Irish and German neighborhoods. Civic organizations, political clubs, and other community-based organizations often mediated these conflicts and created a cadre of political elites as these immigrants became incorporated in the larger society (Gans 1962).

Political Participation and Community Activism

Over the centuries, such political theorists as Aristotle, Rousseau, and John Stuart Mill have argued that citizens must participate in forming a legitimate state. While they varied on what form participation should take and who should participate, they saw participation of the educated and well-informed populace as necessary for the proper and effective functioning of the state.

Aristotle believed that the educated middle class--men of leisure--should participate in the functions of the city-state. Rousseau thought individuals should be “forced” to participate in order to be truly free. According to Pateman (1990), Mill saw participation as necessary because, when the individual is concerned solely with his own private affairs, and does not participate in public affairs, then the “self-regarding” virtues suffer and the capacities for responsible public action remain underdeveloped (Pateman 1990:28). Still

even more important to Mill is participation in the local public affairs. Participation at this level serves to educate and prepare individuals for the national sphere. Mill also saw local level political participation as ongoing and practical. Pateman takes Mill a step further to suggest that Mill believed that participation in the work place and other types of political organizations as a “necessary educative process for participation at the national level.”

It is at this level that he learns how to govern himself. It also at this level that real educative effect of participation occurs. (Pateman 1990:31).

Although Caribbean immigrants have participated at varying levels of politics in New York City since their arrival to its shores, like most immigrants to a new society, they have experienced periods of alienation. This alienation stems from several factors. First they are an immigrant group with fairly recent history of voluntary migration to the United States, compared to the European immigrants who have at least 100 years of history in the United States and have helped to mold politics at the national, state and local levels. Caribbean immigrants, especially those who have migrated in the last major wave of migration (1976 to 1992) have not become citizens, cannot vote in most elections and are thus alienated from the political process. Second, the majority of the immigrants are of African ancestry and have experienced racial discrimination, which further alienates them. Third, American society sees them as poor and uneducated, with limited ability to influence the decision-making process at the local or national levels.

Nisbet (1978) posited a correlation between a group’s alienation from the dominant political institutions and the rise of alternative forms of community and political activism rooted in group symbolisms. The assertion of such a group identity is seen as a

renunciation of (and/or) challenge to the dominant political institutions. It is heightened when individual members (or the group as a whole) are not accepted by the dominant society even though they have made significant economic, educational and social contributions to the host society. According to Yinger (1994), identity politics then becomes an instrument for opposing the status of inconsistency created by their rejection.

Taken a step further, challenges to the dominant political institutions are often focused on gaining access to rather than changing the political institutions. This argument is supported by Katznelson's review of Parson's analogy of access to political power. According to Katznelson (1973), Parson's views of power are not geared toward the "ability of the individual or group to access power but the capacity of the system to secure outputs useful to its continuity and stability." (Katznelson 1973:22). Several members of the Caribbean community were able to gain significant political positions in New York City in the 1920s. However, the systematic exclusion of the majority of the Caribbean immigrants and African Americans from New York City politics during this period, based primarily on race, allowed for the emergence of "another kind of politics." The new political force used street-side pulpits to advance their campaign against American racial, social, political, and economic injustice toward people of African ancestry. Marcus Garvey, founder of the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA); Malcolm X, a second generation Caribbean immigrant; the Black Panther Party; and the Nation of Islam, have all used the soap boxers or street-side preachers and group-based appeals to educate and encourage people of African ancestry to fight against political, social, and economic oppression in America.

While the soap-box orators used their gift of gab to bring issues to the Black public for analysis and discussion in the 1920s and 1930s, a middle-class leadership, who wanted to maintain the status quo, also arose in this period. They worked through various social and professional organizations to influence the political system. This leadership was most likely to be drawn from the doctors, lawyers, real estate dealers, and other successful business people in the community. They did not attempt to dismantle the status quo of New York City politics. They were, however, able to get several appointments in the judicial system and on various commissions throughout New York City. In the 1990s, although the legacy of the soap boxers is but a memory, those with access to the print, audio, and visual media have emerged as leaders in the Caribbean community.

In 1990 George Irish and Bill Riviere produced a comprehensive survey of the Caribbean-American community. This survey was conducted over a two-year period, 1987-1989, in Crown Heights. The researchers concluded that the immigrants were not familiar with various political issues in New York City. The little they knew was obtained from television. Of the three hundred respondents in the survey, 26 percent identified themselves as citizens and 72 percent said they were not. Of those who were citizens, all were registered voters. While this registration rate is surprisingly high, it did not translate into increased political participation. Eight-six percent did not participate in a political party or organization in New York City. A similar amount never participated in a political campaign (Irish and Riviere 1990:54). This finding supports Jenkins's conclusion that Blacks, native-born and naturalized, have a low rate of voter turnouts (Jenkins 1990). By looking at the relationship between time of migration, community participation, education,

income, and settlement pattern, this study will try to discover reasons for the low level of political participation among Caribbean immigrants between the 1970s and 1980s.

Jenkins (1990) argues that the Caribbean immigrants have asserted themselves in the cultural fabric of New York City to some degree, but more so in the communities which they settled. She further argues that this assertiveness was achieved through social, cultural, religious and political community-based organizations. These organizations assisted the group in gaining access to vital services provided by the City. These organizations also serve as advocates in the political and policy-making arena (Jenkins 1990).

Linda Basch has also analyzed the relationship between the social and cultural organization and the Caribbean community (Basch 1987). From an anthropological perspective, Basch examined the role of voluntary associations in Caribbean immigrants' adaptation to New York City during the 1980s and found community organizations act as mediating forces between the immigrants and the new environment. They also serve as a conduit for reproducing cultural institutions in the new environment and fostered links to the home country. From her studies, Basch concluded that these community-based organizations are developed in response to the inequalities and constraints imposed by racial and ethnic division in the city.

The study conducted by the Caribbean Research Center at Medgar Evers College determined that 16 percent of the residents between the ages of 18 and 24, that they surveyed, were affiliated with Caribbean community-based organizations. Another 11 percent were members of cultural organizations (Irish and Riviere 1990: 55). This seems

like a low rate of community involvement in community-based organizations given the "newness" of this community and the fact that its community-based organizations link the immigrants to the host society. While this study showed that these organizations did not draw a large share of the younger population, it did not ask to what degree they were able to foster a larger group identity to facilitate interaction with the African American residents of the communities, or to provide leadership, and encourage political participation. This study used interviews with leaders of various community-based organizations and the general public to illuminate these issues.

Broadly stated, this research is not concerned with participation as an end unto itself but with the relationship between identity and participation. It must also be understood that participation may be political (voting, contribution of time and money to a political campaign, attending a political meeting, rally and/or demonstration, running for office, membership in a community board, tenants'/block association, and/or joining a political club or organization); or non-political (attending church, member of community-based, professional, alumni association and/or member in a social club or organization). Following the argument of Verba et al., which states that, "non-political participation often serves to enrich and inform political participation (Verba et al. 1995:8), this study places emphasis on the political and the non-political variables associated with participation. Thus, I will attempt to determine the correlation between such variables as church attendance and voting.

Methodology

Three target areas are included in this research, one each from Brooklyn, the Bronx, and Queens. Based on the 1990 census, each has a population which is 25 percent or more Caribbean. The Brooklyn sampling area includes the south-central neighborhoods of Flatbush/East Flatbush (see Map 1). The Bronx sampling area includes the neighborhoods of Williamsbridge-Baychester and Wakefield (see Map 2). The third sampling area includes the neighborhoods of Springfield Gardens, Cambria Heights, Laurelton, and Rosedale in southeast Queens (see Map 3). (See Appendix 4 for Maps.)

Factors such as settlement patterns, income and educational levels, and labor force participation were analyzed using the 1980 and 1990 censuses. This analysis showed the similarities and differences within the Caribbean communities in New York City and in these three research sites. The Public Use Micro Sample (PUMS) data and the Community District Needs Statements were used in this analysis.

Forty community leaders, including elected officials and those working directly with Caribbean community-based organizations, were interviewed. The community leaders and organizations were chosen from mailing lists compiled by the Caribbean Research Center and the Center for Law and Social Justice at Medgar Evers College. The leaders and organizations represented both the citywide Caribbean community and groups based in the sample communities. Approximately thirty of the forty organizations served the large Caribbean immigrant population and ten represented specific Caribbean nationalities. In some instances, the community leaders lived outside of the targeted Caribbean communities.

In addition, telephone interviews were conducted with 103 residents from the three targeted areas. Twenty residents were chosen at random from the telephone directory. These residents were chosen based on their telephone exchanges. Another twenty residents were chosen based on names submitted by the community leaders. The community leaders were asked to give names of community residents who were not from their country of birth, were not members of their organizations, never held or currently hold elected public office, or serve as officers in a community-based organization. The other sixty-three residents were randomly selected from a list given by each of the forty initial respondents. The initial forty respondents were asked to give three names of Caribbean immigrants not from their country of birth and who lived within or outside of their neighborhood. Similar questions were asked of the residents and the community leaders (see Appendix 2 for community leaders' questionnaire). The survey gathered data on time of migration, individual ethnic identification, interaction with other Caribbean people prior to and after migrating to New York City, and views about issues around which Caribbean immigrants might be likely to unite or divide. The community leaders/elected officials were specifically asked about the role they or their organizations played in developing an identity among Caribbean immigrants and incorporating Caribbean immigrants in New York City's politics.

The responses of the residents and community leaders/elected officials were analyzed to assess relationships among income, date of migration, educational level, labor force participation, group identity, and political participation among Caribbean immigrants. The analysis also examined the similarities and differences between the community residents' and leaders' views on the development of a Caribbean group identity. Finally,

I attended social and cultural events sponsored by elected officials and by country-specific and Caribbean organizations in order to observe interactions among Caribbean immigrants from the various countries. One such event was the West Indian American Labor Day Carnival on Eastern Parkway. This event is said to be one of the largest cultural events in the United States. Marching with the VIP delegation allowed me to observe the interaction of community leaders, Caribbean immigrants, and other ethnic groups in a large social and cultural setting. I also attended the swearing-in ceremonies of elected officials serving the Caribbean communities.

Findings from the quantitative and qualitative analyses are presented in the subsequent chapters. Chapter two presents a discussion of the Caribbean Basin Region, and a historical overview of the settlement patterns of Caribbean immigrants in New York City, and their political participation in New York City politics. Chapter three examines identity formation and political participation among Caribbean immigrants. It attempts to show how the evidence provided by the Caribbean community serves to support or refute existing theories of group identity and political participation. Chapter four looks at responses of the community leaders. Chapter five provides a detailed examination of the community residents' responses to the telephone interviews. The responses of the community leaders and the residents are then compared to determine the similarities and differences in their views on Caribbean identity and incorporation and participation in New York City politics in this chapter. Chapter six looks at three organizations which have been identified by the residents and leaders as central to the Caribbean community and its attempts to forge a larger group identity. The concluding Chapter seven highlights the

relationship between identity formation and political participation and also discusses the policy implications of the research findings.

Data Limitations

Quantitative Data

There are several limitations associated with the use of census data. One of the main limitations is that the census has a differential undercount rate for people of African ancestry and other "minority" populations. This undercount is probably even higher for immigrants in New York City. The data becomes even more distorted by the difficulty of collecting data from undocumented immigrants. According to the most recent data available from the New York City Department of City Planning, New York City may have as many as 500,000.² Given the size of the Caribbean immigrant community, it can be estimated this population accounts for 10 percent of the undocumented total.

Qualitative Data

Ethnographic research also has limitations. One of the main limitations is obtaining the optimum sample size. While the size of the sample population surveyed is small, it is representative of the various Caribbean countries. However, it does not provide statistical validity for the leaders or the residents of the Caribbean community. Structured interviews limit the range of responses from those interviewed. It can be assumed that my Caribbean origins influenced the responses of some of those interviewed. This was evident when

² *The Newest New Yorkers* 1994:183

three leaders, having discovered that I am Jamaican, apologized for describing Jamaicans as being bossy or arrogant. It was difficult to determine in other cases if the respondents gave “right responses” because I am Jamaican instead of stating their own beliefs and perception of the Caribbean community in New York City.

Of the forty community leaders interviewed, all were willing to speak openly about the issue of race, especially Caribbean immigrants’ relationship with the larger White population. They also spoke openly about Caribbean community relations with African Americans. The majority of those interviewed remarked that they could speak openly about these issues because I am “one of them” (I am from the Caribbean).

The in-depth, face-to-face interview has been lauded as one of the most effective methods of collecting qualitative information (Rubin and Rubin 1995 and Kvale 1996). However, it is time consuming and difficult to engage anyone in a discussion for more than one hour in this fast-paced lifestyle of New York City. The average length of the interviews was three hours. Another limitation is that it is difficult to convey the richness of the words, phrases, and body language respondents use to describe their experiences as immigrants in New York City. The majority of the respondents had to rely on memory to report how they identified in a particular manner or situation. Often this recall may not have been reliable because the interviewee was reconstructing the past to conform to a present belief.

The interviews with the community residents were conducted over the telephone. These interviews lasted, on average, thirty minutes. They were much shorter than those of the community leaders, and as a result, did not obtain in-depth information on identity

formation and political participation.

Chapter 2

Origins

The Caribbean is an archipelago which comprises twenty-five island nations north of the South American continent, south of the North American continent, and east of Mexico and Central America. Although Guyana is located in South America and Belize and Panama are in Central America, these countries are often included in discussions of the Caribbean because many of their residents share historical, cultural, and political circumstances with the Caribbean nationals. Except for Panama and Haiti, the countries included in this study were at one time part of the British Empire. In the case of Panama, the majority of its labor force was at one point British subjects from the Caribbean. The majority of the Panamanians who migrated to New York City and who live in the study areas are first or second generation descendants of those Caribbeans who worked on the Canal Zone or on the banana plantations. In New York, immigrants from Belize, Panama, and Guyana live in predominantly Caribbean neighborhoods. Though Haitians speak French, and were never part of the British Empire, they also live overwhelmingly in these same Caribbean neighborhoods.

Between the 1920s and 1950s, the Caribbean region experienced high rates of unemployment due to the decline in the sugar trade and competition from the Central American banana growers. These factors crippled the mono-crop agricultural economies of most of the countries of the region. Thousands of Jamaicans, Barbadians, and Haitians migrated to the colonial powers in Europe and the United States. Others migrated within the region to burgeoning oil refineries of Curacao, to the Panama Canal Zone, or to the

plantations of Costa Rica, Honduras, and Guatemala.

The Caribbean remains a region dependent on agriculture, including such crops as sugar cane, coffee, banana, marijuana, and cacao. Most countries of the region supplement their sources of income by marketing their natural environment-- sea, sun, sand, and rainforests-- to tourists from North America, Europe and Asia. However, the employment generated by these economic activities have been outstripped by population growth. This was most pronounced during the 1980s, as the countries of the region tried to meet the needs of the population by implementing social and political reforms. In Jamaica, Guyana, and Trinidad, this resulted in a mass exodus to the United States. In Haiti, thirty years of political repression under the Duvaliers caused Haitians to flee, by any means possible, to the United States.

Historical Overview of the Caribbean Community in New York City

The earliest instance of mass voluntary migration of Caribbean people to the United States dates back to the 1840s. According to available data, approximately 100,000 Caribbean immigrants, mainly Jamaicans, Barbadians, and Trinidadians, migrated to the United States between 1840 and 1940 (Reid 1939). During this period about 50 percent of the legal Caribbean immigrants were from the English- and French-speaking Caribbean (Bryce-Laporte 1976).

Caribbean immigration to the United States was restricted by the 1924 Immigration Act. Because most of the Caribbean countries were still colonies, they were placed under quotas reserved for England, France and other European colonial powers (Watkins-Owens

1996). While these quotas were set at large numbers, the average Caribbean immigrants did not have the economic capacity needed to take part in this migration. The Immigration Act of 1924 and similar acts before and after that period were a systematic attempt to restrict the flow of economic, social, racial and political “undesirables” into the United States. In the 1920s and 1930s, there was the fear that an influx of people of African ancestry would add to the United States’ “Negro problem.” Between 1950 and 1960 immigration to the United States from the Caribbean was severely hampered by the 1952 Walter/McCarren Immigration Act. This bill limited the number of immigrants from European colonies, especially those in the Caribbean, to 100 immigrants per colony or dependency. Prior to the 1952 immigration reform, the Caribbean region indirectly benefitted from immigration quotas. Since the Caribbean, mainly the English-speaking countries were considered a part of Great Britain, they were included in the generous quota afforded to that country (Heer 1996). As Levin (1987) noted, it was not until 1965 that immigrants from the English-speaking Caribbean, mainly Jamaica and Barbados, began the first really sizable wave of Caribbean migration to New York City. The restrictive nature of U.S. immigration policies during the 1950s and early 1960s created a steady flow of immigrants from the Caribbean to the United Kingdom and other parts of Europe. However, with the passage of the 1965 United States Immigration Act, the total number of Caribbean immigrants, with Jamaicans being the largest group, rose to 500,000 during the 1961-1970 period, three times more than the prior decade (Levin 1987). The 1965 Act replaced the national quota system with hemispheric ceilings (Sutton and Chaney 1987). The number of residence visas granted for the purpose of family reunification and to

persons with various skill and/or job qualifications increased for the newly independent Caribbean nations. This act allowed many nurses, engineers, and other skilled professionals to leave Jamaica, Barbados, Trinidad, and other Caribbean countries. In addition to the legal means of entering the United States, Caribbean immigrants from various economic classes also used illegal means of entering the United States. For example, during the 1920s and 1950s, immigrants working with United States- based companies in the region used their connections to gain entry into the United States, oftentimes traveling through Central America or Florida (Watkins-Owens 1996).

New York City has been the locus for the largest and the fastest growing concentration of Caribbean people outside the Caribbean region. A recent study of immigrants in New York City described it as the largest “Caribbean city” in the world (Sutton and Chaney 1987: 20). More than a third of New York City’s immigrant population, are from the Caribbean or have Caribbean ancestry. Immigration in the 1980s was fueled by an expansion of the United States immigration laws relating to family reunification and by economic and political turmoil in most of the Caribbean nations. In Haiti, economic and political unrest led to thousands of Haitians crossing the Florida straits in unworthy sea vessels. Jamaican’s Prime Minister Manley’s espousal of democratic socialism and fraternizing with Fidel Castro led many Jamaicans to take one of the five daily flights from Jamaica to the United States. New York City attracted Caribbean immigrants for several reasons. First, information sent back to the Caribbean by those who first visited painted New York City as a land of opportunity, economic and otherwise. Second, unlike Miami or other cities in the South, it was believed that residents of New

York were more tolerant of people of all racial backgrounds. Third, New York was closer to the Caribbean than Los Angeles or Chicago—three hours by plane or few days by boat.

Below is a table showing the influx of Caribbean immigrants to New York City from the 1920s to 1990s.

Table 1

**Time of Migration by Place of Birth
for Selected Caribbean Countries
Population ages 16 -67
New York City**

Time of Migration

Place of Birth	Total Pop	1980 - 1990	1965 - 1975	Before '65
Jamaica	96,124	41,951	46,423	7,750
Guyana	60,481	38,312	21,093	1,076
Haiti	59,436	26,457	29,105	3,874
Trinidad and Tobago	50,290	18,586	28,632	3,072
Panama	20,572	5,313	9,351	5,908
Barbados	19,668	5,584	11,235	2,849
Grenada	9,729	4,534	4,615	580
St. Vincent	7,820	3,626	3,562	630
Belize	7,149	2,906	3,425	818
Dominica	7,130	3,467	2,645	721
Antigua	5,379	3,016	2,063	300
St. Lucia	3,678	2,247	1,281	150
The Bahamas	1,662	512	689	461
Montserrat	1,620	542	799	279
Total	350,738	159,033	166,883	28,533

(Source: United States Bureau of Census, 1990, Public Use Micro Sample)

Settlement Patterns of Caribbean Immigrants

Since the 1890s, Caribbean immigrants to New York City settled in areas already dominated by African Americans. They first settled in these neighborhoods because of the available housing stock and as a result of the racial residential segregation which existed in New York City. During the 1890s, African Americans had begun moving north from the Little Africa sections of lower Manhattan. They first settled along Manhattan's Upper Westside near Columbia University. There were also sizable communities in the San Juan Hill, in the approximate vicinity of Broadway and 72nd Street, and Hell's Kitchen, between 7th and 9th Avenues from 42nd to 50th Streets in Manhattan. Both Caribbeans and African Americans moved into these areas as working class Irish and Italian immigrants moved out to the outer boroughs of Brooklyn and Queens. By the 1920s, most Caribbean immigrants and African Americans moving from the southern United States settled in Harlem.³

Interestingly, most Caribbean immigrants settled among native-born African Americans. Kasinitz (1992) noted that Caribbean immigrants were confined to the same communities as African Americans due in part to the discriminatory practices in New York City's housing market. It can also be argued that Caribbean immigrants, in their attempts to negotiate and adjust to life in the land of opportunity, assumed a racial, as opposed to a national and/or class identity. Even those immigrants who were highly educated with middle-class incomes remained in predominantly African American neighborhoods. This pattern continues to the present day, albeit with rapid increases in the Caribbean middle-

³This information was obtained from interviews with Caribbean historian, Calvin Holder, and other noted Caribbean leaders who were interviewed for this project. Information was also obtained from Watkins-Owen's *Blood Relations*.

class population. There seems to be no large scale residential separation from the working class Caribbean and African American communities. Caribbean immigrants have formed no “new” community like Sunset Park, which has recently emerged as an enclave for middle class Chinese moving out of Chinatown (Winnick 1990). Instead, Caribbean immigrants are expanding, rather than relocating, their neighborhoods from East Flatbush, Brooklyn to Canarsie, Brooklyn. In Queens, similar expansion has taken place. For example Caribbean immigrants, in particular have expanded from Springfield Gardens and Jamaica to Rosedale, Queens and adjoining Long Island neighborhoods (New York City Department of City Planning 1996:93).

While Harlem was the mecca for early Caribbeans, there was a small but growing settlement in Brooklyn’s Clinton Hill near the Brooklyn Navy Yard.⁴ Caribbean residents in this area at the time provided skilled and semi-skilled labor for the Navy Yard. Beginning in the 1950s and 1960s, the settlement pattern of the Caribbean immigrants shifted from Manhattan to Brooklyn. In informal interviews with several Caribbean immigrants who migrated to New York City in the early 1950s, they reported the desire to get access to single family and brownstone homes in the Crown Heights and Bedford Stuyvesant sections of Brooklyn and the Jamaica section of Queens. Many immigrants were able to purchase these homes because they had invested in Harlem’s real estate or began small businesses. In Paule Marshall’s *Brown Girl, Brownstone*, she vividly described

⁴The Navy Yard was the source of employment for many Caribbean immigrants as deck hand, dock workers, longshoreman and other sundries areas in the shipping industry of the Navy Yard. Employment in the Navy Yard afforded the immigrants access to low income housing in the surrounding area, at the edge of the working class neighborhood of Fort Green.

the rise of the Caribbean communities in central Brooklyn during the 1950s. This shift in settlement coincided with two trends. First, African Americans were migrating in large numbers to New York City from the South. Second, the Italians, Irish, and Jews, and other White ethnic groups were moving out of the congested city to the single families homes in Levittown and other bedroom communities in the suburbs.

During the 1970s and 1980s, the African American middle class, including Caribbean immigrants, had amassed enough assets to expand into the adjoining White communities, or, in many instances, to move to the suburbs of Long Island and Westchester. In Canarsie, Caribbean immigrants initially had their houses defaced with racial epithets and fire bombed in an effort to prevent them from moving into a neighborhood first peopled by European immigrants. Ultimately, they prevailed. In Freeport, Long Island, and Jamaica Estates, Queens, Caribbean immigrants were able to establish suburban middle-class communities with little or no negative repercussion from their White neighbors. Similarly, Caribbean immigrants moved en-masse from the South Bronx, which became increasingly “Hispanic/Latino” in the 1970s and 80s, to Northeast Bronx and Mount Vernon. The housing stock in these neighborhoods became available as first and second generation European immigrants moved further north to White Plains and Upper Westchester or south to Florida. As one community leader noted when he and his family moved to White Plains in the early 1970s, they were the first “Black” family to do so and it made the front page of the local newspaper. It is interesting to note that this community leader and his family were defined by his neighbors as “Blacks” as opposed to West Indians or Caribbeans. This community leader, it should be noted, was not averse to

this categorization by the local newspaper. However, he first defines himself by his country of birth, Jamaica, and second as Caribbean. He pointed out that race figured importantly in both definitions and that knowing that he is Jamaican would indicate with 99 percent probability that he is of African decent. This incident points to the fact that regardless of how Caribbean immigrants might identify themselves, the wider society may still categorize them solely on the basis of race.

It can be argued that Caribbean immigrants moved to the outer boroughs and the suburbs because of their propensity for home ownership. Although they are not the only immigrant group with this propensity, it must be noted that Caribbean immigrants come from societies with low density, low-rise residential settlements "with a little piece of land to plant a vegetable garden." Therefore, it is not surprising that many Caribbean immigrants practiced frugality, saved, or joined rotating credit associations, and bought a house "with a little piece of land" thereby fulfilling their American dream.

Characteristics of the Caribbean Community

The term "Caribbean person" or "West Indian person" has been used in the United States to differentiate Caribbean immigrants from native-born African Americans and Latinos. Prior to the 1940s, the majority of non-Spanish-speaking Caribbean immigrants in New York City were from Jamaica, Barbados, or Trinidad. Therefore, it was relatively easy to assume that a Black person with an accent was from one of these three countries. However, during the 1960s, Dominicans and Cubans joined the influx of Caribbean immigrants to New York City. The term "West Indian," referring to those from the

English-speaking Caribbean, became popular as a term to distinguish the two groups.

Before migrating to New York, people from the Caribbean viewed themselves not as "Caribbean people" but as Jamaicans, Haitians, Trinidadians, or even as subjects of their former colonial rulers (French, in the case of Haiti and British, in the case of Jamaica and Trinidad). Several prominent Caribbean scholars interviewed for this study believe that Caribbean people did not become "Caribbeanized" until they migrated out of the region.⁵ One leader noted that Panama was the first place where migrants from former British possession became "Caribbeanized." Construction of the canal and railroads encouraged a male-dominated migration and some degree of national rivalries. However, this did not prevent the immigrants from forming a united force in Panama. One leader noted that it was the strong sense of "Caribbeaness" that allowed most Panamanians, particularly those of African ancestry, to gravitate toward the large Caribbean community in New York City.

At present, New York City's Barbadians, Jamaicans, Haitians, Vincentians, and others have daily contact with each other because they live in the same neighborhoods, work in the same hospitals or offices, and shop for food at the same Korean groceries. Through daily contacts, the immigrants realize that their present and historical experiences are similar. Thus, they began to assume a "Caribbean" identity alongside their national and racial identities.

Since 1980, the term "Caribbean," as opposed to "West Indian," has been used more frequently for several reasons. First, Caribbean intellectuals use this term to refer to

⁵Based interviews with ten community leaders. For further discussions with the leaders see Chapter four.

both English and non-English-speaking immigrants from the region. The term “West Indian” usually refers to those from the English-speaking countries. Furthermore, many intellectuals associate the term West Indies with navigational and subsequent colonial errors of European explorers and attempt to set right those errors by using the term “Caribbean.” More often than not, elites and the general public use the terms interchangeably.

Bryce-Laporte argues that while most immigrants do not see themselves as “Caribbean” or “West Indian,” they gravitate toward this term as a means of surviving. According to Bryce-Laporte, without this separate and distinct definition, Caribbean immigrants would be dissolved into the existing Black population. The use of the term Caribbean can be seen as an attempt of the Caribbean community to create or accept an identity which encompasses a wide group based on historical and cultural experiences. This study will look at the extent that the group as a whole identifies with this larger Caribbean identity.

Study Neighborhoods

My definition of community is based on Keller's (1968) and Fisher's (1984) discussion. According to Keller and Fisher, community is a locality with physical boundaries, social networks, concentrated use of area facilities, and special emotional and symbolic connotations for its inhabitants. The Caribbean communities described here meet these requirements, particularly in Brooklyn. They certainly have physical boundaries and a complex array of social, political, and cultural networks. Furthermore, the residents use

neighborhood facilities such as schools, churches, hospitals, parks, and commercial space. Although the residents are from different Caribbean nationalities, their common cultural background and immigrant status foster emotional and symbolic attachments.

The area in southeast Queens is part of Community Board 13 along the Nassau County border. The neighborhoods included in this study area are Rosedale, Cambria Heights, Springfield Gardens, Jamaica and St. Albans. Approximately 92.8 percent of the housing stock is one or two family homes along tree-lined streets. Between 1980 and 1990 the population increased by 2.5 percent. The percentage of foreign-born was estimated at 27 percent, and approximately 50 percent of the population reported that they were non-Hispanic Blacks. The median household income was \$46,000, significantly above the citywide median of \$31,000 (New York City Community District Needs Statement 1997).

Community Board 12 covers the northeast Bronx communities included in this research. Williamsbridge and Baychester are the two targeted neighborhoods in this area. Between 1980 and 1990, there was also a slight increase in the overall population of this area. Approximately 52 percent of the population was categorized as non-Hispanic Blacks, and 29 percent of the population was foreign-born. The housing stock consisted of approximately 73 percent one-to-two family residential homes. The median household income was \$30,485, close to the citywide figure (New York City Community District Needs Statement 1997).

The communities of Flatbush and East Flatbush are located in Community Boards 14 and 17. The combined population of the boards increased by approximately 3.5 percent during the 1980s. This is due in part to the influx of Caribbean immigrants. Almost 52

percent of the population reported foreign-born status in 1990. The median household income in this sample area was approximately \$27,000, the lowest of the three areas and one-to-two family homes made up 50 percent of the housing stock (New York City Community District Needs Statement 1997).

Jamaicans make up the majority of the Caribbean immigrant population in New York City and these communities. Guyanese are second, followed by Haitians, Panamanians, Trinidadians, and Barbadians. In a recent survey of the Brooklyn Caribbean community, conducted by the Caribbean Research Center at Medgar Evers College, 22 percent of the more than two hundred respondents were born in Jamaica or of Jamaican parentage, 15 percent were Haitian, 8 percent from Barbados, 6 percent Trinidadian, and the remainder from the other countries (Irish and Riviere 1990: 37).

One of the unique features of the Caribbean community is that it is cross-national and, in many regards, cross-cultural. While maintaining their national identity, many immigrants assumed the broader Caribbean identity. Given this context, one could hypothesize that the community-based organizations, which seek to serve this cross-national community, have to address issues of nationalism and racism within these geographic neighborhoods, as well as the larger "minority" context, and the wider society. We will see whether this is the case after close examination of the organizations.

Table 2

**Counties of Residence by Place of Birth
For Selected Caribbean Countries
(ages 16 - 67)
Counties**

Place of Birth	Bronx	New York City	Staten Island	Brooklyn	Queens
Belize	1,512	886	101	3,461	1,189
Panama	20,572	1,733	213	12,995	3,653
Antigua	3,303	602	107	733	634
The Bahamas	279	327	56	692	308
Barbados	1,673	802	255	13,659	3,279
Dominica	2,639	769	0	1,613	2,109
Grenada	301	188	31	8,662	547
Haiti	1,014	3,523	232	38,900	15,767
Jamaica	25,835	3,485	710	43,526	22,568
Montserrat	918	107	0	382	213
St. Lucia	546	122	0	2,415	595
St. Vincent	424	197	0	6,508	691
Trinidad	3,593	2,808	396	34,023	9,470
Guyana	8,395	1,069	412	27,937	22,668
Total	71,004	16,618	2,513	195,506	83,691

(Source: Public Use Micro Sample 1990 Census)

Historical Overview of Political Participation

Politics from the 1920s to the 1950s

Most people of African ancestry were excluded from New York City's political landscape in the 1920s and 30s. Because they were not seen as an important part of the local or national political debate, "another kind of politics emerged." According to Watkins-Owens, Caribbean immigrants bypassed the political establishment and challenged the concept of an imagined "representative Negro." This move created a "new political force" (Watkins-Owens 1996: 76). These new voices used the street-side pulpits to advance their campaign against American racial, social, and economic injustice toward people of African ancestry. The Caribbean immigrants were labeled as "West Indian rabble rousers" by Caribbean and African Americans who supported the status quo and the larger White society. However, because of their mass appeal and community support, people such as Marcus Garvey were able to use the street-side pulpit to engender support for an international political movement under the banner of the Universal Negro Improvement Association.

Participants and organizers of the street-side pulpits were mainly from the working class. Many were self-taught as opposed to those who entered the formal arena of electoral politics. The latter were drawn from the professional educated middle class, mainly lawyers, businessmen, and the clergy. Those involved in street-side politics were more likely to be darker in complexion while those involved in formal politics were of a

lighter hue.⁶ The color/class contrast will be explored further in this paper.

In addition to street-side politics, Caribbean immigrants also used the churches as a means of political involvement. Similar to the Baptist churches in the African American community, the Anglican, Episcopalian, and other denominations in the Caribbean community provided a vehicle for citizenship drives, voter registration, and other forms of political participation. Not only were the churches focusing on New York City politics, but several churches, especially the African Orthodox church, were involved with anti-colonial struggles in the Caribbean and Africa (Watkins-Owens 1996).

Voluntary associations serving the Caribbean community were also involved with activities at the local and international levels. Helena Benta, head of the Montserrat Progressive Society, was among the pioneers calling for unity among Caribbean organizations. The Jamaica Progressive League, the overseas wing of the People's National Party of Jamaica, formed in 1938, was founded, in part, to secure the political support of Jamaicans living in the United States. In the 1950s and 1960s, this group worked with other Caribbean community-based organizations in New York to support the formation of the West Indian Federation.⁷ Many of these voluntary organizations also

⁶Based on conversations with four community leaders, one of which had one extensive research on the history of Caribbeans in New York and another who has lived in New York City during the 1940s, there seemed to be distinctions between color and class in the Caribbean and African American community in New York City during this time.

⁷The West Indian Federation was formed in 1958 by thirteen of the English-speaking Caribbean countries. According to Manley in his book, *Jamaica Struggle in the Periphery*, the Federation was created as a direct result of the British need to deal with the Caribbean as an economic and political entity instead of individual islands. For some of the Caribbean leaders at the time, the idea of a federation meant that the region would have world recognition and speak with a unified voice. The Federation was dealt a death blow in 1961 when Trinidad pulled out of the agreement, followed by Jamaica, leaving Barbados and the others to "go it alone" (Manley 1982: 22-23).

worked with the American Communist Party (Watkins-Owens 1996; Turner and Turner 1988).

Citizenship and voter registration among Caribbean immigrants were two factors of continuous concern to the community leaders. In the 1920s, less than 10 percent of the Caribbean immigrants were citizens and even fewer were registered voters (Watkins-Owens 1996: 89). Caribbean immigrants were less likely to become citizens during the 1920s because they felt that they would lose the protection of being British, Dutch, or French citizens. In addition, Caribbean immigrants were unwilling to become Americans and subject themselves to the unjust treatment received by African Americans. Many felt that as colonial subjects they could receive justice or appeal to the consulates of their respective colonial governments (Watkins-Owens 1996: 91; Holder 1983). The cry among African Americans was that, if more Caribbean immigrants became naturalized and registered voters, the political dynamics of racial politics in New York City would change (Reid 1939: 167).

According to Watkins-Owens, Tammany Hall recognized that infighting between African American and Caribbean immigrants would keep both out of political office and consequently Tammany Hall conducted limited citizenship and voter registration drives among Caribbean immigrants. She also noted that “this tactic contrasted with the manner in which the machine courted and relied on naturalization and registration among European immigrants, mainly Irish, Italians, and Jews” (Watkins-Owens 1996:103). The party bosses actively outreached to these European immigrants to enroll them in the Democratic Party. They worked with the churches, settlement houses, and other community-based

organizations serving these communities to actively recruit these immigrants. The lack of motivation on the part of Caribbean immigrants to become citizens can be attributed to the fact that they saw citizenship as a decline in status. They would have had to give up “British” status to be considered just another Black American. They were more motivated to become citizens during the depression years when benefits were only given to citizens.

The literature on or about Brooklyn's Caribbean community, written between the 1930s and 1950s, suggests that there was little semblance of a Caribbean community. For example, in *Brown Girl, Brownstones*, which depicts the Barbadian community in New York City during the 1930s, Paule Marshall portrayed the Barbadian community as being isolated and wanting to remain exclusively Barbadian. Several characters in the novel rejected the proposal to open the Association of Barbadian Homeowners and Businessmen to other members of the Black community. Based on anecdotal information from immigrants who lived in Brooklyn during this time, the Jamaicans, Haitians, and Trinidadians showed similar tendencies of wanting to remain isolated and organized, based on nationality rather than pan-Caribbean issues.

During this period Caribbean immigrants attempted to negotiate their political identity on the basis of sheer expediency. Many from the middle class identified with the Democrats at the time when the majority of native-born African Americans identified with the Republican Party while the Democrats controlled New York City. As J. Raymond Jones suggested, (Walters 1989:45) many Caribbean intellectuals saw conservatism taking hold in the Republican Party and recognized that Democrats controlled Tammany Hall. Basch et. al added:

It was the Democratic Party in the early 1930s, reflecting the U.S. hegemonic agenda of differential incorporation, that brought West Indians into the formal U.S. political process. West Indians were for the most part unencumbered by the historical experience of African Americans that created strong antipathies toward the Democratic Party. The party was therefore able to find many West Indian political activists who, disillusioned by the failure of the Garvey Movement, of the Harlem Renaissance, and by their experience with the Communist Party, yet eager to gain political and economic empowerment, were willing to accept this overture. All along, however, they were made aware that they were being brought into the Democratic Party not as ethnics with distinctive cultural roots, but as representatives of an undifferentiated Black racial bloc. (Basch et. al 1994: 101)

Caribbean immigrants also had a strong identity based on race. This can be seen by the number of politically active Caribbean immigrants who supported Black candidates and identified strongly as persons of African ancestry or Negro--the label used at that time. Their racial political identity was also evident in their support for the Garvey movement.

They also had a strong national identity based on their relationship with their home country, although this identity was often deeply intertwined with the colonial government of the time. This is evident by their refusal to become citizens of America and their desire to retain their rights as British or British subjects. It can be argued that an ethnic or Caribbean identity was not strong among the immigrants in New York City during this period. This was the first time that Caribbean immigrants were meeting with other immigrants from the circum-Caribbean region in the United States.

Politics from the 1960s to the 1970s

Fueled by the Civil Rights Movement, the Caribbean population had a significant impact on the political climate of New York City during the 1960s. Members of this community were leaders of the civil rights movement and New York City politics. J.

Raymond Jones was among the most popular New York City politicians at this time. During his tenure in office, Jones secured jobs for a large percent of African Americans and Caribbeans. Hulan Jack⁸, who came on the political scene in the 1930s, also assisted Caribbean immigrants to secure municipal jobs and other forms of economic and political opportunities. However, Jack was unable, as Manhattan borough president in the 1950s, to bring about expanded employment opportunities for a significant portion of the Black community. He supported the policies of Mayor Wagner in return for patronage from Tammany Hall. Raymond Jones's shrewdness, on the other hand, allowed him to gain control of the City Council and the New York County (Manhattan) political machine in the 1960s. Like Jack, Jones did not cause broad social changes in the city, but he was influential in shaping the political careers of young Black politicians. Percy Sutton, Charles Rangel and David Dinkins were among those whose careers Jones promoted (Walter 1989; Holder 1990).

Between the 1930s and 1960s, Caribbean immigrants dominated New York City's Black political scene. This was true more so for Manhattan than the other boroughs. In Harlem, most political leaders had Caribbean origins. The Brooklyn Caribbean community, which expanded in the 1960s, was also caught up in similar levels of political activism (Irish

⁸Hulan Jack was born in St. Kitts, a former British West Indies colony. He migrated to New York in the early 1920s and became involved in New York City politics immediately thereafter. In the 1930s, Jack along with J. Raymond Jones, Herbert Bruce (a Barbadian immigrant) and Adam Clayton Powell, Sr. worked within the confines of Tammy Hall to empower the Black voters. Jack, unlike the others, worked closely with the White political establishment, and for that he was awarded the support of Tammy Hall for the position of Manhattan Borough President. In 1953 Jack became the first Black elected borough president of Manhattan.

and Riviere 1990). Wesley MacDonald Holder⁹ and various Black political clubs wielded considerable influence in the Black community in general and the Caribbean community in particular. Under his tutelage, Shirley Chisholm was elected to Congress. She is the first Black woman and the first woman of Caribbean origin to be elected to Congress.

Nationalism was also a strongly advocated political identity during the 1960s. The Civil Rights Movement, which led to the Black Power Movement, incited people of African ancestry in the United States and elsewhere in the world to call for Black independent nations free from colonial repression. This had enormous impact not only within the sending countries but among Caribbean immigrants living in the United States, who pushed for independence for their home countries. The majority of the leaders and residents, interviewed for this study, who were active in Civil Rights Movement noted that they identified strongly with the politics of their home country.¹⁰ As Basch et al. (1994: 113) stated, "The existence of their home countries as nation-states introduced new feelings of cultural, social and political empowerment. In the face of the racism and political exclusion that Caribbean immigrants faced in the United States, they continued to look to the home

⁹Wesley MacDonald Holder, a native of Guyana who never held any elected office in New York City, is often referred to as the Dean of Black Politics in Brooklyn. Until his death, he represented the group of Caribbean immigrants who preferred to be aligned politically and socially with the larger African American community. Holder's political position was borne out of the fact that he was an ardent follower of Garvey's Pan-African movement. Holder is responsible for the political career of many African American and Caribbean leaders in Brooklyn. Included among his proteges are Waldaba Stewart, Colin Moore, and Una Clarke. In the 1985 mayoral election, he along with several Caribbean leaders were instrumental in recruiting Caribbean support for the incumbent Mayor Koch against Mario Cuomo. This information is based on comments of five leaders interviewed for this study and the work of Philip Kasinitz (1992).

¹⁰More than twenty of the forty leaders indicated that they work or have worked closely with their national governments prior to and after migrating to New York City. These individuals hold very strong feelings, positive and/or negative, about their country's politics.

countries as important political arena.”

Only few political activists, mainly those who were Pan-Africanists and supported a pan-African agenda for the Caribbean and the larger African American community, pushed for a pan-Caribbean identity from the 1920s through the 1960s. Their main thrust was to secure an economic base for the Caribbean community in Brooklyn, similar to economic activities initiated by W.A. Domingo, Marcus Garvey, and others in Harlem in the 1920s. Among the ardent community activists pushing for a pan-Caribbean identity was A. Wendell Malliet. Malliet, a Jamaican journalist, was able to rise through the ranks of New York City Black politics while preaching a pan-ethnic identity among Caribbean immigrants. Like most other community leaders, Malliet never held political office but was a member of various social and political organizations and was called on to voice his opinion on issues affecting the community. Historical records show that there were some organizations which attempted to bring together Caribbean immigrants based on a pan-ethnic agenda. One such organization was Paragon Savings and Loan Society, which allowed Caribbean immigrants to accrue savings to purchase homes and invest in various ventures (Holder 1983).

The larger Caribbean ethnic identity reemerged in the late 1970s early 1980s, due mainly to the expansion and linkages of global capitalism, and the growth of regional markets, evidenced by the creation of CARICOM.¹¹ Internal factors such as mass

¹¹CARICOM was formed in 1973 by the four largest English-speaking countries of the region, Jamaica, Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago, and Barbados. The impetus behind the formation of CARICOM was the need to create an economic community in the region to encourage trade and investment with the region. This was done by establishing high tariffs for goods produced outside the region and liberalizing the trading of goods produced within the region. Since the 1980s, Haiti,

communication, travel linking the Caribbean region, and mass emigration of Caribbeans also fostered the re-emergence of a Caribbean ethnic identity. Most of the leaders interviewed, particularly those from the micro states in the Eastern Caribbean, agreed that a Vincentian, Grenadian, or Antiguan national identity does not mean much in the political, social, and economic context of New York City. As one interviewer noted, "Most people in New York City don't even know where St. Vincent is, much less care about it. If you say you are from the Caribbean, that has more meaning, it seems."

Basch et al. argued that national or regional identities depended on:

The outcome of these converging processes—decolonialization and independence in the West Indies, Civil Rights Movement, Black Power Movement, the hegemonic model of cultural pluralism in the US— was the emergence of West Indian as an ethnic political constituency (Basch et al.1993:113).

When politicians began to recognize the Caribbean immigrants as a distinct cultural group during the 1980s, they helped to transform this "Caribbean" or West Indian identity from one based on race to one based on ethnicity. The formation of such organizations as the Caribbean Action Lobby, Caribbean American Chamber of Commerce and Industries, and Caribbean Women Health Association hastened the process. While focusing on specific issues such as health, economic development, or immigration, these organizations served to mobilize the community along ethnic lines, not on a racial or nation-specific agenda. Leaders were more likely to make the Caribbean community salient to their appeals, emphasizing the need to organize the community into a voting bloc which politicians would take seriously.

Surinam, Belize, Cuba, and the Dominican Republic were invited to participate in CARICOM.

One example of this transformation was Percy Sutton's bid for the mayoralty in 1977. Key people within the Caribbean community organized support for Sutton, an African American. He lost the race but succeeded in bringing Caribbean immigrants into a bloc based in the hope that the candidate would address the needs of the Caribbean community. In subsequent mayoral elections, this same group of individuals supported Edward Koch, suggesting that key leadership within the Caribbean immigrant community were pursuing an ethnic as opposed to racial strategy in the hope that Koch would address specific needs of the Caribbean immigrants as opposed to those of the larger American community.¹²

Politics from the 1980s to the 1990s

Mollenkopf's analysis of the 1989 mayoral elections between David Dinkins, a Black Democrat, and Rudolph Giuliani, a White Republican shows that race pure and simple did not decide the outcome of this election (John Mollenkopf cite; Browning, Marshall and Tabb 1997). Instead, race and agenda items-- was the candidate likely to support your issues-- seem to play a role in how individuals vote. In some sense, it is hard to separate the two because race and issues are highly correlated.

Issues are also important to Caribbean immigrants and African Americans. Since Blacks were over-represented in the homeless population and were often priced out the urban housing market, they liked Dinkins's stand on housing issues. As Reed (1988),

¹²Five of the leaders interviewed for this research were involved with this group "Caribbean for Koch." They confirmed the fact that they were pursuing an ethnic rather than racial strategy to influence Koch's policies that might impact the Caribbean community.

Marshall Browning and Tabb (1994), and others have shown, people of African ancestry, or any group for that matter, tend to support members of their own group because they think he or she will be sensitive to their concerns. People of African and Latino ancestries tended to be more concerned about homelessness, education, and affordable housing, and Dinkins made these part of his platform. Caribbean immigrants are often discussed within the context of the African American community both in terms of issues affecting these groups and how they vote on these issues in an election. Analysis of voting patterns in predominantly Caribbean districts showed that their rate of voter turnout was similar to their African American counterparts and that they voted in similar ways during the 1989 and 1993 mayoral elections (see Tables 3 and 4).

Table 3

**1989 Mayoral Election Returns
By Congressional District**

Congressional	Neighborhoods included	Total Vote Cast	% Democrats	% Republicans	% Conservatives	% Liberals	% Other
10	Bed-Sty, East New York, Canarsie	150,428	68.19	25.81	.21	1.27	.09
11	Flatbush/East Flatbush	117,267	74.90	18.19	.26	1.42	.16

Source: New York City Board of Elections 1993

Table 4

**1993 Mayoral Election Returns
By Congressional District**

Congressional	Neighborhoods included	Total Votes Cast	% Democrats	% Republicans	% Conservatives	% Liberals	% Other
10	Bed-Sty, East New York, Canarsie	146,388	69.70	27.85	.22	2.04	.02
11	Flatbush/East Flatbush	115,729	77.42	20.37	.19	1.79	.06

Source: New York City Board of Elections 1993

Interestingly, this support for Dinkins abated between 1989 and 1993. Many Caribbean immigrants were dissatisfied with Dinkins handling of the Crown Heights riots in 1991, and the boycott of the Korean grocery in Brooklyn. From comments of the leaders and residents interviewed, newspapers editorials, and radio talk shows, it appears that Caribbean immigrants believed that Dinkins pandered to the Jewish and Korean communities instead of appeasing the Caribbean community. Community members also felt that Dinkins did not attend their functions or visit the community. This was an error on Dinkins's part because the Caribbean community comes from a tradition of "politics of the personal" where a politician is viewed favorable if he or she deals directly with people at the grassroots level. Furthermore, the community's concern for crime also contributed to the limited support for Dinkins in the 1993 election. The Caribbean community is often described as "conservative" on such issues as crime and welfare (Wilson and Green 1990: 96; Irish and Riviere 1990:60). Some switched their vote to Giuliani whom they perceived to be tough on crime.

The Caribbean political candidate vying for power in the 1980s and 1990s, can be classified into three broad categories, according to Kasinitz (1992). These three groups of leaders, the old guard, the ethnicity entrepreneurs, and the new politicians use the political power of the Caribbean community for different means and to achieve varying ends. For example, the old guard, because of this group's social and economic influence, are able to use the political power of the community to gain access to the larger political establishment by serving as consultants or community resources for the political establishment on behalf of the Caribbean community. The ethnicity entrepreneurs use the community as their

power base to get resources from the government for the community and to foster political empowerment based on an ethnic rather than a race or nationalist agenda. These resources are used to strengthen their political position within the community or cement their bases for future political careers. The new politicians skillfully use ethnicity and race in their bid for political gains but sometimes favor race for building coalitions with African Americans.

In an earlier analysis of the political leadership in the Caribbean community, Colin Moore¹³ noted that the Caribbean political candidate can be classified into two broad categories: nationalists and assimilationists. The former openly identifies as Caribbean and targets his/her campaign to this audience. This politician acts as the voice for a particular segment of the Caribbean community with similar outlooks. The latter identify with the larger African American community, and/or the wider society rather than only Caribbeans and target their appeal to this wider audience. In an editorial on the political participation in the Caribbean community, Moore, like those before, noted that majority of the post-1965 Caribbean politicians could be described as assimilationists (Moore 1984:13). A similar discussion was carried in another article, "The Battle of Brooklyn" in subsequent issues of *CaribNews* in 1984.

Kasinitz's ethnicity entrepreneurs are similar to Moore's assimilationists in that

¹³Colin Moore was one of the six Caribbean candidates who ran in the 1991 City Council election for the 42nd Councilmanic district which was created as a result of the City Charter redistricting efforts. Moore was defeated by Lloyd Henry. After the election Moore continued his involvement in community advocacy until he was disbarred in 1993 for misrepresenting his clients in the well-known Central Park jogger case. Since then Moore has kept a low profile in the community. However, he and Reverend Heron Sam continue to be involved in the Peoples Cathedral, a non-denominational church in Park Slope with a larger Caribbean congregation.

they use the Caribbean community as the “ethnic” power base while seeking to get additional support from other ethnic groups in the surrounding communities or the wider areas of New York City. The actions of the entrepreneurs suggest that one of the main goals of their bid for political representation of the community is fostering the community’s assimilation into the wider American society while maintaining its ethnic identity. In other words, the Caribbean community, through the efforts of the entrepreneurs, would become “Caribbean-American” rather than “Caribbean” or specific nationally hyphenated groups (i.e. Jamaican-American, Haitian-American). It should be noted that this form of assimilation is different from the straight-line assimilation as discussed by Warner and Srole because the ethnicity entrepreneurs stress assimilation based on ethnicity not on melting into the larger American society. Since the 1980s there has been an increase in the number of politicians vying for office by using the Caribbean community as their power base while appealing to the larger African American community and sometimes to the other ethnic groups, especially the Jews of Crown Heights or Midwood/Flatbush.

There are some new politicians, however, who choose to identify solely with the larger Caribbean community. Such was the case with Anthony Agard. Agard ran for state assembly in the 42nd District in 1982. The 42nd District includes the neighborhoods of Flatbush and East Flatbush in Brooklyn and is populated by approximately 65 percent Caribbean immigrants.

Agard migrated from Trinidad in the late 1960s after several years of political involvement in Trinidad’s politics. Agard became actively involved in community organizing during the 1970s and was encouraged to run for office in the 1980s. During his

1982 campaign, he encouraged Caribbean political participation as a means of empowering the community. According to Agard's critics, he wore his Caribbean identity as if it were a badge of honor. This was the first time that a candidate from the Caribbean community ran for office by seeking support mainly from that community. Agard lost to the incumbent Rhoda Jacobs by 1,100 votes. According to several accounts, he was able to target his campaign to the Caribbean community without ostracizing African Americans, Jews, or other ethnic groups in the neighborhoods. Although Agard had mass appeal, Jacobs, with a bigger financial arsenal and a better organized campaign was able to reach Caribbean and non-Caribbean residents of the 42nd Assembly District. Furthermore, from the result of the election, it seemed that Agard did not take into careful consideration that, while the Caribbeans comprised 65 percent of the population in the district, only 20 percent of them were citizens and registered voters. Had he done so, he would have kept his Caribbean ethnic political identity and also broadened his appeal to either the African American or the Jewish members of the constituency.

The ethnic identity of Caribbean immigrants in New York City politics became even more evident in the 1989 vote on the New York City Charter. The New City Charter expanded the city council seats to 51 seats, with two distinct "Caribbean" districts in Brooklyn. Many Caribbean immigrants then vied for office in these districts running on a "Caribbean" agenda. In 1990, seven first generation Caribbean immigrants challenged incumbent Susan Alter for the 42nd Councilmanic District. This suggests that politics of the 1990s have become more "ethnic" within the Caribbean community.

Based on attendance at political meetings, rallies and demonstration, campaigns,

and community forums from 1994 to 1998, I conclude that there has been a distinct push by Caribbean immigrants, particularly among the leadership, to have ethnic representation in New York City politics. The most recent evidence of this is in the number of organizations and individuals encouraging Una Clarke to run against Major Owens in the 11th Congressional District. According to these voices, it is time for a "Caribbean" person to ascend to that office, especially since the numbers of Caribbean citizens within the community has increased and claims that Owens has been insensitive are being heard.

In addition to the Owens and Clarke contest, the 2001 councilmanic races will also be a hotbed of Caribbean ethnic and racial politics in New York City. Term limits will leave the majority of races as open seats. Four of the forty leaders interviewed for this research indicated that they might run in the councilmanic or assembly races. Included in this group is one leader who served as an aid to a state legislator and two city council members. Another serves as head of an organization which promotes business opportunities in the Caribbean immigrant community.

Caribbean leaders are concerned with such issues as immigration, economic development, and political empowerment. While race is important, they seem to focus on ethnicity rather than race. This is evident in such comments as, "It is Caribbean immigrants' time now," or "We have the numbers so we can elect members of our community to represent us."

Una Clarke, one of the most prominent Caribbean leaders in New York City during the 1990s, comes out of the grass root community activism of the 1960s. A native of Jamaica, Clarke, like her fellow compatriots, migrated to the United States for educational

and economic advancement. In the late 1960s, she became involved with the Jamaica Progressive League, where she served as an officer. Along with other community activists, she helped establish federally-funded Head Start programs in central Brooklyn.

Clarke's politics was influenced by Garvey, Wesley MacDonald Holder, and former Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm. In 1989, as a result of her involvement with the Caribbean Action Lobby (CAL), the organization established to address to political needs of the Caribbean community, Clarke was urged, by several community leaders, to run for the newly created 40th Councilmanic District. Interestingly, Owens was one of Clarke's supporters during her bid for office. Clarke, who ran on the Democratic and Liberal lines, won the election by less than 500 votes and without the support of Brooklyn's Black political machine. The machine instead supported African American, Carl Andrews. It has been alleged that Clarke fell out of grace with the Black machinery because she and other Caribbean leaders refused to "wait their turn" to be elected.

In the 1993 and 1997 elections, Clarke was challenged by Ernest Foster, an African American. Foster, who has not been entirely supported by the Black machine, challenged Clarke on the grounds that she only appeals to the Caribbean members of her constituency and does not adequately address the needs of African Americans.

In covering the 1993 city council elections, Joseph Gambaredello of *New York Newsday* reported that it appears that Caribbean and African American politics seem to be at odds because the latter group perceives the former to be in control of the economic and political wealth of central Brooklyn (Gambaredello 1993).

Now Clarke, who is forcefully pushing the Caribbean agenda, is rumored to be

thinking of challenging Owens in the upcoming Congressional race. In a 1998 poll by *Everybody's Magazine*, readers were asked what Una Clarke should do next, now that the city has implemented term limits. More than 50 percent of the respondents stated that she should seek higher office (Hall 1998). It appears that Clarke is following the advice of her constituency.

Another contender in Caribbean politics is Nick Perry. Like Clarke, Perry is a native of Jamaica who migrated to the United States to join his family and further his education. Perry was active within the student movement at Brooklyn College, where he got his first lessons in American politics. Unlike Clarke, Perry is not closely tied to the grassroots of the Caribbean community in Brooklyn. He has been connected to Black Regular Democrats under the leadership of Clarence Norman and with Community Board 18 in East Flatbush where he served as a member for more than five years. Perry ran unsuccessfully in three city council and assembly elections, finally winning an assembly seat in 1990. In the 1998 election, Perry received the second largest voter turnout for all Black state legislators. This was Perry's fourth win since he was first elected. While he has the support of this constituency, members of the Caribbean elite do not view him favorably. One leader referred to Perry as a "tit on a bull." In other words, he is useless because he is only an appendage of the county Democratic Party hierarchy. On the other hand, Clarke has been credited for providing funds for the creation of programs to help young immigrants make the transition to the New York City public school system and established five sickle-cell anemia clinics through the City Health and Hospital Corporation. (Gambaredello 1993:27). Perry took a low-key role in the passage of the legislation to

support the dollar van drivers in Brooklyn. Perry has also been accused of being voiceless on the immigration issue. Unlike Clarke, Perry prefers to downplay his ethnicity and race. In an interview, he revealed that while he is not ashamed of his Caribbean identity, he prefers not to promote himself as a Caribbean politician. He did not come out of Caribbean grassroots activism nor was he tied to social institutions serving that community. He noted that promoting a Caribbean ethnic identity would be in conflict with his African American constituents and members of other ethnic groups.

Roy Hastick, through the Caribbean American Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CACCI), has received some recognition in the Caribbean community and elsewhere. A native of Grenada, Hastick migrated to New York City in the mid 1970s in search of economic opportunities. He began his community activism, in Crown Heights where he first settled, by organizing a block association. He later formed an association of former policemen from Grenada (Kasinitz 1992: 181-188). In the early 1980s, with the help of the Caribbean Action Lobby (CAL), Hastick was instrumental in forming CACCI. This organization attempts to assist up-and-coming entrepreneurs in the Caribbean community. He successfully secured funding from local, state, and federal sources, as well as private donors. His efforts brought him to the tables of Gracie Mansion, the Governor's Mansion, and the White House. He has been appointed to a number of task forces and commissions to review business and economic development. Hastick may run for 40th Councilmanic District which Clarke will vacate in 2001. Several leaders thought he might enter the Congressional primary with Una Clarke against Owens. By splitting the Caribbean vote this might help Owens, who has been a major supporter of CACCI. Hastick, like Clarke,

would appeal to the Caribbean ethnic political identity, especially through his organization.

Of the three, Hastick is the least known and the least liked by leaders interviewed for this study. They distrust Hastick because, while his organization claims to act in the interest of Caribbean businesses, it has produced few, if any, concrete programs. To his credit, CACCI sponsors a monthly “power breakfast,” which Caribbean business people attend for a fee to exchange business cards and interact with each other. Some leaders are also skeptical of Hastick’s previous association with the Gairy regime in Grenada. It is alleged that Gairy was associated with political “strong hands” in Grenada and received support from the CIA to topple the Bishop government. Unlike Clarke, who publicly acknowledges her commitment to the Caribbean community, or Perry who stated his preference for a racial identity, Hastick is perceived to “talk out of two sides of his mouth.” This does not seem to sit well with some Caribbean leaders.

The Caribbean community is also a political force in Queens. In the 1998 election in the largely Caribbean section of southeastern Queens, a Jamaican-born woman won a special election to the state assembly. Pauline Cummings, a community activist from the Rockaways, replaced Gregory Meeks who had taken Floyd Flake’s seat in Congress. Cummings was courted by assemblywoman Vivian Cooke and councilmembers Archie Spigner and Juanita Watkins, three of the powerful Black Democrats in Queens. Cummings was sought after because of her position, as a community activist, on issues of affordable housing, community development, and education. From interviews with Caribbean leaders who live and work in Queens, they feel that the Queens county African American political leaders thought that Cummings has a “good” name recognition in the

community. Unlike Clarke, Cummings is new to the political arena and has not shown any signs of advocating a "Caribbean ethnic" identity. Her speeches suggest she has a strong national and racial identities. It is unlikely that she would push for a separate Caribbean ethnic identity, since African American regulars were responsible for getting her elected.

While there is sufficient evidence to suggest that Caribbean politicians are active in Brooklyn and Queens, there is little evidence to show that similar activities are taking place in the Bronx. In the past four years two first-generation Jamaicans were elected to the school board in the Wakefield section of the northeast Bronx. Only one organization, the Caribbean American Family Service, founded in 1996, has been pushing for a Caribbean political identity. The founder of the organization, who has been supported by Una Clarke and Bronx Borough President Fernando Ferrer might seek office in the upcoming councilmanic or state assembly elections. The Caribbean pursuit of political power in the Bronx has been thwarted by Latinos and African Americans. Unlike Brooklyn and Queens, where Caribbean immigrants contend only with African Americans, Caribbean immigrants in the Bronx have to share the political pie with Latinos, who are increasing in numbers in that borough.

Caribbean politics in the 1990s cannot be discussed in its entirety without mentioning the Crown Heights riots of 1991. The riots stemmed from deep-seated dissatisfaction with Hasidic Jews, the police force, and local government. The Hasidim were perceived to have received preferential treatment from the police and City Hall and to control Crown Heights, by way of their wealth, and political connections. Caribbean residents of the Crown Heights community believed that the Hasidic driver in the Rebbe's

entourage who accidentally killed Gavin Cato, a young Guyanese boy, was treated better than the young boy who lay bleeding in the street. This angered the crowd and brought on five days of rioting. Both sides blamed Mayor Dinkins for paying limited attention to their needs. The leadership also felt they could not get sufficient support from the community to squelch the riot. In the first few days of the riots, City Hall scrambled to put together a group of Caribbean community leaders and community-based organizations to address the situation because there were no viable mechanisms in place to do so.

The resulting ad hoc group, consisting of such notables as Lemuel Stanislaus, George Irish, Una Clarke, Waldaba Stewart and Marco Mason,¹⁴ among others, requested money from former Governor Cuomo to create the Caribbean American Comprehensive Center. CACC was formed in September 1991, a month after the riot. The group was housed in a rent-free space on Utica Avenue, the hub of the Caribbean community in Crown Heights. The purpose of the organization was to provide services for the teenage population (from whom the rioters were drawn). These services included counseling and mediation, athletics, and lessons in Caribbean history and culture. The leadership of CACC also reached out to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and young people in the

¹⁴Stanislaus is a dentist by profession, board member of several Caribbean community-based organizations and Grenada's Permanent Representative to the United Nations (UN). It is interesting to note that Stanislaus is an American citizen, has not lived in Grenada since the 1930s, yet he was appointed to the UN as Grenada's representative. There is speculation, by several leaders, that his appointment came as a result of his support for the 1983 US led invasion on that island. George Irish, a native of Montserrat, is the Director of the Caribbean Research Center at Medgar Evers College. The Center is responsible of conducting ongoing research on Caribbean immigrants in the United States. Waldaba Stewart is a former New York State Assemblyman and currently the chair of the Caribbean Action Lobby (CAL). Marco Mason is Deputy Director for the Caribbean Women's Health Association. Both Stewart and Mason are Panamanians.

Caribbean and Africa.

Since 1991, CACC has unfortunately experienced a decrease in enrollment and has been unable able to attract support from the larger Caribbean community. Apparently, CACC's competes with the Crown Heights Youth Collective, an African-centered community group directed by a Jamaican-born Rastafarian, Richard Greene, who has wide community and city support. City and state officials have asked the leadership of the Collective, who focus on racial identity and African American political empowerment, on a number of occasions to serve as the spokesperson for the Crown Heights Caribbean community. This dampens CACC's search for legitimacy. Furthermore, under the leadership of Stanislaus, CACC has failed to play an active role in the politics of the Caribbean community, even though Stanislaus has considerable name recognition as a result of his association with such organizations as Caribbeans for Koch, CAL, and his most recent appointment as Grenada's Permanent Representative to the United Nations.

From this discussion, it is apparent that a Caribbean identity has clearly arisen alongside an African American racial identity, especially among the leaders. For several Caribbean leaders, the path to political empowerment lies in a specifically ethnic appeal just as a racial appeal works for African American leaders. If Clarke is successful, it will confirm the notion that ethnic appeals count more than racial appeals among Caribbean immigrants. Since Caribbeans do not yet comprise a majority, native-born African Americans would have to buy into her ideas as well, since she might need their votes as the swing votes in the congressional election. Further analysis of the general Caribbean population will reveal the extent to which the community agrees to ethnic political appeal.

Chapter 3

Identity Formation among Caribbean Immigrants

This chapter provides a detailed overview of identity formation among Caribbean immigrants. The discussion will move from the specific individual (micro level) identity to the general or larger group (macro level) identity being embraced by the Caribbean community. At the micro level the individual identity is first shaped by familial circumstances. In the context of the Caribbean societies, race and class, but more so the latter, play an important role in shaping the individual identity (Nettleford 1970). Commonly, race is taken for granted in the Caribbean since most people have African ancestry. Except for Haiti and Panama, Caribbeans have only had a national identity since the 1960s, when their countries became independent. In the multi-racial societies of the Caribbean race and class also influence the national identity.

As newly-formed nations, most Caribbean states encouraged their citizens to develop a strong national consciousness. For example, in Haiti and Belize the government encourages the morning ritual of singing the national anthem and mandatory participation in the military and in Jamaica and Trinidad the governments reinforced this bond by sponsoring various festivals and other cultural expressions of nationhood. Most of the immigrants interviewed recounted, with pride, the ways in which their governments fostered strong national sentiments. This seems to have a profound effect on the immigrants' sense of nationalism. This is evident by their unwillingness to give up their national identity or become US citizens.

While there is a strong national identity, there also seems to exist a larger Caribbean

identity. This identity is based on the common socio-cultural and historical similarities of the societies of the region. This identity stems from various historical junctures. As noted earlier, Caribbean immigrants' first encounters with the notion of a larger group identity occurred in stages outside of the Caribbean region. One of the first occurred in Panama during the construction of the Panama Canal.

Construction of the canal and railroad encouraged a male-dominated migration from the Caribbean. As a result, immigrants from the less-represented Caribbean countries such as St. Kitts and Nevis had to choose mates from the more-represented Caribbean countries such as Jamaica and Barbados. Although many Caribbean immigrants settled in Panama after the canal was built, race and language prevented them from being readily incorporated into the larger Panamanian society. More than 80 percent of the Panamanians who migrated to the United States, from the 1950s to the 1990s were of African ancestry (1990 Census Public Use Micro Sample). Panamanians commented that there had been some national rivalries among the Caribbean laborers in Panama. However, this did not prevent the immigrants from forming a united force within Panama. The larger Caribbean identity developed in Panama served to influence the level of Panamanian involvement in the political and economic activities of the Caribbean community in New York City today.

The second encounter of a larger Caribbean community occurred in England during the massive influx of Caribbean people from the Anglophone Caribbean in the 1940s and 1950s. Not only was there a greater sense of "Caribbeaness," but there was also greater sense of "Africaness" or Blackness resulting from their interaction with Africans and other Anglophone Caribbeans in England. Caribbean immigrants coming to the United States via

England brought with them this sense of a larger group identity.

The third encounter with a Caribbean identity formation occurred in the Caribbean during the formation of the West Indian Federation in the late 1950s and early 1960s. This attempt did not yield the desired result. In fact, the Caribbean region was bitterly divided based on the strong sense of nationalism expressed by the governments of Trinidad and Tobago and Jamaica. Many of the leaders interviewed argued that those Caribbean residents, who can recall the history of the Federation, look with some suspicion on community leaders from Jamaica because they seem to want to emphasize their “Jamaicaness” at the cost of a more inclusive “Caribbean” identity.

There were other attempts at expanding this Caribbean identity, consciously or unconsciously, through the development of the West Indian Cricket team in the 1950s, and the Caribbean Common Market (CARICOM) in 1973.¹⁵ The purpose of CARICOM was to foster trade and other forms of economic relationship between the English-speaking countries of the Caribbean. In the 1980s CARICOM expanded and gave membership or observer status to Cuba, Surinam, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic. Since the 1950s the University of the West Indies served as a seminal meeting place for the intellectuals and students of the region to theorize about development of a Caribbean identity, among other issues. It is within these contexts that Caribbean immigrants have been exposed to the notion of Caribbean identity.

¹⁵Prior to CARICOM, countries of the Anglo-phone Caribbean created the Caribbean Free Trade Area (CARIFTA) in 1968. This was one of the first attempts to bring about regional economic integration by allowing for free trade within the region. However, during the 1980s, as a result of a period of economic decline within the region, countries such as Barbados and Trinidad closed their borders to goods from other Caribbean countries (Vickerman 1999:11).

Prior to their migration to the United States, Caribbean immigrants always had a racial identity. However, it manifested itself in subtle forms in the Caribbean. In his discussion of racial consciousness in Jamaica, Vickerman (1999) aptly described a pyramidal structure. According to Vickerman, racism based on economic conditions is apparent when one notices that the 5 percent of the population at the top of the economic pyramid are mostly people of European ancestry who control 85 percent of the wealth of the societies. The middle consists of approximately 10 percent of the population who are mulattos (light-skinned Blacks) and Asians (Chinese and East Indians). They control 15 percent of the wealth. The base of the economic pyramid consists of 85 percent people of African ancestry who control little or no wealth. It must be noted that in places such as Guyana, Panama, Belize, and Trinidad, the demographic make-up is slightly different. In the case of Panama, Belize, and Guyana, the Native American or Amerindians also fall at the bottom of the economic pyramid. In Trinidad and Guyana there are more East Indians and Chinese in the middle-class. One manifestation of racial identity, which most Caribbean people will recognize is the employment of light-skinned people in banks and certain high-profile sectors of the economy (Vickerman 1999: 27-29).

Access to the middle class in the Caribbean is an arduous but not exceptional process. The average person can ascend to the middle class by virtue of educational attainment or land acquisition. Unlike the United States, Caribbean persons of light-skinned African phenotypes are not systematically excluded from economic mobility. The Haitian expression, "A rich Negro is a White man" summarizes this sentiment. In other words, a rich Negro is afforded all the respect and status that are given to a White man.

That is not to say that the Caribbean-sending societies were devoid of racism. In Panama, Caribbean immigrants working on the Canal became racialized as a result of the treatment they received at the hands of the Americans. They lived in segregated housing, were paid in silver, and were isolated from the larger Panamanian and American communities, while their American counterparts were paid in gold, lived in better housing and received support from the government (Newton 1984). It can be argued that this early exposure to American racism allowed Caribbean immigrants and their decedents in Panama to develop stronger racial identity.

Once they migrated to the United States, Panamanians, Jamaicans, Guyanese and other Caribbean immigrants adopted racial and ethnic identities. According to Ho (1994), this process of racialization is essentially primordial, while “ethnification” is culturally defined. In her studies of Trinidadian immigrants in the United States, Ho concluded that the interpretation of race, class, and culture has a structural foundation. Furthermore, the process of ethnification is structurally linked to the US system of racial oppression and to the political and economic struggles of racial minorities. Ethnification and racialization occur when Caribbean immigrants of African decent are forced to confront the system of racial stratification in the United States. The bipolar racial structure allows Caribbean immigrants, who often have a stronger national identity upon arriving in the United States, to identify with African Americans instead of drawing on their national identity which might allow them greater freedom to identify along race and class line. This form of identity often comes about as a result of a reduction in the immigrant’s class status. Thus a middle class school teacher, a civil servant, or a nurse from the Caribbean often becomes

a domestic worker, gas attendant, or a nurse's aide until he/she "acquires" the American experience. In these entry-level or low-paying positions, Caribbean immigrants come into daily contacts with African Americans, who, because of the prevalence of discrimination in the labor market, are relegated to these low-paying, menial jobs. While studies show that there are some animosities between Caribbeans and African Americans in the work place (Waters 1994; Vickerman 1995) the daily contact between these two groups often brings about a collaborative relationship. Wilson and Green (1989) noted that agreement and mutual support distinctly characterize the relationship between African Americans and Caribbean immigrants.

The class line is further dissolved as Caribbean immigrants become concentrated in neighborhoods that are racially mixed or exclusively Black. According to Ho, upon migration to the United States, the rigid racial boundaries and the comparatively fluid class boundaries of American society trivialize the former status of Caribbean immigrants. The trivialization is exemplified in the case when deference, that is accorded to people based on his/her educational and professional status in the Caribbean, is absent in the social and professional settings of the United States. Thus, a middle-class teacher in the Caribbean who would be referred to as mister or teacher, is now being addressed by his first name in the United States.

Looking at a subgroup within the Caribbean community, Ho concluded that Trinidadians immigrants in Los Angeles are able to develop multiple identities. For example, Trinidadians often classify themselves as Black on the basis of race or as immigrants on the basis of culture. The ambiguous classification, according to Ho, allows

room for negotiation and manipulation of identity in order to place themselves in a better position on the racial hierarchy. She cautioned that this development should not be seen as an expression of racial ambivalence but rather the result of a rejection of US categories in which Blackness is linked with subordination. As a result, these Caribbean immigrants use the “West Indian” identity when they want to be placed on a higher social level than African Americans. Language/accent or other cultural traits are often used to distinguish themselves from the African Americans. The West Indians in Los Angeles also intermarry with other West Indians as a means of maintaining a separate identity.

While Ho has made significant contributions to the study of Caribbean identity formation in the United States, she raises some very contentious issues in her study, which lead me to question her methods and findings. While earlier research points to the fact that Caribbean immigrants do try to maintain their “Caribbeaness,” there is enough evidence to suggest that over-time this “Caribbeaness,” as with other group identity, is transformed as the community is transformed. Ho makes no allowance for this transformation of identity among Caribbean/West Indian immigrants. This research will show that, over time, the Caribbean or the various national identities are not used to distinguish African Americans from Caribbeans. In essence, neither the residents nor leaders are saying that being Caribbean is good and African American is bad. From interviews with leaders and community residents, it can be assumed that identifying as Caribbean or the various nationalities is based mainly on specificity and the fact that the group has grown in number and has cemented its historical base in the American society. As a result of the increase in the population size, Caribbean immigrants now have a major group to identify with, and

not necessarily as a means of distancing themselves from African Americans but to associate with a group with whom they have more in common.

Political Identity of Caribbean Immigrants

The brief historical overview of the Caribbean immigrant community in New York City shows that this community has consistently identified with the more progressive, liberal, or left-of-center politics in New York City. This seems to be consistent with the overall political development of the sending societies of the Caribbean with their history of struggling against slavery, colonialism, neocolonialism and European and American imperialism. The majority of the leaders of the Caribbean community of the 1920s and 1930s came to America as self-imposed exiles escaping certain economic and political repression ascribed by the colonial system. Similarly, the majority of the Caribbean leaders of the 1960s and 1970s, in New York City were closely aligned with the Black Power Movement (Meeks 1997). As Reid (1939) noted, Caribbean immigrants were among the most active members of the left wing or socialist politics in New York City. W.A. Domingo, Richard B. Moore, and Cyril Briggs were active members in the Communist Party of America. It can be argued that, in addition to their left of center ideologies, these immigrant leaders identified with the Communist Party because it offered them status and political opportunities which were not available in the Democratic or the Republican Party.

In the 1980s and 1990s more than 90 percent of the leaders and residents of the Caribbean community supported the Democratic Party's political agenda. There are several reasons for this, chief among them is the fact that the Democratic Party in New

York City often preached, although it did not practice, a left-of-center, liberal political message. This message was one which argued for support for the poor, working class, and immigrants. Also, support of the Democratic Party from the Caribbean community had its links to the 1930s and Roosevelt's New Deal policies. The New Deal programs provided job opportunities for Caribbean immigrants and native-born Blacks who were skilled in carpentry, masonry, road construction, and other trade related work.

In the 1980s, the Caribbean community gave added support to the local and national Democratic Party for several reasons. First, the newly-arrived and majority of the long-term Caribbean immigrants were against Reagan/Bush policies toward the Caribbean Basin, particularly Jamaica, Haiti, Cuba, and Grenada. Many felt that the United States, under the Reagan administration, meddled in the affairs of sovereign Caribbean nations and brought about the downfall of the Manley government in Jamaica in 1980 and the invasion of Grenada in 1983.

Secondly, over the years, several Democratic Party candidates have been very supportive of the Caribbean community. Most notable was Jesse Jackson during his bids for the presidency in 1984 and 1989. As the most widely read newspaper in the Caribbean immigrant community in New York, *The CaribNews* portrayed Jackson as friendly and sympathetic to the Caribbean region and its immigrants in the United States. The newspaper also emphasized the fact that Jackson was of African ancestry and therefore a "brother" to the Caribbean community.

In the 1984 New York City democratic primary, there was an upsurge in voter registration among people of African ancestry, including people from the Caribbean. In a

coverage of the primary, *CaribNews*, reported that new voters increased by 5,000 to 10,000 per assembly district (Best 1984:3). The increased voters registration was most noticeable in the Bedford Stuyvesant, Crown Heights, and Flatbush sections of Brooklyn, northeast Bronx and the 29th district in southeast Queens. These areas are heavily populated by Caribbean immigrants and native-born African Americans.

The report stated that Jesse Jackson had awakened the Caribbean voters who were once referred to as “the sleeping giants” of New York City politics. According to the editorial, Jesse Jackson was able to do what Caribbean leaders have been struggling with since their decline in the 1970s. From responses of the community residents and leaders, particularly those who participated in the 1984 election, and existing election data, Caribbean immigrants overwhelmingly used race as a factor in supporting the Democratic party in the 1980s and 1990s.

The Caribbean communities, especially the leadership, seem to develop their political identity based on the intricate links between politics and the realities of everyday life. However, there seems to be a gap between expressing this identity in a way that brings about concrete political benefits for the community and the way this identity is perceived by the general Caribbean population, the African American leadership and the White power structure. It can be argued that this gap stems from (1) the “newness” of the Caribbean leaders to New York City politics. While Jones, Jack, Chisholm, and others have recruited and trained many to follow in their footsteps, they have passed from the political scene. (2) The political scene has changed over the years. Between the 1920s and 1950s the various political organizations and clubs attached to the county machines of New

York City played a major role in facilitating the movement of immigrants, more so than African Americans, into the political arena. Today these political clubs and organizations are virtually nonexistent. Furthermore, the few that serve the Caribbean community are controlled by African Americans, as is the case in Crown Heights with the Thurgood Marshall Political Club, the African Peoples Political Club of Flatbush, or in East Flatbush with the New Era Democratic Club. (3) There are now several ethnic and racial groups clamoring for the seat of power in New York City. Until the 1960s, politics in New York City was argued, primarily, from the standpoint of race— Black or White. In the 1990s, New York's population has become much more diverse and political power is being contested on the basis of ethnicity-- a sense of culture, peoplehood, and historical connection to a homeland. Thus with Latinos, Asians, Africans, Europeans, and other variegated groups vying for power, race, rather than ethnic coalitions, seems to become less salient in the participatory aspect of New York City's politics. It must be noted that while various ethnic groups are vying for power, the power structure is largely controlled by the White males. Mollenkopf, in his essay entitled "*New York: The Great Anomaly*," points out that the power structure has remained in the hands of this group because, although New York has been heralded as a reform city, trappings of machine politics are still at play and, this machine, historically, serves to undermine the involvement of minorities, especially people of African ancestry. The level of minority incorporation is further undermined by the stark divisions which exist among the various ethnic groups vying for power and space in New York City.

A fifteen-year (1983 to 1998) analysis of the *Carib News*, one of the leading weekly

newspapers of the Caribbean community, shows that the leadership relentlessly encourages its readership to participate in local, state, and national politics and at the same time informs them about the politics in their home country. The newspaper frequently provides information on candidates running for local, citywide, statewide, and national offices from New York City. It also frequently endorses candidates, especially those with a history of support for the Caribbean community. From the endorsements given over the years, it is clear that they are not given based on race or ethnicity but based solely the candidates' support of the Caribbean community.

For example, in the 1984 state senatorial race, *CaribNews* endorsed Marty Markowitz, a Jew, over Carl Andrews, an African American, on the ground that Markowitz was “the single most accessible elected member to the Caribbean community.” On the other hand, *CaribNews* accuses Andrews of being distant from the Caribbean community (*CaribNews* September 1984: 13). In the 1990s *CaribNews* continues to support Marty Markowitz and Rhoda Jacob even when they were challenged by Caribbean candidates. In the 1998 assembly race, Jacob was challenged by Samuel Nicolas, the cousin of Abner Loumia, who was brutally assaulted by four New York City police officers. *CaribNews* endorsed Jacobs based on her commitment to the Caribbean community and stated that Nicolas was a new comer. At the same time Nicolas received the endorsement of the New York Times. According to the editor, Nicolas would bring a fresh burst of energy to a district where many residents are estranged from the political system (*New York Times*, The Editorial Desk, September 4, 1998). Jacobs won with 58 percent of the votes and Nicolas received only 29 percent of the votes. From my

observation of this election, Jacobs made very little effort to target the Caribbean community by appealing to the "ethnicity" of the group. This was different from prior elections, especially in the 1984 race with Andrews, when she worked with majority of the community leaders and attended and provided financial support for a number of social and cultural activities of her constituency. Nicolas also failed to appeal to the "Caribbean ethnic identity" of the community. While he was very vocal throughout the Louima incident, the leaders and many community residents saw his bid for office as a means of capitalizing on an unfortunate incident. In a *CaribNews* article, Michael Roberts described Nicolas as a "Johnny-come-lately, whose only claim to any kind of community involvement is that he is the spokesman for Abner Louima" (Roberts 1998: 4). Nicolas, however, was able to capitalize on the organizing efforts of the Haitian community and the larger Caribbean community around the issue of police brutality and employment programs for the youth in the community. As a result he was able to get a significant 29 percent of the vote. One can only speculate that if in the future Nicolas were to appeal more to a Caribbean ethnic identity, be it social, cultural, or political and expand his outreach beyond the Haitian community, he might be able to defeat Jacobs.

In 1984, in the 17th Senatorial District, the *CaribNews* endorsed Mary Roberts over incumbent Howard Babbush. Babbush, a long-standing politician connected to Brooklyn's Genovese machine, was viewed as a strong supporter of the Caribbean community, however, the *CaribNews* felt that Mary Roberts, was just as qualified with stronger roots in the community. Babbush won the race. In 1996 *CaribNews* endorsed second-generation Caribbean John Sampson, who ran against Babbush with the support of the Brooklyn

Genovese machine. In the case where two candidates of African ancestry were running for office in a predominant Caribbean district, *CaribNews* endorsed the candidate from the Caribbean. For example, in the 1984 assembly race for the 43rd District between Maurice Gumbs and Clarence Norman, the incumbent, *CaribNews* endorsed Gumbs on the basis that while Norman was instrumental in establishing several legislative initiatives which benefitted the Caribbean community, Maurice Gumbs, a noted Caribbean leader, had been active in education and crime and drug prevention and, was the better man for the job. Norman, county leader of the Brooklyn Black Democrats, won the election. It is interesting to note that in most of these races, there were only subtle references to issues of a Caribbean ethnicity, particularly in speeches made at community gatherings by the Caribbean candidates running for offices and other community leaders. The major issues were education and economic opportunities for the residents of the communities.

In addition to endorsing candidates, the *CaribNews* also featured articles and editorials regarding the political state of affairs in the Caribbean community. Over a ten-year period, there were approximately two articles per issue discussing political participation and empowerment of the Caribbean community in New York City. The overriding themes in these articles dealt with increasing citizenship and voter registration in the community. Such leaders as Colin Moore vehemently argued that:

the problem of Caribbean powerlessness will not be solved by symbolic concession from Mayor Koch. It will not be solved by the fraternal alliance with the African-American leadership. It can only be eliminated when the Caribbean community turns its political vision away from the Caribbean islands and focuses on the empowerment of Caribbean people in the United States (Colin Moore 1984:12).

This statement implies that Caribbean immigrants still hold to a national identity which fosters closer political association with the sending countries rather than with the host society. Moore and other “new politicians” are of the opinion that political empowerment of the Caribbean community is not the “primrose path of collaboration, nor the easy path of paternalism” (Moore 1984: 12). But the straight and narrow path of political mobilization including becoming citizens, registering to vote and voting, forming political clubs, and supporting candidates from community by donating time or money.

There is much to contend with if Caribbean immigrants are to further develop their political identity to the point that leads to the political inclusion and participation at the level of the 1940s and 1950s. Using officer holders as one means of determining political participation and inclusion, it can be argued that, regardless of whether the masses participated, there is enough evidence to suggest that during this period there were approximately twenty Caribbean elected officials in New York City all, of whom were elected from predominantly African American neighborhoods. Since 1990 there have been four elected officials serving the Caribbean community and four others who have actively sought office over that same period. Central to this position is whether Caribbeans can be elected to office in numbers similar to the 1940s by promoting an agenda based on Caribbean ethnicity.

This historical overview of the political identity formation of the Caribbean immigrants intimates that in order for the Caribbean community to be included in the political process and actively participate, two factors must be present. First, the Caribbean immigrants must first expand and effectively mobilize their resources. These resources

need not be financial. They can include building cooperative relationships with other groups, developing effective contact with the media, and expanding the professional members, especially those with economic and political clout. The right to vote is of little value if it is disregarded by many of the group members. The right to vote will become significant when there is a growing sense of efficacy and increased opportunities for the group. Then, Yinger (1994) predicts, the group will begin to have significant impact on the competitive political system. One means of ensuring opportunities for the group is by developing members with worthwhile economic and political clout.

The second factor is that the group must push for inclusion. This can be achieved through the formation of institutions, including political clubs, community-based organizations, and other voluntary associations which serve as effective conduits between the formal and informal political establishment and the community. As Walters (1989) noted, the route to the formal political structure is still through various political organizations and clubs throughout the neighborhoods of New York City. With the decline of political clubs, this path seems more difficult. Furthermore, Katznelson (1973) argued that participation for Blacks and immigrants in American society is dependent on the nature of their inclusion as a group. Given the fact that Caribbean immigrants are viewed as part of the larger African American community, it is safe to assume that similar to African Americans, Caribbean immigrants have an unidirectional access to the political structure via the White power structure. To change this would require Caribbean immigrants developing their own access to the power structure. There is evidence that this occurred, especially in 1978 when a group of Caribbean leaders, under the banner "Caribbeans for

Koch” campaigned against the challenger, Percy Sutton, a noted African American leader.

Leaders of the Caribbean community, particularly those pushing a racial identity, believe that a push for political power by Caribbean immigrants would mean wresting power from African Americans. Early literature on ethnic political incorporation argues that this would inevitably lead to conflict. I contend that conflict for political space arises if there has been a history of conflict over social and cultural space. Historical records show that there has been limited, if any, conflict between African American and Caribbean immigrants over social and cultural space. In fact, the relationship has been one of cooperation and collaboration. The conflict is also reduced as Caribbean immigrants often negotiate New York City’s political landscape by using their racial and ethnic identities and often supported political candidates based on race.

A recent example of this collaboration is borne out in the case of Pauline Cummings in her bid for the New York State 31st Assembly in 1998. Cummings was chosen because of her commitment to the Democratic Party and willingness to play race politics over ethnic politics. However, it can also be said that senior politicians within the Queens Black Democratic Party structure also noticed that the Caribbean community is becoming a significant driving force in Queens and worthy of political representation. Walters (1989) noted that for aspiring office holders, at whatever level, the journey begins at the party’s local club. The support of “family ties” in part is necessary for political advancements. It must be emphasized that Walter’s analysis only gives credence to the formal participation within the two major political parties and, in some instances, the Independent party.

Cummings and other Caribbean immigrants vying for political office have their

“family ties” with the African American political leadership. There are two main reasons for this. First, Caribbean immigrants live in neighborhoods largely populated by African Americans. Caribbean immigrants inherited or expanded on the local political infrastructures established by African Americans. As a fledgling community in the 1920s and 1930s and as a community under going transition in the 1990s, Caribbean immigrants, to a large extent, utilized the political infrastructure of the African American community. It can be argued that race played a major factor in this utilization. Caribbean immigrants were seen and treated by the larger New York society as African Americans. As a result, their access to New York City politics was limited as were the African Americans.

Since the late 1970s, as the Caribbean community has expanded, there has been greater public rhetoric about the community being represented by its own members. The leadership espousing this rhetoric felt that the road to political office via poll watching, petition gathering, leafleting, and other foot-soldier tasks as too daunting. In an effort to bypass this process, many community leaders, especially ethnic entrepreneurs, sought affiliations with the formal political structure by forming community-based organizations, and using these organizations to broker services for the community and increase their prominence in the community. Once prominence was achieved, these leaders then acted as gatekeepers and/or barterers on behalf of the community. This practice was very noticeable among the community-based organizations discussed in this research.

In addition to the overall structure of New York City politics, the would-be leaders of the Caribbean immigrant community must also consider the importance that the community places on identifying with various groups in the society. As Bryce-Laporte

point out, Black immigrants arrived in the United States with an acute sense of a national identity while taking race for granted and placing less importance on regional or ethnic identity than is anticipated of them by others. But often they will find themselves branded and bonding along a racial, regional, or ethnic line. Some leaders recognize this attempt to galvanize political power along the line which would yield the greatest victory. Interviews with leaders of the community suggest that the two lines of identity that would yield the greatest political victory are racial and ethnic identity based on regional similarity.

However to realize this potential, the community must aggregate its resources into a larger group. According to Yinger (1994), religious and political movements among ethnic groups is one attempt to attain such aggregation. Following this line of reasoning, it can be asserted that a larger segment of the Caribbean leadership is attempting to aggregate its resources from a nation-specific to a regional group identity. In essence, this means moving from a Jamaican, Guyanese, Haitian, or Trinidadian identity to the larger Caribbean group identity. There is a small, yet significant, segment which is aggregating its resources into an even larger group, African American. This movement can be attributed to a racial identity.

Citizenship and Political Participation

According to David Jacobson (1998), citizenship denotes membership to “a state” but in the current transnational context, where societies have become “borderless,” this does not evoke the same primordial sentiments as does ethnicity, which in many instances transcends national borders. The views of many Caribbean immigrants in New York City

support Jacobson's arguments. This assertion is made based on the fact that Caribbean immigrants are now adopting dual citizenship and carrying out such basic civic duties of citizens as voting, providing support (financial and otherwise) to the community or to issues which are important to one's citizenship. For the Caribbean immigrant community, citizenship no longer denotes membership in "a" state but membership in at least two states.

The notion of transnationalism and the growing sense of regional identity (if only among the leaders) has helped to change the meaning of citizenship. In many instances these immigrants are loyal to both the United States and their home country to which they ascribe their citizenship. This was not always the case. In the early 1920s and up to the 1960s many Caribbean immigrants expressed an unwillingness to become citizens mainly because it was felt that they would lose the protection as British or French subjects. The 1980s and 1990s reveal a more startling picture for Caribbean immigrants and their rate of citizenship. For those immigrants who arrived prior to the 1980 census more than 50 percent have become naturalized over a ten-year period (see Table 5). This is significantly high for this group, although the rates are much lower than for immigrants from Europe and Asia. A majority of the leaders and the rank-in-file population noted that they became citizens for economic and political reasons. Similarly, they expressed loyalty to both their host and home country. Those immigrants interviewed noted, with gratitude, the benefits received while in the United States, particularly the educational and economic benefits. At the same time they recognized that their home country provided them with some fundamental values (moral and otherwise) which allowed them to reap the benefits in the United States.

Table 5

Rates of Naturalization for Caribbean Immigrants

Country	Percent Naturalized for Pre-1980 Immigrants¹⁶
Caribbean¹⁷	72.4
Jamaica	54.9
Haiti	45.2
Guyana	65.5
Trinidad	37.0

(Source: United States Bureau of Census 1990 Public Use Micro Data Sample)

Citizenship provides the conduit whereby one can formally participate in the political activities of the state. As in the days of Aristotle and Plato, political activities of state require the citizen be physically present, however, in an era of nations without borders, physical presence is not necessary. As a result, Caribbean immigrants, regardless of the tenets of the United States, have maintained and, in some instances, have increased their involvement in both the United States and their home country. Jacobson described this as “a polymorphous society.” (Jacobson 1998: 41). What is interesting to note is that although Caribbean immigrants are operating across states’ boundaries, the states, both the sending and the receiving state, do seem to play a role in shaping the immigrant identities by establishing boundaries and ground rules in which the immigrants must operate. For example, it is the policy of the United States that a citizen of that country cannot hold

¹⁶Arrived before 1980

¹⁷Includes the Dominican Republic other countries of the region not listed

elected office in another country and remain a citizen of the United States. Similarly, several Caribbean countries allow members of the diaspora to vote in their elections only if they return to that country. For these reasons many immigrants opt to serve in an advisory capacity with their home-country government or within community-based organizations working with the home country and the United States.

Chapter 4

Community Leaders

Central to this study is the need to gain answers to the following questions: a) are Caribbean immigrants in New York City forging an identity based on the perception of the community leaders/elected officials? and b) are the leaders being directed by the identity forged at the community level? During the interviews, I tried to ascertain the following:

1. The social and economic characteristics the leadership of the Caribbean community;
2. Leaders' views on how their communities needs should be responded to;
3. What factors have shaped their identity then and now;
4. To what degree are the leaders participating in New York City's politics;
5. Which organizations try to develop unity among Caribbean immigrants and foster a "Caribbean" group identity?

There were several objectives for conducting face-to-face life-history interviews with the 40 leaders of the Caribbean community in New York. One such objective was to examine how community leaders and elected officials identify themselves within the context of the Caribbean community and how this has changed over time. Another objective was to highlight how the leaders are organizing to meet the needs of the community, and the relationship (if any) between the level of organizing and the leaders' political, social and cultural identities. In addition, I hoped to discover whether the community-based organizations serving the community are concerned with building a "Caribbean" group identity. I also intended to look at the how the leaders are perceived by the residents of the Caribbean community and the larger New York City community.

Research shows that in order to gain access to services or bring about change, a

community has to organize itself (Yinger, 1994). Historically, for people of African ancestry, community-based organizations have served as a conduit for producing political leaders and fostering community activities in New York City. As a result, one can assume that community organizations within the Caribbean community might also serve as grooming court for current and future community leaders. Based on this assumption, I interviewed forty community leaders. These leaders are individuals who hold or have held executive offices in organizations serving the Caribbean immigrant population in New York City, and individuals who have held elected office. In addition, I attended several social, cultural, and political events sponsored by these organizations and/ or individual leaders.

A face-to-face taped interview, which lasted for approximately three hours, was conducted with each of the 40 leaders. The leaders were selected based on the fact that they were first generation Caribbean immigrants, have held or currently hold positions in community-based organizations serving the Caribbean community, had been or currently hold an elected position at the local, state or national level and/or have run or have intentions of running for elected office in the Caribbean communities identified in this research.

The leaders were asked approximately 50 lead and follow-up questions based on their responses. This ethnographic research method was chosen because it is my belief that by asking key questions, I will get a clear picture of how one's identity develops over time. By taping the responses, I was able to transcribe, with accuracy, the responses of the interviewee.

Socioeconomic and Demographic Profile of the Community Leaders

Of the forty leaders interviewed, ten migrated to the United States from Jamaica, five each from Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago, four each from Barbados and St. Vincent, three from Haiti and Belize, two from Panama and Montserrat, and one each from Grenada and St. Thomas (see Table 6). This sampling, although not intended, closely mirrors the general population distribution of Caribbean immigrants in New York City. Twenty-five of the forty leaders interviewed came to New York during the mid-to-late 1960s. One migrated in the 1930s and the other fourteen came between 1970 and 1986. Most came to join family members and to further their education. Thirty leaders received secondary education in the Caribbean and migrated during their early adulthood, between ages eighteen and twenty-five for their post-secondary education.

Table 6

National Origin and Gender of Community Leader

Country of Origin	Total	% of Sample	Male	Female
Jamaica	9	22.5	5	4
Guyana	6	15	3	3
Haiti	3	7.5	2	1
Barbados	3	7.5	2	1
Trinidad and Tobago	5	12.5	3	2
St. Vincent	3	7.5	1	2
Panama	2	5	1	1
Belize	3	7.5	1	2
Grenada	3	7.5	1	2
U.S. Virgin Islands	1	2.5	1	0
Montserrat	2	5.	1	1
Total	40	100	21	19

Table 7

Community leaders by Occupation and Gender

Occupation	Total	Male	Female
Professionals	14	10	4
Business Owners	2	1	1
Educators	9	4	5
Civil Servants	8	4	4
Nurses/Health Care Workers	7	2	5
Total	40	21	19

Gender

Nineteen female and twenty-one male leaders were interviewed. Of the nineteen females, seven worked or had worked in the health and human services field (see Table 7). These results are consistent with the 1990 PUMS data which showed that approximately 50 percent of the Caribbean immigrant population are women and that more than 25 percent of working women from Jamaica, Haiti, Guyana, Trinidad, and Barbados were employed in the health and/or human services. One leader currently serves as the president of one of the largest nurses' associations serving the Caribbean and the larger New York City Black population. A majority of the women interviewed received their post-graduate degrees, mainly in the social sciences or health related fields.

Similar to their male cohorts, the female leaders became involved with community

and/or political activities in the Caribbean and/or in New York City at an early age, usually as a result of family members activities in New York City politics. The majority, became very active during the mid-to-late 1960s. In developing the sample of leaders, there was no indication that either gender dominated leadership within the Caribbean community. Those who were asked to name important people to interview, referred to males and females with equal frequency. Male and female leaders both readily identified Una Clarke, the city council representative for the Flatbush/East Flatbush section of Brooklyn as one of the most important and influential persons in the Caribbean community. Assemblyman Nick Perry and Councilman Lloyd Henry were also recognized as prominent elected officials from the community. It is interesting to note that there was no mention of prominent individuals who are not in public service.

While it is difficult for this research to gauge the influence or power of leading Caribbean individuals in the private sector, the absence of their names among the leaders interviewed suggest that the leaders from the private sector in this community are not a visible force. Four leaders, two male and two female, interviewed were from the private sector. Of the four, two were not actively involved in political life and made disparaging remarks about New York City politics. In addition, more than 50 percent of the leaders interviewed do not see the business leaders of the community willing or able to help solve the problems of the community. They see the business leaders as concerned with the “bottom line,” or profit margin rather than general welfare of the community.

Education

Nine out of ten community leaders interviewed came to New York City after completing their secondary education or their second year in college. Of those, about half worked as civil servants or professionals prior to migrating to New York City. Many reported that their educational training provided them with a sense of self-worth which has helped them to advance since coming to New York. The limited job opportunities available in the Caribbean gave these leaders a clear mission to get an education which would lead to social and professional advancement in America or the Caribbean. The drive for professional advancement led these respondents to obtain college or advanced professional degrees after migrating to New York. The leaders were asked to identify the most important characteristics which allowed them to get ahead in New York City. Many reported that self-determination, help from family, education, a sense of self-worth, and ambition have helped them to get ahead since migrating to New York City.

Income, Class, and Color

Since most of these leaders have attained a college degree and are currently working as directors of community-based organizations or in other professional positions, it is safe to assume that their income levels would be relatively high, given their educational and professional qualifications. Responses to a question about income suggest that the forty leaders earned incomes between \$40,000 and \$70,000 with the average personal income of \$45,000. Two leaders reported personal incomes of more than \$70,000. According to the 1990 census, these incomes would place the leaders in a middle-class

bracket or among the “shrinking” yet significant middle-class Caribbean immigrant. In a study commissioned by New York City Council and conducted by John Mollenkopf et al., entitled, *“Hollow in the Middle: The Rise and Fall of New York City’s Middle Class,”* Mollenkopf argued that wages of middle-class New Yorkers have eroded sharply since 1989 and while Caribbean and immigrants are doing well, they start much lower on the economic ladder than the people they are replacing, mainly people of European ancestry (Mollenkopf 1997). However, from the responses to my question, “Which class do you consider yourself?” more than 80 percent reported that they were middle-class. When probed further, many said that their income might be that of the middle class but their attitudes and ideologies are similar to the working class. Some leaders also noted that they have adopted a working-class attitude because they were only a pay check from being poor. Others noted that they considered themselves middle-class because of the middle-class goals, values and aspirations, they brought from the Caribbean, which are now even more important in the context of the racially stratified society of the United States.

These leaders’ attachments to their middle-class ideal can be seen as a means of self-preservation. The leaders maintain their middle-class identity rather than be assigned the lower class status of a newly-arrived immigrant who can easily fit into the low-class status of the larger African American society. This finding concurred with earlier findings discussed in Basch et al. 1994. From studies conducted among the Haitian and Vincentian communities in New York, the authors alluded to the notion that class identity was used in the Caribbean as a means of separating the upper and middle strata from the masses. The educational systems, which are modeled from the British and the French, served to

reenforce this class dominance. On their arrival to the United States, the Caribbean immigrants, especially the earlier immigrants who were indoctrinated by the pre-independent educational system, strived to set themselves apart from the larger African American population by identifying their middle-class status and its trapping (i.e. a house, sending children to private schools, attending certain social events).

One noticeable difference between this research and Basch's is the absence of the discussion of the interplay between color, class, and income in the context of the United States. In terms of definition and identity based on color, there was only one leader from Haiti who could be considered a mulatto (of mixed race, primarily African and European). There were also three East Indians and the others were of direct African descent and identified accordingly. The leaders only discussed the issue of class and color in the context of the Caribbean. Five mentioned the fact that in the Caribbean, those with money tended to be of a lighter hue and were automatically placed in the middle class. However, no mention was made of this being a common phenomenon among the Caribbean community in New York City. It can be argued that this notion of class, color, and income might not be a factor in the New York City Caribbean community because the majority are of African ancestry. In addition, anecdotal information points to the fact that the middle-class mulattoes are less likely to migrate for fear of being ascribed a lower-class status and those who do migrate would move to the suburbs of the Northeast or Miami.

Levels of Political and Community Activism

While it can be said that any type of activism is political, for the purpose of this paper there is a distinction between community and political activism. The former includes, among other things, taking part in church activities, attending or having membership in voluntary organizations, and tenants' or block associations. Political activism includes taking part in political campaigns, rallies and demonstrations, leafleting for political candidates, attending or having membership in political organizations or clubs. It must be noted that there are times when there are overlaps between political and community activism, particularly at times when the voluntary organizations have to seek political redress for the community's needs.

Approximately three-fifths of the leaders reported that they and/or their family members were active in community and political activities in the Caribbean. The other 40 percent became active in community and political activities within a year or two years after arriving in New York City. When asked why they became involved in community and/or political activities both in the Caribbean and in New York, the respondents credited their family background, education, and the determination to make a change. Those who came to New York during and after the 1960s also attributed their activism to the events that were shaping American society, mainly the demand for civil rights and social and gender equality. Ten leaders, most of them Jamaicans, were influenced by the ideology of the social-democratic movement of the Caribbean which took place in the mid-to-late 1970s. Five of the ten Jamaicans were, at one point or another, involved with the "left leaning"

People's National Party of the late Michael Manley.¹⁸ Another leader from St. Vincent reported that he was a member of the left-wing St. Vincent United Peoples' Movement and served as the party's emissary to Grenada's New Jewel Movement, the party of the slain Maurice Bishop. Ten of those interviewed were student activists especially at the various campuses of the City University of New York (CUNY).

Another factor which led to the increased involvement of these leaders was that most were faced with overt racism for the first time, which impeded their progress in their host society. Twenty-five of the forty leaders noted that they faced racism, cultural shock, and language barriers upon arriving in New York. All reported that they were denied jobs, paid less than their native-born White counterparts, and refused apartments because of their immigrant status. These leaders further added that they were not aware that these were discriminatory practices until after the fact, especially in conversation with native-born African Americans or other Caribbeans who had migrated earlier. In order to overcome these obstacles, many joined forces with immigrants from other Caribbean countries and also joined with African Americans. Some of these leaders became members of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), Congress for Racial Equality (CORE), the Jamaica Progressive League, Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), the Black Panther Party, and other such organizations which articulated the end of racial discrimination. While these leaders recognized the importance of forming coalitions with African Americans during the 1960s and even today, they also

¹⁸In 1972, Michael Manley, then prime minister and leader of the People's National Party (PNP), proclaimed that the PNP would pursue a democratic-socialist agenda. This agenda emphasized nationalization of major sector of the economy and induced a nationalist fervor in the country.

seemed to be ambivalent about joining forces with African Americans. This reluctance stems from misunderstanding or mistrust between African Americans and Caribbean Americans. For example, there seems to be the perception among both African Americans and Caribbean immigrants that the latter group considers itself "better." Also, some leaders agreed that there is the perception, by African Americans, that the Caribbean immigrants are here to take their jobs. While these perceptions exist, there is no clear evidence that they are being propagated by the Caribbean leadership.

Caribbean leaders display a high level of political and community involvement. More than half have been U.S. citizens for five years or longer. Of those who are citizens, all are registered voters and voted in the 1997 mayoral election and the 1996 presidential election. Many campaigned for candidates within and outside of the Caribbean community. Some ran for office at the city, state and federal levels. Five leaders were not citizens, but they were also politically active. One even served as campaign manager for a Caribbean candidate running for office in Queens and Brooklyn. Of the elected officials interviewed, none had citywide or statewide positions.

Table 8
Community Leaders Political and
Community Participation in New York City

Activities	Total
Registered Voter	35
Ran/Serve in Political Office	6
Assisted with political campaign	36
Union Membership	6
Membership in Political Club/Organizations	10
Membership in Nation-specific organizations	33
Membership in Social Club	15
Membership in Sport Club	7
Block/Tenants' Association	6
Church	22
Professional Organizations	35

Identity Formation among the Leaders

It is interesting to note that thirty-five of the forty leaders interviewed had a strong national identity prior to migrating to the United States. When asked how they identified themselves prior to migration, all thirty-five reported that they never saw themselves as anything but nationals of their countries, except for an identity based on class. This nationalistic identity is mainly the result of limited interaction with people from other Caribbean country or other parts of the world. The strong class identity can be attributed

to the fact that the majority came from families with secondary, and in some cases, post-secondary educational backgrounds. In addition, these families were part of the petite-bourgeoisie—store keepers, teachers, civil servants— who were active in their country's politics and community activities.

Five leaders reported that they had a very strong racial identity prior to migration. The other thirty-five agreed that race was not an important factor to their national identity until they migrated to the United States. Of the five who reported a strong racial identity prior to migration, their identity was informed by undercurrents of the Garvey Pan-African Movement, and the Civil Rights Movement. One of the five, a Vincentian who is a member of a Black nationalist organization identified strongly as African. When asked, "How did you identify yourself while living in the Caribbean?" he said:

From very early I became Black conscious and I think that I see myself from very, very early as an African. I never got into the narrow nationalistic nonsense about I am a Vincentian and play that off as oppose to someone born in Grenada or Trinidad. I always saw myself as an African. I truly believed in Nkruma's position that Africa belong to those home and abroad. Having said that, though, I never saw my salvation as being derived from going back to Africa. I thought that I had to locate myself in space and time and since it happens so that in the 1960s I was born in St. Vincent I thought it was my bounding duty to struggle to make revolution in St. Vincent to be part of a movement that instituted serious political and economic changes in St. Vincent. Vincentian identity did not mean a lot to me. It only brings disunity. From early on I realize that Africans were the only ones around the world who saw themselves other than Africans. People from Poland, no matter how many generation they are removed from Poland, they saw themselves as Polish. They may hyphen and add to some other place that they might locate themselves. So they may say that they are Polish-Argentinian. But you would always see a Pole. Africans are the only people to this day who would completely give up the Africaness. At least in rhetoric because they can't hide based on the melanin. But they would give up the Africaness to say that they are Jamaican or Trinidadian not African. To me that was a way of dividing the people and confusing the people. It shows the impact that colonialism and neocolonialism had on our people. But I never bought into that.

In addition to the Vincentian, a Trinidadian leader, who subsequently adopted a

Yoruba name, noted that race was very important to his national identity prior to his migration. He identified strongly with the Black Power Movement which took place in Trinidad in the 1960s, and with the Yoruba religious practices which have been ingrained in that society from the enslavement period.

Three leaders of East Indian ancestry were interviewed for this project, two were from Trinidad and one from Guyana. While they strongly identify with their East Indian ancestry and expressed a sense of pride in that identity, their national identity or Caribbean identity often supercedes this racial identity. When asked how he identified himself while living in Trinidad and how important was this identity relative to race, one East Indian Trinidadian pointed out that:

As an East Indian, as a nationalist, someone who believes in Trinidadian nationalism, someone who believes that Trinidad should emerge as a nation from colonialism. Well first and foremost I was myself as an East Indian but I always believe in national unity, unity among the races. I never believed in Indian nationalism or Black nationalism. In fact that was one of my political agenda. The people of Trinidad and Tobago, Blacks and Indians and the other ethnic groups should unite politically.

It can be assumed that the three East Indians have strong national identity as opposed to strong racial identities because they lived a fairly integrated life while in Trinidad and Guyana. They associated with people of African ancestry and other races—Whites and Chinese, at schools, in their neighborhoods, and in the workplace. All three had post-secondary training in the Caribbean and served in a public service capacity prior to migration. The same could not be said for the East Indians from the rural parts of Guyana or Trinidad who still maintain very closely-knit communities and practice their East Indian culture. This assumption can be made based on a conversation with several

Guyanese leaders of East Indian and African ancestries including one of mixed race— Indian and African. The latter, now a prominent businessman in Brooklyn, was born and raised in rural Guyana. His father, an African Guyanese, did not play a significant role in his upbringing. He was raised by his mother's family who exposed him to the Hindu way of life. At the age of twenty he moved to the capital city, Georgetown, and was employed as a police officer until he migrated to the United States. In recapping his life history, he explained how his identity changed. This leader noted:

Well let me answer that in a couple of ways. Initially I saw myself as an Indian because my parent, my mother, was Indian, East Indian and my father was Black. But he was not in the family. From I was about 10 years old my mother and father were separated. So I grew up in this Indian culture until I was about in my early 20. That was my total involvement. After that it was basically since I was deprived of a high school education, growing up as a teenager, most of my concentration was on education, educating myself, from the time I came to Georgetown. That was my total and ultimate goal to be educated because after I left elementary school, I never had an opportunity to go to high school, so after I came to Georgetown, that was my total concentration. My identity changed from Indian to Black because I saw myself as more Black when I came to Georgetown than when I was in Berbeice. There [in Berbeice] was quite a bit of oppression and I was not able to make an identity for myself. The community was predominantly Indian, so there was quite a bit of oppression on me because I was not accepted. I was not accepted by the larger Indian population. Because of that I had to get out and form my own identity. When I came to that culture now, it was a 360-degree turn around for me after living in this Indian culture for so long, to me it was a life-time. Because the Indian culture was being practice in Georgetown but not so extensively as it was being practiced in the country. After joining the Guyana police force, it was all a different culture for me because it was predominantly Black. It was a reverse for me.

Only one leader, a Panamanian, of the forty leaders interviewed, strongly identified as Caribbean prior to his migration. Again, it can be assumed that this low level of Caribbean identity, prior to migration, is a direct result of the limited interaction that Caribbeans had with each other within the region. This might not have been the case in the

1920s, 1940s, and 1950s when there was restricted migration to the United States and England and increased interregional migration to the Panama Canal Zone, the banana plantations of Central America, and the oil fields of Trinidad, Venezuela, and Curacao. From the mid 1960s to the present, interregional migration has been replaced by out-migration to the United States, Canada and Europe.

Post Migration Identification

All the leaders have expressed strong racial identities once they migrated to the United States. When asked the question, “When you think of yourself in the context of New York City, what group identification is most meaningful to you? Race has become so much a part of the Caribbean immigrant consciousness that a Caribbean immigrant with a distinguished East Indian phenotype would identify as Black. When asked why he identified as Black, he responded, “Because I feel that is how the White would perceive me. They perceive me as Black.” A female leader from Jamaica summarized this feeling when she stated that:

When you are in Jamaica these identities do not matter. Once you come to this country you are faceless. So the only thing you have to grope at when things become difficult is first, you are a Black woman. I look like a Black woman. I lived in Albany for a while. While I was there, there were Black folks there, but I did not see too many of them. And while you don't have to know a Black person to identify with them, seeing them gives me a certain comfort. To say that there are others who look like me who are around because in this country Black people today do not have any power. So when you go to look for a job, even if you don't want to acknowledge it, you are identified by your color. So for me race is important. Even if I did not like it and at times it made me feel uncomfortable, I am Black and my association has to be with African Americans because the concerns that they have also concern me.

It must be made clear that in addition to race, the leaders also expressed a strong

Caribbean identity within the context of New York City. When probed further to ascertain why they identified with the Caribbean group and to what extent or in what ways is race important to their Caribbean identity, one leader stated:

I am not sure that I have thought that out. I think that it is something that I have subconsciously take on. Since coming to this country I have become closer to the Caribbean community as opposed to when I was in Jamaica, where Jamaica was the center of my universe, so to speak, and now that I am interacting with more people from the Caribbean, and I understand about the global and economic aspects that I take on a group identity as opposed to a Jamaican identity. Not that I have lost my "Jamaicaness." But I find that often when I am asked where I am from and depending on who ask the question, if it is a White American or I believe that the person is a non-Caribbean person, I usually say I am a Caribbean person. If a Caribbean person asks me, I would say that I am Jamaican. Race is important to the extent that I have a different experience here in America. Racism has now become more important to my vocabulary and a very important part of my daily experience. So that where as before I did not focus on race, I find that more and more I am focusing on the whole question of race. Because of what's happening around me, racial conflicts here and there. So it is very, very important to me in terms of my own identity to say that I am Black or I am an African.

In many cases, the leaders used three forms of identity, interchanging them depending on the context. They often start with Black (identity based on race), then Caribbean (for the purpose of this study, an ethnic identity) and their country of origin (national identity). For example, one leader said he is first an African, specifically, a Jamaican, and generally, a Caribbean American. He further noted that he uses the different terms to identify himself depending on the situation. Along with several others, he noted that in the 1950s and 1960s it was to one's advantage to identify as a West Indian rather than a Jamaican or a Barbadian because Americans were not familiar with the specific countries but had some idea of the term West Indian and were able to distinguish between West Indians and African Americans. Then, more so than now, West Indians were given preferential treatment by Whites. It was believed, by Whites, that West Indian Blacks were

more cultured and better educated than native-born Blacks. As Basch et al. (1997), Sutton and Chaney (1987), Bryce-Laporte (1972) among others noted, many West Indian Blacks of the pre-1965 generation played on this assumption by Whites. A leader confirmed this belief by noting that:

During the 1950s a West Indian in New York was seen by the Whites to be better than African Americans, and many West Indians believed that they were better than African Americans. They (West Indians) were treated better than African Americans, but in the long run, Black people regardless of where they are from, were discriminated against by Whites.

Only six leaders continued to have a strong national identity in New York City. Of this group three were Jamaicans and three Haitians. The strength of their national identity was determined based on the fact that when asked, "When you think of yourself in the context of New York City, what group identification is most meaningful to you?" They first gave their national identity. For example, one Haitian leader stated, "Haitian is my primary group and secondary would be African American." The other Haitian leader responded similarly by stating:

I consider myself Haitian American. I am a US citizen. I am a member of the democratic party, and I am fairly active in that. But I also culturally and politically identify with the aspiration of the Haitian people. So I see myself as Haitian American in the same way that others see themselves as Jewish American or Italian American.

Based on research conducted by Bryce-Laporte (1976, 1979) and Sutton and Chaney (1987), I anticipated that more people would identify themselves as West Indians or a specific nationality now that they are living in New York City. However, when the leaders were probed about their identity, many responded that they preferred not to use West Indian because it has become archaic. Several leaders noted that the term "West

Indian" is limiting because it only referred to the English-speaking people from the Caribbean. During the 1940s and 1950s, most immigrants of African ancestry who spoke with an accent were from the English-speaking Caribbean. The immigrants who came during the 1940s were recruited to work on farms, railroads, and in the lumber industry in the United States. Immigrants from the English-speaking Caribbean countries were recruited to help alleviate the labor shortage caused by World War II. Since the 1960s, many more immigrants have come to New York from non-English-speaking Caribbean countries. The term "West Indian" does not apply to these immigrants. One leader noted that the term "Caribbean" is generally used to define those coming from an island nation or coastal regions washed by the Caribbean sea. Another leader argued that using the term West Indian is an acknowledgment of Columbus's mistake of thinking he would reach India by sailing west. Using the term "Caribbean" acknowledges one of the original inhabitants.

I believe that the change from West Indian to Caribbean is in keeping with the current trend of groups self-identifying or re-identifying within the larger American society. The new identities seem to be associated with place and national origin rather than language or color. For example, in the late 1980s there was a move away from the term Black to African American, especially in academia and the policy arena. Similarly, American Indians have re-identified themselves as Native Americans.

When leaders were asked about assuming a Caribbean identity, many responded that it was politically advantageous to identify as Caribbean:

There are not enough Jamaicans here to support a candidate from Jamaica running for political office in New York City. That person has to get the support from all the Caribbean immigrants and also African Americans. This was the case with Una Clarke. She used the definition of Caribbean to get elected. It worked for her.

From the variety of responses from the community leaders, there does not appear to be a uniform agreement on assuming a Caribbean identity. The consensus seems to be that the wider society labels this group as "Caribbean immigrants," and some members accept this definition merely as convenience. However, there is more than one level to the identity of these leaders. Some leaders identify by national, regional, and racial origins based on the particular circumstance. However, regardless of nationality, all leaders stressed the importance of race, especially now that they are living in New York City. Thirty-seven of the forty leaders interviewed were of African ancestry, while the other three were of East Indian ancestry. All highlighted the importance of race in forming their identity. When asked, "Do you ever identify as a Caribbean person, one leader said:

I prefer to see myself as an African person. But if you were to ask me to give a geographic location I would say Afro-Caribbean. First and foremost I try to identify as a Black man, as an African. So I would not emphasize my "Caribbeaness." If someone was to ask me if I was born in the Caribbean. I would say yes but I would not emphasize that because there is nothing peculiar about that. I think too much is made of the differences, and when we get down to it, I think fundamentally African people wherever they are located are the same. Some of us may come from more traditional societies and as a consequence may be oppressed by some of the traditional values and so on. Some of us may come from metropolitan societies, lived in metropolitan societies for a long time and shed some of that. But having said that, I don't think that there are any fundamental differences. African people like basically the same kinds of foods, the same kinds of dance, they like the same kinds of women.

While the issue of race allows Caribbean immigrants to form a broader identity with African Americans, it separates Caribbeans of African ancestry from those of Asian ancestry. This racial division is not new to the Caribbean context. However, in New York City, the separation between Asian Caribbeans and African Caribbeans is more pronounced. In the three neighborhoods studied, the population of Asian Caribbean was

less than 5 percent. In Queens, the numbers were slightly higher. Research conducted by the Department of City Planning identified large numbers of Asian Caribbeans in Richmond Hill and Flushing sections of Queens. It is interesting to note that the Asian Caribbean communities are adjoining the large Asian communities in Queens and are sandwiched between the African Caribbean and White communities. These areas are not included in this study. However, it is worthy to give some attention to the levels of community and political activities taking place there to make some comparison between the issue of racial identity and political participation. Two of the East Indian leaders interviewed have lived or currently live in the Richmond Hill section of Queens and both continue to be very active in the social, cultural, and political aspect of that neighborhood. Both leaders expressed their levels of involvement in this community as a direct result of their ambition to see the community get the political representation that it deserves, independent of the Caribbean, African American and larger White communities. In a discussion of his feelings about New York City politics, one of the East Indian leaders stated that he felt excluded from mainstream politics, in light of the fact that he managed a state assembly campaign for an East Indian Guyanese candidate in the 31st Assembly District. He did, however, feel included in the politics of the fringe. As he stated:

I feel included in politics of the fringe. Definitely politics at the fringe, the outer end. For example, the group that I belong to the East Indian Diaspora, which is a community group, we have been trying to get membership in the Democratic Party and we have not been able to. I think the party chairman in Queens is forever excluding us. My goal is to get an East Indian candidate for election as a Democratic party candidate, East Indian from the Caribbean, whether it is Trinidad or Guyana. I am looking to get an East Indian to emerge as a Democratic Party candidate in Queens and the party itself does not favor this. I feel the party is not accepting us. Although there is a mechanism whereby we can do it— If I were to join the Democratic party—but I am not a citizen so I can't vote. I think the Democratic Party won't accept East

Indians because it still discriminates against minority groups and traditionally American Whites and American Blacks have been the political leaders, and they are trying to keep it that way.

The response led me to probe further to see why this leader would not find it necessary to join with the larger Caribbean group in order to be included in the political process. Based on the response, it seems that inclusion of East Indians is the main goal of this leader. However, racial politics, or the perception of it, prevents East Indians from joining forces with the Caribbeans or African Americans in Queens. When asked whether someone from outside the East Indian community could represent this group, this leader responded, "No, that person would need to have an East Indian identity. That person would have to look East Indian."

While this leader expressed the desire of the community to be represented by one of its members, he also recognized the difficulty of electing an East Indian, or a Caribbean immigrant for that matter, to serve the community, mainly because African Americans, the largest voting block, tend to vote for other African Americans. This is evident from his comment on the community politics in Queens:

Look, we have had a Jamaican, who tried to run for a city council seat in Richmond Hill and Jamaica and he has not been able to win. He is a real estate broker. It is very difficult for West Indian to win an election in Queens. It is not like Brooklyn. If you look at election results in Queens most of the winners are African Americans. A Jamaican recently ran. She won the election. I did a piece on her for the Newspaper [*Caribbean Journal*]. She is not in my area. She is in Springfield and the Rockaways. That is why she won the election, I am very familiar with the 31st State Assembly District because I managed a campaign in this district. It is not surprising that Meeks kept on winning because he is from the Rockaways and the bulk of the votes are in Rockaways. If she rode on Meek's coattail or on Flake's coattail she should win. Flake has a lot of support in the Rockaways. She only won by 150 votes. I think some of the votes went to the other Democratic party candidate, Evans. The Republicans just gets 15 percent of the vote, historically, if you were to look at the voting behavior. So Southern Queens is a Democrat town. The Republican only get 15 percent. That is as much as they have been able to pull.

This leader's comments also reveal that for a Caribbean immigrant of African ancestry to win the Black Queens, he or she has to have the blessing of the dominant Black political figures. The leader also believed that East Indians are being grouped with the Indian immigrants from the Indian subcontinent. However, there seems to be very little, if any political, social or cultural affinity among the members of these two groups. For one, the East Indians from the subcontinent tend to support the conservative Republican party while the East Indians from the Caribbean tend to support the Democrats. When asked why the leadership of the East Indian Caribbeans were not joining forces with the Republican party, he responded:

Two things. One, coming from the West Indies, our political ideologies are not Republican and secondly, I also know that we will lose before we begin. I have written on Queens Politics, I have a book coming out, *Caribbean East Indians in New York* and I talk a lot about it. It is almost a waste of time for an East Indian to go Republican.

In addition, Afro-Caribbean political forces seem to be concentrated in Brooklyn, away from the Caribbean East Indian community of Richmond Hill. As a result, it seems almost impossible for the East Indian Caribbean community to be incorporated into mainstream politics without collaborating with African Americans, Whites, or the Indian immigrants from the subcontinent. The difficulty arises from how they are perceived by the outside community. Apparently the Caribbean power structure, which is based in Brooklyn, often overlooks this group because they are outside the geographical sphere.

They are ignored by Whites and African Americans for several reasons. First, their numbers have not reached that "critical mass" to be considered a political force. Second,

they are considered minority by the Whites and African Americans see them as part of the larger Asiatic Indian community. This group, like the Koreans, is not necessarily viewed by African Americans in a favorable light given the fact that they are recent immigrants who have been able to make significant economic advancements in the high technology industries, seemingly, at the expense of African Americans.

Leaders of African ancestry serving Queens and Brooklyn, particularly those from Guyana and Trinidad recognize the growing East Indian community in Richmond Hill. Many point to the fact that this growing community is an extension of the present state of race relations between the people of African and East Indian ancestry in Guyana and Trinidad. Both countries experienced race riots in the 1950s and 1960s and the recent elections in these countries were plagued with accusations of race baiting.¹⁹

Another interesting case of ethnic identity is that of Panamanians and Belizeans. The Panamanian leaders emphatically pronounced their African Caribbean identity as opposed to the general Hispanic identity. Those Panamanians interviewed had parents or grandparents who were born in the Caribbean and migrated to Panama to work on the railroad, canal or banana plantations. These leaders identify as Caribbean because of their "traditional" Caribbean upbringing. When asked why they chose to live and work among Caribbean immigrants, Panamanian-born leaders noted that while in Panama they lived a "Caribbean lifestyle." They spoke Caribbean English, ate "traditional" Caribbean food, and

¹⁹In the 1998 national elections in Guyana, the American-born wife of former Prime Minister Chedi Jagan won amidst allegations of race baiting. She was strongly supported by the Indo-Guyanese but did not seem to take sides during the riots which took place before and after the election.

attended Caribbean schools or were taught by teachers from the Caribbean. Other Caribbean leaders readily accepted Panamanians as part of the larger Caribbean immigrant society. When asked why Panamanians were considered part of the Caribbean, many agreed that Panamanians have similar cultural traits. One commented that, "Sometimes when a Panamanian talks, you don't know he is not a Jamaican. The only way you might know he is not Jamaican is that he sometimes uses Jamaican old-time words."

Several Panamanian and non-Panamanian leaders remarked that Panama was the first place that allowed for the development of a more encompassing "Caribbean" identity. One pointed out that his family, who played a central role in his development, represented approximately five Caribbean countries. His fraternal grandfather was from St. Lucia, and grandmother from Barbados. His maternal grandmother was from Jamaica and grandfather from Grenada but lived for many years in Trinidad.

Leaders' Views on the Caribbean Community in New York City

Several questions were asked to determine how the community leaders viewed the community which they serve and to get a sense of how they define the notion of a

"Caribbean identity." These questions include the following:

1. How and why they became active in the Caribbean community in New York City and the types of activities they have been involved with?
2. How have their impressions of other Caribbean nationals changed since migrating to New York City?
3. Under what circumstances do they employ their national, regional, and racial identity?
4. Where are they most likely to associate with immigrants from their own country, and other Caribbean immigrants?
5. What is the most serious problem facing the Caribbean community, how

might it best be solved, and how much would various politicians be willing and/or be able to help solve the problems of the Caribbean community?

The responses to these questions were varied and situational. As members of social, political and cultural organizations serving the Caribbean community, all the leaders agreed that they were active in the Caribbean community. They also pointed out that their levels of activities varied over the years. Many made mention of the fact that their levels of activities have waxed and waned over the years. During the late 1980s and early 1990s these leaders were very active in the community as opposed to the 1970s. Many organizations were being formed at this time, including The Caribbean Women's Health Association, the Caribbean American Chamber of Commerce and Industries, and the Caribbean American Media Association, among others. They were actively protesting or supporting the United States involvement in Grenada, Panama, and Haiti. At the local and national level, they were involved with election campaigns of Jesse Jackson, David Dinkins, and a number of other Black local leaders. These local leaders were trying to unseat White incumbents in what has now become predominantly Caribbean areas, especially in the Flatbush/East Flatbush section of Brooklyn and the southeast section of Queens. While they remained currently active in the community, they expressed paradoxical signs of hope and ambivalence. They are hopeful because the Caribbean community is increasing in size and is increasingly being recognized by leaders within and outside the community as a force in New York City politics. They are also ambivalent because the residents of the community are not becoming citizens and registering to vote in the numbers that would make the community become an effective force in New York City politics.

All the leaders assumed “Caribbean” as their first or second level of identity in New York City, particularly in the social or political setting. This strong social and political identification with the Caribbean community in New York can be attributed to several factors. First, all the leaders have social, professional and political contact, on a daily basis, with immigrants from their own country and other Caribbean immigrants. More than 90 percent of the leaders reported that their close friends were either from their home country or from other Caribbean countries. Another 60 percent of the leaders live and work in the Caribbean communities, and another 40 percent live outside the Caribbean community but work with the community or attend church and other social and cultural activities in the community. It is interesting to note, however, that those from the English-speaking Caribbean tend to socialize with each other, while those from Haiti tend to socialize with other Haitians. Thus, the argument can be made that language serves as an impediment to social interaction. Secondly, the strong political identification might stem from the fact that a majority of these leaders came of age during the period of heightened debate about the failure of the West Indian Federation and the formation of CARICOM, during the mid-to-late 1960s. It was also at this time that the West Indies’ Cricket team received worldwide acclaim. However, it should be noted that this strong sense of Caribbean identity resulting from the above-mentioned factors was more the case for the English-speaking Caribbean than those of the Francophone Caribbean or Circum-Caribbean countries including Panama or Belize.

Despite their strong sense of Caribbean identity, a number of leaders interviewed believed that this is a “newly created” identity. Because of its “newness,” its meaning is

somewhat vague. When asked, “What does it mean when you say Caribbean?” A leader from Guyana replied:

It is an artificial dogma that happens to serve our purpose well, but it is not true. It is not true because when people say Caribbean people are aggressive, Jamaicans are aggressive, Barbadians, Vincentians, and Guyanese are some of the most retiring, self-effacing I have ever met, including myself. Trinidadians are aggressive for another set of reasons, perhaps. I mentioned this to say, the first time I went to Jamaica, I was petrified because all around me I thought a war was about to break out. This was in 1983. I went to the CARICOM heads of government. But I thought I was in the middle of a war zone. People were greeting each other in a manner that would lead me to believe that blows were going to come anytime now. The whole rhythm of the language, the posture, I thought they were going to come to blows. Now Barbados is one of my favorite of all the Caribbean islands. It is not like Jamaica at all. And I usually would refer to it as Caribbean territory because, of course, Guyana and Belize, being part of CARICOM, are not islands, and also we need to figure out what we mean when we say Caribbean.

It could mean so many things, and, quite frankly, I have used it to mean so many different things as a matter of convenience that I really don't know what it means anymore. There are times when it has been expedient to include people from like the Garifuna people in Honduras and Belize, to include Panamanians who are Black. Black Panamanians who worked on the Canal Zone, many of whom are of Jamaican and Guyanese and Barbadian ancestry. To include people from the Dominican Republic, who are Black. Sometimes I have included Haitians and people from Surinam. Now CARICOM includes the Bahamas. I have been to the Bahamas. When I went to the Bahamas, I thought I was in America. They use the American dollar, they talk like Americans, they have values that are very American. I never got the impression for one moment that they were Caribbean in the same sense as when I went to St. Lucia. Now you cannot exclude people from Cuba as part of the Caribbean. I see them as part of the Caribbean, but here again you really can't say truthfully that Cuba Caribbean is the same thing as St. Lucia Caribbean. It is not the same thing. Or that Guyana Caribbean is the same thing as Bahamas Caribbean. Or that Belize Caribbean is the same as Turks and Caicos Caribbean.

This leader further stated that the “Caribbean is a useful device created by the intellectual class within the Caribbean region.” He traced the formation of the “Caribbean identity” back to the post-World-War II period. This period, the precursor to the non-aligned movement brought the Caribbean into a more globalized world polarized between the United States and the Soviet Union. The non-aligned movement left these countries

wanting for an identity beyond that of mere ideology. The non-aligned movement²⁰ brought together countries which had limited cultural, historical, social commonalities, and this made it difficult for the average people of these countries to form more concrete bonds beyond that based on politics. The leader also pointed out that,

The non-aligned movement was a good place, but it was so desperate in its constituent elements that, when I was in Yugoslavia, I did not see anything that led me to believe that there is any sort of common anything with the people in Yugoslavia. This was an ideological alliance, but then you have to start looking at other things. Then there is country like Guyana, which is situated in South America where everybody talking Spanish except you. And moreover our socialization and history points northward to the rest of the Caribbean. So our thinkers came up with the idea. I don't know who and I don't know when. But it was part of the continuum. I think came from the intellectuals going back to the 1940s. People like C.L.R. James and those guys. I think that is where it started. I think it is a useful fiction. It is a necessary fiction. I think it is a fiction that is becoming a reality. I think it is a fiction that is indispensable to the future of the region. Nevertheless, it began as a fiction.

Not only is the identity a new creation but it is being made a reality by such forces of history as globalization, world trade and regionalism. Two of the forty leaders are of the opinion that it is a matter of "economic necessity" for the countries of the region to make the Caribbean identity into a reality. An example of this economic necessity is the recent debate taking place with the World Trade Organization as part of an effort to protect the region's banana industry. The countries of the region are not negotiating as separate banana producing countries, but as a banana producing region, which has the potential to offer more legitimacy at the global level. While it is an economic necessity to identify as Caribbean within the region— in the sense that it is no longer the St. Lucia, Dominica, or

²⁰The non-aligned movement was created in the 1970s as a response to the Cold War. The developing countries of Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean agreed to remain outside of the conflict between the United States and the former Soviet Union, so as not to serve as pawns in these conflicts.

Jamaica banana industry but the “Caribbean” banana industry, it seems as though it is more of a political necessity to identify as Caribbean in New York City. This political necessity becomes apparent, as one leader stated, when asked her views on New York City politics in general:

I feel that if you are silent you cannot make an impact, and your vote counts, and you should let other people know what their rights are, and they can make a difference. If a million people cast their vote, that’s a million votes. So if we understand the importance of each one casting a vote, or each one expressing an idea, then it will go places. We can’t sit back and say that if we say anything, there will be retribution, people will get back at you. I always believe what is your motive when you say something, and if your motive is clean people will respect you.

Leaders’ View on New York City Politics

All of the forty leaders interviewed actively participate in politics at the local, state, and national level. Their levels of involvement range from spending more than 60 percent of their time either talking about politics, running for office or being elected to office.

Although the leaders interviewed were active in politics, they have varying opinions of the state of New York City politics. When asked “How do you view New York City politics in general,” the majority described it as “corrupted,” “back scratching,” “back stabbing,” and “racist.” They also saw New York City politics as being dominated by Whites, mainly Italians, Irish, and Jews. While they saw politics in a negative light, all regardless of age, gender, nationality and/or educational background said that it is necessary for Caribbean immigrants to participate in politics. They unanimously agreed that there is a direct relationship between economic and political power, and those with economic power often controlled, directly or indirectly, the political process. As one leader stated:

I think that the people who get the attention in New York City politics are not

seriously interested in confronting the problem, solving the problems that affect the people. They are interested in personal political advancement and sound bites.

One of the leaders interviewed saw himself a power broker between the old guard—those who in favor of maintaining the status quo of race politics in New York City by arguing that Caribbean immigrants are a politically party of the larger African American community, and the political entrepreneurs—those who wish to represent the community as a distinct political entity, separate and detached from the other ethnic groups vying for a piece of the political pie (Kasinitz 1992:163). During the late 1960s to mid 1980s this leader worked with the old guard, particularly those who supported the idea of Caribbean immigrants identifying solely as Blacks, and the political elites in New York City politics. At that time, the seat of power in New York City Black politics had just shifted from Manhattan to Brooklyn and was dominated by the likes of Shirley Chisholm, Al Vann, and Wesley MacDonald Holder, although the latter, a Guyanese, was never formally elected to office. As this leader noted:

I worked intricately in that [electing Blacks to office] as a Black person. That is the point that I was trying to make. I worked in terms of the power play . . . we worked with them so that we could start calling the shots [once they got in]. Working with that group, we were able to say that here in Crown Heights, Flatbush, that is ours. Let's start running people for it. It is Caribbean (emphasis added).

Both the old guard and the African American politicians objected to the new entrepreneurs staking claims on these heavily populated Caribbean districts as theirs to win in elections. These new entrepreneurs were often accused by Wesley MacDonald Holder, one of the deans of Brooklyn's Black politics, of balkanizing Brooklyn's politics. Although these entrepreneurs ran the risk of being ostracized by the larger Black community, they

nonetheless played politics under the guise of “you scratch my back, I scratch your back” to get Caribbean immigrants elected to office.

In 1989, the New York City Charter Revision, expanded the Council from 35 to 51 seats and reconfigured the election districts. The Caribbean political entrepreneurs were able to realize their dreams. From several accounts of Caribbean and non-Caribbean members of the Redistricting Commission, the growing size and potential influence of the Caribbean community was taken into consideration. In addition, several Caribbean leaders lobbied for a “Caribbean” seat in the City Council. It is important to note that this form of “ethnic” politics was being played out in other areas of the city as well, particularly in the densely populated Dominican community in Washington Heights and the Chinese community in Chinatown.

Twenty-two of those interviewed believed that those areas, where the majority of immigrants reside, should have political representation from members of that community. When asked whether anyone from outside the community would or could represent the community effectively, they pointed to the fact that the Caribbean community has the numbers, especially in Brooklyn, to elect someone from the community. Furthermore, they believed that others from outside the community might not be as sensitive to the needs of the community, particularly as it related to its immigration needs and the relationship between the New York Caribbean community and the societies in the Caribbean. The views expressed by one leader, who describes himself as a political consultant, supports this belief:

Personally speaking for me, I wanted to see a Caribbean representative in some capacity in the city as a springboard for greater participation for our people. Because

before, Caribbean people have always been involved in the political life of the city but they have never done it from a Caribbean perspective, that is to say, identify as a Caribbean. They identify as just Black American period. Whether it be the Fox, Stockely Carmichael, whether it be the Patterson, Sutton, or the Farrell.

Another leader when asked if a candidate other than someone of Caribbean origins would not be able to effectively represent the Caribbean community, replied,

I don't see any contradiction in that. I don't see any Chinese representing the Jewish community. There is a big exception with Fujimori in Peru, but that is a whole different dynamics. But you have Irish for Irish, Caribbean for Caribbean that is a part of New York Metropolitanism. We have Little Italy, who runs Little Italy? We have Chinatown, who runs Chinatown? We have Caribbean Town and we should be running it. It is our community. It is only fair. It is only right. As a matter of fact, it is the American way.

While more than 50 percent of the leaders interviewed recognized that their feelings about New York City politics, negatively or positively, affect their levels of participation, all recognized the importance of the ballot box. In fact, more than thirty of the forty leaders have been registered voters for more than five years and have voted regularly in the city, state and national elections. Only four of the forty leaders were not yet citizens but are in the process of becoming naturalized. One leader, from St. Vincent, who is currently a member of a "left of center" Black nationalist organization noted that he would not readily participate in such "formal" political activities as voting because it only served to put those in office who are not serving the people. Another leader, a Jamaican, who holds a prominent university position and heads an organization of Caribbean professionals, said he has no intentions of becoming a citizen. He remarked:

I thought about it. But there is no plan at the moment. I don't have that zeal . . . even with the new immigration laws, I have thought about it as a matter of securing myself, but even with that I am still hesitating.

The reason those four are reluctant to become citizens and take part in such

“formal” political processes, as voting, can be attributed to several causes. First, both leaders do not have a strong Caribbean identity. In the case of the Jamaican, he continues to identify strongly as a Jamaican. However, in some political settings, especially those issues affecting the community at large, he does identify as Caribbean.

The second factor which can be attributed to this ambivalence toward New York City politics stems from the fact that the Jamaican leader became disillusioned by politics in Jamaica. He was deeply involved in the People’s National Party (PNP) prior to migration in the late 1970s. It was during that time that Jamaica, under PNP’s leadership, experienced the highest levels of political unrest. When asked about his general feelings about New York City politics, one Jamaican stated that:

My general feelings about politics on a whole tend to reflect how I feel about New York City politics. Politics as I have seen and experience tend to serve a few rather than the masses. In many respects [politics] tend to be very exploitative.

A further probe of whether they thought that their feelings about New York City politics impacted their level of participation, both leaders agreed that their feeling did affect their levels of participation. The Vincentian leader noted that:

Well certainly. If I have a feeling about something, it will affect the way that I respond to it. For one thing I am not an American citizen and can’t vote, but even if I were an American citizen, I don’t see anyone in the political establishment that I would vote for anyway for the same reason. I don’t think that they adequately present the interest of the people.

Suffice to say that this strong level of racial and national identity, and low level of Caribbean identity, as well as and low levels of political participation is more of an anomaly than the norm among the leaders of the Caribbean community in New York City.

The question, “When you are involved in political activities in New York City, do you identify by race, ethnicity, or by other characteristics?” obtained responses which support the argument that Caribbean immigrants have multilayered identities which are dominated by race, issues, and ethnic identity. Twenty of the leaders said that they identify by race and ethnicity (Caribbean) when they are involved in politics, fifteen identify by issues, two Jamaicans (including the one who consistently identifies as Jamaican), and one Guyanese said that they identify by their nationality when they are involved in New York City politics. Two leaders gave no responses.

In highlighting how issue-based identity and racial identity are shaped, one nurse puts it succinctly:

If I am speaking on behalf of the Black community I am going to do that, or the Black nurses, or the Caribbean nurses, or Caribbean people. I go from my experience, I make my experience guide what I am about to say. I don't sit down and say things such as a Black woman from the Caribbean. I guess sometime I might say as a Black nurse because that is the issue and I can speak to now. So I don't know that my political thoughts separate out very clearly, but they tell me that there is no way that you can get away from race.

A Haitian community activist, stated that:

When I am involved in politics, I am involved as a community member, meaning that anyone who lives in this area benefit from it. When we are talking about schools, the type of issues that we raise are not Haitians issues; they are community issues. More schools, more text books, more security, get rid of the drug dealers. It goes beyond the Haitian community. I go beyond race. I never really think of myself as Black when I am doing something. That is not the first thing that comes to mind. The first thing that comes to my mind is that this needs to be done; can I do it? Whom can I get to do it? Whether it is Haitian, Latino or Black.

And another leader, emphatically stated that his identity, when involved in the politics of New York City, is based solely on issues. For him the main issues of concerns

are immigration and political empowerment. According to this leader:

Politics to me has to deal with power, and I don't equate power and color. Some colors may have the power but politics is a matter of the art of the possible. The art of trying to get policies to meet some expected needs, to respond to some anticipated goals, to satisfy some sort of need. When that is done, one has used politics as a vehicle to meet that need. That is the bottom line. Color is like money. Now in terms of coalition politics in New York City, given its cultural mosaic and diversity, given the Italian- American, Jewish- American, Asian-American communities, we have a whole different dynamics that we don't see elsewhere. And in terms of building coalition, we have to jump in that. Not based on race but based on common grounds. I formed a group called the New York Citywide Consortia for the Empowerment of Immigrant Communities. It has Caribbean-Americans, Greek- Americans, Chinese-Americans, and it is a coalition around immigration issues. We meet four times per year. I am the chairperson of that. The literature and resources that we develop in the Caribbean American community to do citizenship are used by the Greek-Orthodox community in Long Island City. When anybody presses the anti-immigration button, we have an immigrant constituent base to chop their hands off. That is what this group has in common. So it not just what Caribbean people are in their local community, but immigrants around the city are organizing based on a common ground. I also work with the New York Immigration Coalition. We had a big campaign to Albany to lobby for more resources for immigrants.

With the exception of immigration, such issues as political empowerment are also of concern to the African American community. However, from the interview with this leader, it can be gleaned that political empowerment of the Caribbean community might come at the expense of Black political empowerment. For this leader, Black political empowerment does not translate to Caribbean political empowerment because it is felt that Blacks, over the years have become insensitive to the needs of the Caribbean community. These needs include but are not limited to immigration, accessing better public education, and United States' foreign policy in the Caribbean region. If Caribbean leaders believe that Black political empowerment does not mean Caribbean political empowerment, it is likely that Blacks leaders feel that Caribbean political empowerment does not mean Black empowerment. This is evident in the ongoing dispute between Clarke and African

American members of Community Board 14 in Flatbush. Foster, a member of the board, who ran against Clarke in 1993, argued that the members appointed by Clarke "do not vote on behalf of people of African American descent" (Gambaredello 1993: 27).

Involvement in Home Country Politics

Fifteen of the forty were involved in political activities of their home country prior to migration. Of these fifteen all continue to maintain a strong national identity, but only five of them continue to be politically involved in their home country. The involvement does not include direct political involvement such as voting or running for office, but more along the lines of providing financial support to political campaigns and hosting government officials on their visits to New York City.

Only two of the forty leaders interviewed met regularly, in a consulting capacity, with government officials from countries other than his/her own. Of the two, one is a founder and director of the largest immigrant services organization serving the Caribbean community. The other is a leader of one of the largest community-based organizations addressing issues of women's health, AIDS, and immigration. Both leaders travel extensively throughout the Caribbean to meet with heads of states and other government officials to discuss matters pertaining to their organization.

The recent changes in the immigration and naturalization laws have helped to increase the number of deportees back to the Caribbean. The Caribbean governments are now seeking the assistance of Caribbean leaders in the United States, especially those providing social services in the Caribbean communities, to deal with the social issues of the

deportees. The leader of the immigration service organization advises these governments and the United States Immigration and Naturalization Services on matters relating to deportations, family reunification and other immigration matters.

Both leaders expressed strong feelings about their Caribbean, racial, and national identities and participated regularly in New York City politics. Both recognized the importance of participating in the politics of the host and sending societies as a means of political empowerment. They are of the belief that by becoming citizens and voting in the United States, Caribbean immigrants can assist their home country. The assistance would come in the form of a voting block to influence the domestic and foreign policies in the United States, as they relate to the Caribbean community in general. Five of the forty leaders made reference to the fact that the failure of NAFTA²¹ parity for the Caribbean, and the United States' attempt to take away preference for Caribbean bananas being imported by the European community, are directly linked to the limited political influence of the Caribbean community in the United States.

Although these two leaders have a strong sense of Caribbean identity, the leader from Jamaica only recently--since migrating--began to view himself as a "Caribbean person." Prior to migration, this leader's interaction and identification with other Caribbean nationals came as a result of his involvement in the PNP. The social democratic ideologies espoused by the party during the 1970s sought to link governments of the region

²¹NAFTA agreement signed between Canada, the United States, and Mexico to increase trade among these countries. This would be achieved through the elimination of tariffs, quotas, and import fees on goods trading between these countries. This agreement also removed restrictions of investment capital. The Caribbean countries were not included in this agreement and the heads of government of the Caribbean lobbied for NAFTA parity which was denied by Congress.

with similar political outlooks, not necessarily from the point of view of forging a “Caribbean” consciousness, but more so from a larger international political outlook. It was not until his migration to New York and his participation in the Jamaican community, through such groups as the Jamaican Progressive League and the National Association of Jamaican Service Organizations (NAJASO), an umbrella organization of all the Jamaican voluntary groups in the United States, that he adopted a more-encompassing Caribbean identity. When asked why he identified as a Caribbean, and what led him to be involved in the community, he replied:

I am very active in the Caribbean community. I was first active in the Jamaican community through the Jamaican Progressive League and NAJASO. My patriotism led me to be involved. I became involved in the Caribbean community as a matter of strategy. Because in unity there is strength. In numbers there is strength. In number we are not significant from a Jamaican perspective and again it comes back to the fact that we are indeed our brothers’ keepers, because we have so many similarities.

On the other hand, the leader from Panama continued to express a strong Caribbean identity even before migration. While in Panama, the identity was referred to as “Antillanos” or Antilleans which denote Panamanians from the West Indies. According to this leader, an Antillean can be clearly spotted by his/her Hispanophone first name and Anglophone surname. This identity was nationally bound but came from the circum-Caribbean region and was more common among the second generation Caribbean immigrants. Because of the frequency of intermarriages, the second generation did not necessarily identify with the homeland of either of his/her parents but created an identity which was a coalescence of their parents’ past. It can be argued that the Caribbean identity for this Panamanian leader also increased upon migration. This is evidenced by the frequent reference, by the leader, to the need for Caribbean immigrants to claim political

and economic power as a group because they have now reached a critical mass.

Leaders Identifying with African Americans

Of the forty leaders interviewed, thirty-two responded that when they are with African Americans, they identify as Black. In many instances, these thirty-two individuals assumed additional identities depending on the context. The three East Indians, one Haitian, a Guyanese, two Jamaicans, and a Vincentian are the exception. Those who did not use a racial identity when among African Americans identified by class, based on their income and/or education, or political outlooks. For example, two leaders who have been influenced by the socialist ideology which emphasizes a class-based struggle to overcome oppression, identify as working class when dealing with African Americans. According to these leaders, race downplays the possibility of arriving at a workable solution for the problems plaguing the disenfranchised people. As one leader noted, “. . . and when you are talking about social issues in terms of solution, you got to go beyond race and think that’s how I see things through the lense of class. It makes a lot more sense” It is interesting to note that this individual also identifies by class when he is among people of European ancestry, Latinos, when he is at work, and in his neighborhood. The Jamaicans and Haitians use their national identity when they are among African Americans. One Jamaican, who consistently emphasizes his “Jamaicaness,” identified as Jamaican and as Caribbean when he is among African Americans. However, when he is among Whites, he identified as Caribbean. He uses this identity as a form of defense because most Whites, who are ignorant of Jamaica or have traveled there as tourist, would ask questions about

Jamaica. According to this leader, “It is easier to say that you are Caribbean and cut the conversation rather than get into a whole set of discussion.” One Haitian leader noted:

I am using all three identities at the same time. Race is Black, ethnic group is Haitian and nationality is a citizen of this country. I am a US national of Haitian background. Because I have an accent which automatically separates me from African American born here.

The general use of a racial identity when these leaders are among African Americans stems from two factors. First, many believed that because Caribbean immigrants and African Americans share the same physical characteristics, and some of the same problems, it is not necessary to separate and be distinct from the larger group. As one leader noted:

Well they [African Americans] would know that I am Trinidadian, and I would tell them. When you are with a group of people and you are the minority you fit in with the majority, you don't try to stand out. But if something comes up where you have to identify, then you will. So if you are with a group of African Americans you fit in and deal with their problems, their issues, because their issues are also ours. Whatever they benefit from, we also benefit.

Further inquiry to understand why this leader felt this way revealed that he recognized that civil rights leaders such as Martin Luther King marched on behalf of African Americans and whatever rights were won for African Americans were automatically given to Caribbean immigrants because they are seen by Whites and by African Americans as part of the larger African American community. As one of the three Haitian activists commented:

Other see me as African America because your skin color determines who you are in this country. The moment you are Black, you are African American. It is only when you start speaking and you have an accent they realize that you were not born in this country but at the same time you are still Black. The second thing is that the category that they identify you when you are filing a paper are doing something, the race identity is the always the second question after you name and address. So you begin

to develop a sense of who you are also through all these little things that happen all the time.

In addition to being placed with African Americans, the leaders understand that their concerns or problems intricately linked them with the larger African American community. A female leader from Jamaica stated that:

When I am with African Americans I don't have to bring up the fact that I am Jamaican. They know by my accent. If I have to say where I am from, I am from Jamaica. And hopefully, if we are doing something together it becomes race. Because as I said, most time, unfortunately, whether I want to acknowledge it or not, most of us have the same common concerns. We are concerned about where we live, we are concerned about the type of services we get. If I were a White woman and I have the progress that I have made, I would not live here [in this neighborhood]. If I go today to apply for certain housing, in certain neighborhood, until I show them my pay stub, they still would want to say that I can't live there. Because they look at me and assume that I cannot afford it. So when I click with other African Americans, it is definitely because there are some common concerns as Black people, and we want to make a difference.

It is important to note that the identity that Caribbean immigrants assumed when among African Americans must be viewed within the context of which these two groups interact. According the forty leaders most of their interaction with African Americans takes place within a professional setting, within the work place, at rallies and demonstrations, at political meetings, and community groups. From the responses of the leaders, the interaction between African Americans and themselves, at the work place and in a professional setting, is usually cordial. This is based on the fact that more than 65 percent or twenty-seven leaders who responded to the question, "How would you describe your relationship with your African American co-workers?" described their relationship as cordial or good.

It is very rare that these two groups interact at social functions such as weddings,

funerals, or parties. It is also rare that they interact with African Americans in their neighborhoods. The interaction is also limited within the church setting. The majority of the leaders who attended church were Anglican or Catholic. This religious adherence is another carry-over from colonial rule. In the case of the Anglophone Caribbean, the British religious customs, as dictated by the Anglican, prevailed, while in the Francophone and Hispanophone Caribbean, the Catholic church prevailed. These churches did not draw many converts from the African American population. There were other denominations which existed in the Caribbean which did not gain a strong hold among African Americans. The Church of God, Pentecostal, and the Seventh-Day Adventist are examples of some of these churches which drew large following in the Caribbean, but not among African Americans. In addition to the different type of churches that were established by Caribbean immigrants in New York City, the churches that had a large African American population during the 1960s and 1970s have seen a significant change in the population. As a result, Allen African Methodist Episcopalian in Queens, St. Mark's Methodist and Grace Reform in Brooklyn and St. Luke's Episcopal in the Bronx have more than 60 percent of their membership from the Caribbean. The increase in the number of Caribbean parishioners is the direct result of the increase in the Caribbean population in these neighborhoods and a decline in the African Americans population.²²

The interaction between the Caribbean leaders and African Americans is usually at the professional or work-related level, and majority of the leaders are in professions which

²²The figures from the 1990 census show that there was a decline in the African American population in several Brooklyn and Manhattan neighborhoods. This decline was not noticeable in Queens.

seek to provide mainly social services to the community. Thus, an argument can be made that the good relationship that exists between the two is out of the mutual interest of getting much-needed services for their communities. Some leaders remembered that this was not always the case.

In the 1960s, particularly those who migrated to New York as preteens, were harassed by their classmates and called such names as “coconut” or “monkey chasers.” Two of the leaders who experienced this noted this is no longer the case. The acceptance of Caribbean immigrants by the larger African American society is due, in part, to the large influx of Caribbean immigrants, particularly in the 1980s. In addition, there is the perception by the wider society that Caribbean immigrants have done “well” in socioeconomic and political terms. Furthermore, their culture as expressed in the music, food and general life, has become mainstream.

A more telling tale of the Caribbean immigrants view of the African American community is revealed in the leaders responses to the question, “What does it mean to be a Black person in New York City?” In responding to this question, all forty leaders, including the East Indians, identified strongly with African Americans. They recognized the fact that being Black in New York City is rife with struggles against discrimination and racism. By describing what it is like to be Black in New York City, the leaders placed themselves with the larger African American community primarily because the larger society, especially Whites identify them by race. Their comments were based on their personal experience as well as that of other Caribbean immigrants and African Americans. The comments of these leaders capture the essence of being Black:

It means first you are discriminated against on several things. Sometimes in a very subtle way. It means that you get the lowest jobs. It also means that you are being constantly harassed by the police. In Black neighborhoods people feel occupied by the police. In White neighborhoods, they feel that they are being protected by the police. This is based on my experience and others, mostly people that I am working with.

Another leader, a lawyer and former politician, also voiced similar concerns, although he thinks that these problems are slowly dissipating:

I think it is no longer a problem. I think that Black folks are such an intrinsic part of the landscape of New York that identifying as a Black is no longer regarded as something exceptional. I think that most people identify as Black or White in New York and there is a recognition that nearly half of the population of New York is either Black or Latino and the other half White. So it is very easy to have that identification. This is largely the experience of others and me. In practicing law, I was aware of the fact that most of the victims of police brutality were Black or Latino. Most of the people who committed these acts are White. Look at the Louima incident. There were four White officers, and the victim happens to be Black. That is always the case with police brutality. I had an incident the other day. I went to pick up my daughter; she goes to a predominantly White school and she had a play date with one of the students from the school. I went to the apartment building and a Black man opened the door. He said, "Wait a minute, who are you?" I was outside, so I said, "Look first of all please allow me to come into the lobby and explain who I am. You are keeping me out in the cold here, asking me to identify myself." Then I asked if it was a White man if he would do the same. He starts to say that it is not a Black thing or White thing. This is a Black doorman. But I know he sees me as a Black man, a stranger coming to rob this place or give trouble. Believe me, I know that's what he was thinking. He sees me as a Black man, a threat, so he has to keep me outside in the cold to identify myself. So you are aware of those feelings. It is not stated, but it exists.

The comments from the political consultant revealed similar sentiments, but he is somewhat hopeful:

To be a Black person in New York means that you carry the added burden of all facing the same discrimination that is heaped up on Black Americans, and it is just something that I feel that you cannot let it overcome you. More likely you should use it to your advantage because it does open doors, it just that are you able to take advantage? For example, some campaigns need Blacks, they cannot survive without them. But more likely they are token blacks with menial jobs, and if elected officials, Black elected officials, have qualified people, they can place them in those jobs. So I just think it can be an advantage. We now have numbers as

Blacks, and I am quite proud of being Black. I don't wish to be anything else.

One leader, a political entrepreneur who is aspiring to run for office in the 2001 New York City Council election, readily identifies as Black but not necessarily based on his own inclinations but those of the White society. As he states:

Many a time we want to identify ourselves, of course, as Caribbean. There is nothing wrong with that. There are times when you have to identify yourself first as a Caribbean. But we must be very careful not to distance ourselves too far from our brothers. Our African American brothers. And so there are so many histories that affect Black people no matter where they are from. Whether you are from the Caribbean, or from African or whatever, you see I think it is in our best interest to see us as Black people in America because that is how White America [see us]. First of all, they see things in Black and White and so it is important that you hold that identification very, very close in terms of priorities, especially in politics.

Identifying with Latinos and Whites

It can be argued that the Caribbean racial identity is shaped by two forces, internal and external to the community. Internally, Caribbeans assume a racial identity because of their close residential and social proximity with African Americans. On the other hand, the White community, which is external to the Caribbean community, helps shape the Caribbean racial identity by tacitly grouping them with the larger African American community. This is echoed in several statements. Some of these statements include phrases such as, "White community sees me a Black," "Whites only see you in terms of Black and White, and if don't look like them then you are Black ," or Whites don't know the difference between the various islands; they just see you based on the color of your skin." This imposed, external identity results in all of the forty leaders assuming a racial identity when dealing with Whites. Five leaders identified on the basis of race and ethnicity (Caribbean), but none used their national identity when they were among Whites. Their

interactions with Whites are very limited. The little interaction that takes place is usually done in a professional setting.

Caribbean leaders also have infrequent contacts with Latinos. However, the discussion of Caribbean and Latinos must be done from several points of view, not one that is based only on race, but on language and culture. Existing research on immigrant communities in New York City makes a distinction between the immigrants from English and Spanish-speaking Caribbean countries. This distinction is adequate based on the fact that these two groups live in different neighborhoods, speak a different language, have limited social interaction, and differing cultural outlooks.

When asked where and when they are most likely to associate with Latinos, a majority of the leaders noted that it is within a professional setting and at rallies and demonstrations. During one period of this research there were several rallies and demonstrations around the issue of police brutality and immigration. These issues, especially police brutality, affect the larger African American and Latino community.

Although there is limited interaction, social and otherwise, the Caribbean leaders show some affinity with Latinos when they are in their presence. When asked how they identify when they are among Latinos, twenty of the leaders said that they identify by ethnicity (Caribbean) and race (Black/African or African American).

The ethnic identity comes to the fore when the leaders interact with Latinos because there is a sense of historical and cultural commonalities. The leaders recognized that Latinos, particularly those from the Caribbean, shared a history of European occupation, colonization, and slavery. Countries such as Haiti, Trinidad, and Jamaica have a historical

relationship with Latinos. In the case of Haiti, laborers migrated to the Dominican Republic to work on the sugar plantations. For a ten-year period, in the early part of the 19th century, Haiti controlled the Dominican Republic. Similarly, Trinidad's close proximity to oil-rich Venezuela provides for a constant stream of Trinidadian workers to the oil fields. During and after the enslavement period (1838-1898) there was a constant stream of workers from Jamaica to Cuba. In the 1970s, the Manley government of Jamaica had close ties with Castro's Cuba, thereby encouraging a bilateral flow of labor and technology among these two countries. In addition, the wider Caribbean sent workers to the Canal Zone and the banana plantations of Central America. This resulted in frequent contacts with Latinos of the region.

A Guyanese leader recognizes the cultural and historical connections between the English and Spanish-speaking Caribbean immigrants. He tries to impose this identity on them by telling them that they are from the Caribbean. As he stated:

I always tell Latinos that they are part of the Caribbean because most Latinos I meet are Puerto Ricans, so I always tell them that they are from the Caribbean. When you look at the food that they eat, it is very similar to what you get in the Caribbean because of the climate. When I am with Latinos, I identify as Caribbean.

The racial identity which the Caribbean leaders adopt when they are among Latinos is influenced by the notion of color, and arguably, a holdover from their sending societies. In the Caribbean there are several categories to place an individual based on skin color, facial features, and hair texture. This is an attempt to distinguish the mulattoes (those of mixed race) from those of pure Europeans and African bloodlines. In America, these categories do not apply. Instead, the term Hispanic was created to include those

individuals who are from Latin America, Central America, and the Caribbean, regardless of their phenotype.

Although the Hispanic category is widely used, there is an apparent struggle among some Caribbean leaders to place Latinos in the same racial (Black) category. As the Guyanese leader of mixed race noted:

Hispanic, we are very closely linked. And even in the Hispanic community you will find that they have their discrimination also with light-skinned Hispanic and Black Hispanic or straight hair, light-skinned and a Black Hispanic. If you look at Channel 47, which is a Hispanic station, you hardly see Blacks as mainstream into their programming. The singing groups are 99.9 percent White or light-skinned.

A Trinidadian female leader, who has had some negative experiences with Latinos noted that her identity when she is among Latinos varies. However, this variation is based on race as she describes it:

It depends on who they are. I find that some of them are more convoluted than we could ever be. Some of them . . . I've good Latino friends in New York who can accept you. They know you're from the islands, and they accept you for who you are. And then, of course, you have Latinos who go through their color shade nonsense, and I just leave it alone. I don't have to convince them of who I am, and I have learned to allow people to be who they think they want to be.

Even when English-speaking and Spanish-speaking immigrants live in the same neighborhoods, East New York, Brooklyn, for example, the issues of language and color prevent these two groups from forming a common bond. In relating her experience in the early 1970s in East New York, one female leader from St. Vincent said that she identified by race when among her Dominican neighbors because they were not familiar with St. Vincent, and had little connection with the wider Caribbean although they were from the region. In addition, the Dominicans distance themselves because they were of a lighter

hue.

A leader, who served as advisor to the two Caribbean city council members noting the interplay of ethnicity and color among Latinos, paints a vivid picture of the relationship between Latinos and Caribbeans, one which is based primarily on race rather than issues:

There were times when Latino meant being Puerto Rican in New York. By virtue of being Puerto Rican you, are in a class by yourself. But you were a citizen, you spoke a foreign language, you lived in the projects. Whatever that meant. But then, now we have a situation where the Latino community has a very sizable representation for people from places in Dominican Republic. That is in New York because in the southwest Latinos mean Mexicans and in Florida, Latino means Cuban. But now in New York City you have a very large Dominican community to the extent that they even have a Dominican councilmember in Washington Heights. Moreover, all of these Dominican people are realizing that they are Black people because you have some light-skinned, but the Dominicans that I see look like you and me. You remember when they had the Happy Land fire. You never saw so many Black people speaking Spanish from Honduras. In Crown Heights, a lot of these people who are passing themselves off as Caribbean, they are from Panama. This is part of the discussion of what happens in the year 2000 when they do the census and 2001 when they do the redistricting. In the same way of the emergence of the Dominican community in Washington Heights took everybody by surprise, Nobody knew that those people were there. They just say Black people and they thought that they were part of the larger Black community although they were talking Spanish. Nobody really paid them any mind. And nobody realized that there were so many of them. Because there are whole parts of this city that nobody pays any attention to. Places like Brownsville. Back to the Latino thing. It depends. If I am with a light-skinned Latino who think that their shit doesn't stink. I identify myself as Black. If I am with other Blacks, who are Latinos, I identify as Caribbean. In other words, there is a level of crossover. There is a level of crossover where I could be talking to somebody from the Dominican Republic, from Honduras, Nicaragua, who looks just like you or me. To say Black would be ridiculous. To distinguish I would say I am from the Anglophone Caribbean.

When you meet somebody that you don't know, and the person has a Spanish last name, skin color would be a part of it. I would listen to the accent to see if the person is Spanish-speaking primarily. That would be one of the primary things. If it is a Black person, I would assume my Anglophone Caribbean posture because that is what would differentiate if it needs to be made. Of course there are other things, such as where you are from. If you are from Cuba, your social realities would be different, and I would factor that in. I have been fortunate to visit most of these countries, and I think I bring a little bit more to it than that.

One leader based her identity on race and occupation (nurse), and another based his identity on class when they are among Latinos. The former, a nurse, stated that she identifies by occupation because she is usually in discussions with or collaborating with members of the group on health-related issues. The latter, influenced by the socialist ideology of class struggles, states that:

By class. Because in my own sense, I have always had a class-based philosophy of life. There are these racial distinctions that are there, that are obvious, but that should not be the primary organizing tool. It should not be the way we think about each other. There are other things that I think that impact on us more so than our race. Whether we are talking about police brutality, education, or housing, these are issues that are a problem for them as it is for us. That is one of the nicer things of living in Harlem, people work together. Black and Latinos, and Puerto Ricans. There were instances where Blacks and Latinos were able to demonstrate some class consciousness.

Leaders' Views on the Caribbean Community

While there is no clear consensus, the majority of the leaders interviewed are of the opinion that the major problems facing the Caribbean communities in New York are related to the lack of unity among its residents, ineffective leadership, insufficient political representation, and immigration policies. Frequency analysis of the responses of the leaders indicates that 35 percent of them believed that lack of unity, disorganization, and factionalism are a major problem in the community. Another 35 percent believed that lack of or ineffective political representation and leadership are a serious problem facing the community. Immigration reforms relating to deportation and withdrawal of benefits to green card holders was viewed by 30 percent to be another serious issue in the community.

When asked what is the most serious problem facing the Caribbean community in

New York City at this time, one leader, who is linked to a major newspaper serving the Caribbean community responded:

Being able to make our numbers count. I think our most serious problem is our inability to unite, inability to take charge. The whole question of insularity. I think our inability to come together and our feeble attempts at unity. These are the most pressing problems facing us here.

An underlying assumption of this comment is that in order for the numbers to count, especially in the political arena where the voters' turnout matters the most, the community must be organized. However, for this to happen, the question of "Caribbean" unity must be addressed first. By implication, the community has to move away from the "insularity" or national identities and embrace a wider Caribbean identity.

Three leaders, a Guyanese East Indian activist, a Haitian community organizer and a Jamaican professional leader agreed, verbatim, that lack of unity and political leadership are serious problems that must be addressed. As the East Indian indicated:

Unity. In that we are still fragmented, I believe that the so-called leaders in the community sometimes use that as a way to keep people divided so they can continue doing what they are doing. Benefitting themselves, that is, in whatever way they can. I believe there has to be a real push to have a genuine unity amongst Caribbean people. I believe there should be a real push to have genuine representation. And when we speak of genuine, I mean where people come first. The interests of people comes first, not profit all the time. I understand all the things about business but business with a human face. Business without exploitation.

From the earlier comments of this leader, the disunity is a result of the insularity of the Caribbean community. The community, it seems, holds on to their individual national identity, and this prevents the group from forming an effective political and/or economic force in New York City. The comments of this leader also leads me to assume that the

leaders are using this sense of disunity for their economic and/or political enhancement. In essence, in order for the leader of the Guyanese community to maintain his/her position as a leader, he/she is unlikely to form alliance with a Jamaican or Haitian group because it would mean conceding power to that group. Since some of the leaders are attempting to maintain their newly-acquired or preserve their former middle class status from their sending countries, it is feasible that they would continue to emphasize their national identity. However, the comments of the majority of the leaders interviewed for this study seem to indicate that they have moved beyond their individual national identity to embrace a wider Caribbean and/or racial identity, while the general population of Caribbean immigrants are still embracing their national identity. Based on Ho's (1994) and Waters's (1994) research, the Caribbean immigrants' attachment to their national identity is an attempt to prevent them from being cast among the population of African Americans who are viewed as second-class citizens. The discussion of the identity formation among general populace in the following chapter will argue whether this is case.

Of the three major problems identified by the leaders, as facing the Caribbean community at this time, it seems as if the immigration issue is the only one that the community and its leadership are willing and/or able to address. In a follow-up question to ascertain the type of problems or issues around which the Caribbean community has united successfully, immigration was cited--overwhelmingly--as the issue that the community has been working to address. It can be argued that immigration is an important issue because of the passage of the 1996 Immigration and Welfare Reform Bills and Anti-Terrorism

Act.²³ In addition, the media serving the community and the wider society have given this topic consistent coverage. Interestingly, immigration is also seen by some leaders as an issue where there needs to be stronger unity. It is believed that the Caribbean community is not united on this issue because the average resident is not informed enough about the provisions of the reform, and ways in which they can lobby decision makers in Washington, Albany, and City Hall to repeal the laws. Ten leaders or 25 percent of those interviewed cited immigration as an issue which has failed to unite the community successfully. The leaders see recent changes in the immigration and naturalization laws as a major problem for the community because it prevents a significant portion of the community from receiving social service benefits from the government. These new laws also call for the deportation of legal residents who have been convicted of a felony. These stringent laws would result in the breakup of families in New York City. Also, added pressure is placed on governments of Caribbean nations to be responsible for deportees who have to be readjusted to the Caribbean societies and are likely to continue their criminal activities once they are deported. The leaders interviewed believe that the general leadership of the community needs to provide the community with the necessary information about the legal changes, and to organize the community so that they can make demands on the elected

²³The 1996 Immigration Act stipulated, among other things that green card holders and undocumented immigrants would not be eligible for Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), Supplemental Social Security Income (SSI) other federally funded social service benefits. The Anti-terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act, signed in to law in 1996 allowed for, among other things, the deportation of immigrants, documented or undocumented, if they were convicted of a felonious crime. Since the passage of this act a number of Caribbean immigrants were deported to the Caribbean. A significant number of these deportees left the Caribbean over twenty years ago and have no familial or other connections to these countries.

officials who represent them to have these laws repealed. Less than 10 percent of the leaders interviewed believed that the community united successfully around the immigration issue. They pointed to the fact that there were a number of Caribbean immigrants who took part in the marches on Washington in 1996. These marches influenced the federal government to give refugee status to the Haitian community. They also made reference to the work being done by the Caribbean Immigrant Services (CIS), the Caribbean Women's Health Association (CWhA), the Caribbean American Family Services, and a number of churches in the community to naturalize immigrants and to assist people with obtaining green cards and other legal documents.

More than 60 percent of the leaders interviewed agreed that the community has successfully rallied around the West Indian American Labor Day Parade on Eastern Parkway in Brooklyn. This event is held annually, on the first Monday in September. This day is traditionally celebrated nationwide in recognition of the labor movement, but for the past thirty years in New York City, the Caribbean community uses this time to showcase their Caribbean culture and heritage. The parade started in Harlem in the late 1950s and received very scant attention from both the Caribbean community and the larger society. In the late 1960s, the event was resurrected on Eastern Parkway. This occurred at the peak of the shift in Caribbean population from Harlem to Brooklyn, and more specifically, from the Bedford-Stuyvesant section to Crown Heights section of Brooklyn. The parade started out as a cultural showcase in the community. However, over the years, with an increase in the Caribbean population and the general attendance at the parade, many politicians and leaders from within and outside the community have seen this as a political opportunity to

influence many of the million plus voters in attendance. In the early 1980s, during Jesse Jackson's quest for the presidency, he and his supporters used the event to conduct a massive voter registration drive. Subsequently, former Mayor Koch, former Governor Cuomo, Giuliani, Reverend Al Sharpton, and others have participated in the parade. In addition to the St. Patrick Day Parade, the Puerto Rican Day Parade, the Caribbean Labor Day Parade is seen as a must if one is running for statewide or citywide office. In conversations with several leaders who are involved with organizing the event, they have resisted all attempts to become politically involved. However, given the prominence of the event--it is now billed as the largest parade in the United States--it is very difficult for the leadership of the West Indian American Day Carnival Committee (WIADCC) to remain apolitical. In addition, leaders from within the community have been calling on the leadership of (WIADCC) to use the organization to stake a claim for political empowerment. When asked about the most serious problem facing the New York Caribbean community at this time in New York City, a leader from the US Virgin Islands noted:

My concern is that the "Lezamases" of the world have not led any new people. [Carlos Lezamas is the head of the West Indian American Carnival Committee] He is not well, but at some point unless there is an infusion of people, we are not going to take it to the next step. In Atlanta [carnival] they are making money, in Miami [carnival] they are making money, Toronto is going through some changes but every year New York loses money. We have to have people to make the change.

Sixty-five percent of the leadership recognized that lack of unity and lack of political representation in the New York City Caribbean community. This is indicative of the leaders' view of the importance of political involvement in the New York City's politics. As discussed above, more than 80 percent of the leaders interviewed noted that

political involvement was important for the advancement of the Caribbean community in New York.

The priority given to the political involvement stems from the belief in the ethnic succession argument put forward by Robert Dahl (1961) and others. At the core of this argument is the belief that at the local level, groups gain access to City Hall when their numbers increase and within a generation (twenty-five to thirty years), are organized to gain political strength to elect members of their own ethnic group into office or into key decision-making positions within city government.

While the popular sentiments among a number of leaders might be echoed in the phrases, "It's our time now because we have the numbers," or "We have to get our people in office now to address our needs." It seems that there is little attention paid to the fact that the Caribbean community is being grouped with the larger African American or Black community and the political and economic advancements being made by the Caribbean community cannot be done independently of the larger Black community.

As suggested by some leaders, there seems to be a very tenuous relationship between the African American and the Caribbean community. The tension might come from the fact that those who have a very strong Caribbean identity and want to see Caribbean immigrants come into political prominence will have to do so at the risk of isolating the African American community. An example of this was made evident in a conversation with a Guyanese East Indian leader referring to the Crown Heights riots of 1991. He said:

Let me give you a perfect example, the young man [Cato] who was killed by the Rabbi. He [Cato] was from Guyana. And it hurts me to see that when it happened

Al Sharpton was the spokesman for the family. Al Sharpton was the spokesman. We should have been there. The Guyanese. The Caribbean people too. I don't understand the family allowing . . . I am not saying that he shouldn't be a voice there but maybe . . . but we [Caribbean immigrants] should have taken that role to really become the lead group.

In a follow-up question to determine whether there was someone among the Caribbean community to assume leadership during this time, the leader reported:

I don't necessarily know. We could. I feel that Una Clarke should have been out there quicker than Sharpton should have, being the most respected person. I believe she is the one of the most respected politicians in the City, on any level. Maybe she would have taken that role. And I'm giving the example only that we should learn from it the next time. Because do we gain the respect as Caribbean people, as a Guyanese young man getting killed, as a Guyanese group, as a Jamaican group? No. We have an Al Sharpton, an American leading it. Not to say it is necessarily bad, because there comes a time when you maybe go with a Sharpton or a Martin Luther King or a Malcolm X, but in a specific situation we [Caribbean] should have been the focus.

These comments suggest that the perception of existing tensions between the Caribbean and African American community is based on political power, access to the seat of power, and sharing the power. In certain cases, the leaders are willing to share power with African Americans. The willingness to share comes from the fact that the leaders recognized that there are certain shared problems such as the poor public educational system, poor housing conditions, police brutality, and debilitating community infrastructures. The Caribbean leaders are of the opinion that in these instances the only way to solve the problems is to join forces with the larger African American community to make demands on the decision makers. It seems as if the leaders believe that issues that are specific to the Caribbean community, require the attention of the Caribbean community leaders, and in many cases this should be independent of the African American community.

These issues include matters relating to immigration and United States/Caribbean foreign policy.²⁴ However, it should be noted that a number of undocumented Caribbean immigrants marry African Americans to obtain their green cards.

Summary

It is clear that among the leaders, there is a clear sense of multilayered identities. Which of these identities comes to the fore depends on the circumstances. In social or cultural settings the leaders assume a national identity. This is due in part to the high levels of social interaction at the national level. In other words, Haitians tend to socialize with other Haitians, Jamaicans are more likely to socialize with other Jamaicans, and Guyanese socialize with other Guyanese.

These high levels of socializing are aided by voluntary organizations, churches and neighborhood settings. There are a number of voluntary organizations which appeal to the immigrants' association with the sending societies. As a result, immigrants are members of the Guyanese Ex-Policeman Association, Harrison College Alumni Association, Friends of Port Maria Association of North America, and Wolmer's Alumni Association of North America. Only those immigrants affiliated with these villages, schools, or professions are likely to become members.

The high level of socializing is also made possible because of past experience in the sending societies. The Caribbean countries, separated by the Caribbean sea, make it

²⁴It should be noted that a number of undocumented Caribbean immigrants marry African Americans to obtain their green cards. Thus, African Americans are directly or indirectly affected by the changes in the immigration laws.

virtually impossible for constant contact among its nationals. While there are some cultural similarities, the various societies have developed social and cultural structures that restrict social interaction among the various nationals. Music offers an example of this cultural divide. Hence Jamaicans prefer Reggae, Trinidadians prefer Calypso, and Haitians have an affinity for Zouk.

At the political level, the leaders tend to have a stronger sense of racial and/or Caribbean identity. The strongest sense of Caribbean identity is borne out at the neighborhood level. Thus, the leaders will call for a Caribbean person to represent the Caribbean neighborhood at the local, state, or national level, assuming that such a person would be more sensitive to needs of the community. At the city, state, or nationwide level, Caribbean leaders are more likely to support a candidate not solely based on his/her race but on the candidate's ability to deliver to the community and his/her stance on various such issues as immigration, police brutality, and economic development. This does not necessarily mean that race is subsumed within the leaders' political identity.

These multilayered identities, influenced by community issues and race, suggest that Caribbean immigrants have the flexibility to effectively maneuver the political landscape by forming coalitions with other groups (dominant or otherwise) that are involved in New York City politics. While race is important for the leaders of the community, the ability to go beyond race is a signal that the Caribbean leadership is on a progressive path as described by Browning, Marshall and Tabb (1997). These authors argued that race is an unreliable factor in forming coalitions. Instead of forming coalitions based on race, they argue that a more likely goal--although not likely to be attainable--is to about effective

political incorporation of minority groups in which “the leaders are able to create and sustain systems of belief, manage conflict of interest, promote interest alliances, and cross society’s racial and ethnic barriers in the interest of a humane vision of the whole society” (Browning, Marshall and Tabb 1997: 274).

This theory breaks down, however, when one considers the relationship between Caribbean leaders and Latinos. From the comments of the leaders, the interaction among these two groups is limited by residential distance, language and race rather than issues. Often, the Caribbean immigrants are at odds with the fact that most Latinos, especially those who are of African phenotypes are identifying as others or Hispanic. It is seen as the Latinos’ attempt to escape the stigma that is ascribed to those who cannot identify by anything other than Black.

Based on the interviews, it can also be summarized that the Caribbean identity, which is emerging or has reemerged, is fairly new, and this identity is being put forward mainly by the elite members or leaders of the community. Although there is a strong sense of Caribbean identity, a number of leaders interviewed are of the opinion that this is a “newly created” identity. Because of the “newness” of the Caribbean identity, the meaning is somewhat vague. Furthermore, this identity seems to serve a very pragmatic purpose and is often used when power of the immediate Caribbean community is contested. This is more evident in politics at the neighborhood level than the politics at the citywide level, which remains largely the domain of contestation for power among African Americans, Whites and Latinos. For example, several leaders believe that a Caribbean should represent those neighborhoods that are predominantly Caribbean in the City Council, the State

Assembly, or in Congress. This is based on the notion of “taxation with representation” and the belief that the Caribbean community has reached the critical mass to elect members of the community to various offices to represent their particular needs. However, they would be more likely to support a Black (Caribbean or African American) candidate for a citywide, statewide, or nationwide office. This was evident by the number of leaders who supported Dinkins during his bid for mayor and Jackson during his bids for the presidency.

This new identity, while it does not exclude race in its definition, serves to set the Caribbean community apart and distinct from the larger African American community. From the point of view of the ethnicity entrepreneurs—those who subscribe to Dahl’s notion of ethnic succession via a plural society—the use of Caribbean identity in this manner is practical and pragmatic because they can become involved in New York City’s politics and establish a stake in the future of the Caribbean community. However, given the fact that citywide politics in New York City remains largely the domain of contestation for power among the races (African Americans, Whites and Latinos), the use of the Caribbean identity becomes impractical. Apart from the belief in taxation with representation and the community reaching the critical mass to elect its members, the use of Caribbean ethnic identity becomes impractical when such key questions are asked: “To whom should the elected official from the Caribbean community be obligated to—their immediate community or the larger community to which they are elected to serve, their party, the larger public interest or the societies from whence they came? In representing the constituents what should matter most, symbolic representation (make the constituents feel included),

representativeness (speaking on behalf of all groups which are affected by a particular issue) or loyalty to political party, or party leader? These questions cannot be answered based solely on race and/or ethnicity.

Chapter 5

Community Residents

Major studies on political participation in the Caribbean immigrant community tend to focus on the elites who are visibly active in politics. Research by Kasinitz (1992), Wilson and Green (1990), and Holder (1981), are examples of these studies. While these studies on the leadership tells an interesting story, the Caribbean leadership often mirrored the leadership of other immigrant communities. These leaders are often from the middle class, well educated, and possess the values and attitudes of their middle-class cohorts of other races and ethnic groups. For example, they are more likely to argue for the importance of political participation as a major avenue for group advancement. They are also more likely to come from a background of activism. Existing research on the leadership of the Caribbean immigrants should not be viewed as fatalistic but should be complimented by research on the general population. An examination of the political, cultural, and social views of the rank and file population, who tend to be less homogenous and less predictable, and comparing them with those of the leadership will serve to highlight the similarities and disjuncture between the two groups. It is for these reasons, among others, that I choose to conduct a comparative analysis of the rank-and-file population and the elite in the Caribbean community in New York City.

A total of 103 residents were interviewed for the research project. Twenty residents were chosen at random from the telephone directories for Brooklyn, the Bronx, and Queens. The telephone numbers were chosen based on the exchanges or the first three digits of the telephone numbers. Each neighborhood has specific exchanges assigned to it.

As a result, it was easy to identify the exchanges for the three focus areas of this study. Another twenty-two residents were chosen based on names submitted by the community leaders. The community leaders were asked to give names of community residents who were not members of their organizations, hold or have held a position or are active in an organization serving the Caribbean community. The leaders were also asked to identify residents who were not from their country of origin or lived in their neighborhood. Subsequent residents were gathered based on snowball sampling. Each of the forty-two initial respondents was asked to give three names of Caribbean immigrants not from their country of birth and who lived within or outside of their neighborhood. Sixty of those names provided by the initial forty-two residents were interviewed.

Similar questions were asked of the residents and the community leaders (See Appendix 3 for residents' survey). The survey gathered data on time of migration, individual ethnic identification, interaction with other Caribbean people prior to and after migration to New York City, and views about issues around which Caribbean immigrants might likely to be united or divided in opinion. In addition, the residents were asked about their views on New York City politics, to identify Caribbean, Black, and White politicians in New York City and to state whether these politicians were effective or ineffective.

Forty residents were from the Flatbush/East Flatbush section of Brooklyn, twenty-five from the Williamsbridge and surrounding areas in the northeast section of the Bronx, and thirty-five from the Cambria Heights, Springfield Gardens, and Rosedale sections of Queens.

It was expected that the general population would fall into the following matrix

depending on (1) levels of political participation, (2) citizenship status, (3) settlement patterns, (4) group with which the general population identifies with, and (5) time of migration. However, the analysis shows that the 103 residents do not fit neatly in this matrix, primarily because of the weak correlation between these variables. The exceptions are that there is a relationship between time of migration and the type of identity used and income/education and identity. The data shows that the longer the residents live in New York City, the more likely they are to develop an ethnic (Caribbean) and/or racial (Black) identity. It also shows that the higher the income the more likely that the individual will adopt a national identity and participate in the politics of the host and sending societies.

Table 9

Matrix of Caribbean Immigrants Identity and Political Participation

Identity Used	Participation in New York City Politics	Participation in Home-Country Politics	Citizenship Status	Length of Stay in New York
Racial	Similar to African American (more likely to be low)	Low to non-existent	Possible (not likely to equate citizenship with low status)	Most likely to have migrated to New York in the 1960s.
National	Low to non-existent (more likely to participate in activities of home country)	Very high	None	Most likely to be a more recent immigrant. Most likely to come from countries where the government instituted programs to encourage strong national pride
Caribbean	High	High	Citizen or more willing to become citizen	Most likely to be a long-term resident
American	Very high (reflective of the middle-class American society)	None	High level of naturalization	Most likely to be a long term resident

Jamaicans were the most represented immigrant group in this telephone survey. Forty-one immigrants declared that they were Jamaicans. Fourteen residents reported that they were from Guyana. Twelve were from Trinidad, eleven from Haiti, and eight from Barbados. There were four residents from Antigua, three from St. Vincent, Grenada, and St. Lucia, respectively, and two from Panama. The distribution of the residents closely mirrors the migration patterns of Caribbeans in New York City. The majority of residents migrated to the United States during the 1970s. Approximately forty-five said that they came during the mid to late 1970s. Thirty-seven reported that they came during the 1980s, while seventeen said they came during the 1960s. One person reported that he came in 1947 and one migrated in 1993. After further probing, it was revealed that many immigrants traveled to other countries before settling New York City. For example, one Bronx woman from Jamaica worked in the Bahamian tourist industry before migrating to the United States. Two immigrants went to Canada before moving to New York, and one lived in England prior to migrating to New York City. It is important to note that in the targeted neighborhoods in Queens and the Bronx, there is a small, yet significant number of immigrants who indicated the United Kingdom as their place of birth. It is safe to assume that, because these neighborhoods are overwhelmingly peopled by Caribbean immigrants, these individuals are also of Caribbean extractions--possibly second-generation Caribbean. However, in Table 10, they were grouped in the "all other immigrants" category because this survey focused on first-generation Caribbean immigrants.

Settlement Patterns

Of the residents interviewed for this research project, forty-eight were from the Flatbush/East Flatbush section of Brooklyn, nineteen were from the Williamsbridge and surrounding areas in the northeast section of Bronx and thirty-six from the Cambria Heights, Rosedale sections of Queens. This breakdown mirrors settlement patterns of Caribbean immigrants in New York City as provided by the New York City Department of City Planning (see Tables 10, 11, and 12).

Table 10

**Immigrant by Selected Neighborhood/ZIP Code of Intended Residents and Country
of Birth
Brooklyn: 1990-1994**

Country of Birth	Flatbush		East Flatbush		Crown Heights		Vendereeveer	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
All Immigrants	12,551	100	9,270	100	11,842	100.0	5,120	100
Jamaica	2,126	16.9	2,529	27.3	2,461	20.8	625	12.2
Haiti	3,193	25.4	1,415	15.3	1,942	16.4	943	18.4
Guyana	1,646	13.1	1,898	20.5	1,236	10.4	790	15.4
Trinidad and Tobago	1,447	11.5	1,254	13.5	1,856	15.7	454	8.9
Panama	392	3.1	134	1.4	310	2.6	75	1.5
Grenada	358	2.9	445	4.8	442	3.7		
Barbados	269	2.1	214	2.3	450	3.8	90	1.8
St. Vincent	183	1.5	262	2.8	314	2.7		
All others	2,937	23.3	1,119	12.1	2,831	23.9	2,143	58.2

Source: *The Newest New Yorkers 1990-1994*. pp. 69-91

Table 11

**Immigrant by Selected Neighborhood/ZIP Code of Intended Residents and Country of Birth
Bronx: 1990-1994**

Country of Birth	Williamsbridge Baychester		Wakefield	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
All Immigrants	3,125	100	4,344	100
Jamaica	1,902	60.9	2,561	59.0
Haiti				
Guyana	139	4.4	317	7.3
Trinidad and Tobago	103	3.3	155	3.6
Panama				
Grenada				
Barbados			61	1.4
St. Vincent				
Dominica	56	1.8	57	1.3
Antigua-Barbuda	50	1.7	89	
All others	875	28.0	1,103	25.4

Source: *The Newest New Yorkers 1990-1994*: 69-91.

Table 12

**Immigrants by Selected Neighborhood/ZIP Code of Intended Residents and Country
of Birth
Queens: 1990-1994**

Country of Birth	Far Rockaway		Springfield Gardens/Rosedale/ Laurelton		Cambria Heights/St. Albans	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
All Immigrants	3,308	100	3,639	100	4,189	100
Jamaica	587	17.7	1,445	39.7	1,935	46.2
Haiti	130	3.9	583	16.0	555	13.2
Guyana	549	16.6	382	10.5	452	10.8
Trinidad and Tobago	158	4.8	216	5.9	405	9.7
Panama						
Grenada						
Barbados			62	1.7	93	2.2
St. Vincent					37	.9
Dominica						
Antigua- Barbuda						
All others	1,422	42.3	1,013	26.2	1,342	17.0

Source: *The Newest New Yorkers 1990-1994*. pp. 69-91

From an analysis of the responses, there were more immigrants in Brooklyn who were citizens, registered voters, and active in the community. However, this might be skewed since this is a small sample with an over-representation of residents from Brooklyn.

Conway and Bigby's (1987) study of residential patterns among Caribbean immigrants confirms this research observation of the settlement patterns of Caribbean immigrants in New York City. These authors, like Massey and Denton (1987), argued that the categorization of Caribbean immigrants by the larger White society resulted in housing discrimination which concentrated Caribbean immigrants in neighborhoods previously settled by African Americans. This was the case with the Caribbean settlement pattern in Harlem during the 1920s to 1940s and in Bedford-Stuyvesant from the late 1940s to the early 1960s. It was not until the late 1970s, with the availability of housing in the middle-class communities of East Flatbush, Canarsie, and Rosedale, that Caribbean immigrants began to create a distinct "Caribbean" enclave community. Housing in these middle-class communities have been made available not due to the "White flight" as was experienced in most inner city communities in the late 1960s and 1970s, but as a result of the movement of the aging of the White population from these neighborhoods to more warmer climates (Conway and Bigby 1987). The creation of these Caribbean ethnic enclaves must not be viewed chiefly from the standpoint of a movement away from African Americans. The creation of these ethnic enclaves occurred at the time when a sizeable portion of middle-class African Americans moved outside of New York City to the more suburban

communities of Virginia, Georgia, and North Carolina.²⁵

Conway and Bigby also showed that immigrants from Haiti, Jamaica, Trinidad, and Guyana were more likely to live in close proximity than with their Spanish-speaking cohorts. According to these authors, immigrants from the English and French-speaking Caribbean in New York City have a 62 percent residential separation index from the Spanish-speaking Caribbean. This is almost as high as the separation index between Whites and Blacks which was shown to be at 86 percent. Conway and Bigby also showed that Haitians have a tendency to live in close proximity to immigrants from the English-speaking Caribbean as opposed to immigrants from Puerto Rico, Cuba, and the Dominican Republic—a country which shares its borders with Haiti. In addition to language, race and historical social developments helped in setting the stage for residential distancing once the immigrants arrived in New York. For example, in the Dominican Republic, under the dictatorship of Trujillo, from 1930 to 1960, efforts were made to redefine race such that the majority of Dominicans, depending on their hair texture and eye color, were redefined not as Blacks but by other racial classification.

A more current study of Caribbean immigrant settlement patterns conducted by Kyle Crowder (1999) also confirms that racial classification, more so than economic opportunities, relegate Caribbean immigrants to predominantly Black communities throughout the New York and New Jersey metropolitan areas. Crowder arrives at this conclusion based on the fact that Caribbean immigrants, like African Americans, are denied

²⁵Mollenkopf, et al. study commissioned by the New York City Council entitled “Hollow In the Middle” provides an analysis of the out-migration of the African American middle class from New York City.

access to comparable White middle-class neighborhoods. However, unlike Conway and Bigby, Crowder further argues that the Caribbean ethnic identity also operates to create distinct Caribbean neighborhoods. These neighborhoods are usually located in the better sections of the predominantly African American communities or near the edge of White middle-class communities which are in transition. Prime examples of these settlement patterns are observed in the areas where the residents' samples are concentrated, mainly Rosedale and East Flatbush/Canarsie. According to Crowder, the creation of these neighborhoods is the Caribbean immigrants' response to the racial categorization. In these neighborhoods, the immigrants create spatial dimensions which combine race and ethnicity to separate them from the larger, poorer African Americans. Crowder's position on the interplay of race and ethnicity to create an ethnic enclave is a useful one. However, the data from my research cannot confirm nor refute this position, but the unsolicited responses of the seven community residents regarding the safety and cleanliness of the middle-class neighborhoods in Queens and Brooklyn support this assumption.

A point of caution should be noted here since neither this study nor Crowder's study took into consideration the longevity of the communities. The settlement of Caribbean immigrants in the communities of East Flatbush, Brooklyn and Rosedale, Queens is relatively recent. The newness of these communities, the "newness" of Caribbean immigration (particularly since the most recent wave of Caribbean immigration occurred in the late 1970s and early 1980s), the social networks which exist in these

communities,²⁶ and residential segregation as a result of White racism allow for a concentration of Caribbean immigrants.

While Crowder did not discuss the dynamics at play in the creation of Richmond Hill as an ethnically distinct community within the Caribbean community, it can be assumed that the factors of racialization²⁷ and ethnic solidarity might be responsible for the creation of these neighborhoods. However, there is not enough evidence to suggest that over time these neighborhoods will remain exclusively Caribbean based on the need for this group to maintain an ethnic identity. Nor does it suggest that these ethnic neighborhoods, over time, will serve as protection for the ethnic solidarity of the group. If that were to be the case, drawing from historical evidence, Caribbean immigrants would come in conflict with African Americans as they prevent Caribbean-born Blacks from purchasing homes in Harlem, Bedford-Stuyvesant, or these newly-formed communities of East Flatbush, Cambria Heights, and Rosedale where African Americans were the predominant minority, if not the largest ethnic group. Similarly, evidence of ethnic groups attempts to maintain ethnically defined neighborhoods (Bayer 1968 and Gans 1962) have resulted in conflicts between rival groups such as Italians and Irish. Anecdotal information suggests that there has been little, if any, evidence of inter-ethnic fighting between Caribbeans and African

²⁶Social networks which exist in the churches and alumni associations, social clubs, professional associations, and rotating credit system allow Caribbean immigrants to access capital for such large-scale investment as purchasing a house.

²⁷East Indians and Chinese from the Caribbean have become racialized because they are now identifying not with immigrants from the sending societies but with other immigrants with similar racial characteristics. The resulting factor is a settlement pattern which concentrates East Indians and Chinese Caribbeans in Richmond Hill, Queens in close proximity with Indians from the subcontinent.

Americans.

Gender

Unlike the equal distribution of men and women in the leaders survey, women slightly outnumbered men and women in this sample. There were fifty-nine women and forty-four men chosen randomly from the telephone directories for this telephone survey. The over-representation of women in this sample is not unique. Sutton and Chaney (1989), Kasinitz (1993), and others have argued that the Caribbean immigrants in New York City are a female-led population. Many domestics and nurses were able to migrate under the 1965 Immigration Act. The recruitment of Jamaican domestics coincided with the entry of White, middle-class women into the work force, creating a need for household help, while African American women, who had dominated this profession were moving into other areas of the economy.

Also, women were more likely to be represented in the survey because at the time when the telephone surveys were conducted (late evenings and weekends) women, more than men, were more likely to be home. Anecdotal information also suggests that Caribbean households are more likely to be female dominated even though there might be two heads of household. Thus, it is likely that more women than men would answer the phone. It must be pointed out that this is not unique for Caribbean immigrant households, and the same might be said for the general American population.

Eighteen of the women worked in the health care sector. Five women reported that they were teachers in the public school system. The other thirty-one worked in various

administrative capacities in the private and public sectors of New York City. This includes the six who reported that they are working with the municipal government, fifteen who are working in administrative areas in the private sector, and ten in retail and sales. There is an over-representation of Caribbean women in the health care sector because since the late 1960s efforts have been made by private and public hospitals throughout the United States and in New York City in particular, to recruit nurses from the Caribbean, and the Philippines in the wake of a labor shortage in that industry. Over the years, the health sector continued to be one of the fastest growing sectors of New York City's economy and absorbed the most recent immigrants into entry level, semiskilled and skilled positions. It can be argued that the over-representation of Caribbean immigrants in the administrative/service sectors is a reflection of the growth of this sector.

Many Haitian men and women have limited English proficiency, hence, their low levels of representation in mid-level positions in the service sector. Table 13 below shows the occupational distribution by male and female immigrants from selected countries of the Caribbean.

Table 13

**Occupational Distribution of Male and Female Immigrants 16 to 64 Years Old,
by Country of Birth
New York City
1982-1994**

Occupation	Jamaica		Guyana		Trinidadian		Haiti	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
With reported occupation	6,876	6,417	6,678	2,851	2,749	2,437	1,332	1,845
Professional	9.0	18.4	11.1	22.1	15.1	25.1	21.9	16.3
Exec./Admin./ Managerial	2.0	1.5	7.9	5.0	5.3	3.7	8.5	1.4
Sales	2.2	2.0	3.5	4.1	4.8	4.6	2.8	6.1
Admin. Support	6.2	19.8	7.7	25.4	7.9	18.0	4.3	14.0
Production/Craft	7.7	2.1	21.6	6.9	25.6	4.4	27.5	34.5
Operators/laborers	4.0	.9	22.7	3.6	19.1	2.6	19.9	3.2
Farming	4.7	.6	10.3	.4	1.2	0.0	3.4	3.0
Services	64.1	54.6	15.0	32.6	20.9	41.6	11.8	21.4

Source: *The Newest New Yorkers 1990-1994: 27-29*

The personal income for these women averages between \$30,000 and \$50,000 per annum which is relatively high for this particular immigrant group. The strong representation of Caribbean women in the middle level positions of the health care sector

and mid-management positions are two factors responsible for this high personal income.

During several telephone interviews, women working as personal care attendants or home attendants reported that they have a primary job during the week and also have a part-time job during the weekends. These part-time jobs are temporary and most women usually assume a part-time job several months before a major expenditure. Caribbean women seem to earn more than their male counterparts. The fact that these women hold mid-level health care positions, and/or have more than one job could account for this difference.

The women in the survey reported that they came to join their family members in New York City. Most were sponsored by their parents, especially their mothers. Five said that they came to join their husbands. Of the fifty-nine women interviewed, twenty are married or have been married. The others who are single women are in their mid-twenties and early thirties and all are currently attending school so as to advance their careers. Only seven of these women were single mothers. The twenty married women in the survey had an average of three children. The low rate of married female might be a reflection of the fact that most these women were relatively young--many were in their early thirties. Based on anecdotal information and research conducted by Waters (1994), Kasinitz (1992), Foner (1987), and Sutton and Chaney (1989), I expected to find many single mothers whose children remained in the Caribbean. However, this was not borne out in the analysis.

Anecdotal information about the Caribbean community, in general, suggest that the pattern of migration is female-led. After a year or two the female would apply to the Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS) for entry permit for her spouse, and in

another year or two they would apply for green cards for their children. Oftentimes the children would remain in the Caribbean (with the extended family) until they are college age because many parents assume that the educational and social system in the Caribbean is “better” than New York City. This process of family reunification would often take five years or more. It would be safe to assume that, given the fact that a sizeable portion of the community migrated in the 1980s, and the fact that the INS has been experiencing severe back logs in processing immigrants’ applications, family reunification has and continues to be severely hampered. These community respondents however, have been reunited with their children.

The forty-four men in the survey reported varied occupations including bank managers, entertainers, self-employed real estate brokers, civil servants and cab drivers. Five of the forty-four did not state their profession or income. Fourteen of the forty-four reported that they were middle or senior managers/administrators or other professionals. Of this group all earned incomes of \$40,000 and above. Data from the Public Use Micro Sample Data (PUMS) shows that these salaries are reflective of the general income distribution for these occupations. Since this survey did not focus on income disparity between Caribbean immigrants, African Americans, and other groups in New York City, it was difficult to determine whether these respondents received earnings commensurate with their education, experience, and position, regardless of their immigrant status. What is clear, however, is that there is a distinction between income and identity. This will be discussed in more detail below.

While the majority of the women worked in the social service sector (hospital, civil

service, and education), most of the men were concentrated in the private sector—in banking or administrative positions within the private sector. Though this is the case, more women than men reported personal incomes over \$40,000. This is the direct result of the concentration of women in occupations where they are able to work overtime or have the flexible schedules to work more than one job.

The majority of men in this survey were single when they first arrived in New York City and are now married or going through a divorce or separation. Similar to the married women, the majority of the married men have an average of three children. Although most of these men got married after they migrated to New York City, it is not clear whether they have children living in the Caribbean. Many came to New York City during their child bearing years and it is possible that they might have fathered children before emigrating.

Income and Education

Research done by Thomas Sowell (1978) and a series of newspaper articles in the *New York Newsday* and *New York Times* in the mid 1990s pointed to the growing middle-class sector in the Caribbean community. However, an analysis of the Public Use Micro Sample from the 1990 Census shows that 15.1 percent of the Caribbeans who migrated in the 1980s are at or below the poverty level. On the other hand, in terms of salary, 51.5 percent of the immigrants who came before 1980s reported household incomes greater than \$40,000, which can be attributed partly to the number of family members working. From the survey, thirty-six of the fifty-four women earned incomes between \$30,000 and \$40,000, and thirty of forty-four men earned similar income. An equal number of men and

women, eight each, earned salaries above \$70,000. These were all professionals with graduate degrees with the exception of one who worked as real estate broker in Queens.

Sowell (1978) argued that the apparent "economic progress" of the Jamaican and Caribbean immigrants signaled that racism, felt by many African Americans, is not a reality. However, as Kasinitz pointed out, the economic position of the Caribbean immigrants is closer to that of African Americans than to that of other White ethnic groups or Asians (Kasinitz, 1992: 92). Therefore, one can argue that Caribbean immigrants are not as well off as they may be perceived and that racism might play an important role in their economic position. This assumption needs further analysis. For example, we need to look at household income in relation to household size to determine whether the incomes can support the household size. Often times, the Caribbean immigrant has to maintain at least two households. One in New York City and one or more in his/her home country.

Caribbean immigrants in Southeast Queens can be categorized as middle-to-upper income based on the overall distribution of income shown in the 1990 census. According to the census data, the median household income for the southeast Queens neighborhoods was at \$46,000. This is above the median income for the borough of Queens, and far above that for New York City as a whole (\$29,800)²⁸. The twenty-four immigrants interviewed from this area reported an average household income of \$40,000. While this income is below the census figure, it is still relatively high when compared to immigrants from Brooklyn and the Bronx.

It should also be noted that the Queens respondents tended to own their own

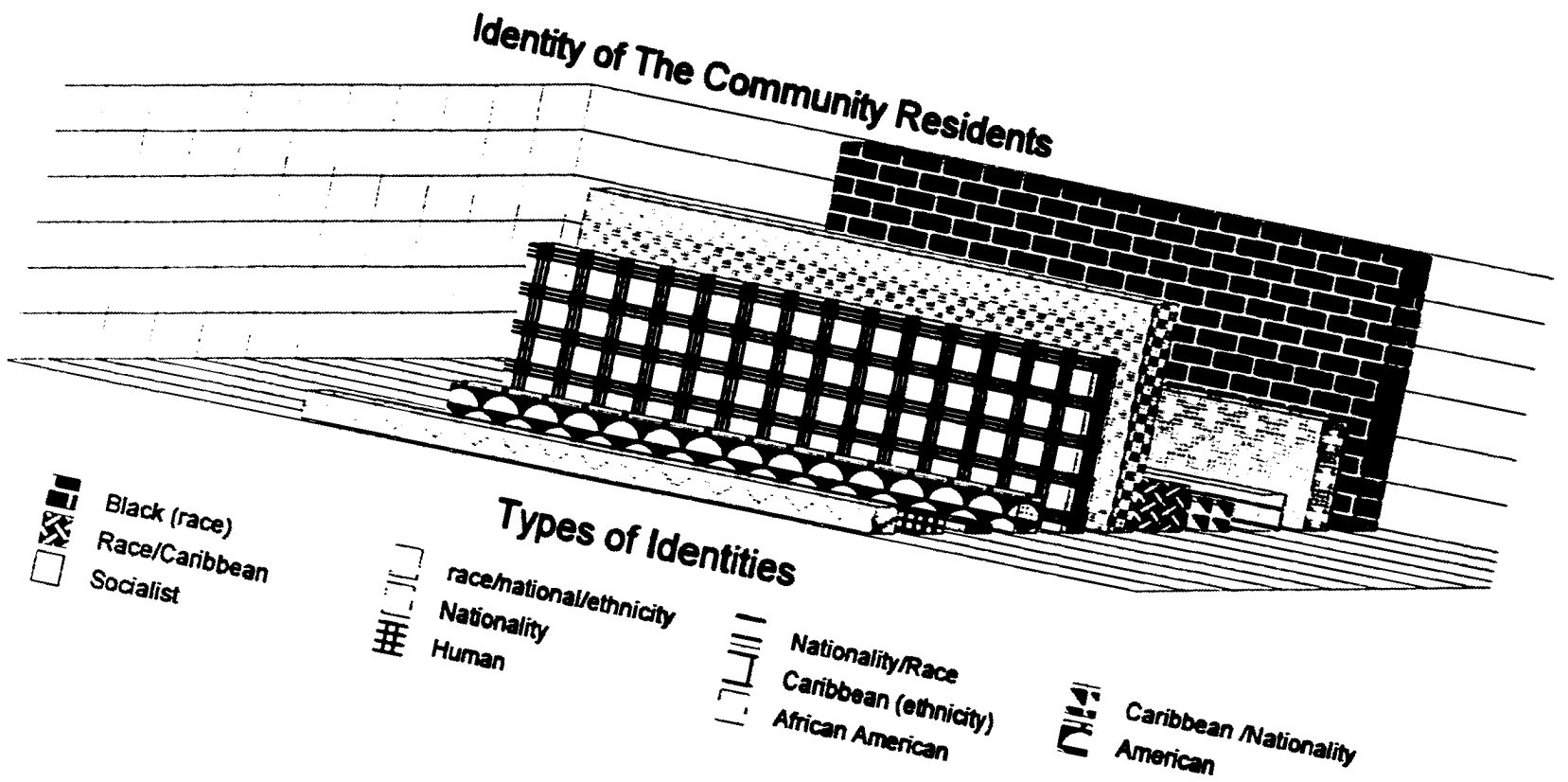
²⁸*Community District Needs Statement*. 1997. New York City Department of City Planning

homes, have a higher level of education, and were more likely to work in a professional capacity. Jamaicans and Indo-Guyanese were well represented in the population of middle-income residents from Queens. In the Bronx, Caribbean immigrants also tended to own their homes. In Queens and the Bronx many Caribbean immigrants have been able to purchase homes from native-born Whites as the Whites moved into the suburbs of Long Island and Westchester. In Brooklyn, Caribbean immigrants were less likely to own their homes. Several factors contribute to this low rate of home ownership in Brooklyn, including low proportion of single and two family homes in the Flatbush/East Flatbush neighborhoods, the higher cost of the existing housing stock, and the desire of many Caribbean immigrants, most of them new arrivals, to remain in these neighborhoods.

How the Residents Identify

The leaders and the residents were asked which terms best described the group with which they identify most closely with since they have migrated to New York City. The distribution of the residents' response paints a murky picture. In terms of race, thirty of the respondents said they identified with the term Black only (racial identity) and three identified as African American. Twenty-six respondents said that they identified solely with a national group (i.e. Jamaican, Haitian, Guyanese). Ten identified solely with the Caribbean group (ethnic identity), and twelve said they identified with varying groups based on race, nation, or region. Six residents identified with racial and regional groups (i.e. Black Caribbean/West Indian) and another four identified as American. Seven identified with racial and national groups (i.e. Black Jamaican or East Indian Trinidadian),

and another four preferred to identify with regional and national groups (i.e. Barbadian from the West Indies or Jamaican Caribbean). Two persons chose to be categorized as humans, and one person identified with a group based on political ideology. In this instance, the resident identified him/herself as a Marxist (see chart 1).



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The types of identities assumed by the residents are different from those of the leaders. The leaders, on one hand, seem to have strong ethnic (Caribbean) and racial identities. Also, these identities are more likely to be situational and are more contested in the political sphere. For example, several leaders state that when they participate in the larger New York City politics sphere, they use a racial identity, and when dealing with issues pertaining to the local neighborhoods, the Caribbean identity comes to the fore. While the residents' identities appear situational, for the most part, they seem to identify more strongly with a racial or national identity, with the racial identity surfacing in the political arena.

The immediate follow-up question as to why they identify with their particular group received varying responses. The four who identified as Americans said that they are now living in America and interacting with Americans. According to Warner and Srole's (1945) definition of assimilation, these four immigrants can be described as having assimilated into mainstream America. Of these four respondents, two have been living in New York City since the late 1980s, and the other two have been here for over twenty years.

The majority of those who identified as Caribbean or a combination of Caribbean/race or Caribbean/national cited cultural reasons for identifying with this group. The most frequently given response was, "We are the same, from different islands, but we are the same. We eat the same food, like the same music and have the same Caribbean values." The thirty-three respondents who identified with the Blacks or African Americans as a group claimed phenotypical similarities with the larger Black community. The most

frequent responses were, "That is who I am," and "That is the color of my skin." Others responded that this was the group of people with whom they associated on a regular basis.

Of the twenty-five who identified with a national group, twelve were Jamaicans, five Guyanese, four Haitians, two Trinidadians, and one each from St. Vincent and Antigua. As with the leadership, the Jamaicans appear most likely to have strong nationalist tendencies. It is interesting to note that there is a significant relationship between identity and income, identity and education, and identity and time of migration. The relationship between income, education, and group identity shows that in the general population, those immigrants who are highly educated and earn incomes which place them in the upper and middle-class bracket are more likely to identify with their place of birth or adopt a national identity rather than Caribbean (ethnic) or racial identity, even though they have lived in New York City for more than fifteen years. Seventeen residents reported personal incomes of \$50,000 and higher. Twelve of the seventeen, when asked, "Which term best describes the group with which you identify most closely," stated that they identified with their national group. Of the twelve, five were Jamaican, two each from Guyana, Haiti, and Trinidad and one from St. Vincent. Of these twelve individuals, the majority (eight) had strong feelings about their racial identity. Another eight also had strong feelings about their being Caribbean. Four said that they did not have strong feelings about their race, and another four said they did not feel strongly about being from the Caribbean. Those who had strong feelings about their race and being from the Caribbean did not openly express their feelings. In essence, they did not wear it on their sleeve. Some, however, were expressive in their national identity. They mentioned their

contributions (financial and otherwise) to their national government and the time spent hosting government officials during their visits to New York City. While they were expressive of their involvement in their home-country, these residents did not seem to be doing so at the expense of political participation in New York City nor at the expense of their racial and/or ethnic identity.

This strong sense of national identity among the upper-income segment of this sample confirms Waters's (1994) and Ho's (1994) position that Caribbean immigrants attempt to distance themselves from the larger Black population so as not to be classified or have their economic position diluted by their association with the larger Black population. Further analysis reveals that this group is more likely to be registered voters, participate in New York City politics, and be involved in their home-country politics. It can be assumed that their involvement in their home-country politics is a way of maintaining the middle-class status that they have acquired since migration or have had prior to migration. This identification also speaks to the level of political sophistication of this group. They realized that they have a political stake in New York City as taxpayers, homeowners, and registered voters while having a vested interest in their home countries because a number of them are likely to own property or some other type of investment. In addition, some of the upper middle income individuals, while they might not be classified as leaders—because they have not sought elected office or hold positions in organizations—are nonetheless part of the elite and are called on by the Caribbean community here in New York City and in their home country to give advice regarding issues of economic and political development. The presence of this segment of the Caribbean population was

evident at a number of meetings and forums in New York City sponsored by the consulate general offices of Barbados, Jamaica, Trinidad, and Guyana, which I attended. The majority of the attendees at these meetings were professionals and leaders who were affiliated with the governments of their various countries. Many see themselves returning to their country of origins, albeit not on a permanent basis, but to maintain their investments. As a result, it is safe to assume that these tangible ties reinforce their national identities.

On the other hand, those with incomes of \$30,000 and below were less likely to have strong national identities, less likely to be involved in the politics of New York City or their in home country. Unlike their upper or middle-income cohorts, the lower income individuals are less likely to own property, serve as consultants to the governments of their country, or have other tangible ties to reinforce their national identity.

There were some noticeable differences in time of migration and identity. Those who have been living in the United States for more than fifteen years were more likely to have stronger racial and ethnic identities than those who are more recent migrants. The more recent immigrants tended to be more nationalistic because they have not been fully acculturated into the American society (see table 14).

Table 14

Time of Migration, Group Identity and Voter Registration

Group	1941-1950			1951-1960			1961-1970			1971-1980			1981-1990			1991-1997		
	T ²⁹	C	V	T	C	V	T	C	V	T	C	V	T	C	V	T	C	V
American													2	1		2		1
Total	4																	
National ³⁰										15	13	11	8	3	1	3		
Total	26																	
Racial ³¹	1			1	1	1	4	2	1	11	8	7	13	3		3	1	1
Total Race	33																	
Caribbean (ethnic)	1	1	1							3	2	2	6	2	4			
Total	10																	
National/ Race										3	2	1		1				
Total	4																	
Race Regional							1			2	2	2	1			3		
Total	7																	
Group ID	T ³²	C	V	T	C	V	T	C	V	T	C	V	T	C	V	T	C	V

²⁹T= Total response
C= Naturalized Citizens
V= Registered Voter

³⁰This includes those who identified with their country of origin (e.g. Jamaica, Haiti, Trinidad)

³¹This includes the three respondents who identified with the African American

³²T= Total response
C= Naturalized Citizens
V= Registered Voter

	1941-1950			1951-1960			1961-1970			1971-1980			1981-1990			1991-1997		
R/National							1			2	1	1	1					
Total	4																	
Multiple							6	3	2	2	1	1	2	1		2		
Total	12																	
Other ³³							2						1					
Total	3																	
Total		1	1	1	1	1	14	5	3	41	29	25	42	32	10	20	1	2
Total	103																	

Basch et al. argue that the creation of ethnic-Caribbean or national identities such as Jamaican, Vincentians, or Haitian was necessarily derived from the emergence of the newly independent nation-states on the world stage. These authors linked the emergence of these identities to the hegemonic contention surrounding race and ethnicity that began in the United States during the protest period of the mid-to-late 1960s. Interviews with community leaders and residents in the Caribbean communities in New York for this study confirm this notion of the formation of national identities. As Table 14 indicates, forty-one respondents reported that they came to New York during the decade of the 1970s—a period of heightened nationalism in the Caribbean. Of the forty-one, 24 percent identified with their country of origin. In addition, a majority of those interviewed pointed to the fact that they were raised during a time in the Caribbean when nationalistic fervor was very strong, particularly in the 1960s and 1970s. Many also linked this with the occurrence of Black nationalism as a world phenomenon. Caribbean immigrants brought this strong sense of

³³This includes the respondents who identified as socialist, humans or others

nationalism with them to New York City which was further enhanced in direct response to the subordinate role assigned to them in the United States.

According to Basch et al., the outcome of these converging processes of decolonialization and independence in the Caribbean, the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements, and a the hegemonic model of cultural pluralism in the United States allowed for the creation of Caribbean or West Indian community as an ethnic political constituency. Based on this research, a fourth factor can be added to the equation--that of globalization and regionalism--the emergence of regional powerhouses such as the European Union, and the Asian and Pacific Basin countries prompted Caribbean leaders to encourage economic, social, and cultural activities within the region. This also translated in to wider regional identification among Caribbean immigrants in the United States. In addition, corporate and White political recognition of Caribbean immigrants as a distinct cultural group helped to transform the Caribbean identity from one based on race to one based on ethnicity. This new hegemonic agenda in the United States and subsequently New York City, gave increasing recognition to the ethnic distinctiveness of the immigrants and helped transform the situation from a politics of race to a politics of ethnicity.

As the immigrant population in New York City became increasingly diverse, White politicians, especially politically astute politicians, began to emphasize ethnicity as opposed to race. This was most apparent in the late 1970s when Koch began making political overtures to the Caribbean community for their support. In fact, White politicians, more so than African American and Latino politicians, were the only ones actively soliciting a specific "West Indian" or Caribbean vote and using distinctly Caribbean symbols to do so

(Basch et al. 1994:118). These symbols were often cultural, and the mainly White politicians would provide financial support, albeit meager, to the West Indian Labor Day Carnival, and sponsorship for various concerts where local and international artists from the Caribbean would perform. The community was responsive, so much so that they returned two Jewish politicians Marty Markowitz, a state senator, and Rhoda Jacobs, a state assemblywoman, to office several times.

African Americans began to court Caribbean immigrants as a distinct ethnic group during Jesse Jackson's 1988 bid for the presidency. Prior to that, local political leaders in New York City such as Al Vann and Clarence Norman, wanted Caribbean leaders to be incorporated into the larger African American political organization, toe the line of local politics, and wait until they--African Americans-- got into office before Caribbean immigrants could seek their own political representation. Many Caribbean political entrepreneurs, seeing the increase in the number of Caribbean voters, resented the fact that they had to wait their turn and be fed the spoils from African American political gains. In interviews with the leaders, many stated that the Caribbean community was large enough now to get their own political representation, one that is more sensitive to the concerns of the community. The leaders and some community residents feel that a number of the African American political representatives are not sensitive to the needs of their Caribbean constituency. Many leaders and informed residents noted that Major Owens's vote in April 1998 against the NAFTA parity³⁴ for the Caribbean showed a level of insensitivity

³⁴It has been alleged by several of the leaders that Owens's vote against NAFTA parity for the Caribbean was in support of the labor unions that are his largest financial supporters. According to these leaders, Owens did not support the Caribbean community, which makes up a significant

toward the Caribbean community in the United States and in the region. The NAFTA parity would allow the goods from the various Caribbean countries to have access to the North American market much like the North American Free Trade Agreement between Canada, Mexico, and the United States in 1996. They also viewed Al Vann's benign neglect of the 1997 state legislation to support the dollar vans--an alternative form of community transport serving the Caribbean community in New York--as a vote against the Caribbean community.

Similarly, the late Barbara Jordan's stance on immigration, which influenced the passage of the Immigration and Naturalization Reform Act of 1996,³⁵ and the limited support against the legislation that was provided by African Americans at the local, state, and national levels were deemed by the Caribbean leadership as a mark of African American insensitivity toward the Caribbean immigrant community in general.

Racial Identity

Residents were asked, "Do you have strong feelings about your racial identity?" as a follow-up to the question about the group with which they identify. Although the residents identified with varying groups, depending on the circumstances, the majority, 80 percent, said they have strong or very strong racial identity. While the majority of those

portion of his constituency because most of them are not naturalized citizens or registered voters.

³⁵The Immigration and Naturalization Reform Act of 1996 limited federal benefits to documented and undocumented immigrants.

interviewed were people of African ancestry, ten were East Indians from Guyana or Trinidad. Three of the ten said that they were Indo Guyanese, and the remainder were Trinidadians. Three persons said that they are of mixed race (Asian and African), and one person said that he is a Jamaican of Chinese ancestry. Of the ten East Indians interviewed, four stated that they have strong racial identity. The remaining six stated that race was never important to them. Two female residents of East Asian extraction added that, while race was important to them in Trinidad, it is no longer the case in New York City. Since migrating to New York, one of the two females is engaged to be married to a Black Jamaican. The person who identified as Chinese Jamaican does not have strong racial feelings, instead he refers to himself as a Marxist. The three persons of mixed race agreed that, while race is important in New York and the United States in general, this is not the case in the Caribbean. Two of the three further added that in the context of New York, money is more important than race in the long run.

As with the Caribbean community leaders, I anticipated that people would identify either as Caribbean or by specific nationality. Additionally, when the residents were probed about their identity, many responded that they use the terms West Indian, Black, and Caribbean interchangeably, along with their nationalities. Unlike the community leaders, the residents did not mention that they disliked the term "West Indian," nor did they feel that "West Indian" was limiting because it referred only to the English-speaking Caribbean. However, more than half of the respondents identified with the term Caribbean, Black, or a specific nationality rather than West Indian. This suggests that there is a limited movement away from the use of the term West Indian. For the leaders, particularly those

for whom the term “Caribbean” is politically significant, this movement away from the use of term West Indian to a more inclusive “Caribbean” is spurred by the belief that the latter is limited to the Anglophone Caribbean and does not include those from the Francophone or circum-Caribbean region. None of the residents interviewed saw the use of Caribbean instead of West Indian as being politically significant.

It is not clear if the term Caribbean, as used by the leaders and residents, also refers to the Spanish-speaking countries of the region. What is clear is that there is very little, if any, interaction between the general population and immigrants from the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, Cuba, or the Spanish-speaking countries of Central America-- Panama not included. This limited interaction is a direct result of language and residential barriers. The limited interaction also prevents Latinos from playing an integral role in the construction of the Caribbean immigrant identity in the political, social, and cultural arenas of New York City. However, there is evidence of interaction with people from Panama. This must be understood from the perspective that most Panamanians living in predominantly Caribbean communities are descendants of Caribbean immigrants who worked on the Panama Canal.

Of the twenty who did not have strong racial identity, nine believe that being categorized along racial lines brings division. It can be argued that Caribbean immigrants’ willingness to work with Whites creates a division between them and the larger African American community. This was more noticeable at the leadership level, particularly when a number of leaders launched the group “Caribbeans for Koch” in the mayoral race between Koch and Cuomo. The latter received the endorsement from the established Black leaders,

but this group of Caribbean immigrants refused to follow suit and support the African American choice for mayor.

Caribbean immigrants', both the leaders' and the residents', willingness to work with Whites can be attributed to the degree to which Caribbeans were socialized with Whites. Unlike their African American counterparts, Caribbean immigrants, prior to migration had very limited, if any, experience with racial segregation as was common in the United States. In addition, since national independence, the majority of Caribbean immigrants worked side by side with Whites and were sometimes in positions of political power above Whites. Thus many Caribbeans, who have only the distant memories of slavery as a reminder of White brutality, and more recent memories of the American government and tourists with money to boost their countries' economies, are more likely to work with Whites than most African Americans who have very vivid memories of family members swinging by their necks from trees across the southern United States.

According to some of the residents and leaders, this racial division prevents people from working together. They blame African Americans for "wearing their racial pride on their sleeves and over-emphasizing race," which impacts the way they work with other groups in New York City. In essence, residents with low levels of racial identity are of the opinion that race is not important, at least not as important as money or power and that having a strong racial identity would impede any collaborative efforts.

Interestingly, none of the residents fault White Americans for the racial division. From the comments of residents and some leaders, it is apparent that White Americans help to perpetuate the stereotype that Caribbean immigrants are better workers than African

Americans by hiring Caribbean immigrants because of their “good work ethics” and professionalism instead of native-born Blacks who are seen as ill-prepared for the world of work. It can be argued that this preferential treatment of Caribbeans by Whites helps to widen the division between native-born African Americans and Caribbeans and encourages hostility between the two groups. It is also important to note that this hostility has not been borne out in fatal conflicts between the two groups. Perhaps the strong sense of racial identity is one reason for the limited inter-group conflict.

The 80 percent who expressed strong racial identity did so because “nature made them that way and there is no choice but to accept their fate.” This is evident by the overwhelming statements made by the residents, “that is who I am,” “I was born that way,” and “I am what I am and they [White society] cannot change that.” Although they expressed strong racial identity, many of the residents added that they are not militant nor do they let this affect who they work with. As one woman stated:

“I am Black, and I am proud of it, but I don’t wear it on my sleeve. I don’t let it get in the way because I cannot change who I am. I am proud of it [being Black].”

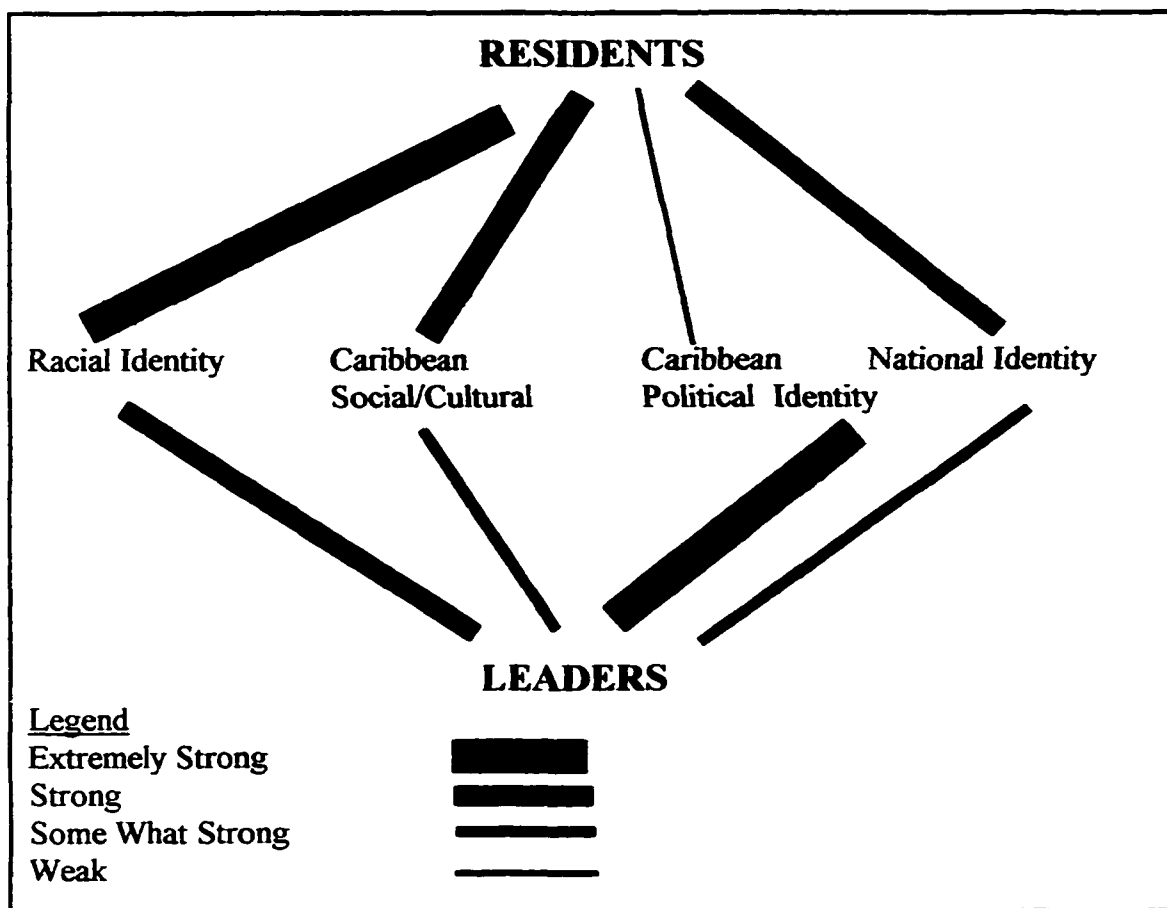
Unlike the leaders, the residents were not asked if they always felt this way about their racial identity. Neither were they asked how important their racial identity was to them prior to and after migration. Seven residents volunteered information supporting the fact that racial identity was not important to them in the Caribbean. Of the seven, only two continued to have low levels of racial identity. The others reported that they now have stronger racial identity. This number is too small to determine the significance of this response. In many instances the sentiments of the leaders can be used as a barometer for

the larger Caribbean immigrant community. In this instance, it can be argued that the racial identity of the leaders became stronger after migration as a result of the racialization process which takes place in American society. Therefore, it is likely that the racial identity of the Caribbean residents became stronger or will become strong over time. The main difference between the leaders and residents is that the process was more accelerated for the leaders given their position in the community. It must be pointed out that the increase in racial identity does not negate their ethnic and national identity. It is likely that an ethnic identity might also increase if the leaders and the general population effectively promote an ethnic identity, be it social, cultural, or political.

It can also be assumed that this racial identity is likely to increase because of the groups with which the immigrants choose to identify. From the responses of the leaders and the residents, it appears that the decision to identify by race (Black) and by ethnicity (Caribbean) comes as a result of two countervailing forces, internal and external to the community. The internal force comes from the immigrants' historical experience—being from societies where people of African ancestry account for over 50 percent of the population. Although the Africans were concentrated at the bottom of the social and economic pyramid, they wielded significant influence in all sectors of the societies.

Thus, in terms of the racial identity there is a two-way directional flow where the racial identity of the Caribbean residents and leaders is being informed by the larger White and African American communities and Caribbeans' own historical experience during the enslavement period. The diagram below illustrates this concept.

Diagram 2



There are two main external forces which influence the Caribbean immigrants to identify by race and ethnicity. One force comes from the dominant White society. They see the Caribbean immigrants as racially similar to the larger African American society. This is evident by the statement made by the leaders and the residents. For example, most residents and leaders responded that, "...that is how they [White society] see us. They first see us by the color of our skin." This supports Blauner's position that categorizing immigrants, in this case Caribbean immigrants, by race was devised by the dominant White Anglo-Saxons as a means of ordering a "universe of unfamiliar peoples while confronting their diversity and individuality" (Blauner 1972:26). This imposed categorization ignores subgroup boundaries, and provides the impetus for diverse people to identify in a single ethnic boundary. As a result, Jamaicans, Haitians, and Trinidadians come to accept a Caribbean identity without making the distinction between the historical and cultural development of their home country and that of the Caribbean region. In other cases, groups such as East Indians and Chinese from the Caribbean are not identifying with immigrants from the sending societies, but with other immigrants with similar racial characteristics. The resulting factor is a settlement pattern which concentrates East Indians and Chinese Caribbeans in Queens near the large Asian American communities and Afro-Caribbeans in the Bronx and Brooklyn, close to the larger African American communities.

The immigrants also believed that African Americans also categorized them racially as Blacks, based on the color of their skin and the fact that they interact with African Americans on a regular basis. In addition, African Americans and Caribbeans are affected by the same set of issues such as poverty, poor education, limited access to affordable

housing, job discrimination and police brutality. From the discussions with the residents and the leaders, it can be assumed that, because African Americans and Caribbeans are affected by the same issues, forming a coalition based on race is one way to address these issues. When asked, "Should African American and Caribbean immigrants work together in order to get ahead in New York City?" More than 70 percent of the 103 residents said yes. They also added that this coalition is important because native-born Blacks and Caribbeans are affected by the same problems.

The 21 percent who said that the groups should not work together expressed reservation to this coalition because of the presumed difference in value systems of African Americans and Caribbeans. According to one respondent, "Blacks have different ideas of how to deal with race. They are bothered by it. They wear it on their sleeve." Another stated that African Americans do not get along with Caribbeans because they think that Caribbeans are "better" than they, though only a small minority voiced this concern. This perception of Caribbean immigrants as being "better" than African Americans has been promoted by the works of Sowell (1978) and Moynihan and Glazer (1975), who argue that Caribbean economic advancement can be attributed to their positive work ethic and frugal life style. Vickerman (1991) also argues that Caribbean immigrants seeing themselves as "better" than African Americans is a way of distancing themselves from the lower-class status ascribed to that group.

Another six residents expressed concerns for a coalition based on the belief that Caribbean immigrants must first unite and organize internally before forming coalition with others. Including these six, more than 47 percent of the residents surveyed believe that the

Caribbean community is disunited. As a follow-up question, the residents were asked to identify the issue(s) about which the Caribbean community has not successfully taken a united position. The analysis of their responses showed that forty-seven residents or 46 percent agreed that Caribbean immigrants have not united successfully around issues of immigration. Ironically, when asked what issues the Caribbean community has united around, an almost equal amount—43 percent—said that the community was united on the issue of immigration and police brutality. They cited examples of the Caribbean radio shows and newspapers which provide regular coverage of these issues. The references to the Caribbean-owned-and-operated media as a tool for rallying the masses is an indication that the Caribbean immigrant's view of his/her community is being informed by forces within the community through the media. It is interesting to note that three of the leaders interviewed are directly involved with Caribbean-owned media. The question then becomes how effectively is this tool being used. The fact that there is an almost fifty/fifty split in the community suggests that this tool is not being used effectively by the leaders to create a sense of Caribbean community, one which most leaders also see as lacking among their constituents.

National Identity

Haitians, Jamaicans, Trinidadians, and Guyanese were more likely to identify with their respective national group. These are the four largest and most culturally distinct groups among the Anglophone and Francophone Caribbean countries. This sense of nationalism was encouraged by the governments of these countries, especially during the

1960s and 1970s. Outside of the respective national government's efforts to develop a strong sense of nationalism, the strong sense of Haitian national identity calls for further analysis. This is necessary from the point of view, that while Jamaicans and Guyanese have strong national identity, they have always been included by those within and outside the community as part of the larger Black community. Haitians, have not always been seen as part of the larger Black community.

The strong tendency of Haitians to identify as a national group also speaks to the way in which this group is incorporated in New York City. The Haitian separate identity allowed for an initial political incorporation not at the local level but at the national level. A number of representatives from the Haitian community met with President Johnson to discuss his policies on the War on Poverty Program (Basch et al. 1994: 199) and its impact on the Haitian community. It is important to note that Haitians were the only non-White immigrant group brought in for consultation. This was possible because the Haitians did not identify with the larger Black community. As a matter of fact, the largest Haitian community up until the late 1960s was located in Manhattan, sandwiched between Harlem and the affluent Upper Eastside neighborhoods. The Haitian community, because of their language, culture, and location, was seen by outsiders as separate from the larger Black community.

Haitian incorporation into the national, as opposed to the local politics, happened at the time when the Haitians were too small in numbers to have any political clout. It has been argued that the White House meeting might have been part of a larger effort directed at incorporating immigrants of color in ways that would keep them separate and apart from

the subordinated population with the United States. Thus, defusing their involvement in the urban riots at the time. Furthermore, the outsiders who sought to incorporate the Haitian in the national politics of the United States saw Haitians immigrants as they saw other immigrant groups, regardless of race or ethnicity. As it happened with European immigrants, early in the century, the outsiders wanted to give Haitian immigrants “a voice,” and were able to do so with funding from foundations, private agencies, churches and public entities. The larger Caribbean community, because of its access to the language and perhaps culture of the African American community, was submerged within that community and did not get similar recognition from the national government.

During the mid-to-late 1970s, the Haitian community shifted its level of activism and its level of national identity. (Basch et al. 1994: 197). This is evident by the number of Haitian organizations being formed at the time. The growth in Haitian organizations in New York City during this time, precipitated the need to form an umbrella organization--the Haitian Community Council. Like most Caribbean immigrant groups in the 1970s, Haitians began to focus on the political and economic issues in their sending country. It was also at this time that dissenting voices began to advocate for the masses of poor Haitians whom they saw as having nothing in common with the influential French-cultured, mulatto Haitians. This was the period of the re-emergence of a Haitian national identity.

In late 1970s, and more so during the 1980s, the Haitian national identity began to take a strong hold and emerged to contest the social, political, and economic spaces in New York City. In essence, the Haitians were seeking incorporation as a separate national group, outside the framework of a Caribbean ethnic or racial group. There were several

reasons which allowed for the Haitian national identity to take a strong hold. First, the number and class of Haitians began to change. The numbers grew as a direct result of the repression brought on by the Duvalier regime. Second, the pre-1965 wave of immigrants consisted mainly of middle-class, educated mulattos, while those who came in the late 1970s and 1980s were mainly from the working class and were more likely to be of the African phenotype. While the former group purported to be French, the latter began to identify strongly as Haitian nationals (Basch, et al. 1994: 198).

Third, the larger American society began to scapegoat and attack Haitians. Haitians were seen as impoverished and uneducated boat people, so much so that in the mid-1980s they were being labeled among the high risk group of people spreading AIDS in the United States. There were even speculations that the Haitian practice of Vodoun, a traditional African based religion, which involves animal sacrifice, made Haitians susceptible to the AIDS virus. To stave off these outside attacks, Haitians galvanized as a national group. This is in keeping with the position taken by a theorist who supports the primordial and instrumentalist view of group formations. The primordialist believes that individuals identify on the basis of collective sentiments and action (Greetz 1963), and the instrumentalist is of the opinion that identity is formed by contact and conflict with other groups and is expressed in the differentiation and maintenance of borders between them (Barth 1969, Olzak and Nagel 1982, and Jones-Correa 1996).

Interviews with several leaders of the Haitian community revealed that the notion of national identity was being put forward by the community leaders, particularly those who foresaw the potential gains (political and otherwise) for the Haitian community. The

leaders identified nationally, mainly because language and religion served as the means by which the identity was being realized, and only those from Haiti had access to these tools of incorporation.

Immigrants from the eastern Caribbean were less likely to express strong national identity. In fact they were more likely to identify as Caribbean, Black or a combination of region or race and their national identity. For example, several residents identified as Barbadian Caribbean, Vincentian from the West Indies, or a Black St. Lucian. If the argument made by one of the leaders that a Vincentian or a St. Lucian identity is meaningless in New York City, this suggests that some immigrants feared that the average New Yorker would not know much about St. Vincent or Grenada so they identify with the larger ethnic group "Caribbean" or the larger racial group "black." Thus a Vincentian from the Caribbean specifies the location of the country.

Following this line of argument, it can be reasoned that these immigrants are not necessarily sentimentally attached to the Caribbean or their racial identity but do so more as a matter of specificity. Furthermore, the limited primordial or instrumental attachment to these identities would limit group cohesiveness which is necessary for any collective action, political or otherwise. Analysis of the responses proved the contrary. A majority of the 103 residents expressed strong feelings about being Caribbean and being Black. These responses suggest that identifying with the Caribbean ethnic group or the Black racial group goes beyond specificity to embrace a cultural/social bond and, by extension, a political bond with the larger group.

Caribbean Identity

When asked which group do they choose to identify within the context of New York City, ten reported that they identify solely with the Caribbean group. However, when asked, "Do you have strong feelings about being Caribbean?" seventy-six affirmed their strong feelings about being Caribbean. This indicates that, while the majority of the general population has strong feelings about being Caribbean, in the context of New York City, and the United States, they choose to identify by race while remaining sentimentally attached to their place of origin. Of the seventy-six who have strong feelings about being Caribbean, eighteen voluntarily stated that they have always had these feelings. It is difficult to determine whether the others always felt this way because there was no follow-up question to gauge their response.

More than seventy of the 103 respondents said they had contact with people from other Caribbean countries prior to migration. All seventy gave favorable responses to the question, "Did you have contact with people from the other Caribbean countries while growing up in the Caribbean?" Thus, it can be concluded that the favorable contact prior to migration has had some effect on the immigrants strong feelings about being from the region. The respondents were more likely to interact with Jamaicans, Trinidadians, and Barbadians. They had the least contacts with Haitians, and the smaller states of the eastern Caribbean. These contacts came as a result of educational and sports activities. Since Jamaica, Trinidad, and Barbados each house one of the three campuses of the University of the West Indies, it is more likely that these countries would have the highest levels of contact with peoples from other parts of the Caribbean. Limited contacts with Haitians

stems from the language barrier. It also stems from the fact that Haiti has not experienced periods of economic growth to attract inter-regional migration as did Trinidad, Jamaica, Barbados, Belize, Panama, Curacao, and Guyana.³⁶

Of the seventy-six who have strong feelings about being Caribbean, all made mention of the positive impact that Caribbean people have made throughout the world. Twenty-four residents agreed, verbatim, that “the Caribbean produced some of the most famous world leaders Eric Williams, Michael Manley, and Fidel Castro.” It is interesting to note that during the interviews, Castro was the only reference made to the Hispanic Caribbean. In addition, the residents from the Anglophone Caribbean made frequent reference only to other Anglophone countries, to the exclusion of other countries of the region.

While answering the question regarding their feelings about being Caribbean, twenty-four residents set themselves apart from the African American community by stating that they have strong feelings about being Caribbean because of the value systems which they acquired in the region. This, according to the immigrants, influences their positive work ethics and their overall outlook on life. The immigrants also believed that these positive ethics and outlook allowed them to be successful in New York City. From the comments of the residents, they do not see African Americans as possessing similar values or outlook on life. A point of caution must be added here because the view that the

³⁶During the 1950s and 1960s, Trinidad’s economy grew as a result of oil production. Similarly, Guyana’s and Jamaica’s economies grew in the 1970s as a result of increased bauxite production. In the late 1960s, Curacao expanded its oil refining production of crude oil from Venezuela and Mexico. These activities spurred inter-regional migration as workers migrated to these countries in search of economic opportunities.

Caribbean work ethic is better than that of African American is incorrect if the factor of class is taken into consideration. Harold Cruse (1967 and 1987) pointed out that majority of the Caribbean immigrants, especially those who migrated in the 1960s were mainly from the middle class, urban population. Central to Cruse's thesis is that Sowell's and Moynihan's works compared Caribbean immigrants with the general African American population instead of African Americans of similar income and educational background. Following Cruse's line of reasoning, Caribbean immigrants, therefore, were not expressing a "distinct" Caribbean identity but a middle-class identity. Thus, for Cruse, a comparison of the African American middle class with Caribbean immigrants reveal that the former group has similar values and work ethics. Farley and Allen (1987) used the 1980 census data to do a comparative analysis of Caribbean immigrants and African Americans, which supports Cruse's claim that there is no noticeable difference between the African Americans and Caribbeans in terms of income, education, and home ownership. From the analysis of the general population response, it is difficult to ascertain whether Caribbean immigrants attribute the slow growth of economic wealth in the African American community to their poor work ethics since none directly stated that this is the case nor made implied statements to that effect.

While the majority reported that they have strong or very strong feelings about being Caribbean, this does not seem to impact the group seeing itself as a united force in New York City politics. There was almost a fifty/fifty split between those residents who believe that the Caribbean community is uniting together in order to get ahead in politics and those who believe that this is not the case. Forty-four said yes there are uniting and

forty-six said that they are not uniting. The remainder gave no response or did not know. Those who said that the community was not uniting stated that they were not doing so around issues, such as immigration, which are important to the community. Unlike the leaders, only one of the residents attributed the disunity to the lack of political leadership. This young male claimed, "We don't have a voice on the matters that are important. You see everybody talking about immigration but don't have anyone representing the Caribbean." The limited reference made by the residents about the impact of the apparent disunity on New York City politics is another example of the lack of importance that the residents place on politics.

It can also be argued that the residents readily identified immigration and police brutality as issues around which the Caribbean community is not uniting, because these issues have been regularly featured in the local and national media, including the media owned and operated by members of the Caribbean community. The perception of lack of unity is based on the fact that the residents do not see the leadership or the community in general "calling out the troops" whenever a major issues affecting the community is covered in the media.

While it can be said that the media coverage of immigration and police brutality provides impetus of uniting the community, other issues relating to the Caribbean community covered by the media, and which might have served as similar impetus, have not received the attention of the leadership nor the residents in the community. For example, during the early part of 1998, the most widely read newspapers in the Caribbean community, *CaribNews* and *Caribbean Life*, have been covering the story of the lobbying

efforts, in Congress, of the Chiquita Company—a multi-national corporation—to prevent Caribbean bananas from getting preferential treatment in the European market. If successful, this would mean severe economic hardship for such countries as Dominica, St. Lucia, and Jamaica whose economies rely heavily on the sale of bananas to Europe. The governments of the Caribbean region have put forward a unified front to protect the banana trade with Europe and have solicited the help of some of their expatriates in the United States to lobby Congress on their behalf. The banana crisis has been given wide coverage by all facets of the media. However, neither the residents nor leaders made mention of the effort of the Caribbean community outside New York to unify the community. One reading of this unnoticed effort of unification might be that, unlike immigration and police brutality, “the banana crisis” does not impact on the daily lives of the Caribbean immigrants in New York. As a result, it is unlikely that the general population would focus on this issue. Another reading of this might be that, while the Caribbean immigrants have strong feelings of Caribbean identity, these feelings are external to the home society and comes as a result of increased interaction with other Caribbean immigrants in New York. Thus issues pertaining to the home country which falls outside the sphere of the New York City community--their immediate surroundings--would receive limited attention.

From the responses of the leaders and the community residents, the issue of immigration and police brutality are of major concern. However, there is little evidence to suggest that the both of these groups have reached out to each other to address these concerns. The information is more revealing when one considers the fact that two of the largest community-based organizations, Caribbean Women’s Health Association and the

Caribbean Immigrant Services, have for the past five to ten years conducted extensive citizenship drives, assisted with organizing demonstrations in Washington and Albany, and have used the media to promote their agendas. None of the residents were able to identify these organizations as addressing the needs of the Caribbean community, and only a small percentage among the leadership was able to identify these two groups.

The fact that there is some ambivalence about the community's uniting in order to get ahead in politics in New York City might stem from the residents' not equating the Caribbean identity with a political identity. On one hand, the majority of the leaders noted that the emerging or re-emerging of a Caribbean identity is positive and serves to enhance the possibilities of political empowerment in New York City. On the other hand, the residents felt that the Caribbean identity operates on a socio-cultural level. The leadership and the residents' of identity, which has reemerged in the 1980s and 1990s operated socially, culturally, and politically. This Caribbean identity has also operated at the international level to support or challenge governments of the Caribbean region. Most notable was Bishop's government in Grenada. From a political point of view, Caribbean immigrants and leaders with stronger ethnic identity were more likely to be against the United States-led invasion of Grenada because they felt that Grenada is a sovereign nation and the United States should not have interfered in the government of a sovereign nation. From a cultural point of view, leaders and residents also resented the United States interference into a matter that Caribbeans should remedy. The strong sense of Caribbean identity also allowed Caribbean immigrants to come out in droves in support of the Haitians as they protested the 1990 ruling by the Center for Disease Control which

identified Haitians as one of the major carriers of the AIDS Virus.

When asked, "What does a Caribbean identity means to you?" sixty-four residents view this identity as serving mainly social or cultural purposes. They attribute this to the fact that Caribbean immigrants in New York City readily identify with the largest social and cultural event in the City--the Eastern Parkway Labor Day Carnival. Twenty residents said that the identity means a combination of cultural, social, economic, and political identities. All twenty showcased Eastern Parkway as an expression of these four aspects of the community's identity. Twelve residents believed that the Caribbean identity is equated with an economic identity. They made mention of the economic progress of the Caribbean immigrant community by citing the number of restaurants, beauty parlors, and other entrepreneurial activities owned, operated, and patronized by Caribbean people. Only seven viewed this identity as being political. However, they did not explain why they viewed this identity as political. Ten of the sixty-four who perceived this identity as social or cultural pointed out that there are not many political representatives from the community and that the community is not seen as a serious political force. Two residents added that, if the community was political, they would have been able to address most of the problems affecting them.

Attitudes toward Other Caribbean Immigrants

While seventy of the 103 residents had contact with other people from the Caribbean prior to migrating to New York City, the contact was not widespread. The physical geography of the region prevented ongoing interaction. Separated by miles of

open sea, the average person was not able to travel inter-regionally unless it was for potential economic gains. In addition, for almost three hundred years, many Caribbean nations had been part of the European colonial empires until their independence in the early 1960s. During this three-hundred-year period, the British, French, Dutch, or the other colonial powers did not encourage inter-regional travel or trade, but rather with the colonial metropolis. This resulted in a communication and trade network which made it easier to travel from the Caribbean to Europe and North America than among the various countries of the region. Individual nations tended to identify with the colonial power than with other countries in the region. Therefore, the average Caribbean person, prior to migrating to the United States, was more likely to have a limited sense of a Caribbean ethnic identity, particularly from a political perspective.

The contact the immigrants had before migrating was through the educational system. Immigrants from Jamaica, Barbados, and Trinidad served as teachers and civil servants in the British territories throughout the Caribbean. Residents also gained knowledge about the Caribbean from textbooks. The preconceived notions that Caribbean nationals have of each other can be attributed to the low level of interaction prior to migration and the colonial education which they received. During interviews, several residents noted that in school they learned about the poverty and voodoo in Haiti, the carnival and the oil wealth of Trinidad, and the high rate of literacy in Barbados. Prior to migrating to the United States, many Caribbean immigrants held the common stereotypes that Barbadians tended to be educated and acted "very British" or White, or Jamaicans were rude, violent, Rastafarians, and very conscious of their culture, class, and color.

Residents from Jamaica, Trinidad, and Guyana, and to some extent Barbados, viewed the other nationals as "small islanders." This term was used repeatedly when the residents were asked about their image or perception of various Caribbean nationals prior to migration. When asked to elaborate on this terminology, many equated it with simplemindedness or lack of sophistication. Although Guyana is many times larger than Jamaica in terms of land mass, many Jamaicans immigrants viewed the Guyanese as small islanders. Similarly, Trinidadians viewed Barbadians and Grenadians in the same light, as small islanders. The Trinidadian perception of size might be based on that country's position as an economic giant in the region during the 1960s, at the time of the financial boom in its petroleum industry.

The settlement pattern of Caribbean immigrants in New York City encouraged higher levels of interaction. This is especially noticeable in areas of Flatbush/East Flatbush, East Gunhill Road, and to a lesser extent, southeastern Queens where there is high occurrence of low-density housing units. From the residents' responses, this experience changed some of the pre-conceived notions that Caribbean immigrants held about each other. For example, many residents reported that they see more similarities than differences among the Caribbean immigrants in New York City. Approximately 90 percent said that they have good-to-excellent relationships with their Caribbean neighbors and co-workers. Similarly, 90 percent felt that Caribbean immigrants in New York City were hardworking. They were also quick to note that there was a certain segment with the population, especially among the Jamaicans, Guyanese, and Panamanians, which tended to give the group a "bad" name. The "bad" element is involved in the illegal underground

economy, especially the drug trade. Involvement in the drug trade has resulted in an over-representation of first and second generation Caribbean immigrants within the criminal justice system. A study conducted by John Flateau of the Bunche/DuBois Institute at Medgar Evers College, stated that almost 10 percent of Black inmates are of Caribbean ancestry. The criminal elements of the population are a major concern for many of the residents surveyed.

Like the Caribbean leaders, most residents have changed their views of Haitians.

One resident reported that:

Is not that they (Haitians) bad, the come 'ere and work 'ard like everybody, sleeping ten to one room, and in no time you see tem move out and buy 'ouse a Queens. Plenty people don't understand tem because of de voodoo stuff but tem is hardworking people.

The general sentiment from the residents was that Haitians in New York City were not given their fair share as other immigrants. The average Caribbean resident surveyed admired the Haitians' courage to organize and be able to achieve the economic success symbolized in buying a house in Queens. While the Haitians are much admired, there seems to be some reluctance to associate with them. When asked which group they least liked to associate with, 22 percent of the residents said Haitians. When asked which group would they least approve of their children marrying, these same individuals said Haitians. Further probing indicated the Haitians are thought to be different because of the language and overall cultural attributes. Several residents reported that Haiti seemed to have been able to maintain its "Africaness" more than the other Caribbean countries.

There was little change in how the average Caribbean immigrants perceived

Trinidadians. Unlike the community leaders, residents did not view the Trinidadians' love for partying as negative. Trinidadians were among the groups with which the residents most liked to associate.

The image and perceptions of Jamaicans, Guyanese, and Panamanians changed for the worse. Like the Caribbean leaders, the residents noted that a certain segment of these groups evokes a negative image of the larger Caribbean population. Constant references were made to the tendency for young men in these groups to be involved in criminal activities. During the 1980s, there was extensive media coverage of the Jamaican drug gangs who were blamed for a number of gang-style murders of law enforcement officers, money laundering, and racketeering. There were also allegations of Jamaican drug gangs rivaling the Colombian drug lords. As a result, innocent young males and females with an accent and a particular look (hair in dread locks) were harassed by the police. Frequent references were made of the Jamaican connection to the drug activities of the 1980s. The decline in media coverage of the drug activities, the murder, arrest and/or deportation of a number of Jamaicans involved in this activity has managed to bring about a change in the perception of Jamaicans, in particular, and Caribbean immigrants in general. There is however, this prevailing sentiment of the arrogance of Jamaican immigrants in New York City. Several respondents, including Jamaicans, made references to the arrogant and aggressive nature of Jamaican immigrants. A middle-aged Jamaican woman from the Bronx noted:

I love my people but them (Jamaicans) in New York are too aggressive and loud. They act as if they own the place with the loud playing of the reggae music. You go on Gunhill Road on a Saturday, and they all over the place. One of the good thing though is that those who use to act big in Jamaica can't do it in New York because they

(White people) see us all as the same Black people.

It seems paradoxical, that while Jamaicans are viewed in a negative light, most residents and Caribbean leaders expressed a willingness to associate with them.

The "small island" stereotype remained pervasive even after migration. Several Jamaicans and Guyanese used the term to describe immigrants from Barbados, Grenada, St. Vincent, and other countries in the Lesser Antilles. While this term is used widely, it does not seem to have a negative impact on the development of a "Caribbean" identity. The majority expressed a willingness to identify ethnically with Caribbean immigrants regardless of their place of birth.

The preconceived notions of the various Caribbean immigrant groups does not seem to impact the general population acceptance of a "Caribbean identity." As mentioned earlier, there is a very strong sense of pride about being Caribbean, which does not change because of the actions of a certain segment of the population.

Identity, Citizenship, and Political/Community Participation

Twenty-nine of the 103 residents surveyed said that they were not citizens and thirteen out of this group stated that they did not plan to become citizens. Sixty-one, more than half of those surveyed, have become citizens and the remaining twelve are in the process of becoming citizens. More than half of those who have become citizens did so within ten years of migration. This time span is average for this group if one takes into account that a number of immigrants might have been undocumented on their arrival in

New York City. It usually takes approximately two to three years for a sponsor (employer or spouse) to file for the individual to obtain his/her green card. It usually takes five years from the date the green card was issued to file for citizenship. This high level of naturalization among the general population is similar to that of the leaders. According to the New York City Department of City Planning's analysis of the 1990 census data, the rate of naturalization for immigrants who arrived before 1980 was 54.9 percent for Jamaicans, 45.2 percent for Haitians, 65.5 percent for Guyanese, and 37.0 percent for Trinidadians. While the naturalization rates are relatively high for the region, when compared to other immigrant groups such as Chinese, Russians, Filipinos, and Poles, which is on average 80 percent, the Anglophone and Francophone Caribbean average rate of 50 percent lags far behind the general immigrant population of New York City (New York City Planning Department, *Newest New Yorkers* 1994). The 1986 and 1996 changes in the United States immigration and naturalization laws propelled many Caribbeans to become citizens for fear of deportation or losing social security and other benefits which the new laws made available only to citizens. The most recent data have not been compiled, but based on anecdotal information from two leaders who are involved with organizations providing immigration and naturalization services in the community, there is an increase of about 20 percent in the rate of naturalization for Caribbean immigrants from 1996 to 1998.

Of the thirteen who had no plans to naturalize, all said that they were planning to return to the Caribbean and therefore had no interest in becoming citizens. Previous studies on transnational migration (Basch et al. 1997) suggest that less than 10 percent of immigrants, Caribbean included, who stated that they would return to their country of

birth, actually do so. Because of this constant plan to return, these immigrants are described as sojourner in the host society (Basch et al., 1997). This sojourner mentality prevents the immigrants from playing an active role in the social and political life of the host society.

Immigrants resisted naturalization for several reasons. Primary among these is the fear of losing citizenship of their country of birth. Another, related to the sojourner mentality, is that the immigrants' thoughts about the future are far removed from the United States. As a result, they do not see the need to become citizens. Seven of the thirteen non-citizens emphatically stated that they plan to return to the Caribbean in the next five years. However, only two of the seven are actually making or have made concrete plans to return.

The resistance of these twenty-nine non-citizens to become American citizens can also be viewed as an anti-American or unpatriotic sentiment toward the United States. When asked, "Do you have strong patriotic feelings about the United States?" only nine or 31 percent of the twenty-nine non-citizens confirmed their patriotic feelings about the United States, considering the fact that this is because they live here and do not have any sentimental or emotional attachment to the United States. The remaining 69 percent disavowed any patriotic feelings about the United States. In addition, it can be argued that this group's anti-American sentiments and low rate of citizenship is a result of their strong sense of patriotism toward their country of origin. Only six of the twenty-nine non-citizens stated that they did not have strong patriotic feelings about their country of origin, the remaining twenty-three expressed a strong sense of patriotism. When probed further all

twenty-three agreed that their sense of patriotism is by virtue of their place of birth. None of those interviewed expressed any strong primordial connections with their place of birth, although it could be inferred from the leaders comments, regarding efforts made by various Caribbean governments to build civic pride, that this patriotism has been ingrained prior to migration. Also, the immigrants continued contacts with their home countries fuel their sense of patriotism for their home countries.

Five of twenty-nine non-citizens are active or somewhat active in the Caribbean community. Of the five, only two had a long history of activism which includes attending rallies and demonstrations, voting, union membership, assisting with political campaigns, and attending political clubs or organizations. Both migrated from Jamaica during the 1970s and have been influenced by the Marxist rhetoric taught in at the University of the West Indies at the time.

Of the sixty-one immigrants who have become citizens, forty-three are registered voters, but only half of them voted in the 1997 mayoral election. The immigrants who are registered voters are registered Democrats who always vote on the Democratic ticket. It is interesting to note that, while most remembered that they voted against Giuliani, they could not recall the name of the candidate for whom they voted. Five said they voted for Dinkins and another seven said that they voted for Sharpton (Dinkins was defeated in the 1993 election and Sharpton was defeated in the 1997 primary by Ruth Messinger). The inability to name Messinger as the candidate who ran against Giuliani is another indication of the disconnectedness between the general population and the political happenings of New York City albeit that she ran a weak campaign. The disconnectedness can also be attributed to

media. The Caribbean media did not provide extensive coverage of Messinger, nor did she use the Caribbean media extensively to pander to the Caribbean community. As a result, she did not have a strong following in the community. Moreover, Messinger quickly disappeared from the political scene after her defeat, while Dinkins and Sharpton continued to address various issues of importance to the Caribbean community after their defeats.

Five of the forty-three registered democrats voted for Giuliani in the 1997 mayoral election. The switch in votes is modest but is indicative of growing support for Giuliani compared to 1993. It is also interesting to note that the switch took place after Sharpton lost the primary. It can be argued that when Sharpton, whom the residents viewed as a popular and effective politician, lost the primary, these voters turned to Giuliani, who also had the name recognition and was perceived by the residents as being effective. Giuliani as the choice for this minority within the Caribbean community can be viewed as a case of choosing the “known evil over the unknown evil.” The five who supported Giuliani were among those who identified him as a White politician who is doing an effective job. They were also among those who identified Sharpton as a politician who is doing an effective job.

Only one residents said that she became naturalized in order to take part in the political process. The others said that they became citizens out of economic necessity—to get educational support, obtain better jobs, or out of fear of being deported.

There is no clear relationship between voter registration and being active in New York City politics. Of the forty-three registered voters, only eleven or 25 percent considered themselves active in New York City politics. This is probably high compared to

the population as a whole. These political activities include attending political meetings, joining political clubs or organizations, contributing to political campaigns (cash or otherwise), and discussing politics, among other things. An even smaller number-- six-- were citizens, non-registered voters, but active in New York City politics and only ten of the 103 residents are registered voters who stated that they are active in New York City politics, the Caribbean community in New York City, and their home country politics. This low number of political activists is to be anticipated given the fact that the majority of the residents only recently became citizens and many became citizens for economic rather than political reasons.

The low levels of political participation among this group supports Verba's et al. (1995) position on political participation among various economic classes in the United States. According to these authors, the working poor and lower middle class--which makes up the bulk of the Caribbean community--have less time and money to contribute to political activities. From the authors' analysis, each of the many participatory options available to Americans require at least some time or some money (Verba et al. 1995:515). Since this community has less free time--many residents have more than one job and demanding family obligations-- and limited disposable income, the levels of political participation is predictably low. What is not clear is whether the Caribbean residents' low levels of political participation is by virtue of their lack of interest in politics, lack of resources--time and/or money, the way they identify within the context of New York City, or a combination of one or more of these factors. From the work of Verba et al. (1995) it can be assumed, for the working poor at least, that they are dissatisfied with New York

City politics, and as a result, they do not participate. This is evidenced by the number of residents who stated that New York City politics was, “dirty,” “corrupt,” and influenced by the rich. The residents were also asked whether their feelings about New York City’s politics affect the way they participate. Overwhelmingly those who view politics in a negative light responded that they do not participate for this reason.

From the residents’ responses it is not clear whether these immigrants were always active prior to becoming naturalized and registering to vote or that their new immigrant status gave them the impetus to become more active. With the leaders, it was clear that their levels of activism was borne out of family or community traditions, or coming of age in their home or host societies—during the 1960s and 1970s, a period of heightened political awareness in the United States and the Caribbean. It was easy to make this determination for the leaders because they were subjected to at least three hours of interview. During this time they were able to recall, with some accuracy, how and why they became involved in the Caribbean community in New York. In addition these interviews were scheduled ahead of time so the leaders knew the nature of the interview and had time to collect their thoughts. The residents were not afforded that time. The residents had thirty minutes to answer fifty questions.

The residents were asked about their personal views of New York City politics. Forty-seven did not have a clear opinion on the subject. In a follow-up question which tried to ascertain why they had no clear opinion, the majority said that they did not follow politics because they were not interested in politics nor they did they think about it seriously. Twenty-nine gave no response or said that they did not know anything about

New York City politics. The others expressed very negative views of politics. Similar to their cohorts in the elite, the residents were of the opinion that New York City politics is “corrupt,” “controlled by Whites,” and that “Blacks and Caribbean are under-represented in politics.” As a result of the corrupt nature of politics, the general population, unlike the leaders, did not see their individual or the communities’ salvation within context of New York City politics. The leaders were in more advantageous positions (having to negotiate with the power structure on a daily basis for the allocation of services for the community) to determine that politics is local, and impacts on every facets of one’s life. The immigrants disillusion with politics can also be traced back to their home countries. In addition to economic reasons, the majority of these immigrants, Jamaicans and Haitians especially, were driven from their respective countries because of political turmoil.

The residents were asked to identify any Caribbean, Black, or White politicians in New York City. Fifty-six were able to identify at least two from each of the three groups. In some instances, residents provided four names for each of the categories. While some were not able to identify a Caribbean or Black politician, sixty-one were able to identify a White politician. The mayor, the governor, State Senator Marty Markowitz, and President Clinton were the most frequently identified politicians. It can be assumed that the media coverage of these individuals allowed them to be easily identifiable by the residents. Also, the mayor, governor, and president hold offices with decision-making powers that are more far reaching than those held by Caribbean or Black politicians. The residents limited knowledge of the politicians who represent them at the local level (the majority of whom are African American or Caribbean) might be an indication that these local elected officials

have limited access to the media and therefore would not have the name recognition with the general population. The picture for the leadership is very different. The leaders readily identified all the elected officials because of the frequent contacts the leaders have with these local politicians. Some even had frequent contacts with the mayor, governor and the president.

In the case of Marty Markowitz, the ability to identify him can be associated with the fact that a majority of the residents interviewed lived in the East Flatbush/Flatbush section of Brooklyn which he represents. In addition, Markowitz has become well known in the Brooklyn Caribbean community for sponsoring free summer concerts in Wingate High School Park. While the residents lauded him for his generosity, some leaders questioned his sincerity and effectiveness. This is another disjuncture between the residents and the leaders. To the residents, Markowitz is addressing their needs, albeit at a social level. He sponsors free stage shows featuring prominent Caribbean artists. From anecdotal accounts of some of the leaders who have been associated with this event, very little money is generated from this event to benefit the community. Neither does it serve as an outlet or rallying point for dialogue on serious issues affecting the community. As a result, from the leaders point of view, this only serves as a social function and many are of the opinion that it does a disservice to the community. For the residents, this is a welcome entertainment on a warm summer evening. At these concerts they get to see four or five artists for free instead of traveling to Manhattan to Madison Square Garden or Radio City Music hall and paying forty dollars or more.

While these concerts are intended to serve a social/cultural purposes, they also

serve a political purpose for Markowitz. Using name recognition and association with this successful event, Caribbean immigrants returned Markowitz to the state senate for more than four terms. It should also be noted that Markowitz's use of politics of the personal (appealing to the personal by showing up at birthdays, weddings, and funerals) has also played a role in his popularity among Caribbean immigrants. Given Markowitz's popularity as a result of these programs, it is safe to assume that, to replace him, a challenger would have to provide similar or better services to the community. On the other hand, Assemblywoman Jacobs has been returned to office as many times as Markowitz, but is losing popularity. None of the residents interviewed identified her among the White politicians in New York nor did they see her as one of the politicians attempting to unify the Caribbean community. With limited name recognition, it can be assumed that a candidate from the community with sufficient name recognition and support could defeat Jacobs. The 1998 state assembly primary between Jacobs and Nicolas provided further evidence to support this assumption

The residents were asked if these politicians are doing an effective job. There was a fifty/fifty split among this group. Those who favored the mayor and the governor thought they are doing a good job of combating crime, although their policies negatively impact on people of African ancestry. On the other hand, many think that the mayor is mean-spirited and a bully, especially when dealing with African Americans. Most were displeased with his continued support for the police force which has been charged with a series of police brutality.

Congressmen Rangel and Owens, former Mayor Dinkins, Al Sharpton and New

York State Assemblyman Larry Seabrook were the names most frequently cited when the residents were asked to identify African American politicians. These politicians were seen as been effective, except for Major Owens. Twenty residents from the East Flatbush section of Brooklyn pointed out that Owens was not doing much for his congressional district. Only the residents from the Bronx identified Larry Seabrook as an effective Black politician. (Seabrook represents a large section of northeast Bronx which has a significant Caribbean population.) Similar to the Bronx residents, the majority of the residents from Queens identified former Congressman Flake as a Black politician who is doing an effective job. No one stated that he was ineffective. It was not clear, however, if the residents were viewing Flake's effectiveness as a politician and/or clergyman, particularly since most of the residents made reference to the work he has done through Allen African Methodist Episcopalian (AME) Church.

New York City Councilmember Una Clarke was the person most frequently identified as an effective Caribbean politician by residents within and outside of the Brooklyn community which she represents. Fifty-six residents cited her as an effective politician, including those are residents outside of Brooklyn. Lloyd Henry was also mentioned by fifteen residents, all of whom live in East Flatbush, Brooklyn, the neighborhood which he represents. All fifty-six residents stated that Clarke is doing an effective job because she is always on television or in the newspaper voicing her concerns for the Caribbean community. Less than five percent of the residents identified Nick Perry. Perry, a Jamaican-born politician has served as the state assemblyman of the East Flatbush community for more than three terms. According to the voter return for the 1998

elections, Perry received the second largest number of votes among the Black state-elected officials. However, Perry does not have the media coverage that Clarke does, nor is he seen as “doing” anything for the community. No mention was made of either State Senator John Sampson ³⁷ or Pauline Cummings, as Caribbean or Black politicians. One can argue that Sampson, a second generation Guyanese, and Cummings, a first generation Jamaican, were “too new” to have the name recognition of a Clarke, Rangel, or Dinkins.

Among the African American politicians, Rangel and Sharpton were identified as being effective, presumably at least in part, because they are always in the media. The brevity of these telephone interviews, did not allow follow-up questions to determine whether the effectiveness of these politicians was based on actual accomplishments or perception as a result of media exposure.

Involvement in Home Country Politics

Of the 103 residents interviewed, only twelve said that they are even somewhat involved in the politics of their home country. This involvement includes frequent discussion with friends and relatives back in the home country, supporting a political party or candidate running for office and frequent contact with their country’s consulate or mission in New York City. A majority of those who are not involved in their home country’s politics expressed dissatisfaction with their home country’s current government.

³⁷Sampson defeated Howard Babbush in the 1998 state senatorial elections. He now represents Canarsie and East Flatbush. Both communities have become increasingly Caribbean and middle-class. Recognizing this, Sampson, in many of his campaign speeches emphasized his Caribbean ethnic ancestry to gain the support of this constituency.

Many residents, particularly Jamaicans, were dissatisfied with their country's government prior to migration. When probed further to determine why they are not involved, many residents reported that they were "too busy trying to make it here in America."

Furthermore, majority expressed a dislike for politics both in New York City and the Caribbean. Although sixty percent of the residents make an annual pilgrimage to the Caribbean, they do so to connect with their family and not with the larger society. As a result, they are far removed from the daily affairs of government of their sending societies. Majority of those who continue to be involved in their home country are more likely to be from the middle class and are likely to benefit socially and economically from their involvement.

Given the fact that a majority of the immigrants migrated to New York City within the past ten years, it is understandable that there are low levels of political participation among this group. Gordon (1992) suggests that immigrants go through three stages before they arrive at full political participation in their host society. In the first stage, the immigrants are concerned with finding jobs, obtaining an education, reuniting with family, and becoming familiar with the unfamiliar. This process usually takes one to three years depending on the immigrants' ability to learn the language and other nuances of the host society. In the second stage, the immigrants are engaged in a process of community formation and transforming the community and living environment. This often takes about five to ten years, particularly if the area settled has experienced significant blight or consistent patterns of economic downturn. The third stage brings about increased awareness of the politics of the host society. It is at this stage that most immigrants

become citizens with the intention of participating in the political process. This usually takes place fifteen to twenty years after migration. From the discussion of the leaders and the residents, the Caribbean community in New York City has surpassed the first two stages and is at the beginning of this third stage. It is at this stage that there is some semblance of a community and members of the community (leaders and general population) talk about putting forward a political agenda. In the case of the Caribbean community it is yet to be determined whether this agenda is being put forward using a racial, or Caribbean identity. It is clear, however, that with the exception of the Haitians,³⁸ it is unlikely that political agenda will be based on national identity.

Another reason which allows for low levels of involvement with their home country can be linked to the fact that more than 60 percent of the residents are not involved with the larger Caribbean community or with nation-specific organizations in New York City. They were not members of any of the hundreds of voluntary associations, social clubs, or alumni associations in the Caribbean community. During the interviews with the leaders, a number of them acknowledge being closely connected to their countries' government through their political contribution, serving as consultants, and assisting family members who are running for office or serving in the government of their home country. In addition, a number of organizations come into frequent contact with these governments because of their charitable contributions to schools, hospitals, and community centers in their home country. Usually, as a matter of protocol, a representative of the national government or

³⁸The Haitian national identity is currently strong in the local and national level of American politics because of the current crisis of political unrest in that country.

the local political leaders are on hand to receive these donations. In essence, it is through the activities of the voluntary organizations that the Caribbean immigrants maintain frequent contact and become more involved in their countries' politics. However, only a small minority, if involved, are doing so at this level.

For the purpose of this research, political activism is viewed separately from community activism to get a clearer sense of how the community views politics as a whole. From the responses, it is clear that they do not see activism in church as being active in the community, nor do they view participation in block association meetings or community board meetings as political. While the average resident is not active in the politics, 51 or nearly 50 percent of the 103 citizens reported that they were active in a church. However, activism in church does not translate to activism in New York City politics nor community involvement. Only eleven of the church activists considered themselves in active New York City politics.

Unlike the African American community, churches in the Caribbean community play a limited role in the politics of New York City and the home countries. Referring to the apparent political apathy among Caribbean immigrants, one leader, who is also a clergyman, blames the church for not being more involved. According to this leader, the churches are not interested in "rocking the boat" or getting involved in politics. This limited political and community involvement of Caribbean churches can also be linked to their past experiences in the Caribbean. With the exception of Haiti and the Catholic Church, since emancipation, churches have played a very low-keyed role in Caribbean politics.

Outside of the church, the Caribbeans are inactive in New York City politics in general or the politics of their community. This level of inactivity can be linked to several factors. First, the outreach, if there is any, for the community-based organizations serving this population is ineffective. The Caribbean Research Center at Medgar Evers College has compiled a list of over two hundred country-specific, professional, social, recreational, cultural, and political organizations serving this community. However, they tend to reach out to middle-class professionals--those who are more likely to be involved--rather than the general population. Second, when probed about why they are not involved, forty-eight or almost half of the residents reported that while they want to be involved in their community, their time is restricted by work, family, and school.

Residents who were not eligible to vote did not express an interest in becoming citizens in order to participate in New York City politics. Community leaders highlighted the need for Caribbean immigrants to become citizens in order to become politically empowered, but, the average Caribbean immigrant does not seem receptive to this message. This message is being carried by the print and audio-visual media. The hundred residents interviewed reported that they get their information about the Caribbean community from such radio stations as WLIB, an African American owned-and-operated radio station, WPAT FM, a New Jersey-based radio station, and IRIE FM based in Westchester, New York. With the exception of WLIB, these radio programs provide more musical entertainment than information about political empowerment.

Residents and leaders alike have ready access to the print media serving the community. The *CaribNews*, *Caribbean Daylight*, *Caribbean Life*, and *Everybody*

Magazine are some of the newspapers circulating in the New York City Caribbean community. Caribbean Life is the only newspaper not owned and operated by members of the community. A fifteen-year analysis of *CaribNews* (1983-1998)--the oldest and most widely read Caribbean owned newspaper--conducted by me showed that there were prolific discussions on home country politics, Caribbean identity, political participation, community empowerment, immigration, and African American and Caribbean relationships in New York City. Both the residents and the elites took part in these discussions. However, during the mid 1990s, there were little if any editorials, letters, or articles focusing on the Caribbean community in New York City. From 1995 to 1997, only two articles encouraged political participation among the Caribbean immigrants (see Appendix 4 for list of articles used in this analysis). However, immigration continues to be one of the main focuses. More often than not these newspaper carry photo opportunities of dignitaries, elected officials and other notables at social events. In addition, the newspaper continues to carry lengthy articles on happenings in the home country and throughout the Caribbean regional. It is fair to say that there does not seem to be a concentration of coverage on a particular country.

From the late 1997 to 1998, the Caribbean news media have been focusing on the impact of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) on the economies of the region. The newspapers also featured articles on the impact of crime in the Caribbean, particularly as it relates to the increase in deportation of convicted criminals from the United States to the Caribbean. In sum, the newspapers, from which the community gets its information, focused internally during the decade of the 1980s. This was due in part to

the leadership kindling the discussion on such issues as community empowerment, political participation, and Caribbean identity. From the letters written by the residents it can be said that these debates aroused interest, if not increased voter turnout.

In the late 1990s, the newspapers featured many articles dealing with United States foreign policy as it related to the economy of the Caribbean region. The resident survey responses make it clear that they are not immediately concerned about this topic even when it is widely discussed in the media. Nor does the debate on political empowerment and participation which took place in the 1980s serve to inform the general population. Several factors may contribute to this lack of interest. First, the *CaribNews*, in the 1980s, was a fledgling newspaper with limited readership. Secondly, the Caribbean community was experiencing the second biggest wave of migrants to New York City, and given the preoccupations with a new society, discussion of political empowerment was a low priority.

Unlike the community leaders, who see the lack of political and economic empowerment as serious issues, the residents see immigration, crime, jobs, police brutality, and low wages the most serious problems facing them. This has changed significantly from the 1990 Medgar Evers study, where immigration ranked low on the list of problems. The Caribbean residents believe that the community leaders and elected officials can address the problems of crime and low wages.

Settlement Pattern, Identity, and Participation

At the borough level, there is an almost equal distribution of a racial group identity. Thirty percent of the residents in each of the boroughs identifies solely by race. This includes those who identify as Indo-Guyanese or Indo-Trinidadian. For those who identify solely with a national group, Jamaicans are almost evenly distributed across each borough and represent close to 13 percent of the sample size in each borough. Those who identify as Guyanese are concentrated in Queens and those who identify as Haitians are concentrated in Brooklyn. Based on the paucity of the sample and the varied distribution of group identification, it is difficult to determine the relationship between group identification and settlement pattern.

An examination of such factors as voting in the 1997 mayoral election, level of activism in the Caribbean community, the church, and New York City politics to determine level of political and community participation reveals some interesting findings. Twenty-three or about 50 percent of the forty-eight Brooklyn residents are not involved in any political activities in New York or in their home countries. The Bronx and Queens show a similar level of political activities. Ten of the nineteen residents from the Bronx and fifteen of the thirty-one residents from Queens say that they are not involved in any form of political activities. For those who are involved in political activities in New York City and their home country the numbers for the target areas is low. Three from the Bronx, two from Brooklyn, and two from Queens participated in their home country as well as New York City politics. About 30 percent or thirteen of the forty-eight Brooklyn residents voted in the 1997 mayoral election. A similar percentage of the Bronx and Queens

residents also voted in that election.

In an attempt to get a better understanding of levels of activism and involvement in New York City, the residents were asked if they were active in the church, the Caribbean community in New York City and/or New York City in general. The analysis of their responses shows that there is no apparent difference at the borough level. Only four residents or 8 percent of the respondents from Brooklyn, two or 10 percent from the Bronx and two or 5 percent from Queens said that they are involved in the Caribbean community in New York. I expected a higher level of activism in the Caribbean community from the residents in Brooklyn given the fact the bulk of the population is located in Brooklyn, and at least five of the Black elected officials are of Caribbean ancestry serving communities in Brooklyn. In fact, registered voters, which is used as a measurement of political participation in the analysis, shows that eighteen residents or 50 percent of the residents from Queens, seven residents or 37 percent of Bronx's residents, and eighteen residents or 37 of Brooklyn's residents are registered voters. Since there is a higher percentage of home-owners and middle-class residents in Queens, the assumption that they are more likely to take part in formal political activity via voter registration is borne out by the residents' responses.

Another interesting findings relates to those who reported that they voted in the 1997 mayoral election. Of the forty-seven who reported that they voted in the election, six residents (12 percent) were from the Bronx, fourteen residents (27 percent) were from Queens, and twenty-seven residents (57 percent)of the forty-eight residents from Brooklyn. But more interesting than the number of voters is the candidate they voted for.

Of the thirty-one who remembered whom they voted for, the majority of the Queens voters said they voted for Messinger and the majority of the Brooklyn voters voted for Sharpton. Only two persons from each of the boroughs said they voted for Giuliani. Sharpton's appeals to the working class and race conscious citizens is one explanation of this strong support in Brooklyn. Similarly, Messinger's appeal to the middle-class, moderate or liberal voters is one explanation for her strong showing among the Caribbean residents in Queens.

Analysis of involvement in church suggests that there is a difference at the borough level. There is a greater percentage of community involvement in the church for Queens and the Bronx than Brooklyn: twenty people or 56 percent of the Queens residents, twelve people or 63 percent for the Bronx, and eighteen people or 38 percent for Brooklyn. Field observation of the targeted areas shows that there is a greater concentration of churches in the Flatbush and East Flatbush areas of Brooklyn than the areas of the Bronx and Queens. From the analysis, it can be concluded that this concentration of churches does not translate to increased membership or members who consider themselves involved in church activities. Another factor which can be associated with the low percentage of churchgoers in Brooklyn is the composition and types of churches located in the targeted areas of Brooklyn. A majority of the churches can be described as small "store-front" churches which serves the needs of immigrants from particular communities in the Caribbean. Thus, the congregation of "Mount Moriah Church" or "Eglise De Dieu" is likely to be from a particular district in rural Jamaica or Haiti. These churches are more likely to be of the Protestant--Baptist, Seventh Day Adventist, Church of God denomination. In essence,

these churches serve as an extension of the sending communities and are unlikely to be active in areas outside of this community. Also, it is unlikely that residents who are not part of these “overseas” extensions would become members of these churches. In the Bronx and more so in Queens, there are fewer “storefront” churches targeting these “overseas” community. Such churches as Allen AME in Queens and St. Luke’s in the Bronx cater to a wider cross section of the Caribbean community, hence increase participation among their congregation.

Interviews with community leaders reveals that there is an extensive organization of Black clergy serving social and political needs of the Caribbean and African American community in Brooklyn and several members of the organization assisted City Council members Una Clarke and Lloyd Henry, and other elected officials during their election campaigns. However, the churches’ involvement in these activities does not reach beyond the confines of the clerics to the average church members. This can be attributed to the fact that Caribbean immigrants see the church as addressing their spiritual and social needs and not necessarily their political needs. Thus political involvement via church would not be easily realized.

Caribbean Unity

Listed below are some of the questions asked of the residents to determine the extent of unity in the Caribbean communities in New York City:

Should Caribbean immigrants work separately from other groups in New York City to pursue their own political interests?

Is there one issue around which there should be Caribbean unity? If so, what should it be?

Are there any elected official(s) who try to bring about Caribbean unity in New York City? If so, who?

Are there any community-based organization(s) that try to bring about Caribbean unity in New York City, if so which one?

Half of the residents believe that the Caribbean countries should join together and form one government. However, many believe that while it is a good idea, it might not work. They assume that any attempt at regional unity in the Caribbean will meet the same fate as the Caribbean Federation of the 1950s. The other half flatly reject attempts at a unified Caribbean. Those immigrants who lived in the Caribbean at the time of the federation, particularly those from Trinidad and Guyana, seem to fault Jamaica for the demise of the federation. One elderly Guyanese man noted that:

The Jamaicans 'em still 'ave the same attitude that 'em di center of the Caribbean and 'em want to control everything. It de same attitude dat does get 'em in trouble wid de federation in de '50s.

While many community leaders argue that the governments of the Caribbean must form a unified entity in keeping with the global trend toward regional unification, the residents do not show a strong bent toward unification.

Sixty-seven or nearly two thirds of the residents, were not able to identify any community-based organization that tries to bring about Caribbean unity in New York City. When probed further, residents were not familiar with community organizations or did not think that those they knew wished to bring about Caribbean unity. Twelve residents

identified the West Indian American Carnival Committee. However, only half of the twelve could identify the organization by name. Others referred to it as the organization that put on the Labor Day Carnival. Another ten identified CWAHA and CIS either by name, by location, or function that they perform. For example, several residents stated, "I don't remember the name but it's the Women's Health group on Church Avenue," or "the guy who comes on the radio of Sundays and does citizenship drive in Queens." When names were stated to the residents, they confirmed their choices. The low level of name recognition of organizations and the views that these organizations do not attempt to bring about Caribbean unity can be attributed to several factors. First, although the West Indian American Carnival Committee is associated with one of the largest cultural and social activities in the Caribbean community in New York City, it has been alleged, by some of the leaders interviewed, that the officers of this organization limit its membership to mainly Trinidadians. Second, this organization does not provide such services as job training and referrals, immigration and naturalization, low cost health care, or other services which impact on the daily lives of these immigrants. Those organizations that provide these services are often not sought after because there is a negative perception in the Caribbean community that those members who receive welfare are lazy. Thus, only a handful of residents, particularly those receiving public assistance would readily identify these social service organizations.

Among those who could identify an elected official who tries to bring about Caribbean unity, Una Clarke's name was most frequently mentioned. Others names mentioned were former Mayor David Dinkins, the former Congressman Floyd Flake from

southern Queens, and Congressman Charles Rangel from Manhattan. Una Clarke is the only one who is Caribbean.

Summary

The Caribbean residents' responses portray the Caribbean community in New York City as inactive in local and home-country politics. This inactivity stems partly from the fact that the residents are trying to "get by" on a daily basis and find it difficult to become involved with activities in their community in New York City, much less that of their sending country. It also stems from a cynicism about what politics can, or more accurately, cannot do for them. Finally, the inactivity might also stem from the lack of outreach by the community-based and voluntary organizations serving this community. In essence, the residents do not participate because they do not know how to. This suggests a limitation of organizations needed to incorporate Caribbean immigrants in the political process. According to Verba et al., it is through these organizations that citizens are mobilized to participate in the public arena (Verba et. al 1995: 17).

The picture also reveals that unlike the community leaders, the general population identifies primarily by race and/or nationality, not by regional or ethnic identity, while the leaders vary their identities between race (Black/African), ethnicity (Caribbean), and national (Haitian, Trinidadian, Jamaican) depending on the situation. Only ten percent of the residents varied their use of their racial, national and ethnic identity, depending on the circumstances. It can be argued that leaders must vary their identity in order to deal with a multitude of clients, including direct-service recipients. Unlike the residents, the leaders

must negotiate for political and/or economic support for their constituency. The identity that would give them the most benefit would be the logical one to use. This goes against Vickerman's position. In his analysis of the Caribbean community, he concludes that Caribbean residents develop a complex pattern of identity formation and in doing so, they create a distinct identity--West Indian--apart from the general "Black" identity that is ascribed, largely by external forces (Vickerman 1999: 168). Vickerman is cautious, however, about this identity and he predicts that this West Indian/Caribbean identity will be problematic because the larger society, particularly the White dominant society, forces West Indians to become "Black" especially in public spaces. Vickerman argues that in public, outside of personal contact with Caribbeans, White sees Caribbeans, first and foremost, as Blacks.

On one hand, the leaders see the Caribbean identity as an important vehicle to engender a political movement in the community. This is important for the leaders because they cannot gain political power by appealing to a segment of the Caribbean community, they have to appeal to the group as a whole. However, the residents do not see the relevance of a political movement to their advancement, nor do they see a Caribbean identity as instrumental, but only as a social or cultural identity.

The general population forges a racial identity based on the racial dynamics of the United States, but not at the expense of their national (Jamaican, Haitian, or Belizean) or ethnic (Caribbean) attachments. Ethnic and national identities remain strong, if only in percentage terms, partly because a large percentage of the community maintains close contact with their home countries (albeit of a social nature given the low level of political

involvement in their home country) and their length of stay in the United States is on average fifteen years (a short time when compared to European immigrants). Thus, an increase in feelings of racial pride and identifying with a particular racial group does not mean a radical decrease in national and/or racial identity.

The immigrants' identity is also influenced by members outside their community. Therefore, the immigrants are faced with the option of agreeing with the categorization of outsiders or forming alternatives. Three possible alternatives for this group are national (Jamaican, Haitian, Trinidadian), racial (Black/African or African American), or ethnic (Caribbean). The general population in this survey chooses to accept the racial categorization in addition to using one of the alternatives. The alternative choice based on nationality is the most difficult to affirm and legitimize in the political sphere. With the exception of Jamaicans, Haitians, and Guyanese (the three countries which ranked in the top ten sending countries), there are not enough St. Lucians, Belizeans, and Vincentians to individually form voting blocs in a city where the electorate who identifies as a group is important.

The fact that this study shows that a large percentage, particularly those earning an income of \$30,000 and less, has strong racial feelings and a small, yet significant number of those earning incomes of \$50,000 or more have a strong national identity, supports Waters's earlier work which argues that socially mobile Caribbean clings to their ethnic or national identity as a hedge against racial identity. In other words, they would rather identify by nationality or ethnicity than by race.

Waters also argues that poor Caribbean immigrants, identify with African

Americans and see little advantage in stressing their ethnicity or nationality. As a matter of fact, Waters asserts that African American view poor Caribbeans who are stressing nationality or ethnicity as wanting to distance themselves from Blacks. In doing so, the Caribbeans risk being labeled as "acting White " (Waters 1994: 816). This study shows, however, that a strong national identity does not come at the expense of a the racial and/or Caribbean identity. Further analysis is needed, to state more convincingly the extent to which the average immigrant hold a Caribbean (ethnic), racial (Black), or national identity more than the others.

The levels of political participation remains low but there does not seem to be a direct relationship between the identity used by the residents and their levels of political participation in New York City. For example, four residents identify as American. Research on immigrant assimilation shows that immigrants consider themselves fully assimilated to identify as "American," at least five years after migration (Warner and Srole 1945 and DeSipio 1996). The immigrants identifying as Americans, lead one to believe that a strong sense of patriotism allows them to identify this way. Furthermore, this level of patriotism requires a commitment at least to be a naturalized citizen, if not a registered voter. The responses of these four reveal, that these individuals have lived in the United States for less than ten years, and only one became a naturalized citizen(in 1997), and this individual is not a registered voter.

There are some important findings which relate to settlement pattern, identity, community activities, and political participation. For example, there is an almost equal distribution at the borough level of residents who identify solely by race. For those who

identify solely with a national group, Jamaicans are almost evenly distributed across each borough. On the other hand, those who identify as Guyanese are more likely to live in Queens and those who identify as Haitians were concentrated in Brooklyn. The varied distribution of group identification makes it difficult to determine the relationship between group identification and settlement pattern and participation.

More than 60 percent of the residents in each of the boroughs are not involved in any political activities in New York or in their home countries. Less than 5 percent of the residents in each borough are involved simultaneously in political activities in New York City and their home country. A higher percentage is active in New York City's politics, especially those who voted in the 1997 mayoral election.

In an attempt to get a better understanding of levels of activism and involvement in the New York City, the residents were asked if they were active in the church, the Caribbean community in New York City and/or New York City in general. The analysis of their responses shows that there is no substantial difference at the borough level with respect to these variables.

Another interesting find relates to those who reported that they voted in the 1997 mayoral election. An equal 30 percent of population from each borough reported that they voted in the 1997 election. Interestingly, the majority of those in Queens voted for Messinger and the majority of those in Brooklyn voted for Sharpton. Less than one percent of the population interviewed voted for Giuliani. This confirms the division based on class of the Caribbean voters. The middle-class residents in Queens voted for Messinger who can be described as liberal while the working-class immigrants in Brooklyn voted for

Sharpton.

Analysis of Caribbean residents' involvement in church reveals some interesting findings. First, there is relatively high number of residents who indicated that they are active in their church. However, this high level of participation among Caribbean immigrants as part of the American society should not be viewed as an anomaly. In fact Fuchs and Shapiro (1999), Verba et al. (1995), Bobo and Gilliam (1990) highlight the importance of the church in generating social, political, and community activism in America. Second there is a difference in church participation at the borough level. There is a greater percentage of community involvement in the church for Queens and the Bronx than Brooklyn although there is a greater concentration of churches in the Flatbush and East Flatbush areas of Brooklyn than the areas of the Bronx and Queens. The concentration of churches does not translate into increased membership or members who consider themselves involved in church, community, or political activities because these churches are more concerned about addressing the spiritual rather than the social or political needs of their congregations. Historically this has been the case of churches in the Caribbean. However, the more well-established churches such as Allen AME in Queens and St. Luke's in the Bronx cater to a wider cross-section of the Caribbean community in these boroughs and encourage their members to participate in the political process.

Finally, the residents' activism in church does not translate into political activism. Nor do the residents see their church activities as akin to community activity. The limited scope of these church activities can be associated with the limited scope of the church--more concerned with the spiritual needs of the community. A majority of the leaders

interviewed are of the opinion that while the church can do much to politically empower the Caribbean community, the clergy has done very little if any activism in this regard.

While I anticipated low levels of direct political participation for the community, given my intimate knowledge of the Caribbean community as it relates to such factors as political dissatisfaction, distrust of politicians, and limited knowledge of the political process, I expected to find high level of indirect or non-political activities, particularly membership in unions, alumni associations, and professional organizations. None of the residents stated that they were involved in any of these organizations. It is unlikely that the residents are active in these organizations and have not indicated so during the interview. To measure levels of direct political participation the residents were asked if they were registered voters and whether they voted in the 1997 mayoral election. They were also asked if they were or have been involved in any political activities in New York City and/or their home country. As list of political activities was read to them in each case when they did not answer the question or seemed to have misunderstood the question (see Appendix 3 for the residents' survey form). Similarly, the residents were asked if they were or have been active in any community activity or in their church. A list of activities was also read to them. Finally, they were asked how they rate their levels of activism in the Caribbean community. This was an attempt to ascertain whether they saw their community as part of or separate from the larger Caribbean community, the larger Black community and New York City. It is conceivable that an individual can live in one of the target areas in Queens but chooses to be involved in community activities in Brooklyn because of historical or familial connection with that neighborhood. These varying questions to determine the

levels of political and non-political involvement reveals that these immigrants have a low level of political involvement and that with respect to non-political involvement, the majority are involved with the church.

The strong racial identity, strong sense of nationalism, and frequent interaction between African Americans and Caribbeans should be an indication to the leaders from within and outside the Caribbean community that attempts at political empowerment should begin with race as a basis for organizing but should not negate or subsume issues of nationalism, culture, or ethnicity. The electoral races in the communities included in this study are showcases of candidates losing the race because they chose to rely solely on race or ethnicity as a factor for empowerment. Wilson and Green (1990) highlight three cases which show what can happen if a candidate chooses to have race as the primary focus of political empowerment of the Caribbean community. The first case was 1982 state senatorial race in the 21st district in Brooklyn. Waldaba Stewart, a Caribbean, and Carl Andrews, an African American were defeated by Marty Markowitz, a Jew, because Stewart chose to rally the community based on ethnicity and Andrews did so based on race. In the end they split the votes and Markowitz won a land-slide victory. The other two cases were examples of African Americans working with Caribbean Americans to increase the representation of Blacks in the political arena. In State Assemblyman Seabrook's district, in the northeast Bronx and in Congressman Floyd Flake's district in southeast Queens, both candidates succeeded in getting Caribbean votes because, while they were concerned with the issue of race, they were also sensitive to the nationalists and ethnic concerns of the Caribbean community which they were attempting to represent. The

heightened level of sensitivity as to the needs and concerns of the Caribbean community should not only be relegated to African American and Caribbean leaders but any leader who decides to represent the Caribbean community in New York City.

While it is important to look at the question of organizing the Caribbean community based on race and other issues, another interesting paradox must be addressed—that of the community organizations serving the community to address these issues. There are several hundred community-based organizations serving the community, however, from the responses of the residents, these organizations are not well known in the community. The following chapter will highlight three community-based organizations serving the Caribbean community. These were the organizations most frequently referred to in the interviews. I will examine the organizational structures, the service delivery components, and the outreach capacity of these organization to show why there is an apparent disconnect between these organizations and the community as a whole.

Chapter 6

Community-Based Organizations and Group Identity Formation

Raymond Jones, one of the most distinguished actors in Caribbean and African American politics shared the belief that people of African ancestry could succeed in politics only through a readily identifiable organizational structure which the community can support, and from which it can expect economic, political, and social assistance (Walters 1989). Bach et al. (1994) support the claim that organizations created by immigrant groups have been one important medium through which collective identities of a given group have been defined, mediated, and contested (Bach et al. 1993: 98). Organizations are important particularly where immigrants are constantly contesting for social, political, and economic space. Verba et al. (1995) also agree that community organization is an important force to channel citizen activities. It is through these organizations that immigrants can galvanize support (financial and otherwise) and push forward their demands.

Although Caribbean immigrants, during the period of the 1920s to the 1950s, identified with African Americans, based on race, there seemed to be a distinction between the political and social identities of the immigrants. For the most part, the social identity seemed to be based on a national identity Holder (1983). The membership in and the growth of various nation-specific organizations such as the Jamaican Progressive League, the Grenada Benevolent Society, the Barbadian Benevolent Society, among others, is one indication of this. The benevolent associations and fraternal organizations provided social support in times of needs—insurance for the sick, monies for burial in the home country, or

scholarships for college education. The monies for these activities were raised through membership dues and from social events—the annual ball or the boat ride up the Hudson River. These events were usually attended by immigrants from that country or other Caribbean nationals. It was very rare that African Americans would attend these social/cultural events.

While the benevolent organizations provided impetus for a social identity formation which was connected to the specific countries, they also served to politicize some of their members who later became incorporated in New York City politics through the African American political arena. It can be argued that the organizations of this period served a similar functions to the political party machine used to incorporate the Irish immigrants at that time.

Since the 1980s, there are only a few region-specific organizations serving the Caribbean community in New York City. And there are even fewer recognizable organizations serving this role of the earlier benevolent and fraternal organizations. This is evidenced by the fact that a significant number of the leaders and community residents were unable to identify community-based organizations serving the need of the Caribbean community. Those who were able to identify organizations pointed to the Caribbean Women's Health Association (CWAHA), the Caribbean American Chamber of Commerce (CACCI), and the Caribbean Immigrant Services (CIS). What is even more interesting is that the majority of the residents were not able to identify the name of the organization but the individuals heading these organizations. The organizations mentioned above have been formed within the past ten years, with CIS being the most recent—formed in mid 1996 as

a direct response to the immigration reform of that year.

During the interviews with the leadership of these organizations they emphasized that while individuals within the organizations are very active, the organizations as a whole are non-partisan service organizations and seldom get involved with supporting a particular candidate running for office. In the case of the Caribbean Immigrant Services, they have openly endorse such candidates as Gregory Meeks during his successful bid for Congress and Pauline Cummings who successfully replaced Meeks in the New York State Assembly. While the other organizations would not openly endorsed candidates—mainly due to the fact that they are 501c3 organizations receiving public funds³⁹—evidence points to the fact that these organizations do serve a political function, as many of the leaders are appointed by elected officials to serve on advisory boards and committees. In addition, several elected officials within and outside the Caribbean community sit on the board of directors of these organizations.

There are several hundred voluntary or community-based organizations formed to address the needs of the Caribbean community. It is interesting to note that most of the organizations date back to the 1970's and target specific country or groups from those countries. For example, there are approximately ten country-specific cricket clubs, several associations for former nurses, teachers, and ex-policemen. There are also hundreds of alumni associations. The main activity of these groups is fund raising to maintain themselves and to support schools, hospitals, or villages in the Caribbean. One of the

³⁹ 501c3 is the tax exempt status given by the Internal Revenue Service to not-for-profit and non-profit community-based organizations.

unique features of the Caribbean communities in New York City is that they are cross-national and, in many regards, cross-cultural. Given this context, the organizations and individuals who choose to serve this cross-national community within these organizations have to address issues of nationalism and racism within the community, within the general minority groups, and within the wider society.

To provide a better understanding of how organizations are addressing the needs of the community, this research will focus on Caribbean Women's Health Association (CWhA), Caribbean Action Lobby (CAL), and Caribbean American Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CACCI). These organizations have been identified by community leaders and residents as being most responsive to the needs of the community, and attempt to bring about unity among Caribbean immigrants in New York City.

Within the past five years there has been some attempt to form umbrella organizations with a regional, rather than a country-specific, focus. Still there are very few organizations within this community which have a regional focus. The Caribbean Action Lobby, the Caribbean Women's Health Association and the Caribbean American Chamber of Commerce are the three largest organizations which were purposely created to address the need of the wider Caribbean community.

Caribbean Action Lobby

The Caribbean Action Lobby (CAL) was organized in 1978 by Joseph Barritue a local community leader and trade unionist and Marvin Dymally, a Congressman from California. A few years prior, Dymally began a Caribbean Action Lobby at the national

level to bring attention to Federal government policies affecting the Caribbean. Barritue and Dymally came together to form a New York chapter based in Brooklyn.

Unlike other organizations serving the Caribbean community citywide and Brooklyn in particular, CAL is not a direct service-oriented group. It is an advocacy group which draws attention to issues affecting the Caribbean communities in New York City. Many organizers would argue that CAL is not a community organization because it was created from the top down. However this paper will contend that it is a community-based organization because it was created by local leadership and serves as an umbrella organization for many Caribbean community-based organizations, not only those in the Brooklyn but throughout the other boroughs.⁴⁰

The leadership body is comprised of a chairperson, vice-chair, secretary and a treasure. There is an advisory board which works with the executive body to provide direction and leadership for the organization. The leadership is elected from among the members, and they serve a one-year term.

In the past, membership was limited to leaders from the community. This leadership was defined as anyone holding office within a Caribbean organization (Caribbean organizations includes those which are country-specific). Recently, the membership criteria have been changed to allow non-elected members of any Caribbean organization to become a member. There are approximately five hundred members, of which two hundred attend regularly and pay dues. Voting and other privileges are extended to those who do not pay dues or attend on a regular basis. The membership is fairly broad-based, in that they

⁴⁰ Statement made during an interview with a founding member and past president of CAL.

belong to various committees and organizations within the community. Each member plays an active role in voicing his/her personal concerns and that of the organizations they represent.

There are five standing committee to address the various issues in the community. These are Education, Health, Economic Development, Political Action and Cultural/Arts. There are other ad hoc committees which are formed on a needed basis. General meetings are held monthly, during the evening to accommodate the working crowd. The meetings are open to the public and on an average, over fifty members attend meetings regularly.⁴¹ The committees usually meet more frequently or on a needed basis. The meetings often run for several hours. In an emergency session, as with the case of the Grenada invasion in 1983 or the Crown Heights riots of 1991, the meetings would go for ten hours or more. The leadership of the organization prides itself on presenting an opinion arrived at by consensus. It often takes several hours to reach a consensus. The leadership does not think that this is counter-productive because there are various factions from approximately twenty Caribbean countries and fifty organizations, and it is important for each person to air his/her views.

According to one of the founding members and current chair, there are a few individuals who devote approximately fifty percent of their time to the organization. Running the organization does become time-consuming and this is alleviated by delegating certain responsibilities to member organizations or the standing committee.

⁴¹Information provided by three leaders interviewed for this project one a founding member and former president and the other two served as officers in the organization.

The organization does not receive funding from government, foundations or private corporations. Funds for maintaining the organization comes from membership dues, which are approximately \$20.00 annually. Members are expected to cover their cost for traveling and providing financial assistance for conferences or other activities. In many instances, member organizations who receive funding from outside sources would assist CAL with mailing or printing expenses.

One member of the executive committee argued that the funding arrangement was deliberately set this way so as to not compromise the organization's status. This member believed that funding from government or other agencies would limit the organization's ability to criticize the government. They believed that criticism of the government usually results in reduced funding. In many cases government tends to have too much influence with organizations which it funds.

Another reason for not seeking outside funding is that CAL would be in competition with its member organizations. In addition, executive members of CAL are usually executive members of other organizations, and it would be a conflict of interest to have the same person involved with soliciting funds for two separate organizations.

Although CAL is based in Brooklyn, it draws its membership from Caribbean organizations in the other boroughs. Needless to say, because Brooklyn has the largest population of Caribbean immigrants, most of the organizations are located there.

CAL is a single, functional organization. Its primary function is to serve as an umbrella organization to provide a non-partisan forum to address issues concerning the Caribbean community in New York City. Although CAL is not policy oriented, it does

provide information for policymakers and gets certain issues affecting the community on the policymakers agendas. The organizations is also change oriented. This is evident from the many proposals which CAL has helped put through the Federal and New York State legislature. CAL supported the passage of the Caribbean Basin Initiative (CBI) with the hopes that it would bring much needed economic development to the Caribbean region. CAL has also taken a very active role in the voter registration drive. They did this especially during the 1988 presidential campaign when Jesse Jackson ran for office and 1989 when Dinkins ran for Mayor of New York City. CAL believes that is necessary to politically empower the community to bring about change.

It is interesting to note that, while CAL had been active in getting the issues of health, welfare, education, and economic development on the agenda of many politicians, it has never openly endorsed anyone running for political office. Although CAL was instrumental in organizing a forum for the 1988 presidential candidates for the community (only Jesse Jackson attended), the organization never endorsed him. Similarly, while Una Clark was vice-chair for CAL she ran for City Council seat in the 40th District. Clark was never endorsed by CAL. On the other hand, member organizations and individuals from CAL openly endorsed her.

The CAL members interviewed for this paper argued that, while others would like to see a change in CAL's endorsement policy, it is better to have a non-partisan approach in an organization which represent such diverse views.

In order to get the issues on the policymakers agendas, CAL formed coalitions with African American and Latino groups throughout New York City. In many cases, issues

such as police brutality and lack of proper health care affect the Caribbean community as well as the African American and Latino communities. CAL worked with the Congressional Black Caucus in Washington for the passage of the Caribbean Basin Initiative. CAL also worked with Latino groups to expose the atrocities of the Panama invasion in 1989, and is currently working with various Haitian groups to resolve the political and economic issues of Haiti.

The governments from the Caribbean have also worked closely with CAL on issues of economic development, immigration and health. These governments realize that an organized Caribbean immigrant community in New York can form a very powerful voting block to support federal and state legislation affecting the Caribbean. The strength of this coalition was evident during the passage of the CBI when CAL lobbied for the removal of CBI quota restriction for goods such as rum, sugar, and textiles, primary products of the Caribbean economy. Members kept the various governments abreast on the outcome of the initiative. In addition, the organization sponsored forums for Caribbean heads of state to dialogue with the New York Caribbean community. In spring 1992, it organized a forum on the integration of the Caribbean region. There were also annual conferences in the Caribbean, sponsored by CAL, to address political and economic issues.

Recently there have been disputes within CAL over the overemphasis on people of African descent and the disregard for East Indians and other Asians from the Caribbean. While this has yet to be resolved, the East Indians have agreed to work within CAL because they also faced problems similar to the larger Caribbean community.

Issues affecting the Haitian communities, a subset of the larger Caribbean

community in Brooklyn, have been given wide attention by CAL. The organization has been involved with sponsoring demonstrations and forums to highlight the horrors facing the Haitian immigrants in New York City, Miami, and Cuba.

There is little discussion within CAL on the issue of class. Both the membership and leadership agreed that the issue of race is of greater concern than class. The main reason for the concentration on race is that people of African descent throughout the world have been relegated to lower class status because of race. As one member stated, addressing the issue of race in this community is to address the issue of class.

Another interesting aspect of CAL is that there are several organizations that were created as a result of its organizing efforts. For example, in 1985, CAL sponsored a conference on health care in the Caribbean community. At this conference, attended by 750 health care professionals--five hundred were women--it was decided that there was a need for a Caribbean Women's Health Association (CWAHA). This association would address prenatal care, infant mortality, AIDS, and other issues affecting women in the community.

Similarly, at an economic development summit organized by CAL in 1985 to discuss, among other things, the Caribbean Basin Initiative, members agreed to form an organization so that the community could benefit from the investment opportunity offered by the initiative. As a result, the Caribbean American Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CACCI) was formed. ⁴²

The Caribbean Research Center at Medgar Evers College is also an outgrowth of

⁴² Information provided during an interview with a former member of CAL and founder of CACCI.

CAL. CAL was instrumental in drafting the proposal and lobbying for funding from the state. In 1986, funds were granted. Now the Caribbean Research Center serves as a main resource for information on the Caribbean community in New York City.

The lowest point in the CAL's history was the Grenada invasion. The membership had reached a deadlock on whether to support the United States' invasion of the island. A compromise was reached after eighteen hours of deliberation and bitter fighting within the organization. The organization presented both a majority view against, and the minority in favor of the invasion.

After speaking with several individuals from the community, it is safe to say that relationship between CAL and the community is ambiguous. Because CAL is not a direct service organization, many residents were not aware of its existence. Although the executive body would disagree, some residents of the community are of the opinion that CAL is ineffective at the local, state and national political level, and there is more that it can do to be more visible in the community.

Over the years CAL's attempt to forge a Caribbean ethnic identity in New York City politics has been at odds with the larger African American community as well as the Caribbean community. Conflict with the African American community comes as a result of CAL's emphasis on a Caribbean agenda in New York City politics. Conflict with the Caribbean community comes as a result of the inaction of the organization (being vocal on issues relating to immigration and police brutality) and its inability to reach the wider community. The more informed residents and leaders fault CAL for not providing a clear sense of a Caribbean identity and using this identity to mobilize the masses.

According to Fisher's typologies of community organization as discussed in *Let the People Decide*, the one which aptly describes CAL is "political activist organization." In Fisher's topology, a political activist organization sees the community as a political unit that needs to be empowered. Fisher argues that the leadership is drawn from the indigenous community leaders—this is clearly the case for CAL. However it can be argued that there is no mass support from the community residents as is described in Fisher outline.

The strategy used by CAL is a combination of challenge to the power structure, which Fisher associates with political activists and a consensual one which is associated with neighborhood maintenance. However, from the responses of the leaders and the general population, the organization has been unable to effectively challenge the power structure, over the years.

Caribbean Women's Health Association

The Caribbean Women's Health Association was founded in 1985 by twelve women. The idea for the organization was an outgrowth of a conference organized by CAL, a group of public health professionals, and health care advocates to address the needs of the Caribbean communities. The general conclusions from the conference were that there were limited provisions and under-utilization of the health care system by minorities, in general, and Caribbean immigrants in particular. These health professionals linked the problem of under-utilization to low income and lack of access to information and services.

It is ironic that in most sectors of the health care industry, Caribbean immigrants,

particularly women, make up approximately 30 percent of the work force, yet there is limited information available on the high infant mortality rate, the serious need for prenatal care, and the increasing incidents of AIDS in the Caribbean community throughout New York City. The Caribbean Women's Health Association (CWAHA) recognized this irony and organized to address these issues facing the community. The mission of CWAHA is clearly stated in their charter:

"...to inform, educate and mobilize the public around crucial health-related issues, develop, provide and promote programs and activities responsive to the health-related needs of low income and indigent communities in New York City; provide a forum through which health providers, consumers, and policymakers can interact to improve health care services and initiate, endorse, conduct, and support programs and activities to ensure quality health care services for all."
(Agency Profile, 1991)

Although this organization was founded by women for women, the founders agreed that in order to effectively address the needs of the women in the community, they have to also address the wider issues of community health care. Since approximately 50 percent of the households in this community are headed by single working females, it was necessary to target women in order to address the larger health issues affecting the community.

In terms of their internal organization, it is safe to describe leadership CWAHA as elite-professional. The leadership consists of health professionals or those with a vested (financial) interest in the organization. In other words, leadership comes from those who have invested the most money and time. There is a clear distinction between the members and the clients. Members are those who make financial contributions while the clients are those receiving direct services.

The director reports to the twelve-member advisory board. Approximately 50 percent of the advisory board are women. Currently, the chair of the board, the president and the executive director are women. The board members are recruited from the prominent leadership within the community. Leadership is defined as anyone holding or having held office in a community-based organization.

The organization is divided in four programs areas. These are maternal and child health, AIDS outreach, education and counseling; immigration services; and community outreach. A committee chair and approximately five members provide direction for each program. It is possible for a member to sit on several committees, but due to time and effort needed for each committee, members are limited to no more than two committees. As one committee chair noted, members have to devote approximately 50 percent of their time to the association. There are times when ad hoc committees are formed to address an immediate need. Also, each committee might be divided into subgroups to prepare for a particular event.

The association holds monthly meetings while the various committees meet more frequently. The meetings are opened to the members of the association, which, as mentioned earlier, are those who have made a financial contribution to the association.

Once the association became incorporated and received the not-for-profit status, they were able to lobby for funds from the city, state and federal government, as well as private sponsors and foundations. In the past the association has received grants from New York City and the state, and most recently they received an award from the New York Community Trust.

The 1998 operating budget was \$5 million. Approximately 50 percent is spent on the health-related programs such as AIDS and Prenatal Care. Another 25 percent is spent on administrative and overhead cost, and 25 percent on personnel services. There are approximately thirteen full-time employees.⁴³

In 1992 the New York Community Trust awarded CWHA \$35,000. According to an article in the September 8, 1992 issue of the *CaribNews*, this award is being used to help the organization develop strategic financial plans to ensure the long-term economic viability of the proposed diagnostic and treatment center in Brooklyn. The strategic plan will outline fund-raising efforts to finance the construction of the treatment center. Dr. Marcia Bayne-Smith, then chair of the board of directors, pointed out that the main purpose of the grant was to develop a strategic plan to generate resources other than public funds for construction of the diagnostic center.

During the fiscal crisis of the late 1980s and early 1990s, when the state and local governments were experiencing fiscal difficulties, CWHA and other community-based organizations had to become more resourceful in getting support from the private sector. They sponsored several social events that received endorsements from top city officials. Among their more successful events were the walk-a-thon, a cultural fashion show, and the dinner-dance. The proceeds from these events benefitted the CWHA's campaign to fight high infant mortality in low-income communities in Brooklyn.

From the available literature and discussions with the members of CWHA, it is difficult to determine whether the city and state have any direct influence on the

⁴³Information provided during an interview with an executive member of CWHA.

organization. Except for the contractual agreement, which the city and state sets with all community organizations, there is little if any overriding influence which the government has on the organization.

Since the organization is dependent on members' support, those who are able to donate the most time and money are most influential in the organization. For example, among the founding members, those who invested a substantial amount became part of the board of directors or the advisory committee.

There are two offices to serve the Caribbean community. One in East Flatbush, Brooklyn and the other in Far Rockaway, Queens. There are approximately twenty full and part-time staff, including doctors, public health professionals, social workers, and researchers. The direct service delivery staff, such as the caseworkers, intake workers and clerical personnel adequately reflects the composition of the community being served. The membership and executive body also reflect the composition of the Caribbean community, but more those who are part of the middle class.

The needs of low-income pregnant or nursing women are addressed in any of these four program areas: maternal child health program counseling; case management; and referral. The second program area, Community Health Outreach, provides outreach—blood pressure screening in shopping areas, distribution of pamphlets on AIDS and sex education, health fairs, counseling, psycho-social support, referrals for medicaid, housing, and job training and employment for low-income families. The AIDS Outreach, Education and Counseling Program provides counseling and case management for people with AIDS and those at high risk of contracting the disease. The Immigration Service is accredited by the

Federal Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) to provide information, referrals, and legal assistance for immigrants. According to CWHA's 1991 annual report, over 8,000 individuals received assistance from the organization.

From the onset CWHA's goals were to provide health services to the Caribbean community, hence its name. However, these services are not limited to this community. African Americans, Latinos, and Asians also benefit from the services. Latinos and Asians utilize the immigration services more than other the services provided. Low-income African-Americans, from communities adjoining the Caribbean community, tend to utilize the medical services since they, too, are faced with health-related problems such as AIDS, infant mortality, and lack proper prenatal care and limited access to health facilities. Because of CWHA's location, relative to major public transportation, residents from other boroughs are able to utilize the services. Due to the increase demand for services, CWHA has proposed to expand its services. As mentioned earlier, there is a proposal to build a diagnostic and treatment center in Brooklyn.

Although the leadership of CWHA is very involved in community and political activities in New York City, it is not visible enough for the average residents to see it as an organization that is trying to address the needs to community much less developing an ethnic identity among the residents. To be precise and fair, community organizing, not explicitly developing an ethnic identity and politically empowering the community, is among the written goals of the organization. However, leaders interviewed for this study who are involved with CWHA professed that political empowerment should be among goals of any organization serving the Caribbean community. While these leaders verbally

acknowledge this, their actions speak otherwise. From field observation of this organization, except for matters pertaining to immigration, CWHA has not taken such political stands as leading a demonstration or lobbying government about health issues or policies affecting the Caribbean community. Furthermore, CWHA has not used the community or wider local media to provide information for community empowerment from the standpoint of a Caribbean ethnic identity as preached by its leaders.

Caribbean American Chamber of Commerce and Industry

As mentioned above, CACCI was formed in 1985 as a result of an economic and development conference sponsored by the Caribbean Action Lobby (CAL). At its inception, CACCI had ten members, not including the executive and board members.

Similar to the other organizations discussed, the internal structure consists of an advisory board, the executive body and the general membership. Currently, the office of the president and the chief executive officer is occupied by one individual. Like CWHA, the leadership of CACCI, which consists of the executive and board members, can be described as elite/professional. On one hand, those who have been able to invest the most money and time in the organization become part of the leadership. These individuals are professionals—for example, former judges, lawyers, or presidents of large companies. On the other hand, the general membership is comprised of small businesses in the community. There is a wide spectrum of the business community represented in the association, including businesses serving the community but not owned by members of the community. Unlike CWHA and CAL, the members of CACCI are also the clients. The services

provided are mainly to develop business strategies, provide access to venture capital, and loans for small businesses.

CACCI holds a monthly "Economic Development Power Breakfast." At these meetings, new members are recruited and businesses from the community get an opportunity to exchange cards and give progress reports. The cost for these breakfast is \$20.00 for members and \$30.00 for non-members. In addition to exchanging business cards, there are also guests speakers from state and local economic and business development agencies. On the average over seventy-five people attend these meetings. To date there are approximately one thousand registered members of CACCI. Of the registered members, only a small minority are active members.⁴⁴

There are several committees to organize various events, such as the breakfast meetings, business development workshops, and the legal forum. While membership seems to be active in coordinating the events, the president and chief executive officer is the most visible member in the organization.

Approximately fifty percent of CACCI's operating revenue comes from membership donations. Members and visitors have to pay to attend the monthly breakfast meetings, seminars, and workshops sponsored by CACCI. In addition, membership dues are collected annually based on the size of the member's organization. For a large, mature business with more than one hundred employees, the cost for membership is \$1,500. For an emerging business, over three years old, with less than one hundred employees, the cost is \$150.00. For start-up businesses and individuals, the cost is \$100.00. The majority of

⁴⁴ Information provided during an interview with an executive member of CACCI.

the members fall in the latter two categories.

The Chamber also receives some financial funds from the federal, state, and local governments and the private sector. Recently the City provided funding to encourage the development of women and minority-owned businesses in New York City, and CACCI was one of the recipients of this funding. CACCI also receives funding from the state and federal agencies to cover administrative and operational costs.

While CACCI does not provide direct financial assistance to its members, the organization assists its members in writing proposals for funding, and provides the contacts and network through which the members can access funding.

Government agencies, especially at the city level are influential in CACCI's daily operations. The agencies regulate the use of its funds, and documentation on how the funds are utilized is provided to the government on a regular basis. As a result of the funder's regulation, CACCI has adopted a bi-partisan approach in its organizational activities.

CACCI provides services for Brooklyn's Caribbean community as well as Caribbean communities in other boroughs. The organization is strategically located in Brooklyn because the bulk of its membership is located there. Prior to moving to its new location at the Brooklyn Navy Yard, CACCI was located in the heart of the Brooklyn Caribbean community on Eastern Parkway.

According to statements made by a member of CACCI's executive body, the organization provides a host of services to its members, as well as the community in general. This includes technical assistance--in the form of proposal writing and business

accounting—seminars and workshops on business development, and business skills training. Anyone can participate in these programs for a fee. For the general community, CACCI participates in the Adopt-A-School Program to provide support for the students at Catherine McCaulley High School. The organization also serves as an outreach for the community through the publication of the business directory, which links the businesses to the community.

Within the past five years, CACCI established a liaison with international business support agencies. The main reason for this linkage was to provide Caribbean businesses in New York access to businesses in the Caribbean and Africa. As a result of this link, a team of CACCI members went on a trade missions to St. Martin, Jamaica, and Barbados to investigate possible business cooperation between these countries and the Caribbean community in New York City.

The organization concentrates its efforts on being an advocate for businesses in the Caribbean community. In 1988, CACCI was awarded the New York State Minority Business Advocate of the Year. It also received the United States Small Business Administration National Business Advocate of the Year Award and was cited by the governor of New York for its advocacy role in assisting minority business owners.

During the Dinkins' administration, a policy "window of opportunity" opened for CACCI to get the issues of economic development in the Caribbean community on the City's agenda. Mayor Dinkins signed an executive order establishing a first-ever Minority-and-Women-Owned Business Enterprise Program. This order mandated that a minimum of 20 percent of the city's business, exclusive of contracts, awarded to public utilities and not-

for-profit agencies go to minority-and-women-owned companies. CACCI was involved in the creation and implementation of this policy. The organization provided the City with insightful information on businesses owned and operated by members of the Caribbean community. The Guiliani administration has since dismantled this program, which made it difficult for CACCI to assist small businesses from the Caribbean community to access loans and other services.

Similar to the other organizations discussed here, CACCI stated that it is a non-political organization. However, the organization is actively involved in empowering the community. From time to time the leadership encourages its members to become citizens, register to vote, and take a more active role in the political process. While it does not endorse any candidate for office, CACCI provides a forum where the candidate can speak with the community.

It is very difficult to place CACCI in any of Fisher's three typologies of community organization. A fourth typology should be introduced to deal with issues of economic development. Fisher began to address this fourth topology. However, he did not complete it. He described this category as neo-Alinskyite, born out of the new populism of the 1970's. According to Fisher, these organizations see neighborhood decline, especially physical deterioration and lack of economic and political empowerment, as a problem (Fisher 1980:145). These organizations aim to improve the physical and economic aspects of the community by working with the restraints of existing political and economic systems. Like CACCI, the leaders of the new emerging community organizations are from the petite-bourgeoisie, home owners and small business owners.

Summary

From the discussions with the leaders of these organizations, there is some evidence of linkages between these organizations and the Caribbean communities at the local, national, and international level. For example, CAL was one of the players in mediating the conflict between the Caribbean and the Hasidim communities during the Crown Heights riots of 1991. CAL, in collaboration with other community-based organizations, requested and was granted two plane loads of goods for hurricane-ravaged Jamaica in 1989, the eastern Caribbean in 1996 and Central America in 1998. In 1991, this organization lobbied for the removal of quota restrictions placed on goods such as rum, sugar, and textiles exported from the Caribbean. Most recently in 1998, CAL was part of a team who tried to influence congress to rescind World Trade Organization ruling which restricts the import of Caribbean bananas into Europe. Although the effects of the lobbying were negligible, the efforts made by CAL were significant in highlighting the importance of these export items to the Caribbean economies. Similarly, CWAH worked closely with Caribbean countries, especially on health-care issues. CWAH sponsored several health seminars in such countries as Jamaica, Grenada, and Guyana.

On the surface one gets the impression the Caribbean community is organized because of the efforts of these three organizations in addition to the hundreds of splinter groups and numerous national and regional umbrella organizations. However, the Caribbean community in New York City is fairly unorganized. While there are hundreds of country-specific social, cultural, and political organizations, the community has only been able to minimally address issues such as health care, immigration, education, police

brutality and economic development. Although attempts have been made by CAL, CWHHA, and CACCI, these groups have not been effective in getting community issues on the agendas of policymakers and politicians at any level of government. In fact, the proliferation of these organizations has only minimally been translated into organizational power and political influence within the Caribbean community in New York City.

Similarly, it has been argued that the Caribbean community, with its numerous organizations, is an emerging political force. While the numerical fact might confirm this truth, the research shows that these organizations have done very little to translate community organizing into political action, even though community organizing is one of the stated goals of these organizations. Although these organizations staged numerous citizenship and voter registration drives, the Caribbean community in New York City has not been empowered to advocate for the much-needed services in the community.

A majority of the leaders interviewed noted that one of the important goals of the organizations is to politically and economically empower the Caribbean community. However, in follow-up interviews with the residents, to determine the effectiveness of these organizations in meeting their goals, less than 5 percent of those interviewed were able to identify CAL or CACCI. Nor were the community residents familiar with their work. CWHHA was more widely known by the residents. Since the average resident is not aware of these organizations or the services provided, one might conclude that these organizations are ineffective in meeting the stated goal of community empowerment.

Given the significant increase in the number of documented and undocumented Caribbean immigrants in New York City, and their concentration in certain under-served

neighborhoods, and their political under-representation, greater unity will be required for political mobilization and increased access to resources. Community-based organizations can serve as one avenue toward these ends.

However, the Caribbean communities in New York have few such organizations. One reason for the inability of these organizations to empower the Caribbean community is that this immigrant group still relies heavily on the immediate family and the individual to solve social and economic problems. This is evidenced by the fact that when asked, "How might your problem best be solved?" Over 50 percent of the leadership and 60 percent residents stated they rely on self and family first to solve their problem. They have low levels of reliance on community-based organizations and politicians to solve their problems. Interestingly, more than 56 percent of the leaders recognized that community-based organization can do more to help the community but they also recognized that due to fiscal constraints, these organizations can only do but so much. In essence, the solutions to these problems often falls outside the parameters of the political and or civic structures of the community.

It can be argued that the individuals rely on their immediate family structure, because these organizations are relatively new and just becoming a legitimate part of the civil society of the Caribbean community in New York City. It can also be argued that the legitimization of these organizations as part of the civil society has been hindered by the community residents' attachment to their country of origin and their unwillingness to embrace a more encompassing Caribbean or ethnic identity. This ethnic identity, as discussed above, recognizes that, regardless of country of origin, the majority of Caribbean

immigrants in New York are faced with issues of racism, lack of economic resources, inadequate education, and other problems associated with unempowered communities in New York City. While the leadership of these organizations purports a Caribbean ethnic identity and attempts to organize the community based on historical, cultural, economic, and political commonalities of the Caribbean basin region, they are not able to communicate this to the wider community. A letter to the editor of *CaribNews* reflects the position of the average Caribbean residents view of these organizations serving the Caribbean community. In a letter entitled, "Caribbean Organizations Suffering from Inertia," the resident stated that:

It is very sad that the 250-odd Caribbean organizations here in New York City, which profess to represent the approximately 2.5 million Caribbeanites, not one was able to step forward to defend the interest of Caribbean people. They were not even able to form a coalition to lobby for and to bring pressure on an administration which has always dished out shabby treatment to the Caribbean. Yet when these organizations want to raise funds for any number of purposes they can get out there and vigorously canvass for our patronization.

Furthermore, the community residents have not been receptive to this notion because they see a Caribbean identity as social/cultural rather than political. For the residents, a racial identity is more important in the political arena than a Caribbean identity. Until the leaders of these organizations recognize this fact and are able to fuse the strong sense of racial identity with national attachment of the residents and the encompassing Caribbean ethnic identity, community empowerment is likely to remain elusive.

Presently, the organizations have be unable to engage in empowering the community for four main reasons. First, with the exception of CAL, it is safe to say that

these organizations are still in an infant stage. Formed less than fifteen years ago, both CACCI and CWHA still have to go through several cycles of positive and negative changes, particularly in the leadership, and the overall political and economic climate of the society. Second, like other community organizations, the organizations in the Caribbean community tend to be more visible and vocal when external actions threaten the community's way of life. CACCI and CWHA were formed as a result of the decline in the economic and the health care services in the community, and CAL became more vocal during the United States-led invasion of Grenada and Panama and during the Crown Heights riots. However, the most recent attack on the community, as a result of the recent immigration and welfare reforms, did not seem to provide these organizations with the impetus to expand their networks within and outside the community to galvanize the community and bring about changes to these reforms. Third, they have been ineffective in putting forward an agenda to mobilize the Caribbean community as a group, along ethnic, racial, or national lines. For the most part, these organizations serve to promote the personal interests of their core membership. While these members have gained access to the political power structure in New York City, they have not provided the means by which this access would be made available to the wider community. It is also evident, that while these groups see political and economic empowerment as the core needs of the community, the general population sees issues of immigration, police brutality, and crime as needs which should be addressed by the politicians as well as the community-based organizations. In essence, there is a disconnectedness between the community-based organizations, the general population, and the leadership of the Caribbean community. The disconnectedness

is due in part to the same leaders of these organizations serving as politicians in the community with an agenda to address issues of Caribbean ethnic identity which does not get translated to the average resident. Finally, these organizations, particularly CACCI and CWAHA, rely on outside sources such as the government for funding. In this era of government fiscal and political conservatism, all levels of government have reduced funding for social programs. Hence, CACCI and CWAHA have to reduce their level of services to the community. These groups seem to be more concerned with securing resources and mastering organizational management than addressing such issues as the formation of an ethnic identity among Caribbean immigrants in New York City.

Chapter 7

Research Overview

This chapter will summarize the contributions of my research to the field of political science and provide the answers to the central questions posed at the beginning. It will also address questions which arose as a result of the field research and data analysis and discuss possible policy implications which might be taken into consideration as the Caribbean community attempts to forge a viable path in New York City politics.

1. How has the formation of identities among Caribbean immigrants and the relationship between these identities and political participation changed over the years?
2. Who are the political elite and what strategies have they adopted to develop an ethnic, national, and/or racial identity among Caribbean immigrants for greater political gain?
3. Can the political establishment of New York City, including the regular Democratic party, and the waning political organizations, and political clubs, successfully integrate Caribbean immigrants in to the political system, as it did with the Irish, Italian, and Jewish immigrants in the early decades of this century?
4. How does the larger racial context shape the process by which Caribbean immigrants are incorporated in New York City politics?
5. What roles do political elites from outside of the Caribbean community, particularly African Americans, play in facilitating or impeding this incorporation?
6. Does greater strength, status, and power for the Caribbean immigrants come from appeals to race, ethnicity or national origin?
7. Are notions of group identity being forged by elites and transmitted to the populace, or are they being forged among the rank-and-file and transmitted to the political elites? Put another way, what is the directional flow of the development of group identity between the leaders and the general population.

Contribution to the Literature

My research contributes to the field of political science, particularly urban politics, in three areas. First, it points out that a likely shift is taking place in New York City Black politics, especially in Brooklyn. This transformation involves the ascendancy of Caribbean politicians to political prominence not on the basis of race but on the basis of ethnicity. In essence, ethnicity becomes a prime factor in the selection of candidates for political office. Interestingly, this transformation is being driven by the leaders of the Caribbean community not by average Caribbean residents.

As this transformation progresses, it is likely to heighten tensions between African Americans and Caribbeans, particularly if Caribbean leaders gain political control, especially in Brooklyn, and marginalize their African American counterparts. There is sufficient historical evidence to show that conflicts occurred in major American cities during previous of ethnic and political transformations (Dahl 1961, Erie 1988, and Brown et al. 1997). The difference in this political transformation is that it involves one Black group being replaced by another on the basis on ethnicity. Between the 1930s and 1950s, Caribbean immigrants were pervasive among the leading figures in New York City Black politics, but they led on the basis of race, not ethnicity. It is important to note that evidence supporting this transformation is based mainly on the political activities of Brooklyn's Caribbean community. Brooklyn has the largest Caribbean and African American population in New York City and the Caribbean leaders in Brooklyn have been the most vocal in voicing their interest in securing political power for the community. It remains to be seen whether an increase in the Caribbean population in the Bronx and

Queens will encourage Caribbean leaders in these borough to challenge the existing Black political structure.

Second, my research points out that this political transformation is taking place independent of Caribbean civil society. Historically, churches, civic and social organizations, labor unions, and political clubs helped to shape a group's political identity and level of participation. However, my research, indicates that the major community-based organizations serving the Caribbean community are not much involved with the political empowerment of the community. Limited staff, narrowly focused missions, and limited funding are some of the factors which encumber their involvement.

Third, the leadership differs from the community residents in the way it approaches ethnic identity. This disjuncture manifest itself in the way the residents and leaders identify and participate in New York City politics. The leaders actively participate in politics and do so from the perspective of a Caribbean ethnic group. The residents are not politically active and race determines the way they see themselves in the larger context of New York City politics.

Responses to the Central Questions

Formation of a Caribbean Immigrant Identity

Caribbean immigrants have gone through many stages of formulating and reformulating their social, political, and cultural identities. These changes reflect the immigrants' perception of their identity vis-a-vis various national, racial, and ethnic groups and the larger American society and their attempts at incorporation into New York City

politics. Between the 1920s and 1950s, Caribbean immigrants participated in New York City politics within the context of a racial group (i.e. African Americans). During this time, New York witnessed the largest number of foreign-born Black elected officials serving the Black community. This large number of foreign Black elected officials should not suggest that Caribbeans were fully incorporated in New York City politics or incorporated at the expense of their political involvement in their home-country politics. Holder (1983) reminds us that individual Caribbean immigrants, such as Richard B. Moore and W.A. Domingo, and groups such as the Jamaica Progressive League, were very active in their home-country politics. Ira Reid (1939) and Watkins-Owens (1996) also reminds us that because Caribbean immigrants were not fully incorporated in New York City's "formal" politics, they created or became involved in alternative modes of incorporation, most notably "stepladder politics" and increased participation in the Communist Party of the United States of America (CPUSA). There was a color and class component to these alternative political activities. Garvey, Domingo, and others led a largely working-class, darker complexion Caribbean immigrant population who were labeled as "rabble-rousers" On the other hand, Raymond Jones and Herbert Bruce, among others, led the way for the lighter complexion, middle-class professional Caribbeans in New York's formal political arena.

In the 1960s and 1970s, Caribbeans continued to be involved but more noticeably as a result of the Black Power movement. The Black Power movement not only influenced those immigrants already in the New York City but also those yet to come. This is made evident by the number of leaders in this study who noted that they were informed

by the Civil Rights Movement, prior to migration, and as a result, their perception of and participation in New York City politics reflected their prior knowledge of the civil rights struggles. Color and class characteristics of the Caribbean immigrant community were downplayed during this period.

A strong sense of national identity did not emerge within the context of New York City politics. For the most part, debates about the various national politics remained in the social and cultural realms of the Caribbean community. Although these debates did not emerge in the larger New York or United States politics, they were important inside the Caribbean community because the English-speaking Caribbean gained independence from Great Britain during the 1960s. With the exception of Cuba, the question of national independence, especially within the context of the sovereignty of the newly-independent Caribbean nations, rarely entered the United States' political sphere or New York City politics. As a result, the nationalist identity for most of the Caribbean immigrants was created in the Caribbean, prior to their migration to the United States. In the 1980s, with the alleged destabilization of the Manley government (1976-1980), the United States invasions of Grenada (1983) and Panama (1988), and the fall of the Duvalier regime (1986), a strong sense of nationalism re-emerged within the Caribbean immigrant communities in New York City. With the exception of Haiti, however, the national politics of the various Caribbean countries remained outside of New York City politics. Because of this, over the years it was difficult for the leaders and general population to forge a political identity in New York City around issues of nationalism as the Irish did with the state of Ireland or Jews did with Israel.

Beginning in the mid 1980s and continuing into the 1990s, Caribbean leaders began to shift focus from a national-specific identity, with its focus on the home country, and the larger Black identity to focus on a Caribbean (ethnic) identity. The leaders say that this shift is necessary to promote the social and political goals of the community and is necessary tool for mobilizing the community. Although the evidence presented here suggests that this strategy has not filtered to the general population we cannot conclude that they are promoting a Caribbean ethnic identity primarily as a way to advance their own. The majority of the leaders and residents have a clear sense of their national and racial identities in the social, cultural and political spheres, but they lack a clear consensus on what a Caribbean identity should mean within the context of New York City politics. The residents give social and cultural connotations to Caribbean identity while the leaders view it as a political stepping stone to more successful participation in New York City politics. While the leaders might not necessarily agree with Dahl (1961) and his arguments of a plural society in which everyone gets to participate based on their issues, the leaders do believe in that ethnic succession must take place in New York City politics. This is made evident by the frequent reference to such phrases as “it is our time now,” “we now have the numbers in the district,” and “we must claim our political power, it is the American way.” A Black racial identity would not serve this purpose because it encompasses the wider African American community, while a national or country-specific identity is too narrow, often referring to small groups, such as Vincentians with a population of less than 5,000 in New York City. A Caribbean identity, in contrast, involves a sizeable portion of the New York City population.

Current Political Establishment Shaping Caribbean Political Participation

This research shows that the general population exhibits low level of political participation, a phenomenon which is endemic in the poorer communities of the New York City metropolitan area. Research on voter participation in the United States highlights the fact that voter turnout, is low, especially among immigrant voters (Verba and Nie 1963; Verba, Scholzman, and Brady 1995; DeSipio 1996, 1994, 1993; and Jones-Correra 1998). It has also been shown by researchers that voter participation among the educated and the middle class continues to be relatively high (Verba, Scholzman, and Brady 1995). The influence of low income partially explains the low turnout among naturalized Caribbean immigrants, many with incomes less than \$30,000, while more middle class leaders show strong attachment to their home country, strong feelings of patriotism, and high levels of political participation in their home countries and in New York City.

Participation in both the formal (voting) and the informal sense (attending rallies, discussing politics with friends and family, contributing to political campaign, etc.) is low for average Caribbean residents, but not for the leaders. These two groups view themselves differently vis-a-vis the political process. The leaders recognize New York City politics is dirty and corrupt, but see political participation as a “necessary” evil, particularly if the community is to get its share of government fundings for schools, housing, and other services. As a result, the leaders believe that they have to vote and influence the decision-making process. The general population also describes New York City politics with contempt. However, they do not see that participation is a necessary evil. Instead, they

see themselves as part of the larger African American community and being treated as such by white society and they are too busy just trying to get by.

Verba (1963) and Dahl (1961), might argue that the non-participation of the Caribbean residents in the political process is a positive outcome because, if the uninformed masses were to participate, they would place greater demands on the system and thus interrupt the democratic process. The leaders, by their definition, fall within the educated and informed class who know about the needs of the community and can effectively articulate them in the political arena. Verba's Aristotelian theory of middle-class representation is inadequate in the case of the Caribbean community not simply because a disjuncture exists between the leadership's articulation of the needs of the community and the residents' views of the important needs of the community, but also, this research shows, because informed and educated leaders do not encourage the general population to articulate their needs on their own behalf.

The explanation for low political participation among Caribbean immigrants can be better situated within context of the political culture of an immigrant community, within the larger framework of New York City politics and, by extension, within American political culture. While American political culture espouses the rhetoric of pluralism, in fact American politics are dominated by small elite groups. It can be argued that participation of the masses is discouraged because, in Piven and Cloward's (1988) paraphrase of the standard view, "excess of participation endangers democratic institution."

American political culture is also based on individualism and opportunity. This individualism requires that the immigrant express his/her needs and access the political

system not as a group but as an individual. However, the nature of the immigrant community requires a communitarian approach to building political power. Immigrants seek to create social networks to access the political system to address their needs. To the extent that these social networks focus on gaining a hearing within the political system, then the immigrants will be incorporated and motivated to participate in the formal political process. In the early decades of this century, The Irish, Jewish, and Italian immigrants got local political machines to respond to them. Since the reform movement of the 1940s and 1950s and the waning influence of the political machine, this process is no longer a viable option for Caribbean immigrants wishing to incorporate into New York City politics. Similarly, churches, voluntary and community-based organizations, and professional associations, which are an integral part of the Caribbean immigrant social life, have not played much of a role in the political system in New York City.

In the 1920s, Caribbean immigrants had the opportunity to become involved in alternative politics via the street pulpit teachings. This includes Garvey's mass movement, the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) and the Communist Party of America (CPUSA) (Turner and Turner 1988: 219). It must be pointed out that the CPUSA used the stepladder forums as a means to establish itself in the Black community with the support of a number of Caribbean immigrants. These organizations are no longer seen as viable options, no other alternative modes of incorporation have appeared on the horizon.

Caribbean immigrants are further alienated from the political process because they are not registering to vote in significant numbers. In essence, civic-mindedness, as

expressed in an informed electorate, is not being realized among rank and file Caribbean immigrants . The voter registration process remains foreign because in most Caribbean countries, citizens are enumerated to become registered voters by a government worker who goes door to door to ensure that all eligible citizens are registered. This is usually done several months prior to the national election. In the United States, being a registered voter becomes the responsibility of the individual. Given the fact that the average Caribbean immigrant is concerned with the day-to-day pressures of surviving in a new country, becoming a registered voter gets placed almost at the bottom of the list. This is the expression of more than 60 percent of the residents interviewed for this research. Furthermore, given the fact that only one of the three organizations highlighted in this research is active in assisting Caribbean immigrants in becoming naturalized citizens and registered voters, it is easy to understand the low level of voter participation in the Caribbean immigrant community. This alienation is heightened by their continued attachment to their sending societies. Becoming a registered voter requires becoming a naturalized citizen, by providing detailed personal information to a government agency. Furthermore, there is a paucity of involvement with community and voluntary associations that have the capacity to assist these immigrants through the maze so that they can become incorporated in the process.

The CWHA, and more recently CIS, conducts voter registration drives in Caribbean communities throughout New York City. Their staff attend churches--a large captured audience on Sundays--with voter registration forms. These organizations also deposit voter registration forms at beauty parlors and restaurants throughout the community. In

addition, CIS airs a weekly radio show that provides information to the community regarding naturalization and voter registration. With the exception of CIS's radio show, the community is not informed about the voting process, and thus they are alienated. It may be that African American elected officials and political clubs do not engaged in such efforts because they worry that an increase in Caribbean voters would undermine their political position. Certainly, Caribbean leaders think this might be the case. However, it is not clear that Caribbean voters would actively replace African American politicians with one of their own because of ethnic solidarity.

Similarly, at the national level, Republican and Democratic leaders have made little effort to increase the voter participation of new immigrants. While the federal and state governments have allocated funds for citizenship training, little, if any of this money has flowed to the Caribbean community. The most notable national effort at voter registration which specifically targeted at African Americans and by extension the Caribbean community was during Jesse Jackson's campaigns for the presidency in the 1980s. During this period, his organization successfully focused on registering newly naturalized voters and first-time voters among the native-born African Americans, Latinos, Asians, and Native Americans.

Low levels of political participation of Caribbean immigrants can also be linked to the social and political capitals⁴⁵ within the community. At a glance, the number of

⁴⁵Political capital refers to the group's ability to have direct access to their political representatives, to form voting blocs, lobby groups, and influence political decisions. Elected officials, churches, political clubs, professional associations, and voluntary organizations provide all members of the community with access to the political system.

voluntary associations, social clubs, and professional organizations would suggest that social and political capital is anything but scarce in the Caribbean community. Following Verba and Nie's (1972) argument, this form of social capital is necessary for political participation. These authors believe that these organizations would cultivate strong civic-mindedness among their members and link community leaders to elected officials.

However, a closer look reveals that Caribbean social capital has not been fully translated into political capital. Some leaders have direct access to the elected officials and the decision-making apparatus at the local, state and national levels. A number of them have used this access for community, personal, and professional advantage. But this entree is reserved for the organizational inner circle, not for the community as a whole. Although the organizations have linkages with immigrant communities, they remain apolitical because they receive government funding, and as a result have to remain neutral, particularly in endorsing or attacking political candidates. These organizations have not put forward explicit political agendas to confront the status quo of New York City politics. Nor have the nation-specific, professional and social organizations serving the Caribbean community sought to create a political force focused on home-country affairs.

In their recent essay on, "Social Capital, Political Participation and the Urban Community," Fuchs and Shapiro (1999), argued against the primacy of social capital in increasing political participation and concluded that political mobilization must be achieved through strong community-based political organizations. According to these authors, only political organizations can hold elected officials accountable for addressing the community's needs. The organizations that they envision bringing increased political

capital, thus increasing political participation, are similar to the party machinery of the 1920s or political clubs, labor unions, or other organizations with strong political agendas. No such organizations have been active within the Caribbean community in New York City during the 1990s. Furthermore the churches, have remained apolitical, serving only the spiritual needs of the community, a carry-over from Caribbean society. Such unions as 1199, which represents health care workers, and DC 37, which is part of the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees, have a significant Caribbean membership at all levels of the organizations. However, these unions pay no attention to an ethnic as opposed to a racial and class identity for their members.

The limits of the urban political machines (Erie 1988), the low or declining union membership over the years, and the perception that the unions do not adequately represent the working poor, make the feasibility of Fuchs's and Shapiro's recommendations questionable. Increasing the political participation of Caribbean immigrants would require more than those organizations. It would require organizations to mobilize the community based on issues that are salient to it, such as immigration rights and police brutality. These organizations must also be cognizant of the racial hierarchy and ethnic succession which are at play in New York City politics.

During the period from the 1920s to the 1970s, Caribbean immigrants, upon arriving in New York City, faced an existing racial political hierarchy in which to operate (Basch 1989). Since the 1980s, the increase in the number of immigrants from Asia, Latin American, and the Caribbean, and their concerns for maintaining their social and cultural autonomy while participating in New York City politics, have brought about a

reformulation of the racial-political hierarchy. In the past, the racial hierarchy consisted of two dominant groups--White and Black. We are now moving beyond this dichotomy to a far more complex environment. Within this new framework, the Caribbean community must not only be able to ally with the larger African American community around issues of common social concern, but also form alliances with non-Black groups addressing issues of concern to the immigrant community such as bilingual education in the public schools. Finally, organizations serving the Caribbean immigrant community must convince the larger White political establishment of the need to include them as part of the electoral and governing coalition. This is necessary if economic and political resources are to be effectively allocated in the Caribbean community to bring about fundamental changes in the failing public educational system, the dilapidated community infrastructure, and a reduction in incidents of police brutality.

A few leaders have sought to forge linkages across country-specific organizations, broad-based Caribbean organizations, and organizations serving the larger African American community. One female leader was a former president of the Black Nurses Association, held a position in the Caribbean Nurses Association, and chaired the Barbadian Nurses Association. She worked with these organizations to address the health needs of African Americans and Caribbeans in New York. This individual also worked with health organizations in the Caribbean region. Another leader was active in a local chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), was a prominent member of the National Bar Association (the association of Black lawyers), co-founded of the Caribbean Action Lobby, and has been active in an

organization representing his country of origin. This type of cross-cutting leadership could foster more effective political mobilization.

Caribbean elected officials are having some difficulty with the reformulation of New York's racial and ethnic political hierarchy. The five leaders who have held elected office, run for office, or plan to run, note that they must move carefully. Their fear, they say, stems from the possibility that emphasizing a Caribbean political identity will come at the expense of racial solidarity. Since a majority of the elected leaders have close ties to the African American political establishment, they worry about alienating the African Americans.⁴⁶ Some leaders mentioned that Councilwoman Una Clarke had developed a strained relationship with the Kings County Black Democrats (which almost stymied her first bid for office) because she wanted to focus on a Caribbean agenda during her campaign. The strained relationship is becoming more apparent as a result of discussions that she might challenge Congressman Major Owens in the 11th Congressional District. However, this is not the first time that Caribbean immigrants, vying for office, have challenged the political hegemony of native African Americans in New York City Black politics. In the 1930s, Herbert Bruce, a Barbadian, challenged an African American for the 21st State Assembly seat in Harlem (Holder 1983). The African American candidate claimed that since the district was largely African American, it should be represented by a member of the group. Bruce won the election but in subsequent years, the seat was won

⁴⁶Assemblyman Nick Perry and Councilman Lloyd Henry were identified in sixteen of the forty interviews as having ties to the Kings County Democrats led by Assemblyman Clarence Norman. Pauline Cummings, one of the newly-elected Caribbean immigrants, was identified as having strong connections with the Queens Black Democrats.

by African Americans.

The move by some leaders to encourage organizations representing Caribbean immigrants to focus on local issues, in addition to home-country issues, suggest that the community may be moving to use its social capital to create political capital. For example, groups such as the Sesame Flyers (a Trinidadian Cultural Group), and the Union of Jamaican Alumni Associations (UJAA), have received funding from New York City government, under the auspices of Councilmember Clarke, to conduct after-school programs and develop a transitional institute for young Caribbean immigrants.

While the current level of participation is dismal, it is by no means unchangeable. The seeds of political participation are beginning to germinate, as the community organizes around police brutality and immigration policy, and as more immigrants become naturalized citizens. According to Piven and Cloward (1988), increasing voter registration is a key factor in increasing political participation. People who are registered voters tend to participate more. One means of increasing registered voters is to use existing community-based organizations and churches to conduct voter registration "Caribbean style." This would involve the community-based and voluntary associations going door to door to encourage community residents to vote. This might be effective given the possibility of Una Clarke's challenging Major Owens for the 11th Congressional District.

Another means of increasing political participation is to shift the focus of the community-based organizations and voluntary associations toward political action. Limited staff and funding and narrow missions have prevented them from sustaining popular participation. As a result, these organizations have been unable to make community service

the basis for community capacity building and political action. In order for these organizations to achieve increased political participation, they should appeal to issues such as immigration, education, police brutality, and others that can build across ethnicity and nationality. According to Piven and Cloward (1988), for movement politics can bring about greater formal political participation.

Political Elites and Identity Formation

My research shows that Caribbean immigrants, especially the leaders, can assume many layers of identity, as they see fit, when they participate in the politics of the host and sending societies. Caribbean immigrants can transcend the strict notions of national borders and at the same time as they acknowledge the sovereignty of the nation-states. Through organizations, as well as on the basis of personal transnational relationships, Caribbean immigrants are active in the political arenas of both the United States and their home countries. Caribbean governments have included overseas residents as a part of their body politic. During the Aristide administration in Haiti, attention was paid to the tenth department--those Haitians living overseas, primarily in New York, Miami, and Montreal. Similarly, in 1998, the Jamaican parliament recognized the role and contributions made by overseas nationals in the economic and political development of that country.

Neighborhood leaders with a strong Caribbean identity believe that Caribbeans should represent immigrant communities in the city council, state assembly and senate, and House of Representatives because they are more sensitive to the community needs. In citywide or statewide races, however, they are more likely to draw on their racial identity

and support an African American. There is not enough evidence to determine whether these leaders would support a Caribbean person running for higher office based primarily on the Caribbean identity. What is apparent from the comments of the leaders and the general population is that they would support an individual, regardless of his/her race or ethnicity, if the candidate proved that he/she would do an effective job.

Race and Political Incorporation

My research supports Basch's position that Caribbean immigrants are involved in New York City political system in ways that are shaped both by race and by their attachment to their home countries (Basch 1987). The majority of the leaders and residents reported that they participate in New York City politics on the basis of race and that, while race was not important to them in the Caribbean, race now structures their reality in New York City. The primacy of race in the New York City politics allows this group to situate their community problems within those of African Americans. The commonality of community concerns and the perception that African Americans and White Americans view Caribbeans as part of the larger Black community provide a point of departure from which Caribbean immigrants can form coalitions with African Americans. These factors might also serve to lessen the subtle tensions between the groups. Leaders and residents often observed of Blacks and Caribbean immigrants that, "We are all the same," "We are all Black," or "Black Americans and Caribbean have the same problems in their neighborhoods," indicating that Caribbeans are willing to work with African Americans.

Unlike the community leaders, the general Caribbean population identifies primarily

by race and/or nationality. The majority of the leaders, on the other hand, vary their identities between race (Black/African), ethnicity (Caribbean) and national (Haitian, Trinidadian, Jamaican), depending on the situation. The leaders apparently have the flexibility to maneuver within the political landscape to form coalitions with other interest groups that are involved in New York City politics. Leaders have formed coalitions with other immigrants' groups, social justice groups, and others working in the areas of immigration, police brutality, housing, and economic development throughout New York City. While race is important to them, their ability to go beyond race suggests that the Caribbean leadership is on a progressive path as described by Browning et. al (1997). These authors stress the need for "leaders who are able to create and sustain systems of belief, manage conflict of interest, promote interest alliances, and cross society's racial and ethnic barriers in the interest of a humane vision of the whole society" (Browning, Marshall and Tabb, 1997: 274).

It is unlikely that the residents, the majority of whom are alienated from local politics, will develop this multi-layered ability to maneuver the political landscape. Their interaction is in the social, cultural, and economic spheres. Hence, more than half of the residents see the Caribbean identity as a social and/or cultural and less than one percent see it as political. The general Caribbean population continues to identify with their country of origin and have a strong sense of nationalism. The majority of the immigrants interviewed recounted, with pride, the ways in which their governments foster strong national sentiments. This seems to have a profound effect on the immigrants' feeling about their country of origin, evidenced by their unwillingness to give up their national identity or to

become United States citizens. Immigrants also continue to be involved with their home country because they have more influence and prestige in that context (Basch 1987:163). In the United States, they are viewed as “second class” citizens, but they receive calls from the Caribbean for their advice and financial assistance in family and community matters.

With regard to political incorporation, this research shows that one reason new immigrants have not been incorporated into the political system is because the burden of the political incorporation falls entirely on their shoulders (Jones-Correa 1998). In the past, political clubs and community-based organizations with government funding taught basic civic education and encouraged citizenship. Now organizations serving the new immigrant populations are more concerned with providing basic social services. Few, if any, community-based or voluntary organizations are addressing immigration and police brutality issues, the two most serious problems facing the community at this time.

In the early 1920s, Caribbean leaders and the rank and file participated in New York City politics and identified with African Americans. During this time, over twenty Caribbean immigrants were elected to serve in predominantly African American communities in New York City (Irish and Riviere 1990:117-119). Holder (1983) reminds us that Caribbean immigrants at this time were also actively taking part in political activities of their sending countries, either through the various community-based organizations, most notable the Jamaica Progressive League. Currently, the limited number of Caribbean elected officials in Caribbean and African American community and the low voter turn out in the Caribbean community suggests that incorporation has not yet achieved the level of the 1920s.

External Forces Influencing Caribbean Political Incorporation

The larger White and the African American political establishment have shaped the formation of Caribbean political identities. Caribbean leaders and the residents agree that, because Whites see them as Blacks, and because Blacks see them as Blacks, they identify as Blacks. Leaders and residents noted that because Whites are not familiar with the various nationalities of the Caribbean, they identify themselves as Caribbean ethnics instead of by nationalities.

There were two exceptions, however. The first attempts to organize and incorporate Haitians in the United States were done through the White community, more specifically the Democratic Party (Basch et al. 1994). Instead of organizing them within the larger Black or Caribbean community, the Democratic Party focused on their national identity because they spoke a different language. As a result, during the 1970s, Haitians organized around a national identity with limited collaboration with other Caribbean or Blacks. Since the 1980s, Haitians have adopted a wider ethnic (Caribbean) and racial (Black) identity in the wake of police brutality and Black and Caribbean support for the returning then-deposed President Aristide to office.

Another exception is that of the East Indian Caribbean immigrants in Richmond Hill, Queens. East Indians and Chinese from the Caribbean are now identifying not only with immigrants from the sending societies but with other immigrants with similar racial characteristics. East Indians and Chinese Caribbeans have settled in Queens near the large Asian immigrant communities. Most East Indian Caribbean residents and leaders agreed

that while race was not an important factor in the Caribbean, it has become important in the context of the White-dominated New York.

In East Flatbush, Brooklyn, the largest concentration of Caribbean residents, Marty Markowitz and Rhoda Jacobs, two White, Jewish elected officials have been reelected several times to the state senate and assembly respectively. Markowitz, more than Jacobs, has appealed to the Caribbean identity of his constituents. Leaders and the residents frequently mentioned Markowitz's support for social and cultural activities in the community. I believe that both Jacobs and Markowitz have used appeals to the Caribbean identity as a way of thwarting African American challengers appealing to race. Markowitz does not promote Caribbean politics. Instead, he sponsors popular summer concerts and other free events and attends birthday parties, weddings, funerals, and other social events to which he is invited. In other words, Markowitz appeals to the politics of the personal. This form of politics is readily acceptable to the Caribbean community. Historically, Manley of Jamaica, Jagan of Guyana, and Williams of Trinidad have all gained prominence using their ability to appeal to the politics of the personal. They were able to sit in rum shops, churches, and community centers and talk with the average person. From my field observations, most Caribbean elites appear to be aloof and far removed from the general population, who would describe them in disparaging terms.

Unlike the White politicians serving Caribbean communities, African American politicians make racial appeals to their constituents. This seems to be a point of contention between African American and Caribbean leaders. Six leaders mentioned of the infighting between Una Clarke and the African American leaders of the Kings County Democrats,

who feel she is bucking party system to gain power for Caribbean immigrants at the expense of the African American community. The tension is becoming more obvious as Caribbean immigrants and even some African Americans encourage Clarke to challenge Major Owens in the 11th Congressional District. Meanwhile, the Caribbean community continues to recognize African Americans as leaders of their community. Both leaders and residents frequently referred to Jesse Jackson, Al Sharpton, former Mayor Dinkins, and Congressman Rangel as effective leaders of the community. Both Jackson and Sharpton have been credited for increasing political participation of Blacks in general and Caribbeans in particular.

It would be misleading to suggest that the White political establishment in New York City whole heartily supports the emergence of a Caribbean political identity. It is very likely that some members of this establishment would support African Americans in their bid to dislodge their Caribbeans political rivals, especially if seen from the point of view of maintaining power through the “divide and conquer” strategy. It is also possible that there are some African Americans who are likely to support Caribbean immigrants in their quest of political power by using a Caribbean ethnic identity. Those individuals who want to remain close to the seat of power and those who have a genuine interest, altruistic or otherwise in supporting a Caribbean political agenda fall into this category.

While ample evidence shows that whites and African Americans shape the racial and ethnic identity among Caribbean immigrants, there is little evidence that Latinos are having much impact. The levels of social and cultural interaction between these two groups are low. Only in a few parts of the Bronx do immigrants from the English and

Spanish-speaking parts of the Caribbean mingle at the neighborhood level.

Status, Strength, and Power of Identity

Central to the question of identity formation is whether a racial, ethnic or national approach to political identity will produce the most positive political impact. Sleeper (1993) contends that a focus on race is slowly giving way to a rainbow or multi-racial coalition. Sleeper argues that as various groups, which cannot be classified as Black or White, vie for political power in New York City, new strategies for participation and agenda setting must be developed. These strategies must be inclusive of varied racial, cultural, social, and political issues. If Sleeper is correct, then seeking political power by relying solely on race would not be advantageous for Caribbean immigrants. The leaders and residents of the Caribbean community gave varied responses as to whether race should be the salient factor in gaining political power and status. They do believe that race is important to the community because government policies that negatively affect African Americans also negatively affect Caribbeans.

Community leaders and residents recognize that adopting a racial political identity might lessen their political power and group status. This belief originates from the perception that there are subtle, yet significant differences between Caribbeans and native-born African Americans. These differences are mainly associated with Caribbeans' conservative views on government support of social welfare programs and their support for the Protestant work ethic. But it also stems from the perception that being grouped with the larger Black population would cause them to be subordinated to African Americans

instead of getting a “piece of the pie for themselves.” Furthermore, Caribbean immigrants’ status as a “model minority” would become suspect if they were grouped with African Americans who, as a group, are seen in a negative light by the larger American society.

My research also shows that a national identity brings strength, status and power for the immigrants, but only in their country of origin. A number of Caribbean immigrants used their affiliation with New York City elected officials to increase their power and influence in their home country. Leaders and residents also gained political strength and status by working with country-specific organizations doing charity and/or political work in their home country. More often than not, however, this home country power and status had little impact in New York City. Unlike Irish or Jewish immigrants, Caribbean immigrants do not use the New York political arena to contest the politics of their home country, with the possible exceptions of Aristide’s fight to regain office in Haiti and the U.S. invasion of Grenada.

Research conducted by Peter Skerry (1993) on Mexican immigrants in California and Espiritu (1992) on Asian immigrants in California argue that strength, status and power come from adopting a broader ethnic identity. Both researchers show that political prestige and power are based in part on larger numbers. Since immigrants who migrated in the 1980s cannot be classified solely on race, the socio-historical and cultural bonds of ethnicity seem to be a more apt basis of mobilization.

Caribbean immigrants have cultural traits and a value system which are akin to those of other immigrants but different from those of native-born African American and Whites. These traits includes, but are not limited to, desire to overcome redefinition into

lower economic and social class because of immigrant status, the desire for home ownership, reliance on education as a means of improving one's economic status, and the aspiration to create of small businesses. Caribbean immigrants have been able to draw on these traits, and their work ethic, to improve their economic and political status in the New York City.

White politicians have sought to bolster a Caribbean political identity as a way to broker political deals and gain the support of that community. Mayor Koch appealed to the Caribbean community through "Caribbeans for Koch" and Marty Markowitz panders to the Caribbean community by supporting their cultural and social activities. Since the beginning of the 1990s, those who wish to serve the Caribbean community politically have sought to emphasize the ethnic rather than the racial dimension of its political identity.

Directional Flow of Group Identity

My research shows that there is a disjuncture between the group identity being forged by the leaders and that of community residents. In the context of New York City's changing political milieu, the leaders see a Caribbean identity as allowing for greater political gain for the community as a whole. However, residents do not see a political payoff. To them, a Caribbean identity has cultural and social roots in the value system and work ethic of the sending societies of Caribbean. These values are perceived by the residents to be better than those of African Americans.

The strongest basis for a Caribbean political identity lies in the territorial nature of representation. Thus, leaders will call for a Caribbean person to represent Caribbean

neighborhoods in local, state, or national legislative offices and residents will understand and respond to this appeal. For city, state, or nationwide executive offices, Caribbean leaders will support a candidate not on the basis of his/her race or ethnicity, but on the candidate's ability to deliver services to the community and on his/her stance on immigration, police brutality, and economic development. For the residents, however, race is still the political identity most likely to come to the fore, since that is how the larger polity sees them.

Summary

It is not enough to say that one has an ethnic identity. More information is needed about how context affects the salience of ethnicity. By focusing on the various forms of identities imposed on and/or constructed by the Caribbean immigrant community and the relationship between these identities and political participation, I sought to illuminate how the Caribbean immigrant community is pursuing social, cultural and political recognition from the larger society. This research shed light on the processes of group identity formation, group interaction, leadership development, political representation and participation, and the role of community-based organizations.

This research raises a final question: how can the Caribbean political identity being forged by the leaders be institutionalized? In other words, how will Caribbean residents and the citizens of New York achieve the same kind of ethnic empowerment practiced by Italians on Staten Island or the Jews in Borough Park? One way is to encourage the second generation to adopt a Caribbean identity. There is some evidence that this is

happening. John Sampson, who represents the Canarsie section of Brooklyn, appeals to his constituents by making constant reference to his Caribbean heritage. Assemblyman Denny Farrell and State Senator Basil Paterson have also found it fashionable to highlight their Caribbean heritage. This appeals will become more potent as New York City's Black population becomes more Caribbean. The 1990 census data shows that New York City is experiencing a significant out-migration of African Americans, especially the middle class, and they are steadily being replaced by first and second generation Caribbeans.

It is quite possible, however, that Caribbean identity will become more institutionalized in cultural rather than political terms. There are four reasons why this might be the case. First, the general population sees this identity as cultural rather than political. Second, the larger New York community also recognizes and has incorporated the various cultural aspects of the Caribbean community into its daily fabric. As a result, throughout New York City there are Italian Pizzerias selling Jamaican beef patties and popular television commercials trying to convince the public, with the hypnotic reggae or calypso music, to buy products ranging from cosmetics to vacation cruises. Third, the close proximity to the Caribbean and the immigrants' frequent contact will constantly renew this cultural connection. Finally, the federal government's and the courts' decision to limit the racial basis for redistricting may hamper the emergence of more Caribbean districts. In 1998, a federal court overturned Congresswoman Nydia Valasquez's district on the grounds that far-flung Hispanic neighborhoods did not constitute a community of interest. Given that 11th Congressional District (the largest Caribbean district in the United States) was redrawn to reflect its Caribbean population and the likelihood of a heated race

between Owens and Clarke, African American political elites may try to hamper Caribbean immigrants' influence. These constraints remind us that, as always, that the process of ethnic succession in New York City is far from smooth.

Appendix 1

Lead Questions for Community Leaders

First set of questions to determine identity formation and levels of political participation before migration to the US.

1. Where were you born? (Give name of country)
2. What year were you born?
3. What year did you migrate to the United States?
4. Please describe your involvement in community activities in your country? before you migrated to the US? (Probe for membership in local associations, schools, churches.)
5. Are you still involved in these home-country organizations?
6. Please describe your involvement in your country's local and/or national politics before you migrated to the US? (Probe for whether the respondent ran for office, attended/organized political rallies, voted, gave financial contributions, or others).
7. Are you still involved in these political activities of your home-country?
8. Did you have contact with people from other Caribbean countries when growing up in the Caribbean? If yes, where were they from? (List the countries). What activities led you to interact with people from other Caribbean countries?
9. Did you have clear impressions of the history, culture, and politics of other Caribbean nationals before migrating to the U.S.? If yes, what impressions did you have of them?
10. While living in the Caribbean, how did you identify yourself? (Probe to see if person identified with a specific racial and/or ethnic group.)
11. How important was this identity to you relative to race/national origin?
12. Did you have a strong patriotic identity prior to migrating to the U.S.? If yes, what led you to feel this way?
13. What did you hope to achieve when you first moved to New York City? Have those goals changed? How?

The second set of questions to determine identity formation and political participation in New York City

14. Which neighborhood do you currently live in?
15. What personal traits/characteristics do you believe are most important for you to get ahead in New York City?
16. In America there is a tendency to group people by race, immigration status, income, national origins, religion, and many others. When you think about yourself in the context of NYC, what group identification is most meaningful to you?
17. What led you to identify with this group?
18. To what extent or in what ways is race important to this identity.
19. How do you think the following people tend to classify you?
 - Your neighbors
 - Your friends
 - Your co-workers
 - Your colleagues at school
 - At church
20. When you are among your close friends, do you identify by race, class, nationality, ethnic group, or by other characteristics?
21. Why do you identify this way?
22. When you are at work do you identify by race, class, nationality, ethnic group, or by other characteristics?
23. Why do you identify this way?
24. When you are in your neighborhood do you identify by race, class, nationality, ethnic group, or by other characteristics? Why do you identify this way?
25. When you are among African Americans do you identify by race, class, nationality, ethnic group, or by other characteristics? Why do you identify this way?
26. When you are among Whites do you identify by race, class, nationality, ethnic group, or by other characteristics? Why do you identify this way?
27. When you are among Latinos do you identify by race, class, nationality, ethnic

group, or by other characteristics? Why do you identify this way?

28. Do you ever identify as a Caribbean person?
29. If yes, on what occasion(s)? (Probe for cultural, political, social events or at work/school/church) If no, why?
30. Do you ever identify as a Black or African person?
31. If yes, on what occasion(s) do you identify as a Black/African person? (Probe for cultural, political, social events or at work/school/church) If no, why?
32. Do you ever use your national identity?
33. If yes, on what occasion (s) you do use your national identity? (Probe for cultural, political, social events or at work/school/church) If no, why?
34. What does it mean to you to be a (person's nationality) in New York City?
35. What does it mean to you to be a Black/African person in New York City? (Probe to see if that is based on the person's experiences or those of others)
36. What does it mean to you to be a Caribbean person in New York City? (Probe to see if that is based on the person's experiences or those of others)
37. Do you now have strong patriotic feelings about your country of birth? If yes, how do you express those feelings?
38. If yes, do you believe that those patriotic feelings affect the way you interact with other ethnic, racial, or national groups in New York City? Why or why not?
39. Do you have strong patriotic feelings about the United States? If yes, how do you express those feelings? If you do not have patriotic feelings, why not?
40. If yes, do you believe that those patriotic feelings affect the way you interact with other ethnic, racial, or national groups in New York City? Why or why not?

41. Do you have strong civic pride about living in NYC? If yes, how do you express these feelings?
42. Do you believe this feeling impacts the way you participate in NYC politics?
43. Do you feel included or excluded from political activities in New York City? If you feel included why do you feel that way?
44. If you feel excluded, why do you feel that way?
45. Do you have strong feelings about your racial identity? Why or why not? If yes, how do you express those feelings?
46. If yes, do you believe that those racial feelings affect the way you work with other racial, ethnic, or national groups in New York City? Why or why not?
47. Do you have strong feelings about being Caribbean? Why or why not? (Probe to see when these feeling changed)
48. If yes, how do you express those feelings?
49. If yes, do you believe that those strong feelings about your Caribbean identity affect the way you work with other ethnic or national groups in New York City? Why or why not?
50. Approximately how many friends do you have in New York City with whom you discuss issues that are important to you?
51. Of these friends how many are from your country?
52. Of these friends how many are from other Caribbean countries?
53. Of these friends how many are White?
54. Of these friends how many are African Americans?
55. Which friend has been most influential in your opinion of life in New York City? Why? Where is he/she from?
56. Of the people who live in your neighborhood, about what percent would you say are: a) Caribbean immigrants b) African Americans c) Whites d) Others

57. How would you describe your relationship with your neighbors from the other Caribbean countries?
58. How would you describe your relationship with your African American neighbors?
59. How would you describe your relationship with your White/other ethnic neighbors?
60. How would you describe your relationship with your neighbors from your country?
61. How many of your co-workers are: a) from the Caribbean b)White/other ethnic groups c)African Americans d)Latino/Hispanic
62. How would you describe your relationship with your co-workers from the Caribbean?
63. How would you describe your relationship with your African American co-workers?
64. How would you describe your relationship with your co-workers who are White or those from other groups?
65. How would you describe your relationship with your co-workers from your country?
66. Since migrating to New York City have your impressions of other Caribbean people changed in any way? How?
67. Over the past 3 months how many times have you attended the following?
 - a)community meetings (block association meetings, tenant' s association meetings, community board meetings)
 - b)social function (parties, weddings, funerals, etc.)
 - c)rallies/demonstrations
 - d)cultural events
 - e)church
 - f)meeting organized by any voluntary organizations
68. Where are you most likely to associate with other Caribbean immigrants?
69. Where are you most likely to associate with immigrants from your own country?

70. **Where are you most likely to associate with African Americans? (Probe for community meetings, social functions, political rallies, cultural events, church, at work, at school, etc.)**
71. **Where are you most likely to associate with Latinos/Hispanics? (Probe for community meetings, social functions, political rallies, cultural events, church, at work, at school, etc.)**
72. **Where are you most likely to associate with Whites? (Probe for community meetings, social functions, political rallies, cultural events, church, at work, at school, etc.)**
73. **Of all the Caribbean nationals, which group do you most like to associate with? Why? (give name)**
74. **Of all the Caribbean nationals which groups do you least like to associate with? Why? (give name)**

Community/Political Activism

75. **What or who influenced your decision to move into the neighborhood where you are currently living?**
76. **Briefly describe the neighborhood in which you live?**
77. **Are you involved in your neighborhood activities? Why or why not?**
78. **If you are active what led you to become involved in your neighborhood?**
79. **What sort of neighborhood activities are you involved with? (List activities)**
80. **Are there many community-based organizations or groups in your neighborhood?**
81. **Are you involved in any of these organizations in your neighborhood? Why or why not?**
82. **If you are involved, which one(s) are you involved with? (Give name)**
83. **What is the focus of the organization(s) you are involved with? Probe to see if organization(s) is social, cultural, political, nation-specific or others)**

84. Do you attend meetings, hearings or other gatherings where community issues are discussed? Which ones and how often?
85. Which community-based organization(s) is/are best at addressing the needs of the Caribbean community?
86. Do you participate in these organizations or groups? Why or why not?
87. How much time do you spend talking about politics with your friends or co-workers?
88. What is your general feelings about NYC politics?
89. Do you believe that these feelings impact your level of participation? Why or why not?
90. If you are or have been involved in political activities, do you remember how or why you first became involved?
91. If yes, do you remember what/who allowed you to become involved?
92. When you are involved in political activities do you identify by race, ethnicity, or by other characteristics?
93. Is there a union where you work and are you active in your union? Why or why not? If you are active in your union what led you to become involved?
94. Are you active in the Caribbean communities in NYC? Why or why not?
95. If you are active in the Caribbean communities what led you to become involved? If you are active what are some of the activities your are involved with?
96. Are you active in political activities (rallying, voting, discussing politics with friend, campaigning, handing out leaflets, giving donations to politicians) in NYC? Why or why not?
97. What do you think are the most serious problems facing you at this time?
98. How might these problems best be solved?
99. What do you think is the most serious problem facing the Caribbean community this time?

100. Why do you see this as a problem?
101. How might these problems best be solved?
102. How much would each of the following be willing and able to do to help solve the problems of the Caribbean community? Why?
 - a) White politicians
 - b) African American politicians
 - c) Caribbean politicians
 - d) business leaders
 - e) clergy
 - f) community leaders
103. Have you sought help from any of the elected officials?
104. If yes, how do you make demands on your elected officials? (Probe to see if person writes letters, makes phone calls, visits office, etc.)
105. Are you aware of any Caribbean elected official(s) from New York City who is/are addressing the needs of your community? (Give names)
106. How do you view the elected official(s)/leaders serving the Caribbean community?
107. Should the Caribbean immigrant group work together with Latinos in New York City in order to get ahead? Why or why not?
108. Do you believe that African Americans and West Indian/Caribbean immigrants should work together in politics in order to get ahead? Why or why not?
109. Do you believe that West Indians/Caribbean immigrants should work with Whites in politics in order to get ahead? Why or why not?
110. Is there any issue around which the Caribbean community has united?
111. In your opinion, is there any important issue around which the Caribbean community in New York has failed to unite?
112. Is there any elected official who tries to bring about Caribbean unity in New York City? If so who are they and how do they try to bring about unity?
113. Are there any community-based organizations that try to bring about Caribbean unity in New York City? If so which ones?

General Questions

114. What is your immigrant status?
115. If you are not a citizen, do you plan on becoming a citizen? Why or why not?
116. Are you a registered voter?
117. If yes, did you vote in the 1997 mayoral election?
118. If yes, did you vote in the 1997 city council election?
119. Did you vote in the 1996 presidential election?
120. Did you vote in the last school board election?
121. What is your main source of information on current affairs in New York City and the United States? And how often do you consult (read, watch or talk with) these source(s)?
122. What is your main source of information on current affairs in the Caribbean community in New York City? And how often do you consult (read, watch or talk with) these source(s)?
123. What is your main source of information on current affairs in the Caribbean? And how often do you consult (read, watch or talk with) these source(s)?

Personal Information

124. What is the employment status of your spouse?
125. What was your occupation prior to migrating to the United States?
126. What is your present occupation?
127. What was your highest level of education when you arrived in New York?
128. What is your highest level of education since you have been in New York City?
129. What was or is your personal income range?

130. Which class do you consider yourself?
131. Do you live in a private house or apartment building? Do you rent or own your home?
132. What is your native language? (give name)
133. What was your marital status when you immigrated to the U.S.?
134. What is your current marital status?
135. Where is the birthplace of your spouse? (give name)
136. What is the ethnicity of your spouse?
137. Do you have any children? If yes, how many?
138. How would you feel if you had a child who married (see below)? Would you approve or disapprove? Why or why not?
 - a)White
 - b)Hispanic/Latino
 - c)African American
 - d)Asian
 - e)some one from your own country
 - f)another Caribbean country

14. Are you involved in any community or church activities? If so, what activity
15. How active are you in the Caribbean communities in NYC?
a. very active b. some what active c. not active
16. Many different groups are active in New York City politics today. In this context, I would like to know which term describes the group with which you identify most closely:
a)American b)Caribbean c)Black person d)Others_____ (fill in)
17. What led you to identify with this group?
18. Can you tell me the name of a person or organization that you think is working to solve the problems of the Caribbean community?
19. Do you have strong patriotic feelings about the United States? Yes No
20. Why do you feel this way?
21. Do you believe this feeling impacts on the way you participate in NYC politics?
22. Do you have strong patriotic feelings about your country of birth? Yes No
23. Why do you feel this way?
24. Do you believe this feeling impact the way you participated in NYC politics?
25. Do you have strong feelings about your racial identity? Yes No
26. Why do you feel this way?
27. Do you believe this feeling impact the way you participated in NYC politics?
28. Do you have strong feeling about being Caribbean? Yes No
29. Why do you feel this way?
30. Do you believe this feeling impacts the way you participate in NYC politics?
31. Do you believe Black/African Americans and West Indian/Caribbean immigrants should work together in politics in order to get ahead Yes
No

32. Do you believe West Indians/Caribbean immigrants should work with Whites in politics in order to get ahead. Yes No
33. Do you believe that Caribbean immigrants in New York City are uniting together in order to get ahead in politics? Yes No
34. What are your personal feelings about New York City politics?
35. Why do you feel this way?
36. What does a Caribbean identity means to you?
 a) cultural identity b) political identity c) social identity
 d) economic identity e) all of the above f) none of the above
 h) other (give name)
37. What is the highest level of education that you completed?
38. Are you currently employed?
39. If so what is your job?
40. Can you tell me about how much you earned from this job last year?
41. Can you identify any of the following and tell if he/she is effective or ineffective
- | | | |
|----------------------|-----------|-------------|
| Caribbean politician | Effective | Ineffective |
| Black politician | Effective | Ineffective |
| White politician. | Effective | Ineffective |

Appendix 3

CaribNews Articles Used for Content Analysis

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_____ "Koreans Have No Respect." *CaribNews*, (January 30, 1990): 4.

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Editorial, "Labor Day Carnival Is Latent Political Power." *CaribNews*, (September 11, 1990): 22.

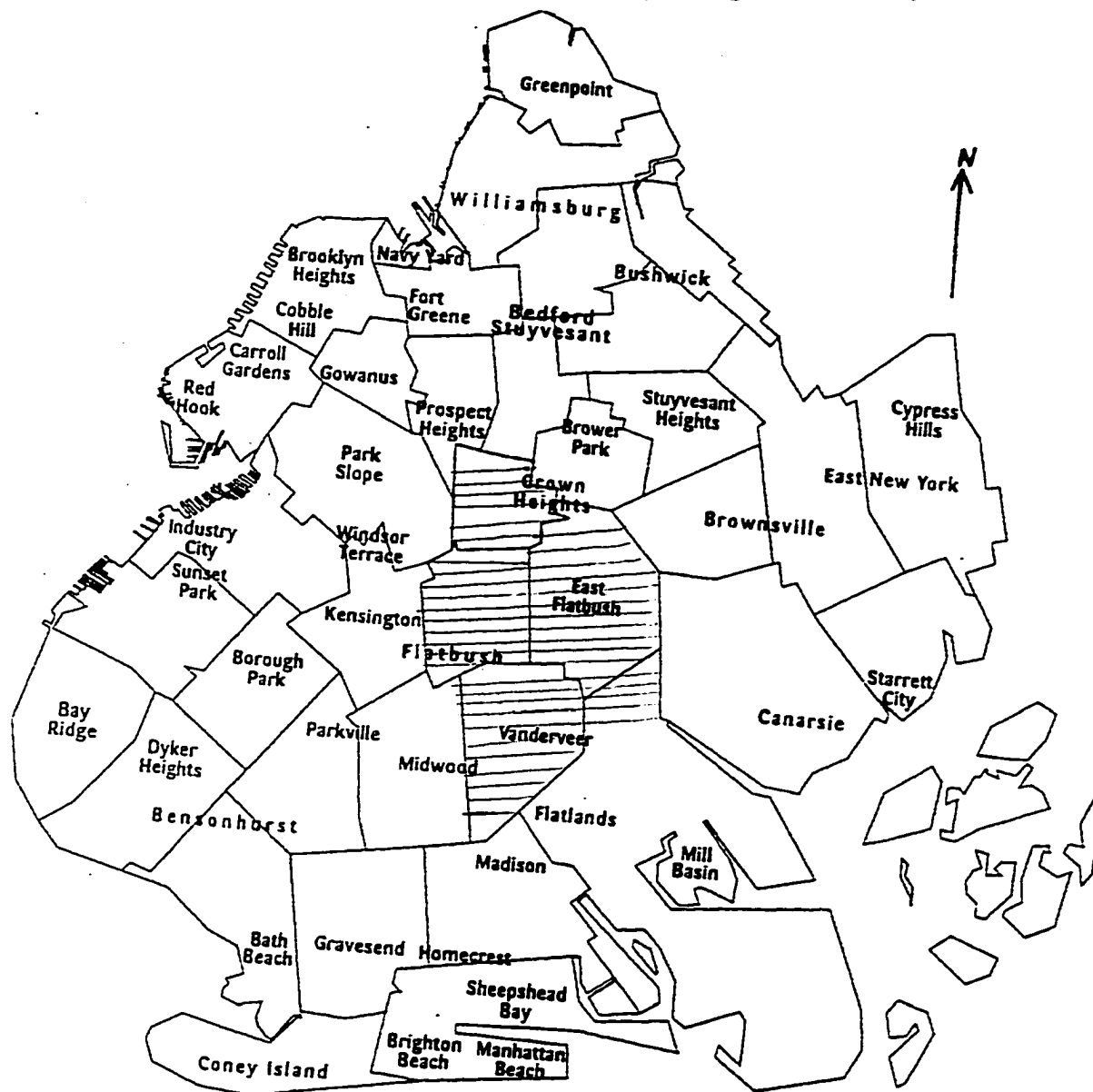
Swai, Sidique, "Election Politics: A Tale of Shattered Dreams," *CaribNews*, (July 24,

1990): 17.

Thomas, Laurence, "Where is our Leader?" *CaribNews*, (July 24, 1990): 17.

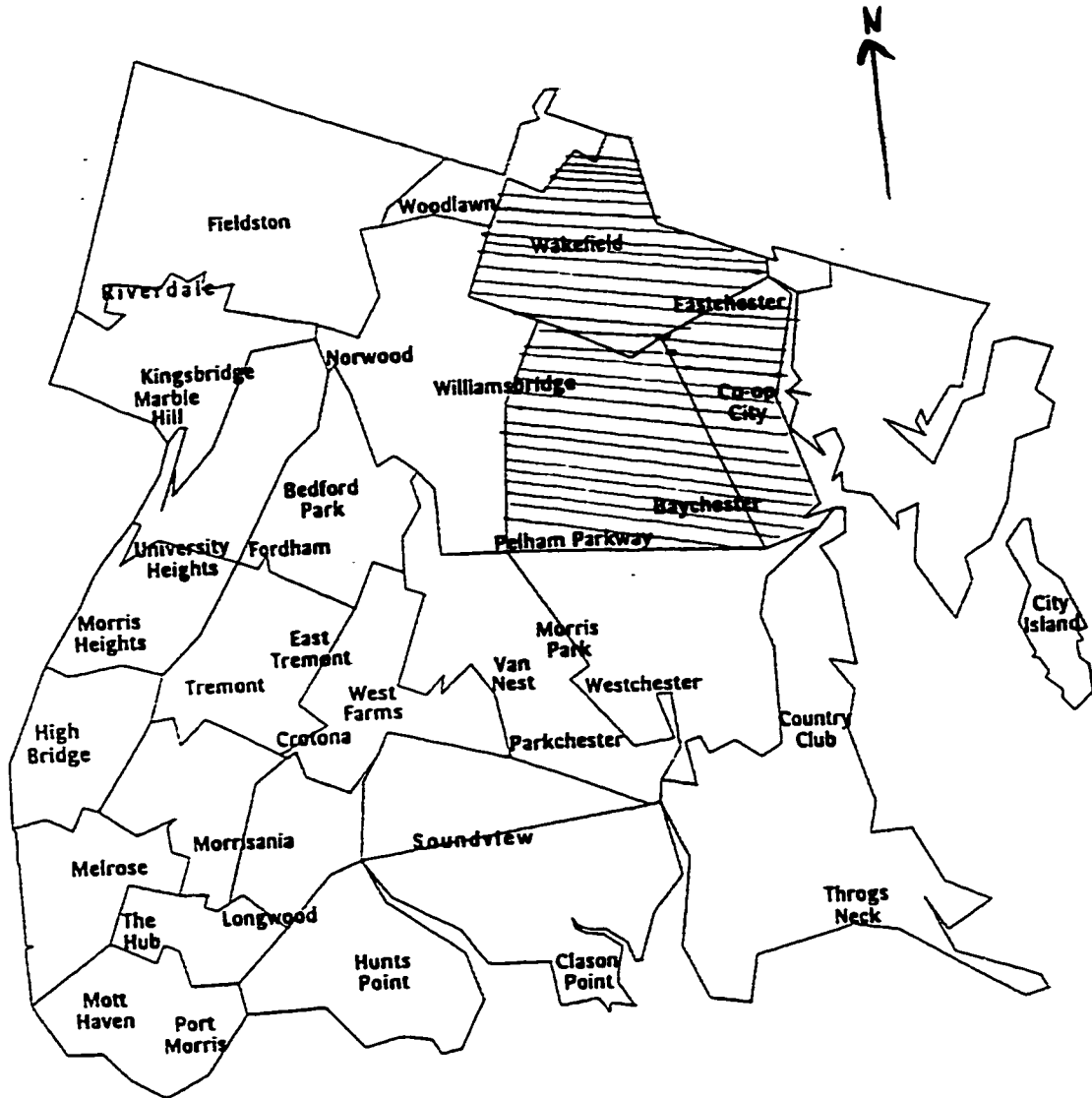
Appendix 4

Map 1
Selected Brooklyn Neighborhoods



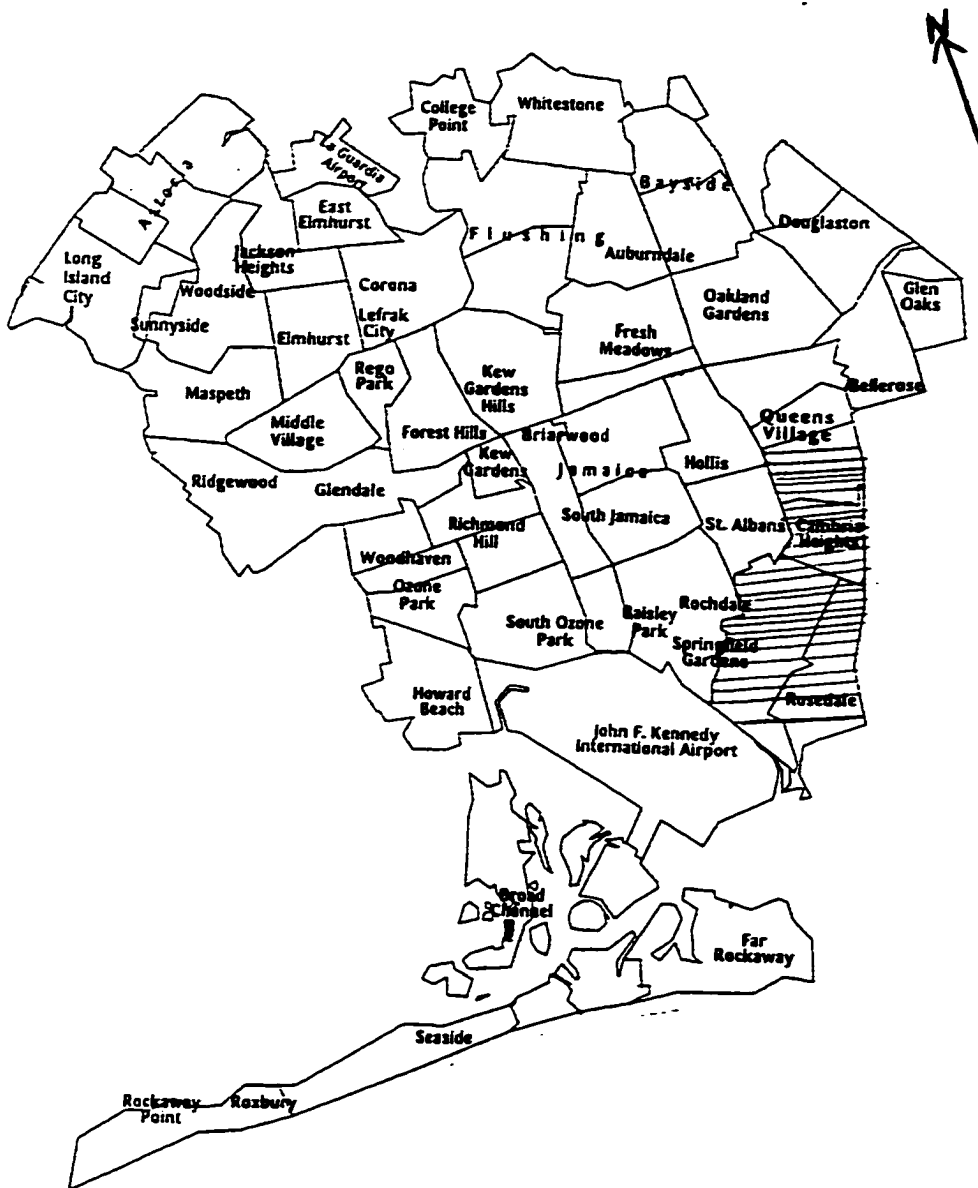
(Source: *The Newest New Yorker* 1990-1994: 75)

Map 2 Selected Bronx Neighborhoods



(Source: *The Newest New Yorker* 1990-1994: 63)

Map 3 Selected Queens Neighborhoods



(Source: *The Newest New Yorker* 1990-1994: 95)

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