CARIBBEANS IN NEW YORK: POLITICAL PARTICIPATION, STRATEGIC COOPERATION AND THE PROSPECT FOR PAN-ETHNIC POLITICAL MOBILIZATION IN THE DIASPORA

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Abstract

This work examines the inauspicious environment for the formation of pan-Caribbean strategic coalitions and political mobilization in the Diaspora. Caribbeans in New York City have a distinct political participation profile, characterized by lower rates of participation, but driven largely by the impact Hispanic Caribbeans have on the larger Caribbean collective that includes Afro-Caribbeans. Analysis of legislative co-operation among Caribbean elected officials and the initiatives of political entrepreneurs who seek to create distinct bases of political support by forging alternative identities reveal further that, despite initiatives by such strategic actors, Caribbeans exhibit a variety of identities, some of which may be in competition, contradiction or simply to fledgling to withstand challenges from readily articulated and enduring identities and extant political allegiances.

Keywords: Caribbean pan-ethnicity, political participation, pan-ethnic mobilization

Resumen

Este trabajo examina el poco halagüeño medio ambiente para la formación de coaliciones estratégicas pan-caribeñas y su movilización política en la diáspora. Los caribeños en Nueva York muestran un perfil de participación política distintivo, el cual se caracteriza por bajos niveles de participación, pero dados mayormente por el impacto que los caribeños hispanos tienen sobre el colectivo mayor que incluye a afro-caribeños. Los análisis de cooperación legislativa entre representantes caribeños electos y los de las iniciativas de "empresarios" políticos, que buscan crear fuentes de apoyo político distintivos al forjar identidades alternas, revelan además que, no obstante el ímpetu de actores estratégicos, los caribeños muestran una variedad de identidades, algunas de las cuales pudieran estar en competencia, contradicción o simplemente muy incipientes para resistir el embate de identidades ya articuladas y duraderas al igual que alianzas políticas imperantes.

Palabras clave: pan-caribeñidad, participación política, movilización pan-étnica

RÉSUMÉ

Ce travail propose d'examiner une atmosphère peu favorable à la formation des coalitions stratégiques pan-caribéennes et leur intégration politique dans la diaspora. Les caribéens vivant à New York laissent dessiner un profil distinct en ce qui a trait à une intégration politique, lequel résulte de leur faible participation aux affaires politiques, mais surtout de l'impact que les caribéens d'origine hispanique exercent sur la collectivité y compris les afro-caribéens. Les études portant sur la coopération législative entre représentants caribéens élus et ceux "d'entreprises" politiques- favorables à la promotion d'identités alternatives- démontrent qu'au delà de la fourgue d'acteurs stratégiques, les caribéens possèdent une variété d'identités et certaines d'entre elles sont susceptibles de correspondre à une marque de compétence, de contradiction ou simplement aident a résister les attaques identitaires aussi bien articulées et fortes que des alliances politiques bien connues.

Mots-clés: pan-caribéanité, intégration politique, mobilisation pan-ethnique

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"We need to unite the Caribbean community as an economic and cultural force in many ways and certainly as a political force in the United States." With these words, Adolfo Carrión, the borough (county) president of the Bronx, made an appeal to civic, business and political leaders in the larger Caribbean population in New York City beyond his narrow Puerto Rican base of support in the Bronx, in an effort to broaden his political base in anticipation to a run for citywide elective office (Best 2005a). Carrión organized and convened a conference titled "Caribbean NYC: The Future is Today" in 2005, as an overture to West Indian-centered institutions from the English-speaking Caribbean that were receptive to the idea of cross-Caribbean collaboration, such as the Caribbean American Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the weekly *The New York Carib News*, which enthusiastically endorsed the project (Best 2005b). Under the slogan "The blood that unites us is thicker than the waters that divide us" (Bronx Borough President's Office 2005), the conference centered on business and politics, both domestic and international, specifically on trade and entrepreneurship among New York's Caribbean community; U.S. immigration policy and its impact on Caribbean Americans; and disaster (i.e., hurricane) preparedness and relief efforts in the Caribbean.

The expressly political focus of the discussions was aimed at the U.S.

federal policy. However, in the aftermath of the conference, the potential for cross-Caribbean co-operation in the United States, and specifically in New York City, raised serious doubts and concerns among African-American political leaders at the possibility that the effort by Carrión was an attempt to solidify relations with Caribbeans from the English-speaking Caribbean on the basis of Caribbean identity and interests at the expense and exclusion of African-Americans, with which there was some common ground on the basis of racial identity and interests.

Carrión's ambitions were set on running for mayor in 2009 along with a crowded field of pretenders, most of which were non-Hispanic whites. His ethnicity (and race) contributed to differentiate Carrión from most of these potential opponents on a white/non-white dimension along which many contests for elective offices are held in the United States. However, in New York City's political landscape, Carrión's racialized ethnicity as a non-white did not differentiate him much from another potential candidate, the city's comptroller, William Thompson, an African-American from Brooklyn. In fact, the presence of prominent minority candidates in a crowded field of pretenders set the stage for potential inter-minority competition and conflict, in the heels of two previous mayoral elections in which the support of a Puerto Rican mayoral candidate by black political leaders and voters successfully promoted a black-Latino electoral alliance, even as it was ultimately unfruitful (Hicks 2005). The pressure for inter-minority solidarity, which called both implicitly and explicitly for negotiating alternating viable minority candidates to office, in contrast to pursuing individual political ambitions, created the political environment in which Carrión announced that he would not seek the mayoralty as he had originally intended, but would rather run for comptroller, also a citywide elective office, which would groom him for a future candidacy for mayor and would allow him to expand his base of support (Hicks 2007).

Carrión's efforts as a political entrepreneur to manipulate his situational ethnicity in order to direct an identity that could be mobilized for political purposes in New York City may have rested on a strategic calculation on Carrión's part to leverage his position as potential spoiler to exact concessions and support from established political arrangements and alliances. Alternatively, his attempt may have rested on a genuine belief on his part and that of his supporters that enough commonalities and shared interests exist among people of Caribbean origin or descent to mobilize them along pan-ethnic lines for electoral purposes. Whatever his motivations, his ultimately failed fledgling attempt to mobilize Caribbeans with a pan-ethnic appeal shows in relief the limits to the viability of such strategy, at least at this point in time and under current circumstances and political arrangements. His efforts at mobilizing along pan-ethnic lines,

however, raise the question of whether a group identity exists among people of Caribbean origin and descent that may be mobilized for political purposes. In fact, his attempts beg the question of whether such a group identity among this population can be created at all if it does not exist. A related question is whether such a Caribbean identity has been politicized so that in its politicization it may be readily mobilized or deployed.

In the space that follows I examine whether there are bases for pan-Caribbean political mobilization in the United States. I focus on structural factors that may undergird commonalty of interests among Caribbeans. To this end, I examine data from a public opinion survey to ascertain what issues are salient for the Caribbean population in New York City to establish whether there is agreement or disagreement on issues of political interest that may serve as bases on which a pan-ethnic political alliance or coalition may be built. In addition to the analysis of political attitudes and orientations, I explore the political behavior (electoral and non-electoral) of Caribbeans to identify sociodemographic and political predictors of participation that they may share, which may signal common conditions that may provide bases for concerted political action. Furthermore, I explore political behavior at the mass level in order to discern whether there are commonalities in their behavior that may similarly suggest a commonality in the manner in which policy priorities are conveyed to elected representatives. Finally, I examine the behavior of Caribbean political elites in the local legislative body to establish whether there is a singular pattern of cooperation among them in terms of legislative work that may serve as evidence of their disposition for self-conscious concerted action as Caribbeans, as opposed to competition or to prevalent mutual unawareness or indifference.

The analyses will reveal that at present there is no coherent and extended group identity that would accommodate under a singular banner the large number of people who hail from and identify with the Caribbean and who may be mobilized for political purposes. Predominant identities tend to be based at the national-origin level (e.g., Dominican). Broader identities may only extent to narrower conglomerations that share a "sociocultural" area (e.g. English-speaking West Indians). Extant social and political arrangements in New York City make it improbable that such a Caribbean pan-ethnic identity will be crafted in the short-term or even in the foreseeable future. The main reason is that such a large population has not been singled out as Caribbean and it has not had to organize and respond as such. Yet, this reality notwithstanding, current efforts to project such a broader identity have been attempted (e.g., Carrión) or are in the works (e.g., CaribID2010). Consequently, an analysis of present conditions for such intra-Caribbean mobilization is pertinent and timely.

Caribbeans in the United States

Presently there are more than 4.6 million people of Caribbean birth living in the United States.[1] Adding those who claim Caribbean ancestry raises the number of Caribbeans living in the United States to more than 11.2 million, or more than 3% of the total population of the country. More than 1.2 million residents of New York City were born in the Caribbean (14% of the population), and an additional 1.4 million people trace their ancestry to the Caribbean in 2006-2008. This makes New York City the place with the largest Caribbean population in the country. It also makes New York the third largest "Caribbean" city in the world, after Santo Domingo and Havana. These 2.6 million people of Caribbean origin or descent, then, represent 32% of the 8.3 million people who reside in New York City. The largest national origin Caribbean group in New York is Puerto Rican, with almost 784,000 people; followed by Dominicans, with over 571,000 people; Jamaicans, with more than 380,000 people; Guyanese, with almost 223,000; Haitians, with 210,000; and Trinidadians, with 160,000 people, among others.

This visible presence and the potential for its growth in New York City had been foreseen for decades (Handlin 1959; Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños 1979; Bryce-Laporte and Mortimer 1976; Georges 1990; Grasmuck and Pessar 1991; Sutton and Chaney 1987; Foner 1987). However, when studying the presence of these Caribbeans in New York City, or in the United States at large, the emphasis has been on single group analysis (Senior 1961; Mills, Senior and Goldsen 1950). At most, plural analyses or case studies involving more than one Caribbean group tend to be limited to groups described as sharing a "sociocultural" area (e.g. English-speaking Afro-Caribbeans) (Reid 1939; Kasinitz 1992; Waters 1999). Thus, what passes for comprehensive studies of Caribbeans in New York are often limited to the aggregation of chapters that treat each Caribbean group individually. When comparative analyses are performed involving Caribbeans, they tend to be with single groups or socioculturally cohesive groups and "others" with whom they may share some similar traits (e.g. African-Americans and Afro-Caribbeans as blacks) or in contrasts (e.g. African-Americans and Puerto Ricans as native minorities vis-à-vis Anglophone Afro-Caribbean immigrants) (cf. Levine 1987; Sutton and Chaney 1987).

Indeed, while observers and students of the Caribbean and its people may recognize similarities, they largely distinguish Caribbeans along lines of language and racial formation (i.e., racial categorization and racial relations). West Indians, that is, English-speaking Caribbeans, are seen as conforming a more coherent group, even as Haitians are often added to the category, thus highlighting the parallel experiences of

people from largely black countries from the region with Creole cultures (Waters 1999). Studies involving peoples from the Spanish-speaking Caribbean tend to center on the specific national-origin groups or their experiences tend to be understood and analyzed along with those of other Spanish-speaking people from elsewhere in the Americas, with little grounding on the Caribbean as a region. This often leads observers to conclude that, while this collection of peoples from the same geographic region may share similar histories and experiences, both in the Caribbean or abroad, there is little common conscience or shared collective identity as *Caribbeans* for the entire conglomerate (Kasinitz 1992). This may in fact be the case.

Yet, the distinguished scholar Roy S. Bryce-Laporte remarked more than three decades ago that "[a] Pan-Caribbean spirit is emerging in New York City"; a pronouncement based on "signs that New York functions as a site of significant cultural and political contacts in which there occurs a coalescence, structural reformation, and fusion of Caribbean peoples of various persuasions, cultures, classes and sub-regions who were apart, antagonistic, and even ignorant of each other at home" (Bryce-Laporte 1979: 228). Moreover, Franklin Knight, in contextualising his argument about Caribbean fragmented nationalism, starts with three assumptions about the region: the countries go through the same general experience, only at different times; "the sum of the common experience and understandings of the Caribbean outweigh the territorial differences or peculiarities"; and "the forces that have resulted in the Balkanization of the region have varied more in degree than in kind" (1990:xiv). While there are obvious differences and divisions within the region, Knight goes on to assert not only that the region comprises one culture area, but that all societies in the Caribbean share an identifiable *Weltanschauung*. With such contrasting understanding grounded on these insights from the region of origin, the present analysis examines whether such signs Bryce-Laporte observed three decades ago (e.g., the growth of Third World radio; the institution of Caribbean studies programs; the common understanding of religiosity based on a collective African heritage) have grown into more formal convergence and structuration. In the pages that follow, I examine the interaction of these Caribbeans in the symbolic and instrumental realms of politics.

Pan-ethnicity and Mobilization

The mobilization of ethnic identities is an eminently political pursuit. It does not happen naturally or spontaneously. For this ethnic mobilization, the role of a political entrepreneur is key. Political leaders do not mobilize public involvement just for its own sake, but rather in pursuit

of their own advantage. These leaders do so when faced with new political, economic, and social incentives, which motivate "their attempts to mobilize citizen involvement in elections and in government changes to exploit the new opportunities and accommodate the new constraints" (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993:233). An incentive for political leaders to mobilize the public or segments thereof surfaces with shifts in ethnic boundaries (Wimmer 2008). Migration provides an opportunity to produce such ethnic boundary shift. Migration may change the spectrum of actors involved in social dynamics of ethnic boundary making and unmaking, and whose presence offers "new opportunities for forming alliances and thus provide the impetus to redraw ethnic boundaries" (Wimmer 2008:1005).

In the United States, the proportion of immigrants has more than doubled to 11% since 1970, when those born abroad represented 5% of the total population (U.S. Census Bureau 2000). In fact, the current proportion of foreign-born is the highest since 1930. Moreover, the region of origin for this migrant population has shifted significantly from past migratory movements. Whereas in 1970, 62% of all foreign-born were of European origin, by 2000 they represented only 16% of all foreign-born in the United States. In contrast, the foreign-born with origin in Latin America and Asia, who in 1970 represented 19% and 9%, respectively, of the total foreign-born population were 52% and 26%, respectively, in 2000 (U.S. Census Bureau 2000; Malone *et al*. 2003). Those migrating from the Caribbean represented 9.5% of the foreign-born. Consequently, the racial and ethnic make up of the resident population in the United States has changed as a result of the multi-ethnic and multi-racial nature of these migrant groups. This changed make up, along with these immigrants' incorporation experience in U.S. society, has created conditions for changes to established political arrangements and popular demands on governmental institutions.

Pan-ethnic mobilization is difficult to carry out given the competing tugs that come from overlapping or competing identities. Boundaries of pan-ethnic inclusion and exclusion shift at the individual and small-group level depending on understandings of whether their common identity is based on a similar racialization of their national origin, their migratory experience, social class solidarity or the assimilation process of their children (De Genova and Ramos-Zayas 2003). Even as common pan-ethnic identities emerge, they are fragile. In order to make sure such fragile identities remain in place or are strengthened, political leaders or political entrepreneurs may decide to take affirmative steps. The willful agency of elites plays a crucial role in developing collective action when affective ties or social proclivities groups in society may have for each other are weak or tenuous. Yet, these groups of individuals may need to

develop a history of social interaction, which occurs over time, along with the effort to affirm such common history and interaction (Saito 1998). However, the steering role of elites can serve as a critical ingredient in every day coexistence, and in strategic interplay between ethnic groups that exhibit some commonalities.

García (2003) frames two bases around which people of a variety of national origin or ethnic groups can coalesce as a more or less coherent "community". These bases are the concepts of *commonalty of culture* and *commonalty of interest*. Accordingly, "cultural communities endure when persons are tied together naturally by their involvement in a common system of purpose with accompanying patterns of traditional interactions and behaviors that are rooted in a common heritage" (García 2003:21). Under this common heritage García includes national ancestry, language, religion, religious customs, observance of holidays and festivals and familial networks. For a community of interest, the salient characteristic is the unity of people around a common set of economic and political interests, which may result from sharing industrial or commercial sectors, residential enclaves, discriminatory treatment and political disenfranchisement.

In contrast to García's proposition, which views commonalty of culture as a base on which commonalty of interests could surface, Lopez and Espiritu, following Padilla (1985), conclude that while cultural factors (i.e., language and religion) may be necessary to facilitate pan-ethnic cooperation, they are certainly not sufficient conditions. Rather, it is the similarities in structural factors (i.e., race, class, generation and geography) that lead to pan-ethnic alliances and possibly pan-ethnic identities. Lien (2001) concurs. In regards to Asians in the United States, they, Lien states, "do not share the same immigration experiences, lengths of history in America, ethnic and racial origins, English-language proficiency, home languages, religions, and socioeconomic classes […] also boasts few incidences of interethnic coalitions […]. Nevertheless, one of the most remarkable developments in the post-1965 history of Asians in America is the formation and transformation of the pan-ethnic group identity…" (2001:50). From this perspective, cultural commonalities may be less relevant to the formation or mobilization of a pan-ethnic identity than structural ones.

In understanding panethnicity as "the development of bridging organizations and solidarities among subgroups of ethnic collectivities that are often seen as homogeneous by outsiders" (Lopez and Espiritu 1990: 198), one can identify the instrumental efforts of political entrepreneurs in developing these bridges as integral part of the process of ethnicity construction and change. Thus, the efforts of a political leader such as Carrión to mobilize Caribbeans qua Caribbeans may be seen as a step in

a pan-ethnic formation project that may be successful years or decades later. Whether Carrión's attempts at pan-ethnic mobilization were seen as realistic and realizable, albeit not immediately attainable, or whether they were unrealistic and exaggerated, he facilitated a modest context in which commonalities could be identified and intra-group collaboration fostered. But given the difficulty in mobilizing a population along pan-ethnic lines, particularly if it had not been attempted previously, what then are the indicators that may lead a political leader such as Carrión to launch a strategy to politically mobilize Caribbeans as a collective with a variety of components that may coalesce along pan-ethnicity appeals in the United States? Do Caribbeans in the United States share any history of social and political interaction, which may allow current political elites to raise the example of previous cooperation or similar treatment? Alternatively, if such a history of interaction is lacking, do these Caribbeans presently exhibit structural similarities that may then lead to a present mobilization effort along pan-ethnic lines?

To explore the bases of a commonality of interests among Caribbeans, a comparison of political attitudes, orientations and behavior at the mass level will be conducted dichotomously, contrasting Caribbeans and non-Caribbeans. In addition, an intra-Caribbean comparison will be made along these dimensions. To test whether bases exist for potential public policy commonality among Caribbeans, which may then mobilize them in a concerted effort around common policy interests, is the expectation that Caribbeans will have different political attitudes, orientations and behavioral profiles from non-Caribbeans. The intra-Caribbean analysis of attitudes and orientations is expected to further reveal consistent commonalities among Caribbeans that may buttress the Caribbean vs. non-Caribbean distinctiveness and underscore a potential for elite mobilization. For Caribbean political elite behavior to indicate bases for potential pan-Caribbean mobilization, it is expected that these Caribbean elected officials at the municipal level exhibit cooperative behavior in their legislative work. If these attitudinal and behavioral patterns are not discerned, then it will be concluded that bases for pan-ethnic political mobilization are weak or undeveloped and therefore unlikely to lead to such pan-Caribbean mobilization or may lead to mobilization appeals that go unheeded.

I situate the analysis of pan-Caribbean political mobilization in New York City as it is the place with the largest Caribbean population in the United States, with more than a quarter of the total population of Caribbeans in the United States. The focus on one city allows to control for one structural factor affecting pan-ethnic alliances and mobilization: the geographical dispersion of different Caribbean national origin groups throughout the country. Padilla (1985), Lopez and Espiritu (1990) and

García (2003), among others, have noted the impact that dispersed regional settlement has had on the tenuous hold of pan-ethnicity when examined at a national level of analysis. Limiting the inquiry to a lower level unit of analysis where sub-ethnic groups may be concentrated, one may be able to discern more easily manifestations of pan-ethnicity.

Furthermore, the focus on one locale allows for additional controls. New York City is not only the locality with the largest Caribbean population in the United States; it is also a discretely organized polity. Structurally, there are not as many governmental jurisdictions with which denizens have to interact, which may lead to diffusing involvement in the political process, unlike, for instance, Miami, the second largest concentration of Caribbeans in the United States (Foner 2001), where residents interact not only with their municipal government, but also with the county government for many of their needs. By limiting the analysis to one such political entity, we are able to control for contextual factors (i.e., overlapping governmental jurisdictions at the local level) that may impact political outcomes, and it allows for isolating effects more effectively.

Issues and Concerns: A Common Public Policy Agenda?

What points of political commonality exist then among Caribbeans settled in New York City? Issues of concerns and the political priorities for Caribbeans are largely given by the economic and class incorporation of Caribbeans in New York and have been mediated by their cultural distinctiveness and by how race has been constructed in the City: the ethnic "invisibility" that Afro-Caribbeans confronted as they were subsumed under the rubric "black," the ethnic/cultural distinctiveness highlighted among those arriving from the more racially ambiguous Spanish-speaking islands, and the economic shift from a manufacturing center to one based on services, all have contributed to the environment in which Caribbeans lived after the Second World War and particularly after 1965 (e.g., incorporation as racial minorities providing unskilled and semi-skilled labor in service industries).

The socioeconomic situation of Spanish-speaking Caribbeans has traditionally driven their public policy agendas and demands for redress along these following lines: governmental policies, such as increases in public expenditures on education, that would ameliorate and reverse the high poverty rates for individuals and children; the high unemployment rate and low level of participation in the labor market; the low level of educational attainment and school dropout rate (Hernández, Rivera-Batiz and Agodini 1995; Falcón, Delgado and Borrero 1989). Public opinion studies have found that individuals process and interpret

their socioeconomic conditions by the impact structural forces have on their environment. Thus, a national sample of Puerto Ricans finds that more than four fifths of them identify social problems, such as crime and drugs, as the most important local problem (De La Garza *et al*. 1992), as the dire conditions they face transform the areas in which they live into environments plagued by high crime and drug addiction rates.

Social integration and the satisfaction of migrant aspirations seem to drive the concerns of Afro-Caribbeans. Thus, a survey of Afro-Caribbeans in a Brooklyn neighborhood finds that more than two-fifths of respondents identify housing as the most serious problem they face, followed by racism and immigration concerns (Riviere and Winborne 1990). The priorities these concerns take are interpreted as relating to the desire to own residential property and their inability to satisfactorily achieve it. More recently, a study of Afro-Caribbean political incorporation stresses issues of political empowerment, education and racial discrimination as top concerns for this population in New York City (Rogers 2006).

As migrants to New York and their incorporation in a segmented labor market, Caribbeans have occupied similar labor niches where they have worked side by side or have become competition to one another. Such has been the case of Dominicans and Puerto Ricans in the restructuring garment industry (Cintrón-Vélez 1995). They may occupy ancillary occupations in the same industries, as is the case of workers in the health care or educational systems (e.g., nurses, teachers, nurse aides, instructional para-professionals). Programmatically, non-English speaking Caribbeans, both parents and educators, have supported bilingual education initiatives that benefit their children. Therefore, one finds areas in which Caribbeans may interact both cooperatively or competitively.

A reliable manner to ascertain what people's political wants, needs and priorities are is the use of public opinion surveys. One such tool is the New York City Participation Survey.[2] The results presented throughout this work are based on this survey, whose advantage over other types of data gathering methods is that it provides a large random sample encompassing a large geographical area (New York's five boroughs) and a variety of groups, which allows for a reliable comparative analysis. The results reported include aggregate responses from all respondents as well as responses from people identified as Caribbeans (if they reported birth in or ancestry from any of the island territories or the continental territories such as Guyana or Belize) and those who are not Caribbean. The subsample Caribbean was further differentiated into Afro-Caribbeans and Hispanic Caribbeans.[3]

As can be appreciated in Table 1, crime and education top the concerns of all respondents as the most serious issues affecting New York

Table 1. Public Opinion Preferences (in percentages)

	All Respondents	Non Caribbean	All Caribbean	Hispanic Caribbean	Afro Caribbean
Most Serious City Problem	(N=1144)	(n=790)	(n=354)	(n=238)	(n=116)
Crime	21	21	20	20	20
Education/Schools	12	11	14	13	16
Employment/Jobs	9	9	10	8	13
Drugs	8	5	15	18	10
Homelessness	7	7	5	5	5
Race/Racism/ Intolerance	5	4	7	5	12
Police Brutality	4	4	5	5	4
Chi-Square= 90.46***					
Most Serious Neighborhood Problem	(N=974)	(n=667)	(n=307)	(n=209)	(n=98)
Drugs	24	18	36	43	21
Crime	18	17	18	17	20
Education/Schools	4	2	4	2	7
Trash/Dirty Streets	5	5	3	1	4
Noise	4	5	2	2	1
Race/Racism/ Intolerance	2	2	2	0	5
Employment/Jobs	3	3	4	2	6
Housing	4	4	2	3	1
Youth/Teen Rowdiness	3	2	4	4	4
Chi-Square= 119.04***					
Most Serious Family Problem	(N=922)	(n=638)	(n=284)	(n=190)	(n=94)
Money/Finances/ Income	26	26	26	23	33
Employment/Jobs	13	12	15	12	20
Housing	5	5	6	5	7
Education	7	6	8	10	5
Crime	7	8	7	7	6
MedicalCare	5	6	3	4	2
Drugs	5	3	8	11	3
Chi-Square= 67.27**					

Source: Barnard/Columbia Center for Urban Research and Policy, 1997.
** Significant at .05 level, ***Significant at .01 level.

City. Crime is also a top concern for all respondents, after drugs, at the neighborhood level, with about a fifth of respondents consistently identifying it as the most serious problem. The pattern is replicated for both Caribbean and non-Caribbean respondents. Crime is the top concern for both subgroups at the state and city level, and the second most noted concern at the neighborhood level. That crime is such a salient issue among respondents is no surprise given the crime rates in New York at the time as well as the policy response from the city's government.

Education and employment rank second and third among all respondents as the most serious problem for the city. But drugs rank second among Caribbean respondents as the most serious problem in the city. This is driven by the responses from Hispanic Caribbeans who disproportionately identified drugs as the most serious problem. Drugs are identified by Hispanic Caribbeans as the most serious city problem (18%) at almost twice the rate of Afro-Caribbeans (10%) and more than three times the rate of non-Caribbeans (5%). Similar proportions are found at the neighborhood level were more than two fifths of Hispanic Caribbeans report drugs as the most serious problem, at twice the rate of Afro-Caribbeans and more than twice the rate of non-Caribbeans.

Singularities are also evident in the responses Afro-Caribbeans give to the most serious city problems. Concerns about high rents and rent control for homes tied for third place (at 12%) with concerns about employment and jobs among Afro-Caribbean respondents as the most serious state problem. This response rate is more than twice as large as that of Hispanic Caribbeans and four times as large as non-Caribbeans. Afro-Caribbeans also identify racism and intolerance as the most serious city problem in greater proportion (12%) than Hispanic Caribbeans (5%) and non-Caribbeans (4%).

Economics is consistently the most serious family problem facing these New Yorkers with more than a quarter of all respondents naming money or finances and more than a tenth identifying employment or jobs as such a concern. Afro-Caribbeans, however, name these concerns in greater proportion than other respondents. For a third of Afro-Caribbeans finances were the most serious family problem, compared to more than a fifth for Hispanic Caribbeans and just over a quarter for non-Caribbean. Similarly, a fifth of Afro-Caribbeans name employment as the most serious family problem compared to 12% for Hispanic Caribbeans and non-Caribbeans. Drugs, again, and education represent a disproportionate problem for Hispanic Caribbean families than for Afro-Caribbean and non-Caribbean families.

That the family's economic situation is such a serious concern for Afro-Caribbeans may be further explained by the fact that fewer Afro-Caribbeans report receiving any form of financial assistance from the

government such as food stamps, public assistance or Medicaid relative to Hispanic Caribbeans, although the proportions are higher than for non-Caribbeans in some of those programs (see Table A1, in Appendix). This may be indicative of Hispanic Caribbeans greater willingness to avail themselves of a governmental safety net to an extent that Afro-Caribbeans are not. As Hispanic Caribbeans are able to better weather the economic storm given the safety net, they do not seem to be as concerned as Afro-Caribbeans in this respect, though it is nevertheless the primary worry about their families. Lack of employment opportunities or job insecurity underscores this financial consideration among Afro-Caribbeans.

How these issues and concerns turned into public policy is evident in municipal government expenditures that allocated increasing shares of public funds to public safety and education in the late 1990s. For instance, the average annual change in Board of Education spending between 1990 and 1997 was 3.4% (or 1.4% per pupil) increasing to 9.6% (or 8.6% per pupil) between 1997 and 2000 (Independent Budget Office 2000). This increase resulted mostly from increases in pedagogical staff. Similarly, increased expenditures on public safety resulted from the increase in hiring police officers, whose headcount grew by 18% between 1990 and 1998 (Independent Budget Office 1999). Moreover, changes in policing tactics and procedures contributed to substantial drops in crime throughout the decade albeit at the expense of a substantial increase in the perception of racial profiling, discriminatory treatment and police abuse and brutality among racialized minorities, epitomized in the deaths of Anthony Baez, a New Yorker of Puerto Rican origin, and Amadou Diallo, a West African immigrant, at the hands of the police. Thus, these Caribbean policy preferences were implemented into public policy as they coincided with those of the majority's opinion. Their implementation, however, had a differential impact on racialized communities. Not surprisingly, Caribbeans as a whole tend to have worse opinions about the services the police department offered in their neighborhoods than non-Caribbeans, with Hispanics having the worst opinion within the Caribbean group (see Table A1). Moreover, Caribbeans are more likely to believe that there is police brutality in their neighborhoods, with Hispanic Caribbeans less equivocal on the subject. Somewhat surprising, given their overall opinion about discrimination, is the finding that most Afro-Caribbeans would not approve of a police officer striking a man, but at a lower proportion (60%) than among Hispanic Caribbeans (69%), whose own high concern about crime might soften their stance on law enforcement in favor of stern responses.

In all, one observes commonalities among Caribbeans in terms of public opinion issues. But one also observes some variations in how these

issues are perceived by Caribbeans. The variations are more of degree than in kind. But they nevertheless raise the question of whether the differences among Caribbeans are large enough to assume they will have different political priorities. Similarly, in relations to non-Caribbeans, are these differences on issues distinct enough that would make Caribbeans pursue separate paths or strategies to convert their interests into policy priorities?

Political Participation and Representation

Constituents communicate policy preferences to policy makers in a variety of ways. Different forms of participation may result in different outcomes as a result of the type of influence each form exerts on the government structure (Verba and Nie 1972). For example, an individual may convey a lot of information to an elected official when contacting that elected official on a particular issue (e.g., siting a homeless shelter in her neighborhood); but the pressure she may exert on the official may be limited. Alternatively, voters may vote for or against an official, therefore exerting a lot of pressure, but they may not be able to convey substantial information in the process of casting a vote as the official may not be able to disentangle the reasons for the support (or lack thereof) she or he receives from the electorate. Joining others in concert to lobby City Hall will also provide a wealth of information to those officials, but the level of pressure on those officials may vary depending on the numbers, cohesiveness and resources of those supporting the lobbying efforts (McCarthy and Zald 1977; McAdam 1982).

Table 2 shows the levels of political involvement for the NYC Participation Survey sample. They include electoral as well as non-electoral participation. Results show the generalized lower levels of political involvement of Caribbeans in relation to non-Caribbeans. Caribbeans vote at lower rates and contact elected officials in lower proportions than non-Caribbeans. Fewer Caribbeans contribute money or volunteer to work for a political candidate or party. Fewer still participate in protests or demonstrations. As a result, their ability to convey information to elected or government officials and to exert pressure on those officials is limited relative to non-Caribbeans. Summing all eleven political activities listed in Table 3, the mean number of political acts New Yorkers surveyed engaged in was 2.5. However, the mean number of acts Caribbeans engaged in was 42% lower, or 1.9 acts, than the 2.7 political activities in which non-Caribbean New Yorkers engaged.

Voting is the most common form of political participation, both among Caribbeans and non-Caribbeans. But among Caribbeans the turnout rate is over one-third lower than for non-Caribbeans in both

Table 2. Political Activities (in percentage)

		All Respondents	Non Caribbean	All Caribbean	Hispanic Caribbean	Afro Caribbean
		(N=1188)	(n=822)	(n=366)	(n=243)	(n=123)
Registered to Vote**		71	73	67	70	60
Voting	For President (1996)***	64	69	52	53	50
	For Mayor (1993)***	52	56	41	44	35
Worked for Party/Candidate		8	9	7	7	7
Contributed to Party/Candidate***		17	19	12	11	15
Attended Political Rally		14	15	11	11	12
Made Calls for Party/Candidate		5	6	4	4	6
Contacted Elected Officials***		25	29	17	13	25
Participated in protest/demonstration		14	15	11	12	11
Attended Political Meeting		16	16	14	13	16
Raised Funds for Political Cause		12	13	10	9	13

Source: Barnard/Columbia Center for Urban Research and Policy, 1997.
** Significant at .05 level, ***Significant at .01 level.

Presidential elections (52%) and local elections (41%). This lower turnout rate is explained by the lower registration rate for Caribbeans (67%), which in turn may be explained by their slightly lower rates of citizenship (82%). Another explanation for the lower rate of voting among Caribbeans is institutional as well, but reflective of the political party system in New York City. Caribbeans are less likely to be encouraged to go out and vote at election time (Rogers 2006; Vargas-Ramos 2003). Whereas 28% of non-Caribbeans were contacted and asked to vote, only 18% of Caribbeans received the same prompt.

More non-Caribbeans report participating in non-electoral activities, such as contacting an elected or government official (29%) and attending a meeting where political subjects were discussed (16%), than Caribbeans (17% and 14%, respectively). Caribbeans are also less likely to participate in electoral activities, such as contributing money to (12%), volunteering to work for (7%) or making calls on behalf of (4%) a political party or candidate than non-Caribbeans (19%, 9% and 6%, respectively). Similarly, Caribbeans exhibit lower rates of attending political rallies (11%), participating in protests or demonstrations (11%) or raising funds for political causes (10%) than non-Caribbeans (19%, 15% and 13% respectively). These findings would indicate that Caribbeans' ability to convey information to policymakers is relatively muted

vis á vis non-Caribbeans. Moreover, because Caribbeans make use of mechanisms available to exert pressure on elected officials in lower proportions than non-Caribbeans, there is an expectation that their policy preferences would receive less attention from policymakers, unless these preferences coincide with those of non-Caribbeans. Caribbeans are at a particular disadvantage in relation to non-Caribbeans insofar as the political activities that convey both the most information to (i.e., contacting elected officials and contributing money to a party of candidate) and exert the most pressure on (i.e., voting) to elected representatives are precisely the activities in which the differential rates are large and statistically significant.

The lower political involvement exhibited by Caribbeans across the participation spectrum is driven by the relatively lower levels of participation of Hispanic Caribbeans. By aggregating results for all Caribbeans, the parity with non-Caribbeans that Afro-Caribbeans might exhibit in some forms of participation is diluted. For instance, Afro-Caribbean participation in attending political meetings (16%), in raising funds for political causes (13%) or in making calls on behalf of political parties or candidates (6%) is higher than that of Hispanic Caribbeans (13%, 9% and 4%, respectively) and equal to that of non-Caribbeans. Moreover, in instances where Afro-Caribbeans participate at levels lower than those of non-Caribbeans, they still exceed the participation of Hispanic Caribbeans, as is the case with contacting elected officials in which Afro-Caribbeans exceed Hispanic Caribbean participation by 12% (25% to 13%, respectively). In only one activity do Hispanic Caribbeans participate in greater proportion than Afro-Caribbeans—taking part in a protest or demonstration—and only by single percentage point. One could then expect Afro-Caribbeans to convey information to policymakers at greater rates than do Hispanic Caribbeans. The latter, however, enjoy a political advantage in relation to Afro-Caribbeans—relatively higher turnout rates on Election Day. Overall, Afro-Caribbeans engage in 2 political acts (in a scale of 11), or 20% lower than among non-Caribbeans. In contrast, Hispanic Caribbeans engage in 1.88 acts, or 29% lower than non-Caribbeans.

Caribbeans engage in political activities at lower levels than non-Caribbean as a result of lower scores in politically relevant sociodemographic and attitudinal variables. This is particularly the case for Hispanic Caribbeans. The political science literature has identified predictors of political participation at the individual level (Conway 1991). These predictors have been hypothesized to show how socioeconomic status variables (i.e., education, income and occupational status) impact political participation through the intervening role of institutions, such as the workplace and voluntary associations, as well as political attitudes

and orientations (Verba, Schlozman and Brady 1995). Caribbeans score at lower levels on most, if not all, of these predictors of political activity; Hispanic Caribbeans more so than Afro-Caribbeans (see Table 3). Caribbeans are younger and of lower socioeconomic status than the population as a whole and non-Caribbeans in particular. Their psychological engagement in politics, measured through their level of interest in politics, their level of political efficacy and their willingness to discuss politics, is also lower than for other New Yorkers. Similarly, Caribbeans are less likely than non-Caribbeans to join voluntary associations. Consequently, Caribbeans exhibit lower involvement in politics, whether it is in voting, activities associated with the electoral process or non-electoral forms of participation.[4]

Table 3. Mean Score of Politically Relevant Sociodemographic and Attitudinal Variables

	All Respondents	Non Caribbean	All Caribbean	Hispanic Caribbean	Afro Caribbean
Age***	39.30	41.00	35.30	35.50	35.00
Education***	15.40	15.80	14.40	14.10	14.90
lncome***	4.20	4.40	3.70	3.40	4.30
Interest in Politics***	1.90	2.00	1.70	1.65	1.85
Political Efficacy**	8.30	8.40	7.90	7.80	8.00
Political Engagement***	8.80	8.90	8.30	8.02	8.50
Homeownership***	0.29	0.33	0.21	0.14	0.33
Voluntary Association**	1.53	1.70	1.20	1.10	1.50
Union Membership	0.23	0.23	0.24	0.21	0.28
U.S. Citizenship***	0.83	0.84	0.82	0.87	0.71
** Significant at .05 level, ***Signiflcant at .01 level.					

The results obtained by Caribbeans on predictors of participation are again driven by Hispanic Caribbeans, who scored at lower rates than Afro-Caribbeans. Both groups tend to be of the same age, and generally younger than non-Caribbeans (see Table 3). But Afro-Caribbeans tend to have additional schooling than Hispanic Caribbeans, though not as much as non-Caribbeans. Afro-Caribbeans also tend to earn incomes that are higher than those of Hispanic Caribbeans, approaching those of non-Caribbeans. Afro-Caribbeans are also likely to have homeownership rates similar to those of non-Caribbeans and twice as large as Hispanic Caribbeans. Afro-Caribbeans scores on psychopolitical attitudes, which strongly correlate with political activity, are also higher than for Hispanic

Caribbeans, though not on par with non-Caribbeans. Afro-Caribbeans also appear to belong to voluntary association in greater proportions than Hispanic Caribbeans, and they appear to be closer in profile than non-Caribbeans. The one politically relevant variable where Hispanic Caribbeans have greater representation is among those who are United States citizens, a reflection of the greater numbers of Puerto Ricans represented in the Caribbeans group in general, and among Hispanic Caribbeans in particular. These differences in proportions in politically relevant factors would explain the relatively lower levels of political participation among Caribbeans in general and for distinct profiles between Hispanic Caribbeans and Afro-Caribbeans insofar as political behavior is concerned. These findings are reinforced further by the results of correlation analyses, which show that while in general the direction of the predictors of participation for Afro-Caribbeans is negative, the magnitude is small and the coefficients are not statistically significant, relative to those who are not Afro-Caribbeans (See Table 4). The noted exceptions are age and U.S. citizenship. Among Hispanic Caribbeans, on the other hand, the direction of the effect is negative and consistently statistically significant.

It is to the extent that Caribbeans, whether Afro-Caribbeans or Hispanic Caribbeans, amass greater values in these predictive variables that their political activity is contigent on. There is nothing inherent in Caribbeanness that inhibits the political behavior of these peoples. It is in the sociodemographic attributes that they have manifested in the U.S.

Table 4. First order correlation coefficients for ethnicity, political variables and predictors of political activity

	Caribbean	Hispanic Caribbean	Afro Caribbean
Age	-.169***	-.123***	-.087***
Education	-.168***	-.157***	-.034
Income	-.141***	-.162***	.013
Interest in Politics	-.145***	-.108***	-.035
Political Efficacy	-.071*	-.042	-.021
Political Engagement	-.125***	-.093***	-.035
Homeownership	-.084**	-.114***	.018
Voluntary Association	-.129***	-.143***	-.008
Union Membership	.017	.011	.002
U.S. Citizenship	-.074*	-.016	-.105**
*Significant at .1 level, ** Significant at .05 level, ***Significant at .01 level.			

that has resulted in those levels of political involvement. This is underscored by multivariate analysis. Holding these predictors of political activity constant shows that being Caribbean, whether in the aggregate or as Hispanic Caribbean or Afro-Caribbean, has no independent impact on any measure of political participation (see Table A2, in Appendix).[5]

The regression models show two consistently robust predictors of participation for New Yorkers: being U.S. citizens and belonging to voluntary association(s). Citizenship will of course have an impact on voting, as it is a requirement to register and to turn out to vote. But U.S. citizenship also has a strong positive effect on non-voting political activities such as contacting elected officials or engaging in electoral/campaign activity. Belonging to voluntary associations also has a strong positive effect across the political participation spectrum, consistent with findings in the literature (Verba *et al*. 1995). However, it is the voluntary associations with a political intent that have the most robust impact on participation (Fuchs, Shapiro and Minnite 2001). In addition to these two predictors, attitudinal variables also have a strong positive effect on participation but not as consistently. Interest in politics predicts involvement in all political activities analyzed; but efficacy is not significant in explaining contacting. Neither is discussing politics (i.e., engagement), which has no impact on voting as well. The socioeconomic status measures (i.e., income and education) have no statistically significant impact on any form of participation in New York, with the exception of the positive effect that education has on voting. Being Caribbean (or Afro-Caribbean or Hispanic Caribbean) has no discernible statistically significant effect on any form on participation. If Caribbeans as a group, in the aggregate, exhibit lower levels of political involvement in New York City is a result of being at a deficit of factors that impact on participation.

The Impact of Distinct Participation

Caribbeans in the aggregate, when other variables are not controlled for, are behaviorally distinct not only in relation to non-Caribbean, but also within. If Caribbean individuals at the mass level do not seem to attitudinally and behaviorally agglomerate under a neatly defined political profile, which may be distinctively characteristic, observers may then need to ascertain whether elites and political leaders have attempted to build coalitions ties based on identified commonalities.

The pan-ethnic experiences of other groups highlight the organizational and elite level character of such collective identity efforts (Lien 2001; Lopez and Espiritu 1990; García 2003; Saito 1998). Consequently, I turn to an analysis of local elected officials to determine whether their actions provide evidence of collaborations on a pan-Caribbean basis that

may presage the fruitfulness of targeted appeals or intentions. Scholars who have analyzed the political relations of disparate groups in diverse urban environments have emphasized the role of elites in the formation of governing or policy coalitions. Sonenshein has stated that "shared political beliefs are the firmest foundation for interethnic and interracial coalitions. At the same time, however, each group's perceptions of what constitutes its most immediate interests can enhance or destroy these coalitions and, even when groups share beliefs, leaders have the capacity to push interests towards alliance or conflict" (2001:211). Cruz (2000) concurs and elaborates on six dimensions along which interminority coalitions come about and/or end: congruence of attitudinal frameworks; the dilemma between substantive and descriptive representation; minority elites representing groups that are simultaneously powerful and oppressed; discrepancies in different minorities' intentions, actions and perceptions; lack of historical memory; and distribution of responsibilities (positions of power) and distribution of rewards.

The analysis that follows focuses on the disposition of Caribbean political leaders to collaborate with each other in moving forward their public policy agenda, based on revealed preferences evident in their behavior. I examine the role of Caribbean elected officials in the New York City Council, the legislative body that contains the largest proportion of Caribbean elected representatives in the United States. The City Council is made up of 51 council members, who represent districts of approximately 157,000 people. As currently constituted, Caribbean representation in the City Council stands at thirteen members of fifty-one (25%) that make up the legislative body. Hispanic Caribbeans represent 15% of New York City's population whereas Afro-Caribbeans make up an additional 7% of the population. Thus, at first glance it seems that Caribbeans are more than proportionally represented in the New York City Council. However, as data are disaggregated, Puerto Ricans appear overrepresented in the Council, with 15% of the seats relative to 10% of the City's population; Dominicans appear underrepresented with 4% of the seats but 5% of the population; and Afro-Caribbeans collectively also holding 4% of the seats to 7% of the population.[6] Despite lower participation rates overall, Hispanic Caribbeans have greater political representation in local government than Afro-Caribbeans. This speaks to three facts: There are more Hispanic Caribbeans than Afro-Caribbeans in New York City; there are more U.S. citizens among Hispanic Caribbeans (87%) than among Afro-Caribbeans (71%), given the fact that Puerto Ricans are U.S. citizens by birth;[7] and the discrete and singular residential concentration of Hispanic Caribbeans has allowed them, in combination with the other two factors, to achieve a greater level of political empowerment in relation to Afro-Caribbeans. But what impact

has this representation had? Is there a pan-Caribbean effort reflected in municipal legislation of New York City?

In 1997, the year the New York City Participation Survey was conducted, council members introduced 224 bills, of which 99 (44%) were enacted as local laws.[8] In addition, council members presented 619 resolutions, upon 479 (77%) of which the City Council took some form of action. Caribbean council members introduced, as main sponsors or co-sponsors of the legislation, over 100 bills (45 percent). Of these, there were some 50 bills which had broad Caribbean support, gauged by determining whether the bills were sponsored across national origin lines (e.g., whether a Dominican council member co-sponsored a bill introduced by a Jamaican one). Thirty-five of these Caribbean-sponsored bills became local laws. Most of the bills introduced by Caribbean council members—54—were co-sponsored by other Caribbean council members. In addition, Hispanic Caribbean legislators introduced 44 bills and Afro-Caribbean council members introduced an additional 11, without cross-Caribbean support. We find a similar trend among the more than 600 resolutions presented for consideration. Caribbean council members sponsored 180 resolutions during the session, 98 of which were co-sponsored across Caribbean national origin lines. However, only 65 resolutions were adopted by the full City Council, although not all of the adopted resolutions were co-sponsored across Caribbean national origin lines.

This initial numerical assessment would indicate a somewhat even representation of Caribbeans in the New York City Council insofar as Caribbean council members introducing legislation and seeing it converted into law. Caribbean council members did introduce almost half of all bills; but they only introduced a third of the bills that went on to become local laws. In terms of resolutions, Caribbean council members presented less than a third of the total and saw less than one-sixth of the resolutions adopted or acted upon. Just as relevant for our purposes, those legislations that had broad Caribbean co-sponsorship were less likely to be enacted, adopted or acted upon by the City Council. While broad co-sponsorship of legislation will not assure the success of any particular bill or resolution, those with widespread support, demonstrated by large co-sponsorship, have the greatest likelihood of legislative success.[9]

Also relevant for our analysis of Caribbean co-operation in the municipal legislative body is the observation that substantively many of the bills and resolutions introduced or presented by a Caribbean council member were not exclusive to narrow Caribbean interest, but rather legislative initiatives that had broad general interest, many of which resulted from the council member's institutional role either as chairs or

members of a committee or sub-committee. In fact, most of the legislation sponsored by Caribbean council members was also sponsored or co-sponsored by a broad range of other non-Caribbean legislators.

Another observation about the legislative initiatives of Caribbean council members is the relative dearth of Caribbean-focus legislation, either substantive or symbolic, evident in the proceedings of the City Council. This may be attributed to a number of factors. Politically and ideologically, the New York City Council is rather homogeneous. The vast majority of council members are Democrats, and while some may have been elected with the formal support of more than one party, including the Conservative party, and the ideological spectrum of these Democrats runs a gamut from the extreme left to more moderately conservative positions, the institution as a whole is decidedly left of center in its rhetoric if not in its legislation. Consequently, policy issues and legislative outcomes that are of singular interest to Caribbeans and fall under a municipal purview (e.g., education, healthcare, public safety, real estate taxation) may also enjoy the broad support of non-Caribbean council members. The extant political and ideological consensus of the Council may then make it less necessary for Caribbean legislators to band together as such in pursue of municipal public policy with direct impact on Caribbeans. Nevertheless, the relative dearth of Caribbean-centered symbolic legislation, exemplified in Council resolutions, raises questions about a purported Caribbean identity among Caribbean political elites. Rogers, however, has persuasively exposed how the political environment in New York City privileges ethnic identity over other forms of collective identity such as pan-ethnic or racial (Rogers 2006; cf. Kasinitz 1992). It is not unexpected then to find resolutions, many of them by acclamation, commemorating the establishment of the state of Israel or "Bloody Sunday", even petitioning the U.S. government to move its embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem or the particular treatment of Irish Republican activists in British prisons or denouncing the treatment of Italian-American citizens and for reparation for the detainment of Japanese-American citizens during the Second World War.[10] No such similar resolutions are found in reference to Caribbeans during the legislative session, whether approved or even presented for consideration. At best, the only reference to any Caribbean group was expressed in ethnic terms, as with the resolution condemning the unflattering depictions of Puerto Ricans in a local newspaper.[11]

Moreover, there does not seem to be much consistency for the support particular legislation receives from Caribbean council members that would denote a coherent Caribbean agenda. Rather, legislative initiatives and support for them seem to respond to interest other than exclusively Caribbean in nature. For instance, while there was broad

Caribbean support for a bill demanding that the New York City Department of Mental Health and Retardation report to the City Council on its compliance to federal law and regulations, with 2 Afro-Caribbean and 7 Hispanic Caribbean legislators co-sponsoring the measure; or for a resolution calling on the Council to hold hearings on the impact of a local institution of higher education's bilingual education programs, which received the support of 3 Afro-Caribbean and 4 Hispanic Caribbean council members; a bill calling for the creation of a "Commission on New Americans" only received support from 2 Afro-Caribbean council members, but no Hispanic Caribbeans, even one who was himself a new American.[12] None of the three legislative bills was adopted. Moreover, a bill creating an independent police investigation and audit board was only co-sponsored by one Afro-Caribbean and one Hispanic Caribbean, despite the heightened sensitivity among minority residents and their elected officials to the issue of police discipline. The bill became law with broad Council support, even over the objections of the mayor who vetoed it.[13]

While the New York City Council certainly has a very distinct Caribbean presence, by virtue of the fact that there are council members of different Caribbean national origin, there did not appear to be a distinctly defined pan-Caribbean effort in their legislative work. Sympathies and collaborations were evident throughout the course of the year under analysis. But it was not evident whether these sympathies and collaborations were due to an understanding that the municipal legislators were acting under the colors of pan-Caribbeanism as opposed to alternative forms of coalescing, such as partisanship, ideology, minority status or geographical (i.e., borough) representation. The evidence does not disprove pan-Caribbean collaboration by highlighting competition or animosity. But the evidence is not able to sustain the argument that there is in fact a conscious pan-Caribbean tenor to the legislative work of these Caribbean council members at that point in time.

Discussion and Conclusion

The different data used in this analysis to establish whether there are bases for mobilization of people of Caribbean origin or descent as Caribbeans exists among this population in New York City show that those bases seem rather tenuous at present. Caribbeans at the mass level do show similarities in political behaviors, attitudes and opinions, but not homogeneity. Moreover, these similarities do not seem singular or sufficient to compel the formation of a self-conscious pan-ethnic mobilization, at least in the invidious realm of politics. Furthermore, Caribbean political elites do not seem to have the need to make appeals

on the basis of shared political interest along pan-ethnic lines in order to coordinate their legislative work. Such is the conclusion reached based on the analysis of the data presented in this work.

There is, however, another aspect that is missing from the political experience of Caribbeans in the United States that may offer an explanation as to why there do not seem to be other attempts to mobilize the Caribbean population in New York City or in the United States more generally. There has not been a political issue that had linked Caribbeans and their incorporation in the United States as Caribbeans, which may have served as a politicizing or mobilizing agent. Historically, individuals or specific Caribbean groups may have suffered discrimination based on their ethnicity, national origin or race, but not collectively. Black or mixed race Caribbeans may have been discriminated against for not being white or may have been disenfranchized politically in spite of being U.S. citizens by virtue of the fact they did not speak English (as was the case for thousands of Puerto Ricans). But those sources of discrimination were to be addressed and redressed on the basis of race or ethnicity/national origin or language group through civil rights legislation, equal employment opportunity programs and affirmative action initiatives. They did not affect Caribbeans qua Caribbeans. Consequently, Caribbean has not become a category for discrimination and therefore an identity around which people could also organize to fight off unequal treatment in U.S. society. The absence of targeted discriminatory treatment against Caribbeans as Caribbeans has not required their mobilization along pan-ethnic lines. In the absence of external forces that lump together internally disparate groups, there does not seem to be a need for pan-ethnic political appeal to take hold (Lien 2001; Gutiérrez 1995).

If bases for mobilization of Caribbeans with a panethnic appeal are not ostensibly present, why then would a political entrepreneur such as Adolfo Carrión attempt one? Were Carrión's efforts at mobilizing Caribbeans as a political bloc in New York City doomed from the beginning? Possibly. Even though there may have been a fledgling interest in the concept and the possibilities in certain quarters of the different Caribbean communities in the city, opportune conditions simply did not seem to exist both at the mass level and at the elite level for the initial efforts of a political entrepreneur to come to fruition in the realm of electoral politics. Presently, Adolfo Carrión is not running for any political office in the City of New York, nor is he borough president of the Bronx any longer. Rather, Mr. Carrión has been appointed to serve as an aide to the President of the United States on urban affairs (Zeleny and Santos 2009). This fact may lead observers to conclude that Carrión's attempts may have been a calculated effort to extract concessions from African-American leaders during an election year in order to benefit his personal

position.

However, Carrión's effort at pan-Caribbean mobilization may not be unique. More recently, in anticipation to the general census of the population in 2010, an organization called CaribID 2010 has formed to lobby for the creation of a Caribbean census category in order to get a true count of Caribbean-Americans as this population must choose from existing racial and/or ethnic categories (i.e., African-American, Asian American or Hispanic) available on the questionnaire (McCallister 2008). The impetus behind the initiative lies on the perception some Caribbeans/West Indians have that "both these groups (i.e. African-American or Asian Americans) don't think we matter" (Cruz 2009). The effort has resulted in a bill presented in the U.S. House of Representatives by Rep. Yvette Clarke, a Jamaican-American congresswoman who represents a district in Brooklyn, NY (East 2009). Inclusion as an ethnic/pan-ethnic category on a governmental form such as the census questionnaire is likely to result in greater attention to such identity, if not necessarily in the creation of an identity in and of itself (García 2003). Thus, while at present a pan-Caribbean political identity that encompasses all the peoples from the Caribbean region in the United States does not seem to have coherent form, fledgling but willful attempts at creating one are under way. Whether these efforts succeed is too soon to tell. What is certain is that the process is likely to be slow and labored, given the tenuous bases for political mobilization evidenced in the political attitudes, orientations and behaviors of Caribbean residents of New York City and in the disposition of their municipal legislature representatives.

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APPENDIX

DEPENDENT VARIABLES

The dependent variables (scales) were constructed by adding the scores to the following questions (dummy variables):

Contacting Scale:

Q: "Over the past year, have you contacted a local elected official about some need or problem?" (1=yes; 0=no)

Q: "In the past year, have you written a letter to a public official?" (1=yes; 0=no)

Voting Scale:

Q: "Are you currently registered to vote where you live?" (1=yes; 0=no)

Q: "In 1996, you remember that Bill Clinton ran for President on the Democratic tickets against Bob Dole for the Republicans and Ross Perot for the Reform Party. Did you vote in that election? (1=yes; 0=no)

Q: "In 1993, you remember that Rudolph Giuliani ran for Mayor of New York City against David Dinkins. Did you vote in that election?" (1=yes; 0=no)

Overall Political Participation Scale: (This scale includes the variables in the two preceding scales, with the exception of the voter registration dummy variable.)

Q: "In the past year, have you worked as a volunteer for a party or candidate?" (1=yes; 0=no)

Q: "In the past year, have you contributed money to a political party or candidate?" (1=yes; 0=no)

Q: "In the past year, have you attended a political rally for a candidate?" (1=yes; 0=no)

Q: "In the past year, have you attended a political meeting?" (1=yes; 0=no)

Q: "In the past year, have you attended a fundraiser for a political cause?" (1=yes; 0=no)

Q: "In the past year, have you made calls for a candidate or party?" (1=yes; 0=no)

Q: "In the past year, have you participated in a protest or political demonstration?" (1=yes; 0=no)

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

Age— Q: "What is your age?" (in years)

Education— Q: "What is the highest level of education or schooling you finished?" (no schooling; grade 1 through 12 ; junior/business college; technical/trade school; first, second, third year of college; college graduate; some graduate school; graduate school degree.)

Income— Q: "In which of the following ranges does your family income fall? (1= $12,000 or less; 2= $12,001 to $20,000; 3= $20,001 to $30,000; 4= $30,001 to $40,000; 5= $40,001 to $50,000; 6= $50,001 to $60,000; 7= $60,001 to $80,000; 8= $80,001 to $100,000; 9= $100,001 to $150,000; 10= over $150,000.)

Employment Status— Q: "Are you currently working, or are you temporarily laid off, unemployed, retired, permanently disabled, a homemaker, a student or what?" (1= working; 2= part-time; 3= laid off; 4= unemployed; 5= retired; 6= disabled; 7= homemaker; 8= student.)

This variable was dichotomized into those working (1= working and part-time) and those not working (0= all else).

Gender: Interviewer coded the respondent's gender. (1= female; 0= male)

Race/Ethnicty: (Recoded into mutually exclusive categories from the following two questions.)

Race— Q: "For statistical purposes, we'd like to ask you, are you white, black, or some other race? (1= white; 2= black; 3= Hispanic/Latino; 4= mixed; 5= Other.)

Ancestry: (Aggregated from responses)

Q: "From what countries or part of the world did most of your

ancestors come?

Homeownership— Dichotomized in a single variable from responses to the following two questions:

Q: "Do you or your family own your own home or pay rent?" (1= rent; 2= own; 3= neither.)

Q: "Do you rent from a private landlord, another family member, or from the Public Housing Authority, or do you own your apartment? (1= private landlord; 2= another family member; 3= Public Housing Authority; 4= Own apartment.)

Citizenship— Q: "Are you a United States citizen? (1= yes; 0=no)

Membership in Labor Union— Q: "Are you currently a member of a Labor Union?" (1= yes; 0=no)

Organizational Membership: respondents were asked about membership in organizations or associations such as neighborhood; professional; religious or church-based; sports clubs; service or fraternal; PTA; veteran's; hobby; civic; literary; and ethnic. The organizational membership scale was constructed by adding the number of "yes" responses to each one of these questions.

Mobilization— Q: "During the last presidential election did anyone telephone you about registering to vote or getting out to vote? (1= yes; 0=no)

Interest in Politics— Q: "Some people don't pay much attention to politics. How about you—would you say that you are very much interested in politics, somewhat interested, not much interested, or not at all interested? (1= not at all interested; 2= not much interested; 3= somewhat interested; 4= very much interested)

Political Efficacy— a scale was constructed adding the responses to the following three questions:

Q: "Do you agree or disagree: People like me don't have any say about what the city government does"

Q: "Do you agree or disagree: Sometimes city politics and government seem so complicated that a person like me can't really understand what's going on"

Q: "Do you agree or disagree: I don't think local officials care

much what people like me think."
(1=agree; 2= somewhat agree; 3=somewhat disagree; 4= disagree)

Political Discussion— a scale was constructed adding the responses of the following three questions:

Q: "How often do you discuss politics with family members: nearly everyday; once or twice a week; less than once a week; or almost never?"

Q: "How often do you discuss politics with friends: nearly everyday; once or twice a week; less than once a week; or almost never?"

Q: "How often do you discuss politics with co-workers: nearly everyday; once or twice a week; less than once a week; or almost never?"
(1= never; 2= almost never; 3= less than once a week; 4= once or twice a week; 5 nearly everyday.)

Table A1. Public Opinion Preferences (in percentages)

		All Respondents	Non Caribbean	All Caribbean	Hispanic Caribbean	Afro Caribbean
"How would you rate...						
…the neighborhood pubic schools?"						
	Excellent	9.8	9.0	11.6	14.1	6.5
	Good	30.0	29.0	32.1	35.1	26.0
	Fair	23.4	22.1	26.1	23.8	30.9
	Poor	15.9	15.7	16.4	15.7	17.9
Chi-square = 28.99***	DK	20.9	24.2	13.7	11.3	18.7
…housing code enforcement?"						
	Excellent	6.7	6.3	7.6	8.5	5.7
	Good	27.1	28.5	28.5	21.9	27.9
	Fair	24.6	23.8	23.8	30.4	18.9
	Poor	19.7	17.2	17.2	27.5	20.5
Chi-square = 35.234***	DK	21.9	24.1	24.1	11.7	27.0

		All Respondents	Non Caribbean	All Caribbean	Hispanic Caribbean	Afro Caribbean
…how the police respond to calls or complaints?"						
	Excellent	12.5	13.5	10.2	10.9	8.9
	Good	33.7	35.8	29.1	29.4	28.5
	Fair	21.2	20.1	23.5	23.8	22.8
	Poor	17.9	14.9	24.5	26.6	20.3
Chi-Square = 29.55***	DK	14.7	15.7	12.7	9.3	19.5
"Are there any situations you can imagine in which you would approve of a policeman striking an adult male citizen?"						
	Yes	38.3	43.0	27.9	26.8	30.1
	No	55.9	51.2	66.4	69.1	61.0
Chi-square = 30.27***	DK	5.8	5.8	5.7	4.1	8.9
"Do you think there is any police brutality in the area or neighborhood where you live?"						
	Yes	37.5	34.1	45.3	45.2	45.5
	No	48.8	51.8	42.3	45.6	35.5
Chi-square = 21.05***	DK	13.6	14.2	12.5	9.3	19.0
"Have immigrants coming into NYC in recent years made NYC a better place to live, a worse place to live, or hasn't it made much difference?"						
	Better	23.2	22.3	25.1	19.6	36.1
	Worse	26.9	27.1	25.3	31.0	13.9
	No Difference	40.7	40.6	40.9	41.6	39.3
Chi-square = 20.713***	DK	9.2	9.5	8.7	7.8	10.7
"Do you agree or disagree that immigrants in NYC use more than their fair share of gov't services, such as welfare, medical services and food stamps?"						
	Agree	47.4	48.5	44.9	50.4	33.9
	Disagree	40.8	37.9	47.1	42.6	56.2
Chi-square = 21.39***	DK	11.8	13.6	8.0	7.0	9.9
"Have you or anyone in your household ever received...						
…Social Security?"						
	Yes	29.4	30.6	26.6	30.2	19.5
	No	69.9	68.9	72.0	68.6	78.9
Chi-square = 8.9*	DK	0.8	0.5	1.4	1.2	1.6

		All Respondents	Non Caribbean	All Caribbean	Hispanic Caribbean	Afro Caribbean
…Medicare?						
	Yes	25.8	25.1	27.4	30.9	20.5
	No	72.9	74.0	70.7	68.3	75.4
Chi-square = 13.65***	DK	1.3	1.0	1.9	0.8	4.1
…Medicaid?"						
	Yes	28.1	21.7	42.2	50.2	26.2
	No	70.8	77.3	56.4	49.4	70.5
Chi-square = 81.86***	DK	1.1	1.0	1.4	0.4	3.3
…Unemployment Insurance?"						
	Yes	29.2	30.5	26.4	27.3	24.6
	No	69.8	68.9	71.9	71.8	72.1
Chi-square = 10.23**	DK	0.9	0.6	1.6	0.8	3.3
…Public Assistance? (PA)? ...Supplemental Security Insurance? (SSI)?"						
	Yes, PA	20.1	15.9	29.3	35.2	17.2
	Yes, SSI	9.9	11.1	7.3	8.5	4.9
	No	69.0	72.3	61.5	54.3	76.2
Chi-square = 53.83***	DK	1.1	0.7	1.9	2	1.6
…Food Stamps?"						
	Yes	23.9	18.9	35.1	41.9	21.3
	No	74.4	79.2	63.6	56.9	77
Chi-square = 55.74***	DK	1.8	1.9	1.4	1.2	1.6
…Student Loan?"						
	Yes	34.7	35.7	32.6	26.4	45.1
	No	64.3	63.5	66.3	72.8	53.3
Chi-square = 14.75***	DK	0.9	0.8	1.1	0.8	1.6

Source: Barnard/Columbia Center for Urban Research and Policy, 1997
*Significant at .1 level, ** Significant at .05 level, ***Significant at .01 level

Table A2. Political Participation
(Unstandardized OLS regression coefficients; standard error in parenthesis)

	Overall Participation	Electoral Participation	Voting	Contacting
Constant	-3.055***	-2.7***	-1.68***	-.628***
	(.471)	(.394)	(.228)	(.186)
Age	.022***	.024***	.024***	.0011
	(.005)	(.004)	(.002)	(.002)
Income	-.0056	.0033	.0079	.015
	(.033)	(0.28)	(.016)	(.013)
Education	.024	0.24	.03***	.013
	(.023)	(.019)	(.011)	(.009)
Gender (Female)	.094	.033	.04	.119**
	(.144)	(.12)	(.07)	(.057)
Interest in Politics	.473***	.367***	.138***	.158***
	(.088)	(.074)	(.043)	(.035)
Political Engagement	.075***	.056***	.013	.0029
	(.026)	(.022)	(.013)	(.01)
Political Efficacy	.069***	.06***	.026**	.0082
	(.024)	(.02)	(.012)	(.01)
US Citizenship	1.56***	1.352***	1.634***	.199***
	(.194)	(.162)	(.094)	(.077)
Homeownership	.35**	.189	.091	.136**
	(.157)	(.131)	(.076)	(.062)
Labor Union Membership	.142	0.77	.095	.079
	(.162)	(.136)	(.078)	(.064)
Voluntary Association	.476***	.387***	.057***	.12***
	(.044)	(.037)	(.021)	(.017)
Mobilized to Vote	.057	.074	.039	.022
	(.172)	(.143)	(.083)	(.068)
Caribbean	-.049	-.0405	-.072	-.074
	(.164)	(.137)	(.079)	(.065)
R-Square	.432	.435	.523	.215
Adjusted R-Square	.421	.424	.514	.199
F ratio	38.854***	39.32***	55.99***	13.912***
** Significant at .05 level, ***Significant at .01 level.				

Notes

[1] Definitions of what constitutes the Caribbean abound (Lowenthal 1972, Mintz 1974, Knight 1990). They are largely based on the purpose on the analysis undertaken. For our purposes, we take an expansive view of the Caribbean to incorporate all of the islands in the Caribbean, whether on the Caribbean Sea side or the Atlantic Ocean side (Greater Antilles and Lesser Antilles as well as the archipelago of the Bahamas), along with mainland territories in South America (i.e., the Guyanas) and Caribbean coast of Central American territories where descendents of people from the Caribbean have settled (i.e., Garinagu in Belize, Honduras, Guatemala and Nicaragua; and Costa Rica and Panama) (cf. Torres-Saillant 2006). In 2000, there were more than 4.6 million people of Caribbean birth living in the United States. Adding those who claimed Caribbean ancestry raises the number of *Caribbeans* living in the United States to more than 8.9 million, or more than 3% of the total population of the country. New York has approximately 26% of the Caribbean population in the United States; New Jersey, 8%; and Florida, 21%.

[2] The Barnard/Columbia Center for Urban Research and Policy conducted the NYC Participation Survey by telephone, in English, with respondents chosen randomly from households selected using a RDD procedure, between August 11 and September 8, 1997. The survey was a joint effort of the Barnard/Columbia Center for Urban Research and Policy and the Hispanic Education and Legal Fund Opinion Research Project. The original random sample for the survey was 1,123 New York City residents, 18 years of age and older, with access to a residential telephone. This sample was supplemented by an oversample of Latinos and blacks that yielded a total of 350 black and 453 Latino respondents.

[3] Further disaggregation of the Caribbean subsample was not attempted, as it would increase error and therefore unreliability. The Caribbean subsample was dichotomized along the most common identities these Caribbeans have either assumed or have been noted by outside observers. It was dichomotized given the expectations that differences from within the group were likely to surface. The labeling of these Caribbean subgroups may not be the best or most accurate. However, it is one that is reflected in the survey itself. In describing themselves racially, 94% of Hispanic Caribbeans reported their race to be "Hispanic or Latino"; 3% to be "Other"; 2%, "white"; 1%, "black"; and 1% "mixed". On the other hand, 90% of those in the Afro-Caribbean group identified as "black"; 4% as "Other"; 3% as

"mixed"; 3% as "Hispanic/Latino"; and 1% as "white".

[4] The measures of political participation are additive scales of dichotomous variables. The scale for overall political participation is made up of voting in the 1993 Mayoral elections, voting in the 1996 Presidential elections, working as a volunteer for a party or candidate, contributing money to a political party or candidate, attending a political rally for a candidate, attending a political meeting, attending a fundraiser for a political cause, making calls for a candidate or party, writing a letter to a public official, contacting a local elected official and participating in a protest or political demonstration, all in the past year. This eleven-point scale had an internal reliability (Chronbach's alpha) score of 0.7858, and all factors loaded onto the dimension at 0.5 or better. (Protesting had the lowest loading, at 0.481.) It explained 32% of the variance. The voting scale was made up of registering to vote, voting in the 1993 Mayoral elections and voting in the 1996 Presidential elections. Its internal reliability score was 0.8401 and it explained 16% of the variance. The contacting scale added writing a letter to a public official and contacting a local elected official about some need or problem. Its internal reliability score was 0.6731 and it explained 9% of the variance.

[5] Four OLS regression models were specified for each Caribbean variable (i.e., Caribbean, Hispanic Caribbean and Afro-Caribbean). The effects of these ethnic variables were consistent throughout insofar as they did not evidence a statistically significant effect on the dependent variables while holding all other factors constant. The dependent variables are described in footnote 4.

[6] In 2008 there were 9 Puerto Rican council members (4 from the Bronx, 2 from Brooklyn, 2 from Manhattan, 1 from Queens); 2 Dominicans (representing Brooklyn and Manhattan); one Haitian (representing Brooklyn) and one from St. Vincent (representing Brooklyn) in the New York City Council.

[7] In contrast, the number of Afro-Caribbean U.S. native-born citizens in the Caribbean (i.e., U.S. Virgin Islanders) is relatively small.

[8] In 1997, there were twelve Caribbean origin council members in the New York City Council: 8 Puerto Ricans (4 from the Bronx, 2 from Manhattan, 2 from Brooklyn); one Dominican (from Manhattan); one Jamaican (from Brooklyn); one Belizean (from Brooklyn) and one Guyanese-American (from Queens).

[9] Just as important, the support of the speaker of the City Council is perhaps the single most important factor affecting a bill's outcome.

Broad co-sponsorship would nevertheless elicit the Speaker's attention.

[10] Resolutions No. 2707, 2227, 2505, 2334, 2549, respectively; all introduced in 1997 (Council of the City of New York 1997). Adopting a resolution *viva voce* is indicative of the relatively uncontroversial nature of its content and its broad support in the Council.

[11] Resolution No. 2457 (Council of the City of New York 1997).

[12] Intro No. 975 and Resolution No. 2609, and Intro 984, respectively (Council of the City of New York 1997).

[13] Intro No. 961 became local law 91, once the Council overrode the mayoral veto (Council of the City of New York 1997).

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