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Caribbean Immigrants' Perception of Crime in New York

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Abstract

The Caribbean immigrant has long remained outside the purview of academia throughout studies relating to immigration and crime. Using social disorganization theory, this paper investigates the views and perceptions of the Caribbean immigrant with a rationale to understanding how their various communities affect/ influence their perceptions of crime. Questionnaires were administered to the participants in the study. The findings revealed that Caribbean immigrant participation within their community and their views on law enforcement has an effect on the perceptions of the Caribbean immigrants within their various communities.

Introduction

Every year people from all over the Caribbean migrate to the United States. There are numerous reasons for their migration, some migrate to reunite with family, and others migrate to seek a better life and better job opportunities. All of these migrants hope to achieve the “American Dream” of success through material accumulation. Caribbean immigration into the United States has increased distinctly since the 1965 changes in immigration policy (Grosefoguel et al, 2010). Until recently, there was little attention given to understanding the experiences of Black Caribbean immigrants. Due to their physical appearance they are seen as part of the Black American community, despite differences in language, culture and religion (Guy, 2001). According to Guy (2001), the Caribbean immigrant’s “invisibility” means that they are not seen as having to face unique issues or having distinct needs. This paper explores some of the issues facing Caribbean immigrants and how these issues impact their notions of crime in the United States.

The Caribbean immigrant, as a group has, for the most part largely remained outside of the interest of academia in the various studies regarding immigrants and crime. Their views and experiences, as a minority group with a unique history and culture have been ignored. The Caribbean immigrant is not widely researched and surveyed in studies understanding the role of immigrants and their impact on crime. Many academics, when researching immigrant populations’ experiences with the United States tend to investigate the Hispanic/Latino experiences with limited emphasis placed on the black Caribbean immigrants.

The United States has often been referred to as a nation of immigrants, since the founding fathers landed, and is believed to have succeeded as a nation because immigrants from all over the world worked to build this nation (Martinez, 2001). Immigrants’ worldwide view America as

the land of opportunity and many seek to immigrate to the United States to seek fame and fortune. According to the Office of Immigration Statistics, there are currently thirty one million foreign-born legal residents in the United States who account for a total of 12.5 percent of the total population. According to the Census Bureau, of this figure, three million foreign born are from the Caribbean representing ten percent of the total immigrant population. In their study it was found over 60 percent of this group of Caribbean immigrants had a high school or college education, however, they were more likely to be unemployed than the foreign-born population in general (Census Bureau, 2000).

The last several decades have witnessed a surge in immigration within the United States. According to the U.S. Bureau of the Census (1970, 1990), more than 10 million immigrants have entered this country legally within the past 30 years, and estimates are that another 5 million to 10 million persons have also entered the country illegally over the past 10 years (Nelan, 1993). The large numbers of legal immigrants presently in the United States is partially due to the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act, which abolished quotas and emphasized family reunification (Drachman, 1995).

Immigration and crime is a topic that becomes more and more popular with the influx of contemporary immigrants. However, when this topic is discussed, it is generally a blanket statement covering all immigrants and how they relate to crime statistics. An important issue that isn't widely publicized is the Caribbean immigrant perspective and how their assimilation and communities affect how they perceive crime. These immigrants' views on issues of crime and their perceptions is also an area that has not received much attention.

The issue of immigration and its effects on crime has been an important issue since the 19th century as the reaction to the rising amount of immigrants caused fear among citizens who

began to seek immigration restrictions and reform from government. American interest in immigration is not new, given the substantial role that immigration has played throughout our history and the sometimes considerable number of immigrants coming into the country (Gottfredson, 2004). Higgins, Gabbidon and Martin (2010) highlighted that since the late 1800s immigrants were believed to contribute to a host of societal problems, including taking jobs from low-wage workers and competing with established residents for various social service benefits. Since the 1960s the increase in immigration coincided with a rise in incarceration rates (Martinez & Valenzuela, 2006) resulting in public sentiment associating rising immigration with increasing crime rates. Much like in the past, the public debate over immigration today is laced with myths and a failure to separate fact from fiction. One of the most glaring examples of this can be seen in the common stereotypical assumptions that immigrants are uneducated, unemployed, and, because of various social and health related problems, are a drain on our welfare and healthcare systems (Desmond & Kubrin, 2009).

There is a presumed positive relationship between immigration and crime which is a major concern, and a growing body of research focuses on the criminal involvement of recent immigrants in relation to individuals born in the United States (Olson et al ; Martinez & Valenzuela, 2006). In contrast to studies from the early 20th century, however, more recent investigations have generally reported that immigrants have lower levels of criminal involvement than their native-born counterparts (Lee, 2003; Lee, Martinez, & Rosenfeld, 2001; Martinez, 2002; Rumbaut, 2005), perhaps in part because foreign-born persons, who enter the United States legally, must be investigated for past criminal behavior (Butcher & Piehl, 2008). These findings are surprising because many immigrants' incomes and occupations place them toward the lower end of the socioeconomic scale in the United States, and poverty has been one of the

most enduring explanations for crime. Moreover, most immigrants settle in urban areas and are frequently concentrated in neighborhoods with high levels of poverty, crime, gang activity, and drug dealing (Lee, 2003).

In Crutchfield and Petticicchio's (2009) study public opinion from the late 1990s indicated that most Americans believed that immigrants would go on welfare and/or drain social services. Immigration and crime became unexplainably linked resulting in widespread fear, fuelled by the media debating the negative impact of current immigration policy and the consequences of immigration on the society. This fear is capitalized on by politicians seeking votes using this negativity to gain votes by promising reform of immigration and thus reduction in crime (Higgins, Gabbidon & Martin, 2010).

As a result of these fears regarding immigration and crime, studies have been conducted by several researchers to investigate whether there is a link between immigration and crime. Many of these studies could not conclusively link crime with immigrants and in contrast, most of these studies found that foreign-born immigrants were less involved in crime compared with the native population despite a lack of social capital (Stowell, 2007). Butcher & Peihl (1998), in their study, they found that immigrants were less likely to be institutionalized than native born. However, research has also found that the structural characteristics associated with immigrants such as, poverty and residential instability; tend to be positively related to increases in crime levels (Laidler, 2009). Stowell (2007) believes that immigrants, who have few resources, find themselves living in poor, disorganized neighborhoods and it is these features that results in crime.

The current literature indicates that there is no clear consensus on immigration and its effects on the crime rate. This could be resulting from the fact that the literature, in my opinion

does not cover all the factors associated with immigrants and their socialization into US society. The question of how does the Caribbean immigrant transition and assimilation affect their perceptions of crime and violence has yet to be thoroughly answered.

The Caribbean immigrant as a subject has hitherto escaped the concerns of the large majority of mainstream criminologists, social scientists and historians (Guy, 2001). The Caribbean immigrant arrives in the United States with limited knowledge about the culture and values except what they are exposed to on television and in the media. The hopes of achieving financial success are blocked when they realize that the actuality and the reality are different (Walters, 1999). They have limited resources and face unemployment despite their educational background. As a result of their limited financial means, they reside in disorganized communities where they are integrated and thus adopt the values and attitudes of these communities and are assimilated based on the negative reinforcements from their neighborhood (Olson et al, 2009). This research is directly relevant to public policy on immigration because punitive measures directed at immigrants are often justified based on their alleged higher rates of criminal offending. As Martinez (2001) argued, many of these measures may have the paradoxical effect of destabilizing ethnic enclaves, thereby increasing victimization and offending rates of immigrants. Additionally, the perceived negative interaction with society and law enforcement agents can have undesirable effects on Caribbean immigrants' successful integration into American society.

The primary purpose of this study is to understand the Caribbean immigrants' perceptions of crime among a sample of Caribbean immigrants in New York. To my knowledge, no study has examined perceptions among the Caribbean immigrant population in New York. This

strategy allows us to key in on immigrant specific variables, while simultaneously maintaining continuity with extant research on perceptions and fear of crime (Ackah, 2000).

Social Disorganization

Criminologist and theorists have researched and proposed theories that account for criminal behavior and deviance among individuals. Some argue that it is the processes within the individual that causes crime, while others posit that it is societal factors and features which primarily accounts for criminal behavior.

Unlike theories centered on “kinds of people” explanations for crime, social disorganization theory focuses on the effects of “kinds of places” specifically, different types of neighborhoods, in creating conditions favorable or unfavorable to crime and delinquency (Kubrin & Weitzer, 2003). These neighborhoods were characterized by physical decay, poor housing, broken families and unstable populations (Akers & Sellers, 2009). The residents were at the bottom of the socioeconomic scale with low income, education and occupations. Under these conditions, criminal and delinquent traditions develop and are culturally transmitted from one generation to the next (Akers & Sellers, 2009).

Social disorganization refers to the inability of a community to realize common goals and solve chronic problems. According to the theory, poverty, residential mobility, ethnic heterogeneity, and weak social networks decrease a neighborhood’s capacity to control the behavior of people in public, and hence increase the likelihood of crime (Kubrin & Wietzer, 2003). Social disorganization refers to the relative lack of articulation of values within cultures as well as between culture and social structure (Kornhauser, 1978). High crime rates exist because limited opportunities make it difficult for residents to pursue conventional goals which

further feed their lack of willingness or capacity to prevent deviance, thus leading to an increase in crime rates.

Kornhauser (1978) posits that social disorganization theory contains two variants; strain models and control models. Strain models focus on the consequences of social disorganization that produces pressures to engage in crime and delinquency and control models assume that strain is relatively constant across persons.

Social disorganization theorists propose that social order, stability, and integration are conducive to conformity, whereas disorder and malintegration are conducive to crime and deviance. A social system society or community is described as socially organized and integrated if there is an internal consensus on its norms and values, a strong cohesion among its members and social interaction proceeds in an orderly way (Akers & Sellers, 2009). The system is described as disorganized if there is a breakdown in social cohesion or integration.

Sampson and Groves (1989) study examined external factors affecting social disorganization such as residential mobility, social class and family disruption. Their study also tested the effects of community supervision, and participation in formal organizations. The results yielded illustrated that these measures also had an effect on social disorganization and were good predictors of crime and victimization. Neighborhood studies that focus on homicides (outside of the gang context) have found strong connections between social disorganization constructs such as poverty, neighborhood instability, and neighborhood rates of homicides (Mares, 2009).

Sampson also made reference to the concept of collective efficacy which he defined as a combination of shared values and a willingness to act (Sampson, 1989). Additional support for the role of collective efficacy in shaping crime is found in Morenoff, Sampson, and

Raudenbush's study (2001), which shows that collective efficacy and concentrated disadvantage in Chicago neighborhoods influence homicide, "collective efficacy," which they define as mutual trust among neighbors combined with willingness to intervene on behalf of the common good (Weitzer et al, .

Social disorganization theory focuses on the relationship between neighborhood structure, social control, and crime (Kubrin & Weitzer, 2003). A key claim associated with Shaw and McKay's (1942) work on social disorganization was that structural conditions lead to rapid changes in population turnover, which created neighborhood instability. New immigrants with little funds seek cheap housing in inner city neighborhoods, once stable they move to more desirable neighborhoods elsewhere, creating a cycle of instability, lack of social control and crime (Pattavina et al, 2006). It is my belief that the reverse can be argued with Caribbean immigrants, upon arrival Caribbean immigrants settle in inner city neighborhoods which have a history of being socially disorganized, with family members. Their lack of ability to find suitable jobs befitting their educational levels, as well as their need for self sufficiency and independence forces them to take positions that are in the lower wages sector. The low wages and limited opportunities for employment force them to remain in these socially disorganized communities. As a result, they begin to adapt and assimilate into the community, adopting the community values thereby continuing the cycle of lack of social control and crime.

Caribbean immigrants are differentiated from African American primarily in their speech. As they are new to the United States and are not fully aware of the various avenues to seek employment, most new immigrants rely on referrals from family members and friends already in low paying jobs. The wages received from these positions and the lack of opportunities for advance also force the immigrant to remain in their communities or move to

similar communities where they are forced to either assimilate and take on the values of these communities or remain reclusive and apart from the communities, thereby maintaining their values and work ethic.

The amount and quality of police activity in a neighborhood can significantly affect its crime rate. Disadvantaged neighborhoods are typically the least able to secure needed police protection and services, as indicated in residents' complaints and in data on police practices (Weitzer et al, 2008). In Chicago, for instance, residents of poor communities were significantly more likely than residents of other areas to report that officers were not responsive to local issues, performed poorly in preventing crime and maintaining order on the streets, and responded poorly to crime victims (Sampson and Bartusch 1998). Other recent studies similarly document dissatisfaction with police services in poor neighborhoods (Reisig and Parks 2000; Velez 2001; Weitzer 1999, 2000). In Rochester, St. Louis, and Tampa, an average difference of 18 percentage points separated low and extremely disadvantaged areas in terms of residents' satisfaction with the quality of police services to the neighborhood (Weitzer, 2000).

Based on the findings of this study, it is my opinion that Caribbean immigrants arrive and settle in areas that have a poor relationship with law enforcement. This is primarily due to the fact that at the time of migration to New York, their sponsors and/or family members reside within these disorganized communities. Their perceptions are influenced by what they see happening in their newly adopted communities. In addition, these immigrants bring their knowledge of and experiences with police and law enforcement agents from their respective countries. Their lack of trust for law enforcement agents in their home countries are brought with them to the United States. This affects how they interact with law enforcement as well as how they assimilate. If their views of the law enforcement are further influenced by the police

interactions in their communities, they will adopt the negative views of police hence reinforcing the social disorganization of their neighborhoods.

Immigration

In this study, immigrants are defined as those persons who arrived in the United States following the Immigration and Nationality Act Amendment in 1965. First generation immigrants are defined as persons who were born outside of the United States. First generation immigrants are a starting point because they are likely not to acculturate into American culture and maintain their cultural beliefs of their country of origin (Barata et al, 2005). Their cultural background has to be taken into consideration when studying how they assimilate into the culture of the United States. Many first generation Caribbean immigrants view themselves as West Indian because they identify with the Caribbean culture.

The Immigration Act of 1965 has had the most significant and direct effect on black immigration to the United States. This act established parity among independent nations in each of the hemispheres (Bryce-Laporte, 1972). Its impact was seen predominantly on the mostly black sovereign islands of the West Indies. In 1965, only 1,837 incoming immigrants from Jamaica were registered. By 1971, 15,033 Jamaicans entered for the highest number among black countries in that year, an increase of about eight times the 1965 figures. For the same years, 485 and 7,350 immigrants came from Trinidad respectively (Bryce-Laporte, 1972). Based on the current immigration trends, it can be expected that the number of Caribbean immigrants in the United States will continue to increase.

As a result of the new laws, one of every eight Americans—some 37.9 million people—is now an immigrant, and the United States is growing faster than any other industrial democracy, with immigration accounting for about three-quarters of the country's annual growth and 40

percent of its total growth since 1970 (Tanton, McCormack, and Smith 1996; Beck 1996; Camarota 2007). According to the Bureau of Census (2000), nearly 2.8 million foreign born immigrants come from the Caribbean region, yet these groups remain largely invisible (Walters, 1999).

Several trends have characterized immigration to the United States in the past two decades. Immigrants have arrived at an accelerated pace, peaking in 1990, when 1.5 million immigrants entered the United States (Martinez, 2001). Recent immigrants have concentrated in relatively few states and metropolitan areas, and their composition represents diverse parts of the world (Fix, Passal, Enchautegai, & Zimmerman, 1994). As a consequence of these facts, many immigrants have experienced difficulty assimilating (Wilson, 2009).

The emigration of black Caribbean persons to the United States can be understood as part of a global pattern of labor migration from poorer countries to wealthier ones (Butcher, 1994). This movement is propelled by the expansion of the global capitalist economy under the hegemony of U.S. economic interests (Wilson, 2009). The United States has emerged as the dominant economic force in the region and prompted many persons to migrate to America in search of economic opportunity (Guy, 2001). Since investment capital only came to the Caribbean sparingly, Caribbean labor followed the flow of investment capital (Wilson, 2009). The developing economic and political relationship between the Caribbean and the United States promote the flow of migrants from the island nations to the United States (Foner, 2001).

There are a variety of theories about the causes of immigration, just as there are many reasons that individuals choose to migrate. But in the modern context of the United States, it seems clear that the desire to work is a central aspect of many migrants' decisions to move there (Gottfredson, 2004), as are access to a wide range of educational opportunities, the prospect of

greater advancement for those already well educated and ties to family and friends. In an area as complex as immigration, generalizations are hazardous, but it seems clear from a considerable body of research that, with some exceptions, immigrants to the United States rather quickly incorporate into the mainstream labor force (Bridgewater & Buzzanell, 2010).

Black Caribbean immigrants come from nations that share a history of colonialism and exploitation. Reasons for their immigration must be understood within the context of their sociocultural history (Guy, 2001). According to Bryce-Laporte (1972), the selection of black persons who immigrate to the United States is largely characterized by those for whom economic advancement and social mobility have higher positive valence and salience than the high negative valence and salience of racism. Their decision to try to enter the United States is often made when they realize they cannot attain their aspirations at home.

This is not to deny that black persons migrate to the United States for other reasons, such as, education, family, health, and so on (Guy, 2001). Most immigrants, black or white, are also aware of the wide economic difference between their countries of origin and the United States. As a result, many foreign blacks have risked the probability of racial conflict or have come prepared to tolerate some manifestations of American racial discrimination in order to make socioeconomic gains (Bryce-Laporte, 1972). Their deeper objective is to try their luck at improving their life-chances, creating opportunities for their loved ones, or acquiring money, experience, or knowledge to return home successfully (Wilson, 2009). Caribbean immigrants are accustomed to unemployment without welfare, hard work or underemployment and low pay, and thus relative deprivation from many of the things black and white Americans consider basic necessities (Walters, 1999; Guy, 2001)

Thus, in the old push-pull vocabulary of immigration sociology, the black immigrant is pushed more by the adverse socioeconomic conditions of his country and he is pulled by the relatively open socioeconomic opportunity structure of the United States (Camorota, 2007).

For New York City, the foreign born population is approximately 40 percent (Lobo & Salvo, 2004). The immigrant population has mushroomed since the 1990s. During the decade of the 1990s, the foreign population of New York City spiraled to 2.9 million. The non – Hispanic Caribbean foreign born population amounts to 5.3 percent of the United States population according to data from the 2000 Census (Wilson, 2009). When those macro data are disaggregated and New York City is isolated, the Caribbean foreign born compose of 20.8 percent of that population (Lobo & Salvo, 2004). In New York City, West Indians from the English-speaking Caribbean, if counted together as one group, are now the largest immigrant group. In the late 1990s, foreign-born West Indians numbered over half a million (Foner 2001).

Current Population Survey estimates, the top nine groups in the city, in descending order, were immigrants from the Dominican Republic, former Soviet Union, China, Jamaica, Mexico, Guyana, Ecuador, Haiti, and Trinidad and Tobago (Foner, 2001). The Caribbean community in Brooklyn is concentrated in the Crown Heights, Flatbush, East Flatbush, Kensington and Canarsie neighborhoods in central Brooklyn. Brooklyn is home to one of the largest communities of West Indians outside of the Caribbean, being rivaled only by London, Miami and Toronto. Crown Heights and Flatbush are home to many of Brooklyn's West Indian restaurants and bakeries. The West Indian Labor Day Parade takes place every Labor Day on Eastern Parkway.

Assimilation

Park and Burgess (1924) define assimilation as the process in which persons and groups acquire memories, sentiments and attitudes of other persons or groups and by sharing their experience and history are incorporated with them in a common cultural life (Park & Burgess, 1924:735). Gordon (1964) distinguishes three distinct ideologies of assimilation: the melting pot, Anglo conformity and cultural pluralism. Many researchers and theorists refer widely to the melting pot ideology when studying the Caribbean immigrant process.

One of the central arguments of immigration discourse is the proposal that immigrants tend to be hardworking, will enter the labor market with a desire to work hard and that they wish to assimilate (Olson et Al, 2009). The classic immigration model, based on the European immigrant experience assumes that immigrants come to America to work hard, play by the rules and after some period assimilate, merge and become more American (Morenoff& Astor, 2006). According to Skrentny (2008) immigrant assimilation varies according to three background factors. These are human capital, family composition and context of reception. Adopted from the segmented assimilation theory developed by Portes and Zhou in 1993, these three factors are the primary determinants of the outcome of the immigrant experiences and acculturation process.

It is important to understand and distinguish that social integration is not a primary goal for most first generation immigrants. For many Caribbean immigrants maintaining their own cultural and national identity remains important. They want economic security and are willing to work for it, but they do not immediately see themselves as losing their cultural identity or relationship with their home country (Walters, 1999).

Black Caribbean immigrants do not arrive in the United States as empty cultural containers waiting to be Americanized. They come with perceptions, images, and views on

issues of race, class and gender relations that are shaped by their home country. Similarly, they display multiple forms of identity related to the diverse racial, ethnic, and urban contexts in which they settle and work (Guy, 2001). Caribbean immigrants usually do not come to the United States as isolated individuals or recluses; they come to settle with relatives or friends. They tend to locate themselves in areas traversed by a kin network or situated near an ethnic enclave (Butcher, 1994; Lee, Martinez & Rosenfield, 2001). For many Caribbean immigrants, the move to the United States is sometimes a culture shock. This is because the land of opportunity where all are equal represented on television and the realities they face when they arrive in the United States can have a profound effect.

Immigrant groups differ in reasons for immigrating, in official reception from the U.S. government, as well as in how they have become politically, economically, and socially integrated in the United States and in New York (Nielsen & Martinez, 2011). As such, we might expect that immigrant groups may differ from each other as well as from natives in involvement in various crimes and their assimilation process.

Immigrants settle where they do for many reasons, including facility for example, settling near ports of entry, where jobs are located, or where family and friends from earlier migrations have settled (Martinez, 2006). One might interpret immigrants settling where friends and family reside as “clannish,” but an alternative interpretation is that settling in areas with others from the same origin provides for economies in communication, information, consumption, and in the labor market (Chiswick and Miller 2005:7). These areas can be “sites for the creation of social networks, aggregating devices, anchors for identity, and representations of culture.” This argument is consistent with the immigration revitalization perspective, which suggests an influx of immigrants into an area may encourage new forms of social organization and strengthen

neighborhood institutions and social ties, which ultimately may help to reduce crime (Martinez 2006).

It is important to recognize that not all communities offer such advantages or resources to residents. Many areas of high immigrant concentration are segregated from mainstream society and plagued with poverty, joblessness, and other social ills (Walters, 1999). However, immigrant communities are an important factor for preserving aspects of ethnic culture, such as language, customs, religious beliefs, and lifestyle (Breton 1964). Desmond and Kubrin (2009) argue that, while immigrant communities may expose residents to risk factors, they also introduce key protective factors. Numerous studies have sought to answer whether and to what extent these communities produce less crime and delinquency, but more remains to be done.

Research on the perceptions and attitudes of ethnic minorities indicates that when residents view their neighborhood as a “community of choice” compared with a “ghetto of last resort”, they are more likely to report their household is doing better economically than they expected, describe job availability within the community as good, feel they would receive assistance from their neighbors if needed (Gottfredson, 2004).

Recently, some research has begun to consider whether immigrant concentration affects crime levels among community residents, and the results suggest it does (Lee & Martinez 2002; Sampson et al. 2005; Morenoff & Astor 2006). These studies find that crime and victimization are lower in communities with more immigrants. While clearly important, these studies are relatively few in number, and typically focus on neighborhoods within a single city, such as Chicago, Miami, or San Diego. Thus, the extent to which this finding is generalizable has not been fully established (Desmond & Kubrin, 2009). There is some empirical support for the idea that immigrant communities generate lower crime rates. In their study on immigrant

communities and drug violence in Miami and San Diego, Martinez et al. (2004:151–2) find that “without exception, those residing in barrios or enclaves did not live in areas with significant levels of drug violence.” These studies, however, focus on all immigrant areas and are not specific to the Caribbean Immigrant.

One key factor for understanding the immigrant paradox, that is, the counterintuitive finding that immigrants have better adaptation outcomes than their national peers despite their socioeconomic status (Martinez, 2001) and that has received some attention in the literature which centers on the presence of immigrant neighborhoods, or the residential concentration of immigrants. Immigrant concentration is “the tendency of immigrants to concentrate geographically by ethnicity or country of origin within the host country” (Chiswick& Miller 2005; Desmond &Kubrin, 2009). Afro-Caribbean communities in New York have been characterized as poverty-stricken ghettos with disproportionately high crime rates (Solis et Al, 2009). These neighborhoods are areas that are labeled crime prone by law enforcement agencies and have a history of antagonistic relations with the police.

Ramirez and Lee (2001) in their study of the relevant literature state that although a host of reasons exist to expect that immigrants are high-crime prone, the bulk of empirical studies conducted over the past century have found that immigrants are typically underrepresented in criminal statistics (Gottfredson, 2004). It could be that first generation immigrants themselves are not usually involved in crime but that the strains of immigration result in high crime rates for second and third generation immigrants.

An important study by Lee and colleagues (2001) focuses on the impact of immigration on Latino and Black homicide rates at the census tract level in Miami, El Paso, and San Diego. With the exception of Black homicides in San Diego, the relative size of the new immigrant

population has either a negative or an insignificant effect on the rates of killing for both groups. This failure to find a positive impact of immigration on crime is replicated in most other recent investigations (Reid, Weiss, Adelman, & Jaret, 2005).

Lee (2001) study found that controlling for other influences; immigration does not increase levels of homicide primarily among Latinos and Blacks. Their results not only challenge stereotypes of the “criminal immigrant” but also the core criminological notion that immigration, as a social process, disorganizes communities and increases crime.

Similarly on the basis of the census data for 1980 and 1990, Butcher and Piehl (1998) show that controlling for age and sex, immigrants are less likely to be institutionalized than native born men with similar demographic characteristics. They conclude that if the natives had the same institutionalized probabilities as immigrants, our jails and prisons would have one-third fewer inmates.

Nielsen and Martinez (2011) study results indicated that immigrants are less likely to be arrested for robbery relative to aggravated assault than are natives controlling for relevant variables. Almost without exception, immigrants were less involved in robbery than assault, and immigrant status helped to account for some of the apparent differences in arrest likelihood for Latinos and Haitians, respectively, and African Americans.

Morenoff and Astor (2006) study attempted to illustrate how involvement in violent offences varies across (1) generations of immigrants (2) length of stay (3) two key dimensions of neighborhood context, the level of concentrated disadvantage and the percentage of immigrants in the neighborhood. They found that most type of violent behavior tend to become more prevalent across immigrant generations which taken at face value suggests that as immigrants

assimilate they become more involved in crime a finding that is consistent with downward assimilation theory.

Second, their study examined whether there is an association between neighborhood context and violent crime and if so, whether the association varies by immigrant generations in ways consistent with segmented assimilation theory. Segmented assimilation theory predicts that immigrants who assimilate into neighborhood contexts marked by high levels of socioeconomic disadvantage, especially those who do not have strong attachment to their family or immigrant communities, will be at risk of becoming involved in criminal behavior (Morenoff & Astor, 2006). Morenoff and Astor found that the risk to involvement in crime associated with living in a more disadvantaged neighborhood should be greatest among the youth in the third generation, in which most youth presumably are fully assimilated. The study revealed that concentrated disadvantage is positively associated with the odds of violence in the third generation but not in the first or second (Morenoff & Astor, 2006). This could be primarily due to the fact that the first and second generation immigrants are aware of the socioeconomic conditions in their home countries and the aspirations or goals of economic success which may have played a significant role in the decision to emigrate.

Morenoff and Astor (2006) study posit that assimilated youth fare worse in terms of delinquency than unassimilated youth. However, the research documenting increasing successful economic integration by the children of immigrants casts doubt on the relationship between crime and second-generation immigration. In fact, the well-known studies of the connection between urban areas and crime casts doubt on the children of immigrant hypothesis. The hypothesis that children of immigrants tend to have high crime rates is an idea without firm research support (Gottfredson, 2004).

In sum the neighborhood analysis suggests that the associations between neighborhood context and participation in acts of violence differ across immigrant generations. First generation youth appear to be more protected against violence when living either in more disadvantaged or other more stable neighborhoods.

Perceptions

Lindsay and Norman (1977) define perception as the process by which organisms interpret and organize sensation to produce a meaningful experience of the world.. People's perceptions of or overall attitudes towards their environs can determine their behaviors and how they view their surroundings.

Since the 1960s, the fear of crime has been recognized as a social fact that is equally as important as crime itself (Ackah, 2000; Sundeen, 1984). Researchers have also reported more fear of crime in urban, rather than in rural, residents. Beliefs and opinions about crime are shaped by widespread consumption of news and entertainment about crimes, police, courts and prisons. Attitudes about crime and justice reflect judgments about social threats and harms, and perceptions of personal safety as well as beliefs about criminal offenders (Indermaur & Roberts, 2009). Recently, criminal justice agents have begun to appreciate the importance of proper criminal justice response to persons involved in criminal incidents who are recent immigrants (Shusta, Levine, Harris, & Wong, 1995). Historically, relations between police and ethnic minorities have been fraught with problems of insensitivity, misunderstanding, and miscommunication (Davis, Erez & Avitable, 2001).

Research has shown that what drives the general perceptions is not the reality of crime but the reporting of crime (Indermaur & Roberts, 2009; Chiricos, Eschholz & Gertz 1997). This is

not surprising, since the media is the public's main source of information on crime. So any understanding of public perceptions must equally examine the ways media treats crime, and how the public assimilates the reporting of crime. Crime is continually 'news', so it is not surprising that perceptions of crime generally exaggerate its incidence. Research into this problem has pointed to the impact of media on community perceptions (Chiricos, Eschholz & Gertz 1997). The challenge is to provide quality information, which is accessible to a broad public, so that common understandings of criminal justice are less captured by media imperatives (Indermaur & Roberts, 2009).

Bridgewater and Bazzanell (2010) in their research found that many immigrants held idealistic or fantasized images of the United States through media depiction and portrayals of wealth, easy life and land of plenty. These images are met with the harsh realization that the realities of life in the United States. Many immigrants transport distinct cultural patterns and their ideas about American culture engrained even before they arrive in the United States (Skrentny, 2010). West Indians who arrive in New York must cope with living in a radically different racial order, where blacks are not just a minority, but a disparaged minority group (Foner, 2001). In most West Indian societies, people of African ancestry are the overwhelming majority (the exceptions are Trinidad and Guyana, with their enormous East Indian populations), and there are hardly any whites or Europeans. That people with dark skin occupy high status roles (including dominant political positions) is a fact of life and unremarkable (Foner, 2001).

Mary Waters in her research argued that when the immigrants first arrive, their knowledge of English, their skills and contacts, their self-respect, and their optimistic assessment of American race relations facilitate their integration into the American economic structure (Waters, 1999). However, over time the realities of American race relations begin to swamp their

positive cultural values and persistent, blatant racial discrimination soon undermines the enthusiasm the immigrants have when they first arrive. A lack of adequate housing choices forces them into neighborhoods with inadequate city services and high crime rates. Inferior public schools undermine their hopes for their children's future (Waters, 1999).

According to Hartnagel (1978) study which examined the relationship between the perception and fear of crime and neighborhood cohesion, social activity and affect for community. Hatnagel findings did not support the claim that perception of crime and the fear of crime were not related to neighborhood cohesion and social activity.

Sundeen (1984) study on fear of crime among foreign students found that main predictors of fear were perceptions of neighborhood dangerousness, perceived police protection, victimization experiences, and gender. The study further revealed that predictors of fear among immigrant students samples included participation in cultural activities from their home country and length of stay in the U.S. Participation in their cultural activities showed a positive association with fear, while length of stay in the U.S. showed a negative association. Although this study was limited to foreign students in the United States, it introduced a factor relevant in any study of immigrants' fear of crime, length of stay in the United States.

Ackah (2001) study hypothesized that fear of crime among Ghanaian immigrants in the Washington, DC metropolitan area will differ from other populations based on the presence of variables such as length of stay in the United States, participation in social activities, perception of neighborhood dangerousness, prior knowledge of crime, and work schedule (Ackah, 2000). The fear results from a personal assessment or perception of one's vulnerability to criminal victimization, which is made in the context of one's neighborhood. Coston (1988) argues that it is the subjective perception of one's vulnerability that is critical to the presence or absence of

fear of crime, and not what others may objectively perceive to be the true state of affairs. It is a social psychological fact that what people perceive as real is real in the consequence. Hence, a female immigrant may correctly or wrongly perceive herself as especially vulnerable because of gender or insufficient assimilation into the American culture (Coston, 1988).

Yin's (1985) conceptual framework is summarized in the equation $F = f(P, E)$, and interpreted as fear is a function of the person and the environment. The personal or organismic factors include age, gender, criminal victimization experiences, prior information about crime, and perception of neighborhood dangerousness, whereas some environmental factors are the ethnic composition of one's neighborhood, the local police protection from criminal victimization, participation in social activities, and signs of incivility in one's neighborhood (Yin, 1985). Fear of crime results from an interplay of these coexisting and interacting organismic and environmental forces (Coston, 1988; Sundeen, 1984; Yin, 1985).

Scheider, Rowell and Bezdikian (2003) study found that the visible presence of police officers in a neighborhood has been found to improve residents' opinion of police (Pattavina, Byrne & Garcia, 2006). Solis et Al review of literature showed evidence of a long history of negative police–community relations between Afro-Caribbeans and the NYPD. Their interview data show that respondents believe the police do not care about their communities and, thus, do not offer the same level of protection and concern as in white communities. Furthermore, study participants report that their interactions with the police often involve racial profiling and disrespectful treatment. Solis et al (2009) also find that respondents' interactions with the police are shaped by officers' uncertainty about youths' immigration status (Solis et Al, 2009). This is heightened by the aggressive policing methods utilized by the police in neighborhoods that are predominately black.

There are reasons to believe that it is important for criminal justice officials to make special efforts to encourage immigrants to report crimes and assist in their prosecution. It has been noted that recent immigrants who become victims face significant barriers to involvement in the criminal justice system. For example, many immigrants have had negative experiences with authorities in their country of origin (Davis, Erez & Avitable, 2001). These perceptions of authorities as oppressors may be transferred to officials in the United States in the absence of any direct experience with authorities in this country. When they do have contact with police here, the contact may be perceived as negative because of misunderstandings arising from cultural or language differences (Davis & Henley, 1990). Immigrants may avoid involvement with police because of concern about their immigration status (Davis, Erez & Avitable, 2001). Language difficulties and ignorance of criminal justice procedures also may restrict immigrants' ability to report victimization or become involved in criminal prosecutions (Ackah, 2000; Pattavina, Byrne & Garcia, 2006).

In light of the fact that Caribbean immigrants primarily settle in areas that are classified as socially disorganized, this study will look at the effects of migration and settlement patterns on the Caribbean immigrants' perception of crime. The research will discern how they view the community's role in their integration and assimilation process, in addition, if and how law enforcement bodies impact their perceptions and attitudes.

This study investigates the various views and opinions of Caribbean immigrants on crime in the United States mainly in New York State, focusing on how the integration and assimilation process impact their attitudes particularly those who live in socially disorganized communities. The present study will seek to investigate how their communities as well as adjustment and integration process of Caribbean immigrants affect their views on crime. The criminal justice

profession has contributed little or no knowledge to facilitate the understanding of immigrant acculturation (Buddington 2002 & Skrentny 2008). It is the expectation of the researcher that the findings will assist in the development of policies and programs to aid in the adjustment and integration of immigrants. In addition, this study will seek to assist criminal justice policy makers on how ethnicity and community relations can factor into immigration and crime. This type of examination is missing in current studies on immigration and crime.

Based on the literature review this study will investigate the effects of the community on Caribbean immigrants' perceptions of crime. In addition to how their community and law enforcement influences their perceptions and how social cohesion impact the perceptions of crime and neighborhood security.

The independent variable is social cohesion. Social cohesion refers to the processes of building shared values and communities of interpretation, and generally enabling people to have a sense that they are engaged in a common enterprise (Maxwell, 1996). This will be measured through the immigrants' length of stay in the United States and their participation in community activities.

The dependent variable is perceptions. Perceptions describe a person's experiences in the world and can be shaped by memory, culture and expectations. For this study, perceptions will be measured by the immigrants' views on the level of severity of crime and policing practices in their communities.

Method

The procedure employed for this thesis was the use of a survey research using questionnaires was administered to Caribbean immigrants. The participants were males and

females above 18 years. The participants should be from English speaking countries in the Caribbean. At the time of the study, they should have resided in the United States for a period of no less than six months and legal residence status is not a factor affecting participation. The requirement that participants consider English as a first language is important so that their experiences will not be compounded by having to learn English, as this will not be tested or measured during the study (Bridgewater & Buzzanell, 2010).

The participants should also reside in neighborhoods that have a large Caribbean immigrant population; these include Crown Heights, Flatbush and East New York areas of Brooklyn as well as the Bronx and New Rochelle areas of New York.

Questionnaires were distributed via the researcher's personal networks and the snowball method. The researcher's friends, colleagues, classmates etc. were asked to pass the surveys on to their friends and colleagues who they knew are Caribbean immigrants. The reason a snowball sampling was used instead of random sampling was again to ensure that the participants were Caribbean immigrants.

The adjustment and integration of Caribbean immigrants as well as the effect of the community violence on immigrant perceptions of crime will be tested in the design and sample. An interview survey questionnaire will be administered to participants. The survey will be in three parts: Caribbean emigration to the United States, immigration and community adjustment and exposure to and perceptions of crime. Within each part, there were a minimum of five primary questions. These questions will be primarily of a closed - ended nature in order for the participants to provide answers based on the hypothesis being tested. The participants also were given a questionnaire requesting background information.

Secondary information was gathered on the cities in New York State where the participants reside. The two counties where the participants reside are Kings County, which is considered Brooklyn and New Rochelle, a city located in Westchester County.

New Rochelle is located in Westchester County and is about 16 miles from New York City. In 2010, census data reported the City had a population of 77,062. It is one of the largest suburbs of New York City, the seventh-largest city in the state of New York, and the second largest city in Westchester County. According to the 2000 census data the racial composition of New Rochelle was, 68 percent Caucasian/ Non-Hispanic, 20 percent Hispanic, 19 percent African American and 6 percent other. There were 26,189 households in New Rochelle with 32.7 percent having children under the age of 18 living within them. Of this number, 12.5 percent were female headed with no husband present. The median income for a household in New Rochelle, according to the 2007 census estimates was \$64,756 with 9.8 percent of the population living below the poverty line.

According to the City of New Rochelle Police Department annual report 2010 New Rochelle is the fourth safest city nationwide out of 62 cities with comparable population. The city had an overall 12 percent decrease in crime between 2009 and 2010. Property crimes such as burglary and larceny decreased by 31 and 5 percent respectively, while robbery and aggravated assault also decreased by 17 and 54 within 2009 to 2010 period.

According to the 2010 Census report, 35.7% of the population in Brooklyn is non-Hispanic White, 31.9% non-Hispanic Black or African American, 10.4% non-Hispanic Asian. The 2010 US Census data reports that there are approximately 370,000 (16.4%) Caribbean immigrants or descendants living in Brooklyn. Brooklyn's West Indian community is primarily located in the Crown Heights, Flatbush, East Flatbush, and Canarsie neighborhoods within

central Brooklyn. Of the 880,727 households in Brooklyn, 33.3% have children under the age of 18 living in them. Of this number, 22.3% had a female headed household with no husband present. The median income for a household in Brooklyn, according to the U.S. census bureau, was \$32,135 with 25.1 percent of the population below the poverty line.

The New York State crime report for 2010 reported an overall decrease in crime for the state over the 2009- 2010 period. However, the Kings County (which is comprised of the Borough of Brooklyn) had increases in crime rates with a 4.5 percent increase in violent crimes and a 1.6 percent increase in property crimes. Property crimes such as burglary and larceny increased by 2.5 and 2 percent respectively, while robbery and aggravated assault increased by 6.2 and 2.5 percent within the 2009 – 2010 year.

Analysis

Frequency analysis was used to categorize responses and calculate percentage data. Closed – ended questions will be categorized and the answers compared and contrasted to distinguish how they formulate an overall view of responses. Commonalities and differences among the responses will be grouped to provide the basis for evaluation of the data. Open codes used were, community involvement and participation, assimilation cultural and environmental changes or adjustments and relationship with law enforcement.

Results

A total of 30 questionnaires were collected through snowball sampling. The questionnaires were assessed and 29 were found to be relatively complete. All of the participants were Caribbean immigrants who had been residing in New York for a period of no less than six months. The immigrants came from Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, St. Lucia and Antigua. As this research was mainly interested in immigrants' perceptions towards crime, their demographic backgrounds were examined in a greater detail.

As shown in Table 1, among the 29 respondents who indicated their gender, 38 percent of the participants were male and 62 percent were female. Thirty- eight percent of the respondents were between the ages of 25 and 34 years, this age group represented the largest amount of participants. Twenty-four percent of the participants were in the 18 to 24 age group, 17 percent of the respondents were between the ages of 35 and 44 years. The smallest numbers of participants were in the 65 years and older group which was 7 percent of the respondents.

As also shown in Table 1, 66 percent of the respondents reported they were single. This was the largest number of participants' marital status. Thirty one percent were married and 3 percent divorced.

All of the participants in the study reported completing a High school level education. Seventeen percent were High school graduates, 10 percent had business technical or vocational training after high school. Seventeen percent also reported completing some college but not the four years. Thirty one percent of the respondents were college graduates, those respondents represented the largest group and 21 percent reported post graduate training or professional school. These numbers are evidence to the fact that Caribbean immigrants place a lot of importance on education, whether as a means for economic prosperity or for self-accomplishment as shown in pie chart.

As evidenced by Table 1, all of the respondents reported some level of employment. Fifty five percent were employed full time; this was the largest amount in this cohort. Thirty one percent were employed on a part time basis, 10 percent reported being entrepreneurs who owned and/or operated small business enterprises in their communities and 3 percent were retired.

The bar graph shown represents the family income of the participants. Seventeen percent of the participants reported a family income of less than \$20,000 annually and \$20,000 to \$40,000 income range respectively. The highest income range was \$40,001 to \$60,000 per annum, with a total of 31 percent of the participants stating they earned this figure. Twenty one percent of the participants reported family income of \$60,001 to \$80,000 per annum and 7 percent reported family income of above \$80,001 per annum. The numbers show that while Caribbean immigrants are educated their annual incomes are disproportionate compared to the

rest of society for their educational accomplishments. This factor can have significant implications on their views and have an effect on how they assimilate into U.S. society and economy.

Emigration

The participants were asked to respond to various questions regarding immigration in order to obtain a view on the reasons Caribbean immigrants choose to travel to and settle in the United States. Also, the researcher wanted to gain a view on how the Caribbean Immigrants begin their transition to and their assimilation progression.

When asked why they chose to emigrate, 41 percent of the participants responded that they came to the United States because of family, to be reunited. Twenty eight percent of the participants stated that they chose to emigrate in order to further their educational pursuits. Financial prospects accounted for the 24 percent of the immigrants reason for emigrating and 7 percent came for both education and family. These numbers reinforce the argument that many Caribbean immigrants choose to leave their home countries for family reunification and/ or in pursuit of a “better” life through economic stability for themselves and their family.

The participants were asked with whom they first stayed upon arrival in the United States, 80 percent reported that they stayed with family members initially. These results further reinforce the fact that many Caribbean immigrants already have some relatives, whether immediate or distant in the United States. Seventeen percent reported that they lived on the campus of the school or university they attended, in a dormitory and 3 percent responded that they stayed with friends upon first arriving in the United States. The participants were asked if they still resided with the household they initially stayed, 72 percent responded no and 28 percent

responded yes. This is indicative the nature and acculturation of the Caribbean immigrant. Many Caribbean immigrants are anxious to start working and maintaining some level of independence and employment. They understand that their presence can place a financial burden on their relatives and are eager to gain employment and become independent whether it is through low paying wages or at jobs that are below their educational attainment.

The study also sought the views of the participants on whether they had any expectations when they migrated to the United States, 52 percent responded yes and 45 percent said no. This is evidence that many Caribbean immigrants have preconceived notions about the United States, based on their interactions and how the United States is portrayed to the Caribbean. These concepts of the United States are primarily based on how their local media and movies depict life in America and portray the United States as the land of opportunity.

Community and Environment

The participants for the study resided in areas that had a significant Caribbean immigrant population. A total of 72 percent of the Caribbean immigrants resided in Kings County, Brooklyn. These areas included Crown Heights, Flatbush, East New York and Canarsie. Ten percent of the participants reside in the Bronx and 17 percent reside in New Rochelle, a suburb in Westchester County, New York. The average amount of years in the United States for the participants in the study was 17 years, the lowest number of years present was two and the longest was forty one. The participants' average age at the time of their migration was 19 years old. The youngest age at arrival was eleven months old and the oldest age at arrival is forty years old.

The participants were asked if they liked living in their respective communities, 55 percent responded no and 45 percent responded yes. Similarly, they number were primarily the same when asked how safe they participant felt in their community, less than half, 48 percent responded yes and 31 percent responded no.

Seventy two percent of the participants reported that their community had social or sporting events; however, only 34 percent stated that they participated in these events. These statistics demonstrate that Caribbean immigrants are not assimilating or do not wish to let go of their culture and assimilate into American culture. Their motives for immigrating are focused on financial and economic prosperity and education; they do not consider embracing American culture.

The participants were asked how safe they felt from criminal activity in their community; 48 percent of the respondents reported that they felt safe and 31 percent reported they felt unsafe. What is interesting to note is that 80 percent of the participants who reported feeling safe in their community participated in community activities and 60 percent of those who reported feeling unsafe did not participate in any community activities.

Using a likert scale rating participants were asked to rate their views on crime being a problem in their community; 14 percent strongly agree, 28 percent that they agree or were neutral respectively, 17 percent responded that they disagree and 14 percent strongly disagree. The results are represented in the bar graph (see Appendix)

The participants were asked to choose what crime they felt was more of a problem in their community, property crimes such as vandalism and theft, violent crimes such as assault and armed robbery, or whether they are about the same. Thirty one percent respectively felt both

crimes were a problem. Additionally, 31 percent felt both crimes were as much a problem. The survey also sought to get the opinion of the participants on the crime rates in their communities over the past three years; 69 percent reported that they thought crime levels had remained the same. Fourteen percent believed that the crime rate had increased in their community, concurrently, the same number of participants (14 percent) thought that crime had decreased in their communities.

When asked what crimes the participants thought had increased in their area, 38 percent responded that they thought property crimes were on the rise; this answer was the most popular response. Twenty one percent of the respondents were of the opinion that violent crime and homicide were increasing and 17 percent believed that gang violence was the most prevalent crime in their community.

Additionally, the participants were also asked to render their opinions on the crimes they thought were decreasing in their communities. Of the participants who responded to this question, 31 percent stated that they believed property crimes were down, 28 percent thought that gang violence was on the decline and 10 percent believed that violent crimes were decreasing.

A perception on the level of police protection was also garnered from the participants in the study; the participants were asked what they thought about the level of police protection in their community. Forty eight percent of the respondents thought the level of police protection had increased and 41 percent stated they thought that the level of police protection had remained the same. Seven percent of the respondents stated that they felt the level of police protection has decreased over the past three years.

Subsequently, the participants were asked their views on the amount of police presence and patrols in their communities. Almost half of the respondents (48 percent) felt there needed to be more police patrols, 45 percent of the participants were satisfied with the amount of police patrols and believed that the amount of policing in their neighborhood could remain the same. Only 3 percent of the participant felt there could be less police presence and patrols in their community.

The community and environment responses were categorized according to the Brooklyn and New Rochelle residents' responses. When asked whether or not they liked living in their respective communities, 60 percent of the New Rochelle responded yes, while 57 percent of the Brooklyn residents responded no they did not like their community. When asked to rate how safe the participants felt living in their community, 80 percent of the New Rochelle residents reported feeling very safe and 20 percent reported feeling safe. The responses from the Brooklyn ranged from 33 percent feeling unsafe, 14 percent feeling very unsafe, 48 percent responded that they felt safe and 5 percent responded that they felt very safe.

The participants were asked whether they participated in community social or sporting events. Among the Brooklyn respondents, 29 percent responded yes and 71 percent responded no, while 80 percent of the New Rochelle residents responded yes and 20 percent responded no.

The participants were asked to rate whether they thought crime a problem in their community, the responses from the Brooklyn ranged from 57 percent reported strongly agree and agree while 20 percent disagreed. Among the New Rochelle residents, 80 percent disagreed while 20 percent strongly disagreed. The participants were also asked to rate whether they thought on the crime level in their community over the past three years. All the residents of New Rochelle were of the opinion that crime had remained at the same level, while 62 percent of the

Brooklyn residents believed crime were at the same level and 19 percent respectively responded that they crime had increased and decreased over the time period. The respondents were also asked how they felt about the level of police patrols in their community, 80 percent of the New Rochelle residents felt the amount of patrols should remain the same and 20 percent responded that there could be more police patrols. Of the Brooklyn respondents, 57 percent thought their communities needed more police patrols, 33 percent thought the level of police patrol was sufficient and 5 percent thought their community needed less police patrols.

Discussion

This study provides an account of the relationship between assimilation and perceptions of crime among Caribbean immigrants. There were some key findings arising from the result; these include; assimilation, despite the length of stay, assimilation and acculturation was significant in the perception of crime. The assimilation and acculturation of the immigrant did affect their perceptions of crime in their various communities. Household income also yielded surprising results as the income of the participants did not have a significant impact on their perceptions of crime within their various communities.

The results showed similarities and differences between the current study and other related studies on fear of crime among immigrants. The findings were similar to both Sundeen (1984) and Ackah (2000) in that while length of stay in the United States did have an effect on the Caribbean immigrants' perception of crime. Additionally, their assimilation also had an effect on their perceptions.

The findings, however, were inconsistent with the study conducted by Hartnagel as the communities studied showed a positive relationship between neighborhood cohesion and social

activity on the Caribbean immigrants' perceptions of crime in their communities. The neighborhood stability and security did affect how the immigrants in the study perceived the relative safety of their community.

The purpose of this study was to examine the Caribbean immigrants' perceptions of crime in their community using the tenets of social disorganization theory as a guide to understanding the Caribbean immigrant perspective. Within this context and in an effort to understand these perceptions two hypotheses were examined; the first stated whether neighborhood conditions and community involvement affect the Caribbean immigrants' perceptions of crime. Several questions asked and responses analyzed in order to investigate and gain insight into this hypothesis. For example, the participants were asked if their communities had sporting event and if they participated in these community events. The responses revealed that while a majority of these communities did, according to the accounts of the respondents have sporting and social events; however a little over one third on these respondents participated in these events. One of the defining features of socially stable and organized communities, according to social disorganization theory, is the willingness of the members of the community to come together and participate in community events, this helps to create an atmosphere of collective efficacy, necessary in sustaining stable communities that are crime free and cohesive. The fact that many of the participants in the study did not take part in community events can be the causal result of social disorganization theory on the assimilation of the Caribbean immigrant. The immigrants move into these neighborhoods where there is either a culture of unwillingness to take part and they become cultured to this behavior, consequently they adopt this attitude.

The second hypothesis examined in the study was whether the Caribbean immigrants perceptions are impacted by their relationship with law enforcement, specifically, the police in

their community. Does the relationship between the police and their community have an impact on the immigrants' perceptions? An analysis of the data suggests that the communications and interactions of law enforcement and communities do influence the immigrants' perceptions about crime and policing in their neighborhoods. The response to the question of whether there was adequate police protection was evidence that the Caribbean immigrant communities in New York felt that they were not adequately protected by the police from criminal activity in their communities. These perceptions can have negative effects on participation with law enforcement bodies as this can further fuel mistrust between both groups.

The study introduced other factors that influence perceptions of crime and integration with the Caribbean immigrant notion; immigrants who reported being involved and participating in community activities reported feeling safe in their communities and this was a community. Also, there was a correlation between the number of Caribbean immigrants who the number of immigrants who had expectations when they migrated to the United States and the number who responded that they liked living in their communities. The same number who had expectations about life in the United States also did not like their respective communities. This exemplifies how the myth and the reality of life in the United States can affect the Caribbean immigrants perceptions and ultimately their assimilation and integration into the culture.

Additionally, the analysis completed also sought to determine whether there was a link between law enforcement presence and their effectiveness in the communities and the perceptions of crime levels in the communities. The responses were compared and analyzed in order to discover if there was a link. Our analysis revealed that while the majority of the respondents were of the opinion that crime had remained the same over a period of three years, almost half of the participants reported that they thought their communities needed more patrols

and support from the police. The analysis also revealed that community involvement and participation in social activities was not significantly related to the residents' perceptions that the police are effective in making their neighborhoods any safer from crime.

These perceptions of law enforcement's ability to protect the members of society have a significant impact on the assimilation and integration process. Caribbean immigrants who view law enforcement negatively can reject integration and assimilating into society based on a lack of positive reinforcement and assurance of security from law enforcement. This rejection of socially acceptable behavior coupled with negative reinforcement from their community can further add to their adoption of negative community values and participation in criminal activity in these unstable neighborhoods.

Strengths

This research is innovative for numerous reasons; the focus on the views from the perspective of the immigrant has rarely been a feature on criminologists when conducting research on perspectives of crime and immigrant assimilation. This work is also groundbreaking in that it gives voice to the Caribbean immigrant, a voice that is distinct and needs to be explored in the context of immigration and crime. Many prior researches either sought to answer questions from the perspective of all immigrants or other distinct ethnicities such as Latinos.

This study was centered on the opinions of Caribbean immigrants, providing their views of crime and community structure. A topic which has not been explored and requires substantial emphasis especially in the states, such as New York, Florida, New Jersey and other states that are now becoming home to a large Caribbean Diaspora. This study investigates the viewpoint of

the Caribbean immigrant and their immigration experiences with a motivation to understanding how these experiences are affected by current immigration and criminal justice policies.

Additionally, the study contributes to criminal justice policy makers and law enforcement knowledge of the issues affecting immigrants and their assimilation and how their views of law enforcement are resultant from their various communities and interaction with law enforcement. This can assist in the innovation of policies geared specifically for new immigrants and fostering relationship between immigrants and law enforcement agents.

This study can be a worthwhile contribution to criminological literature in that it provides a look at immigration effects on social disorganization as a contributing factor in the perpetuation of crime and lack of social control in addition to how community structure and values affect new immigrants and their reception of American values and attitudes.

Limitations

It is important to note that the findings of this study pertain to Caribbean immigrants' perceptions of community crime and policing rather than actual crime and policing practices. It is recommended for future studies to compare both immigrant perceptions with actual crime figures for the relevant communities. This would assist in the formulation of policies specifically aimed at this cohort.

The purpose of this research was to gain insight on the perceptions of Caribbean immigrants of their community and their opinions on crime and policing in these communities. One of the limitations this study faced was the unwillingness of participants to take part in the study, despite reassurances from the researcher, due to their immigration status in the United

States. Participants declined to give their opinions as they felt their participation would have implications and their status in the country would be revealed.

The researcher utilized the snowball method to gain participants for this research. This meant that many of the participants were familiar with or had links with the researcher. This may have affected their answers as their answers may be skewed based on the fact that they knew the researcher. Also, the participants' answers may have been arrived at based on assumptions about the researcher's purpose for the study. Additionally, the majority of the participants were Jamaicans, this was due to the fact that the researchers, being of Jamaican heritage, relied on the snowball method which ultimately resulted in many of the participants being of a similar background. The percentage of Jamaicans in the study compared to the other Caribbean nations was not an accurate representation. As a result, the study may appear to be indicative of the perceptions of one Caribbean nation and not the whole. Further studies should maintain a comparable balance of Caribbean nations.

Another limitation is the study was conducted only in New York State. As in all single state studies, the findings are specific to that location and should not be generalized to all cities that have Caribbean immigrant populations. However, the findings can be compared with cities that have similar characteristics as New York. Also, the demographic statistics provided in the research represented the total sample of persons within the cities; these areas are not exclusive to immigrants from the Caribbean. Both New Rochelle and Brooklyn have immigrants from various nationalities worldwide, however, they also have a large Caribbean immigrant population.

Conclusion

This exploratory study is an attempt to give voice to Caribbean immigrants concerning their perceptions of crime and the police in New York. Guided by social disorganization theory we examined the perceptions of Caribbean immigrants on crime and the influence their assimilation and acculturation exerted on their perceptions. The literature that we examined provided a basis for an understanding of Caribbean immigrants' motivation for emigrating from their home countries to the United States, specifically New York and the role their community plays in their views of law enforcement.

Our findings revealed that for many Caribbean immigrants their preconceived notions of life in New York and the United States can be different from the actuality. While their motives include family reunification, for Caribbean immigrants, the financial prospects that they can gain through education plays a vital role. It is these motives that drive them and not the need to assimilate and become a part of American society. Their inability to gain employment fitting to their educational level and the influence of their communities' structures and instability ultimately affect their impression of crime and security in their community.

This study divulges the need for law enforcement and criminal justice agents to take action and become more sensitized to the specific issues relating to Caribbean immigrants. As the society becomes more diverse, it is evident that Caribbean immigrants are a distinct group and criminal justice officials should ensure that they are given the resources and access to facilities that encourage and facilitate significant involvement in their communities and the criminal justice system.

Recommendations

This study provided an important opportunity to assess the perceptions of Caribbean immigrants in an ethnically diverse New York and in communities that are predominantly populated by Caribbean immigrants. New York City is also a place with a racial and ethnic landscape that both resembles contemporary America and is a signal of future urban diversity. For this reason, it is a key location for attempting to understand relationships between immigration and crime.

With increased immigration from the West Indies, and continued out-migration of native blacks, New York City's black population will be more and more Caribbeanized (Foner, 2001). At the same time, their perceptions and experiences regarding their communities and how they acculturate into New York and other communities has gone unnoticed. It is important that law enforcement and criminal justice officials take this demographic into consideration and the impact negative acculturation can have on crime and perceptions of crime among this group. Law enforcement, social services and criminal justice officials responsible for implementing policing and community relations polices in communities that are predominantly Caribbean need to consider how the Caribbean immigrant culture and perceptions can affect how they assimilate into the United States. The need for understanding the Caribbean immigrant beliefs and experiences through their culture in order to formulate effective strategies that will allow immigrants to be able to communicate with law enforcement thereby fostering a sense of efficacy within themselves and ultimately, their communities.

Based on the findings, there is a need for police services and outreach programs aimed specifically at immigrants in these communities. These services should include workshops and other sensitivity training programs for law enforcement staff that emphasize the specific needs of recent immigrants. Training on the specific needs of the Caribbean immigrant and awareness on

their ethnic type, beliefs and how they relate to law enforcement. This training can help to foster positive encounters between the police and immigrants, which can assist in furthering a climate of cooperation required in the stabilization of communities and decrease in crime rates. It is important that criminal justice bodies take steps to encourage the participation of Caribbean immigrants in the criminal justice process and foster a sense of security among this group.

As most Caribbean immigrants are initiated into American culture by family and their surroundings, they look to these associations to assist in finding jobs and accommodations. As a result, they often take on the same beliefs and attitudes whether negative or positive. The need for government programs that are aimed at training immigrants on the various avenues to explore in their job search is essential. These programs should offer workshops and training on how to access available resources. The institution of these programs will be beneficial in that they will provide immigrants with the knowledge and skill that can assist in acculturation and assimilation into American society.

It is recommended that future researchers replicate and further this study by collecting data from other immigrant destination or majority Caribbean immigrant cities across the United States. This would both enable consideration of other immigrant groups and generations comparable to Caribbean immigrants and allow assessment of and provide perspectives that may differ in their receptivity and ease of incorporation for immigrant groups, ultimately influencing their integration and attitudes compared with New York.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Consent Form

My name is Renee Shaw. I am a graduate student in Criminal Justice at The King Graduate School, Monroe College and the investigator of the project “Caribbean Immigrants perceptions on crime in their community” This research is being conducted to understand the views of Caribbean immigrants on crime in New York. I would like your participation in a questionnaire about your views on crime in your neighborhood.

The questionnaire will take approximately 10-15 minutes. The information on the questionnaire will only be seen by me and my advisor. All information gathered will be kept strictly confidential, and will be stored in a locked file cabinet, to which only I and my advisor will have access. At any time you can refuse to answer any question or end the interview.

I foresee no potential harm for participating. Potential benefits of this research will include meaningful Caribbean integration and assimilation in New York.

I may publish the results of this study, but neither names of participants, nor any identifying characteristics, will be used in any of the publications. If you would like a copy of the study, please provide me with your address and I will send you a copy in the future.

If you have any questions about this research, you can contact me at 917-318-9786 or by email, rshaw6529@monroecollege.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a participant in this study you can contact Dean Basil Wilson at The King Graduate School at 718- 933-6700 or bwilson@monroecollege.edu. You may also contact my advisor, Dr. Christopher Charles at 718-933-6700 Ext. 8677 or ccharles@monroecollege.edu

Thank you for participating in this study.

I agree to participate in the interview, please circle one: Yes No

 Participant's signature

 Date

 Investigator's signature

 Date

Appendix 2

Demographic Background Questionnaire

Thank you for taking time to participate in this research project. Below are some demographic questions, please check the most appropriate response for each question. Completion of the document is voluntary and you will not be penalized for not answering any question that you may feel uncomfortable responding to, however, this information will prove vital in the interpretation of data and I hope you will be comfortable responding to all the questions.

1. What is your gender?

---Male

---Female

--- Other (Please Specify) _____

2. What is your age?

---Younger than 18 years

---18-24 years

---25-34 years

---35-44 years

---45-54 years

---55-64 years

---65 years and older

3. What is the last grade or class you completed in school?

---No formal education

---Grades 1- 8

---High school graduate (Grade 12 or GED certificate)

---Business, technical or vocational school AFTER high school

---some college, but no 4 year degree

---college graduate (BS, BA, or other 4 year degree)

---Post Graduate training/professional school after college

---Other (Please Specify)

4. What is your race?

---Black

---Caucasian

---Asian

---Mixed Race

---Other (please specify) _____

5. Are you now employed? Check what answer (s) apply to you

---Full time

---Part time

---Retired

---Not Employed

---Entrepreneur (Owns Business)

--- Other (Please specify)_____

6. What is your relationship status?

---Single

---Married

---Cohabiting

---Divorced

---Separated

7. Do you have any dependents living with you?

---No

---Yes (how many? _____)

8. What is your total family income?

---less than US\$20,000

---US\$20,000 - \$40,000

---US\$40,001 - \$60,000

---US\$60,001 - \$80,000

---US\$80,001 or more

9. From which Caribbean country did you come when you immigrated to the United States?

10. How long have been residing in the United States? _____

11. How old were you when you migrated to the United States?_____

Questionnaire

Part 1 – Emigration to the United States

12. Why did you come to the United States?

- Education
- Financial Prospects
- Family
- Other (Please specify)

13. Who came with you to the United States?

- Immediate family
- Friend
- Other (Please Specify) _____

14. Whom did you stay with when you first arrived in the United States?

- Family
- Friend
- Dorm
- Other (Please Specify) _____

15. Is this where you are still staying with now?

- Yes
- No

16. Did you have any expectations when you migrated to the United States?

- Yes
- No

Part 2 – Community and Environment Questionnaire

17. What community do you currently reside in?
18. Is this a place you would like to live?
---Yes
---No
19. Does your community have social/sporting events?
---Yes
---No
20. Do you participate in community events?
---Yes
---No
21. How safe from criminal activity do you currently feel living in your community?
---Very Safe
--- Safe
--- Unsafe
--- Very Unsafe
22. Crime is a problem in my community (Please rate according to the scale below)
(A) Strongly Agree (B) Agree (C) Neutral (D) Disagree (E) Strongly Disagree
23. What type of crime do you feel is more of a problem in your community: (A) property crimes such as vandalism and theft, (B) violent crimes such as assault and armed robbery, or (C) they are about the same?
24. In the past three years would you say the level of crime in your community has
(A) increased, (B) stayed about the same, or (C) decreased?
25. What crimes have increased in your community? A) property crimes such as vandalism and theft, (B) violent crimes such as assault and armed robbery, or (C) gang violence and homicide
26. What crimes have decreased in your community? A) property crimes such as vandalism and theft, (B) violent crimes such as assault and armed robbery, or (C) gang violence and homicide

27. Would you say the level of police protection in your community has (A) increased, (B) stayed about the same, or (C) decreased over the past three years?
28. Do you feel there need to be, (A) more police patrols, (B) about the same number of police patrols, or (C) less police patrols in your community?

Table 1 Characteristics/ descriptors of Sample (N=29)		
Characteristics/descriptors	Number	Percentage
Gender		
Male	11	38
Female	18	62
Age Group		
18-24 Years	7	24
25-34 Years	11	38
35-44 Years	5	17
45-54 Years	1	3
55-64 Years	3	10
65 and Older	2	7
Education Level		
High school graduate (Grade 12 or GED certificate)	6	21
Business, technical or vocational school AFTER high school	3	10
Some college, but no 4 year degree	5	17
College graduate (BS, BA, or other 4 year degree)	9	31
Post Graduate training/professional school after college	6	21
Marital Status		
Single	19	66
Married	9	31
Divorced	1	3
Employment Status		
Entrepreneur	3	10
Full Time	16	55
Part Time	9	31
Retired	1	3
Family Income (Annual)		
No Answer	2	7
Less than \$20,000	5	17
\$20,000 -\$ 40,000	5	17
\$40,001- \$60,000	9	31
\$60,001- \$80,000	6	21
80,001 and above	2	7

Country of Birth		
Antigua	1	3
Dominica	1	3
Haiti	1	3
Jamaica	22	76
St. Lucia	1	3
Trinidad & Tobago	3	10

Table 2

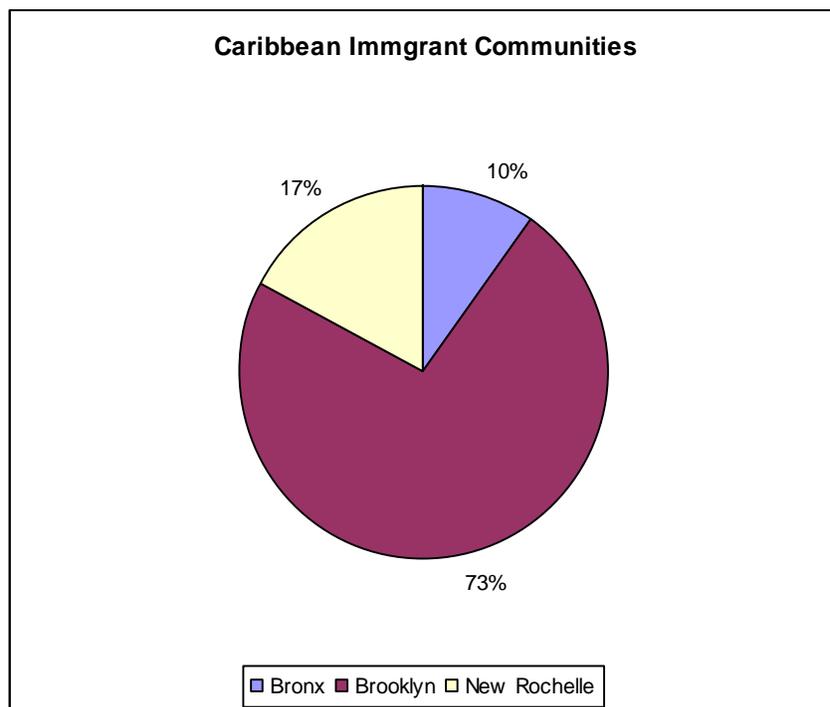


Table 3

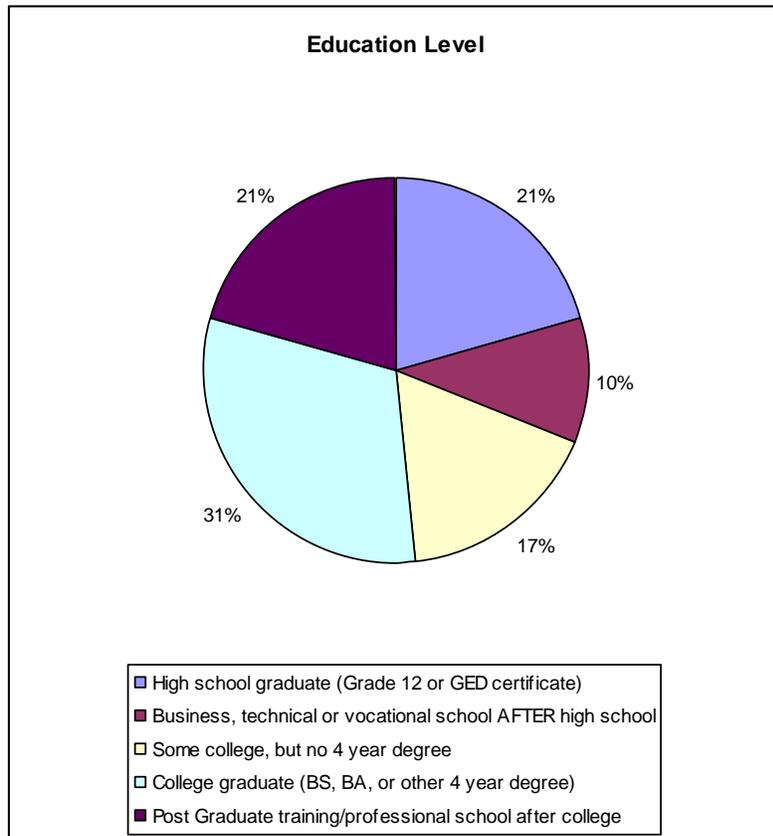


Table 4

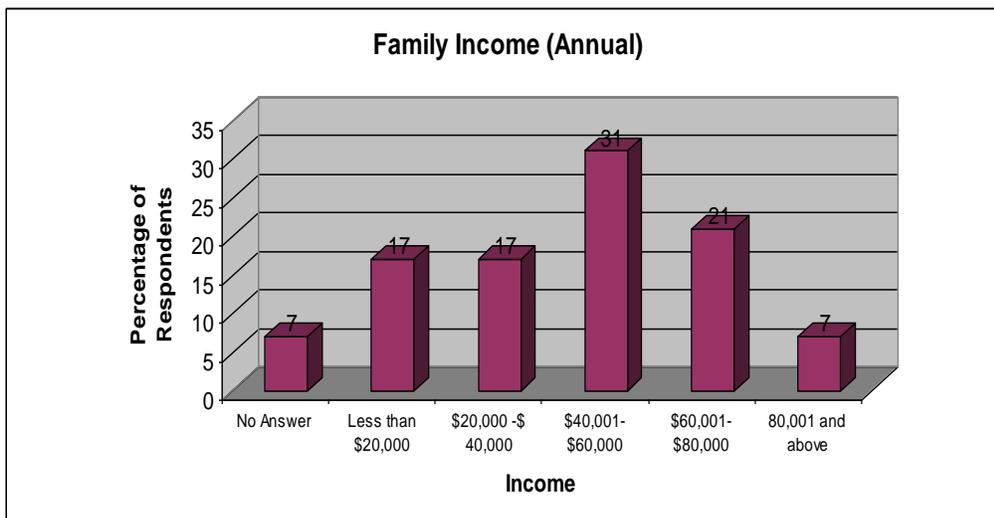


Table 5

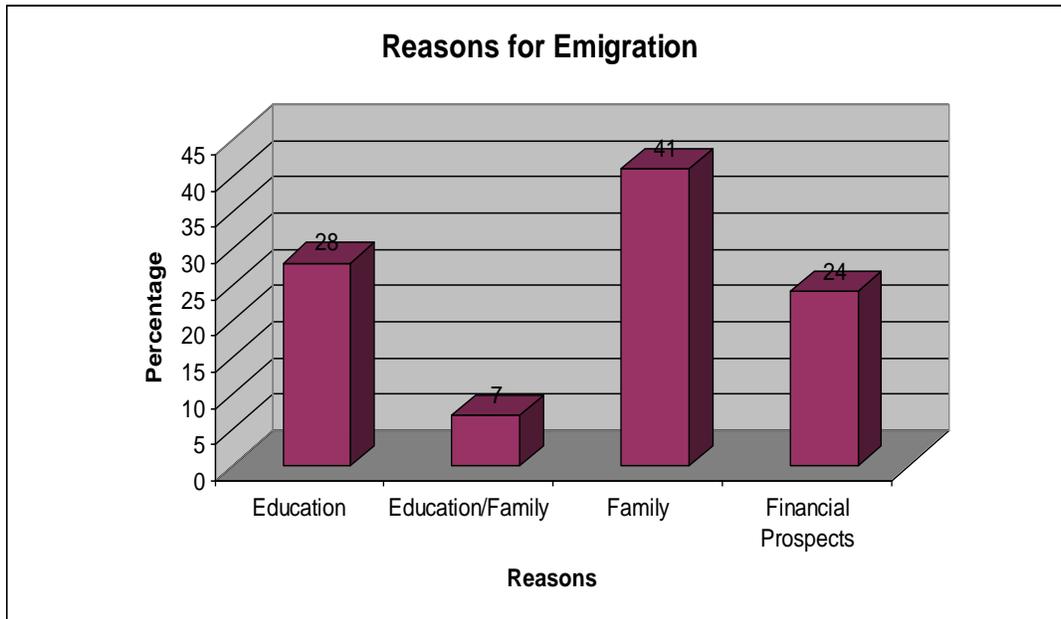


Table 6

