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Untold Stories of the African Diaspora: The Lived Experiences of Black Caribbean Immigrants in the Greater Hartford Area

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Abstract:

The African Diaspora represents vastly complex migratory patterns. This project studies the journeys of English-speaking Afro-Caribbeans who immigrated to the US for economic reasons between the 1980s-present day. While some researchers emphasize the success of West Indian immigrants, others highlight the issue of downward assimilation many face upon arrival in the US. This paper explores the prospect of economic incorporation into American society for West Indian immigrants. I conducted and analyzed data from an online survey and 10 oral histories of West Indian economic migrants residing in the Greater Hartford Area to gain a broader perspective on the economic attainment of these immigrants. This project focuses on the following two questions: (1) what are the prospects for economic incorporation into American society for English-speaking West Indians in CT; (2) Are Afro-Caribbean immigrants affected by downward assimilation? If so, to what extent? I hypothesized that English-speaking West Indians in CT are likely to experience downward assimilation upon arrival in the US, but are able to overcome that by following two paths: assimilation into American society by first finding employment and then potentially working their way up in ranking or economic incorporation either through recertification processes to continue professional careers they may have begun in the West Indies or by becoming small business owners. I find that West Indians in the Greater Hartford Area, for the most part, are able to overcome any initial downward assimilation through economic incorporation and report a higher average yearly income than their African American counterparts.

INTRODUCTION: Afro-Caribbean Migration

During the 2016 presidential election, immigration was a prominent issue. President Trump's comments expressing disdain toward immigrants for "taking our jobs," demonstrate a long-standing economic fear of Americans "competing" with immigrants for employment opportunities (Boak 2019). Given that xenophobia fueled by a fear of migrants "stealing" American citizen's employment opportunities continues to be a salient issue, I am interested in examining immigrant labor market participation from a more localized perspective. In this paper, I study Afro-Caribbean immigrant labor history in the Greater Hartford Region.

Throughout this project, I study the following two questions: (1) what are the prospects for economic incorporation into American society for Jamaican or other English-speaking West Indians in CT; (2) Are Afro-Caribbean immigrants affected by downward assimilation? If so, to what extent? My independent variables are immigrant status and racial/ethnic identity while my dependent variables are economic outcomes and satisfaction. I hypothesize that while Jamaican or other English-speaking West Indians in CT may face downward assimilation (lower economic prospects) upon first arrival in the US, they eventually overcome that initial hurdle, following two paths: assimilation into American society by first finding employment and then potentially working their way up in ranking or incorporation into society either through recertification processes to continue professional careers they may have begun in the West Indies or by becoming small business owners. I define assimilation as being different than incorporation as it is a more advanced stage of an immigrant's transition to a new country. These hypotheses combine two seemingly competing theories in the literature of the model minority stereotype and the prominent issue of downward assimilation that I discuss further below.

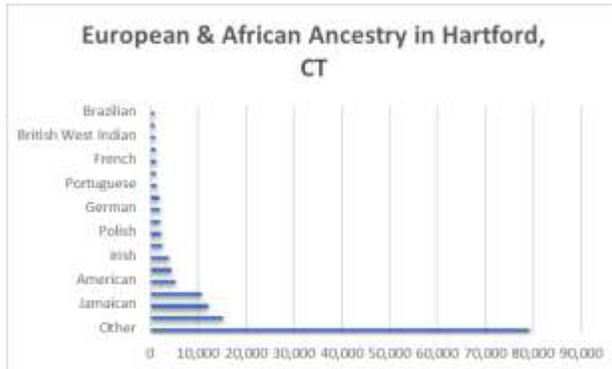
For this project, I studied the two aforementioned questions in the following ways: (1) develop a mixed-methods approach to gather local data through building and distributing a confidential, short online survey of convenience with a participation goal of 100 West Indian immigrants residing in the Greater Hartford Area, (2) conduct 10 oral histories among this same population, and (3) analyze available national census and local data on Afro-Caribbean immigrants incorporating into various labor markets within the US. I limit this study to Afro-Caribbean immigrants for reasons discussed below. Due to my limited resources, I collected and analyzed data at the local level and utilized census data and a mixed-methods approach to triangulate my findings.

Afro-Caribbean Settling Patterns

This project focuses on the economic experiences of English-speaking West Indians. Examining national data, the Department of Homeland Security's Yearbook Immigration Status indicates that over 180,000 Jamaican immigrants were admitted to the US between the years of 1990-1999 (DOJ INS 2002). This decade was particularly important for West Indian migration due to the Diversity Visa Lottery Program implemented under the Immigration Act of 1990, which allowed highly skilled and professional immigrants more pathways to access visas (Hamilton 2014). Looking at more recent data, in 2017, Jamaicans represented the third largest immigrant group from the Caribbean in the US at 16.9%, only behind Cubans at roughly 30% and Dominicans at 26% (Zong 2019). In acknowledging that immigrants who speak Spanish or French creoles have very different experiences in the US, I limit my scope to focus on English-speaking West Indian immigrants, particularly Jamaicans, who comprise a significant majority of US Afro-Caribbean immigrants in general and Hartford Afro-Caribbean immigrants in particular due to the limited nature of this project.

According to Portes & Rumbaut (2006), immigrants tend to concentrate in metropolitan areas. The following six states host the highest proportion of immigrants: New York, California, Florida, Texas, New Jersey and Illinois (Portes & Rumbaut 2006: 47; Dunlevy 1991: 54). Caribbean immigrants, particularly those from Jamaica and Guyana, account for the second largest immigrant group in New York (Portes & Rumbaut 2006: 49). Connecticut, being close in proximity to New York, has a sizable group of West Indians, some of whom might have resided in another state upon arrival in the US.

Turning to local data, the US Census data's 2015 ACS 5-year estimate survey indicates there are 86,719 people of West Indian descent (excluding Hispanic origins) residing in the state of CT with 55,097 people being Jamaican or of Jamaican descent (See [Census Data of West Indians in CT](#), [Census Data for Jamaicans in CT](#)). The Jamaican Families in Hartford, CT 1940-Present project further breaks down these numbers, delineating the historical migratory patterns of Jamaican men who first migrated to CT during World War II to work on tobacco farms seasonally (Dadmar 2020). However, the project limits the time frame to the 1990s-present day to study more modern migrant patterns. According to the website, there are over 30,000 West Indian immigrants residing in the Connecticut Valley region. Jamaicans are the largest reported West Indian ancestry group in Hartford, with 10,700 residing in the capital city, and an additional 25,000 residing in the Metropolitan area (Dadmar 2020). Thus, I focus my study on Hartford's Jamaican and other West-Indian immigrants to analyze their level of incorporation into the American economy and compare their experiences to other West Indians nation-wide. The following graphs illuminate the predominance of Jamaicans among CT West Indians:



See Statistical Atlas; Ancestry breakdown of Hartford, CT

Top Sending Countries to CT	Immigrant Population
India	46,000
Jamaica	36,400
Dominican Republic	26,000
Poland	26,000
Total:	134,400 (out of 560,000 total immigrants in CT)

See 2018 American Immigration Council; CT Immigrant Pop.

Divergent Immigrant Experiences

In studying West Indian immigrant experiences, it is important to discuss the migration patterns of immigrants as a whole in the US. Why do immigrants move the places they do? Portes and Rumbaut (2006) argue a multitude of factors outside of wage differentials or propinquity – proximity to an immigrant’s home country – affect where immigrant communities are established (Portes and Rumbaut 2006: 37-38). Factors such as labor recruitment and preexisting networks of family and friends all have an effect on migrant patterns. However, professional immigrants have less of a need to rely on such networks, relying on their skills to secure stable employment instead (Portes and Rumbaut 2006: 42). Entrepreneurial immigrants have a propensity to settle in urban areas in order to gain access to credit, cheaper labor, and a protected market (Portes and Rumbaut 2006: 42-43). Consistent with Portes and Rumbaut’s findings, Bartel found migration patterns to be strongly influenced by the education level of immigrants; those who were more educated [and thus relied on their skills rather than familial connections to economically adjust] were more likely to settle away from metropolitan areas (Bartel 1989: 390)

Once immigrants move to the US and have somewhat settled in, how are they integrated into American society? While scholars typically focus on assimilating migrants, how do immigrants perceive American society and their adjustment within? Three dominant themes of immigrant integration are incorporation, acculturation, and assimilation. Barkan (2006) discusses all three theories. He notes incorporation as the beginning stage of immigrant adjustment to mainstream society, defining the phenomenon as: “ever widening circles of contact and interaction and frequently begins in job settings and then moves outward to informal and less structured encounters, such as in schools, sports, and religious institutions, as well as on to foods and observance of holidays,” (Barkan 2006: 9). Incorporation embraces processes of acculturation - integration and adaption - before fully reaching the conclusive and most comprehensive stage of assimilation (Barkan 2006: 9). Similarly, Alba and Nee (1997) recognize assimilation as the end stage in immigrant adjustment and integration into society. Much like Barkan, they view acculturation as a starting point, defining the phenomenon as a “minority group’s adoption of the ‘cultural patterns’ of the host society,” also noting that acculturation is an early stage of assimilation and is almost inevitable (Alba and Nee 1997: 827). While both Barkan (2006) and Alba and Nee (1997) utilize a definition of assimilation focusing on the full immigrant experience, [cultural, social, political, and economic integration into mainstream society] for the purposes of this paper, I am focusing on the economic aspect of integration.

West Indian Immigrant Adjustment: Two Competing Theories

In regard to West Indian immigrant experiences pertaining to economic integration into American society, two dominant, sometimes conflicting, theories arise. One argues for West Indians being a “model minority” Black ethnic group while the other highlights that the downward assimilation many immigrants face upon arrival in the US also burdens West Indian

immigrants. Beginning with the former, there is a good deal of scholarship on West Indian immigrant experience in the US. Economist Thomas Sowell (1979) sets the foundational groundwork for applying the “model minority” myth to this Black ethnic group. The model minority stereotype can be defined as a racial-ethnic group that is “perceived to have achieved greater success than [other minority groups] because of their greater work ethic and lack of concern with US race relations and racism,” (Ifatunji 2016: 133). While this myth is typically assigned to Asian Americans, it can be extrapolated to other groups to further disseminate the idea that African Americans are a “failing minority” (Lee 1996: 126).

Sowell argues factors beyond urban crime, poverty, and broken families account for the plight of the “Black underclass,” positing that major moral and economic setbacks of slavery do not entirely account for social patterns present among today’s African Americans (Sowell 1979: 93). He posits that West Indians faced worse treatment under slavery, but still have significantly higher incomes and occupational status when compared to US-born Blacks (Sowell 1979: 102). The following are suggested as potential explanations for the discrepancies among African American and Afro-Caribbean earnings: a majority of Black immigrants congregate in New York where income earnings are much greater than the South (where the majority of African Americans reside), better education in home countries than in the US, and favoritism towards West Indians by White employers (Sowell 1979: 103). Sowell contends positive cultural attitudes of West Indians toward education and schooling and lower fertility rates when compared to their African American counterparts contribute to their greater economic success, ultimately promulgating the idea of Afro-Caribbeans being a model minority (Sowell 1979: 110-11). Based off Sowell’s thesis, one can argue that successful West Indians incorporate rather than fully assimilating into [Black] American society. Essentially, their positive cultural attitudes

toward schooling and marriage all distinguish them from Afro-American attitudes, allowing for their economic, educational, and familial success.

Delineating a historical precedent, scholars have found the model minority theory stands the test of time. Doodoo's (1999) findings analyzing US Census Bureau data highlights a historical trend of the greater economic success of Afro-Caribbeans: Caribbean immigrants are more likely (81.8%) than African Americans (73.3%) to be employed (Doodoo 1999: 75). Almost twenty years later, Ifatunji (2017) supports that trend, finding that Afro-Caribbean immigrants are more likely to be employed and earned 16% more than African American counterparts in a 2017 National Survey of American Life (522). These findings suggest that West Indian immigrants have been more economically prosperous overtime when compared to their American counterparts. However, both authors recognize the limitations of the model minority theory in defining and explaining Afro-Caribbean success.

Hamilton (2019) also supports the idea of West Indian immigrants being a model minority, arguing cultural inferiority, which he defines as: "poor attitudes toward work, shiftlessness, poor diets, oppositionality, promiscuity, and general lack of family values," hinders African American success (Hamilton 2019: 49). If Black immigrants are able to obtain better social and economic outcomes than their US-born counterparts, then it must be due to their cultural differences; racial discrimination has even less of an impact on economic outcomes in this theory (Hamilton 2019: 49). In arguing so, he strongly supports the Sowell model minority thesis, arguing cultural differences like attitudes toward work and family values account for the disparity in labor market earnings among US-born Blacks and Black immigrants (Hamilton 2019: 49). Manuel et al. (2012) further helps to cement this thesis, providing data confirming that on average, Caribbeans are more likely to have a college degree when compared to African

Americans and out earn their American counterparts: (\$53,000 in annual income for Afro-Caribbeans versus \$34,000 for African Americans) (Manuel et al. 2012: 233). Still, scholars like James (2002) and Model (1991) advocate against the biases lingering in the model minority theory, arguing that the theory overlooks institutional and systemic racism.

While the data in the Doodoo (1999), Ifatunji (2016) and Ifatunji (2017) reports could be used to support the Sowell thesis, all advocate against the model minority theory as the primary explanation for West Indian success. They acknowledge that while Afro-Caribbeans do outperform their African American counterparts, work intensity remains the same among both groups (Doodoo 1999: 75). To explain differences in economic outcomes, they highlight the self-selection of immigrants to migrate as well as their having more “hard and soft skills” as compared to their American counterparts (Ifatunji 2017: 530). Ultimately, they posit that the model minority theory actually works to support White hegemony, downplaying systemic racism (Doodoo 1999: 77; Ifatunji 2016: 111).

Other scholars completely reject all aspects of the model minority theory entirely. Model (1991) is among the first to explore the issue of downward economic mobility of Afro-Caribbeans. Studying IPUMS data of Borjas (1985) and Bean and Tienda (1987), Model presents data demonstrating that while foreign-born Black men had out earned their native Born-Black counterparts in the 1970s by about \$6,000 per year, those differences in earnings actually completely disappeared for Black men in the 1980s, while foreign-born Black women continued to out earn native-born Black women, albeit at more diminished levels (Model 1991: 253-254). She finds that cultural superiority, stronger human capital, and White favoritism currently are not strong enough factors to elevate West Indian income over African Americans’ (Model 1998: 273). A decade later, Model (2008) continued to support this theory, arguing that West Indians

from English-speaking Caribbean nations skew the numbers of success due to their advantage of knowing English (Model 2008: 2). She also argues that selectivity of immigration rather than cultural superiority better explains West Indian immigrant success. To Model, West Indians are not a Black success story, but rather an immigrant success story (Model 2008: 143).

Similarly, others scholars recognize a flaw in the model minority thesis: the undervaluing of systemic racism's effect on African Americans. James (2002) argues that the "historical vacuum" of which Black Caribbean immigrant success is often pitted against the success of (or lack thereof) US born Blacks needs to be filled in order to make sense of and quantify the Afro-Caribbean experience (James 2002: 219). James acknowledges Sowell's acceptance of racism being a barrier for all Blacks to contend with. However, he argues against Sowell's thesis by comparing the success of White immigrants versus Black immigrants. James posits that Black immigrants in the early 20th century had higher literacy rates, education, and skill than European immigrants during the same time, yet the children of the White immigrants fared better economically than the children of the Black immigrants, most likely due to racism and other systemic barriers (James 2002: 224). Thus, racism had even *more* significant effects on African American children whose parents were not as advantaged as Afro-Caribbean immigrants (James 2002: 224). Additionally, the gap between the two groups' earnings has been narrowing within the past few decades due to the selectivity of migration, ultimately disputing the cultural superiority of West Indian immigrants as posited by Sowell (James 2002: 249).

Supporting James' theory and updating Model's (1991) data, Akresh (2006) highlights the continued grim prospects of economic mobility for many immigrants from the Caribbean. Analyzing data from the New Immigrant Survey Pilot, Akresh found that, "Fifty percent of immigrants experience downgrading," with more than 75% of the highest-skilled immigrants

from Latin America and the Caribbean ending up in lower-skilled jobs than what they held in their home country (Akresh 2006: 854). He also suggests, “immigrants who received their green cards in 1996 were largely unable to convert their prior experience and skills into comparable jobs in the US... There remains a lack of understanding as to how these initial entries into the US labor market play out in the long run,” (Akresh 2006: 876). As such, I hope to fill the gap in this understanding of economic outcomes of these immigrants who might have faced downward assimilation upon arrival.

Matthews (2014) further underlines the issue of downward assimilation, acknowledging a “brain drain” of professional Afro-Caribbean immigrants leaving to America only to be relegated to positions below their prior educational and occupational skillset (33-34). Of the 28,000 immigrants, primarily from Jamaica, Guyana, and Trinidad & Tobago, settling in the US, particularly in New York, during 1990 and 1994, approximately 42% were professionals and many could expect to begin in non-professional positions (Matthews 2014: 34). Matthews also found that 70% of survey respondents had to change to a non-professional job in the US, negatively affecting their mental health (Matthews 2014: 40-44). Ultimately, Model (1999), James (2002), Akresh (2006), and Matthews (2014) all help to support the idea of downward assimilation: immigrants not being able to transfer prior educational or occupational experiences or skills upon arrival in the US, and consequently being relegated to low-skilled and low-wage jobs. Even if Afro-Caribbeans had an economic advantage over Black Americans a few decades ago, those gaps continue to close as noted below.

Waters et al. (2007) highlight a trend of downward assimilation, noting a negative shift in public opinion toward Jamaicans who had traditionally been viewed as a “model minority” group particularly “adept at creating business, attaining professional credentials, and achieving

outstanding success as leaders of the black community,” (Waters et al. 2007: 485). They note a decline in this view due to a decline in Jamaican socioeconomic status in the US. James’ (2002) assertion that children of successful Caribbean immigrants are not as successful as their White counterparts helps to support the change in view toward Jamaicans Waters et al. highlight (244). Perhaps, Jamaican second-generation children have faced economic barriers which have helped to alter the American public’s perception of the group. While the experiences of the second generation are not prominent in my research, it is particularly interesting to note that this shifting dynamic is occurring over successive immigrant generations. If proven to be consistent, this trend could highlight that the selectivity of migrants who choose to leave their home country – and not innate cultural superiority - ultimately is the most important factor in pinpointing their economic success.

As hinted at by a few aforementioned scholars’ work, the two seemingly opposing theories – model minority versus downward assimilation – need not oppose each other. One scholar actually links both in his work. Hamilton (2014) studies Caribbean immigrant’s ability to overcome initial downward assimilation and posits that the Diversity Visa Lottery Program introduced in the Immigration Act of 1990 allowed for new avenues for highly skilled immigrants to enter the US (Hamilton 2014: 998-999). He argues that Afro-Caribbean immigrants may face the burden of downward assimilation upon arrival, but are actually able to overcome that initial hurdle over time, eventually out earning native Blacks (Hamilton 2014: 998).

RESEARCH DESIGN: A Mixed-Methods Approach

As Sowell (1979) first postulated and other scholars have since supported through data, Afro-Caribbeans are often viewed as a model minority group when compared to African

Americans. Their economic success has been attributed to migrant selectivity and culturally superior attitudes and motivations. On the other hand, the downward assimilation many Caribbean immigrants face casts serious doubt on the validity of the model minority theory. Scholars supporting this theory posit that a group with such cultural superiority should be shielded from taking positions below their skill level to earn a living in the US, but this often is not the case, discrediting the model minority thesis.

However, in this paper, I explore West Indian economic integration using the Hamilton (2014) framework which bridges these two theories in regard to this migrant group. I predominantly focus on the experiences of CT Jamaicans and West Indians who immigrated in and after the 1990s. Perhaps they experienced downward assimilation when they first arrived, having to take jobs below their prior occupational or skill level to get settled in the US. However, were they able to prosper economically in the long run as Hamilton (2014) suggests, or were they and their children continually affected by downward assimilation as James (2002) and others propose? I aim to answer this question in the remainder of this paper, specifically targeting older participants, to see if the decade they immigrated and opportunities like the Diversity Visa Lottery worked in their favor. By virtue of being older, they also have had the opportunity of time to either establish their own successful businesses/complete professional recertification processes (economic incorporation) or work their way up the corporate ladder (economic assimilation).

To study the economic incorporation of West Indian immigrants in the Greater Hartford area, I employed a mixed method [quantitative and qualitative] approach on multiple levels of analysis. I gathered data at the local, state, and national levels. Relating to West Indian immigrants in particular, I define economic incorporation as the first stages of their adjustment or integration

into American society in which they separate themselves from typical labor market interaction. Some do so by starting their own businesses while others complete recertification processes for professional careers, but most maintain cultural heritages and practices that differentiate them from the dominant society at large. This is a hard metric to quantify in the surveys, but I study this in the oral histories by asking questions relating to personal values and how they differ or coincide with American ones. Other immigrants continue even further, following an assimilatory path in which they gain employment and perhaps are promoted due to good work ethic, thus climbing the “social rungs of society” and becoming more fully integrated within the dominant culture. These are the specific definitions I use to study economic adjustment of Connecticut West Indians.

At the local/micro-analytical level, I conducted an online, anonymous 30+ question Qualtrics survey on a convenience sample as well as oral histories with the help of my PI, Professor Venator. I initially aimed to have 100 survey responses and conduct 10 oral histories of English-speaking West Indian economic migrants over the age of 18 who reside in the Greater Hartford Area. While I successfully conducted all 10 oral histories, I unfortunately was only able to gather 44 survey responses with only 31 being viable. Participants who completed the survey were eligible to receive a \$10 e-gift card if they choose to provide their email in a link completely separate from their survey response. Upon completion of an oral history, participants were emailed a \$20 e-gift card due to this method taking longer to complete (45 minutes to an hour). To maintain anonymity, oral history participants were not drawn from the survey pool.

In the survey, I asked questions about pull and push factors for immigration, where people first settled upon arrival in the US, and why they moved to CT in particular [see Appendix]. The key indicator question asked participants if they feel that their race/skin color, immigration status, or a mix of both have had an effect on their ability to incorporate into the labor market and if so,

in which direction. In this way, I aimed to uncover whether West Indians feel they have been disadvantaged or advantaged due to their racial/ethnic and/or immigrant identity. I worked with my PI and researched established methods in studying Afro-Caribbeans to determine how to measure race/ethnicity, set income brackets, and overall refine wording. In oral histories - a looser-structured interview - I allowed participants to share their immigration and economic incorporation stories, often asking clarifying questions to include similar information being captured by the survey.

Initially after gathering the survey data, I aimed to run statistical tests like cross tabulations in Stata on the collected information with the help of my PI to ascertain correlations between racial/immigrant status and economic incorporation in the Greater Hartford Area. However, due to lack of survey participation discussed below, I did not quite have a large enough sample size to run statistical analyses. I shifted my focus to the oral histories in order to study whether these immigrants experienced upward or downward assimilation. Were they able to find the economic stability and success they sought in immigrating to the US? Did they arrive in the US already a model minority as Sowell (1979) and others posited due to cultural attributes or the very fact they self-selected to migrate? Or did they have to overcome downward assimilation as posited by Hamilton (2014)? I utilize Hamilton's framework in this study; Afro-Caribbean immigrants in the Greater Hartford area may face a period of downward assimilation upon arrival, but are eventually able to overcome it either through the incorporation or assimilation paths mentioned above. If this is the case, I aim to uncover possible attitudes, characteristics, or traits that correlate with their successful outcomes for future scholars to explore.

My employed sampling method is the nonprobability snowball method, which "relies on previously identified group members to identify other members of the population," (Henry 1990:

21). Henry (1990) asserts the benefits of nonprobability sampling methods which allow for the study of “certain specific populations” and may be “the only recourse for obtaining data in certain situations,” (Henry 1990: 24-25). He also notes the risk of nonprobability sampling, which may allow for confounding variables to influence study results or the credibility of the sample itself in representing the population (Henry 1990: 24-25).

In regards to survey research, Etikan et al. (2016) much like Henry (1990) assert that non-probability convenience sample, while not representative of the general population, can be useful when a population is large and is generally more affordable to conduct (1-2). Because the West Indian population in Hartford is estimated to be about 30,000, a large, representative sample would be impossible given my limited resources (Dadmar 2020). As an undergraduate with limited resources, my PI and I decided it would be in my best interest to conduct a mixed-method approach of a convenience survey and oral histories to help combat bias, gain some quantitative data to analyze, and learn how to conduct fieldwork while having the oral histories to add depth to the information collected in the shorter surveys.

According to Kapiszewski et al. (2015) oral histories are more often associated with history [or less often, sociology and anthropology] than political science, so I will now define and highlight their benefits for my inter-disciplinary project. Oral histories are described as collecting “memories and personal commentaries of historical significance through recorded interviews” for preservation (Ritchie 2011: 1). Oral histories originally covered the stories of the elite, but have evolved to preserve the voices of the non-elite, an often-overlooked group in popular accounts of history (Ritchie 2011: 6; Kapiszewski et al. 2015: 198). I find it fitting to use this method as a form of interview for these reasons. Afro-Caribbeans are a group of overlooked immigrants. Due to their race, they and their children are grandfathered into the African American ethnic/racial group. As

such, there is an inherent danger of their stories and migration experiences being left out of the historical record. I aim to record their experiences and provide more depth to the data captured in the surveys. Oral histories of non-immigrant and internal migrants have been conducted on African Americans before [particularly in Black feminist studies] (see Geiger 1990; Bunch-Lyons 1997; Bent-Goodley 2006) but, West Indian immigrants' stories have been overlooked.

As alluded to by Kapiszewski, Ritchie (2011) notes the multidisciplinary nature of oral histories, highlighting the differences from typical interviews conducted in other fields like journalism. He also addresses complex issues of interpreting oral histories and whether interviewers should be neutral during the recording process, noting vigorous debate surrounding the topic (Ritchie 2011: 11-12). For the purpose of my study, I recognize that the oral stories were conducted from a place of bias as I had preconceived hypotheses. However, I encouraged participants to share as much about their immigrant journey and labor market experience as they feel comfortable indulging. I worked with Dr. Fiona Vernal to keep neutral phrasing in advertising my study and conducting the oral histories to conceal biases from participants. As for preserving the recordings, I consulted Dr. Vernal on potential public repositories that would work best for this project. I aim to offer oral histories of those participants who consented to sharing their recordings to UConn's manuscript and archives. Also, recordings will not identify participants by name.

In order to conduct oral histories, I followed best practices set forth by the Oral History Association. Launched in 1966, the organization provides some insight on conducting oral histories, aiming to "to help foster best practices and encourage support for oral history and oral historians" (see About Us page). For best practices, they recommend interviewers receiving and documenting informed consent from participants and preparing informed questions in an open-

ended guide (See Best Practices Page). They also provide other resources to understand the manner in which oral histories are conducted today through digital recording. One of the sources recommended by the association is Sommer and Quinlan (2005) “Capturing the Living Past - An Oral History Primer,” in which they provide key insights into conducting oral histories. They also recommend first setting goals for what one is trying to accomplish with oral histories, how many will be conducted, and keeping track of their purpose (Sommer and Quinlan 2005: 5). In accordance to this step, my goal for the oral histories was capturing immigrant and economic experience and obtaining 10 participants.

In addition to the above guidelines, they also discuss the rapidly changing nature of recording oral histories (Sommer and Quinlan 2005: 12). Originally, I planned to conduct oral histories in person and use an iPad to audio-record the session. However, due to the Coronavirus pandemic, all oral histories were conducted online using WebEx, which makes equipment handling much easier. This allowed me the opportunity to audio-record participants with their permission while also taking copious notes of sessions. WebEx also transcribes audio-recordings, saving time for me as a researcher. I store the WebEx recordings in WebEx’s cloud and am considering sharing them to the public.

To prepare for an oral history, Sommer and Quinlan recommend doing the necessary background review and preparing a list of questions. They advise against sending the participant that questions list prior to the oral history because preparation can eliminate spontaneous responses oral historians are looking to capture (Sommer and Quinlan 2005: 19). As for the interview, Sommer and Quinlan provide a few tips: begin with the common goals of the interview and with easier information for subjects to talk about, proceed in chronological order, and use key terms and phrases rather than writing out specific questions (Sommer and Quinlan

2005: 20). For questions, Sommer and Quinlan recommend using an open-ended format, phrasing questions and statements neutrally, keeping opinions to oneself, asking follow-up and clarifying questions and only asking questions the narrator can answer from first-hand experience (Sommer and Quinlan 2005: 21-22). I kept the above guides and potential risks in mind as I searched for suitable participants and conduct oral histories.

Surveys, on the other hand, are more familiar and welcomed by the field of political science. In fact, many scholars studying economic incorporation of West Indians as compared to other racial/ethnic groups utilize survey research (either surveys they conducted themselves or analyzing available survey research conducted by others) to endorse their claims, (see Ifatunji 2017; Ifatunji 2016; Manuel et al. 2012; Akresh 2006) signifying survey research's general ubiquity in studying West Indian labor market participation. Brady (2000) discusses survey research's contribution to the field of political science, noting survey's usefulness for description, assessing causes and impacts of certain events, and allowing data collection (47). Survey research is widely applicable, conceptually rich, and "provide[s] some of the best tests of different kinds of theories" (Brady 2000: 48). He also highlights the theory confirming quality of surveys with embedded quasi-experimental research. While he notes some scholars' concerns over the expense of surveys, he posits that they are a thriving and leading source of data for testing political theories (Brady 2000: 54). As such, I employed survey research as a more traditional form of quantitative study. However, the oral histories helped to provide a more robust narrative, correcting any misinterpretations that may occur in the surveys.

Rossi et al. (2011) acknowledge issues surrounding conducting survey research while advocating best practices. They highlight modern day issues in survey collection: rising costs, issues in measurement, and issues in analyzing survey data (Rossie et al. 2011: 15-17). However,

they note that rise in technology and reduction in funding leads to innovative ways to combat survey expenses. To reduce Type II error in surveys – non-rejection of a false null hypothesis – they promote using appropriate phrasing of survey items and using mathematical models help to reduce unreliability (Rossie et al. 2011: 17).

In order to gain participants for both oral histories and surveys, I enlisted the aid of Dr. Vernal due to her involvement with the West Indian Foundation in Hartford. Through Dr. Vernal, I was connected with an excellent oral history participant. Additionally, I contacted the West Indian Foundation after receiving their contact from Dr. Vernal on multiple occasions, but unfortunately never received a response. Fortunately, I was able to advertise my research study through other avenues detailed below.

To gain eligible participants, I also advertised my study in the local West Indian American Newspaper popular in the Greater Hartford Region from July through September. I received 44 survey responses; however, only 31 were viable. Fortunately, I was able to meet my goal of conducting 10 oral histories. I also enlisted my immediate network of parents, church, family friends, and organizations I am a member of to find eligible participants for my study, thus employing snowball sampling. These steps were crucial in getting my project off the ground and finding my first round of participants for the surveys and oral histories. Some participants led me to even more eligible participants they knew in their own social circles, furthering snowball sampling. I also found that ineligible participants [i.e., 2nd generation immigrant children of Afro-Caribbean immigrants] were generally willing to ask their eligible family members to take my surveys, and that was helpful.

As my project involves human subjects, I went through the Institutional Review Board (IRB) process and received approval mid-June. I began circulating my project upon approval. I

also already completed the CITI training certificate course required of all researchers to conduct political science research. I worked alongside my PI to ensure that my surveys continued to gain the informed consent of participants, the risks posed to participants were minimal, and maintained confidentiality.

Moving beyond the local level of data, I analyzed available US Census data on West Indian economic incorporation between 2010-2015. Doing so aided in determining where my sample size of Hartford Afro-Caribbean immigrants fit into the overall state and national story. I was able to extrapolate data at the Connecticut state level on West Indians overall and Jamaicans in particular.

Overcoming Project Weaknesses

As noted throughout my design, there are some weaknesses to my research methods. Firstly, I rely on a nonrandom and nonrepresentative sample, so generalizing to the larger population is not feasible. I also face other biases due to compensating both survey and oral history participants. People may self-select to opt-in for the incentive. Thus, there might be certain characteristics and traits prominent among those who opt-in to the survey that are not generally representative of the greater population at large (Hsieh and Kocielnik 2016). Finally, when I envisioned this research project over a year ago, I had not factored in COVID-19. While I generally was able to adapt due to remarkable technology like video conferencing applications and the surveys already being conducted online through Qualtrics, I struggled garnering adequate participation. I originally planned to gain participants through frequenting public spaces such as libraries and coffee shops, offering individuals the chance to take the survey on an iPad provided by my PI while also advertising the survey link in the local newspaper. I was only able to do the latter. However, the newspaper moved to a digital format, so I believe viewership levels might have significantly decreased due to people either not knowing the switch took place or not feeling comfortable

accessing the paper digitally. I also was not able to recruit people in church or at other social functions either. I had to solely rely on email, social media, and texts. While some people were receptive, others were not for a variety of reasons.

However, despite these challenges, I was able to gather rich data on the experiences of West Indian immigrants. I received 31 viable survey responses, conducted 10 oral histories, and analyzed US Census data despite the lack of face-to-face contact. For the oral histories, I devised a plan with my advisor to add an element of randomness in the remaining eight oral histories I needed to conduct; I drew a list of sixteen potential participants and randomly selected eight to conduct oral histories with. I also noticed that many survey respondents opted out of receiving an incentive, potentially signaling that the chance of incentive-related biases is small. In the oral histories, I noticed a trend of participants having high educational and/or occupational expectations for both themselves, but especially for their children if applicable. I also gathered information on complex racial/ethnic dynamics among West Indians and White Americans, West Indians and Black Americans, and even among other West Indians. A more expansive analysis of the oral histories is discussed below. While my study may be less representative, it is an exercise to learn to how to conduct political science field research (albeit in the virtual world). I also supplement my data with local and national statistics available. Finally, I have the honor of capturing unique stories of such a prominent yet understudied population that risk going unrecorded.

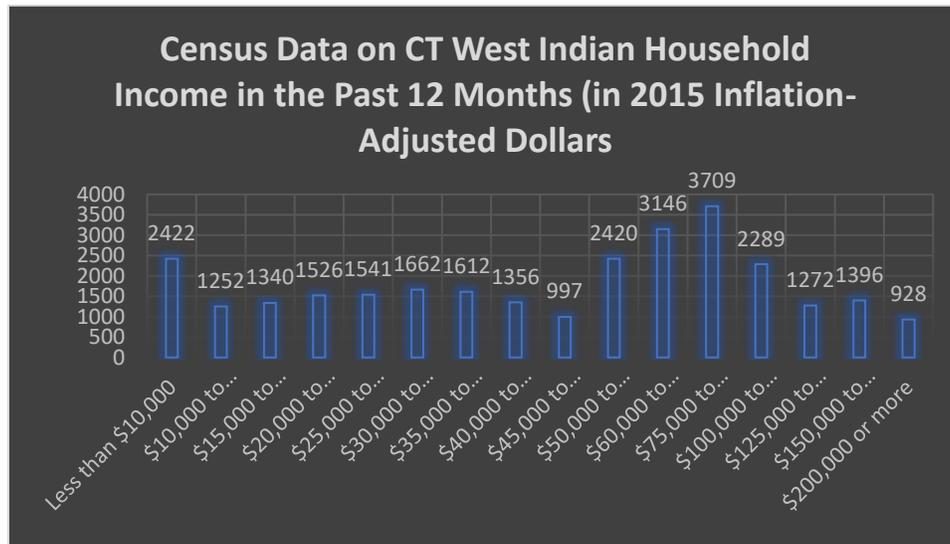
RESULTS:

US Census Data

West Indians in CT: According to US Census data, there are over 86,719 people of West Indian descent in CT (note that these numbers include both non-migrants and migrants and non-English speaking West Indians). Below are data taken from the US Census Bureau's website on

West Indian Household Income in 2015. The mode for CT West Indian’s income is between \$75,000-\$99,999 while the median is \$52,505 (see [Median Household Income CT West Indians](#)).

See the following graph on CT West Indian’s reported income:



See [Census Data CT West Indians Household Income](#)

Additionally, the census breaks down the occupations by sex of West Indians in CT. There are more females (24,521) than males (18,950) of West Indian descent employed in civilian occupations in CT. The most popular occupations for men are in management, business, science and arts occupations (4,754) while most popular for women are service occupations (9,481):

West Indian CT Men Civilian Occupations for those 16 Years and Over (2015)

Male Total	18,950
Management, business, science, and arts occupations	4,754
Service occupations	4,016
Sales and office occupations	3,495
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	2,446

Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	4,239
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West Indian Female CT Civilian Occupations for those 16 Years and Over (2015)

Female Total	24,521
Management, business, science, and arts occupations	8,233
Service occupations	9,481
Sales and office occupations	5,915
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	34
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	858

For more detailed breakdown, visit: [Census CT West Indians Occupation by Sex](#)

The census also provides information on people of Jamaican descent living in the state of Connecticut. Differing from West Indian occupation trends, almost twice as many Jamaican men (27,376) are employed in the civilian labor force as compared to their female counterparts (15,882). Like West Indians, the most popular occupations for CT Jamaican men are in management, business, science, and arts occupations while most popular among women are service occupations (6,562) as well.

Jamaican CT Male Civilian Occupations for those 16 Years and Over (2015)

Total Male	27,376
Management, business, science, and arts occupations	11,494
Service occupations	2,353
Sales and office occupations	2,381
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	2,018
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	1,821

Jamaican CT Female Civilian Occupations for those 16 years and Over (2015)

Total Female	15,882
Management, business, science, and arts occupations	5,129
Service occupations	6,562
Sales and office occupations	3,678
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	34
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	479

For full breakdown, visit: [Census Data Jamaican Occupation by Sex in CT](#)

Oral History Demographics

Focusing on the ten oral histories conducted, participants had a range of career and educational experiences and varied experiences with racism and discrimination. To preserve the anonymity and confidentiality of participants, I will refer to them as “Participant” followed by a randomly assigned letter from the alphabet. Of the ten participants interviewed, two identified as male and eight identified as female. Similarities among the participants were evident. Participants are between 30 and 60 in age (one 30 years old, five in their 50s, and four in their 60s). All were of Jamaican ethnic backgrounds; nine immigrated from Jamaica and one was born in Canada after her parents immigrated from Jamaica (Participant Y). All had children and/or step-children either born in the US, Jamaica, or a mixture of both. Five owned their own homes and cars. Nine were employed in some fashion and one (Participant K) is formerly employed receiving disability assistance due to multiple ailments. Only three (Participants C, J and S) had owned a business in the past or currently, but three more (Participants S, T and P) thought about or are thinking about beginning [and/or supporting their spouses in] their own business ventures.

Educational Opportunities

While participants had a range of educational experiences, many were able to pursue further education or certification in the US, overcoming any initial downward assimilation faced. Three participants (two females and one male) only completed elementary (Participant B) and/or secondary school (Participant K) in Jamaica, pursuing neither a high school diploma nor its equivalent later in the US. The male in this group (Participant S) went on to pursue further trade certification in the US. One participant finished high school and fashion design school in Jamaica (Participant C); another finished High School and Hair Dressing School in the UK after her parents migrated there from Jamaica when she was eight years old (Participant J). The rest of participants (6) held Associates through Doctorate degrees. Participant D finished her Associate's degree in Jamaica and attempted to pursue additional schooling in the US but was deterred due to racist experiences that are delineated below. Participant T finished her first Master's Degree in Jamaica before receiving an educational opportunity to come to the US to pursue a second Master's Degree in Biology. She eventually earned a Doctorate Degree. Participant P completed the equivalent of an Associate's Degree in Jamaica, completing her Bachelors and Doctorate Degrees in Pharmacy in the US. Finally, Participant M (Ph.D.) and Y (J.D.) completed their studies in the US. Participant M had immigrated as a baby with his mother from Jamaica to CT. He went onto graduate with a Master's in Pastoral Studies, a Master's in Business Administration, and a Doctorate of Ministry Degree. The final participant (Y) was born in Canada to Jamaican immigrant parents before relocating to the US; she attended private boarding high school in CT as a day student, earning a bachelor's and Juris Doctorate Degree at a top law school. In essence, participants M, Y, P, T, and J's successful pursuit of further educational and training opportunities in the US certainly supports my hypothesis of West Indian

immigrants having upward financial mobility through economic assimilation. Still, participants had varied educational opportunities.

Economic Opportunities:

Now that demographics have been addressed, I turn to discussing participants' distinct economic experiences. The chart below illustrates the progression of participants' careers both in their home countries, upon arrival in the US, and currently:

Participant	Occupation in Home Country	First Occupations in US	Current Occupation in CT
B	Dressmaker & Farmer (JA)	Dressmaker & Farmer	Homecare/Personal Care Assistant
C	Sewer & Dressmaker (solo business owner) & Fashion Design School Tutor (JA)	Certified Nursing Assistant & Phlebotomy	Upholstery
D	Student (JA)	Part Time in Clothing Store & Mailing Company → Financial Firm & Mortgage Industry Positions (laid-off)	Cardiac Care Monitoring
M	NA (Baby) (JA)	Assistant & Associate Pastor (NY)	Pastor
J	Student (JA)/Hair Stylist (UK)	Hair Stylist (Salon Owner/Manager)	Hairstylist
K	NA/Unknown (JA)	KFC Employee → Dietary Work	Unemployment - Disability
P	Accounting (JA)	Pharmacist (NY)	Pharmacist
S	Restaurant Worker Carpentry Coffee Industry Board (JA)	Sugar Cane Farming (FL), Post Office, School Bus Driver, Extrusion Company, Truck Driver (CT- solo business)	Iron Worker's Union
T	Science Teacher at Teaching College (JA)	Elementary School Science Teacher (H-1B Visa)	Elementary School Science Teacher
Y	NA/Student (Canada)	Attorney	Managing Partner

Again, participants had a range of careers and career trajectories. With the exception of Participant K, all showed upward career trajectories, supporting my hypothesis. Participants M, Y, P, T, and J all have more straightforward economic paths. After arrival and/or being raised in

the US, most were able to pursue further education beyond the collegiate level or, in the case of Participant J, further training in her field as a hair stylist. That further education and training allowed them to pursue successful careers in their own field. Participant J even managed her own salon while the rest of the group were working professionals.

Turning to the experiences of more blue-collar workers, Participants B, C, D, and S all demonstrated upward trajectory in their respective fields as well. Many pursued further trainings either to switch fields or advance in their chosen fields [Participant B, C, D]. Participant S proudly shared that he earns way more now working with the Iron Workers Union than he had in any of his prior fields. While Participant D was unable to pursue further education in her field of accounting, she was able to switch industries, finding more secure employment and pay in cardiac care monitoring. In fact, this security in employment allowed her to purchase her own home and car as a single parent.

Finally, the only career path that strays a bit from my initial hypothesis of upward economic trajectory is Participant K. Due to ailments, she receives disability benefits and relies on her partner's income for support. Still, before her illnesses rendered her unable to work, her story also demonstrated upward economic mobility. When she first came to the US, she hoped to pursue nursing. However, she started working at KFC to support herself and help family members who had taken her in. Eventually, she was able to earn more doing healthcare and dietary work, despite not being able to pursue nursing. While she and other participants were not able to fully actualize their educational and occupational goals in the US, they all demonstrate upward economic mobility over time, overcoming any initial downward assimilation experienced upon first arrival.

Immigration Goals

A question I aimed to uncover during these interviews were immigrant's goals in moving to the US. I anticipated West-Indian immigrants to be motivated by further economic opportunities in the US as well as family reunification. I found both reasons consistently upheld in participants' stories. Each participant reported immigrating (or their parents immigrating) for better educational and employment opportunities in the US. Most also reported family reunification as a driving factor in relocating either to the US or CT. For example, Participant P immigrated to New York to further pursue pharmacy education and reunite with family members. Participant S originally started in Florida for a farming-work opportunity but went to New York and eventually Connecticut to live with family. Participant K lived with a family member in Connecticut to adjust to the US upon arrival. Few participants reported having definite employment positions prior to arriving in the US (Participant S had a farm work position while Participants T and P had admission to enroll as full-time students in universities).

While most participants have been able to actualize their goals, some unfortunately have not been able to fulfill their long-term educational and career goals, but seek a better future for their children. For example, Participant K reported having a rough life. She was able to immigrate through her husband in the 1990s and hoped to pursue further education in the US after only completing the 9th grade in Jamaica. She reported, *"I didn't go back to school, because when I came here, I had to stay with my cousin. When I stayed with my cousin, then, I have [sic] to go and look work so I could have money for myself and to help him also... that's why I couldn't go back to school or do anything. My first job here in Hartford, I worked at KFC. I worked there for 2 years, and then I leave [sic] and went onto dietary work. I worked there for 14 years."* She noted that having to live with someone and adjust to the US was difficult. She felt

pressure to support the family member who had taken her in. Due to that pressure and difficult adjustment period, she was unable to fulfill her goals and pursue higher education. Eventually, health problems led to her having to leave her dietary work. She is now surviving on disability support from the government and her husband who works in the trucking industry. Instead of fulfilling her aspirations, she focused on her children's future. As will be discussed below, her son has become the nurse she had dreamt to be.

Participant D also had a similar struggle pursuing further education in the US, but her obstacle had less to do with the pressure of aiding a family member and more to do with racist experiences in the US. Like Participant K, Participant D immigrated through a family member. She and her sister were able to get their immigration papers through their brother in the 1990s. First, she started in CT working part-time in a clothing company, eventually working for a mailing company. She decided to move to Georgia but came back to CT due to blatant discrimination she experienced there. She worked in various low to mid-level positions at mortgage and insurance companies, being laid off three times. Tired and burnt out from job instability, she went back to school. She had completed the equivalence of an Associate's degree in Jamaica in accounting. She enrolled in Briarwood College (now Lincoln College of New England) to complete a Bachelors in Accounting. Instead, she experienced racism related to grading, remarking: *"I know I got a high mark on the paper and the teacher - I think I was the only Black [sic] in the class – downgraded my grade and give [sic] my grade to someone else. I said to the girl that she gave it to, 'why did she do this?' The girl even said to me that she knows she didn't pass it, and she doesn't know [why] and I'm like 'okay, that's fine.' I said to myself I don't have to stay here, go through this discrimination and waste my money."* Unfortunately, like

Participant K, Participant D was never able to complete her bachelor's degree in the US, having been deterred by the racism and discrimination she had experienced in that class.

She also talked about the difficulty of changing fields and finding a suitable position in healthcare. Having completed further medical billing and coding courses, she noted she was unable to find a position due to lack of experience: *"I got laid off, and the company [said they] would pay for you to go back to school, and so I said okay. I went and did medical billing and coding and at the same time after I finished, I couldn't get a job. Everywhere they're telling you, you need 5-6 years' experience, and I'm like okay, I don't have the experience and in order for me to get an experience is for you to give me a chance to get the experience. I couldn't get a job in it. They refused to give me a job in it to get the experience, so I moved on. Right now, I'm doing cardiac care monitoring, which I'm going to do a course in it later on. It's something that I really love, it's in the health field."* Like many others first starting out in a particular field, she highlighted the Catch-22 of needing experience to get a job, but having no employer willing to give a newcomer a chance. Participant D also focused on ensuring her son would have more opportunities than she had. She hopes to return to Jamaica after her son finishes college; he is currently working with special-needs children and hopes to become a graphic designer one day.

Still, some participants were able to actualize their educational goals in migrating. Participants P and T successfully pursued and completed professional degrees in the US. Beginning with Participant P, she finished her bachelor's in pharmacy in the 1980s, noting *"Because I completed 3 years of college in Jamaica, I only had to do 3 years of a 5-year program here in order to get my bachelor's. I really crammed and did it in 2.5 years because I just wanted to get it done and support my family."* Realizing the requirements to be competitive in her field had become more rigorous, she went on to complete a Doctorate in Pharmacy in

2005. Still, despite her educational success, she noted significant barriers. She reported facing what she discerned to be racial discrimination both in her everyday life and on the job market when she first moved to Connecticut *“I think in terms of [racism/discrimination], one of my notable experiences, when I was doing my internship in Queens - part of my pharmacy school program - if I recall correctly, was 6 weeks in a retail pharmacy, 6 weeks in a hospital setting, 6 weeks in an out-patient center. When I did my 6 weeks in the retail pharmacy in Queens, I was shopping at another store in the plaza and they [employees] bypassed me, [and] verbally refused to serve me. They served everyone else. Another gentleman said, ‘she was here before me, why didn’t you take her order?’ That’s when they served me begrudgingly. I think that was my first experience of blatant racism. When I moved to CT, there was a shortage of pharmacists at the time, but I could not find a job. I thought color played a role, seeing how corporate America works. I did eventually find a job in a pharmacy and I worked there for a couple years, then I had my second child.”* Despite these experiences, she ultimately achieved her initial goals in immigrating to the US: completing her education in pharmacy and having a successful career in that field.

Participant T can also be viewed as another success story despite initial struggles relating to visa constraints. She immigrated to pursue her Masters in Biology, which she successfully completed in the mid-2000s. When asked about her husband’s and her goals in immigrating, she noted, *“for the most part, we do feel that we’ve met them, specifically to get that master’s degree and then an advanced degree/terminal degree. We’ve done that. We wanted our children to be educated here, in the US, particularly in the Adventist system and we were able to get that done. Those two goals have been met. We were also able to purchase our own home here, so we’ve met those goals, but I do think that professionally, I don’t think I’ve kind of realized the kind of*

upward mobility I had hoped for when I first came. Again, it might be due to the fact that close to 10 years, we were kind of bound to the same employer, but that kind of put a damper on it, and then we stayed true. We're getting older, and [we have] that sense of it's safer to stick with what you know rather than venturing out. At 56, it probably might not be as easy to get into a new environment, so you have to think about that too, you have to think about your retirement. Those kinds of issues are coming up. That's the kind of thing that causes us the most anxiety in that we would not have contributed to things like Social Security or even our own retirement plan for long enough to have the kind of retirement we would like to have. That is probably our biggest source of anxiety, just catching up. Because, most other people enter the workforce at 25. We were getting in at 45, so that causes us a little concern. For the most part, we feel like we've kind of achieved those goals." Despite achieving their advanced degrees and initially being able to work through the H-1B Visa, she noted the lack of job mobility as a main stressor and hindrance. The H-1B Visa only allowed Participant T and her husband to work with one employer and no other. She stayed with her initial employer for six years, losing out on opportunities to move up in her field and gain a more competitive salary.

Uniquely, Participant T's narrative strongly emphasized the role community played in her migration journey, experiencing both support and neglect within her Hartford West Indian circle. She also noted feeling a tremendous sense of loyalty towards her employer for taking her on through the H-1B visa in the first place. She was also tied through religion; the school she worked at was ran by the church she and her family attended next door. Even after the employers had graciously filed for her husband and herself to gain their green cards so that they would no longer be legally bound to that organization, she still felt immense loyalty, struggling to branch out elsewhere. The lack of saving for retirement coupled with the skyrocketing costs of her

children's education - which is discussed in a later section - also handicapped the couple's financial goals. However, she recognizes how fortunate she was to have had her opportunity to legally work in the US and have her employer sponsor her visa and green card. Overall, she feels she has been able to meet the goals she had in mind when she initially immigrated.

Other participant's stories are not as clear cut as the two negative and two positive stories highlighted above. Some, like Participant C, had more mixed results when it comes to the fulfillment of their goals after immigrating: "*Yea, one of my goals was to definitely work and get a home for myself. My main goal, my first goal, was to really go back to school for fashion, in the fashion industry. That was my main goal, but it didn't happen. So, after I realized that I am not going to do that anymore I decide [sic] that, you know, go to school, get something so I could work, and so I went and did the CNA [Certified Nursing Assistant] course, and I worked, and during that job was when I got my house [sic]. Then after, I just figured that I'm getting older, so I want to get out of CNA, so I decided to do phlebotomy.*" As a dedicated sewer all her life, even having a solo practice in Jamaica, she had wanted to further her craft by attending the Fashion Institute of New York. However, life got in the way. She immigrated to join her soon to be husband in CT and had her first child soon after. She like many other working moms, prioritized raising her children over pursuing her own dreams. Yet, she met her other goals of buying a home and still sews on the side for extra income.

Participant B also reported mixed fulfillment of her goals: "*You know the only thing I would want going in America, [sic] maybe I would like to buy a house in case I could help my kids come up here. I don't think I'd want to go further or [maybe do] CNA.*" She noted she's still working towards her main goals of buying a house and filing for her children in Jamaica to come

to the US. After a lengthy immigration process that began in 2008, she is finally able to work towards these goals.

Participant P also felt that he accomplished most of his goals. He had not planned on staying and creating a life in the US outside of the initial seasonal farm work her came to do in Florida. However, he feels that he has been able to accomplish his goals, *“But it so happen,[sic] that, after I give it some thoughts, [sic] I think I would be better able to do more for my kids and my family in general [sic]. You know, I was able to purchase a home, where if I was in Jamaica, I probably wouldn’t have purchased a home, I probably would have built a home, but my goal was to make sure that all of my kids are taken care of, educational wise and you see that they’re on the right path.”* All his older children graduated from college and his youngest child is currently finishing her bachelor’s.

The last three participants had little say in their first migration journeys. Participant J was only eight years old when her family decided to migrate from Jamaica to the UK as part of the Windrush generation. She described, *“The Windrush was a ship that transported people from the Caribbean to the UK after the Second World War. Hitler bombed Britain back into the stone ages, so after the Second World War, West Indian people were asked to come to Britain to help rebuild Britain. You had the first wave, second wave, third wave that kept coming in to build Britain. My dad’s brothers were the first ones to come to the UK, and later down the line my dad came in the sixties, and so my dad came first with the intention of bringing my mom. I was already born in Jamaica at the time and so was my sister and brother...my mom came later on [with me and my siblings].”* Still, as an adult, she had the power to decide where she would live, and after much convincing, she chose to follow her husband [now ex] to the US. As a prominent hair stylist working under the likes of celebrity stylists like Derek “De-Clutter” Clement in the

UK, she noted the difficulties of transitioning to and building her clientele in the US. She also noted the vast differences between racism in the US and UK that affected her in the workplace that are discussed in the Racism section below. However, she was able to overcome these hurdles, eventually managing her own salon. She also raised her son to have a strong sense of self and pride in his African-Caribbean history.

Finally, Participants Y and M were both babies when their families decided to immigrate. Participant Y's parents had immigrated to Canada first, where she was born, before moving to the US so her father could pursue a better job opportunity. She noted their main goals in immigrating were to have upward economic mobility and to ensure the best education possible for their children. In regard to both of these aspects, they certainly succeeded. Participant Y attended a prestigious CT boarding school, college, and eventually a top law school. She is now among the few Black women serving as managing partner of a prominent law firm in downtown Hartford. Her older brothers also attended college and are now in successful careers.

Participant M's mother also immigrated with similar goals in mind. He noted, "*My mother was motivated to migrate, I think in large part due to poverty and lack of opportunity in Jamaica and the dream of a better life, access to education for her children. So, my mother and I came in 1990.*" He was two years old at the time. They settled in Bridgeport, CT with his maternal aunt. His mother worked as a babysitter and CNA for 25 years to make ends meet. Ultimately, her goals were fulfilled. Her son went onto graduate from college, earning two Master's and a Doctorate along the way. He now pastors a church in Hartford. Like Participant Y and M's parents, other participants like C, D, and K all transferred their own educational aspirations onto their children when they could not attain their goal of finishing school themselves.

With the exceptions of Participants D and K, all other participants were able to either partially or fully actualize their goals in immigrating to the US. Participants B and C reported partially fulfilling their goals, noting they are still actively working towards them. The rest of the participants were able to pursue further educational and/or occupational opportunities in the US, bettering their economic situation. These findings help support my theory of upward economic mobility among CT West Indian immigrants.

Immigration Experience

As for migration patterns, most participants immigrated through their families (most often spouses). Participants Y and M immigrated as babies, gaining citizenship through their parents. Participant J immigrated to the US to be with her husband at the time. However, others reported some troubles in gaining proper status through family. Participant S had an interesting migration journey due to starting in seasonal farm work in Florida. As mentioned, he had no intentions on permanently staying in the US, but eventually followed family members to Connecticut. He describes, *“I come to America [sic] and did not go back to Jamaica, and I have to get myself situated so I could be a free person, move around, and do what I want to do without having to be worrying about anything. And so, I went to Baltimore to this immigration place. I heard they were doing some amnesty thing down there. I went there and, I actually got through [partially], but didn’t get through all the way. I got through to a certain point, and then after I move [sic] to CT and I got to immigration [Field Office] they say [sic] I have to go back to Baltimore to do all the paperwork and all that stuff. Afterwards I realized it was a backdoor deal [in Baltimore]. So, I could not go back there; if I go [sic] back down there it would have been a disaster and so, I decided to get married. I got married, and I got my papers, and I got my citizenship. That was years ago, back in the 90s.”* Participant B also got her citizenship through

her partner. She had originally come to the US visiting family and married her husband in 2009, a year after immigrating. She details, *“it [the citizenship process] take [sic] so long. Was 2 years, my husband had to file, and I had to file about three different times before I could get it. The lawyers and everyone messed it up.”* Participant K who also received her citizenship through her husband described the difficult process: *“It [immigration process] was really long and costly, and it wasn’t simple at all. It was a hard fight. It was a fight for me to come here because when he was here and working, they [Immigration Field Office] didn’t want to send anything for him. He had to fight them to send the papers. It dragged out for 3-4 years. It wasn’t easy at all.”*

Others reported less of a hassle in their migrant journeys. Participant C came originally to visit family but ended up overstaying her visa in the 80s. Eventually she was able to get her green card and noted that the immigration process, *“wasn’t lengthy. I mean I waited a while before I really went through [it]. It really wasn’t lengthy when I started. It was okay, did what I have to do.”* Participant D had a simple experience as well, immigrating with her sisters through their older brother who had filed for them. She remembered, *“One of my older brothers had migrated here back in the early 70s, and I guess he wanted us to see what life was like in a different country, so he filed for us and we came here as legal immigrants and right now we’re here as citizens. He never said why, but I think he wanted us to see what life is like in a different country. This racism and stuff like that we didn’t have to deal with in Jamaica.”*

Finally, Participants P and T both immigrated to pursue higher education. However, Participant P actually immigrated in 1980 through her father filing for her instead of on a student visa. She went onto finish her bachelor’s in pharmacy, eventually completing a Doctorate degree. Participant T and her husband came on student visas, eventually receiving the H-1B visa, simultaneously opening and limiting their employment trajectory. Her whole family now has

their green cards and will be eligible for citizenship. She noted how their immigration status negatively impacted her family, *“While we were here, we were on those work visas – [while] we could travel - we didn’t do a lot of traveling because of the hassle that would come with it. Travel with the kind of work visas we were on would mean that we would have to go to the local embassy back home to get visa permission to go back and forth. Now, there was no guarantee that going into that would work the way you envisioned it to work. The embassy could revoke the visa you were on. So, for all kinds of reasons, we didn’t do a lot of traveling.”* She also noted how her family’s immigrant status hindered her children’s opportunities and activities which I discuss in a later section.

Most immigrants reported relatively easy/straightforward migrant journeys and paths to citizenship through their families. Such relative ease of immigration may have aided this group’s transition and further success in the US. A particularly interesting case here was Participant T and her family’s journey. She was the only participant not to have immigrated through her family, instead immigrating on a student visa and finding work through a H1-B Visa. Though she was grateful for her employers sponsoring her citizenship, she noted the lack of mobility in being tied to one employer. However, she did not note any other hindrances when she first immigrated to the US. West Indians benefit from a long-standing network of other West Indians, including family members, both in the US in general and in CT in particular. These familial networks allow for more ease of migration, allowing for migrants to focus on bettering their economic prospects.

Inter-racial Discrimination

To study participants’ educational and economic paths, it is important to note the role of racism and discrimination in potentially hindering their ability to pursue further opportunities.

Though many participants noted some form of discrimination, ultimately, they were able to overcome said discrimination to successfully pursue their economic goals. Participants had varying experiences with racism and discrimination. Only two, Participants B and C, reported never having experienced any racist and discriminatory instances. However, most reported dealing with typical White racism. As delineated above, racist and unfair grading practices caused Participant D to leave the college she was attending, effectively tarnishing her dream to become an accountant. She had also moved to Georgia for a while before coming back to Connecticut and noted the more overt racism she experienced there. However, she faced other racist experiences in Connecticut, explaining, *“I had a part time job along with the job at this oil company...I used to sit beside this gentleman, he’s White, from an Italian background I think, and he said something to me...I don’t quite remember, but, I remember my answer to him: ‘let me tell you something, I did not stow away and come here on a banana boat, I did not come here illegally. The same rights you have in this country are the same rights I have in this country.’ He was very prejudice [sic]. I just tell [sic] him that. He came back to me the next morning and he said, ‘I went home and told my daughter, and she said I should have never said that to you because my parents are immigrants too.’ And I’m like ‘okay...’ I try not to pay them any mind, because to me, we are all one person. God never - as a Christian I cannot be like them; I have to try to be above them and do my best.”* Particularly interesting in her experience among her colleague is how her intersecting identity of race and immigrant status were initially negatively perceived by a White immigrant.

Participant S also reported experiencing prejudice in the workplace, albeit coming from his own employers. He observed, *“well there are times, when there are things to be done...they usually give it to the White guy even though I am more qualified than the person most of the time.*

But I am known to call them out on it though, you know... It's good, but it's good, but it doesn't make me their favorite person." Despite being outspoken, he never reported feeling any direct retaliation for speaking up during those incidents but noticing more covert actions. Participant P as described above reported racist experiences both in the workplace and her everyday life as did Participant M. Despite his profile as a pastor, Participant M noted being racially profiled, *"I went to college in Alabama [and] certainly saw discrimination... racial/ethnic discrimination living through the election and presidency of Barack Obama, I saw significant racial tension. I felt almost as though America had taken a step forward, and then taken several backwards in terms of race relations. It was almost like more licensing since now a Black man was the president, people felt liberated to speak racist and prejudiced statements that they would not have otherwise spoken, but they felt comfortable because America had done something good, so now she feels like she could do something bad. Personally, I feel like I've been discriminated by police. Pastoring in New York, I felt like I was targeted, pulled over quite frequently, dealt with quite harshly, and not vindicated in court even when - of course these are traffic infractions, not necessarily anything criminal, but just not feeling heard."* During a time in which Black Americans celebrated this huge leap forward in becoming a more racially unified society, some Black Americans were feeling the effects of a threatened White supremacist underclass as highlighted in this Hartford pastor's narrative.

Participant J had a particularly interesting perspective due to her varying experiences with racism and discrimination both in the UK and US. *"The UK is very different. Honestly, wherever you find a Black-White dynamic there's always going to be racism. Racism exists everywhere. However, in the UK we had what we called color as in class; color prejudice [is] more prevalent as you had color, skin prejudice. Britain is more of a class-conscious society, so*

you will find black, white, pink, blue, purple live[sic] together, wealthy black, white, blue people live together -- my best friend was a White girl, we went to each other's houses. Her sister was like my big sister; nobody could pick on me at school because Tracy would beat them up, but I experienced racism even from my very best friend believe it or not. One day, we were walking home from school and she used the N-word, and that ended the friendship. We had a next-door neighbor, her children lived in our house pretty much and she was an Irish woman. There were kids across the street who were Polish; they were Holocaust survivors. Britain doesn't have a predominantly Black and predominantly White community. It was a mixed community - Indian, Asian - I went to school with everybody, Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, Jews - we went to school with everybody. It was a different understanding in England. When you went to the salons in England... you're gonna [sic] find Black and White people working the same job. You could walk into a White salon as a Black woman and get your hair done, and a White woman could walk into a Black salon and get their hair done. So that's just how it was." Despite Britain's more class-conscious society, underlying anti-Blackness still permeated her experiences, with her friend using a racial slur in her presence. However, she describes Britain as being less racially segregated than here in the US.

As for race relations in the US, she reflected, "very different, I found America makes you know that you're Black. Because I couldn't understand when they say 'oh this is the Black- this is the first Black [i.e., President, awardee, etc.]. There's so much emphasis on color in America. It really was a little difficult for me to get over. When I first moved here, I worked in a White-owned salon called Penthouse...I went there, and I was fresh from the UK, and what I saw was two Italian guys who ran the shop. They had a mix of customers, and what was interesting was the back of the salon actually overlooked Main Street in downtown Hartford. The Black folks

that worked there thought they worked in the front of the salon, and I would let them know the front of the salon is their reception area. When you walked through that salon, there was never a Black face in the front, they were always in the back, so I questioned it. I had a problem with it, and they didn't like that I questioned it. I said, 'I'm sorry, but I'm not used to working like that.' But anyways, things changed, and I came up front, and they were shocked because when I moved up front my clientele changed. I had a mixture of Black and White clientele. But prior to that, I experienced racism with them. I called it out, and they didn't know what to do and said the people liked to work in the back. I called it out and said 'well I'm used to working on stage. I am used to being watched,' and I moved up front. Before you know it, I had a mixture of clientele and then they were shocked. They saw they could make more money because I worked for commission at the time. That was my first experience of feeling that craziness in America. It never hindered me though because coming from a West Indian-British background, we were raised with a certain sense of dignity and pride. In the UK, Black people didn't take that foolishness. We didn't take that nonsense. You couldn't tell us we couldn't go nowhere [sic]. That didn't exist in our thinking. We go wherever we please, wherever we want, and no one tells us anything. There wasn't any of that stay in your place kind of stuff. I think that's really prevalent with Caribbean people as a whole and then coming out of the UK, honestly my experience of growing up in the UK, when I listen to my brothers and sisters here in America, West Indian people, that experience a different dynamic when they came [sic] here from the Caribbean in how they were treated by their own people of the same hue, they were treated differently. Me growing up in the UK, it's interesting. If you weren't West Indian, Jamaican...you got beaten up. That was a different dynamic. Everyone was a Jamaican in the UK. The Indian man was Jamaican, the White man was Jamaican, the African man was

Jamaican. To go to the UK today, in the subculture, there is a Jamaican influence. Even in the way the young people speak, you will hear it within the culture. That's the era in which I grew up in. I came here with a difference sense of pride. You couldn't tell me I wasn't supposed to go - that doesn't exist." Her experiences growing up in a pro-West Indian and pro-Jamaican environment empowered her to stand up for herself when experiencing blatant American racism. Such an environment fostered a sense of pride in herself and ability that she took with her to the US. When faced with blatant and overt American racism as opposed to British subtle racism, that confidence instilled in her through her UK Black West Indian community prepared her to stand up for herself and others. She also highlights the strong influence and positive cultural reputation and respect West Indians in the UK held and received from their peers.

Finally, as for Participant Y, she discussed her parents silence on the issue of: *"They didn't really talk about that. I think it's more generational, not to say it didn't happen or didn't exist. Their generation was more of the viewpoint 'we're happy to be here and have opportunities and we're just gonna [sic] work.' And I think, I feel like because - I mean it's just my own opinion - because they actually weren't here for the whole Civil Rights and all of that stuff that Black Americans actually lived through or went through, I think it was one step removed almost, you know what I mean. I think because of that they knew that coming in, they and many other Jamaicans still knowing all that went on, thought that it was a better life opportunity for family, so they came, but I felt they didn't complain about it the way we do now, you know what I mean?"* For her immigrant identity's effect on her educational and work experiences, she noted, *"I think it impacts it in the sense...I feel that a lot of my motivation and being self-driven comes from that Jamaican background. I think you just see it and live it so you kind of know how to do it. You kind of just put your head down. I'm not saying I don't complain*

or things like that, but I feel like in most instances I feel like things are more opportunities or blessings than things to complain about. I think even within your own family, you know that I was getting opportunities that so many of my cousins didn't have whether in Jamaica or America. So, you just kind of, even if it was hard or it wasn't the ideal situation or ideal campus or ideal whatever, you kind of just did what you needed to do which was your school work and hopefully figure out how to have fun around it in spite of your parents, right. Try and do all you can in school, do it well so maybe, possibly you could kind of have some freedom." She had internalized that cultural and generational attitude of just putting your head down and getting to work, recognizing the multitude of opportunities she had being educated in the best schools in the US as compared to her family in the West Indies. Her narrative also details a slightly darker side of West Indian emphasis on overachieving: children feeling unhappy and isolated from their American peers due to extreme parental expectations.

Intra-racial Discrimination

Patterns of racism and discrimination that differed from what I expected to find included within-group discrimination. Many participants noted unwelcoming and even discriminatory experiences from people within their own racial group. Participant T reported feeling isolated from her own community at her job. She explained, *"Not racism in the classical sense of the word, like Black-White issues because the job I got was with fellow West Indians. The organization was pretty much a minority organization, mainly West Indian Blacks, West Indian immigrants. I did however, feel, a certain sense of isolation I would say. I wouldn't say discrimination, not in the traditional sense, but I did get a sense of 'Oh you must not know exactly how to do this thing or how to fit in because you're new.'* So that sense of people kind of keeping you at arm's length, not sharing enough information I would say." She went onto

explain how her family and community left her to figure out how to transition on her own. From the weather to fitting in as a teacher at the school she taught, she was left to fend for herself. She also felt that her strong work ethic was a point of tension for her colleagues: *“Some other colleagues probably felt like you were probably trying to outdo them, which was not the case, you were just trying to do your job the way you know how to do it to the best of your ability. I think that that kind of, doing something that came naturally to me was a source of angst with my colleagues.”* Besides these isolating experiences, she did not report racist or discriminatory experiences with other groups.

Participant K also reported also similar intra-racial experiences. When asked about racist/discriminatory experiences, she delineated, *“Especially where I used to work... other Blacks [African Americans] would say we come here in this country and we take their jobs from them...we are doing their job and they don't have jobs to do. Yeah, I heard it, I heard them talk about it. 'Oh, you guys working money and think you're better than us' and stuff like that... they [African Americans] keep telling us we came her and take [sic] their jobs. I worked hard to reach where I am today. My kid's father worked hard to be where he is today. He too took a lot of talking about we come here and take their jobs, and we should go back to our country, but they don't want to work. They just sit. I've heard it, they've told me that.”* Her story demonstrates underlying tensions within the Black community that often is often overlooked.

Overall, most participants, with the exception of Participants B and C had experienced negative racist and/or discriminatory experiences. While most stories of racism/discrimination stemmed from typical White racism, two participants had divergent experiences of discrimination from within their own racial/ethnic groups. This highlights an understudied issue of additional, intra-racial discrimination West Indian immigrants might have to contend with in

addition to navigating typical White racism and the burden of adjusting to a new country. Also, participant stories of being denied service in public (Participant P) or being racially profiled by police (Participant M) highlights that West Indians at first glance are labeled as African Americans and subject to White racism. However, despite these prevalent racist/discriminatory experiences, for the most part, participants were not hindered in pursuing their economic/educational goals.

Privileges & Advantages

Just as discussing racist or discriminatory experiences is important in ascertaining Afro-Caribbean immigrant success, so is discussing certain privileges or advantages they may have experienced. Here, I hoped to ascertain whether participants felt they had been awarded certain advantages over other racial/ethnic groups that may have eased their path to upward economic mobility. While some felt they had no privilege over other groups, others acknowledged the privilege they had in being able to legally immigrate to the US. When asked about privileges, Participant C responded, *“I wouldn’t say that. I wouldn’t say that. I believe you work for what you want.”* Participants S and K both echoed her sentiments, feeling they had no special privileges over others and had worked hard to get to where they are in life. Upholding the other responses, Participant P reflected, *“I don’t know [that] I have advantages as an immigrant, I think immigrants are more hungry because they are coming from a background where they don’t have as much. They don’t have that sense of entitlement. They are willing to work harder to achieve what they want. This is a generalization, but in general I think that Americans are not as motivated to work hard and pursue higher goals.”* Participant M also observed, *“Privileged no, I think I see the strengths of my culture, but privileged, no. I think my culture values education and so I had the benefit of being from a culture that places some regard on education. But no, I don’t*

think I had any special privileges or opportunities because of my ethnicity.” They all emphasized the hard work their families and culture instilled in them, which allowed for their success.

However, others noted privileges due to their legal immigration status. Participant D remarked: *“yes in a way because people who came here undocumented, there’s certain things they can’t do. I am glad that I did not come that way. I came here as a legal immigrant. Those that are undocumented, a lot of stuff goes on that people are not talking about, and they try to discriminate against Black on a whole, and I don’t think that is right, because to me it’s the same blood that flows through everyone’s vein, you don’t have a different color blood, but these people in America are mean and selfish.”* Participant T echoed her sentiments: *“Well, I do think we had a big advantage in the mere fact that you could work legally is a very big advantage in a place where there’s many immigrants, most of whom would not have legal status, so we did have a big advantage in that regard. We feel that we owed it to our employers to be good workers and I felt that we did that too, so yes there were advantages as I’ve already outlined. We felt kind of limited in exploring other opportunities.”* Despite feeling the H-1B Visa limited both her and her husband’s employment options and earning abilities, she acknowledged the immense advantage her family had over others in having legal immigrant status. Still, like the participants above, Participants T and D also emphasized how their culture of hard work aided in their successes.

Again, Participant J had a unique perspective on feeling advantaged due to her experiences in the UK and US. She reflected, *“You know it’s so interesting because we have this conversation amongst ourselves all the time-friends who were raised in the UK. There’s a lot of UK-raised people in Hartford... I wouldn’t say we felt we’re better. I think different circumstances create different mindsets. Coming out of the UK - I’m so glad I was raised in the UK - there was this...we had to fight. There was this sense - people might call it arrogance - but*

it really wasn't arrogance; it was a confidence we had. We had the pride of being West Indian people. In England, Black people - no matter where they come from - we all saw ourselves as one, so we moved as one. The only difference was us and African people - we didn't embrace each other. Today they do, but in my time, they weren't as embraced. But people from other [Caribbean] islands in the UK - we were all one it didn't matter where you came from. There was a sense of pride. Now why I think Caribbean people in my opinion may seem to excel more than African American brothers and sisters in some instances, I think it's because the fact we were raised in an environment where we saw people of color in high positions. There was no limit to you being a doctor, lawyer, politicians, scientists or whatever because that's all you saw growing up in the Caribbean - Black people in positions. Discrimination didn't come because of color - it came because of class. So, you knew you could grow up to be a doctor, a lawyer, a businessman, anything you want to be. Here, there is that level of racism that keeps you down because of the color of your skin, so it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy where you're constantly being told and there's an image being shown to you that all you are is a criminal- systematic remote-control programming of our people." Interestingly, this sense of pride fostered having been raised in pro-Black and Pro-Caribbean environments in both the West Indies and the UK allowed for Participant J and other UK West Indian immigrants to feel comfortable and supported in dreaming big and pursuing such dreams. Unfortunately for African Americans living in a dominantly White and systemically racist society, they are overly bombarded with negative images and stereotypes that may limit their confidence and ability to dream big, staying stuck in a cycle of self-fulfilling prophecies alluded to by Participant J.

It is particularly illuminating to highlight the varied opinions participants had on whether they felt they had certain privileges and/or advantages over others. Interesting to note, Participant

C who detailed never having experienced anything racist or discriminatory also felt that she had no particular advantages over others either. Generally, most participants had some underlying gratitude towards African American's paving the way for West Indian and other immigrants of African descent to have opportunities in the US. Still, most emphasized that their hard work, and more importantly, their culture's emphasis on hard work, had the most impact on their educational and occupational outcomes. Few participants like D and T recognized their privilege in immigrating to the US legally. Participant T who faced struggles due to visa constraints was still able to reflect on and be grateful for having a legal path to migrate to the US in the first place. Participant P also specifically acknowledged how the African American movement for Civil Rights paved the way for Black immigrants to have opportunities in this country.

While participants were split on their feelings of being privileged due to race/ethnicity or migrant status, it is clear that West Indian immigrants have certain benefits over other groups. Like Participants D and T note, participants' ability to legally immigrate is certainly a privilege over those who cannot [all participants in this study were able to legally immigrate to the US]. Legal immigration opens the door for further employment opportunities and ease of living in general. Participant P and J both touched on interesting takes on race and racism. Participant P highlighted how African American struggle for the advancement of Black people particularly and all racial/ethnic groups as a whole directly benefits Black immigrant groups like West Indians. Participant J touched on a salient point of self-esteem and mindset that Black children who are raised in predominantly Black nations can build. That sense of confidence may aid West Indians in pursuing their dreams and goals of upward economic mobility. One benefit none of the participants touched on was immigrating from predominantly English-speaking nations, which certainly allowed for an ease of transition to the US. These benefits and privileges all

certainly aid West Indian immigrants in bolstering their economic prospects, overcoming any initial downward assimilation.

Values & Differences

Pairing with the privilege question, a number of participants spoke on differences in values in the US versus in the Caribbean and noted these cultural differences, in part, led to their success. Most participants highlighted the value of hard-work and a culture of discipline and obedience toward elders in the West Indies. They also heavily emphasized the importance of school and education. That emphasis of discipline and schooling may have enabled this group's success and upward economic trajectory. For example, Participant C observed, *"It's [culturally/morally] way different. In Jamaica parents have more control over children than in the US. And even though sometimes you think back, and you say the parents were abusing you and stuff, I give thanks for that abuse compared to what I see in America. Parents don't have much talk towards [control over] their kids. Back home, parents have more control."* She believes that level of control instilled better character in children. Participant Y's parents also held similar values. She described, *"Definitely hard work and 100% education [were my parent's main values], that's all they really cared about was education. [My siblings and my] joke was, we used to say they didn't really care about if we were happy. I think that's Caribbean parents, they don't. They care about studying. We were studying in the summer at a time when people weren't studying in the summer. I know you all study in the summer now, but when we were growing up, people did not study in the summertime, you know, no. That kind of stuff. That was like- I think there's a misperception that Americans or even the world has about Jamaicans because so many people see Jamaica as just a vacation spot or 'yeah man' or the party island or whatever, but I think people don't understand...They put so much focus on education back when*

my parents were growing up, and that was everybody, and it was very strict and very no nonsense. I think they definitely carried that over, not just my parents, but every person in my family, every person that's in my parents age group." Unlike popular stereotypes of the West Indies being party destination islands, Participant Y particularly highlights the strict culture many West Indians are raised in. It is one that values obedience/deference to elders and excelling in school overall.

Staying on the theme of education, Participant P reflected on the different attitudes that are valued in students in school in the West Indies versus in the US. *"I remember in elementary school my headmaster had a cane, and if anyone got out of line, he would use it. If folks were out of line, corporal punishment was swift. But here, you're taught to be more of an independent thinker. Most people raised in American system are better oral communicators. Even Jamaicans who are very highly educated, they have very poor communication skills because that wasn't as emphasized in school."* Again, Participant P highlights how West Indian culture's value on obedience may negatively impact West Indian immigrants in the job market in the US. However, West Indian's values of hard work and never complaining Participant Y alludes to helps overcome this cultural difference.

Overall, participants highlighted the West Indian values of schooling and discipline as factors in their educational and economic successes in the US. Emphasis placed on obedience and respecting elders in the Caribbean may have aided this group's integration into American society. West Indian immigrants can relate to the American ethos of working hard to achieve one's dreams. They might buy into this ideal so much so that it may even be considered a bit obsessive, as Participant Y indicated. Such no-nonsense culture allows West Indian immigrants to just "put their heads down" and work, leading to upward economic mobility and success.

Children's Opportunities

Fitting my hypothesis, most participants demonstrate upward economic trajectory over time. Still, their level of fulfillment within their occupations and achieving their goals in immigrating to the US varied. However, discussing the opportunities their children had demonstrated a common goal all participants had and were able to secure. Many participants hoped for a better future, full of opportunities they were not able to benefit from, for their children. Participant S noted that although he had not initially planned on staying in the US, America provided better opportunities for his children. Participant B noted her children were her primary motivation in moving to the US. She was not particularly worried about her own economic mobility, but bettering that of her children. She is hoping to file for them to come to the US one day.

Other migrants echoed these sentiments, noting that their children did have more opportunities in the US than the West Indies. Participant K reflected, *"They have a lot of opportunities, more than I did. That's why I have to fight so hard for them to have the opportunity. They have the opportunity to do what they want to do...my son - he's a nurse. He's working in Enfield and my daughter is still in college. She's at CCSU... She's a senior."* Participant C also felt that her children had more opportunities in the US, *"My daughter is a social worker. She works in the school system and my son he does building, Sheetrocking and all of that."* Participant P also agreed that her children had more opportunities in the US, *"It's a totally different educational system, but I think they certainly had more opportunities than I would have.... Lots of people in Jamaica, they did high school and then they learned the job. That's how they qualified themselves. Very few went to university...In terms of the kids having more opportunity, they did, my two oldest went to Kingwood Oxford. My younger went to*

University High Science and Engineering.” Her children graduated college and some pursued Master’s degrees. Overall, many highlighted better educational and employment opportunities in the US for their children that had attracted them in the first place.

Still, others had more mixed feelings on whether the US provided more opportunities for their children. Participant D noted, *“Well you know, I tried to, I tried to give him as much opportunities as I can. We had limits back home, so I tried to give him as much as I can what I did not achieve. I tried to tell him and to give him as much as I can... he’s still going to school. He’s doing art therapy course, he works with mentally challenge kids, helps the teacher. He’s still going to school, he’s going, he did an art therapy course the other day. He wants to go further into that. But he wants to do graphic designing.”* She did not elaborate further beyond some educational setbacks her son had endured.

Participant T had a unique perspective due to her immigrant status and H-1B visa limitations, *“We [my husband and I] kind of do feel like our children would have been more motivated in school if they had remained in the Caribbean...And then too the pressure of having the kid’s school fees skyrocket, that took up our resources because they were not eligible for student loans or any kind of support that regular college students would benefit from, so we had to finance that ourselves. Our resources took a big hit in that regard.”* She also noted how difficult it was for her children to miss out on activities the typical teen involves themselves with due to their immigrant status: *“So our children were then dependents on our visas. They were able to go to school, but they couldn’t work unlike most kids who, like, let’s say by the time you’re 16 or so you can get a part time job at McDonald’s or someplace like that, they couldn’t. So that kind of negatively impacted their self-esteem, not being able to do things other kids could do like getting driver’s licenses and so on, but they were able to go to college with the H4 visa*

until they were 18. When they turned 18, we had to get them a student visa. When they got the student visa, it created an economic challenge. On the H4, it was just regular fees at the school. But when they switched to student visa because they were now older, they were no longer considered dependents; they now had to go as international students and that meant fees tripled with them being international students. That was another economic impact on their [experience/confidence]. They were able to...one finished college; one didn't finish her first college. She kind of dropped out from that one. She changed her program and went to another school still as an international student and earned her nursing credentials. After earning her nursing credentials, she now was able to get hired...this was now a work visa she was able to get for herself. By the time she finished nursing school, we could no longer file for her in any case because she was now older than 18. One child, we were able to have him [file], when we were filing for the green cards, he was able to do that because of his age, but the older one couldn't so now she had to find a pathway for herself. Doing nursing was actually a good choice because nursing is one of the jobs here that allows you to actually be - hospitals can file for you and the process is not as onerous as someone going from a H-1B to a green card. So, she was able to do that and get her own residence -green card. The younger one was able to get his green card when we were getting ours.” Her children’s immigration status certainly limited their ability to be typical American teens. It also caused the family extra financial stress due to the sudden tripling of college fees once they were deemed international students and no longer dependents. Still, both of her children were able to graduate and attend college eventually with secure jobs in the health field.

Finally, Participant J also had an interesting take on her son’s rearing: *“my son was raised to think like a global child; my son never spent summers in America. My son went to school here,*

but he never stayed here. If you speak to him, he doesn't have a connectedness like that...yes, he's American, but most of his fun time was spent in the UK. I would send him away to summer camp in London. When he was in university, he did a 6-month internship in the UK. He has a lot of roots there. Even after his father and I got divorced, he would travel a lot with his father. My son has been to many different places. He's an international child. I used to tell him to stop living in a bubble, so he has a global way of thinking. As far as opportunities go - I'm like this – yes there's more opportunities in the UK, in US, [versus the] West Indies. [However], I have family members who never left Jamaica but are doing exceptionally well. They've travelled all over the world. I think it's a mentality. It's maybe a bit more accessible here. If you limit yourself, you won't have opportunities. No matter where you live in the world, you can do it. It might be a little more difficult depending on where you live but my son was raised to believe there's nothing in the world you can't achieve if you put your mind to it. That's something my mother in particular instilled in us. We have a motto – 'what the mind achieves the body achieves.'” For this immigrant, location was not a major determining factor of success, and she raised her son with a respect for varying cultures. Success, as she defined it, is a mentality, a drive to preserve no matter the circumstances. This mindset is perfectly fitting for this group of immigrants who passed their inheritance of hard-work and motivation to their American children.

While few participants were not able to fully actualize some dreams and goals they had in immigrating to the US, all demonstrated upward trajectory in their careers and earning potential. Even more telling is the story and successes of their first-generation children, all of whom graduated high school. Most even have gone onto college and pursue professional careers. Participant D's son is pursuing further training and schooling to find a fulfilling career. Besides

bolstering their economic opportunities, all participants with children noted a major goal they had was to ensure opportunities and higher education for their children. In hearing their stories, it is clear that all participants were able to actualize this goal, even if they were not able to realize their educational goals themselves.

Survey Results

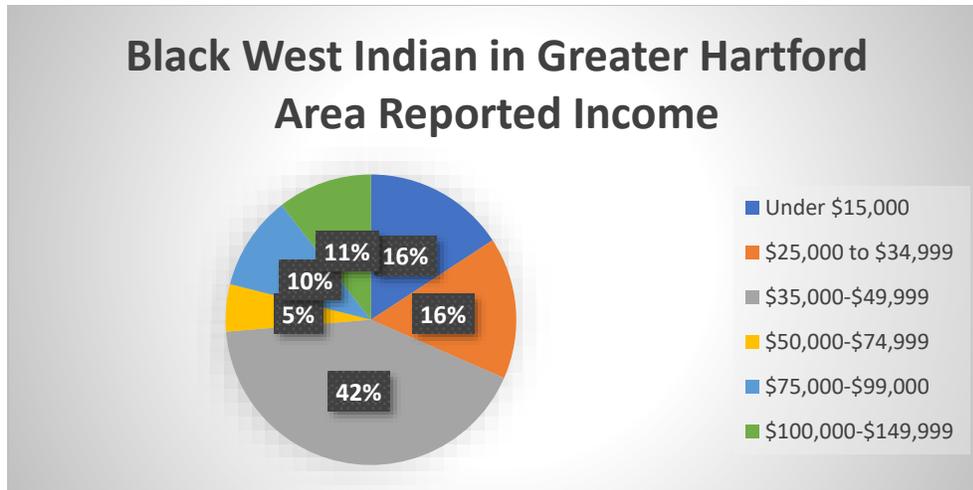
Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, I was unable to meet my research goal of 100 participants. I had 44 responses in total, but only 31 were viable. From those responses, I was able to gather the following data. I conducted a 33-question online Qualtrics survey that ran from June through August. All the participants identified as being over the age of 18, residing in the Greater Hartford Area, and West Indian immigrants of African descent. In the table below, I present information on the decades West Indians surveyed reported immigrating to the US. The vast majority came to the US in during the 1990s-2000s decades.

Decade Immigrated	Total
Before 1980s	2
1980s	6
1990s	9
2000s	9
2010s	2
N/A	3
Total	31

A vast majority, two-thirds (20) had immigrated from Jamaica, two from Trinidad and Tobago, one from Saint Lucia, and one from Guyana [six did not respond]. As for ethnicity, two

thirds identified as Afro-Caribbean, three identified as multiethnic, and one of European descent [four did not respond]. Only six respondents reported earning their high school diploma in the West Indies, two reported completing some college, and a further two completed university degrees. The vast majority had only completed secondary school and some high school. Most pursued further educational opportunities once in the US: five pursued trade certifications, seven finished high school, six completed some college, five earned a bachelor's degree, and one completed a graduate degree, and two did not pursue any further educational opportunities [four did not respond].

As for employment in their home countries, 35% (11) identified as students, two worked in the service industry, two worked in education, two worked in health care, one worked in government, one worked in agriculture, one was self-employed, two were unemployed, and four worked in other fields [four did not respond]. However, six respondents began in the service industry upon arrival in the US, 10 were students, three began in health care, one in information technology, one in agriculture, one was unemployed, and four began in other fields [four did not respond]. However, currently nine respondents work in healthcare, six in the service industry, three are currently students, two work in education, one is self-employed and two are unemployed [one did not respond]. Nearly half of the respondents felt that immigration laws at the time they migrated had no impact on their ability to work, four reported laws had negatively impacted their employment opportunities while only one felt immigration laws positively impacted their ability to work. However, more than half (17) of respondents reported earning more on average now than they had when they first immigrated while only one reported not earning more. See the following chart for a breakdown of the 19 respondent's average yearly income:



In how their immigrant and racial statuses impacted their opportunities, one businessowner reported their immigrant status negatively impacted their ability to start their own business. Half of respondents (15) reported feeling their race had negatively impacted their ability to find employment outcomes while only three reported their race positively impacting their experiences on the job market. More than one-third (11) reported their immigrant status also negatively impacted their ability to find employment while only one reported the opposite. Only five participants reported ever attempting to start their own business [one restaurant, one childcare, one real estate, and two in other areas] in the US.

Behind their motivations for leaving their home country, only two reported poor educational opportunity as a push factor, one-third (11) reported poor labor/employment opportunities as a catalyst, two reported natural disasters, ten reported other non-disclosed reasons, and five failed to respond [two also reported poor healthcare in conjunction with one of the previously mentioned factors]. Most did not respond to why they came to the US specifically. Two were minors and had no choice in immigrating, two immigrated for family reasons, and one immigrated for better employment opportunities and pay. Half (15) immigrated to CT first, five to Florida and four to New York [six declined to respond]. Over half (16) reported specifically

moving to the Hartford area to reunite with family, two moved for economic opportunities, two for a lower cost of living, one for educational opportunity, one for better access to social programs and three for other non-disclosed reasons [five did not respond].

For economic challenges they faced in Hartford, 12 reported racism/colorism negatively affecting employment opportunities, five reported immigration status negatively affecting opportunities, one reported their lack of education/skills as a negative factor in their economic opportunities, and four reported other non-disclosed hindrances [eight declined to respond].

Overall, most respondents [19] felt they had achieved the goals they had set when immigrating to the Greater Hartford Area to some degree while five reported not having met their goals [six did not respond].

DISCUSSION:

The data I gathered from the robust oral histories and limited surveys unveil interesting patterns which help confirm my hypothesis of West Indians in CT overcoming any initial downward assimilation overtime through economic incorporation or assimilation. Professional oral history participants like J, P, and T were able to earn the necessary degrees/certification needed to continue in careers they began in the West Indies/home countries, successfully incorporating into the US. Others, like Participants D, S, and K were able to work their way up in various industries, successfully assimilating into American society. Participants Y and M did not quite fit into my initial hypothesis as they immigrated as babies, thus I cannot compare their occupational journeys in the US to their home countries. However, they are both quite successful in their respective fields. Finally, while Participants B and C's journeys are less clear, Participant C was able to buy her home and car with her husband overtime while Participant B - who immigrated later than the other participants - is still working towards this goal. Thus, the oral

histories support my initial hypothesis of English-speaking, West Indian immigrants overcoming initial downward assimilation overtime through economic incorporation or assimilation.

The oral histories provided deeper insight into people's immigration and economic journeys. While most of the participants had immigrated to join family, many also were motivated to pursue further education and better employment opportunities for themselves and for their children. While there are mixed results among oral history participants surrounding their abilities to pursue higher education, what is clear is that most of their children, whenever applicable, have been able to pursue and complete advanced degrees. Thus, participants were either able to improve their own economic chances through education - overcoming initial economic hurdles - and/or improve their children's future economic opportunities through better education, supporting my hypothesis.

Beyond the pursuit of education, employment opportunities were another important factor during the oral histories. In conjunction with pursuing higher education, Participants P and T were also pursuing better employment. While Participant P was successful in this endeavor, Participant T and her family particularly found their immigration status and limit to only one employer through the H-1B visa to be a financial hindrance. While her children were also able to graduate from college, she was the only one to note any sort of limitations her kids had faced in the US. Again, these limits stemmed from their immigration status stifling the teen's ability to participate in normative teen behavior and activities to gain more independence. It is unclear whether Participant T might have felt differently about her children's motivation and opportunity in the US if she and her family members had been permanent residents or citizens at the time. Despite these limitations, she was also able to improve her financial situation through economic incorporation, completing professional degrees she started in the West Indies and earning

promotions in her field as an educator, ultimately promoting my hypothesis of upward economic mobility.

Participant S had a particularly interesting migration experience. While in Jamaica, he held multiple jobs as a carpenter and even a position on Jamaica's Coffee Labor Board. However, he decided to take an employment opportunity and immigrate to the US, first pursuing seasonal farm work in Florida. Eventually, he joined family in Connecticut and became a member of the Iron Worker's Union. Prior to joining the union, he had bounced back and forth with a prior boss at an extrusion company. He detailed how verbally abusive the boss was, leaving the job twice. Each time, his boss came begging for him to come back to work due to his skills. However, the verbal abuse would start up again. That environment led him to starting his own trucking business. But when the truck needed repairs, he looked for other work, eventually joining the Iron Workers Union. Through the union, he has been able to secure better healthcare, benefits, and pay; he reported that he has earned much more in the past years than he had when he first arrived. His journey is the perfect embodiment of my hypothesis: West Indian immigrants overcoming initial downward assimilation over time through economic assimilation.

Other journeys were not as clear. Participant D had started in an accounting career in the West Indies and hoped to complete her bachelor's in the US. However, a racist experience from a professor caused her to drop out of college, abandoning her pursuit of higher education. Still, she earns more now working in healthcare than when she first immigrated and worked in part-time retail positions. Despite being a single parent household, she was able to purchase her own home and car for herself and her son, thus improving her economic trajectory from when she first immigrated.

Overall, oral history participants who immigrated in adulthood tended to have upward trajectory in their careers, further supporting my initial hypothesis. Participant B was able to purchase her own home. Participant J, who was used to having a celebrity clientele back in the UK, successfully economically incorporated into American society, rebuilding her client list, eventually owning and managing her own salon in Hartford. Participants M and Y who immigrated as babies have highly successful careers in professional fields. The only participant that slightly broke away from this mold is Participant K. She had started working in the service industry when she first immigrated, eventually switching to the health field, and thus earning a higher income. However, multiple ailments have hindered her ability to work and she relies on disability benefits and her husband for support. This is certainly a unique life experience among oral history participants. Before her illnesses, she also embodied my initial hypotheses as well, improving her situation through economically assimilating, moving from the service industry to healthcare.

Finally, their experiences with racism and discrimination were very telling. While some Participants like B, C, and Y never experienced discrimination personally, others had very disgusting first-hand experiences. But despite any racial or discriminatory experiences, most participant's economic trajectories were not negatively impacted by said experiences. However, Participant D is one exception after being deterred from her initial career due to a racist encounter with a professor. Still, her journey demonstrated upward economic mobility over time, further supporting my hypothesis. While Participant S felt that he had been overlooked on the job despite having more work experience than White peers selected over him, he was able to improve upon his economic trajectory overtime, joining a union. Participant P noted struggled to gain a position as a pharmacist when she first moved to CT despite their being a shortage. She

felt that color certainly played a factor in her struggles there. Still, she overcame these hurdles, successfully completing a Doctorate in Pharmacy and continues to work as a pharmacist today. Participant M detailed being racially profiled by the police on multiple occasions. Attending college in the deep south during President Obama's time in office exposed how deeply divided the nation was to Participant M. These experiences neither deterred him from pursuing higher education nor his passion of ministering to others. Participant J noted how the White-owned salon she first worked at in Downtown Hartford segregated Black hairstylists to the back. She had to advocate for herself and others to move upfront and "work on stage" as she described. Participant J was eventually able to manage her own salon, gaining newfound financial independence. Despite these racist and discriminatory experiences, participants were able to overcome these hurdles alongside any initial downward assimilation to actualize their economic goals and improve their financial situation.

As detailed, examples of typical White racism dominated this group's experience. However, two participants noted intra-group discrimination they experienced. Participant K was extremely upset and disillusioned by the discriminatory remarks she overheard from African Americans on the job market. Some African Americans expressed their displeasure in Black immigrants coming and "stealing their jobs," a familiar xenophobic sentiment. Due to these experiences, Participant K felt very strongly that she and her husband worked to earn their positions and that African Americans were lazy. While those comments from Black Americans certainly stung, they had little impact on Participant's K overall economic trajectory as well. Her story, however, exemplifies underlying tensions in the Black community that need to be addressed.

Participant T also had an interesting experience, but this time her discrimination came from fellow West Indians. She highlighted colleagues isolating her and expressed fears of coworkers potentially using her precarious immigration-work status through the H-1B visa against her. She noted that these issues and feelings of being unwelcomed faded overtime, though she does not necessarily still work with all the same people. Despite this unwelcoming experience, Participant T continues to teach at the school and has even been promoted. Her story too, details upward economic trajectory after dealing with initial constraints related to her work visa.

Reviewing participant's ability to overcome racism/discrimination helps illuminate their thoughts on their own privileges and advantages. Many, like Participants C, S, K, M, and P did not feel they had any advantages over others. They noted that immigrants worked hard for their share in the American pie. Still, Participant P did acknowledge that West Indians and other Black immigrants do not give African Americans their just due for all they had experienced in fighting for equal rights that allowed Black and other multi-racial groups to live and work in the US in the first place. Others, like Participants D and T noted the advantages they had in immigrating with legal status over others. Despite issues in their abilities to pursue further education and work opportunities respectively, they both acknowledged how their legal statuses granted them protections other migrants yearned for. Participant J had an unique perspective on feelings of privilege. She noted how growing up in a predominantly Black environment better developed a sense of pride in Black youth. With that foundation of pride and security and seeing examples of doctors, lawyers, teachers and other Black professionals, West Indians were privileged in a way African Americans are not. They did not have to contemplate their race in everyday situations while in the West Indies the way Black Americans must in America. This certainly freed mental

space to aim high and pursue whatever goals they set their minds to achieve. Participant J also noted just how influential West Indian, particularly, Jamaican culture is in the UK. That sense of respect and cultural bolstering certainly aided in children's emotional development and sense of confidence in themselves. That positive reinforcement and environment may help foster West Indian immigrant achievement.

Turning to the survey responses, a few interesting patterns emerged as well. I was not able to do much statistical analysis due to a lack of responses, but the few who had participated left interesting trends that are in line with US Census Data on CT West Indians overall. While the median household income for CT West Indians is \$52,505, the participants in my study report a slightly lower median household income between \$25,000-\$39,000 and a mode between \$35,000-\$49,999. Majority of the female oral history participants worked in the service industry upon arrival in the US and many continue in this area today, also aligning with US Census Data indicating that service occupations are the field West Indian and Jamaican females are employed in the most in CT. The surveys help support themes uncovered in the oral histories. Despite half of respondents (15) reporting feeling their race negatively impacted economic opportunities and one-third (11) reporting their immigrant status as being a barrier in finding employment in the US, respondents also reported an upward economic trajectory, supporting oral history narratives. More than half of respondents (17) reported earning more on average now than when they had first immigrated. Still, it is difficult to account for factors like inflation in such reporting. However, like the oral histories revealed, though West Indians may start in lower positions upon first arrival in the US, they, for the most part, are able to have a positive economic trajectory overtime. Additionally, CT West Indians also have a higher reported median income (\$52,505) than their African American counterparts who have a median household income of \$42,917 (see

[Census Data Black/African American CT Income](#)). Overall, my both my oral history and survey findings support my over-arching hypothesis of West Indians overcoming downward assimilation over time through economic incorporation or assimilation.

IMPLICATIONS:

Finally, my results support my hypothesis of CT West Indians being able to overcome initial downward assimilation overtime through economic incorporation or assimilation, even out-earning their African American counterparts according to US Census data. While my study certainly uncovers interesting migration patterns and other socioeconomic issues among Hartford's Afro-Caribbean population, there are certain inherent flaws. Of course, due to my limited resources as an undergraduate, my study, particularly the surveys, are not representative or generalizable to the 30,000+ West Indian immigrant population in the Greater Hartford Area. The oral histories also were not a random sample as I relied on snowball sampling and my own network to gain further participants. Beyond these initial limitations, the COVID-19 pandemic severely impacted this study as well. Over a year ago when planning this study, I had intended on frequenting various public sites around Hartford to gain survey participants. COVID-19 and research restrictions prevented me from doing so, limiting the surveys to online reach. The popular West Indian newspaper I advertised my study in over the summer also switched from a paper to an online format. I doubt most readers would have been exposed to my advertisements as I had trouble finding them myself.

Still, this study could be a starting point for other researchers interested in this group of migrants in the Hartford Area. I was not able to compare West Indian educational experiences to other racial/ethnic groups such as African Americans. It would be interesting to further explore dynamics between such groups. It might also be interesting to study how being raised in a

predominantly Black positive environment such as the West Indies may positively impact self-esteem and participants. How does environment impact outcome? This would be an intriguing area for future scholars to explore further.

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APPENDIX

TEMPLATE FOR ORAL HISTORY (conducted via Web-Ex)

This is my guide only; participants are not emailed a question list Participants should have been emailed information sheet prior to oral history. Check to see if they read it.

SCRIPT:

Good Afternoon Mr./Ms./Mrs./Dr. **PARTICIPANT**,

Thank you so much for taking the time to speak with me today. I am a Political Science student conducting research as part of my Honors Thesis. My study focuses on the educational and labor experiences of West Indian immigrants in the Greater Hartford Area. I believe everyone has an important story to tell, and it is my hope to capture those stories via oral histories. Before we get started, I just want to go over a few things:

- You can decide to stop at any time for any reason.
- You do not have to have your video on at all but can choose to if you would like.
- Your responses will be anonymous – I will use an alias for you when I refer to your story in the write up of my project unless you would like to be identified.
- Do you consent to being audio-recorded (you will see me typing too, but I like to have audio-recording as well to makes sure I didn't miss anything and leave gaps in your story)?
 - Recording will just be for me and my Professor aiding me in this project.
 - Only audio is recorded, not video.
- After completion, I will be emailing you an e-gift card. Is the email used prior okay to use?
- Any questions/concerns before we get started (Information Sheet)?
 - Can share screen with information sheet if there are/if they haven't read it yet.
- Alright, I'm starting the audio-recording now (only if participant consents).

****Note Participants will be pre-screened when we schedule a time for the oral history via email to make sure they:*

-Live in Greater Hartford Area

-Are 18 years of age and older

*-Immigrated from an English-Speaking West Indian country and identify as Black/Afro-Caribbean****

- Okay, so for the record, please confirm that you are a West Indian Immigrant residing in the Greater Hartford Area.
- What is your age (feel free to provide the actual age or the decade you were born)?
- What is your country of your birth?
- What race do you identify with? What ethnicity? Speak any foreign languages/creoles (can include creoles/Patois)?
- What gender do you identify as?
- Okay, let's get into:

OVERALL QUESTION: Please elaborate on your time in the US particularly focusing on your economic and immigration experiences. I may minimally interject with clarifying questions, but this is your time to tell your story. Feel free to begin with your immigration journey.

Notes for Me: Intervene as little as possible. If necessary, interject with clarifying questions to steer participant to elaborate on:

1. **Demographics:** age, gender, race, ethnicity, languages, birthplace, etc. (pre-screen above)
2. **Immigration Journey and Inspirations:** home country, full immigration journey (touch on length and cost), family members, why CT, goals in immigrating, attainment level of goals?
3. **Education** level back home, and education level in US, educational aspirations.
4. **Discuss Occupation** in home country, occupational journey in US.
5. **Discuss specific issue of field they're in.**
 - a. Any **discrimination** faced in labor market? Explain.
 - b. Any **positive stereotyping/favoring** in labor market? Explain.
 - c. Feel culturally distinct from Americans/Afro- Americans?
6. Have participants discuss any **children** they have in regards to their educational/occupational attainment (expectation of children/American vs. Caribbean culture).
7. Thank you so much! That is all I have unless you have anything else you would like for me to include.
 - a. Lastly, ask: Do you know any other West Indian immigrants over the age of 18 living in the Greater Hartford Area that might be interested in sharing their story for me. Don't feel compelled to tell me who right now, but if you know people please feel free to share my study with. They can contact me at this email Shanelle.jones@uconn.edu with any questions they have, and we can go from there. Thank you so much again for your time. It is truly appreciated. I will be emailing you your e-gift card over the next few days, and as always feel free to contact me with questions or concerns you have. Thanks again and have a wonderful day!

SURVEY QUESTIONS: The Lived Experiences of English-speaking, Afro-Caribbean immigrants in the Greater Hartford Area

Pre-Question: [Participants Read IRB consent form]. Do you consent to participating in this survey?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Screening questions: If they answer no, survey automatically ends.

Q1 Are you 18 years old or older?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q2 Do you reside in the Greater Hartford Area? (Hartford, Bloomfield, West Hartford, East Hartford, Manchester, Farmington, Wethersfield, Windsor, South Windsor, Windsor Locks or New Britain)

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q3 Do you self-identify as an English-speaking West Indian immigrant of African descent? (i.e. moved to the U.S. from Anguilla, Bahamas, Bermuda, Cayman Islands, British Virgin Islands, Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Barbados, Grenada, Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Montserrat, St. Lucia, and Turks and Caicos)

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Data Questions:

Q4 When did you immigrate to the U.S. from the West Indies?

- Before 1980 (1)
- 1980-1989 (2)
- 1990-1999 (3)
- 2000-2010 (4)
- 2011-2020 (5)
- Not currently residing in the U.S./not an immigrant (6)

Q5 What is the country of your birth?

- Jamaica (1)
- Trinidad & Tobago (2)
- Guyana (3)
- St. Lucia (4)
- Bermuda (5)
- Barbados (6)
- Bahamas (7)
- Grenada (8)

Other (9)

Q6 Do you feel that immigration laws at the time you immigrated affected your ability to work?

Yes, positively impacted my ability to work (1)

Yes, negatively impacted my ability to work (2)

No, no impact on my ability to work (3)

Q7 What is your racial identity?

Black or of African Descent (1)

East Indian (from South Asia including India) (2)

White or of European Descent (3)

Asian (i.e. of Chinese Descent) (4)

Afro-European (Mixed of African and European Descent) (5)

Afro-East Indian (Mixed of African and East Indian Descent) (6)

Other (7)

Q8 What is your ethnicity?

European (English, Scottish, Spanish, Irish, German, etc.) (1)

East Indian (2)

Chinese (3)

Afro-Caribbean (West Indian of African Descent) (4)

Multi-Ethnic (5)

Other (6)

Q9 What level of education did you complete in your home country prior to immigrating to the U.S.?

Secondary School (1)

Some High School (2)

High School Diploma (3)

Some College/University (4)

- College/University Degree (5)
- Graduate Degree (MD, PhD, JD, etc.) (6)
- None/NA (7)

Q10 After arriving to the U.S., did you pursue further educational opportunities?

- Some High School (1)
- High School Diploma (2)
- Some College/University (3)
- Trade Certification (Plumbing, Nursing Assistant, Truck Driving, Electrician, Physical Therapy Assistant, etc.) (4)
- College/University Degree (5)
- Graduate Degree (PhD, MD, JD) (6)
- Did not pursue further educational opportunities (7)

Q11 What was your job/occupation in your home country?

- Service Industry (Restaurant, Tourism/Hotel, Retail, Finance, Transportation, etc.) (1)
- Agriculture (Farming) (2)
- Health Care (Medical Assistant, Nurse, etc.) (3)
- Government (Police Officer, Clerk, etc.) (4)
- Education (Teacher, Counselor, Administrative Assistant) (5)
- Information Technology (Engineer, Web Developer) (6)
- Professional (Physician, Lawyer, Principal, Professor Politician, etc.) (7)
- Self-Employed (8)
- Unemployed/NA (11)
- Student (10)
- Other (9)

Q12 What was your first job/occupation upon arriving in the U.S.?

- Service Industry (Restaurant, Tourism/Hotel, Retail, Finance, Transportation, etc.) (1)

- Agriculture (Farming, etc.) (2)
- Health Care (Medical Assistant, Nurse, etc.) (3)
- Government (Police Officer, Clerk, etc.) (4)
- Education (Teacher, Counselor, Administrative Assistant) (5)
- Information Technology (Engineer, Web Developer) (6)
- Professional (Physician, Lawyer, Principal, Professor Politician, etc.) (7)
- Self-Employed (8)
- Student (10)
- Unemployed/NA (11)
- Other (9)

Q13 What is your current job/occupation currently in the U.S.?

- Service Industry (Restaurant, Tourism/Hotel, Retail, Finance, Transportation, etc.) (1)
- Agriculture (Farming, etc.) (2)
- Health Care (Medical Assistant, Nurse, etc.) (3)
- Government (Police Officer, Clerk, etc.) (4)
- Education (Teacher, Counselor, Administrative Assistant) (5)
- Information Technology (Engineer, Web Developer) (6)
- Professional (Physician, Lawyer, Principal, Professor Politician, etc.) (7)
- Self-Employed (8)
- Student (10)
- Unemployed/NA (11)
- Other (9)

Q14 Do you feel that your racial identity affected your ability to start your own business?

- Yes (1)
- Maybe (2)
- No (3)

Q15 How did your racial identity affect your ability to start your own business?

- Negatively impacted (Discriminated against, denied loans, etc.) (1)
- Positively impacted (Given preferential treatment in accessing loans, etc.) (2)

Q16 Do you feel your immigration status affected your ability to start your own business?

- Yes (1)
- Maybe (2)
- No (3)

Q17 How did your immigration status affect your ability to start your own business?

- Negatively impacted (denied loans, discriminated against) (1)
- Positively impacted (given preferential treatment) (2)

Q18 How did your racial identity affect your ability to join the labor market or find employment opportunities?

- Negatively impacted (discriminated against, denied opportunities based on race) (1)
- Positively impacted (given preferential treatment for positions based on race) (2)

Q19 Did immigration status affect your ability to join the labor market?

- Yes (1)
- Maybe (2)
- No (3)

Q20 How did your immigration status affect your ability to join the labor market?

- Negatively impacted (denied employment opportunities based on immigration status) (1)
- Positively impacted (given preferential treatment for positions based on immigrant status) (2)

Q21 Did you attempt to start your own business at any point in time after arriving to the U.S.?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q22 What kind of business did you wish to start?

- Food (Restaurant, Bakery, Grocery Store, etc.) (1)
- Automotive Repairs (2)
- Real Estate (3)
- Retail Stores (4)
- Child Care (5)
- Other (6)

Q23 Why did you leave your home country? Click up to 3 that apply.

- Poor Labor/Economic Opportunities (1)
 - Political Persecution/Violence/War (2)
 - Natural Disasters (Famine/Food Shortages, Hurricanes, Earthquakes, Flooding, etc.) (3)
 - Lack of access to adequate Healthcare (4)
 - Lack of reliable Transportation (5)
 - Poor Educational Opportunities (6)
 - Other (You may fill in one other reason) (7)
-

Q24 Where did you arrive first in the U.S.?

- New York (1)
- California (2)
- Florida (3)
- Texas (4)
- New Jersey (5)
- Illinois (6)
- Connecticut (7)
- Massachusetts (8)

- D.C. (9)
- Other (10)

Q25 Why did you move to the state selected above upon arriving in the U.S.? (Click up to 2 that apply)

- Economic Opportunity (recruited for employment reasons, greater job prospects, etc.) (1)
 - Educational Opportunity (attending secondary school, college, certification programs, etc.) (2)
 - Family-Related Immigration (joining/reuniting with family living in state) (3)
 - Greater access to Social Programs (Healthcare, Child Care, etc.) (4)
 - Other (You may fill in 1 more reason) (5)
-

Q26 Why did you come to the Greater Hartford Area? (Click up to 3 that apply)

- Educational Opportunity Hartford Area (1)
 - Economic Opportunity in Hartford Area (2)
 - Reuniting with Family in Hartford Area (3)
 - Lower cost of living in Hartford Area (4)
 - Greater Access to Social Programs (Healthcare, Child Care, etc.) (5)
 - Other (You may fill in 1 more reason) (6)
-

Q27 Do you believe you have accomplished or will be able to accomplish the economic goals you had in moving to the Greater Hartford Region.

- Definitely Yes (1)
- Yes (2)
- Maybe (3)

- No (4)
- Definitely not (5)

Q28 Please select any economic challenge you have faced during your time residing in the Greater Hartford Area. You may select more than 1.

- Racism/Colorism in Employment (being discriminated against on basis of skin color) (1)
 - Immigrant Status affecting Employment opportunities (being discriminated against on the basis of being an immigrant) (2)
 - Lack of necessary education, certification, or skill needed for employment opportunities (3)
 - Other (please fill in any other economic challenge you faced during your time in the Greater Hartford Area in 1 sentence or less) (4)
-

Q29 Do you have a spouse or long-term partner. If yes, are they living in the U.S.?

- Yes, spouse/partner lives in US (1)
- Yes, spouse/partner does NOT live in US (2)
- No spouse/partner (3)

Q30 How many children or step children do you have?

- 1-2 (1)
- 3-4 (2)
- 5+ (3)
- No children/step children (4)

Q31 Were your children born in the U.S.?

- Yes (1)
 - No (If no, you may enter which country your child(ren) were born) (2)
-

Mixed (some born here, some born elsewhere) (You may enter which country your child(ren) were born outside the U.S. (3)

Q32 What is your yearly household income on average?

- Under \$15,000 (1)
- \$15,000 to \$24,999 (2)
- \$25,000 to \$34,999 (3)
- \$35,000 to \$49,999 (4)
- \$50,000 to \$74,999 (5)
- \$75,000 to \$99,999 (6)
- \$100,000 to \$149,999 (7)
- \$150,000 to \$199,999 (8)
- \$200,000 and Over (9)
- Prefer not to say (10)

Q33 Do you earn more now on average, per year than you did when you first immigrated to the U.S.?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Not Applicable (3)

Q34 How much more do you typically earn per year?

- Up to \$10,000 more (1)
- \$10,000-\$20,000 more (2)
- \$20,000-\$40,000 more (3)
- \$40,000-\$60,000 more (4)
- \$60,000 or more (5)

End of Survey: Links participants to separate survey to leave email for e-gift card