"JUST ASK MI 'BOUT BROOKLYN:" WEST INDIAN IDENTITIES, TRANSGEOGRAPHIES, AND LIVING REGGAE CULTURE

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This ethnography explores the symbiotic relationship between the West Indian Diaspora and performance based, Jamaican originated, reggae culture. The field site was Brooklyn, New York. I analyze the intersections of reggae with racial and cultural identity construction, expressions of gender and sexuality, transnationalism, and place making practices. The formation of a local, West Indian led, reggae related economy is also a subject of focus. In order to theorize the impact West Indians have on Brooklyn and their subjectivities, I develop the concepts transgeographies and figurative citizenship. I argue that the West Indian Diaspora creates transgeographic cultural places that specific sociocultural practices and performance help to form. I offer that performance, action, and material alteration coalesce to physically transform space and imbue it with affect and sensory elements that together constitute links to the various nations of the Caribbean. The West Indian geographies of Brooklyn are thereby brought inside the Caribbean space expanding how geography is conceived of as an analytic. Emergent diasporic subjectivities are formed within these transgeographic cultural places, one of them being what I term figurative citizenship. This work also includes analyses of the relationship of West Indians

to U.S. representations of Blackness and the locations of Japanese nationals, who temporarily settle in Brooklyn to be a part of reggae, within the culture at large.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Sabia McCoy-Torres, Ph.D. is sociocultural anthropologist whose investments in scholarship are in expanding the body of knowledge on communities of color in the United States and internationally. Her hope is that greater exposure to the lived experiences and the social and cultural contributions of marginalized people might lead to greater cross-racial and cross-cultural collaborative justice, and participation. Furthermore, amplifying the self-recognition and pride of communities of color in their historical and contemporary social, and cultural contributions to the societies in which they live are scholarly and pedagogical objectives of hers.

Dr. McCoy-Torres' research interests span the African Diaspora, urban forms of popular culture, performance, gender/sexuality, race/ethnicity, place/space, and transnationalism. This list of inquiries is composed of elements she feels are integral to conceptualizing the myriad and multi-layered experiences of not only members of the African Diaspora but also communities of color more broadly. She, in turn, dedicates her work to theoretically and ethnographically immersing herself in them.

Growing up in the 1980s South Bronx as an avid dancer and lover of the music that surrounded her, juxtaposed with the contrasting sociocultural and socioeconomic experience of being Black and Latina in a prestigious New York City private school, are experiences that have come to inform Dr. McCoy-Torres' research passions, analytical eye, and pedagogical commitments. Her diasporic

subjectivities as a member of both the African and Puerto Rican diasporas are also significant. She makes her scholarly work accessible to broad audiences by contributing to online outlets and diversifying her writing style, and language. She looks forward to producing publications from this ethnographic research and beginning her next research project.

For my mother and father –

Brenda Helen McCoy
And
Gabriel Torres Rivera –

Thank you for passing on to me the best half of yourselves
(If I do say so myself)

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Much gratitude and respect to all of the people who shared their time, memories, and ideas with me whose words appear in this text as a testament to their experiences as members of the West Indian Diaspora and, for many, to their integral place not only within the local New York City (Brooklyn) world of reggae, but, their deep footprints in reggae globally.

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INTRODUCTION
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Ascending the final step off of the dim number two train platform, I slowly took in my surroundings as my eyes adjusted to the light of day. I was visually disoriented, a consequence of the change in illumination and of having emerged from the subway in a place vastly different from where I had boarded the train earlier. As a native New Yorker I thought I had known my home well. In that moment, however, I realized just how small my city-view had actually been. Flags hung in the windows of buildings – the red, white, and black of Trinidad and Tobago, the green, red, and yellow of Grenada. Dollar vans, a mode of local transportation, meaning local to the neighborhood in which I found myself, whizzed by with Jamaican flags attached to antennas undulating in the wind. I was struck by scents. A thin smoke billowed past my nose and clouded the air, food cooking on a nearby outdoor grill. Was it jerk chicken? I thought to myself, nothing could be more quintessential of an experience in a West Indian neighborhood than the smell of jerk chicken wafting through the air. Speakers rattled unable to handle the bass of dancehall reggae tracks that blared from car radios. I could hear the "boom-chick-boom-chick" percussive beat central to reggae songs at various volumes around me. I was in Flatbush, Brooklyn, popularly termed "Little Jamaica" among local Jamaican residents, exploring West Indian communities in New York City.[1] I was also in the epicenter of reggae culture outside of Jamaica.

[1] I use the term West Indian as this is how my research participants identify themselves. They additionally refer to themselves simply as Caribbean or Caribbean people which also appear as terms

This first day in Flatbush marked the beginning of my two year exploration into West Indian place making, transnational sociocultural engagement, identity construction, and cultural continuity as evidenced through the lens of Jamaican originated, performance based, reggae culture. Using this ethnographic lens I endeavored to understand how West Indians in New York City maintain social, cultural, and economic ties to the Caribbean, form Caribbean subjectivities, one of which I came to refer to as "figurative citizenship," and shape what I term "transgeographies" – spaces in which aural, visual, and sensory bridges to the West Indies are formed.

Through the reader's continued engagement with this text the labor, passionate dedication, thought, collective cooperation, personal motivation, passing on of knowledge, and love that go into producing and living reggae culture will come into view, revealing its many dynamic components. At their crux are the personal motivations tied to individual and collective identities, self-subsistence, and diasporic sensibilities that undergird the West Indian community in New York City and people's understanding of themselves as Caribbean and as culturally unique contributors to the multifaceted cultural mishmash of the United States.

I chose New York City (often appearing here as NYC as locals refer to it) as the place of exploration because more people of West Indian ancestry live there than any other city in the world outside of the West Indies.[2] The centrality of New York City as a destination for travel, temporary work, and (semi)permanent relocation for West Indians in times past and present make the city the meeting

[2] Department of City Planning, City of New York, (DCPNYC) last accessed March 31, 2015, http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/html/census/pop_facts.shtml

place of the diaspora that it is. The historic cultural work of the West Indian community and its transformation of the city's greater cultural cartographies have also made New York City, particularly Brooklyn, an epicenter of reggae. The ways in which West Indians have distinctly culturally and physically marked New York City spaces make the city important to understanding the intersection of reggae with these transformations and the formation of transnational Caribbean subjectivities.

These ethnographic explorations took place predominantly in Brooklyn. Brooklyn has historically and continues to be enriched by the various ethnic groups that call the borough home. Alongside West Indians, Russians, Polish, Eastern Europeans, and Hasidic Jews have formed distinct ethnic enclaves for their belonging. Historically an Italian community thrived in Brooklyn, their imprint still visible in imaginings of Canarsie and Sheepshead Bay. An increasing population of Mexican immigrants and White middle class newcomers are transforming Bushwick, once predominantly Puerto Rican. White Americans have historically taken residence in the Brooklyn Heights and Park Slope areas with Black Americans residing in Clinton Hill, Bedford-Stuyvesant, and Fort Green; neighborhoods that are now rapidly gentrifying or, in the case of Fort Green, fully gentrified. [3]

Despite the diversity of Brooklyn, West Indians collectively compose the largest ethnic group.[4] Additionally, Brooklyn is home to the majority of New York

[3] Where "black" and "white" are used to refer to racial identities I capitalize them to acknowledge the great emotional and political power with which history has imbued these social constructions.

[4] According to the United States Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS) 2008-2012 five-year estimates. The category West Indian specifies "except Hispanic groups" and includes: Bahamian, Barbadian, Belizean, Bermudan, British West Indian, Dutch West Indian, Haitian, Jamaican, Trinidadian and Tobagonian, U.S. Virgin Islander, West Indian, Other West Indian. These numbers do not reflect racial specifications and include Indo-Caribbean people. Retrieved from the digital archive of the United States Census Bureau, American Community Survey,

City's Black population (ACS), many of whom are West Indian. Considering that as of 2011, New York City had the largest Black population of any other city in the United States, more than double the count (DCPNYC), this is demographically significant impacting how historically, and until only very recently, it has been imagined as a Black borough. It has furthermore played a role in Brooklyn being a center of Black cultural production evidenced in its deeply rooted Afrocentrism and thriving hip-hop community from which iconic rappers have come including: Big Daddy Kane, Busta Rhymes, the Notorious B.I.G (Biggie), Jay-Z, Lil Kim, Mos Def, Talib Kweli, and more recently Joey Badass. The contributions to Brooklyn's Black cultural production that West Indians make through reggae unfold in the pages that follow.

In addition to Brooklyn being predominantly West Indian, it is also the borough in which the majority of West Indians in New York City reside (ACS) and expressions of Caribbean identity are the strongest. I use "West Indian Brooklyn" to refer to contiguous neighborhoods and sections of neighborhoods that together house this population. These areas are: Flatbush, East Flatbush, western Canarsie, and the 40s, 50s, and 90s sections of East New York. Jamaicans compose the majority of the West Indian population (79,381 thousand people) followed by Haitians (72,198 thousand) (ACS). Despite the high number of Haitians, collectively people hailing from the Anglophone Caribbean significantly outnumber them (205,544 thousand), which coupled with their earlier migration (Bryce-Laporte1983; Sowell, 1981), has clearly given this community an advantage in defining cultural fields as distinctly Anglophone Caribbean.

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http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_12_5YR_B04001 [accessed August 1, 2014].

Brooklyn is also the location of the annual West Indian Day Parade and proceeding J'ouvert celebrations that draw West Indians from all over the U.S. and abroad. It is the mixing pot of West Indian nations, where all meet never to meld into one, but rather to celebrate their distinctions from each other, where they are the many, and collective distinctiveness from the U.S. population at large in which they are the few. Brooklyn is home to reggae DJ and dance competitions, to the most frequented reggae concerts, is a major point of travel for reggae artists, and is a place of mention in reggae songs. It is a historic and contemporary central geographic point in the transnational network of reggae music production; the part of New York City where on a single night there are numerous reggae events advertised by posters pasted on the sides of buildings and lampposts. For residents and people in search of reggae music and culture from New York City to Japan, Brooklyn is metonymic of reggae. The Japanese nationals for whom Brooklyn holds significant weight as a site of reggae knowledge and cultural production are significant to this research. Because of Brooklyn's reputation it has become the temporary home of Japanese nationals in their twenties and thirties in search of reggae instruction and Caribbean cultural immersion. The location of Japanese nationals within New York City reggae culture is explored in chapter three.

Flatbush, at the time of writing (2013 – 2015), is undergoing a process of rapid gentrification. Young, predominantly White, middle class New Yorkers and people hailing from states across the U.S. are migrating to the country's cosmopolitan center and reshaping its cultural and racial demographics. Many of these people are making Brooklyn their home**.** Subsequently, Brooklyn is becoming

one of the most rapidly transforming and contested boroughs with Williamsburg, Bushwick, Fort Green, Bedford-Stuyvesant, Clinton Hill, and increasingly Flatbush being centers of this activity, moving from being predominantly working class communities of color to increasingly White middle/upper class communities. As recently as 2003 Brooklyn was considered the "ghetto," a place Manhattan dwellers did not visit, taxis drivers often refusing patrons traveling there. Contrastingly, today Brooklyn is one of the most sought out places to live in NYC, particularly in the areas closest to Manhattan, which now boast a vibrant nightlife, bars, lounges, quaint cafés, clothing boutiques, newly renovated storefronts, farm-to-table restaurants, yoga studios, food co-ops, and a plentitude of vintage clothing stores. Who can claim Brooklyn is every day growing more uncertain.

To some Brooklyn is a "hipster" haven, the place of young art nouveau fashion followers, musicians, poets, visual artists, and models. To others it is still the home of West Indians, the Caribbean in New York, and metonymic of reggae. While many parts of Brooklyn are unrecognizable from just five, even two years ago, commuting further into the interior reveals that the cultural imprint of Caribbean residents remains strong. Even further still, where subway stations are few and neighborhoods can only be accessed by boarding a bus after a train, theses changes to Brooklyn's cultural nexus have not yet fully reached and there is no doubt that Brooklyn's long standing ethnic enclaves, of which West Indian Brooklyn is one, are still thriving.

Exploring reggae and West Indian communities also brought me to the Bronx, Manhattan, and Queens. Though the White Plains (north central) area of the

Bronx is home to the second largest population of West Indians, it does not exhibit the enthusiasm for all things West Indian, as Brooklyn does.[5] Reggae is, however, vibrant in the Bronx, second only to Brooklyn. The contrastingly muted exhibition of West Indian identities is indicative of West Indians not connoting the majority ethnic group. Manhattan was also a relevant research site. Though not boasting a West Indian community, Manhattan is a location where reggae listeners can be found congregating in scattered downtown areas as loyal followers of a specific "reggae night" event. Ventures into Manhattan based reggae venues gave invaluable insight into the class, and racial differences between Manhattan and Brooklyn reggae places.

Only on few occasions did I find myself in Queens, where the 3rd largest population of West Indians resides. Like the Bronx, West Indians do not form the majority ethnic group making their cultural exhibitions less strong. Furthermore, unlike both the Bronx and Brooklyn, reggae culture does not have strong roots in Queens. The proximity of Queens to Brooklyn, allows for easy commuting to events there making the need to develop an independent reggae scene in Queens less expedient. The strong presence, literal and symbolic, of both reggae and the West Indian community in Brooklyn made it the best site to focus the greater bulk of this research. Queens does bring to light another contrast to both Brooklyn and the Bronx that is important to note. It is home to the Indo-Caribbean population, which lives in communities alongside South Asians hailing largely from India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. The borough in particular has a large Guyanese community, a

[5] Demographic data on the Bronx, Queens, and Brooklyn was retrieved from The United States Census Bureau (USCB) digital archive, http://www.census.gov (accessed December, 7, 2012)

Caribbean country with a majority East Indian descendant population, which is visually very apparent there.[6] In fact Queens is home to the majority of the city's Guyanese people, while Guyanese are among the least populous West Indians in Brooklyn (USCB).

It is difficult to find quantitative data on the Indo-Caribbean population specifically. Census studies do not account for people claiming dual ancestry, Trinidadian and East Indian, or Jamaican and Chinese for example; nor do they include racial sub-specifications, i.e. Jamaican and Black, except for people identifying as "Hispanic." The visual imprint of the Indo-Caribbean community in Queens, however, is very strong, and comparatively much less so in Brooklyn and the Bronx in which Afro-Caribbeans are more visually apparent. Supermarkets advertising Guyanese food items and Guyanese restaurants line avenues of the Richmond Hill district. In nightclubs Indo-Trinidadian and Indo-Guyanese youth are numerous, dancing to the latest soca, ragga-chutney and basement-bhangra (mixes of reggae, calypso, soca, and East Indian music styles), along with hip-hop and reggae.

The separation of Indo-Caribbean and Afro-Caribbean people by borough is by no means absolute. Middle class Afro-Caribbean West Indians reside in houses in the more affluent outskirts of Queens reaching the Long Island border and likewise Indo-Caribbean people are not invisible in Brooklyn. Nevertheless, distinctions between the two communities are rather stark. I regret that a secondary outcome of

[6] Population data on Guyana was retrieved from the Central Intelligence Agency, World Factbook , https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/gy.html (accessed April, 2, 2015).

focusing primarily on Brooklyn is giving less attention to Indo-Caribbeans and the specificities of their experience in the ethnographic analysis that unfolds here. Covering the breadth of inquiries into this community both requires, and deserves, its own ethnography. Some interesting points of analysis are the relationship between the Indo-Caribbean and Afro-Caribbean communities and explorations into why Queens is the chosen place of residence. Identity politics are also significant. According to a lead organizer at a Queens based nonprofit community organization, one challenge to helping Richmond Hill residents gain greater political power is getting Indo-Caribbean people to identify formally in the census, and informally in everyday political and social negotiations with the non-Caribbean South Asian community. This later point seemingly contradicting the voluntary decision to live among them and carrying informative implications. While reggae is relevant to Indo-Caribbean identities, explorations into the connection of syncretic Indo-Caribbean music forms to the creation and embodiment of East Indian Diasporic subjectivities might be analytically useful to interpreting the specificities of those subjectivities. Though important, these avenues of inquiry are outside the ethnographic focus of this text.

While not central sites of exploration, as outgrowths of the wider West Indian community, the Bronx and Queens are still significant to the concepts developed in this work. Furthermore, the frameworks developed here are analytically useful to interpreting West Indian communities found in all of the boroughs that collectively compose "West Indian New York." Though the field site was New York City my research also brought me to West Indian communities, and

reggae places outside of the city. Focusing the flows of reggae and Caribbean cultural referents throughout the West Indian Diaspora made it relevant to gather information outside of the immediate area of exploration. My analysis of the NYC ethnographic context was informed by brief visits to the Miami and Fort Lauderdale areas of Florida, together having the second largest population of West Indians in the U.S.; California, which has a much smaller population but a very lively multiracial community of reggae enthusiasts; and Costa Rica, a country with an Afro-Caribbean population, largely of Jamaican descent, that is actively involved in producing a vibrant reggae culture. The comparisons and similarities I witnessed in each place helped to illuminate certain characteristics about the New York City context that gave breadth to my interpretation of NYC as a particular, to analyses of NYC within the context of the broader U.S. society, and brought to mind new insight, and avenues of inquiry.

Immersing myself in the different spaces of reggae and West Indian cultural production I asked: how do people create individual and collective racial, cultural, (trans)national, and geographically understood identities through reggae production and participation? In what ways do the relationships formed between people, and music and dance change the participants themselves, and the environments in which they find themselves? How does the creation of spaces for expressive cultural production and enjoyment transform physical space? Can transnational cultural spaces be created through diasporic artistic production and if so, how might they promote the learning and settling of diasporic peoples? In what ways is expressive culture marketed and what economic functions might it have? In

efforts to understand these questions, I came to the broader inquiry, how do New York City's ethnic groups, using West Indians as an example, transform the city and even the identities of those who live in proximity with them?

In the chapters that follow I use the specific words of certain individuals to illustrate broadly documented sentiments and ideas that were elucidated through these inquiries. The voices are predominantly from the Anglophone Caribbean in New York City, an outcome of the demographics of the primary field site and the expressive cultural form used as an ethnographic lens. Reggae is significant to the lives, identities, and transnational work of people from across the Dutch, Spanish, and French speaking Caribbean, and the world. However, reggae in New York City is placed in distinct relationship to Anglophone Caribbean West Indians as a collective, an outgrowth of the possibilities for lyrical contextual understanding, linguistic commonalities, and the sociocultural and sociohistorical resonances, and in turn allegiances, that linguistic commonalities evince.

There are other relevant music forms to people hailing from the Anglophone Caribbean, soca and calypso are significant examples. However, the expansiveness of consumption of these music forms is less great than reggae, they thereby tend to be in dynamic relationship to identities rooted in specific Caribbean countries (soca to Trinidadian identities for example) as opposed to broadly regional Caribbean ones, a subject of later focus. It follows that reggae, as a music form that originated in Jamaica, is juxtaposed with Jamaican identities in particular ways that it is not with other Caribbean identities, ways that grow from cultural nationalistic allegiances. These dynamics will also be a focus of later exploration.

Why Music?: Central Arguments and a Review of Literature

Why is a music and performance based culture a useful lens to interpret West Indian subjectivities? The significance of music and performance has a long history that is tied more broadly to the African Diaspora and the roles of expressive mediums to positive cultural identity creation, rebellion, cultural celebration, and continuity from slavery to the present. These significances are carried through the music, dance, and other expressive modes of the different ethnic groups that compose the African Diaspora. Music and performance are thereby tied very specifically to the cultural genesis, embodiment, and expression of the people of the individual countries of the Caribbean and their national identities from reggae to soca, reggaeton, son, rumba, calypso, and zouk.

Many scholars have investigated the dimensions of an Afro-Diasporic cultural ethos shaped by shared aesthetics in both sacred and secular music and dance, underscoring their importance to community regeneration and cultural continuity (Herskovits 1958; Browning 1995; Thompson 1983; Gilroy 1991a, 1993; Boyce Davies 1999; Baraka 1963; Perry 2008; Roach 1996; Emery 1988). Another analytical focus is the relevance of expressive mediums to negotiating marginalization, celebrating Blackness, globally transporting Black identity politics thereby providing the materials for Black identity construction in the various places in which the African Diaspora finds itself.

The historically contingent connection of music and dance to the social, cultural, and political survival of Afro-descendants place music and dance at the crux of identity construction of the various peoples of the diaspora and their myriad subjectivities. But why reggae? The origins of reggae is the focus of the next chapter, however, to give a cursory explanation here, reggae is a form of music with attached modes of performance that have spread widely throughout the Caribbean from Jamaica. I argue that reggae exists in dynamic relationship to the expression of Caribbean social and cultural identities, and the constitution of place within Caribbean diasporic communities, which as I will demonstrate here, is witnessed in New York City.

Hintzen (2001) provides a cursory exploration of "carnival" in Brooklyn, more commonly called J'ouvert the name of a celebration in Trinidad that takes similar form. Additionally Buff (2001) presents an intriguing comparative analysis of the significances of Brooklyn's carnival (J'ouvert) and Native-American powwows to maintaining cultural identities and resisting political oppression in their respective communities of creation. However, outside of these texts few scholars on Caribbean communities in the United States have focused on expressive culture and its relation to West Indian place making, identity construction, social organization, and cultural continuity. Even though expressive culture and performance spaces are central features of these processes, scholars have instead focused on the important political and economic forces and motivations that shape ethnic and racial identities (Foner 1987b; Greer 2013; Sowell 1981; Rogers 2006), fuel transnational activity (Basch, Schiller, and Blanc 1994; Foner 2001a; Watkins-Owens 2001), and structure

the dynamics of the West Indian community's social space (Basch 1987; Kasinitz 1992; Watkins-Owens 1996; Kasinitz and Vickerman 2001; Butterfield 2004; Brown 2011).

In contrast, scholarship focusing on West Indians within the nations surrounding the Caribbean Sea gives attention to the significance of reggae and other Caribbean popular cultural forms, and performances to them. Stolzoff (2000), Hope (2006), Cooper (2004, 1993), Stanley-Niaah (2010a), Bakare-Yusuf (2006a) are significant texts to interpreting reggae to Jamaican life. Their explorations into reggae bridge Jamaican history, politics, economy, literature, gender, sexuality, and style. In the case of the U.K., subcultural studies and theorizations of race and identity offer insight into the significance of music, dance and their surrounding cultures to the Afro-Caribbean community living there (Hebdige 1976, 1987; Gilroy 1991b, 1991b; Hall 1999). In Central America, Monestel Ramírez's (2005) history of calypso in Costa Rica, and Marshall's (2009) and Twickel's (2009) explorations into Panamanian Spanish language reggae explore the interlaces of nation, cultural identity, and West Indian migration. There are, however, no parallel detailed explorations of these dynamics conducted in the United States even though the U.S. has the largest population of West Indian (im)migrants, with the most diversity of origins, than any other country (Edmondson 2003). Furthermore, reggae is one of the most well known, and consumed exports from the Caribbean to the U.S., and around the world.

This dissertation contributes to studies of popular forms of expressive culture, performance, identity, race, ethnicity, and transnationalism by recognizing

that the West Indian community in New York City and reggae culture are integral to them. My approach complements macro-systemic analyses by using reggae culture to interpret people's everyday experiences negotiating ethnoracial and transnational identities, and their place making practices. Such a perspective demonstrates how cultural institutions that are significant to diasporas and their cultural recreation and embodiment are formed in unlikely spaces like restaurants, bars, clubs, and catering halls converted into party places as much as they are formed in churches and schools.

Reggae is consumed across class, race, and ethnicity globally. Because of reggae's broad appeal I acknowledge it in this ethnography as being a form of popular expressive culture originating in the Caribbean. Despite its broad consumption, reggae in New York City and more generally in the U.S. is not one of *the* most popular genres of music. It remains marginal to hip-hop, rock, pop music, and electronic/dance music. Additionally, outside of West Indian spaces the attached forms of performance that produce reggae culture at large and its affective potential are often lacking where reggae music is consumed. Knowledge of reggae outside of mainstream radio or cable television play is also less common. Because of the relative marginalization of reggae and its isolated existence to Caribbean communities as a fully constituted performance culture, reggae is conceptualized here as a subculture that is tied to ethnic, racial, and geographic distinctions.

The analysis that unfolds, however, departs from the subcultural studies of Hall and Jefferson eds. (1976), Hebdige (1979), and Thornton (1996). Their work is more concerned with interpreting class or youth cultures existing within and

struggling against hegemonic cultural forms. Using reggae culture as an ethnographic lens is not intended to shed light on the negotiation of West Indian marginality within larger American society specifically or negotiation of structural or racial violence entirely, though these dynamics do receive some attention in chapter three.

The framework I develop analyzes the reggae subculture as a geographically situated, ethnoracially defined, social organization characterized not by its response to a dominant culture. Rather, what characterizes the reggae subculture is its creation of mediums through which West Indian subjectivities are constructed and its formation of spaces in which these subjectivities are embodied, promoting cultural continuity. This is not to imply that class inequalities do not impact West Indians in the U.S. or that this community does not exist in tension with the dominant racial or economic group – middle class White Americans – and hegemonic cultural representations. Indeed, there exists a substantial literature offering robust analyses of these dynamics, how they affect the West Indian community, and how they are negotiated (Vickerman 2001; Rogers 2006; Waters 1999, Foner 1987a, 2001a, 2001b; Kasinitz 1992, 2001). The West Indian community, however, is not defined solely by these dynamics.

Without necessarily minimizing the oppressive economic and social realities that West Indians are compelled to navigate this ethnography foregrounds a different but equally significant aspect of West Indian life in the U.S. It is concerned with affect and agency on their own terms assuming a bottom up view of West Indian cultural engagement as evidenced through reggae. The awareness and

burden of structural violence and marginalization is always there. However, like the West Indian girls who are the focus of Oneka LaBennett's (2010) ethnography, my research collaborators are "nobody's victims" (107) and accordingly I choose to explore other areas of their living, agency, and sustaining of the West Indian community.[7]

Bringing the analytical view inside the various places in which Caribbean cultural forms are embodied, this work interprets how performance, and social and economic practices converge to form what I term transgeographies or transgeographic places. They are sociospatial, cultural and performance geographies that bring Brooklyn into a Caribbean space in which Caribbean subjects are born. An experience inside a weekly "reggae night" illustrates being inside a transgeographic place.

The microphone was on a setting that created an echo of the singer's voice. The melodic reverberation of his voice coupled with the dim red lighting of the bar-lounge gave the impression of being inside a cavernous nocturnal space in which the viewers of this unfolding musical spectacle were comfortably together. Everybody

[7] As opposed to using the word "informant," I refer to people who participated in this research as research collaborators or research companions, depending on my level of closeness with them. My decision to not use the word "informant" grows from the connotation of the word among the community of participants I worked with and urban communities in general. To be an informant has strongly negative implications descending from its use to refer to someone who gives information to police or other authority in exchange for favors, legal leniency, largesse, or other legal, or political protections. Given these connotations the word "informant" is highly taboo, informants being the loathed subjects of many reggae songs. No one wants to be referred to, under any circumstances, as an informant. Additionally, collaborator, as in one who collaborates with another, signifies a mutual effort and exchange to collaboratively produce something. The moments of bonding that transpired between participants and I coupled with their avid enthusiasm for this research, and support of the final product instilled in me the sense that we were mutually collaborating in helping it to come to life. This work indeed reflects a collaboration of efforts and could not have been possible without those who voluntarily shared their time, words, and excitement with me. Lastly, in the music world collaborations (also referred to as "collabos") have strongly positive connotations that point to the positive productive output of people working together. I hope to capture that spirit here.

swayed with the rhythm of the reggae music, shoulders and heads bouncing as we stood in a crescent shape around the performer, the DJ, and his equipment. The singing, the atmosphere and our collective presence and movement enraptured us. Every time the singer carried a note in the undulating style of roots reggae music and sustained it passed the point it seemed his breath would carry, crowd excitement swelled. His voice echoing beyond the moment's finality prolonged its impact on the crowd.

The DJ switched into a faster paced beat as the singer passed the microphone to a man standing beside him. The new man in possession of the microphone delivered improvised lyrics in the faster paced rhythmic chanting associated with dancehall reggae. He commented on the happenings of the space and people within it. The energy of the crowd built in response to his on the spot improvisation. People began bouncing from one foot to the next and jumping in the air. Spectators held lit lighters high above their heads in show of support for the lyricist's skill, flames glowing like stars in the dark atmosphere. The lyricist finalized his performance yodeling, a stylistic choice that revealed the meeting of many genres of music within reggae. To show their enthusiasm crowd members shouted "bow, bow, bow!" an onomatopoeia of imaginary celebratory bullets being fired into the sky from fingers that formed the shape of pistols.

There was no sky. We were inside Happy Endings, a bar-lounge that despite comfortably encasing us was expansive beyond that space in its affect. We could have been in any number of locations that surround the Caribbean Sea, but, we were in a Caribbean place within the concrete topography of New York City, a place that is

nevertheless connected to that sea. People, actions, performance, sounds and physical design transformed space into a Caribbean reggae place rearranging how we experienced the geography of New York City and reconstituting it as a vitality of links to the Caribbean. In turn, the Caribbean was made present therein.

This was a common observation throughout my research. People through actions, practice, performance, and the physical construction of space created distinct places that were indelibly linked to the Caribbean such that they had cause to say "this is just like Jamaica" or feel that the West Indian geographies of Brooklyn are Caribbean places. What is behind these sentiments? What practices are enacted in space and transformations made to it that make people feel they inhabit the Caribbean? Better yet, how are these spaces informing of identities that lead people to feel they are members of the Caribbean countries they have left, and for those who were not born in the Caribbean to feel they still belong to it? Addressing these questions is central to my theorization of transgeographies.

Conceptualizing transgeographies I focus on spatiality and how practices enacted in space and its material transformation both define place and link it to different nations. I draw on the phenomenology of perception (Merleau-Ponty 2012; Feld and Basso 1996; Casey 1996) and theorizations of place and space. Of particular significance is how the physicality of space is transformed through social practice to constitute distinct places for cultural production that put identity and space in dialectical relationship (Lefebvre 1991; Low and Zúñiga eds. 2003; De Certeau 1984; Gupta and Ferguson 1997). Building on theories of space, the senses, perception, and place to frame transgeographies, I demonstrate how certain

structural elements of ritual social practices and performance cohere to form a reggae complex that manifests the Caribbean.

Transgeography complements and is an extension of the ideas of transnationalism interpreting how the spaces with which transnational communities engage evolve and through what means. If we understand transnationalism as "the process by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement" (Basch et al. 1994: 7), then transgeographies illustrate how these immigrants and their descendants transform space within societies of settlement. How they are transformed to reflect linkages to societies of origin is also a focus. Transgeographies go beyond fixed space to interpret the expansiveness of geography as an analytic in order to understand the Caribbean in New York City, and the West Indian geographies of Brooklyn as being a part of the Caribbean. If as Perez (2004) states, "over time migration becomes part of the fabric of places, as people begin to imagine themselves as part of a larger community that extends beyond their place of residence" (14) then interpreting the formation of transgeographic places helps to understand how that fabric is made. The term accounts for the changes that happen to places that become important to the imagining of one's self as belonging to a larger transnational community and its geography.

Framing spatial transformation as transgeographic as opposed to transnational is not intended to disregard the significance of the nations. How space is constructed and the activities that unfold within are tied to the imaginary of

nations, particularly their cultural signification. This is evidenced in the allegiances transnational communities hold to their countries of origin, and representation of them in transgeographic places. As will later be revealed, cultural identities tied to nations come to the fore within them because it is precisely attachments to nations, and imaginings of them that inspire the creation of transgeographies in adoptive homes. Furthermore, historical systems of oppression, structural violence, and the economic forms nations take have tangible impacts that inform the cultural identities embodied and expressed in transgeographic places. They also inspire movement between nations. Additionally, it is within the bounds of nations that transgeographies are formed making them thereby subject to its history, politics, social and economic contexts. It will be argued in chapter two that bringing New York City into the Caribbean space through the formation of transgeographies is contingent on the historic and contemporary economic and political engagement of the U.S. with the nations of the Caribbean; this engagement providing the bases of migration and informing the social, economic, and political contexts of both. Transgeographies are manifestations of links between.

Describing these spaces as transgeographic is intended to foreground the physicality of space, rather than to indicate that the nation is somehow irrelevant. Doing so allows me to step into the micro dynamics of the present moment to analyze affect in space, the relationship between space and identity, the transformative actions occurring within space, and to theorize how space is manipulated to bring the various nations of the West Indies close to New York City. Transgeography then focuses on the recreation of places "here" that are reminiscent

or invoke places "there," perpetuating nostalgia while also quelling it. They are places for transnational belonging and imagining that serve to culturally constitute the West Indian community in the U.S.

The formation of transgeographies is, furthermore, dependent on transnational processes other than migration. In its focus on spatiality, however, this ethnography gives more attention to the collapsing of geographic boundaries evidenced in the construction of Caribbean places than to transference. Of particular focus are aural, visual, and sensory bridges to the West Indies. Scholars of transnationalism have focused extensively on processes of economic, political, and social transference (Basch 2001; Basch et al. 1994; Patterson 1994; Sutton and Makiesky-Barrow 1987; Sutton 1987; Appadurai 1996; Smith and Guarnizo 1998; Grewal 2005). My development of transgeographies interprets how the West Indian Diaspora uses what is transferred to construct spaces that bridge the West Indies and New York City to form distinct Caribbean places that transform the people within them and make the city a satellite space of the different nations of the West Indies.

In cultural, literary, and film studies "transgeographical" and "transgeographic practices" are mobilized as terms to refer to practices and art forms that traverse geographical boundaries or distance (B'beri 2009; Tolentino 1999; Roof 1996; Fleetwood 2004), sometimes transnational and transgeographic appearing together as concepts. When transgeographical is employed it is done so to focus on transfer through space without focus on the happenings of the national. Similarly in ethnic studies it is mobilized to refer to practices within a nation that

can be noted across distance (Lugo-Ortiz 2007) but are not tied to the particularities of the national.

In contradistinction to the use of transgeographical/transgeographic in cultural, literary, and film studies, I use transgeographies and transgeographic places to refer to the transformation of space itself that results from transnational practices and ties that are enacted within them. Additionally, the terms conceptualize how two locales become linked through that transformation such that how we think of geography is affected. The term as it is mobilized in this ethnography is then not "a-national," as B'béri describes of the transgeographical practice of *marronage* in African film (2009). Rather, it is concerned with how spaces become connected to different nations and imbued with the cultural meanings, desires, and longing of the people who create them as evidenced through the places the West Indian Diaspora forms in New York City.

The analyses of sensory experiences, place making, and specific sociocultural practices that converge to form transgeographies support the argument I develop that conceptualizations of a Caribbean space should include the nations bounded by the Caribbean sea as well as their satellites – the locations where the West Indian community is populous that they transform into thoroughly Caribbean places. Mintz' (1974, 1966) and Girvan's (2000) explorations into what defines the Caribbean despite the diversity of the nations therein evince the possibilities of rethinking how it is conceptualized.

While Mintz assumes a historically rooted sociocultural perspective, Girvan assumes a geopolitical one. Mintz looks in particular at the meeting of Europeans

and Africans under the system of plantation slavery and sociocultural commonalities arising therein (1974, 1966). Girvan (2000) locates the concept of a Caribbean space in a specific geopolitical history of political and economic engagement with U.S. and European powers. He sees the Caribbean as a geopolitical concept invented from the outside and, furthermore, acknowledges the interests of the wider Caribbean (the diaspora) as being significant to the interests of the "island Caribbean" – the contiguous islands of the Antilles (2000:31). In doing so Girvan envisions the possibility of the Caribbean space exceeding the geography of these islands. Mintz interprets the Caribbean primarily as a sociocultural space, though one that has been constituted by geopolitical history and external forces. His view nevertheless remains insular to the contiguous islands**.** The similar and contrasting dimensions to Girvan and Mintz' interpretations of the Caribbean – as insular space or expansive, as a concept invented from the outside or one signifying insularly shared historically contingent social and cultural ethos – leave room for continued theorizing of what constitutes the Caribbean space and an expansions of the concept.

Occupying this conceptual space as a point of departure, I argue for conceiving the Caribbean as encompassing the places of settlement of the diaspora so as to include West Indian neighborhoods in New York City. This approach to thinking the Caribbean brings into the foreground the Caribbean places in adoptive homes that are outgrowths of circuits of travel between the nations of the Caribbean and their satellites outside it. The interpretation offered considers the historic and contemporary sociocultural, economic, and political engagement between the West

Indian communities and the countries from which its members have come that define both spaces. It considers the push and pull factors to migration between the Caribbean and the U.S. that have been historically mutually informing and have connected the two spaces since prior to the independence of each country of the Caribbean. The assertions made are thereby both sociospatially and sociohistorically oriented.

Carole Boyce Davies (2013) also expresses a desire to imagine the Caribbean beyond fixed geographies. It is a desire that arises from her experiences traveling through the different migratory pathways of the Caribbean. She says: "My own particular version of seeing the Caribbean comes from being located in a series of contiguous spaces, in the Caribbean landscape and seascape, in the air space above, recrossing the Atlantic Ocean, living in North America, Africa, Europe, and South America" (2013: 36). While in support of reconceptualizing the Caribbean so as to expand its horizons, Boyce Davies' does not make it her goal to explore how the Caribbean takes specific shape outside of the nations bounded by the Caribbean Sea. In this text I expand on our shared desire by theorizing Caribbean place making in New York City.

Boyce Davies states: "beyond identifying actual localities, for me, seeing the in between spaces as possibility, not as barrier or emptiness, is as critical" (ibid). Indeed these in between spaces, their contingencies, and meanings are significant as they are the connectors that make the formation of Caribbean places outside of the immediate area of the Caribbean Sea possible, so as to imagine it as much greater than that. Boyce Davies focuses on those in between spaces so as to "identify a series

of passages and locations between the Americas that facilitate movement as they identify a set of specific traumas" (2013: 6). This goal is partly rooted in her wish to move beyond Africa/New World analyses to explore the networks within the New World migratory matrix. She fulfills this objective through autobiographical storytelling and analysis of literature and historical moments. Our texts complement each other in their desire to see the Caribbean as being greater than that which is bounded by sea, and in the different and complementary ways this process is focused on, and explicated.

Seeing the Caribbean as an expansive space that encompasses the satellites of the nations encircling the Caribbean Sea brings into focus diasporic subjectivities emerging in Caribbean places in the U.S. I use the term figurative citizenship to give name to the diasporic subjectivity arising from sentiments of belonging to and imagining oneself to be a part of a Caribbean country, an orientation that grows from engagement in Brooklyn Caribbean cultural institutions, including reggae places. Theorizations on citizenship are broadly relevant to interpreting social, economic, and political belonging in multi-ethnic societies. Working with West Indians in New York made obvious the need to examine their national dispositions and relationships to citizenship.

Existing interpretations of citizenship that fall outside of legal-political definitions do not fully explain the orientation of many West Indians to their countries of origin, even of those born in the United States. Flores and Benmayor (1997), Ong (1999), Rosaldo (2003) have all made efforts to theorize citizenship to account for multiple, spatialized attachments and the subjectivities that emerge

from them. Ong's notion of flexible citizenship attempts to explain the disjuncture between national and ethnic identities in the era of "high modernity" (1999: 2) in an increasingly transnational global community. She focuses on the multiple passport holder pointing out that: "The multiple passport holder is an apt contemporary figure; he or she embodies the split between state-imposed identity and personal identity caused by political upheavals, migrations, and changing global markets" (Ong 1999: 2). While Ong acknowledges the possibility of non-aligning legal-political identity and personal identity, which legal-political citizenship presupposes, she is not concerned with interpreting what emerges in the fissure. Her priority is understanding the forces that inspire exit and their theoretical impact on, and locations within, global economic and political processes that obfuscate citizenship. Adoptive homes and places of origin and inquiries into what happens to the person who wants to belong to multiple places are analytically irrelevant to her analysis making flexible citizenship incomplete to explain West Indian positionalities.

Flores and Benmayor (1997) offer cultural citizenship as a theory that hopes to account for both cultural and legal-political belonging. They conceptualize cultural citizenship as "a process of constructing, establishing, and asserting human, social, and cultural rights" (Flores and Benmayor 1997: 12). Using Latinos in the U.S. as an ethnographic example they argue that through the daily life practices of families, communities, and through linguistic and artistic expression, Latinos "cross the political realm and contribute to the process of affirming and building an emerging Latino identity" (Flores and Benmayor 1997: 6). Establishing cultural

citizenship – belonging despite cultural distinction – allows for greater political recognition and, in turn, participation and inclusion. While cultural citizenship interprets sociocultural subjectivity it does not account for the dual look inward to the place in which cultural citizenships is created and also outward to places of physical or cultural origin. The concept shows little concern for the diasporic positionality of U.S. Latinos and other marginalized ethnic groups. This positionality is fundamental to understanding West Indian transnational dispositions, attachments to legal-political citizenship, and cultural belonging.

Flores and Benmayor's work is an elaboration on Renato Rosaldo's (1989) coining of the term cultural citizenship in *Culture and Truth: The remaking of social analysis*. In the introductory chapter of his edited volume (2003), Rosaldo attempts to bring people on the borderlands both physical (occupying geographic spaces in between nation-states or the hinterlands and centralized state) and figurative (marginalized or excluded communities) into dialogue with citizenship. Drawing on his experiences working with the Ilongot of Northern Philippines and also Latino communities in the U.S. Rosaldo interprets how people of the borderlands experience their marginalization defining citizenship as a struggle over cultural meaning, respect, and dignity. Like Flores and Benmayor, Rosaldo understands citizenship to be defined by, and to be the objective of, struggles for inclusion and he in turn aims to interpret those dynamics. The transnational orientations of those occupying the borderlands are not a focus of inquiry.

The framing of figurative citizenship I present exemplifies my efforts to bridge the spaces between these different ways of conceptualizing citizenship.

Figurative citizenship interprets dual inward/outward, here/there subjectivities of diasporas and the emotional investments and divestments in legal-political citizenship that emerge from both orientations. It differs from cultural citizenship in that it sees individuals as untangling themselves from the webs that connect them to the nation-state chosen to be the adoptive home to construct a sense of cultural belonging that is not predicated on national or political inclusion. Though cultural and racial marginalization are deeply a part of the West Indian experience in the United States, figurative citizenship is not conceived of as a response to exclusion necessarily. Figurative citizenship is, rather, seen to be a byproduct of forming Caribbean spaces, transnational sociocultural engagement, migration, and of the replenishing of the West Indian population (Foner 2001a), and Caribbean cultural referents. Figurative citizenship then does not describe belonging to the nation-state in which diasporas reside, rather, to the ones they have left. Like flexible citizenship, figurative citizenship accounts for transnational practices but unlike flexible citizenship it does not give attention to the complications caused by physical exit or the macro-level factors that inspire it, rather it focuses on subjectivity arising from the unifying of disparate geographies.

A distinct characteristic of the West Indian Diaspora in NYC is the coexisting settlement, transmigration, and repatriation patterns of its members. Classical ways of theorizing diasporas as a body of elective or involuntarily displaced people without plans or possibility of return "home" (Safran 1991; Clifford 1994) that is enveloped by nostalgia or longing (Hall 1999, 1990; Burman 2010) can be applied to West Indians in New York. They additionally exemplify the active transnational

engagement that theories of diasporic mobility interpret (Appadurai 1996; Gilroy 1993; Schiller et al. 1995; Foner 1987a; Foner 2001a; Basch 2001; Olwig 2001; Cordero-Guzmán, 2001). Though this text focuses in part on the orientation of the West Indian Diaspora towards various island "homes," I do not endeavor to tackle the significance of "home" or a "homeland" as is common in diaspora studies (Hall 1999; Safran 1991; Munasinghe 2001; Gilroy 1993; Clifford 1994; Brubaker 2005; Cohen, 1997). While "home" was a term and concept that my research companions invoked, theories discerning what home means to diasporic peoples are plentiful. This work instead shifts the focus to the liminal spaces (Gennep 1960; Turner 1970) that unite adoptive homes and places of origin. It is focused on bringing the "homeland" to the adoptive home in transgeographic places that demonstrate the liminality of being both a place that is "here" but much a like a place "there."

Reggae culture provides a rich point of entry to analyze West Indian spatial orientations, place making, and cultural continuity bringing into view both the relationship of West Indians to each other, and the relationship of those with African descent to African-Americans with whom many share Black racial identity. Many scholars look at the negotiation of similar and diverging class, cultural and racial identities between West Indians and African-Americans. Basch, Schiller, and Blanc (1994), Bobb (2001), Vickerman (2001), Hintzen (2001), Sollors (1996), Bryce-Laporte (1983) argue that West Indians preferentially assert their ethnic identities at the cost of embracing a racial identity, in part to disassociate with African-Americans for individual reasons and also for collective political and socioeconomic interests.

In contrast, Rogers (2001, 2006), Waters (1999, 2001), Butterfield (2004), and Fouron and Glick Schiller (2001) assert that West Indians do not necessarily privilege their ethnic identities over racial identity, rather these identities are fluid, contextually experienced and foregrounded depending on a myriad of factors. Some of these factors include class and susceptibility to structural violence, immigration status, period of time spent in the U.S., and with whom they are engaging. Other scholars have concerned themselves with interpreting the economic mobility of West Indians which they assert contrasts with that of African-Americans (Sowell, 1981; Reid 1939; Glazer & Moynihan 1970). This body of scholarship has perpetuated model minority myths and upheld "good" versus "bad" immigrant dichotomies.

Cristina Greer (2013) in a more recent text, interprets West Indian relationships to other Afro-descendants in the U.S., the breadths and limits of their identification, and loss of confidence in the American Dream. This ethnography complements these collective efforts by interpreting the increasing salience of Black racial identity among Afro-descendant West Indians and their welcoming of mutual racial identification with African-Americans. I argue that this trend arises from sharing urban geographies, occupation of similar positions within U.S. racial hierarchies, and from the impacts of transnationally communicated politicized Blackness (Thomas 2004; Thomas and Clarke 2006; Gilroy 1991b). It looks at the embodiment of this sameness and its articulation through moments when hip-hop enters reggae places, evidencing the mutual recognition of members of the African Diaspora and its communication through forms of popular music (Gilroy 1993,

1991; Perry 2008; Stanley-Niaah 2009; Brown 2006; Codrington 2006; Béhague 1994; Elam 2005).

Delving further into the analysis of embodiment and specific reggae performance mediums, chapter four presents a reading of reggae dance. Specifically I look at representations of gender and sexuality. It is a tripartite analysis that focuses first on women, moves on to men in reggae dance, and ends with an exploration into dance and cultural continuity.[8] The section on women in reggae dance represents my efforts to both engage in and depart from dominant discourse on women in urban popular dance by looking at women in reggae specifically. Politics of the gendered dispositions of reputation and respectability have been at the center of studies on gender and sexuality in the Caribbean and West Indian women in various spheres of life from work, to family, fashion, and dance (Clark 1999; Wilson 1973; Rosenberg 2010; Green 2006; Hope 2006; Cooper 2004, 1993; Barnes 2000; Thomas 2004; Freeman 2014). Interpreting the effects of the plantation slavery social system and the impacts of the middle class defining Caribbean nationalisms are central to theorizations of respectability politics. Of particular relevance is how the plantation social system converted sex into labor and dehumanized Black men and women, a lethal combination from which grew oppressive gender subjectivities. Scholars attribute the dichotomous framing of middle class and lower class respectability and morality to the middle class historically defining Caribbean nationalisms and invoking colonial social and cultural representations in doing so. Efforts to push back against dominant framings

[8] My decision to divide my analysis by gender is a reflection of the gendered dichotomies existing in reggae and the distinctions between styles of reggae dance women and men perform.

of respectable women have been focal points of theorizations of women in dancehall reggae performance.[9]

Some scholars see dancehall reggae as providing a liberatory place for contesting middle class moral economies and for women to be agents of their sexuality and themselves as keepers of it (Cooper 2004 1993; Wright 2004). Others see women's participation in less emancipatory terms, by foregrounding patriarchal social structures and dichotomies (Hope 2006; Bakare-Yusuf 2006b; Stolzoff 2010). For example, Donna Hope acknowledges the liberatory and counter cultural potential of dancehall, but nevertheless argues that women's participation is largely a response to and engagement with "capitalist-influenced sexuality" (2006:69). Olsen and Gould (2008) have a similar view. The analytical frameworks used to interpret gender and sexuality in the Caribbean are similar to those used in dance studies and in both scholarly, and popular debates on women in popular culture.[10] What is particularly similar about these frameworks is their focusing on the impacts of patriarchy, historical repression, and sexual objectification on representations of women in dance and popular culture including the representations women themselves define.

Literature focusing on women in dance ranging from ballet to modern, scrutinizes the effects of the male gaze (Mulvey 2006). Attention is given to the omnipresence of male spectatorship, awareness of it, and the kinds of authority the

[9] Here I make an intentional and analytically significant specification of "dancehall" reggae. The different genres of reggae music will be explained further in the subsequent chapter.
[10] I use "popular debates" to refer to discourse that is widely available to audiences outside of academia and broadly participated in across race, class, and geography by accessing blogs, online magazines and news sources, and through social media. They are additionally read in the op-ed sections of national newspaper including the *Jamaican Gleaner* and *Jamaica Observer*, which are both available online.

male gaze implicitly has over choreographic choices, either affirming or denying its relevance (Adair 1992; Bordo 1993; Daly 1987, 1992; Manning 1997; Farge 1992; Albright 1997). The historic dehumanization of Black women and their contemporary vulnerability to structural violence make them the subject of heated debate about their locations within past and present popular performance (Lindsey 2012; White 2001; Batker 1998; Bennett and Dickerson eds. 2001; Lee 2010; Cooper 2004, 1993; Browning 1995; Sharpley-Whiting 2007; Morgan 1999; Henderson ed. 2010). Interpreting Black women's agency, vulnerability, objectification, and sexual liberation are of central concern. Uplifting, protecting, or justifying their aesthetic choices in performance are major objectives. Popular debates on women in mass mediated cultural performance coalesce with the work of these scholars to form a heavily relied upon analytical frame through which the role, place, and actions of women are viewed and interpreted.

The reading of women in reggae dance offered here both contributes to and departs from these debates. It contributes to them by looking in part at the intersections of gender representation, sexuality, and agency. The perspectives I offer are aligned with the writings of Cooper (2004, 1993), Sterling (2010), and Wright (2004) on women in dancehall, Miller (1991) on women in soca, Browning (1995), on women in samba, as well as Lindsey (2012), Shelton (1997), and Lee's (2010) work on women in hip-hop. These scholars position women not as passive subjects of patriarchy but rather active agents in their own representation, sexual or otherwise. I depart from these studies with the attention I give to a micro-level, woman-centered view to understand embodied experiences in dance, which I assert

are also useful to interpreting the aesthetics of reggae. Subsequently, the second part of the exploration looks at men in reggae dance spaces. I shift the interpretive lens from its regular focus on hyper masculinity, gender hierarchy and courting rituals (Hope 2006; Wilson 1973; Chevannes 2001; LaFont 2001; Alexander 1997; Reddock 2004; Mohammed 2004; Murray 2002) to constructive intra-gender engagement as evidenced in dance and cathartic sentient experiences therein. The analysis hopes to shed light on the positive and constructive dimensions of reggae rather than focusing on pathological masculinities, which seems a dominant theme in reggae, Caribbeanist, and popular cultural literature. While interpreting the impacts of the male gaze, respectability politics, patriarchy, and the legacies of slavery are useful to conceptualize women and men in reggae, focusing only on these dynamics obscures other productive ways of understanding them.

Chapter four concludes with an expansion of the view outside of gender, sexuality, dance clubs and bars to the realm of the home and family to interpret the connection between dance and cultural continuity. I argue that reggae dance is a conduit for the transfer and regeneration of embodied cultural knowledge that is central to familial engagement. In development of this argument my work builds on the work of Sloat (2010), Daniel (2011), Ortiz (1950), Dunham (1994), Emery (1988), and Szwed and Marks (1988) but assumes a transnational view. Though I combine my own experience in dance with existing dance scholarship to assert that reggae is a form of Afro-Diasporic dance that illustrates the continuity of West African dance vocabulary in the Caribbean (Asante 2001; Sloat 2010; Emery 1988; Szwed and Marks 1988; Ortiz 1950; Thompson 1979), the focus of my exploration is

more on how dance facilitates contemporary transnational cultural recreation within the New World migratory matrix that West Indians travel rather than the New World/African connection. In addition to its social and cultural significances, dance is also a popular medium through which people establish professional occupations and exemplifies the connection of reggae to economic self-determination.

West Indians in New York City are creating an economic base through their production and participation in reggae culture. They are forming professional positions in reggae's various performative fields, commodifying the music and performance through the production and sale of party DVDs and music CDs, and generating capital through party planning, marketing, and promotions. Some of this work is transnational in nature. People travel to the West Indies, Europe, Asia, and Africa and send music, and images electronically to satisfy international reggae markets for dance instructors, DJs, video footage, and photography. Caribbean cuisine or reggae themed bars and restaurants are just another way that people are capitalizing on reggae and forming spaces for indulging in what the Caribbean offers in food, sound, and performance.

The analysis I present on the commodification of reggae and Caribbean cultural forms complements literature on the West Indian community's economic engagement. Scholarship on Caribbean economic contributions and incentives focus largely on medical services (Foner 1987a; Kasinitz and Vickerman 2001), public rehabilitation labor (Sutton 1987), economic (im)mobility (Greer 2013; Glazer and Moynihan, 1970), and transnational labor migrations and commodity exchange

(Basch 2001; Foner 2001b, Olwig 2001). Focusing on reggae, an industry outside of these well-explored avenues, expands the view of West Indian economic engagement, entrepreneurship, and transnational activity. It also gives insight into Pan-Anglophone Caribbean collaborative efforts to form an economic sector in New York City that they themselves are responsible for establishing and largely control. The production, commodification, and consumption of reggae and its geographic placement in Brooklyn reflect the formation of economic enclaves that other immigrant groups undertake (Takaki 1989; Zhou 1992; Portes and Stepick 1993) and exemplify the economic opportunities afforded by reggae culture.

The commodification of reggae and Caribbean cultural forms, however, is not only a process that only West Indians are partaking in. Outside of the Caribbean cultural and geographic space in New York City there is a market for reggae and desire to indulge in and experience the images, sounds, and tastes of the Caribbean. Predominantly White entrepreneurs are at the forefront of efforts to satisfy these markets in New York. I use my experience working at a chic downtown Manhattan, Jamaican cuisine inspired, reggae music filled restaurant as a case study to interpret Caribbean cultural commodification by outsiders to the Caribbean geographic space in New York City. I look specifically at how satisfying these markets takes shape demonstrating how a hallmark of these efforts is the creation of hyperreal spaces in which the Caribbean is invoked, with reggae as a conduit, for "authentic" Caribbean touristic indulgence. These spaces are made cross culturally intelligible and "safe" while still conjuring the Caribbean and reggae experiences. White, non-Caribbean people predominantly occupy them. To develop this argument I turn to theorists of

the hyperreal (Baudrillard 1988; Fjellman 1992) and to scholarship on cultural tourism (Eco 1983; Urry 1990; Richards 2001; Griffin, Raj, and Morpeth 2013). I build on this scholarship to argue that the creation of the hyperreal allows for a distinct kind of cultural tourism – one that is not dependent on travel. Rather than removing oneself from the known and ordinary to visit the distant and extraordinary, the allure of the distant and extraordinary is recreated within the space of the known and ordinary allowing for non-threatening access to that desired extraordinary realm.

Hip-hop scholars have turned to cultural tourism in efforts to explain White rural and suburban consumption of hip-hop and gangster rap music (Watkins 2005; Ogbar 2007; Rose 2008). They locate the attraction to hip-hop and gangster rap in the imaginary travel into ghetto life and (glorified) urban Black America that the listening experience affords. The analysis of cultural tourism outlined here elaborates on these ideas by focusing on more than just the aural and by providing an in depth interrogation of how cultural touristic experiences are constructed and their significances. I critically analyze the elements that come together to create "authentic" cultural encounters for consumers of reggae and Caribbean culture. Again, a hallmark of these processes is the formation of cultural touristic spaces that can be entered into and indulged in within the geography of the known. In further exploration of non-West Indian commodification and consumption of reggae and Caribbean cultural forms, this work also takes a brief look at the creation of Manhattan based reggae parties and social scenes.

Confusing the Paradigm: Conceptualizing Ethnicity and Nationality

Through the ethnographic process of interpreting West Indian subjectivities I found that how my research collaborators use and understand the terms ethnicity, nationality, and citizenship differs from scholarly interpretations. In this ethnography I mobilize these terms as my research collaborators do in efforts to discern their distinct ways of conceptualizing themselves and their relationships to the U.S. and to transnational cultural cartographies. My hope is that this will give the ethnography greater analytical breadth.

While conducting research various people asked me what my nationality was to which I would respond that I was born in the United States. The questioning never stopped there and continued with efforts to know where in fact I was "from," an indication to me that inquiries into my ethnic background and desires to understand my cultural loyalties were being made. When I posed the question "what is your nationality?" to them in return invariably they named a Caribbean island. My research collaborators, regardless of their citizenship or immigration status referred to their "nationality" hardly ever as American, but instead as Trinidadian, Jamaican, Guyanese, Grenadian and so on. Nationality is used to refer to a person's own or their parents, or grandparents place of birth rather than a place of citizenship. Their conceiving of nationality, then, is not as a legal-political status that their citizenship defines, rather a sentiment of cultural loyalty and belonging to a geopolitical unit that is a nation, though not necessarily the one in which a person holds citizenship.

My research collaborators' framing of nationality is closely aligned with early theorists of nationalism that root it in sentiments of social and cultural loyalty (Hayes 1926; Plamenatz 1973) in contrast to those analyses that emphasize the constructed and instrumental aspect of nations (Hobsbawm 1990; Gellner 1983). According to Hayes (1926) the term nationality arose in eighteenth century Europe "to designate a group of people who speak either the same language or closely related dialects who cherish common historical traditions, and who constitute or think they constitute a distinct cultural society" (Hayes 1926: 5). Nationality, as Hayes describes the origins of the term, is much like ethnicity. He goes on to say that nationalism is an "emotional fusion" of nationality and patriotism – belonging to and having loyalty to a distinct sociocultural group, a positionality that forms a sense of pride in and loyalty to one's place of origin. Hayes' framing places sentiments of loyalty to the cultural body (the group of people who speak either the same language or closely related dialects who cherish common historical traditions) before the nation-state itself. It is the sentiment of those sharing a nationality that creates the nationalism on which state formation is dependent. It follows that in highly transnational, multiethnic societies, loyalties to ones "nationality" remains and emotionally fuses with transnational patriotism, a sense of pride in the place of origin of those sharing a nationality.

This framing gives insight into why many of my research collaborators respond that their nationality is Trinidadian or Jamaican as opposed to American despite having been born in the U.S. In doing so they foreground their transnational cultural loyalties over their legal-political citizenship which, again, I argue is

evidence of place making practices in adoptive homes that create a sense of belonging to a distant national unit from within another. It is partly from this milieu that I came to theorize figurative citizenship. In keeping with these logics and approach to presenting the following analysis, I use the terms "national groups" to account for the various "nationalities" represented in Caribbean Brooklyn that make cultural claims and exhibit loyalties to specific nations of the Caribbean regardless of the possible inaccuracy of these terms in reflecting their true place of citizenship. In later chapters this approach allows me to explain the relationships and conflicts between West Indians as struggles between different "nationalities" as this is how antagonisms take shape.

Ethnicity is another confounding term. Scholarly associations of ethnicity with ancestry and history (Sollors 1996; Isaacs 1974), and its framing as an identity that is larger than the family but smaller than the state (Glazer and Moynihan 1975) suppose that ethnic identity is attached to or found within a nation-state. The transnational movements of people and processes that "diasporize" (Clifford 1994: 313), however, have undone the binding of ethnicity to specific states and created multi-ethnic societies that disrupt a direct correlation between ethnicity and a geopolitical unit that is a nation-state (Gupta and Ferguson, 1997; Lavie, 1996; Patterson, 1994). Still, there remains an implicit link between the two in that there is a nation-state from which ethnic groups have come even if it is not the one in which they reside, or, in the case of historically multi-ethnic societies, see themselves as being a part of as a distinct ethnic group. My research collaborators disrupt the implicit link between nation-state and ethnicity by constructing their

ethnic identity as a regional one. They use ethnicity as a widely inclusive term that encompasses all the members of the Caribbean (with the exclusion of the Spanish speaking countries) despite elements of cultural and historical distinction. Their ethnicity is broadly West Indian.

Barth's (1969) and Hannerz's (1996) framing of ethnicity leave conceptual room to envisage an ethnic identity as a regional one as my research collaborators do. Barth defines ethnic groups as social units that have "membership which identifies itself, and is identified by others, as constituting a category distinguishable from other categories of the same order" (1969: 298). He furthermore observes that ethnic groups have constantly evolving criteria for membership, making internally ascribed boundaries more significant to the composition of ethnic groups than specific cultural criteria.[11] Hannerz (1996) elaborates offering that ethnic identity and boundaries allow for cultural vitality amidst the threat of assimilation. The partially subjective and ascriptive nature of ethnic groups as Barth and Hannerz describe them combined with ethnic groups' desire for regeneration within a larger community explain how my research collaborators define their ethnic identity as broadly West Indian. They are an amalgamation of peoples with various origins forming a collective in which people mutually recognize their sharing of a cultural ethos that makes them more similar to each other than to other ethnic groups in the U.S. The expansive "West Indian" ethnicity of my collaborators is evidence of

[11] Vincent (1974) offers a contrasting interpretation asserting that outside structural factors that marginalize certain ethnic groups involuntarily create boundaries around them prohibiting exit from ethnic identification. While Vincent's interpretation is relevant to West Indians, the focus of the point being made here is on the agentive dimensions to ethnic identity formation, which I assert are behind the formation of a broadly regional West Indian ethnic identity.

creolization processes that although yielding different outcomes, still allow for mutual recognition and identification.

Methodology

As indicated, the location of this ethnographic exploration took place primarily in Brooklyn, New York where I spent two years (August 2011 – August 2013) conducting research. There was no typical day in the field. The structure of my days was determined by whether or not my activities were focused on interviewing, conversing, socializing, observing, and documenting in daytime spaces (homes, stores, restaurants, or neighborhood avenues for example), in nighttime spaces (reggae bars, clubs, concerts, sound clashes, and parties for example), or both in a single day. I was able to meet people both in indoor and outdoor, and daytime and nighttime physical and temporal spaces, many of which through my friendliness and persistence in seeking them out became research companions who were central to producing this ethnography. Through these key research companions I was introduced to others and was able to expand my social network in Brooklyn, in New York City reggae more broadly, and meet willing interviewees.

The primary methodological approaches to conducting this research were demographic data collection through digital archival research, participant observation, holding guided, informal interviews and focus groups, and the documentation of everyday conversation and interactions. I held thirty-seven semi-structured interviews with West Indians who recently arrived to the U.S., first, 1.5,

and second generation West Indian Americans, and reggae professionals including: DJs dancers, music producers, event promoters, videographers, and photographers. During these meetings I gathered information about their professional lives, interests and involvement with reggae, their identities, upbringing, relocation, and settlement stories. I also documented countless other conversations.

The age range of my interviewees varied but was largely between the ages of eighteen to sixty. I primarily interviewed, interacted with, and observed people who were of age to attend reggae parties, which required that they be at least eighteen or twenty-one. Outside of nighttime leisure spaces I was able to observe others who were younger than eighteen, but still old enough to be in social public places without an adult chaperone, for example: parks, street corners, hair salons, and restaurants. Interacting with adults also gave me insight, into the experiences of the youth – their children, siblings, nieces and nephews – though from the vantage point of adults. The perspectives of adults cannot stand in as input from children but did provide useful information delivered through informative anecdotes. People of all ages are participants in reggae culture, its creation and consumption, however, not everyone was able to participate outside the home in the same way.

The class and occupation of those who collaborated with me in this research varied. I never inquired directly about what class my participants perceived themselves to be a member of. Their responses, however, often helped me to assess more or less whether they were working or middle class, and their level of education. Specifically of importance was information about where they lived, where they grew up, their occupation, their international travel, and what they

described their life circumstances to be in the country from which they came. Some, though by far a minority, were evidently considered to be of either the upper middle class in their country of origin. Owing multiple properties in the Caribbean and having had the most prestigious international schooling was often evidence. Most of this demographic of research participants experienced a descent in economic standing upon relocation to the U.S. The majority of my participants came from working class families, some who had risen from poverty in the country from which they came.

Regular involvement with and observation of people performing, leisurely enjoying, dancing, and singing along to reggae music, or socializing in reggae places were central to my research approach. Communicating with them about their experiences was how I endeavored to interpret what reggae meant to people, how they experienced it, lived it, how it transformed them, and enabled transference for them. I also observed and documented the spaces themselves in which reggae was produced and enjoyed taking note of how people interacted with space: holding lit lighters in the air in communion, banging on walls in enthusiastic praise or celebration, and calling out for example. Understanding how people became involved with space as figures enmeshed within it, and how in their totality became a part of its design and atmosphere, together fomenting the energy, sounds, and sights that made distinct reggae places were significant inquiries to my research.

The spaces that were converted into reggae places I analyzed varied. Many were public: nightclubs, night lounges, bars, concert halls, neighborhood streets, restaurants, and businesses converted into places for reggae parties by night

including catering halls. Many were private: people's homes, music studios, and the personal spaces people created around their immediate persons and retracted into for intimate experiences with reggae, for instance, while wearing their headphones on subways. The analysis of Caribbean spaces more generally was also integral to my methodology. Many of them overlapped with reggae evincing the strong links between the two – homes, street corners, bars, and restaurants. Others examples included, but were not limited to, hair salons and barbershops. In observance I asked, how are these spaces being constituted as distinctly Caribbean places? What processes are involved? What significances do these spaces and processes have? In all of the spaces detailed I observed and documented: gender representation and interaction, specific reggae and Caribbean cultural practices, interpersonal communications, gestured and vocalized displays of racial, ethnic, and national identity, style, dance, and the complex ways in which people interacted with music and created musical experiences. Complementing the bodies that filled reggae and Caribbean spaces were their actual physicality: the structures and designs of the walls, how they were decorated, and how they were transformed to make possible the experiencing of them as being connected to the Caribbean.

As a means to be in contact with West Indians in a context I would not have otherwise (at a place of work) I spent a year working as a bartender at a celebrity frequented Caribbean food restaurant in the wealthy SoHo neighborhood of Manhattan – Mo'Bay Café.[12] In the restaurant kitchen, cooks and prep chefs prepared foods to the sounds of reggae, sung along, and reggae listening sparked

[12] I have assigned a pseudonym to protect anonymity.

conversations related to the music itself, family, friends, the islands, relocation, and the future. Outside of the private employee realm and in the public customer one, reggae and Caribbean culture was still significant. Reggae, from roots to dancehall, was the ambient music played, and through their indulgence of Caribbean food and imagery, customers escaped to the islands through an exoticized dining experience intended to recreate the magic of the Caribbean for the predominantly White, wealthy, or celebrity clientele, right in the safety of NYC's lofty SOHO area. My experience working at Mo'Bay Café gave me invaluable insight into how reggae and labor overlapped, the marketing and consumption of reggae by non-West Indians, and the opportunity to build relationships with individuals who were some of the most significant to this work.

Internet research also comprised a significant component of my methodology. Social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube comprise virtual communities that were additionally significant reggae spaces. People share information on these sites about upcoming events, their opinions on dance or DJ competitions results, current events, and reggae related happenings and their self-promotion. Social media, in turn, served as a readily available newsfeed detailing what was going on within the community of reggae participants. Following people on Twitter – being able to view their communications through this particular electronic social venue – also afforded me the opportunity in one instance to arrange an interview with someone who I was finding it difficult to access and might not have otherwise come into contact with.

On another occasion I was able to engage in an impassioned, candid, and very informative (and public) debate with an internationally renowned reggae artist about homosexuality. His input added to the conversations I had with others on the subject. Social media also provides an important means of connection between the Caribbean and the West Indian Diaspora, creating valuable spaces for the exchange of cultural knowledge on new dances, songs, and language. It was important that I understood what people were frequently accessing and why. The Internet and social media similarly provide a platform for communities to assert themselves as actors within the global reggae community. On his Facebook page, one DJ from Costa Rica regularly shared links to interviews with Jamaican artists visiting his Costa Rican reggae radio station. In doing so he was positioning himself, and Costa Rica, within the global community of reggae culture.

Though scouring the Internet and closeness with my computer outside of writing is not to my liking, it was important that I made Internet based research a part of my day to be connected to this significant transnational virtual reggae community. Exploring the Internet also gave me access to various news sources relevant to my research community, particularly New York State wide news, local Brooklyn or Bronx news, and Caribbean news. The close monitoring of Black and Latino communities, violence, police aggression, and perspectives on these communities was central to understanding the experience of West Indians in New York. During my research the words of police offers who had made a public Facebook page to collectively voice their grievances, mostly racist and violent, about the annual West Indian Day Parade gave me insight into how authorities who work

closely with (or against) West Indian communities view the people who they are "protecting" or (surveilling and controlling). The op-ed section of the Jamaica *Gleaner* provided a myriad of views on reggae, Jamaica, and the diaspora. These are just small examples of how the Internet was useful, truly a sign of the changing labor of an anthropologist in the Digital Era.

My primary forms of documentation were audio recordings, pen and paper notes, typed reflections, journal entries, which I later typed for easier indexing, and notes taken in emails to myself written using my cellular phone. Each had its place and importance. The audio recorder carried its own form of research capital that helped me. When people saw a recorder they knew I meant business as evidenced by their willingness share and by how they settled into their narratives. I gathered that the recorder indicated I was interested in their stories and work in a different way than simply a reggae fan. It was a tool that seemed to represent an esteem I hoped to bring to their work, their story, their lives, and an emblem of my ability to bring their story beyond the place in which it was told to an audience. While many people did not know what an anthropologist was, the sight of a recorder invoked journalism in their minds, a profession which all of my collaborators knew, and which they again, associated with delivering their message, art, knowledge, and personal stories to the world.

There were occasional disadvantages to the recorder. I once had an interviewee who hosted a local radio show become performative once the recorder was on. He shouted out his artist name and a number of adlibs. Once I informed him that the recorder was strictly for my own listening, to free my hands and eyes so I

could speak freely with him and make eye contact, and that no one else would hear the information but me, he changed his tone and intention. For the self-conscious, fear of a slip in thought, speech, or language or taking too much time in their rumination presented another challenge – the curtailing of free flowing thought and conversation. This occurred only twice, however, with two dancers who, perhaps used to being on a stage, were quite aware of their performance. Both those who seemingly felt self-conscious and those who were clearly aware of the presence of the recorder, the thing that could hold a persons words and ideas as they were forever, seemed to become less inhibited as time went on and conversation unfolded not following a strict question and answer format. The occasional disadvantages did not outweigh the benefits, particularly because after some time with the interviewee the disadvantages waned altogether. Witnessing research participants' gratification for being recorded was always a research high point.

My cellular phone was a salvation and was the means for my regular everyday, up to the minute documentation. It allowed me to type rapidly and with a touch of a button have my notes saved to various data storage locations, email and the phone itself. It furthermore eliminated the loss of valuable information to illegible handwriting, which had happened to me numerous times. Taking advantage of this technological luxury seemed fitting for the U.S. based anthropologist conducting research that, in part, examines people's interactions with technology, the Internet, and social media. I in turn, felt not like I was violating the principle of writing and the closeness of anthropologists with their notes, the physical notes themselves, but rather like I was aligned with the type of research I was doing and

the activities and actions of my research community. A cellular phone was also not an odd sight in the spaces I conducted research in which people expected to see them. Contrastingly a pen and paper could raise unwanted suspicions in a party, concert, bar, or club context, and even within the intimacy of the home when I was aiming to be inconspicuous. That a pen and paper in a home raises more suspicions than a cellular phone is truly a demonstration of how intimately we have invited technology into our lives, and of how people have become accustomed to disengaging from interpersonal, face to face, sociality in exchange for impersonal electronic sociality or involvement. Nevertheless, it remains the case, no matter how frustrating to even myself at times.

Overuse of phone in contexts deemed inappropriate within research spaces, specifically during intense moments of reggae performance, did draw attention. My involvement with my phone was read as not being involved with the environment, music, dance, people, and fun around me. On two occasions people commented. Once a man approached me, inserted his hand between my face and cellphone screen, aggressively waved it back and forth before chuckling and walking away shaking his head as I smiled. If only he had known that rather than being uninvolved I was so involved with what I was seeing that I could not stop my impassioned fingers from documenting it all. Regardless, documenting on my phone helped me to blend in.

In Between the Insider/Outsider Binary: The Ethnographer's Positionality

Where I was assumed or later discovered to fit within U.S. class, ethnic, and racial cartographies played a role in how my research participants received me. I drifted on the border of the insider/outsider binary in ways that impacted my research process. On more occasions than not I was asked why I cared to know about reggae, where I grew up, where I lived, what my nationality is, which as indicated prior tends to mean "what is your ethnicity?" or some combination of these questions. These inquiries into my background were clear efforts to asses how relatable I was, could be comfortably interacted with, or what assumptions could be made about me. They often came before engaging with me in an in depth and personal way or during that engagement. In response I would offer that I am Black, American and Puerto Rican, that I was raised in the Bronx and live in Harlem. The desire of people to "place" me, and their responses to my answers, confirmed the sneaking suspicion that some felt they could more openly speak to me depending on my positionality. Of particular relevance was feeling open to sharing their perspectives on race and lived experiences tied to it. Campt (2006) witnessed a similar phenomenon conducting research among Black Germans. On one occasion a Rasta who was suspicious of my desire to get to know him explained to me that the F.B.I. had "sent" him "all types of women." Only after a barrage of questions did he agree to speak with me further. This Rasta eventually became a central research companion often drawing me into his analysis of "We Africans." How I identified myself opened doors of communication, though without me knowing it, perhaps closed others.

My insider racial identification was not always a given to my collaborators as it was to me. There were a few occasions where men or women referred to me as "Spanish girl," which though not carrying a racial specification, within the research context I worked signifies someone who is not Black. I would suddenly be an outsider. Other times I was mistaken for Trinidadian, the nation to which people tend to ascribe racial ambiguity, an insider once again, at least on the surface. Evidently being a woman of color, I never felt I stood out in the depths of Brooklyn scouring reggae places where mainly Afro-descendant West Indians were present or navigating the West Indian community. Being inconspicuous helped me to feel free to more actively participate, the benefit to being a scholar of color working in communities of color. Additionally, having been raised in the Bronx I felt at ease in the urban geography of West Indian Brooklyn. Though an outsider to the community, I am an insider to inner-city New York experiences.

As an Afro-descendent or ethnically ambiguous brown person of some sort, comfortably maneuvering my way through Brooklyn reggae places, it was possible to be visually read as someone who belonged. The visual perception of belonging was convenient and my preference. I preferred to pass under visual radars rather than call attention to myself as a researcher. Upon speaking to me, however, I would quickly be positioned as an outsider to the West Indian cultural community. Not having an Anglophone Caribbean accent of some origin or ability to code switch into one when speaking to other West Indians, as many did, pointed to my inability to claim West Indian cultural identity.[13] So while I could be perceived at a glance as an

[13] The significances of language to West Indian identity are interrogated further in chapter three.

insider to the Brooklyn reggae experience, a person of color, secure in the urban setting, I was an outsider to the in-group cultural community of West Indians. Additionally, I am not from Brooklyn, a reality that would be made known through lines of questioning directed at me, which, combined with my cultural outsiderness further placed me outside of the ethnographic context.

Being a sometimes insider or drifting on blurred borders – racial or geographic as a New Yorker – facilitated ease in communication. It was my perpetual place as an outsider to the specific geographically situated cultural community of West Indians that brought my anthropologist subjectivity and labor into high relief. This outsiderness provided the basis for me to approach a community and geography that are both a part of the city in which I was raised and live with the eye of a researcher, exploring the unfamiliar in the midst of a world that was presumed to be, and previously experienced as, familiar. Jamaican, Caribbeanist scholar Carolyn Cooper fervently believes in "the authority of the native as speaking subject" and roots her work in "a politics of place that claims a privileged space for the local" (Cooper 2004: 2). Conducting fieldwork in New York City, my "home," contradicted all assertions of the authority of the local, of the native, precisely because it is a geography that encompasses too many ethnic enclaves and disparate communities to ever claim a single local or native. From this position of non-local, non-native within my own native home, is where these inquiries were made from.

My anthropologist subjectivity, which could not be assessed by appearance alone, also set me apart from the community of reggae participants in which I would

find myself. Outside of the visual realm, claiming my anthropologist positionality benefited my data gathering effort. In a city where people tend to be suspicious of each other, introducing myself as an anthropologist in nocturnal reggae places was useful to explain my direct approach of strangers while they participated in revelry. Though most people did not initially know what an anthropologist was, presenting myself as an one piqued interest in speaking to me, likely an allure of the unknown and sense of prestige it invoked. To be clearer, I would add that I was researching reggae culture and gathering information that would eventually result in a publication. I could tell from a nod, relaxing of a furrowed brow, and enthusiasm with which a person would speak that saying I was an anthropologist encouraged others to take me seriously, and distinguished me from other participants in the space as one of an investigatory mission. This contrasts with the air of suspicion with which researchers are typically perceived and treated within communities of color. People's receptiveness to me grew from their interest in being documented. Many were reggae professionals, aspiring professionals, or avid participants in and producers of the culture enthusiastic to share their stories. Those who collaborated with me in gathering information felt a sense of pride to the point of being emotionally moved by my interest in their culture, identities, and lives. They would thank me and shared with me how important they felt it was for a greater audience to be exposed to West Indian communities and reggae culture in New York. Receiving thanks and witnessing enthusiastic participation was the greatest joy of my entire research process. The words of all the individuals who collaborated with me are the knowledge that makes this work possible.

There were some cases where I chose to minimize my anthropologist subjectivity. In friendly conversation and working as a bartender at Mo'Bay Café are two examples. Presenting myself as an anthropologist, which is heavy with class and educational distinctions, was simply not necessary when engaging in everyday rapport or outside of quelling roused suspicions. Working at Mo'Bay, I felt more a part of the staff community, composed of predominantly chefs, musicians, models, actors, artists of some sort, or career service industry workers, when I minimized my anthropologist identity. It was important to me that I first be seen as an active member of the community of employees, and build camaraderie, and friendships based on our shared experiences as staff, and shared labor. It was of course no secret that I was an anthropologist, and it became widespread knowledge once relationships were otherwise built. However, I always participated as a listener rather than storyteller in conversations about career endeavors, a part of my anthropologically and personally situated preference to blend in whenever possible.

My female gender identity played an interesting role in my research experience. I was able to approach both men and women. Women were not apprehensive speaking and meeting with me as they may have been otherwise, and men were happy to turn on the charm and give a moment of their time. Furthermore, reggae culture is heavy with masculinity. While the appreciators of reggae are of all genders and sexual orientations, outside of dance, men are the primary actors in reggae performance. Men almost exclusively hold positions as DJs, event presenters, promoters, music producers, videographers, photographers, radio show hosts, singers, musicians, and numerous other professions. Most reggae events

are more populated with men than women, especially sound clashes – the DJ competitions that form a very distinct and unique place within the NYC reggae subculture.

Male dominance within reggae places often positioned me as an outsider to instances of intersubjective communication and performance engagement. Being physically on the outside often meant I was left out of insider conversation, commentary, and, frustratingly for me, discussions about event happenings, unless conversations became so animated they reached the level of yelling and dramatic gesturing, which was common. The relative absence of women as dominant actors in reggae production and women constituting the minority in reggae places combined with my location outside of the sphere of men sharpened my sense of reggae culture being a hyper-masculine expressive form. This is undoubtedly also a view that arose from my own exclusion and always being made keenly aware of being a woman within the space. As a result of male dominance within reggae, men also formed the vast majority of my research collaborators.

The ways I experience my female gender and Black, and Latina ethnoracial subjectivities inform how I interpret the information presented here, just as much as they affected my actual research process. There were many instances, particularly related to being a person of color, a marginalized inner-city New Yorker, or being a woman performer that I felt I could very directly identify with the people with whom I was speaking, and draw experiential comparisons. Additionally, as a member of both the African and Puerto Rican Diasporas who grew up dancing hip-hop, salsa, Afro-Puerto Rican *plena*, and reggae socially with friends and family, and

modern dance and hip-hop more formally in stage performances as a teen and young adult, I feel a certain analytical closeness to interpreting the relationship of expressive culture to the body, place making, sociality, community, identity, and cultural continuity. It is a sense of closeness that inspires my interest in understanding the symbiotic relationship between these dynamics and reggae culture in West Indian Brooklyn

Overview of Chapters

In the first chapter I demonstrate how forms of popular culture constitute analytically useful ethnographic lenses to interpret subjectivity formation. It also explores the development of reggae in Jamaica and its growth into a performance based subculture in New York City. Chapter two explores the social, economic, and performance based dimensions to West Indian place making, formation of transgeographies, and presents an argument for bringing West Indian neighborhoods in New York City into conceptualizations of the Caribbean space. Chapter three takes a closer look at West Indian racial, ethnic, and transnational identities and the creation of figurative citizenship. It also considers the relationships between the different West Indian national groups and a hierarchy that develops through the formation of reggae culture. Chapter three furthermore explores the location within reggae places of Japanese nationals who relocate to Brooklyn to live in Caribbean communities and be a part and learn the artistry of reggae culture. Chapter four goes inside reggae dance spaces to interpret gender

and sexuality in dance and cultural continuity. Chapter five retracts the view to consider the larger commodification of reggae and Caribbean cultural forms for marketing and broader public consumption.

A Brief Note on Reggae Terminology

The contrasting use of reggae music related vocabulary between Jamaica and the United States necessitated moments of clarification throughout the research process. Of particular significance is the use of the homonym deejay/DJ. In Jamaica a deejay (spelled phonetically) is a person who speaks in rhyme (toasts) over reggae music recordings or live instrumentation. The deejay in Jamaica fulfills the role that in hip-hop is referred to as that of the "rapper," though stylistically they are very different approaches to lyrical and melodic delivery. In Jamaica the term "selector" refers to the person responsible for choosing and playing musical recordings for listeners to enjoy and deejays to lay their lyrics over. This role in the United States across genres of music is that of the DJ, an acronym for disc jockey, a term historically popularized through hip-hop music play and production. DJ in the U.S. musical context is both a noun (she is a DJ) and a verb (she is DJing) and, again, refers to choosing the music as the Jamaican "selector" does.

Jamaicans and other West Indians with whom I spoke in the New York City ethnographic context almost exclusively referred to the act of playing music as "DJing." When choosing a noun form there was some changing between "selector" and "DJ," though DJ was more commonly used. In Costa Rica as well, where I have

conducted research on reggae culture in Afro-Caribbean communities, people also use the term DJ (including in Spanish) as it is used in New York, although historically reggae was transnationalized directly from Jamaica. These linguistic transformations evince the transnational influence of hip-hop and movement of reggae language throughout the Circum-Caribbean space.

While selector and DJ are two easily interchanged terms, what to call the reggae "deejay" (the toaster) when speaking in the U.S. gave pause to many. Some said "rapper" tentatively and with much modifying of the term and others went ahead with deejay. I locate this conundrum in two issues: New York City based reggae lyricists are uncommon and much less so than DJs for reasons I will detail later. In turn, the position requires far less defining causing confusion when it must be named. Additionally, DJ, as most in the U.S. understand it, refers to someone who fulfills a completely different role and reggae language has adjusted accordingly to account for that.

To bridge the different understandings and to account for common usage in the reggae context in which this research was conducted, while also respecting the very different stylistic approaches to lyricism that hip-hop and reggae artists employ, I use the terminology in the following ways: written out in the form "deejay" this word will refer to the work of reggae lyricists who perform in the faster chanting style of dancehall reggae. Reggae singers will remain singers. DJ in its acronym form will be used in place of selector and DJing will retain its verb form.

CHAPTER ONE
READING POPULAR CULTURE AND THE TRANSNATIONALIZATION OF REGGAE

Why Read Popular Culture?

The theoretical grounding of this analysis of reggae and its connection to Brooklyn and articulation with the West Indian community rests on the notion that forms of popular culture are valuable lenses for anthropologically examining how the practices within performance spaces and places of leisure articulate with, illustrate, and impact circumstances outside of it including, but not limited to, constructions of gender, sociocultural identities, and transnational dispositions. Ethnomusicologists Nettle et al. (2002) define popular music as music that is social, easily accessible, heard in informal venues, and commodified. Sociologist Herman Gray asserts that combining "popular" with "culture" illustrates the "commonsense understandings" (1995: 2), of histories, desires, and sociality that are expressed, performed, enacted, and viewable through media outlets. His emphasis on the commonsense positions popular culture outside of interpretations of social, economic, political, or material life impressed upon people in educational or otherwise institutionalized settings such as the work place. Understandings of histories, desires, and sociality are, however, not always widely shared, or common. In recognition of this I add here that within the community of people who are responsible for the creation of a specific expressive form that becomes popularized, interpretations are shared within that creative community. This becomes the "commonsense." Furthermore, within a creative and participant community people

selectively consume and put into practice the images, actions, and ideologies represented within that popular (expressive) culture. While interpretations may change as music and modes of performance become widely enjoyed (popular), there are still localized commonsense understandings tied to the evolving contexts in which they continue to be created that persist. Hall (1993) similarly emphasizes the locations of popular culture with "the people," or those responsible for its creation and who identify with it as mediums for expression with meanings that exist outside of dominant cultural representations.

Lipsitz (2001), Iton (2008), Hall (1993), Gray (1995) and Gramsci (1972) provide conceptual grounds for understanding the analytical usefulness of popular culture. Lipsitz found himself inspired by the experience of witnessing his students, diverse in age, ethnicity, and occupation, analyze what he refers to as pop cultural text, or film. Lipsitz observed how his students interpreted the film in the context of their own lived experiences and personal identities, which both shaped their interpretations and illustrated their identities and complex resolution with the world around them. His experience brought into relief the value of pop cultural text to creating a space where memories and experiences otherwise suppressed or rendered inexpressible by dominant economic, political, and social narratives and ways of thinking can be unleashed. Through the unleashing of their memories and embracing of the unconventionality of their experiences, students created a space where, through their interaction with popular culture, "happiness was still possible" (xiii). Students experienced joy in their temporary immersion in a space outside of the regular rhythms and dominant representations of life.

This ethnography assumes Lipsitz's view that seeing the productivity of popular culture to interpreting self and larger social worlds as evidenced through reggae, its attached performance modes, and the physical, visual, and imaginative creation tied to it. The differences between the logic and experiences represented in the public realms of work, commutes, media events, and the macro political and economic, and the intimate realms of the home, leisure, informal everyday sociality, and solitary moments can create a space of disjuncture, alienation, and anxiety that are given outlets for expression within popular cultural and leisure spaces in which people's alternative to public subjectivities can be expressed. This is the theoretical basis that the explorations of this ethnography are developed from.

Popular culture not only allows for a plurality of views (Lipsitz 2001), but epistemes and subjectivities connected to the artistic forms that shape the culture, which as observed here are reggae music, dance and performance. The embracing of plurality that popular culture is indicative of allows it be unhinged from overarching moderating structures of its content, unbound to a single orthodoxy, giving insight into realities not interpretable within dominant spheres of cultural representations alone – work, party politics, family, school, and more formal cultural institutions and organizations like alumni groups, and immigrant organizations. It is a realm where anything goes, and what goes provides insight into the worlds of its participants as they live them outside of the majority moments of ordinary life. Following this logic, Rose (1994), Hope (2006), Gray (1995), Hall (1996) and countless others demonstrate that specific forms of Black popular culture present a venue to challenge local political, cultural, and moral discourse.

This is not to indicate that popular culture is inherently non-conforming, that it does not borrow ideas from dominant representations, or that it is counter-cultural, acting against dominant sociocultural and political epistemes, or revolutionary, hoping to destabilize them. Rather that existing outside of the ordinary, everyday, and outside of the macro political and economic, these representations and the understandings of them can be playfully used in ways that exist outside the macro realm to account for multiple positionalities and create spaces for alternatively constituting subjectivities. In this way too, popular culture is political. Of course, as well, the more expansively a popular culture becomes, the more it illustrates a new "dominant," though it is a dominant that represents the efforts of its creators rather than those that define larger social, economic, and political structures.

The separation of popular cultural spheres from overarching orthodoxies of the majority everyday moment makes the spaces in which popular cultural forms are experienced venues for the (re)presentation and construction of self, and indulgence in practices and activities not supported outside of it. What is unveiled within these venues is useful to interpreting the people who are within them. Furthermore, the tendency of popular cultural forms to push boundaries in their representations (Rose 1994) helps to determine what those boundaries are. Critiquing the lack of Italian, popular, national literature at the time of his writing in the 1930s, Gramsci (1971) asserted that the intelligentsia was failing to identify with the masses and vice versa. His assertion indicates that where there are lapses in understanding there are analytical holes interpreting the subjectivities and

experiences of the masses, which serves to impede the intelligentsia's development of popular, national literature. These analytical holes can be peered through and the masses interpreted where the intelligentsia is stripped of this label and brought into the masses, where cultural production is not directed by the intelligentsia, but rather by the individuals composing the masses – in the popular cultural realm.

Lipsitz (2001) articulates his position on whether mass culture and popular culture can be conflated. I too would like to present my position on the subject. While the "popular" concept infers the role of mass marketing, mass communication, production, and exportation in the process of producing culture and converting it into widely consumed forms, putting popular culture under the rubric of mass culture obscures the origins of widely consumed forms in the smaller, community level expression intended for in group participation, localized production, consumption, and interpretation. The conflation of mass and popular culture also ignores how popularized forms were once for the articulation of these locally specific and contextualized experiences emerging at specific junctures of history and how those experiences articulated with wider economic, political, and social realities. Local or community specificity is not necessarily lost when expressive forms become widely consumed. Furthermore, equating popular and mass culture makes an assumption about how expressive forms become popular that is not necessarily representative of their diffusion.

Hip-hop in the U.S., reggae in Jamaica, and bachata in the Dominican Republic are all popular music forms that originated within disenfranchised working class communities. Their becoming broadly "popular culture" was indicative of their

growing consumption across racial, class, or geographic barriers. Greater exposure to these previously marginalized music forms came as a result of its producers bringing them, and their attached performance, into public spaces – bars, street corners, vacant lots, and informal party venues (Stolzoff 2000; Rose 1994; Pacini Hernandez 1995). It was their growth across social barriers, which their producers led, that subsequently made these music forms ripe for commodification. Expressive forms are mass produced because they are already popular, as opposed to the other way around. Conflating mass and popular culture also exaggerates the role of the agents of mass production in the formation of the expressive content itself. Quite to the contrary of notions that the mass production of expressive forms converts them into adulterated expression, Hall asserts that "popular" evokes the connection of an expressive form to the experience of "the people" locates it with "the people," and therefore simultaneously represents the underside, the classless, the "vulgar" through which ideological battles and battles of representation are taking place (Hall 1992: 25).

Not necessarily all representations in popular culture, however, will be counter cultural. Some argue that the emphasis on sex, for example, in hip-hop is a clear acceptance of the use of sex for marketing (Sharpley-Whiting 2007); or that the embracing of luxury items in dancehall reggae does nothing to contest capitalism, an economic system that has historically oppressed Black people, and from which they have been historically excluded. Popular culture still functions within larger social power structures and economic frameworks in turn articulating with and against them. However, how they are articulating with them is just as

valuable a focus of fruitful interpretation and investigation as examinations of how they articulate against them.

Much of this differentiating between mass and popular culture is unnecessary in the analysis of reggae, partly because it still lies outside the realm of extreme mass production and consumption as witnessed in hip-hop or U.S. rock, for example. The reggae industry in comparison remains much smaller and less moderated. Artists can become internationally known from songs recorded in basement studios diffused without the work of big company advertising. However, still it is important to address this difference in interpretation if I am to argue that popular culture, of which reggae is an example, lies outside of dominant narratives and hegemonic interpretations, and an overarching moderating orthodoxy, which, in part, makes for a productive analytical space.

Returning to the analytical usefulness of popular culture, Iton (2008), Hall (1996), and Gray (1995) all advocate for analyzing forms of Black popular (expressive) culture to interpret Afro-Diasporic negotiation of social, economic, and political worlds and historical contingencies in their places of origin. Iton (2008) asserts that Black subjectivities cannot be understood without some analysis of popular culture, which is comprised of Black cultural "work." Embedded within this Black cultural work, or expressive culture turned popular culture, are the "minor-key sensibilities generated from the experiences of the underground, the vagabond, and those constituencies marked as deviant-notions of being that are inevitably aligned within, in conversation with, against, and articulation beyond the boundaries of the modern" (Iton 2008:16). The inscription of minor-key sensibilities

evident in popular cultural forms make them a productive venue for the analysis of dispositions, identity construction, community cohesion, interpretations of race, ethnicity, and economic self-determination among other components of sociality among Afro-Diasporic peoples.

Where identities, ethnicities, and race are many and in part regional as in the U.S., there is little room for a single unanimously accepted form of popular culture, even among the masses. In turn, subcultures cohere around larger popular forms, and on the converse, subcultural productions grow into popular cultural forms that though becoming national or transnational in dimension, can still remain the tools of an isolated community. Reggae is interesting in this way. It is at once a subcultural, popular cultural, even global, form. In Jamaica it presents a popular expressive culture that is widely enjoyed across race and class (Hope 2006; Stolzoff 2000; Stanley-Niaah 2010a). It is *the* music of Jamaica. However, because of its historic and current transnationalization and exportation, reggae no longer lives exclusively within the confines of the Jamaican geographic and Black, working class, socioeconomic, and cultural context.

In New York City, a place that epitomizes the ethnic, racial and class diversity of the U.S., it is difficult to pinpoint a single popular form as being representative of the tastes of the society at large. However, if reggae is *the* music of Jamaica, then hip-hop, though not necessarily consumed by every American, in terms of its global image, resonance, use in marketing, wide enjoyment, and influence on American style and language, is *the* music of the U.S. Reggae in NYC is still an underground expressive, albeit popular, cultural form particular to the West

Indian community, and non-West Indians who specifically seek it out, making it a subcultural expressive form with localized subcultural participation. Reggae in New York City existing as a form of popular culture and simultaneously as a geographically situated, and ethnoracially defined subculture foreground it being constitutive of links between the West Indian community in Brooklyn, sociocultural and transnational identities, and transformation of New York City geographies.

The theoretical grounding and explorations into the significances of popular culture and culture that have unfolded beg the questions: What is reggae? How did it come to be the focus of a subculture that helps to define the social, cultural, and economic cartographies of West Indian Brooklyn? An explication of the expressive components that compose reggae culture give context to the analyses that follow.

What is reggae?

Roots (and Culture)

Reggae culture refers here to the vibrant dance, style, language, celebratory and performative practices associated with reggae music. Reggae emerged in 1960s Jamaica as an expression of the country's Black lower class majority, evolving from already existing Jamaican music forms including: mento, ska, and rocksteady, meeting American ones: jazz, R&B, funk and country (Stolzoff 2000; Lesser 2008). The evolution of Jamaican music into reggae began in the slave societies of the colonial plantation era. Its most distant relative is mento, the syncretic music of

slaves during the plantation era that combined African and European instrumental elements (Stolzoff 2000). Mento became the folkloric music of the Black masses and a sonal blueprint for future Jamaican music. The social and political forces that gave rise to reggae came to a head with the approaching independence and post-independence moment in Jamaica. Prior, Jamaican popular music was comprised largely of cover songs of American R&B, rock, and country tunes given a Jamaican twist with 3/3 percussive rhythms, and guitar riffs that alluded to the historic mento. As nationalist sentiments brewed, the nation's grassroots culture workers turned inwards for expressive musical composition and began utilizing sounds already within the repertoire of local Jamaican music to create a new national style (Stolzoff 2000; Lesser 2008). Reggae was born of these efforts.

There are numerous styles of reggae all with distinct tempos, harmonic elements, combinations of syncretic sounds, and contrasting references to Jamaican life – love, politics conflict, social ideologies and religious thought. Styles include: roots, culture, dancehall, lover's rock, one drop, rockers, and rub a dub. Rockers, roots, one drop, and rub a dub connote the early reggae sound. What unifies all the different styles of the reggae are the centrality of the bass, 3/3 rhythm structure, staccato chords, percussive techniques, and the singing and chanting melodies. The account of reggae that unfolds in the following pages looks most closely at roots and culture, and dancehall, the two styles of reggae around which reggae parties and rituals are structured in New York City.

Looking more closely at the historical formation of roots reggae, one of the local Jamaican musical influences that came to compositionally constitute it were

the percussive phrases of nyabingi, Kumina, and buru hand drumming that are central to Jamaican funerary and Rasta rituals (Stolzoff 2000; Olsen and Gould 2008). The chanting and vocal utterances associated with Rasta ritual were layered on these percussive rhythms to create an innovative sound. Roots reggae evolved with and within Rastafarianism, providing an outlet to communicate political ideologies and celebrate African ancestry, and cultural heritage. Roots furthermore provided a medium to express grievances, disenchantment, and disillusionment with the post-independence period, which saw little changes in the social, economic, and political depression of the Jamaican masses. It was the valve through which Babylon – signifying an amalgamation of forms of oppression including capitalism, governments driven by corruption, greed, and imperialism – was chanted down, or torn down through the word power and calls to action. Roots reggae was also the valve through which social energy and tensions were channeled in leisure, enjoyment, and dance. Reggae eclipsed foreign music and covers as the popular music of the masses.

Roots reggae adheres closely to Rastafarian cosmology and living. Within it positive "livity" breathes. "Livity" can be translated loosely as "life essence" nurtured through healthy living and the connecting of mind, body and soul. One's livity is rooted in and developed through philosophical analysis of the world and the untying of the chains of capitalism, imperialism, domination (the Babylon System) from the mind, body, and spirit, and separation of self from vanities (luxury goods). Practicing Rastas are not the only reggae participants to support and assert these social, political, and economic perspectives. Gilroy (1991b) puts forth that

Rastafarianism forms an "interpretive community" (187) and as such others who do not identify as Rasta can belong to it. The Rastafarian forms of analysis and logic communicated in roots are thereby ideologically relevant to, and supported by Rasta and non-Rasta alike making roots an inclusive form of expression, and interpretive space. Roots puts forth social messages encouraging the awareness and analysis of social ills, oppression, and self-empowerment through recognition of these realities and subsequent movement of the mind, body, and soul, into consciousness for the "upliftment" of all people. It is a form of social critique that focuses on the proliferation of "sufferation": ghetto living, social, economic and political suffering, a lack of food, resources, education, and mobility, that "sufferas" feel: the victims of ghetto living who are most heavily impacted.

Roots is also steeped deeply in the reinvokation of Africa. Africa provides an imagined escape from the world of "sufferation;" a place where man and woman can be delivered to his and her rightful place of authority and power and escape the victimization at the hands of the Babylon System. African roots, provide the base of power, pride, and esteem. Asked about the specific content of roots, Bobo, a self identified Rasta born in Jamaica who has lived in Brooklyn for twenty-two years since he was ten, explained:

> Roots they uplift the Black woman and keep her on a high plateau. Show herself, make her feel good about herself. Make the Black man know himself. Make him know he have a culture, a history, a land of his own, a nation of his own. Something that he can do for self and that he can also do for others.

His combining of "roots" and "they" signifies the multiple meanings embedded within the word. He illustrates roots as a belief system, a form of music, and as

phenomenon of nature responsible for growth into high places. From these connected roots extends the esteem of Black men and women, and pride in an ancestry from which a culture and history his and her own has emerged. Bobo locates roots reggae within a specific ancestral history, which in keeping with the dominant narratives of the music, began in Africa the land one's own. Africa's place within roots reggae keeps the diaspora intimately close. Furthermore, through roots reggae Rastas are positioned as the guardians of an African past and philosophers of the Afro-Diasporic experience in the West. Roots thematically is not only focused on social and political commentary. Love, enjoyment of marijuana smoking, and the search for a good party for camaraderie and fun are also themes in roots. A part of roots' ability to uplift is derived from its reminder of the less heavy moments in life in addition to its messages of political and socioeconomic justice, and empowerment.

The terms "roots" and "culture" are often combined to refer to a single style of music causing confusion about the distinctions between the two. Asked what distinguishes roots from culture, many of my research collaborators were unable to pinpoint exact musical qualities or lyrical themes highlighting the ambiguity of their boundaries. I have not come across scholarly theories on the distinctions between roots and culture or why the words might be melded and went on a conceptual journey to understand this terminological choice and its conceptual significances.

Andrew Digital, a reggae event creator who is a prominent figure in the production of reggae culture in Brooklyn, offered that roots refers to the origins of the music, the roots sound of the original movement. He specifically mentioned

African origins. Culture, he explained, refers to the messages of positive and healthy living, and descriptions of a specific way of life. "Roots" is the type of sound and "culture" is the message on how to live articulated within it. The perspective of others correlated with his interpretation. Bobo similarly explained: "It [roots] came from the breaking of the yolk of bondage. Came off the slave ship and was on the slave plantations. We start singing for freedom, and that's how the music started. It rebirth in Jamaica." According to Bobo, the roots of roots reggae unfurled from physical emancipation and the worldview born from it. It is an origin and original sound connected to a rebirth of the African subject and African music in Jamaica, underscoring roots music as a "beginning." Fyah, a self identified Rasta who also left Jamaica in his twenties and has lived in the U.S. for ten years, further supported Digital's assertion that "culture" refers to the type of living that is articulated through "roots" music. He said: "it take the man with the roots fi [to] build the culture." Collectively, Digital, Bobo, and Fyah illustrated that culture (music) expresses a way of life formed through the experiential knowledge of slavery, emancipation, and historical memory passed on through roots as a sound and phenomenon. They underscore an origin(al) doctrine embedded within roots that gives way to a particular culture of living thereby connoting roots *and* culture.

Following this logic, they also emphasized that the "roots" of roots and culture always signifies an actual style of sound associated with early reggae as much as it signifies the origins in Africa, and the wisdoms born of slavery and emancipation. Culture, in contrast, can signify reggae with lyrics that condone the Rasta way of living and Rasta insight without necessarily being attached to the sonic

style associated with roots music. In other words, roots refers to a necessary musical style while culture refers to a necessary content matter. Culture content is often in roots but not always, and culture content can be communicated through roots style, but is not always. The word culture refers to guidelines for living and a specific worldview lyrically communicated through music that might be faster or otherwise audibly distinct from the origin(al) roots sound.

"Roots" having given birth to the interpretations of living put forth in "culture" closely links the two conceptually. Their pairing in reggae places further links them giving insight in why they are interchangeably used or linked as in "roots and culture." The situations in which "culture" is enjoyed also tie it closely to roots. I choose then, to unite "roots" and "culture" in the form roots&culture to denote the union of the philosophies, their shared origins, and how my research collaborators conceptualize, and listen to them. The combination is similar to how rhythm and blues became ontologically linked in the form R&B to indicate their symbiotic relationship and their conceptual and aural proximity despite their independence as ideas and sounds.

Roots&culture musical sound is composed from the recording of live instruments including: horns, guitars, bass guitar, drum set, key board, and hand drums. Rhythms are moderate to slow tempo without any one instrumental sound dominating the overall tonality. Artists sing their lyrics in undulating melodic phrases. Vocal attacks are soft and patient. Timbre is yellow, smooth in texture vibrating at low frequency. Roots&culture can be slow and languid, being more of a listening meditative music, or full of energy fomented through quicker beat

structures that are conducive to dancing. The sounds of roots&culture are distinct and easy to discern from dancehall, a style with which roots&culture closely exists in reggae places in New York City, but differs dramatically.

Dancehall

The historical forces that gave rise to dancehall reggae began brewing in the mid 1970s and boiled over into dancehall in the late 70s and early 80s, a product of societal eruption (Lesser 2008). This period of Jamaican history was marred by violence, much of it politically inspired. As a means to outdo their competitor the two predominant political parties of Jamaica, the People's National Party (PNP) and Jamaican Labour Party (JLP), sought political allies in the ghettos of Jamaica. The alliances political leaders formed with residents of centralized ghettos converted Jamaica's impoverished urban centers into garrison communities – residential areas controlled by a specific political party (Figueroa and Sives 2002). In exchange for political support, garrison community leaders received largesse in the form of guns, money, and legal exemption. The liaison between garrison and political leaders gave rise to the don (garrison leader), shotta, (political and underworld assassin), the rude boy (gangster), and bodmon (bad man, also a gangster).[14] All were examples of the subjectivities celebrated in dancehall that arose from the lawlessness without legal sanction that political alliances facilitated, and the militarization of ghettos that resulted from largesse coming in the form of money for armament (Gunst 1995).

[14] Rude boy has also grown to refer to a person who identifies with a specific style and not necessarily gangsterism.

Beyond the shotta and bodmon, dancehall distinctly celebrated urban identities, spoken in heavy Patois, in contradistinction to the representations of Jamaican subjectivities put forth by the upper class, and appealed greatly to the lower class Jamaican masses (Stanley-Niaah 2010a; Hope 2006; Bakare-Yusuf 2006a).

Economic factors coalesced with the growing violence in ghettos to exacerbate matters. Jamaica experienced a number of economic catastrophes resulting from the failure of structural adjustment economic plans, and subsequent strict adherence to the programs of fiscal austerity – read limiting of social services – that receipt of loans from the International Monetary Fund made requisite (Hope 2006; Gunst 1995). As unemployment rose, access to social resources diminished, the Jamaican dollar was devalued, and the underground economy grew in strength without moderation as interference could compromise political alliances (Hope 2006; Gunst 1995). The don, shotta, bodmon, and rude boy rose to the fore as both feared and revered figures. Feared because of their power and armament and ruthless attitude but also revered for their wealth, earned from largesse and underground economic activity that went unmonitored, and for their community assistance.

Garrison leaders were and continue to be known to distribute wealth to members of their communities who depend on them in times of financial need and for protection. In June 2010 Kingston fell into a state of civil unrest when police attempted to capture and arrest don Christopher "Dudus" Coke who was wanted in U.S. federal courts for internationally trafficking guns and cocaine. Seventy-six people died during the battles between police forces and Dudus' supporters that

ensued for the four days after the failed attempt. While having the reputation as "one of the world's most dangerous drug lords" to law enforcement, in Kingston ghettos Dudus, who was in the company of a reverend when finally arrested five weeks later, is compared to Robin Hood and Jesus.[15] Similarly in March 2014, residents of Portmore Jamaica mourned the loss of Vybz Kartel, the single most successful dancehall artist of the 2000s who was also known to be a community don, to a life sentence in prison for murder.[16] The legal proceedings following his arrest in 2011 were the longest in Jamaican history.

Lawlessness, the proliferation of drug dealing as a form of subsistence, state sponsored violence in garrison communities, and ghetto living all spilled thematically into a new form of music that was developing in spaces of leisure that reflected the times – dancehall. The work of the shotta, bodmon, and rude boy, ghetto living, violence, and vulnerability, and the activities of crews of ghetto youth emerged as focal features within dancehall narratives. Displays of competitive skill in lyricism at parties in which dancehall reigned supreme were articulated through metaphors of violence that were indicative of that era in Jamaican history and became characteristic of dancehall. The fetishization of money and excess that the overvaluation (and necessity) of the underground economy produced also became central to this new style of reggae that served as a secondary narrative arising from the same history that gave birth to roots&culture.

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[15] Information extracted from *CNN.com*, "Alleged Drug Kingpin Arrested in Jamaica" (staff writers), http://www.cnn.com/2010/WORLD/americas/06/22/jamaica.dudus.captured/ (accessed April 8, 2015)

[16] Information from the *Jamaica Observer*, Police Maintain Strong Presence in Waterford," (no author), http://www.jamaicaobserver.com/news/Police-maintain-strong-presence-in-Waterford (accessed April8, 2015)

Accompanying the fetishization of capital are the exhibition of its value in social spaces (Bourdieu 1977), which subsequently inspires the fetishization of enjoyment that is illustrated in dancehall lyrics. Fun and enjoyment also increasingly became a need for cathartic release (Hope 2006). As "ghetto run hot," as late 80s dancehall artist Super Cat stated, leisure cooled. Dancehall emerged not only to articulate the seriousness and intensity of ghetto life but also to satisfy desires for dance and sociality. As its name indicates, dancehall was linked to the social activities occurring in dance halls. As such, the content also reflects the fun of social experiences, particularly, being with friends, the rituals of party life – dancing, drinking, smoking marijuana—and the conquest and capture of the opposite sex; themes that are collectively referred to as "slackness" (Stanley-Niaah 2006). Early dancehall songs continue to provide the archetype for popular dancehall today. The thematic closeness of early and contemporary dancehall is evidence of the continuation of many of the social, economic, and political circumstances that gave rise to dancehall in Jamaica and their correlation with the experiences of communities outside of Jamaica as well.

Both the intensity and excitement of dancehall lyrics is reflected in the music itself. It is characterized by deep bass riffs, fast paced tempo, and synthesized instrumental sounds sometimes distorted to create new percussive elements or compositional dimension. The sound is often described as aggressive. Dancehall lyrics are delivered with sharp, aggressive, attack through vocal patterns that alternate between deep baritone and high pitched melodic accents, or high and low octaves. With rage-like execution of lyrics, reminiscent of yelling, the voice is used

fully as an instrument of musical sound and contextual intimacy. Dancehall is also a lively music that resonates as celebratory and light even under the heaviness of its content, a characteristic that is derived from the fast tempos, multilayered rhythmic structures, percussive elements, and the vocal play achieved through alternations between high and low pitched noises, octave changes, harmonic synchronization with (synthesized) instrumentation, and chanting through melody. If roots&culture is yellow in timbre, smooth in texture, low frequency in vibration then dancehall is dark blue, rough, and vibrates at a high frequency.

For the most part contrasting musically, dancehall and roots&culture are largely thought of as contrasting thematically as well. If roots&culture is envisioned to portray good, positive livity, upliftment, culture, Africa, evolution, enlightenment, and the past then dancehall is thought to capture evil, negativity, unrighteousness, "bad mind," disillusionment, and the contemporary. Among those who hold seemingly negative views of dancehall, there is still open embracing, appreciation, and even love of the music that exists alongside those opinions. Dancehall's irrevocable characteristics as fun, danceable, and even celebratory keep people connected to it. The affirmation of lower class, urban positionalities, and ghetto story telling additionally appeal to listeners despite their own possible critical views. Dancehall is positively lauded as "ghetto music," an organic expression of the ghetto as a historically constructed sociogeographic place, resonating with the West Indian Diaspora living within this context.

Roots&culture similarly resonates with the diaspora a point of which is evidence of the ways in which dancehall and roots&culture, upon more nuanced

closer inspection, are not so contrasting. Analysis of what they share in common is useful to understanding their Diasporic connections. Furthermore, it is important to addressing the very legitimate critiques of violence and slackness in dancehall that can also serve to delegitimize its significance to listeners and the performance culture that forms around it. Understanding these dynamics helps to open the view to conceptualize the relationship between these reggae styles, Caribbean identities, place making, social and economic practices in New York City.

Two Sides of the Same Coin: Conceptually Linking Dancehall and Roots&Culture

Dancehall is embraced as a raw expression of the ghetto. Roots&culture also speaks to working and lower class inner city communities throughout the diaspora. Roots&culture's articulation of harsh living under the Babylon System illustrates the experiences of the West Indian Diaspora in urban spaces. Two relevant examples include the New York City police, the arm of an oppressive and discriminatory legal system responsible for the harassment and deaths of innocent Blacks and Latinos, and structural violence against marginalized communities.[17] Dancehall and roots&culture, exemplify differing ways of conceptualizing and negotiating the abject circumstances from which they emerged and are still observable today. They

[17] Tamir Rice, John Crawford, Michael Brown, Eric Garner, Trayvon Martin, Akai Gurley, Tamon Robinson, Kimani "Kiki" Gray, Andy Lopez, Reynaldo Cuevas, Israel Hernandez, Walter Scott, Freddie Gray are only a few of the unarmed Black and Latino men, teens, and in one case child, killed by police and vigilantes during the time of writing. Five of them were killed in New York: Garner, Gurley, Cuevas, Robinson (Brooklyn), and Gray (Brooklyn). March, 2013 police shot six times and killed Kimani "Kiki" Gray, a sixteen-year old Brooklyn resident who a few of my research collaborators had known as a "good kid." Officers claimed the teen was carrying a gun though witnesses, friends, and relatives claim he was not.

are discussions of the characteristics of the same coin, choosing different language to illustrate its features. Roots&culture and dancehall communicate the diversity of perspectives that arise from the circumstances they speak to and myriad ways of negotiating and asserting agency within these contexts. One person's rejection of Babylon's capitalist ideology and efforts to negotiate marginalization within it is another person's desire to exploit the underbelly of its economic structure and attain capitalism's promise in order to negotiate marginalization and assert agency within it.

Dancehall in many ways looks to the present moment (of fun, indulgence, frustration) while roots&culture, as the genre title implies, looks towards the past to interpret and form a base of knowledge for the present. Dancehall and roots&culture, in turn represent historically contingent continuities rather than dichotomous distinctions. Dancehall is the present. It is the illustration of flux, and change, and the loss of sobriety that is resulting from the distancing of globalized and capitalist centered society from frugality and modesty. It represents a drifting towards what Lipsitz refers to as a society based on "consumer-hedonist values" (2001: 12) reflected in its imagery – cars, women, and increasing endorsement of capital goods – and embracing of vindicating conspicuous consumption as a way of asserting agency (Thomas 2006). Lipsitz looks at the local U.S. context to examine the growth of capitalist values in popular culture, but really his analysis is a global trend, an illustration of the ideological and practical changes in life that the growth of global capitalism has produced and is dependent upon (Marx, Fowkes, and Fernbach 1990).

Consistently considered "raw expression," the use of the word raw to describe dancehall speaks to the unadulterated illustrations of the "impurities" of society – violence, sex, consumerism – that are portrayed in dancehall. Dancehall embraces the carnivalesque, a common feature of popular cultural forms (Lipsitz 2001) as evidenced in its contradicting of the norms, moral codes, and representations of middle and upper class Jamaicans. The "counter mainstream" perspectives of dancehall continue to be relevant to its fun and enjoyment in the West Indian Diaspora. While embracing the carnivalesque in almost a satirical fashion does distinguish dancehall from roots&culture it does not necessarily place it dichotomously to it. Roots&culture also contests the cultural homogenization imposed by dominant classes and ethnoracial groups, although differently articulated through Rasta ideologies.

A further demonstration of how dancehall is an illustration of the contemporary moment is the sex that is increasingly becoming a feature of the music. While "slackness" has always been a feature of all styles of reggae (Stanley-Niaah 2006; Olsen and Gould 2008) the continually increasing explicitness of sexual expression mirrors: the growing commodification of sex for marketing, the visual stimulation of ad campaigns that rely on sexual innuendo and nudity, the ever increasing negotiations of power through sex demonstrated in popular films and TV shows, the increasing prevalence of stripping and go-go dancing as forms of economic advancement for women, and representations of women in popular media internationally. The global growth in violence is also depicted in dancehall as evidenced by the use of "Gaza" to name a popular dancehall crew, in the addition of

dropping bomb and gunshot sounds in dancehall songs, and narrations of rivalry between artists.

Fyah referred to dancehall as exemplifying society's "progression." His words correlate with Ramsey's (2003) assertion that today's youth are associating progress with economic success, as measured through material goods and access, as opposed to political engagement and influence, a change that he sees as being reflected in music. Access to women too is a demonstration of both economic success and power. Fyah's interpretation is enlightening because it separates the idea of progression from the evolution of an older less developed object or aesthetic into a better version. Dancehall being indicative of "progression" as opposed to "evolution" illustrates its correlation with changes in society that are not necessarily contingent on it becoming a form that is morally, intellectually, politically, musically "better" or advanced, but rather progressing and correlating with the contemporary moment. His interpretation speaks to dancehall as being both a reflection of and response to the situations that roots&culture comments on as opposed to senseless and misplaced hedonism, hyper-sexuality, violence, or consumption.

Fyah further explained: "the consciousness in dancehall sounds rough and rugged, and hardcore based on the time that we're living in." Fyah described dancehall as having consciousness, separating the idea of consciousness from conscience and the intellectualizing of one's lived experiences, as is evident in roots&culture, defining consciousness instead as a form of logic that arises from a specific context that is valuable. The meaning embedded in his words supports the notion that rather than being dichotomously situated (conscious and not conscious

music), dancehall and roots&culture form parallel narratives arising from a similar experiential course. They describe this course using different forms of analysis and interpretation that are reflective of the diversity of experiences and perspectives of the people who find themselves in it.

As forms of reggae that are also enjoyed in the same reggae places in NYC, roots&culture and dancehall together represent the multilayered interpretations and experiences with indulgence and abstinence that are embodied in the individual showing the diversity of the human character and the conflicting information and situations people negotiate. They align the meditative introspective experience with the extroverted one, the thinking about the world and the act of living in it and experiencing it in its current state. They are not dichotomous, they are continuous. "It comin' from the soul and the soul express in that way" Fyah said. The soul, in turn, embodies the contradictions of society, the multiple ways we respond and experience. Dancehall then emerges as one aspect of soul expression; an energetic one that illustrates the rising of social pressure, energy, excitement, and exhaustion and its combustion. Fyah's statement is an implicit rejection of the dichotomies that are put forth in Judeo- Christian doctrine in which conflicts between indulgence and abstinence are framed as the competing between good and evil forces, particularly in the soul. He depicts an alternate analysis in which the soul is acknowledged as having multiple dispositions and forms of expression of which dancehall is just one for its listeners whether they are experiencing and identifying with the lyrical content, the musical composition, or both.

Bobo asserted that "Dancehall, it's like ya know, channeling energy" and later added, "dancehall just take the people energy away from resisting the oppressors." Bobo acknowledged dancehall as both a form of social cathartic release, a valve to channel energy that might be negative in its manifestation or origins, but must be expelled. Yet, the actions partaken that channel energy – presumably rituals of partying and pleasure seeking behaviors associated with dancehall – are the same ones that divert attention from activism. His critique is mirrored in the opining of harsh critics of dancehall, which claim that the music is an impediment to social change and source of social pathology.[18] These perspectives tend to ignore that dancehall is a musical form that is an expression of the worlds that supposedly need to be intervened in and can therefore shed useful light on them. Like roots&culture, dancehall articulates needs and desires, just from a different view – from analytically within the social, economic, and political worlds it describes while roots&culture remains analytically outside of it.

The language of the Rasta interpretive community in both roots&culture and dancehall is further illustration of continuities between them. In dancehall the language of Rasta is demonstrated through a profound belief in the ability of Jah (the divine leader of Rastafari) to uplift the oppressed masses and mention of Haile Selassie's divine status as a prophet and savior. In dancehall Jah is consistently portrayed as a symbol of protection and deliverer of unconditional love that is felt and celebrated despite the poverty and harsh urban living conditions dancehall

[18] Critiques can be regularly viewed in the op-ed sections of *The Gleaner*, one of Jamaica's national newspapers. For specific references see Tyson, Esther (2008, April 6) Slackness and More Slackness. In *Jamaica Gleaner*. Retrieved April 25, 2013 from http://old.jamaica-gleaner.com/gleaner/20080406/cleisure/cleisure5.html

artists lament. The concepts "livity," "sufferation," and Babylon also appear in dancehall. If in hip-hop God's name was summoned for deliverance from suffering, or belief in God's divine power and protection proclaimed as much as it is in dancehall, it would be considered Christian rap. The language of Rastafarianism in dancehall is further indication of the connecting of the systems – cosmological and social – that led to the creation of both dancehall and roots&culture.

Dancehall is also not without its political and socially conscious content. Lyrics that advocate the use of condoms and having "clean" (STD free) health records are seamlessly interwoven with brazen sexual expression. The promotion of sexual health in dancehall is indicative of the awareness of the dangers that accompany nightlife courting and conquest bringing into question dancehall's supposed mindless hedonism. Furthermore, on catchy tracks, dancehall artists chant of the poverty among urban people and the inaccessibility of education that makes survival through moving through the accepted economic structures of society difficult. Dancehall reggae artists comment on political corruption, greed, and manipulation arguing for the tearing down of Babylon through force – binding politicians with ropes, armed uprising, and through social agitation as opposed to more formal activism.[19] Advocating for the overthrow of government control through violence is not the exclusive ideological terrain of dancehall.

Bob Marley's "Burning and Looting" also speaks to civil unrest and redress through aggressive means. However, "aggressive" revolution in roots&culture is marginal in comparison "enlightened" revolution – awareness, mind, body, and

[19] *See Appendix,* Cham, "Hope."

spirit separation from the Babylon system, and repatriation to Africa. “It’s not an easy time, so if you have a positive message that you have to send to a stubborn people then you have to say it in a way where they would understand, they would listen.” These are the words Fyah used to describe the political critique narrated through imaginings of violence in dancehall. Fyah still understands the messages to be “positive” and aimed towards uplifting the masses despite the violent rhetoric. Addressing government failure, manipulation, and corruption is another example of correlations between roots&culture and dancehall that are indicative of them describing the sides of the same coin, just with differing perspectives communicated in different language. “Down with the man, up with our plan” is their call but the execution of the plan is differently articulated.

A final significant point of observation of roots&culture and dancehall is its rootedness in the masculine. The vast majority of reggae singers, deejays, and actors within the reggae music industry are male including managers, music producers, and company executives. There is a history of significant Jamaican women deejays and singers who are held in high regards notably, to a name a few: deejays Lady Saw, Patra, Lady G, Ce’Cile and singers Queen Ifrica, Sister Nancy, Nadine Sutherland, and Tanya Stephens. While the music of these women is still highly relevant, their production of new songs, and the presence of women in general as independently performing artists, declined significantly by the early 2000s. Spice and Gaza Slim, who are more recently active singers, have mostly featured on the dancehall tracks of famous male deejays rather than performing as independent artists in their own right.

Additionally in Brooklyn, while women are significantly present as appreciators of reggae, on the level of performance and production of reggae events, the people involved are predominantly men: DJs, promoters, MCs, videographers, and photographers. There is, however, wider gender representation in dance performance, which has relatively equal male and female participation. The prevalence of male leadership and performance in reggae accords with the narrations of lived experiences from the male perspective and focus on women as objects of both conquest and deep adoration articulated in dancehall particularly. The most widely celebrated female dancehall deejays, particularly Lady Saw and Ce'Cile, cleverly play with these same themes, similarly assert sexual agency and their conquest of men taking on these masculine narratives, but as feminine subjects, their music thereby still fitting within the aesthetic of dancehall narratives. The omnipresence of men in New York City reggae also accords well with analyses of West Indian masculinities emerging in the realm of leisure, outside home spaces, in which fulfillment is found within male crews. Social rank within crews being tied to highly gendered ideas of reputation as formed in the streets as a sociogeographic space, placing crews and their masculine representations dichotomously to women, whose realm is the home (Wilson 1973).

These dynamics are reflected in roots&culture's and dancehall's lyrical referencing of crews and street life (street socializing and philosophizing in roots&culture, and involvement in underground economy in dancehall), and privileging of heterosexual masculinities. There are many more analytical dimensions to the privileging of masculinity within reggae, particularly dancehall

and are covered in depth in Hope (2006), Copper (2005, 1995), and Stanley-Niaah (2010a). The prioritizing is tied to cathartic release of street life anxieties and the need for oppressed masculine subjectivities, an outgrowth of colonialism and post-colonial society, to be asserted and celebrated. These connections between dancehall and masculinity are explored well in those texts. The inextricable link of roots&culture to Rastafarianism, in which constructions of femininity are tied to women's chastity and maintaining the sanctity of the home (Hope 2006), also explains the male centeredness of themes and representation among musicians. The focus on masculinity in reggae furthermore correlates with the openly expressed, vehemently anti-gay content of dancehall (which has declined significantly post banning of dancehall artists' international performances) and more subtle moral declarations made in roots&culture. Homosexuality is conceived of as contradictory to masculinity. Anti-gay ideologies communicated in reggae are also rooted in both Rasta cosmology and certain interpretations of Biblical teachings.

All of these gender nuances in reggae music are reflected in men being the principal actors in producing reggae in New York City. In questioning both men and women research collaborators about the lack of central female actors in reggae, outside of being dancers and participants as appreciators, most agreed it is a result of: women's vulnerability to sexual manipulation, the tiresomeness of having to overcome gender biases, and their eventual retreat into home life as mothers. Many, however, had not questioned women's marginalization prior, seeing it as being "just the way it is." An outcome of male dominance is that the majority of my research

collaborators, with the exception of dancers, are men. I did have the opportunity to work with a female DJ who was one of only two active Brooklyn DJs known to me.

Before moving on to exploring the movement of reggae from Jamaica to New York City I want to address how defining dancehall as a form of reggae could be critiqued. Caribbeanist and reggae scholar, Hope (2006) does not classify dancehall as reggae at all, rather as its own genre of Jamaican music. She says: "…dancehall resulted in the creation of a shiny new genre of Jamaican popular culture that was unmistakably related to, but significantly distinguished from, its predecessor, the Rastafari-influenced reggae music" (Hope 2006:10). Her distinguishing of dancehall from a Rastafarian influenced predecessor that she calls reggae indicates her separation of the two. It has hopefully been demonstrated here that dancehall actually incorporates Rasta influences particularly as related to belief in Jah and the divine status of Selassie. Dancehall is actually rather rich with references to Rastafarianism as an interpretive community. Hope's separation of dancehall from reggae, which is rather consistent in her work, does not reflect the conceptualizations of the many people that participated in the making of this ethnography – reggae appreciators, dancers both professional and social, DJs, producers, promoters, journalists, and more. They all consider dancehall to be a type of reggae. This has also been my understanding for decades before this research was underway and accords also with popular framings in Costa Rica where I have conducted research in Afro-Caribbean communities.

The melding of dancehall, roots&culture, rockers, one drop, and other styles under the umbrella "reggae" evinces acknowledgement of these forms of music

sharing historic, artistic, cultural, and thematic roots in Jamaica, and their shared musical attributes. It, in turn, reflects diasporic concern with, and prioritizing of, origins, the integrity of beginnings, and cultural specificity. I conceptualize dancehall as a form of reggae not only because of my research collaborators' widely shared common sense understanding but also because doing so illustrates the very real correlations between the two genres. These correlations are outgrowths of their shared historic contexts, shared rhythmic structures, similar privileging of African derived percussive rhythms (Stolzoff 2000; Olsen and Gould 2008), insertion of Rasta ideology and vocabulary, and their sharing of a culture in New York City.

Hope (2006), Stanley-Niaah (2010a), and more recently Galvin (2014) explore dancehall in Jamaica. In their texts dancehall is described as having a distinct and vibrant culture that, in their framings, is distinguishable from and existing separate and apart of roots&culture, one-drop, rockers, rub-a-dub, and other styles of Jamaican music that I have combined under the umbrella "reggae." In New York City all of these popular styles of music singularly share reggae places and are constituent parts of a single music subculture. Reggae places are constructed such that it is impossible to separate and analyze dancehall on its own. Even parties heavily saturated with dancehall include roots&culture. The converse is also true reflecting the conceptualization of the two styles as being different parts of the same thing – reggae. But how did reggae come to form a performance based culture in Brooklyn?

"Where Mi Come From? Brooklyn!": The Transnationalization of Reggae

The history of reggae in New York City and its consistent migration mirrors the traveling and settling of its carriers, and creators, and is as old as reggae itself. A central vehicle for the transnationalization of reggae was the sound system and gained sway in the early 1970s as the sound system developed into a full-fledged practice in Jamaica. A sound system is both a collection of objects and a performance phenomenon birthed in Jamaica and continuing in New York City today. It is a physical structure (a system that projects sound) but also a collection of performance practices tied to interacting with the structure (a performance system) that together are responsible for the transnationalization of reggae. The sound system is also central to the production of the broader reggae culture and in turn the West Indian Community at large. It is composed of electronic equipment and the people that operate them. Of the equipment there are the amplifier and formidable speakers, giant speakers that can reach six feet in height and have the potential to play high level decibels with deep bass frequencies with little distortion (Rose 1994). The speakers are connected through intricate cable systems to turntables, the mechanism that makes aural the engravings on vinyl record surfaces, to compact disc players that make laser readings of microscopic dots on CDs, or to computers that release audio files compressed into mp3s and mp4s. Computers are most commonly used today in New York for their ability to hold large quantities of musical information in small, light weight, compact systems as opposed to dozens of crates of records, or heavy binders of CDs which also require the extra labor of rapidly unloading from storage and reloading into players.

Record players, CD players, or computers are attached to an intricate audio control system that looks like an electric switchboard and enables the alternation between one source of music and another and the control of volume, tempo, and the different sonic elements of a song to foreground different components and emphasize bass. Equally important to the practice of the sound system are the people who operate it. There are generally three people who operate the system: a sound and operating engineer, a DJ also known as a selector, and a soundman. The engineer is responsible for making sure all of the cables are correctly connected to equipment and quality sound can be successfully delivered. The DJ is responsible for selecting, creating a play order, and readying songs to be played. Lastly, the soundman, alternatively mic man (short for microphone man), or MC, which stands for mic controller or master of ceremony, is responsible for animating the audience as they listen to music. Sometimes the DJ or MC will double as an engineer; however, it is rare to see a DJ without an MC. The relationship between the MC and the audience is central to the sound system function and practice. The talk of the MC over rhythms provided the foundation for the early lyricism of dancehall (Hope 2006; Stolzoff 2000). In the DJ competitions known as sound clashes, DJs and MCs together decide what songs to play based on crowd response.

The decibels expelled from sound system speakers can resonate for miles, impregnating the air with reggae rhythms and bass licks making the sphere of reggae seemingly infinitely expansive beyond the structure of the sound system itself and its operators. Sound systems can be made mobile, placed on the flatbeds of trucks, or left stationary on stages or grounds. Beyond the reach of its sonic

frequencies, sound systems were the vehicle practice and structure for the transnationalization of reggae. The immigrating Jamaican community that settled in New York City recreated the sound system infrastructure and reinstituted the practices of selecting, playing, and talking over music making their cultural mark in the geography, and aurally transforming the city. Where NYC radio stations were slow to pick up reggae, sound systems provided the means through which it could still be enjoyed, satisfying the demand for reggae music and Jamaican cultural references within the growing Jamaican community. People migrating between Jamaica and New York brought new reggae records to play on sound systems, to exchange between family members, and to sell in local Brooklyn records stores dedicated to making reggae music available.

Central to sound system practices are sound clashes, competitions between rival sound systems for crowd support that rose to the fore as a prominent reggae performance practice as dancehall took root in the 1980s. The transnationalization of sound clashes came as a result of "bust the sound" – sound systems traveling, often internationally, to clash other sound systems. Brooklyn, with its large population of West Indians and avid reggae fans, became the prime site when sounds systems clashed internationally. According to Andrew Digital, artists like Super Cat, Nicodemus, and Johnny Osbourn came to "give" sound clashes. "We feed off of what is going on back in Jamaica," Digital described of the expressive cultural links that formed through sound clash culture at the time. His use of the word "feed" invokes the deep nurturing connections existing between Jamaica and its diaspora that is also reflected in the sentiments of other West Indians from the various

countries of the Caribbean. Subsequently West Indians in New York City went on to form their own robust sound clash scene that remains vibrant today. Brooklyn, in particular, became so involved in the hosting of sound clashes that, according to one Japanese DJ and research collaborator, by the 1990s it was Brooklyn not Jamaica that was most known in Japan for hosting sound clashes. Andrew Digital is widely recognized in Brooklyn as being a leader in hosting sound clashes.

Reggae expanded across the West Indian community in New York City, composed of people hailing from the various countries of the West Indies, and formed a stronghold in Brooklyn. My older research collaborators described a Brooklyn of their youth where backyards, basements, and parks were converted into places for the exposition of, and participation in, reggae music. Many of them described their first recognition of their identities as occurring during moments of sound system participation as its operators or audience members. Through the recreation and use of the sound system's physicality, and the experiential creation between crowd and music that extends from interacting with it, reggae was transnationalized. As time has progressed, CDs made from digital audio files and mp3s downloaded, and emailed have allowed for more direct, and immediate disbursement of music for sound systems, eliminating lag time, and the physically traveling middle person to be replaced by the virtual one. The practices and experiences that unfold from the sound system continue to form a distinct culture defined by reggae through which people began and continue to see themselves as West Indian. The sound system has also been central to the creation of transgeographic spaces for cultural production.

The transnationalization of reggae also subsequently transformed Brooklyn into a transmigratory space for reggae music recording. Paul Henton, better known as Computer Paul, is a well-regarded Jamaican producer and musician who was a leader in this transformation. He is also generally credited with pioneering the production of reggae tracks, otherwise known as "riddims," using computer technology, as the nickname his peers gave him indicates.[20] In 1979 when Paul was in his early twenties he emigrated from Jamaica to Brooklyn and found himself immediately immersed in reggae, a continuation of his interests in Jamaica. Shortly after his arrival he became a member of the reggae band Monyaka, which went on to make the Billboard-charting hit "Go Deh Yaka." However, Paul said that after the label behind the release made significant profits from the hit, it folded to avoid giving Monyaka their fair share. He found himself back at square one, a Jamaican youth in Brooklyn looking for a musical outlet, though not for long.

Amidst his Brooklyn journeys, Paul met a man who had recently bought a basement studio in Brooklyn, and secured access to the studio by agreeing to set up all the wiring. From that small studio in Brooklyn he went on to compose reggae riddims for top dancehall artists including Super Cat, Barrington Levy, Beenie Man, Shabba Ranks, Capleton, Bounty Killer, Sizzla, and Buju Banton at the height of their careers. According to Paul "quite a few hits came out of that [Brooklyn] studio" though none are recognized as having origins in New York City. In the 1990s, after

[20] "Riddim" is the widely used term to refer to the non-lyrical musical elements of a song, the rhythm rising to the fore as the most important aural element. The widespread use of "riddim" is derived from the pronunciation of the word "rhythm" in Patois. Many artists will record vocals over a single riddim, a process which Manuel and Marshall (2006) refers to as the "riddim method" and cover substantially in that text.

spending many years mastering computer music technology in Brooklyn, Paul returned to Jamaica where he lives today. It was there that in 1994 he created the Corduroy Riddim on which Beenie Man recorded his vocals for "World Dance." It is a song many credit with bringing dancehall's unique dance culture into the spotlight, giving a platform to dance legends like Bogle. Computer Paul's work was a precursor to the production of reggae riddims and albums in New York City that continues today. In recent history, Jamaican-American music producer Rellee worked with well-known Jamaica based reggae singer Gyptian in his Queens home studio writing and producing tracks for his album *Sex, Love, and Reggae.* Jamaican-American music producer Ricky Blaze created the Riot Squad and Hold Yuh riddims in his Brooklyn home studio both of which went on to become international hits after top dancehall deejay Vybz Kartel recorded "Ghetto Road" and "Get Gyal" on the Riot Squad riddim and singer Gyptian recorded lyrics on "Hold Yuh."

These songs, however, are not widely known to have some genesis in New York City. Their partial origins there reflect the geographic connections between NYC and Jamaica based reggae music making spaces. Simultaneously the marginalization of New York City within these spaces, a question of authenticity, is indicative of tensions existing within the Caribbean sociocultural space as evidenced in reggae. I elaborate further in chapter three. Still, reggae artists and music producers collaborating in New York City reggae recording sessions is significant and not only to creating music but also to the continuity of cultural references, and to transnational social connections. Music studios, often found in basements or backrooms of homes, become significant transgeographic places in which cultural

identities are conjured through experiential unions in music creation connoting a significant space outside of the home in which West Indian cultural references circulate and subjectivities are formed.

Record companies also played a role in the movement of reggae outside of Jamaica – its internationalization. I distinguish internationalization to draw out the differences between the micro level work of grassroots culture workers and the macro level work of record labels and distributors that mass produce reggae. The prefix "trans" of transnationalization alludes to the movement, processes of migration, and subsequently the efforts of the individuals who traverse national boundaries bringing reggae with them. It also brings into focus the back and forth exchanges, or *trans*ferences, of information through electronic webs which along with physical movement continues to make the production and living of reggae culture possible. Internationalization implies broad movement from one nation to the next without signifying the processes of transference themselves. The commodification, exportation, international marketing, and supplying of reggae to radio stations that popularized artists like Peter Tosh, Bob Marley and the Wailers, and Jimmy Cliff, outside of the West Indian community was the work of record companies, many of them U.S. based. Record label efforts to brand and market Jamaican artists exposed their music to audiences outside of the reach of the sound system, bringing reggae to mainstream commercial attention and Billboard charts.

Today the transnationalization of reggae continues through the digital traversing of the routes that reggae has historically followed. Appreciators access YouTube videos that make visible the latest songs, videos, and dances. The

producers of reggae culture (from avid youth to aspiring reggae professionals) send electronic files between the U.S. and Caribbean and click website links for immediate visual downloading making the flows of reggae multidirectional. Music producers in New York City can now work with artists in Jamaica needing only a computer and can send tracks to DJs throughout the Caribbean, further digitally connecting NYC to it. The digital webs, travelled routes, performance creation, and constructions of places for reggae converge to form a vibrant performance based culture in New York City.

The expressive practices, performances, social rituals, and activities that cohere around both dancehall and roots&culture reggae music are many. There are however six principal elements that my research collaborators consistently described as being central to reggae culture: the music, the dance, the work of the DJ, the work of the mic man, and rituals of marijuana smoking. The affect and significances of these dimensions to reggae, among others, will be points of exploration in the chapters that follow. The impact of locally produced, and run reggae media whose photographers and videographers capture reggae events not covered by mainstream media are additionally focuses of inquiry. Together these professionals form underground paparazzi that cover the reggae subculture. They release materials on reggae focused websites, YouTube videos, local public access television stations, or produce DVDs sold in local parties, reggae music stores, or in countries across the Atlantic including Italy, France, Germany, Israel, and Japan where they become central references of reggae culture for fans internationally. The international accessibility of these DVDs, video clips, and photographic images bring

New York City to the fore as an epicenter of reggae culture serving to make Brooklyn, to reggae lovers locally and internationally, metonymic of reggae.

The performance practices, creative processes, expression, and expositions tied to reggae are central to the formation of regional West Indian cultural subjectivities, place making, and assertion of Caribbean cultural identities within the ethnoracial continuums of the U.S. They are identities formed by turning to Caribbean cultural references that exist within New York City and reflect the location of the city within the Circum-Caribbean space. Reggae culture is furthermore crucial to the construction of transgeographic spaces in which aural, visual, and sensory bridges to the West Indies are formed, and Caribbean subjectivities embodied.

While reggae is constituted from Jamaican originated expressive forms, in its use and continued production in New York, it emerges in Brooklyn as a broadly West Indian subculture, one that presents a ruddy obstacle to cultural homogenization and evinces the salience of race. Participants thereby challenge the possibility of a unanimously understood and experienced American cultural persona through their grassroots cultural work. In their colonization of physical space, West Indians create specific cultural geographies that they define within the already established sociocultural cartographies of New York City and U.S at large. Their time spent and labored redistributes cultural power and asserts West Indians within it having significant impact on their political participation, and its structuring around identity politics, and their formation of ethnic economic enclaves. Participants create and fortify transnational social and economic networks that

cohere around the production of attached expressive forms, presenting real possibilities for self-determination, collapsing national, physical, cultural, ideological, and electronic boundaries to create transgeographic West Indian Diasporic places.

Within transgeographic diasporic places it is important to critically evaluate the notion that the various Caribbean nations create authentic cultural references which then their diasporas mimic in their adoptive homes (Hall 1999). In NYC cultural references are reformulated to fit to, and in turn reflect the new social contexts and support the local community in differing ways. This work is not a comparison to reggae culture in Jamaica but rather an exploration into the ways in which it is presented, produced, lived, interacted with and embodied in New York City, the significance that comes from that context and the rich analytical insights it might yield. Of course Jamaica appears here. Many of the research collaborators who shared their views and opened their hearts and minds to provide the blueprint for this work are Jamaican nationals or descendants, or from other Caribbean countries that are equally significant to reggae. They are those who travel back and forth frequently, those who have left never to return, those who have never been but imagine a Caribbean nation as a place that is home, and those who are recently naturalized Americans, the Caribbean still pervading their thought, speech, travel, and daily lives. So the different nations of the Caribbean are here, but not as a replication, rather, as an extension of the people who informed this work and the overlapping geographies they create in their minds and through their cultural work

and subsequent (trans)actions that link them physically, figuratively, and digitally through space to the Caribbean.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided theoretical explications of the significances of popular culture to understanding the subjectivities of its participants. Of importance to these theorizations is the role of popular culture in providing an outlet for social anxieties, and forming an alternative realm to the everyday spheres of the home, work, and school for the construction and expression of identities. Also of relevance is how popular culture constitutes a space for the articulation of Afro-diasporic social, economic, and political positionalities, and perspectives. The chapter additionally gives a thorough explanation of the two forms of reggae that are at the crux of the performance based subculture in Brooklyn – roots&culture and dancehall – and explores their transnationalization. The next chapter will go more deeply into Brooklyn to interrogate the formation of transgeographic reggae and Caribbean places, and to interpret the transformation of the borough that the West Indian Diaspora has made.

CHAPTER TWO
"BROOKLYN IS THE FLESH AND BLOOD:" PLACE MAKING, STRUCTURES OF FEELING, AND THE FORMATION OF TRANSGEOGRAPHIES

Once considered the outer reaches of New York City, Brooklyn has fast become the most popular place to live resulting in the borough's rapidly increasing racial, economic, and sociocultural diversity. Despite growing diversity, to the West Indians who have established an ethnic enclave in Brooklyn the borough is singularly theirs. Brooklyn becomes Janus-faced, both the U.S. and a cultural, social, economic, and political satellite of their places of ancestral origin. It reflects the meeting of two spaces in the mind, action, and design. The focus of this chapter is on space and its conversion into places for West Indian cultural belonging, recreation, and embodiment. The exploration uses a number of theoretical approaches that together illustrate how the West Indian Diaspora has transformed Brooklyn's social, cultural, and economic cartographies into distinctly Caribbean ones, creating places in which aural, visual, and sensory bridges to the West Indies are formed. I term these places transgeographies to conceptualize the ways they exist in a state of liminality between distant locales and simultaneously are the contingency upon which they are connected.

There are two dynamic and multifaceted spaces that are analyzed here: West Indian Brooklyn and collectively the private venues that are converted into public reggae parties. The goal with the spatial analysis that unfolds is to interpret the ways in which avenues, street corners, barbershops, restaurants, bars, lounges, and clubs are converted into Caribbean places significant to the formation of Caribbean

cultural subjectivities, and their embodiment. In turn, these spaces become places for belonging within the larger social and cultural nexus of New York City and the United States at large. I demonstrate how place making practices are tied to specific sociocultural customs, economic engagement, performance mediums, and collective leisure that cohere to form transgeographic cultural places for remembering, seeing, hearing, and feeling that make the Caribbean present. These actions converge in reggae parties to convert them into significant cultural institutions. I secondly show how place making practices and transgeographies serve to draw West Indian Brooklyn into the Caribbean.

Theoretical Trajectory

In *The Production of Space* Henri Lefevbre writes:

> The theoretical error is to be content to see a space without conceiving of it, without concentrating discrete perceptions by means of a mental act, without assembling details into a whole 'reality,' without apprehending contents in terms of their interrelationships within the containing forms (1991: 94).

Lefevbre underscores that space is not a void or devoid of meaning. Rather it is composed of constituent parts and what fills it (containing forms): people, objects, actions, their interrelationships, and what is perceivable to the mind – sounds, sights, and sensations. These components combine to both define space and imbue it with theoretical significance to the researcher.

In looking at space and the actions, and sensory information within it that form Caribbean places in New York City this exploration of spatiality follows the

theoretical trajectories of not only Lefevbre but also Low (1999), Gupta and Ferguson (1997), and Certeau (1984). These theorists interpret how social and physical conceptual relations, and practices shape the contours of space. People convert space into places "for" some collective purpose –identity construction and embodiment for example – through their occupation of it and alterations they make to it with action and objects to fill it. Space is thereby both defined by and inscribed with the identities of the people who socially construct it.

Furthermore, how these socially constructed spaces are perceived by the senses (Merleau-Ponty 2012) has significant effect on the meaning they are imbued with, thereby playing a role in their conversion into places "for" the fulfillment of some social need, and constituting the subjectivities of the people within them. The feelings that are structured and emotions experienced in space are additionally the contingency on which space is converted into significant "places for" the people who make and inhabit them. Analysis of place making practices is significant to understanding how marginalized ethnoracial groups negotiate structural inequalities forming places they define and for which they create the rules for social and economic engagement. It is also useful to interpreting the work of diasporas in bringing their places of origin to their adoptive homes so as to challenge how geography is conceptualized. Of significance here is bringing New York City into the Caribbean space despite the physical distance of the city from the contiguous countries of the West Indies.

Norman Girvan (2000) asserts that the concept of a Caribbean geographic space arose from a specific geopolitical history of U.S. and European political and

economic interest, and intervention in the region. For Girvan, the Caribbean is an invented concept arising from a specific history of colonial domination. His perspective leaves conceptual room to reinvent the Caribbean space by untying it from its geopolitical origins, despite how bounded the nations of the Caribbean are by that shared history. Doing so allows for the possibility of expanding conceptualizations outside of the contiguous nations. Girvan aptly uses the term "island Caribbean" to refer to the islands that encircle the Caribbean Sea demonstrating an awareness of the Caribbean existing outside of the Antillean archipelago (2000: 31).

Mintz (1974, 1966), also theorizing what connotes the Caribbean, conceives of it as a sociocultural space that evinces a shared cultural ethos despite diversity. He locates this ethos in historical rupture and the meeting of European and African cultural influences that came to define the islands. The Caribbean, to Mintz is indicative of historical rupture and the meeting of external forces that together formed creole culture. Mintz' framing also leaves conceptual room to expand the Caribbean outside of the contiguous nations. The rupture and shared ethos of which Mintz writes is mirrored in the emigration of people from the West Indies, and their transference and re-placement of their shared cultural ethos to adoptive homes.

Despite continued diversity, post-colonial rupture also forms a new, shared cultural persona emerging from diasporic relocation and settlement experiences, and the meeting of transferred cultural references, that were also previously shared, in a new context. Both the secondary rupture and evolving shared cultural ethos are indicative of the continued engagement of the West Indies with U.S. and European

political, and economic interests. In turn, the interpretation presented here views the Caribbean through a sociocultural and historical lens that considers the places that the West Indian Diaspora forms in New York City, as a result of historically and continually traversing cultural pathways between the Caribbean and New York City, to be analytically significant to conceptualizations of the Caribbean space. It also considers the diasporic experiences and mutually constituting social, economic, and political contexts of the West Indies and the U.S. to be integral to theorizations of the Caribbean geography. The exploration that follows looks inside transgeographic cultural places that unite West Indian Brooklyn with the countries of the Caribbean challenging conceptualizations of the Caribbean as being constituted only by the nations that surround the Caribbean Sea. The theorization of transgeographies thereby expands geography as an analytic.

The conceptualization of transgeographies is an extension of the ideas of transnationalism. It interprets how transnational communities transform space and the significances those transformations have to West Indian Diasporic subjectivities, settlement, and cultural continuity. I use the term transgeographic places to make space the central object of focus. Combining the prefix "trans" with geography is intended to foreground the *trans*formation of space such that the boundaries between distant places are collapsed, uniting them, and reorienting how the cultural and physical geography of the Caribbean is conceived and mapped. Transnationalism theorizes the transference of people, goods, cultural forms, and ideas between nations that is central to the formation of transgeographic places (Burman, 2010; Foner 2001a; Cordero-Guzmán and Smith 2001; Basch et al. 1994;

Basch 1994, 1991). Interpreting transgeographic places, by extension, foregrounds physical space (design and elaboration so as to invoke another place), what is conducted in space (transnationally moving performance and actions), and what is made tangible to the senses in space (sounds, sights, sensations) so as to connect two places in perception and practice, reorienting how geography is conceived. Transgeographies, in turn, account for transnational activity and how diasporas through this activity come to shape place. Beyond conceptualizing how spaces with which diasporic communities engage evolve, interpreting the impacts of spatial transformation on the West Indians who inhabit transgeographic places is a subject of focus.

Though making the immediacy of space the central object of focus on a micro level, the macro level of the national is always present. The national is made present in transgeographic places through invocations of them as signifiers of cultural identity, allegiances, and symbolic authority. Furthermore, the transgeographic places I write of exist within the borders of the United States making them, and the people that form them, both subject to and informed by its history, politics, social and economic contexts. Their formation is also dependent on the historic and contemporary forces that have connected and impacted the U.S. geographies in which West Indians live and the different countries of the Caribbean. These forces formed the migratory routes that constitute the West Indian Diaspora and their socioeconomic and political positionalities. Transgeographies are then inextricably linked to the systemic inequalities, politics, and economic environs of nations, despite nations being invoked in them largely as cultural signifiers. Within

transgeographic places distant cultural spaces become united inducing shared perceptive experiences, exhibiting similar practices within them, and reflecting each other materially. Also, very importantly, the enactment of Caribbean cultural forms within them both brings into high relief and maintains Caribbean cultural continuities and subjectivities.

Transforming Brooklyn

The transformation West Indians have made to Brooklyn is tangible. Flags of all the Caribbean nations are shown in business and residential windows. Reggae, soca, and calypso music provide the soundtrack to life. In summer neighborhood barbecues with reggae blaring from giant standing speakers close off local streets to car travel. Caribbean food restaurants are conveniently placed a few blocks from each other. Men with graying hair sit outside barbershops disputing fact or fiction in Patois with such passion one could mistake them for arguing. Posters advertising reggae parties are pasted onto the surfaces of buildings and lampposts. Teenage boys congregate on corners alternating between heavily West Indian accented English and New York City urban slang. Boutiques display their latest in fashion and costumes for parades, carnivals, and festivals taking place locally, nationally, or internationally. The West Indian presence is pleasantly jarring and impossible to ignore.

The physical imprint and assertion of West Indian identities are the markers of the people who make their community in Brooklyn more than a location with

Caribbean character and flare, but a place of Caribbean cultural belonging. People and their actions within space complement inscriptions on it. In warmer months, outdoor socializing on corners, stoops, benches, or chairs set in front of residences and businesses stands out as a widely participated in social practice. Socializing outdoors accords well with both the tropical heat of the Caribbean and the stiflingly hot, and humid New York City summers. Where and when the temperatures of home and business interiors become unbearable, transferring social gatherings and communication outside where folding chairs can easily be opened is a way of communing and also of keeping cool. Where air conditioning is available, it helps to keep costly electricity bills down.

The locations in which outdoor socializing occurs – right in front of homes and businesses, on the border between private and public spaces, making the private public and the public private – is actually what distinguishes the outdoor socializing of Caribbean communities in New York City from the more general and very common human practice of enjoying the outdoors. Community members' and in particular business' owners' acceptance of it is a characteristic feature of West Indian Brooklyn. Some businesses even facilitate the colonizing of space by setting up benches or chairs in front of their establishments. Corner mini-grocery stores, liquor stores, and barbershops extending a place of social respite to local residents mirrors the conversion of these same establishments into social sanctuaries throughout the Caribbean. Stolzoff (2000), Hope (2006), and Lesser (2008) document how it was partly from local grocery and liquor store spaces in Jamaica,

which played dancehall from speakers within, that the music spread and its culture took shape.

Meeting in these private/public spaces is not only an activity of the youth but also adults and seniors. In the majority of New York City's other neighborhoods, standing or sitting in front of apartment buildings, duplex residences, or businesses is a frowned upon activity. It is more negatively framed as loitering, associated with the youth, and widely policed by law enforcement and business owners. Not in this part of Brooklyn. It is considered, rather, as a Caribbean way of communing as long as it is peaceable. Elders set up outdoor games of dominoes, slapping game pieces hard onto the surfaces of wobbly portable picnic tables, sending dominoes jumping through the air. People gather to cook food on gas or charcoal grills sometimes closing off both ends of a street to the passage of cars for street parties. In these instances residents claim more ownership, authority, and policing of Brooklyn spaces than the city's officials who likely see disturbing the self-sustaining social ecology of the place and potentially stirring conflict as less preferable to allowing peaceful assembling that is evidently deeply rooted in the sociocultural practices of the community. In turn, West Indians in Brooklyn colonize specific public spaces not necessarily demarcated by city officials as being for socialization and form borders to their area of power and influence.

In contrast, typically throughout the city's non-Caribbean residential communities people go to parks where organized socialization or "picnicking" is configured for them through the city's placements of benches and public grills or inclusion of plazas in urban designs. There is no more want for parks in Brooklyn

than there is in any other part of New York City where visiting parks, river promenades, or spaces demarcated for public gathering commonly involves commuting. This is particularly the case because Prospect Park, one of the largest in New York City, borders the West Indian community. However, parks tend to be heavily policed curtailing the freedom of enjoyment and its various forms of expression including loud music and riotous voices. Outdoor cooking, a key feature of Caribbean communing, is also forbidden in most parks in the city. Furthermore, Prospect Park tends to be occupied by Brooklyn's more affluent residents. Together these aspects of meeting in parks make the immediate spaces of one's neighborhood more attractive and comfortable alternatives.

Moving the community of friends and family outside furthermore allows for a sense of intimacy inviting the broader community of residents to join. Outdoor communing in effect serves as a community building activity as well that carves places out of public space that West Indians define. They become places for belonging, and for social, and cultural expression within the more sober and exclusionary socioeconomic and sociocultural fields of the city that more affluent residents, or other ethnoracial groups define. Action coheres with space to transform it and shape the subjectivities of the people within it. These practices evidence the melding of the private (inside the home and business) and public (outside on the street) spheres. The private becomes public and the public private where they are defined by the socializing practices of West Indian community members. Accordingly, the public gets saturated with Caribbean cultural referents and privatized affect, turning public space into a domestic realm, and shaping

Brooklyn into a geography that is both distinctly Caribbean and home. Complementing these dynamics is the background music of outdoor experiences.

The centrality of music to public socialization in Brooklyn make Caribbean rhythms, instruments, and song compositions the ambient music to life there and integral to West Indian place making. People complement the aural construction of outdoor soirees with boom boxes or large sound system speakers and complete DJ setups. From apartment windows, restaurants, and shops the sounds of reggae, calypso, and soca meander into the streets. The ever-present forms of Anglophone-Caribbean popular music reverberate from cars with subwoofers that make the bass of dancehall shake entire car frames and rattle speakers. The popularity of dancehall and its particular connection to electronically synthesized music production and a sound system culture contribute to the pervasiveness of it in Brooklyn. Dancehall is intended to be played loud, heard loud, and bass heavy adding to its omnipresence, domination of sonic fields, and it forming aural backdrops to life.

Guthrie Ramsey's (2003) observation of the centrality of music in African-American film is illustrated in the connection of Caribbean music to West Indian place making in Brooklyn. Ramsey demonstrates the importance of music to the semiotic fields of African-American film, a reflection of its importance to life and, I add, place making. He supports these points by demonstrating the diegetic presence of music in film. Diegetic music refers to that which is played from a source depicted in a film, whereas non-diegetic music refers to the background music producers include to complement the scene of the film and is not connected to any characters, or visible object in a particular scene.

I have additionally observed that more broadly in films depicting members of the African Diaspora in urban settings, the music that people listen to (diegetic) is often also the background music of the scene (non-diegetic). The background music will be revealed to be emanating from someone's stereo, car radio, or window.[21] The music is diegetic but also functions non-diegetically to complement and place the scene, tie the happenings of the moment together with the space in which the scene is located, and to its inhabitants. The dual diegetic/non-diegetic role of music and the links it forms simultaneously bring into view racial, cultural, and socioeconomic subjectivities and sociopolitical leanings having significant expressive impact that is not dependent on dialogue. The dual role of music also demonstrates how the characters of film stake a claim to space so as to define it as a place of their own as do people in real life. It is a film technique that accurately reflects the real life inextricable links between music, (inter)subjectivity, racial and cultural identities, and self and collective assertion that are instrumental to claiming space and making it a place of belonging with tangible affect.

These links were at the heart of controversy on November 23, 2012 that ended with Michael Dunn, a White Floridian, firing shots into a car occupied by four unarmed Black teens after Dunn attempted to demand that they turn down the rap music playing from their car. Dunn's demand ignited a verbal dispute that ultimately

[21] Example of films in which this technique can be observed include, but are not limited to: *Do the Right Thing* (U.S) and *Boyz in the Hood* (U.S.), both depicting African-American urban life and strife; *I Like It Like That* (U.S.), which portrays the lives of a Puerto Rican family in the Bronx; *The Harder They Come* (Jamaica), about a rural aspiring reggae artist's life in urban Kingston; *Dancehall Queen* (Jamaica) the story of a single mother in financial straights who competes for cash prizes in dancehall queen contests, *Shottas* (Jamaica), a film about two men involved in Kingston and Miami transnational crime circuits; and *Rockers* (Jamaica), a film about the development of reggae that melds fictional storytelling and documentary footage.

resulted in Dunn murdering seventeen-year-old passenger Jordan Davis. In the Brooklyn scene described here where the relationships between music, identities, socialization, and place making do not conflict socially, culturally, racially, or historically with how space is otherwise constructed as they did in the Florida shooting, music is harmonizing. The Caribbean regional expression of identities reflected in Brooklyn through West Indians making claims to and participating in the construction of space with their reggae, calypso, and soca music positively defines the sociocultural cartographies of West Indian Brooklyn and situates people within them.

The transformation of space into a Caribbean one aurally, visually, and through practice came to light in a Jamaican food restaurant on Nostrand Avenue. Looking rather obscure from the outside with a façade that gave little indication of what type of business it was, when I walked into the establishment with a research companion I was taken aback by the contrast between the exterior façade and interior décor. While the exterior was dark revealing little light from the inside, the interior was filled with warm illumination that emanated from hanging white lights strewn over wooden wall posts and an overhead bulb. Heat from the open window style kitchen warmed the restaurant from the cold winter temperatures outside. Fixed against the walls were cross latch wooden paneling that gave the appearance of mom and pop food stops constructed out of wood that line rural roadsides in the Caribbean. Tall indoor plants were placed in every corner in lieu of tall trees, bringing the outdoor foliage indoors. A counter top surrounded the open window of

the kitchen with stools set in front. Patrons sat on them conversing with the chef with whom they were very familiar. A large Jamaican flag hung overhead.

Four older men sat at one of the two tables that were occupied. They were playing dominoes, their palms banging emphatically on the tabletop to punctuate the finality of a move. They rehashed details of the game so enthusiastically they were nearly shouting in Patois amid bouts of laughter. Their jousting sounded like angry fights but friendly heckling made it evident the men were comrades. They had no beers, food, or other beverages that indicated their patronage of the establishment. They were simply hanging out. Roots reggae played from overhead speakers, louder than ambient music. A young woman sat at another table listening to a man who accompanied her recite rap lyrics that sounded of his own creation, alternating between West Indian accented English and African-American Vernacular English (Alim 2009) in their conversation thereafter.

This restaurant illustrates the inscription of the Caribbean within and on New York City spaces to create transgeographic cultural places. Social, cultural, and even environmental refuge – outdoor gaming brought indoors in the winter cold where "appropriate" patronage is secondary to the offering of a community space – are the hallmark of transgeographies. Décor constructed to match what the mind remembers or imagines of the Caribbean, and constructing the tropical within urban concrete, are a part of the creation of them. The collapsing of indoor and outdoor space is a necessary art in New York City winter if hoping to create the Caribbean within it. The young couples' linguistic code switching and engagement with a U.S. originated form of Black urban music evinced the liminality of the restaurant as a

transgeographic place, which housed people, practices, designs, and representations, that illustrated the meeting of New York and the Caribbean.

Caribbean place making in Brooklyn and transformation of materiality is partly tied to making available to West Indians in New York what they had access to in the countries from which they came – family, food, language, music and performance. Nurse D. is a woman in her fifties from Jamaica who migrated to Brooklyn as an adult to work in medical services. She referred to the process of transformation as efforts to: "transpose where we're from in Jamaica to where we are here when it comes to living." The West Indian Diaspora forms a geography that is "like home." Andrew Digital elaborated:

> I feel like I'm home. To me it's the closest place to Jamaica. I travel a lot of places in the world and stuff. But when you come to Brooklyn it's like where I'm from in Jamaica, you know you have your market, you go to your market on a Saturday morning and you buy your fresh grocery, your fresh foods, vegetables. I'm not saying you can't do it anywhere else in the world, but it's like there is more stores in Brooklyn that's geared to make you feel more at home. We call them Korean stores, where when you walk in you can get anything that's in Jamaica. You can get it at those stores, and it's really owned by Koreans, and they only have Trinidad products, Jamaican products. Anything you want, drinks, fruits from Jamaica, biscuits, bread, bun and cheese, and most of them are open twenty-four hours; tea that we drink back home. Every main intersection there's a Korean store. Even in the Bronx. So yeah, Brooklyn and the Bronx are the closest thing you can get to Jamaica…so Yeah, I'm at home in Brooklyn.

The availability of food items that allow people to continue to prepare the cuisine of their country of origin is just one small example of how cultural continuity is made possible in a new place. The preparation of Caribbean food is a part of creating cultural identities and the continuity of customs, while the presence of Caribbean food markets inscribe those identities and continuities in space.

Caribbean cuisine is held in high regards as a fundamental constituent part of being West Indian. Food similes often replace other descriptors to communicate Caribbeanness. “We are real Jamaicans. Born and grown. Dumplings and buttah, ya nah mean? Cut up ya lime and put it inna di water wit sugar and ya get lemonade…yeah, real Jamaicans,” Chavez, 25, who was born in Jamaica and has migrated back and forth between Jamaica and New York City since his teens, said of his family. Rellee, a second generation Jamaican-American, made a similar analogy between food and his Jamaicanness: “My culture was beaten into me. ‘This is where you’re from this is who you are,’ ya akee and saltfish, dumpling, the banana, the yam. The curry goat and alla de ting dat.” In Deborah Thomas’s (2004) ethnography of Jamaican nationalism and identities, a woman explains to Thomas that being “very, very Jamaican means:” “You eat plenty ackee and saltfish. You love reggae music. You talk Patois.” Food, language and music make up basic but fundamental constituent elements of Caribbeanness as evidenced in these examples of their links to Jamaican identity. Food, language, and (reggae) music are reflective of the creation, literal consumption, embodiment and expression of one’s culture. Food, music, and language follow emigrating families and serve to constitute space in their places of arrival, or as Nurse D. put it, transpose space.

Working in concert with the social practices and ways of inscribing Caribbean identities and material culture on and within Brooklyn spaces are the economic practices in West Indian Brooklyn, specifically informal transit services and commercial activity much of it reggae related. “Dollar vans” – personal vans that serve as communal taxis dropping people off at points of choice on a given route –

fill voids in the New York City Transit system that make the outer reaches of Brooklyn beyond train stops where the West Indian community is found still accessible. Additionally, while Brooklyn has an adequate north to south train system, east to west transit lines are not as available as they are in Manhattan. In turn locations that are geographically close but on an east-west axis are difficult to reach without taking long circuitous routes that bring travelers long out of their way. Dollar vans also address this travel inconvenience. Communal taxi vans are common in the Caribbean as evidenced in Jamaica, Barbados, and the British Virgin Islands. The dollar vans of Brooklyn evidence a reinstitution of this practice to connect the West Indian community in New York City. Vans themselves are reflections of a driver's individual taste and character, decorated with flags, interior lights, or other designs. Some have tinted windows and are equipped with subwoofers and special speakers to play the latest tunes at high volume without distortion. The invisibility of dollar vans in other parts of the city and their visibility in the West Indian neighborhoods of Brooklyn adds to one's sense of transference from a more general space to a distinctly Caribbean one.

The unmonitored or taxed sale of a diverse array of consumer goods on sidewalks or by mobile salesmen and women who solicit buyers brings another common Caribbean economic practice to Brooklyn. Older women sell soaps, unguents, shampoos, conditioners, clothes, flags, and odds and ends out of booths that line the sidewalks of Flatbush Avenue in keeping with the work of the "higglers" of the Caribbean. Hope (2006) writes on the work of higglers – informal commercial merchants – in Jamaica and their formation of an important and lucrative economic

base. Putnam (2002) similarly discusses late 19th century Afro-Caribbean immigrant women in Atlantic coastal Costa Rica forming an economic niche selling merchandise and helping to establish the Afro-Caribbean community there. Additionally, Mintz (1964) looks at women in the market place in Haiti and the importance of their work to the sustainability of the Haitian economy. Working as merchants is an economic option for women that allows them to have flexible schedules and to circumvent socio-historical obstacles to advancement through professional avenues that require education. In the studies cited here women dominate the merchant sector. In West Indian Brooklyn the women selling goods are predominantly Haitian. With many Haitians in Brooklyn being recent immigrants and at a linguistic disadvantage, selling goods is a valuable source of income where options are limited.

Men monopolize the sale of non-clothing related reggae merchandise, particularly CDs and DVDs, and, in recent history, records. Reggae goods are sold at records stores, tables set up outdoors, sidewalk booths, and out of the bags of men who enter in and out of businesses soliciting buyers. They are also sold in reggae parties. As the demand for classic mediums of music listening and playing grows among younger reggae listeners fascinated by the "old ways," stores are also reinstituting the sale of records earning back their descriptive title. CDs are made from music and audio files sent digitally through the Internet and imprinted in New York. CDs are generally DJ mixes of the latest or classic reggae songs. The DJs who put together the compilations are both locally and island based. Other music CDs and records, and DVDs are acquired in the Caribbean and passed through various

hands before reaching music stands. DVDs capture reggae parties in Jamaica. Passa Passa Wednesday and Dutty Fridaze are two popular Jamaican parties featured. DVDs are also locally made recordings of Brooklyn reggae parties that party videographer and promoters collaborate in putting together. Some video recordings and moments party photographers capture are made available for free viewing on the Internet contributing to reggae participants' transnational digital traversing of economic routes that connect the West Indian Diaspora globally.

The transnationalization of informal commercial industries, labor, and products attach Brooklyn to a Caribbean commercial, economic, and artistic space. The meeting of material Caribbean transformations, and social and economic practices in Brooklyn to create a transgeographic cultural place combine to form structures of feeling that tie Brooklyn in the imagination and sentiment to the Caribbean. Williams (1961) describes structures of feeling as a "felt sense of the quality of life" and "a community of experience" derived from activities cohering into a way of thinking and living (47-48). He interprets shared structures of feeling as being linked to time and space. According to Williams, people of the same generation and geographic location will share similar structures of feeling. Outsiders to that geography can only learn but will never truly embody the same structures of feeling or their incumbent behaviors, or habitus (Bourdieu, 1977) that connote a "a particular and native style" (Williams, 1961: 48). The West Indians of Brooklyn affirm the relevance of structures of feeling and their connection to space, but demonstrated that contrary to Williams' interpretation, structures of feeling can be recreated in new settings and passed on through generations. While still placed,

they are not fixed, demonstrating how people constitute place through language, music, and the enactment of identity, producing their environment, rather than being produced solely by it.

Structures of feeling, uprooted, sown again, or created as something new but invoking something old are so firmly anchored in West Indian Brooklyn that a Trinidadian Professor told me with conviction and feigned regret that he "can't leave Brooklyn." He was responding to the shock I expressed when he told me that he commutes to Philadelphia three times a week to teach courses. The Professor found the arduous commute well worth the inconvenience because of his deep attachment to Brooklyn, an attachment arising from the structures of feeling anchored there. "Brooklyn is the flesh and blood," he explained with much emotion, adding that most of his cousins and friends from high school in Trinidad are now in Brooklyn. "I just run down the block to see them," he said miming riding a bike with gusto, "just like in Trinidad." The transference of people, sometimes whole families, from one space to another, and their continued proximity and accessibility to each other in a single community nurture Brooklyn's Caribbean space.

The associations The Professor made are significant. He acted out riding a bike to illustrate his use of this same method of transport to see his family in Brooklyn today as he used when seeing family members in Trinidad. He in effect brought Trinidad and Brooklyn together in the imagination in the reenactment of his past and present, as if he were biking from one time and space in Trinidad seamlessly to the same space in a different moment in Brooklyn. His referring to Brooklyn as the "flesh and blood" imagined Brooklyn as a life force that sustains the

Caribbean community. His invocation of the body envisions Brooklyn (the flesh and blood) as being part of a larger sustaining entity, a greater Caribbean diasporic space (the whole body). To bring this point outside of metaphorical terms, Brooklyn is a place where Caribbean familial community socialization is extended through flows of people from one community to the next so as to overlap them, creating the imagined anatomical configurations, embedded with deep emotional meaning, that The Professor spoke of.

As The Professor indicated, his friends from high school are mostly found like him in Brooklyn. One of his communities from Trinidad relocated to Brooklyn and existed for him there as an already established supportive social network, one that seemed to move not between two locations with a vast distance between them, but more proximate ones. The transnationalization of school communities creates a sense of sameness and belonging as well as structures Brooklyn as a Caribbean place before the process of relocation might even actually begin. Dice, a reggae party promoter who is of Grenadian descent, spoke of the bonds of shared Caribbean schooling as helping to reestablish in Brooklyn communities that had existed prior. He sees camaraderie among school alumni as being a benefit to his work as a promoter, which is often dependent on the granting of favors.

Dice furthermore described lasting loyalties that extend from a shared alma mater and the benefits that arise from these bonds as "West Indian Stuff," made possible by the relatively small populations of Anglophone Caribbean countries, which make for a smaller pool of school communities that meet in Brooklyn. He added that in hip-hop music, those types of allegiances do not exist. "It's reggae

music. We all from the same communities […] It ain't like hip hop where its like 'Oh you're from Harlem, I'm from Brooklyn I don't know him like that,' unless you know someone from the record label." Dice went on to compare school derived Caribbean community bonds that continue in the U.S., as reflected in NYC based reggae negotiations, to the prevalence of jails in the U.S., which, as follows, is a source of disharmony in hip-hop. He said: "Reggae and calypso is different. In the islands there's only so much schools. It ain't like America where you got eighty-seven jails in New York State. They have more jails than houses." I was left to assume that the "they" who are subject to living where there are more jails than houses are African-Americans.

In his framing Dice made reggae metonymic of the West Indian community, in turn suggesting that hip-hop is metonymic of the African-American community. He sees West Indian "stuff" – communal bonds and solidarity – as extending from schools, whereas African-American "stuff" – lack of camaraderie as evidenced in hip-hop music industry negotiations – extended from jails outnumbering homes. Dice, in turn, made a larger statement about the pervasiveness of criminalization and incarceration in the U.S. and its impact on the lack of community formation among African-Americans. His interpretation both undermines the existence and impacts of crime evident throughout the Caribbean and aggrandizes solidarity among West Indians. His assertion about "West Indian stuff" also mirrors the analysis of scholars who locate West Indian success in the mutual assistance based immigrant allegiances they form, born of shared experiences of emigration, settlement, and

economic trailblazing in new contexts (Reid 1969; Glazer and Moynihan, 1970; Sowell 1981; Watkins-Owens 1996).

The links between alumni and the exchange of favors are also transnationally active and based in more formal institutions. Alumni of schools in the West Indies form alumni associations based in Brooklyn and direct their organizational efforts to the improvement of their alma mater. The Giddy Hall School Alumni Association (GHSAA) is an example of one such transnational institutional affiliation. According to Nurse D., a member of the GHSAA, the association once raised enough money from a fund raising event to build a computer lab at their alma mater in Jamaica. The activities of the GHSAA are not only goal directed. Sometimes members gather for barbecues and other social functions, reggae music placing the space of socialization in a Caribbean cultural context. Transnational linkages formed in high school communities benefit alumni on both ends through the mutual exchange of favors, establishment of solidarity, and in their creation of social places of collective belonging. They are also important to bringing New York City into the Caribbean space. "The streets" as a navigable socio-demographic and socio-geographic space also connect NYC and the Caribbean.

The streets make Brooklyn a familiar place particularly to male interviewees who have relocated from the urban West Indies. Speaking on moving from Toronto to Brooklyn a year after emigrating from Jamaica and feeling more at home in Brooklyn than he had in Toronto, Andrew Digital said: "When I got there [to Brooklyn] it wasn't like Toronto. Toronto is a big city, clean beautiful. Brooklyn, New York is kinda more rough and rugged, ya nah mean? But then I loved it because of

the pace […] Brooklyn is more streets and that's how Jamaica used to be." Andrew does not necessarily see the streets of Brooklyn and Jamaica as being the same, but rather as being reminiscent of each other in their constitution (rough and rugged) and pace. But who constitutes the streets? The lower income and working families, and people at the margins of society who live there do. The Caribbean language, symbols, and practices that define West Indian Brooklyn form visual, semiotic, social and experiential bridges that bind the streets of Brooklyn to the streets of Jamaica making Brooklyn appeal to him.

A *Daily News* article reported that East New York, Brooklyn accounted for a disproportionate amount of the city's gun violence (Rocco Parascandola, Paddock, and Conner 2012). In the parts of Brooklyn subject to crime and violence parents struggle to negotiate "street life" and keep it from entering into their homes. Where police aggression also presents an additional threat to daily livelihood, safety and security seems intangible. For those involved in the illegal drug trade, the violence of protecting one's turf and prestige, and savviness navigating the streets are transnationally intelligible realities despite contrast otherwise. Gunst (1995) explores the 1980s interconnectedness of Brooklyn and Jamaican streets, the interdependency of their underground economies, and mutually contingent eruptions of violence.

The illegal drug economies of New York City and the various countries of the Caribbean have historically been interdependent. The passing of narcotics and armament through transnational networks, and the business negotiations connected to these activities inspiring business related violence in both geographic

contexts. This transnational network, as indicated in Gunst's text, has also benefitted families in the West Indies who depend on the remittances sent from family members in the U.S., funds acquired from involvement in the drug trade. For some relocating to New York City has a different kind of American promise of wealth. These realities are narrated in verse one of dancehall deejay Cham's "Ghetto Story" (see appendix). In the verse Cham reminisces about the 1980s migration of "Mikey" to "foreign," his becoming a gangster, and subsequent acquisition of wealth, which benefitted his community in Jamaica. Though drug related violence in New York City has declined exponentially since Gunst's book was published, as well as the influence of the transnationally active gangs originating in the West Indies, the legacies of this period and related activity continue.

A Jamaican permanent resident of the U.S. once asked me in jest: "What is the first thing a Jamaican does when he moves from the countryside to Kingston? Buys a gun. What's the first thing a Jamaican does when he moves from Jamaica to Brooklyn? Buys a gun." His joke revealed the irony and contradictions of mobility. For people who migrate from rural to urban areas of Jamaica, movement is intended to yield better employment, access to universities and higher education, all of which are the supposed vehicles of upward mobility. Yet, urban migration can also be an introduction to street violence, the dangers of the transnational drug economy, and the hopelessness of an overly saturated job market.

Similarly, in relocating to the U.S. people hope to acquire more income and access job opportunities, but many find themselves entering circumstances that mirror the ones they left. Ultimately, despite its diversity and many distinct parts,

West Indian Brooklyn to many, is still the streets. Akim, a Jamaican resident of the 90s section of East New York openly bragged about the infamy of his neighborhood. According to Akim it is the place where all Jamaican reggae artists come to hang out because it is famous for being a New York City ghetto. The desirability he alleged, of people wanting to travel between ghettos illustrates the contextual familiarity and lack of boundaries between ghetto geographies. It is also indicative of the glamorization of ghetto life that is evident in dancehall music. Transgeographic intelligibility in both ghetto contexts is indicative of the savviness necessary to maneuver through streets constructed as contiguous places, as illustrated by The Professor riding his bike seamlessly between Trinidadian and Brooklyn geographies.

Red Fox, a Jamaican born reggae artist now in his forties who relocated to Brooklyn when he was sixteen, asserted to me that the struggles of people in Jamaica and Brooklyn are the same and defended successful professionals who get famous and leave Brooklyn saying: "In the word 'ghetto' is 'get out'." In his heavily accented pronunciation the words became homophones. While his sentiment is an overstatement, the garrisons and shantytowns of Jamaica cannot be conflated with even the most downtrodden parts of Brooklyn, he made the point that within the borders of West Indian Brooklyn that people leave the Caribbean to head towards, there exists also a need for exodus from its more troubled parts. The sociohistoric, socioeconomic, sociodemographic, visual, cognitive, and experiential circumstances that form and define ghettos create a link that relate New York and Caribbean streets.

This is more directly what Red Fox seemed to speak to. He dedicated some of his early work to dispelling myths about what he referred to as the "streets lined with gold" of New York. Songs inspired by his disillusionment with Brooklyn living. At sixteen he left his community in rural Jamaica where he grew up without electricity or running water to reunite in Brooklyn with his mother who he had not seen since he was two years old. He found himself in an apartment that felt like a cage and longed for rural Jamaica despite his access to more amenities in New York. His feeling is indicative of how the transposing, transferring, and recreation of transgeographic spaces that link two places can never make them exactly the same as much as they may overlap or mirror each other. They will reflect the contexts in which they are rooted, as they do the ones they are connected to, evincing their inherent liminality. As Red Fox grew older, he got involved in drug dealing and street life, both distant realities for him when he worked in his grandmother's grocery store in Jamaica as a young teen. From the disillusionment and insight he gained from living in both Brooklyn and Jamaica he wrote "Jamaica Nice," a song of encouragement to Jamaicans on the island to appreciate Jamaica and to dispel myths of the American Dream.

Other reggae artists illustrate the overlapping socioeconomic, demographic, and cultural spaces of New York City and the Caribbean that are observable visually, aurally, and experientially. The Brooklyn born and Jamaica raised members of roots&culture group Morgan Heritage illustrate the principles of these overlapping geographies and cultural cartographies well in their song "Brooklyn and Jamaica." Lead singer Peter Morgan begins the song asking not to be bothered about things he

does not know and asserts instead: "Just as mi 'bout Brooklyn…Just ask mi 'bout Jamaica." He continues:

> Just ask me 'bout Brooklyn/And how the ganja [marijuana] move in the street/And when you're poor you can't sleep/Ask me 'bout Brooklyn/Where everyday another bites the dust/True so much gunshot a bust [fire]/Just ask mi 'bout Jamaica/Where life is gettin' harder/And if you ever come on yah/Ask me 'bout Jamaica/Where the policeman and soldier/Nuh [don't] stop charge man fi [for] murder.

Peter Morgan articulates some of the same ideas as Andrew Digital and Red Fox about the labyrinth of the streets that connect Jamaica and Brooklyn drawing parallels between the depressed economic circumstances of Brooklyn and Jamaica, the oppressiveness of ghetto life, and the violence witnessed in both places. "Knowing" the two connected locations is about understanding how to navigate the streets.

The group concludes the last verse of the song with: "This life/It's not a pretty life/When ya livin' this here ghetto life/Upon the eastside/This life/It's not a pretty life/When ya livin' this here ghetto life/Over on the west side."[22] Dividing ghetto life into sides east and west is a reference to Jamaica (east) and Brooklyn (west). Morgan Heritage's framing positions Brooklyn and Jamaica as occupying two cardinal directions of the same geographic space bringing these two places closer. They are linked by travel between them and how their social, and economic circumstances are reflected in each other. Morgan Heritage also exposes popular imaginings of relocation providing an escape as being mere fantasy that in actuality leads people to similar social and economic environments from the ones they left

[22] *See* appendix for additional lyrics.

"over on the west side." Brooklyn and Jamaica are both envisioned as places of no escape.

Other reggae artists bring Brooklyn and Jamaica conceptually and imaginatively close. Their talk of Brooklyn anchors both reggae and Jamaicans in Brooklyn. Screechy Dan, one of few Brooklyn born and raised dancehall deejays, says: "From Kingston [Jamaica] to Marcy [Brooklyn housing project] big up [much respect to] all my dogs, whether you illegal or you have your green card. Link up a [meet in] Brooklyn the tings get broad and the thugs in the street test dem vocal chords sayin' 'Brooklyn we go hard.'" When Jamaica based dancehall reggae deejay Vybz Kartel in a song in which he laments the challenges to fidelity that having so many women available to him presents remarks: "The first youth Sophie a bring [gave birth to], that a mi baby mother a Brooklyn" he links himself to the borough through his progeny, a demonstration of his travels and conquest of women on both the east and west sides.

Similarly, when Jamaican deejay Buju Banton appears in his video for "Driver A" in Brooklyn, he locates himself and Jamaica within the Brooklyn geographic space, depicting himself seamlessly moving between the two locales in a way that constructs them as being easily accessible and mutually intelligible. His instructions to his driver to carry his marijuana product to a street in the West Indian neighborhood (Albemarle) and portrayal of various locations in Brooklyn through his driver's window serves to indicate his knowledge of the ins and outs of the Brooklyn geography and West Indian community, as well as the underground economic matrix therein. Buju Banton concludes the video in a Brooklyn record

store serving to further situate reggae in Brooklyn. As this song is heard and the video viewed throughout the world, the connections between reggae and Brooklyn become internationally understood as well.

The discursive and visual link artists form between Jamaica and Brooklyn are actualized in the reggae music production described in the previous chapter. The work of migrants, immigrants, first generation Americans and beyond to create places for Caribbean cultural belonging, learning, and practice have formed transgeographic cultural spaces that overlap with the West Indies in which they create and embody Caribbean subjectivities. The performance and celebration of these subjectivities and the aural, visual, and performative connections between Brooklyn and the West Indies that form therein to nurture attachments to the Caribbean unfold in the next space investigated here, the reggae party.

"Music puts you into that mood and takes you where you want to be": Reggae Party Spaces and Transgeographic Places

When I asked Noel, a fifty-nine year old Jamaican car mechanic who has lived in the U.S. for twenty years, if reggae reminded him of home he responded: "Yeah, in the party." The moment in which Jamaica came to New York in Noel's mind helping him to imagine and giving him the feeling of being in his place of origin happens within a specific place, "the party." Connecting Noel to Jamaica is not only reggae music itself but also the space in which it was listened to, rituals associated with enjoying the music in that space, and the company within it, together making up the

party place. Others shared Noel's sentiment and attached being immersed in a moment, and space of belonging such that they feel "at home" to the embodied experience of being in the party, and indulging in its spatialized practices. The links between music, space, identity, performance, and socializing make partying significant to diasporic subjectivities and nostalgia, and undergird the formation of transgeographic cultural places.

"The party" refers comprehensively to the site of identity celebration where people exit the rigors of the outside world – work life, family life, daily stresses – and enter into a place of collective cathartic release and enjoyment. Atencio (2008), Hall et al. (1976), Niaah (2010), Hebdige (1987), Gilroy (1991b) and Stolzoff (2000) all give serious attention to the importance of spaces of leisure such as parties to the embodiment of identity and self-actualization. Stolzoff and Stanley-Niaah focus specifically on reggae spaces of leisure. Research in Brooklyn revealed that parties serve as diasporic cultural institutions much like church and political associations. The venues where reggae parties unfold are converted into Caribbean cultural and performative arenas tied to reggae that Caribbeanness space.

The very basic components that constitute reggae parties are the sound system, the music, dance, and other performance modes, the participants in festivities and their fashion, consumable items (alcohol, marijuana, and frequently West Indian cuisine), and the space in which celebration unfolds. These minimal components constituting reggae parties allow for an expansive interpretation of what exactly a reggae party is to include reggae concerts and sound clashes. There are many different typologies of reggae parties and reggae spaces from private

homes and backyards, to public streets, and empty lots. I focus here predominantly on privately owned venues intended for public use – bars, lounges, catering halls, clubs, and concert halls – the most common places in which non-familial based parties are held. Familial parties receive attention in chapter four.

The different typologies of reggae parties are referred to as "scenes." Like in theater, scenes are made by designing space to create an atmosphere that sets the tone and backdrop for the actions that will unfold within it. The people who "act" within that space and their self-presentation also create scenes. Music is pertinent to establishing the atmosphere of scenes and informs action within it. What unify the diversity of reggae scenes are the performative practices of reggae: music listening, MCing, Djing, call and response (either vocal or through gesture and dance) between the DJ, MCs, and the crowd, and danced or vocalized improvisations. Beyond unifying the different scenes, reggae performative practices are the substance of transgeographic places. They are at the crux of sensory perception and action that create the aural, visual, kinesthetic and even olfactory links to the Caribbean that bring these places close not only in the mind but also in action.

Sonjah Stanley-Niaah refers to the performance complex that unfolds in reggae spaces in Jamaica as performance geographies. She sees the concept of performance geography as expanding the logic of cultural geography and performance studies "to include the ways in which people living in particular locations give those locations identity through certain acts" (2010: 32). People inscribe identities within and shape the contours of space through performance constituting that specific geography. Sterling (2010), interpreting reggae in Japan,

writes about transnational performance contexts in which shared performance practices and behavior similarly define distant places. It follows then that through shared performance acts people shape the contours of space similarly and constitute identities that are tied to performance and space in parallel ways. Despite the location of that performance geography, they mirror each other. These parallels that unite space in practice and action, also unite them in perception further forming a link between two places that can extend outside the specificities of location. These dynamics become particularly important when considering performance mediums within diasporas.

The reggae parties described here are indicative of expressive cultural links that connect reggae places in New York City to those in the Caribbean and the adoptive homes of the West Indian Diaspora at large to constitute transgeographic diasporic performance places; places that, as Noel said, remind them of home. The places where performances unfold are cultivated through the transference, regeneration, recreation, enactment, and embodiment of shared cultural forms across geographies. The expressive performances therein furthermore form links between different sites of reggae creation whether they are Caribbean or not. People travel from all over the world to New York City to participate in reggae party performance actions, and are central to creating a global performance nexus.

Returning to the different scenes, each party follows a particular music structure. Roots&culture centered parties begin with the much slower rhythms of one drop before moving into roots&culture which dominate the evening's sounds before transitioning into dancehall in the last hour before the party ends. Dancehall

centered parties begin with the less intense and more brightly colored sounds of classic roots before progressing through reggae history into dancehall as the space becomes full. The "early warm," as the slower music start to the evening is referred to, and subsequent transition through different genres and periods of reggae are a journey through the historical development of the music to contemporary dancehall. The significance of roots music to the musical structure of reggae places is evidence of diasporic preoccupations with beginnings, origins, knowledge of the past, and the preservation of it. It is also indicative of the invocation of memories, mind travel, and imagining that set the tone of reggae places and are constitutive of them as transgeographies. As Andrew Digital put it: "Music puts you into that mood and takes you where you want to be."

What distinguish reggae scenes are crowd dress, which performative practices are emphasized most, and the party venue. Crowd dress varies generally from Rasta, to urban, to highly stylized dancehall regalia that avid dancers participating in dancehall's vibrant dance scene wear. Rasta wear is characterized by: tams or cloths that cover dread locks, red, gold and green colors, and more modest outfit selections. Urban nightclub wear is intended for "posing" or "modeling" – looking one's best in the nightclub to be seen and admired. For men urban nightwear generally includes, but is not limited to: jeans and collared button up or crew neck tee-shirts, or fashion forward experimentation (combining swim wear pants with a formal shirt); and for women, form fitting dresses and heels. There is also the highly stylized dancehall wear: custom made studded and spiked vests, shirts, and jackets, form fitting jeans, elaborate or creatively styled and

colored hair-dos (braids, waves, pigtails, and curls), which both men and women can be see adorned with; and the flesh bearing crop tops and "pum pum shorts," or "batty riders" of women (shorts that just barely or hardly pass the bottom of a woman's buttocks). No individual fits neatly into these general categorizations of style, nor are these descriptions of style fixed. They are notable trends. At any given party all of these styles might be visible and worn by people of various ages. However, women and men who adhere to the Rasta style of dress are more apparent in roots&culture parties whereas in dancehall dominated parties stylized and urban dressed patrons are more visible.

The dominant style of the patrons that attend a specific party and the style of reggae music played are reflected in the space in which a party is held. There is much diversity in the design and decoration of reggae spaces. Bembe and Club Nocturnal serve as examples of opposite end of the spectrum spaces in design and décor that the style of reggae played and clientele also reflect. Bembe is a Brooklyn bar and lounge that spatially exemplifies a venue that holds a roots&culture party, the décor mirroring the aura of the music and stylistic leanings of patrons. It is a small venue with distinct and unusual brick walls, wooden pillars, bamboo lined corridors, bare walls painted green, bar top candles, and framed and illuminated artwork that all give this space a rustic and earthy feel. The focus on natural materials (wood and bamboo), and dim ambient candlelight complement the warmer sounds of roots&culture and moderate energy level of the crowd within.

Club Nocturnal the venue for a weekly Brooklyn dancehall party, contrastingly is held in a club space with a modern interior design. The area below

the bar top is illuminated with blue lighting. The pillars in the space have metal facades, the lighting of the club is controlled by overhead fixtures that project moving red, blue, green, and white lights onto the dance floor. The space is large and much less intimate than Bembe. The spaciousness of the dance floor, focus on angular metallic fixtures, and modern design of the space give it a more formal feel and appeal that is fitting of the clientele who dress in their finest urban nightlife chic and hope to find themselves in an atmosphere conducive to posing. Both Club Nocturnal and Bembe reflect the varying aesthetic tastes within the reggae community.

The intermediary spaces on the spectrum in style and design between the rustic atmosphere and the modern design club settings are where the reggae parties frequented by people clad in New York City dancehall stylized dress can be seen most. These intermediary spaces are by and large the most diverse encompassing: smaller neighborhood bars with few accents in physical design, and narrow dance spaces carved out of the areas between bar high-top tables and pathways; large minimally decorated spaces with hanging adornments (Christmas lights, Caribbean flags, and posters) mostly bare event venues rented for an evening; and also the more rundown and worn nightclubs. In their bareness and lack of specificity in design, intermediary spaces house a diversity of crowds that independently constitute the scene, rather than the space itself signifying the belonging of a certain crowd and sound, as is more the case with venues like Bembe and Club Nocturnal.

Also characterizing the typologies of parties are the reggae performative practices that are emphasized within the space. Roots&culture parties generally do

not have a soundman working to animate the crowd. Without a soundman, roots&culture centered parties are less directed towards collective participation in a single activity and more geared towards the meditative experience that roots&culture music tends to inspire. The vocal presence of the soundman in dancehall parties adds to the sound volume and intensity of action, and energy in the space. The soundman will banter, ask the crowd to wave their country's flag in the air, command that it raise two fingers in the air in the symbol of a gun firing imaginary celebratory bullets into the sky, chant words of his choosing in response to his call, or perform specific dance moves. Dance is always a feature of reggae parties. People's bodies responding to the rhythms of the music, the crowd in its entirety waving and bouncing in unison like a vibrating gelatinous mass. However, in dancehall focused parties specifically, dance performance is oriented towards displays of dance skill, collective participation in the moves of the latest dances, and high energy, kinesthetic, and cathartic release.

Many of the public venues where reggae parties are held serve some other purpose on other days of the week underscoring the significance of people and practices to defining space. "Wha Gwaan Wednesdays" is a reggae party at Temptations nightclub on Wednesday, but on Thursday the nightclub hosts a hip-hop party. Rose Garden by day is a catering hall, Albany Manor is a bare event space with no proper bar but rather a simple service window with a kitchenette area behind it that is converted into a bar for sound clashes and parties. Other venues are bar/restaurants by day but are converted into reggae places by night with musical and dance performances, celebrations, selling of Caribbean foods items, and through

the establishment of "The Vibes." These elements cohere to form a transformative ritual reggae complex. The formation of aural, visual, and sonic fields in reggae places that convert them into transgeographies connected to the West Indies are contingent on this reggae complex.

The Vibes: Forming a Ritual Reggae Complex

Asking my research collaborators to define or conceptualize what connotes "the Vibes" or "vibe" was like asking them to explain in great detail why they love their mothers. Sometimes it is the most commonly shared and widely understood feelings, and ideas that are the most difficult to articulate. The vibes encompasses a number of interrelated concepts and experiences that are closely attached to space and the happenings within it. It is a singular word with multiple meanings and experiential origins. In efforts to elaborate, the vibes refers to positive or excited emotional and mental states, and good feelings that emanate from within a person but also from within the "atmosphere" of space. Atmosphere is created within a space through people's actions – their conversation, singing, and dancing.

Collective effervescence is useful to interpreting the palpability of collective action and excitement in reggae places that induce the vibes. Durkheim (2001) offers that collective effervescence is generated through the channeling of collective energy and excitement in space so as to unify the group, and imbue the actions of its members with sacred significance. The collective, their actions, emotions, and transformative affect are in dialectical relationship. The affect (the vibes) the

collective creates with their actions and emotions imbues them with sacred meaning that impacts the collective experience. Manipulating lighting and décor to physically alter space and create an atmosphere that complements the actions intended for that space, provide the platform for collective effervescence, and is constitutive of the vibes.

The vibes can also signify the sound feeling of music and the emotive changes it invokes in listeners. Digital reminisced about Jamaica, his accent becoming heavier, saying: "You go to some likkle place in Jamaica, dem a play music inna di yard and everybody there may be playing dominoes and having fun. But doing those things without music, it doesn't make you feel good ya nah mean? Because music bring di vibes. Nah mean? […] vibes give you that good feeling. You can't deal without the vibes and the vibes a part of the music." Digital's assertion that you "can't deal" without the vibes has a literal connotation – one cannot manage – it also indicates that nothing can transpire in its appropriate way without music and the vibes it induces.

Music foments the vibes as it resonates within a space, its high and low frequencies matching the energetic frequencies of the participators and also being the source of them; another dialectic coming into view. In tune with the vibes that build in reggae places, people bang their hands on walls to show their excitement over the DJ's musical choice or general enthusiasm for the party's cohering elements. Andrew Digital described a situation in which the pace and excitement of music excited the crowd at a sound clash creating the vibes. He said: "You see so much guys in the place and you wonder 'wow,' it's scary, they're jumping up they're

going crazy, but it's just for the music, just for the vibes." In this way vibes refers to the palpable energy that reverberates in space. Speaking about the different types of parties he likes to DJ at, Steppa explained: "you will get more vibes, energy, from a Jamaican dance," referring rather literally to the energy frequencies. The dim lights of venues, the sounds of music playing, voices chatting, walls vibrating under impassioned hands, DJs calling, crowds shouting, bodies moving create a cross geographically intelligible reggae party vibe and experience.

A significant factor in the transformation of space into transgeographic reggae places and establishing the vibes is marijuana smoking. Marijuana smoking arises time and time again as a significant feature in reggae parties, so consistently that it cannot be ignored here. Especially since smoking weed or ganja, as marijuana is frequently called, is against all New York City and State regulations, which are typically heavily enforced by NYPD to the point of being predatory. Nowhere did this shocking suspension of law come so blatantly to attention as it did in the Hammerstein Ballroom, an elegant and ornate Manhattan based multi-purpose entertainment arena.

I had been to concerts at the Hammerstein Ballroom prior but never witnessed ganja smoking. However, when in conjunction with this research I attended a popular national corporate radio station's annual reggae concert, I found that weed smoking was the rule of the space rather than the exception. People passed marijuana filled tobacco rolling papers and cigars emptied, and filled again with marijuana throughout the space even sharing with apparent strangers, putting a new spin on Giorgio Agamben's concept of a state of exception (2005). At one

point a reggae DJ from the popular station shouted into the microphone: "Caribbean people can't chill without ganja, drinks, 'n' ting." Though clearly an essentializing remark about Caribbean leisure, the DJs statement is indicative of the ritualization of marijuana smoking in reggae places.

Ganja is a part of the ritual ceremony of reggae gatherings and transforms space with the rules of its internal crowd. In a city where people cannot smoke cigarette in parks, reggae lovers establish the vibes by lighting up their scented and intoxicating herb filled spliffs and blunts and reorienting space towards their governing principles. Fyah, a Jamaican Rasta with firm belief in the ritual, spiritual and healing properties of marijuana, sees it as being pivotal to the creation of atmosphere:

> You hafi [have to] have the right atmosphere fi [to] get the real vibe ya nah I'm saying? Environment. Marijuana is a part of Jamaican culture. Marijuana is not a drug. It's a herb. Herb is the healing of the nation. And we use it many different ways: sacrimonial [sic], aromatherapy, Ayurvedic way.

While some would beg to differ that marijuana is a part of Jamaican culture, it is, very much a part of Rasta culture from which reggae sprung, and by extension, reggae culture. Fyah's either intentional (Rasta's often cleverly concoct words that capture a range of meanings in a single signifier) or mistaken combination of "ceremonial" and "sacrament" into "sacrimonal" illustrates well the way marijuana is viewed within reggae places. It is a sacred rite undertaken within the reggae party that "blesses" the space. It is a ceremonial act, central to the celebration that is the reggae party and to collective sociality. It is also seen as a unifying practice between people and reggae places internationally.

The convergence of marijuana smoking with reggae music and performance, and collective celebration brings to consciousness its significance as a ritual ceremonial practice that constitutes the vibes (part of the ritual reggae complex) and inscribes reggae and Caribbean cultural identity (which many attach to smoking) within a space, literally filling, transforming, and instilling it with sacred properties and significances. Most venues turn a blind eye to marijuana smoking as exemplified in the case of the Hammerstein Ballroom reggae concert, where weed could be smelled even from outside the venue filtering through the ventilation system. So do police officers during these reggae states of exception. Appeasing a peaceful crowd of smokers that vastly outnumbers police forces in a given space might seem preferable to stirring conflict with the masses by enforcing no smoking policies. Andrew Digital, had the following to say about unexpected police entrances at sound clashes: "Maybe the most they will complain about is the weed smoking, ya nah mean. That's part of our culture. But mostly they don't really give us a hard time." Many venues actually accommodate marijuana smoking providing access to outdoor smoking areas, or outdoor gardens where smoking is "allowed." Some still, however, strictly forbid it and enforce the regulation with bouncers who do not want to see so much as a cigarette behind someone's ear, party goers know which places these are and begrudge them.

Beyond the possibility of establishing the vibes people can also "catch a vibes" – be spontaneously captivated or immersed in positive vibrations. People are always in search of the vibes, a search that often lands them in reggae places. Catching a vibes also signifies the experience of cultural embodiment. Red Fox

explained that he goes to Jamaica to catch a vibes as a way to "recharge" after being away for too long. For him catching a vibes describes the positive sentiments that come along with cultural immersion that subsequently revive him. Alternatively, crowd indulgence in the vibes at reggae parties serves as a form of cultural immersion and embodiment that the transnationalization of performance practices has facilitated. Red Fox described his favorite reggae party where deejays in attendance bring the "authentic vibes" spontaneously improvising (freestyling) song lyrics over recorded music, "just like Jamaica." Thereby expressive practices are reproduced providing the basis for Caribbean cultural embodiment, celebration, and subjectivity formation – catching a vibes. Furthermore, these practices define space visually as people engage in performance, aurally through the reggae music played and the improvised vocals of MCs, deejays, and singers, kinesthetically through crowd movement and dance, and environmentally as specific sentiments and energetic frequencies are fomented. In turn, transgeographic places for Caribbean indulgence are formed.

As in the larger Brooklyn geography, socialization in reggae places – drinking, reminiscing, laughing, and crowd engagement – are central to the vibes and formation of transgeographies. While these examples of socialization are common to most nocturnal leisure experiences, there are others that are uniquely observable in reggae places. At Temptations nightclub there is a well-lit table seating area approximately seven yards away and down two stairs from the dance floor where people dance the night away. I have observed older patrons playing dominoes and chatting in this well-lit seating area. In their game playing, they were

a distinct kind of participant in the party and added to the dimensions of socialization and the vibes. Their seemingly misplaced presence in a nightclub venue is fitting of a reggae places in which people in their fifties and sixties are brought together with those in their twenties and thirties, creating a site for inter-generational participation. The meeting of the generations is evidence of reggae places being more than simply for fun but also significant cultural institutions and places for social belonging.

An additional element of the many interrelated components that create transgeographic reggae places and constitute the vibes is the presence of informal food vendors. Vendors sell home cooked food right inside venues, often the case at sound clashes and concerts, or outside nightclub parties waiting to catch hungry people leaving in the early morning. Charging a flat rate per plate complete with a jerk or curry meat, rice and peas, and a vegetable, food vendors are a staple at many reggae functions. Their sale of food is also a practice that is specific to reggae parties, one that I have not witnessed at other New York City parties. Bringing Caribbean cuisine into reggae places adds to the olfactory experience and conjures the Caribbean within the space.

The convergence of these elements to constitute the vibes – reggae music listening, intersubjective performance, dance, ritual marijuana smoking, food consumption and enjoyment – forms a ritual reggae complex that configures transgeographic reggae places in which imaginaries are created, memories induced, nostalgia quelled, and subjectivities created. Theorizations of space and perception are useful to interpreting these dynamics. Merleau-Ponty (2012) offers that sense,

perception, and space are in a mutually constitutive symbiotic relationship in which the perception of sensory data in space imbues it with life and meaning. Space is transformed into places with affect through sensory perception.

Connecting Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of perception to the vibes and to Noel's experience remembering home in "the party," sensory experiences in the party – perception of aural, kinesthetic, visual, and even olfactory data as derived from gangja smoke and Caribbean food being sold – converge to constitute the vibes. In turn memories, sentiments, and imaginings of a distant place are conjured bringing it closer in moments of perceiving their overlapping sensory fields. Party spaces thereby become places for transgeographic imagining and embodiment in which people relate affectively to their places of cultural origin in the West Indies. Bergson (1988) aptly states: "there is no perception which is not full of memories. With the immediate and present data of our senses, we mingle a thousand details out of our past experience" (Bergson, 1988: 33). Of these mingled and matched experiences are the associations made between experience, memory, and space, and transgeographic performative and socialization practices that transform reggae spaces into places for cultural embodiment.

Tied in with the significance of affect created within reggae parties is how their limited temporality sustains the continuous temporality of West Indian Brooklyn as a Caribbean space. The contrasting temporalities of the wider Brooklyn Caribbean space and nocturnal Caribbean reggae spaces are in dialectical relationship. The momentary ephemeral revelry, cathartic release, and conjuring of cultural subjectivities within reggae parties both sustain and are constituted by the

permanence of Brooklyn as a Caribbean cultural space. The Caribbean cultural performances of the greater outside Brooklyn world – exhibitions and inscriptions of identity, street socialization, place making, and economic practices – are coterminous with the inside world of the party and reggae performance that unfold therein.

The words my research collaborators shared about their experiences indulging in the aural, visual, imaginative, and feeling oriented dimensions of the vibes in transgeographic reggae places brought to mind a passage from Julia Alvarez's book *Yo!* A Dominican writer who relocated to the U.S. as a child, Alvarez's literature is often infused with the thoughts and sentiments of diasporas expressed in literary terms and artfully constructed vignettes. In the passage the American boyfriend of the main protagonist notes her relationship with the Dominican Republic: "She hasn't lived there for a quarter of a century. She works here, makes love here, has her friends here, pays taxes here, will probably die here […] Still, when she talked about the D.R., she gets all dewy-eyed as if she were crocheting a little sweater and booties for that island, as if she had given birth to it herself out of the womb or her memory" (Alvarez 1997: 193). Alvarez's likening of diasporic connection, longing and memory to a mother's nurturing and protection of her child is an inversion of scholarly framings of places of origin as a "mother" (land) whose children have been dispersed throughout the many continents and look to their physical or cultural birthplace with admiration.

In Alvarez's text her framing of the homeland as a baby needing constant nurturing (memory and imagination), care (the recreation and embodiment of

cultural forms), and to be provided with amenities for survival (music, performance, and the creation of cultural spaces) more aptly describes the sentiments of my research collaborators. The kind of care and attention they give to the memory and invocation of the Caribbean in New York City through their participation in reggae is as if they are nurturing a baby – their cultural product. In the party they nurture, care, maintain, feel, and experience their places of origin, holding their homeland closely to them like a baby. Through these processes they bring the Caribbean and New York City intimately close in the mind, sights, sounds, and practices that are all encompassed in the vibes.

Provincializing Brooklyn

The discursive overlapping of Brooklyn and the West Indies that my research collaborators and different reggae artists create exemplifies the material and cultural transformation of Brooklyn that actualizes the Caribbean in NYC, and brings New York into the Caribbean space. It also reflects a certain provincializing of Brooklyn. Referencing Chakabarty's (2000) call to provincialize Europe by questioning its position as the sole representation of modernity, Lara Putnam asks her readers to consider Harlem of the interwar period not as a center of knowledge, a financial mecca whose lure and appeal went unquestioned, but rather as "one among many white-dominated destinations where claims to equality for citizens of color were increasingly under assault" (2013: 472). While the claims of my research collaborators do indicate that there is a certain romanticization of Brooklyn, New

York, and the United States, ultimately relocation reveals a more complex and familiar reality.

The research collaborators and reggae groups cited here affirm the relevance of Putnam's candid observation of Harlem in the 1920s to Brooklyn today. The idea of provincializing as Putnam and Chakabarty conceive of it problematizes the center/periphery model. In their view Harlem and Europe should not be conceived as being so distinct from locales positioned as peripheral socially, economically, or politically and also should not be made into a model towards which all others aspire. Provincializing also has the connotation of seeing as a geographically provincial space.

The actions, imaginings, and mark of people on and within space shape Brooklyn into a place that is envisioned as provincially connected to the Caribbean; a place where a man can ride his bike to see his cousin in Trinidad and also to see his cousin in Brooklyn. Migration, imagination, transformation of adoptive homes, visual and sonic links, and the exploitation of transnational mediascapes facilitated by digital technology all coalesce to compose connected geographies. Reading Brooklyn as provincial to the West Indies mirrors Patterson's (1994) observation of how people who settle a new space within the U.S. geography form "regional cosmos: " regional hubs that are satellites of their country of origin. His observation aptly describes how West Indians have transformed Brooklyn into a place of belonging. It is a colonization of space that harkens back to the transformation of New World colonial centers into spaces of European architecture and culture in the Western Hemisphere.

The actions and work of people to transform parts of New York City into Caribbean cultural places reflect only some factors that bring the city into a Caribbean migratory, economic, cultural, and social geographic space. The mutually constitutive histories of the U.S. and the nations of the Caribbean have also played a role in the socio-spatial orientation of the Caribbean and New York that has provincialized Brooklyn. The symbiotic history of the U.S. and the Caribbean is evidenced in the U.S. predicated push and pull factors that have inspired emigration from the region to NYC. From the Caribbean Basin Initiative to the Structural Adjustment Programs of the Cold War period, the flows of people between New York City and the Caribbean and subsequent transformations of the city have largely been contingent on U.S. political and economic involvement in the affairs of Caribbean nations.

Numerous scholars have investigated U.S. political and economic intervention in the Caribbean and the socioeconomic impacts that consequently inspired emigration and foregrounded the formation of the Circum-Caribbean, with New York City becoming a principal place of settlement (Sheller 2014; Basch, Schiller, and Blanc 1994; Gunst 1995; Pearce 1982; Perkins 1981; Harsch 1981; Lundy 1999; Looney 1987). Others have focused specifically on West Indian Diasporic experiences upon arrival and settlement particularly as related to racialization, the establishment of economic niches, and formation of transnational political ties (Foner 2001; Cordero-Guzmán 2001; Waters 1999; Basch 2001; Butterfield 2004). Historian Laurie Gunst's (1995) exploration into the transnationalization of the Jamaican posse underworld gives background history to

U.S. involvement in and influence on Jamaican domestic political and economic affairs that were integral to the creation of a transnational underground economic industry and gang underworld active in Kingston and Brooklyn. All of these scholars provide evidence of the mutual contingency of the history of the United States' and the countries of the Caribbean.

Brooklyn being brought into a close spatial relationship with the Caribbean is evidence of the historic and contemporary interconnectedness of the two geographies and of the political and economic impacts the mutual contingencies of their histories has had. To name only a few of these impacts: Transnational political organizations invested in NYC have made their mark on the party politics in both the city and the West Indies (Basch, Schiller, and Blanc 1994; Basch 2001). Families sending remittances from the U.S. to the islands make up a steadily growing and significant portion of the GDP of the Antilles (Sampson and Branch-Vital, 2012). West Indians are also transforming New York City's economy. They have formed a significant economic niche in the medical services (Kasinitz and Vickerman 2001), are concentrated in the city's federal, state, and municipal agencies, and have transformed all labor sectors including, and most notably, low-cost housing rehabilitation which is credited with restoring the physical landscape of the city (Sutton 1987). Cultural impacts are evidenced in the transformation of NYC's cultural cartographies as have been hereto explored.

Conclusion

This chapter has theorized the collapsing of sociocultural and geographic boundaries so as to form what I have termed transgeographies – aural, visual, kinesthetic sensory bridges that unite Brooklyn and the Caribbean in the mind and practice so as to form places for Caribbean cultural embodiment and recreation. Interpreting the constitution of transgeographies I focused on West Indian place making as tied to certain social and economic actions, and reggae performance practices. In exploring these dimensions of West Indian Diasporic transformation of Brooklyn, this chapter has been concerned with union, and Brooklyn as a boundary-less space that as a satellite is provincial to various countries of the Caribbean.

Rather than foregrounding the collapsing of boundaries, the next chapter focuses on the distinctions and contradictions that arise within West Indian Brooklyn and the Circum-Caribbean space. Of particular focus are: the distinctions between citizenship as cultural solidarity and citizenship as legal belonging; tensions arising over who can claim ownership of reggae culture at large; and cleavages between West Indians in the situated in the West Indies and those in Brooklyn. Chapter three moves from analysis of what unites and from the general to the more detailed, and disparate. In its analysis of the more specific, chapter three takes a closer look at the national, ethnic, and racial subjectivities arising within West Indian Brooklyn, and the relationship of reggae to them. Particular attention is given to conceptualizing what I term figurative citizenship – sentiments of belonging to and imagining oneself to be a part of a Caribbean nation.

CHAPTER THREE
U.S. CITIZENS OF THE WEST INDIES: IDENTITY, DISJUNCTRE, AND THE CREATION OF FIGURATIVE CITIZENSHIP

Likkle Bit, is a twenty-four year old professional reggae dancer who was born in St. Andrew, Jamaica and brought to the U.S. when she two years old. When I asked her about her national identity she explained: "If the government is asking, I am American. If anyone else asks, I'm Jamaican." James[23] is a twenty-two year old sous chef at Mo'Bay Café born and raised in Negril, Jamaica. He joined his father in the U.S. in his late teens and was able to receive expedited U.S. citizenship under his father's sponsorship. On a train ride home from Mo'Bay Café where we worked together James said, "I'm not an American, I'm a Jamaican. I use my citizenship like a Metrocard," referencing the prepaid card that when swiped through a turnstile allows entry into the New York City subway transit system. "When I go Jamaica, I come back and…" James concluded his sentence by gesturing swiping a Metrocard through the turnstile.

For James, his U.S. citizenship is not about identity. It is instead a legal practicality that facilitates easy exit into the pathways of the Circum-Caribbean and return to the U.S. with a quick show of his passport, like swiping a Metrocard to commute through the city's underground travel complex. Both James and Likkle Bit, see themselves as Jamaicans revealing their conceptual detachment of citizenship from a legal and political status, and attachment of it instead to a sense of cultural belonging and solidarity. Their framing evinces the salience of origins and the cultural distinctions they symbolize that are at the heart of tangible, everyday

[23] I have assigned a pseudonym to protect anonymity.

senses of self. Likkle Bit, who has spent the majority of her life in the U.S., but still sees herself as a Jamaican further exemplifies how Caribbean subjectivities are created within New York City's transgeographic places.

Thrown into the milieu of the (trans)national, cultural, and legal-political identity negotiation that James and Likkle Bit speak to, is racial identity. Of the twenty-two Afro-descendant West Indians that I asked directly: "What do you think of yourself as being first, a Black person or a Jamaican/Trinidadian/Grenadian etc.?" all twenty-two responded that they first consider themselves a Black person.[24] Many later elaborated that they distinguished their Black racial identity from the ethnoracial identity "Black American." Still, their sense of their race having greater significance than their cultural, national, or regional origins is analytically significant.

James, Likkle Bit and the dozens of other interviewees, and research collaborators I came into contact with throughout my research brought the complexities of racial, ethnic, (trans)national, and regional identities to the fore. These complexities and analysis of them form the basis of this chapter. As spaces that are Caribbean yet contained within the United States, the West Indian geographies of Brooklyn are powerful sites to examine West Indian subjectivities and the relationships between them. The ethnographic context is informed by U.S. racial history, Caribbean forms of racial and cultural identity negotiation, and by the interactions between the different West Indian "nationalities" represented in

[24] I asked this question in semi-structured interviews amid many other questions including, but not limited to, the interviewees': perspectives on reggae, work in reggae (if relevant), professional goals, upbringing, relocation and settlement stories (if relevant), experiences living in Brooklyn, Caribbean identity, and American identity.

Brooklyn.[25] Furthermore, Brooklyn is informed by U.S. conceptions of Blackness and African-American cultural forms.

These overlapping contexts elucidate the multiple layers and contingencies of West Indian Diasporic identity construction. I interpret identity formation in relationship to both the Brooklyn Caribbean space, and the production of, and participation in reggae culture. Reggae is not an arbitrarily chosen analytical lens. As previous chapters have demonstrated reggae remains integral to the construction of Caribbean places and formation of transgeographies that connect the West Indian community in Brooklyn to the West Indies so as to place West Indian Diasporic identities in distinct relationship to it. Analysis of these identities reveals cleavages between West Indians living outside of the West Indies and those living within, West Indians born in the U.S. and those born in the West Indies, and between the different nationalities of West Indians in Brooklyn.

In this chapter cleavages are interpreted particularly as they relate to reggae culture and claiming ownership of it. Reggae, however, serves as a microcosm to view the antagonisms that unfold within West Indian Brooklyn at large and evinces the disunity among the members of the diaspora within the Brooklyn Caribbean cultural space despite their unity in relationship to the larger U.S. cultural space. Even amidst disjuncture, West Indians in New York City continue to have a sense of themselves as being distinctly Caribbean and even members of the nations to which they tie their cultural identities. This sentiment made evident the need to

[25] I put nationalities in quotations here to indicate my awareness of the possible scholarly inaccuracy of this word and to acknowledge my use of it in the ways my research collaborators conceived of and mobilized the term.

theoretically account for West Indian Diasporic locations within the U.S. but orientations towards the West Indies, an orientation made possible by the Caribbeanness of Brooklyn, thus inspiring my development of figurative citizenship.

Brooklyn's tangible Caribbeanness is evidenced in the borough being an epicenter of reggae. Mixed into the pot of reggae cultural production, performance, and identity expression are the people who travel to the borough to be a part of its vibrant reggae music culture, particularly Japanese nationals. The presence and prevalence of Japanese nationals in Brooklyn reggae places is impossible to ignore necessitating that I analyze their locations within them and their reflexive views of themselves as consumers of a Caribbean originated form of urban, Black, lower-class expressive culture. The Japanese presence in Brooklyn reggae life is a taken for granted reality because of how common it is. In turn, in reggae events Japanese are treated with a sort of benign disinterest when they are present as appreciators. Beyond being occupants of reggae places, however, Japanese are active participants in reggae culture as DJs and sound systems competing in sound clashes. Though West Indians at times skeptically view active Japanese performance in reggae, they nevertheless welcome them. Interestingly, this open stance does not accord with tensions over who can claim reggae that exist otherwise among West Indians. I argue that as Caribbean cultural outsiders and transient people within the Brooklyn geography, Japanese nationals are also outsiders to the antagonisms that exist surrounding reggae. Furthermore, Japanese are paradoxically welcomed as included members of the reggae cultural community because of their embracing of the vibes,

upholding of the ritual reggae complex, and demonstration of their commitment to learning its performance mediums.

Reggae and the Creation of Caribbean Subjectivities in New York City

Within West Indian Brooklyn where Caribbean cultural referents abound that both shape Caribbean places and constitute, and ensure the continuity of West Indian identities, Caribbean subjects are created. The sheer size alone of the West Indian community helps people to feel and understand themselves as West Indians. The use of Patois serves as one example. Asked how he came to speak Patois, Ricky Blaze, who is a second generation Jamaican-American replied: "You come from East Flatbush, it's full of Caribbean people." Because of the population size and concentration of West Indians, Patois becomes a spatialized language within the larger NYC and U.S. cultural geography, and people who occupy that space are informed by it as much as they produce it. The meeting of spatial concentration and cultural referents of which food, language, and music are examples give birth to Caribbean identities formed within the Caribbean cultural places of New York.

The impacts spread beyond people of West Indian descent. A young Puerto Rican woman once asserted to me: "I'm Puerto Rican but I grew up in Flatbush which basically means I'm Caribbean." In West Indian Brooklyn to be "Caribbean" invariably means to be of one of the countries notably represented within that

geography, i.e. an Anglophone Caribbean one.[26] Similarly, an Afro-Venezuelan first generation American who strongly claims West Indian descent via Venezuela, offered that he feels more West Indian and began speaking to me in his best "Jamaican" to demonstrate how growing up in Brooklyn brought his ancestral West Indian past into a culturally tangible present through contact with other West Indians, Jamaicans in particular.

For many, becoming West Indian and socialization into Caribbean cultural practices transpires through participation in reggae performance. The previous chapter explored the significance of performance to Caribbean place making in New York City. It is tied to a long history of Caribbean music creation, engagement, and migration. Performance is also significant to Caribbean place making because of its centrality to West Indian identity construction and to Caribbean cultural institutions as formed through reggae. The importance of reggae music to forming Caribbean subjectivities is captured in the words of my research collaborators for whom reggae is central to their understanding of themselves as members of a Caribbean cultural space and to nurturing their continued connection to it.

When I asked Ricky Blaze to share with me when he first became cognizant of his Caribbean subjectivity he responded: "Talkin' on the mic. When people would hear me they'd say 'this kid comes from Jamaica.'" For Ricky Blaze an experience embodying his Caribbeanness, talking (in Patois) through a central reggae

[26] The widespread, including outside of West Indian Brooklyn, disassociation of the Spanish speaking islands (Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, and Cuba) with the Caribbean are evidence also of the dominance of U.S. assimilationist ideologies and systems of racialization that erase the historical and sociocultural aspects of the Spanish speaking Caribbean that distinguish these islands, its people, and members of their diasporas from other Latino communities and demonstrate their sociohistorical and sociocultural commonalities with other countries of the Antilles.

performance practice – speaking in rhyme, addressing listeners, or boasting on the microphone – brought his Caribbean identity into high relief. It was not only his embodiment of his Caribbean identity through language, and reggae performance knowledge that were significant to his becoming cognizant but also the other people present validating it saying: "this kid comes from Jamaica." The constitution of Ricky Blaze's Jamaican identity was not necessarily a conscious process, nor was his performance of it intended to be an exhibition. Both unfolded from his immersion in the Caribbean cultural contexts of both his home and the wider Brooklyn geography while engaging in reggae practice. Reggae practice gave him an outlet for the expression of his Caribbean self and was also the mechanism through which he reproduced it. Ricky Blaze's story also demonstrates the importance of reggae to reproducing Patois.

Micro Don, a reggae mic man for Federation Sound who is of Guyanese and Puerto Rican descent, similarly connects his West Indian cultural subjectivity to the inevitable Caribbeanness of West Indian Brooklyn and to reggae. In conversation he said:

> There's no question that I feel West Indian, because everywhere I go that's all I hear, reggae music, dancehall music. It's like I might as well grew up in the West Indies, you know what I'm saying? So I took in everything from them. I know everything people do, Haitian people do, Guyanese people do, Trinidadian people do. I'm aware of the whole West Indian culture so. That's who I am. I'm a West Indian. You know what? I'm every island.

There are a number of significant points Micro Don speaks to. His embodiment of his West Indian self and feeling West Indian is experienced in reggae places. He also sees these spaces as being multi-island places for learning the "whole West Indian

culture," singular. A West Indian regional culture can be singularly constituted and experienced within the spaces that reggae informs. Reggae thereby forms cultural institutions of learning that unify people with a similar cultural background to the extent that he is representative of "every island." This latter point is also a career reference. As a mic man his job is to be constantly connected to and observant of his audience, and in constant dialogue with them. One of Micro Don's assets as a mic man is his ability to switch into different West Indian accents and employ the slang of the different Caribbean countries, skills he learned becoming West Indian in Brooklyn reggae places.

The constant regeneration of reggae, an outcome of fundamental practices of its creation (sampling and resampling), makes old songs relevant to new, and old generations of listeners and participants in its performative modes relevant to new generations. The regeneration and perpetuation of reggae combines with material and digital music sharing, and with the aural dominance of music that cars, radios, and home music systems facilitate to form an expansive and transformative cultural product that easily traverses space and time providing the "raw materials" (Gilroy 1991b: 154) for identity construction and engagement. An interaction that a 1.5 generation Jamaican-American mother had with her nine-year old daughter and recounted to me illustrates the dynamics between music and performance regeneration, the traversing of space and time, and becoming West Indian.

The woman said she walked into her daughter's room and found her listening to her iPod and dancing. When mother asked daughter what she was listening to as she wound up her waist, daughter explained that she was listening to

reggae because she is Jamaican. The mother found her daughter's nascent sense of being Jamaican endearing and her indexing of it through reggae the amusing focus of the story. The interaction illustrates how for her daughter, reggae and its performance modes provide easily accessible mediums through which she can engage with what she understands to be representative of her familial origins, and in turn her budding sense of cultural identity. The interplay between music and Caribbean identity give reggae new significances that are broadly reaching as evidenced also in a story Michelle shared. Michelle is a naturalized first generation American who emigrated from Jamaica to the U.S. when she was twenty-five and is now in her late fifties. She explained to me that she hardly listened to reggae when she lived in Jamaica. "Reggae only became important to me when I came to the U.S., it was suddenly the way I got in touch with my country and my culture."

Hintzen's (2001) observation of the interplay between producers and participators in popular culture, which he refers to as "promoters" of popular culture, and popular culture's impact on identity speaks directly to the possibility of reggae places forming cultural institutions in which Caribbean subjects are created. He says: "The promoters of popular culture are at the center of identity construction," asserting that they give meaning to the cultural forms in their performance and demonstration of them. He continues: "The role of these promoters, then, is to transmit knowledge about the group and to publicize its legitimate presence in a particular sociogeographic arena" (Hintzen 2001: 55). Micro Don and Ricky Blaze are just two of many culture workers that bring Caribbean cultural forms to performative spaces that then become places for

learning, shaping not only Caribbean cultural subjectivities but also the reggae subculture. In this subculture Caribbean subjectivities can be asserted within the multi-national, transnational, and multi-racial cultural geography of New York City.

Subjectivities and Disjuncture within the Caribbean Cultural Community

That Caribbean subjects are made in New York City is not an indication that they see themselves as being the same as their counterparts born in the West Indies or vice versa. The Caribbean subjects who are "made" in New York City, particularly those born in the U.S., possess forms of symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1977) that they, and some others not born or raised in the U.S., feel put them at an advantage. Broadly my interviewees largely see this symbolic capital as: possessing the ability to speak Standard American English (Alim, 2009) and business acumen including savvy use of the legal system.

Speaking to me in English that betrayed no Jamaican heritage, Likkle Bit described her way of conversing with me in that moment as "speaking properly," something she began to learn once she was socialized outside of her home as a kid. "My father, he used to be a school teacher so we had to learn how to speak properly. We could speak Patois in the house but at school we had to speak properly." Likkle Bit's mention of her father being a schoolteacher indicates that she, and he, felt it was part of her appropriate education to be able to distance herself from indexers of her West Indian background (language and accent), a distancing that could signify her level of American integration. Switching out of her language and accent was,

furthermore, necessary to being perceived as "proper" outside of the cultural sanctuary of her home. "Speaking properly," or code switching, is a tool used to one's advantage.

Of the differences that James, who speaks with a heavy Jamaican accent, thinks distinguishes Jamaican-Americans from Jamaicans in America, he feels the most significant is Jamaican-Americans' ability to speak what he referred to as "good English." He also sees this ability as mitigating the effects of being Black. "He's Black but he can speak good English," he said both of African-Americans and Jamaicans raised in America. Thinking of all of the Jamaican-Americans, Black Americans, Latinos and other marginalized Americans from urban neighborhoods in New York City whose English would not be considered "good" by my seventh grade English teacher's standards, I could only imagine he meant that their English did not necessarily demarcate them as West Indian. Communities of "improper" English speakers in the U.S. are still marked, marginalized, and face barriers because of their linguistic difference and the socioeconomic and sociodemographic locations it signifies.

James' perspective mirrored that of Likkle Bit's father who associated Patois outside of the home with social marginalization. The ability to abandon one's West Indian accent indexes education in American institutions and adeptness at selectively adopting American cultural forms, a signifier of time spent in the United States. The significance of abandoning West Indian accents to calling upon valued American cultural forms ("proper" American Standard English) serves to associate West Indian accents both with marginalization and with "improper" social conduct.

Denoting American English as "proper" so as to render Patios and accented English "improper" mandates that those who want to demonstrate a sense of social decorum outside of Caribbean places code switch out of it, instrumentally performing Americanness. Not being able to do so signifies, though unfairly so, a "lack" of decorum along with carrying marginalizing connotations related to level of integration.

The negative associations made with language and accents present an alternate view to Water's (1999) assertion that West Indian accents are seen as cultural capital that West Indians can use strategically to highlight distinction from African-Americans. Considering code switching and the significance of being able to move between English dialects is useful to a more nuanced interpretation. West Indian accents are an asset in certain cultural spheres in which they are positive markers of a person's engagement with their West Indian heritage – within the home, in in-group situations, and within Caribbean cultural geographies. However, outside of these spaces, accents can be considered an impediment when a person cannot switch into a more Standard American dialect on command. It is relevant to note that, contrastingly, within reggae places and reggae performance, Caribbean accents and Patois are highly valued cultural capital to which reggae authenticity is tied. The valuation of West Indian ways of speaking and reproduction of it in reggae places demonstrates another positive correlation between reggae and Caribbean identities. In addition to conversation within reggae places, the work of mic men to animate the crowd provides a medium through which Patois is communicated and celebrated, inspiring language knowledge and discouraging language loss. In this

way reggae places serve as cultural institutions that provide safe spaces to celebrate and assert Caribbean identities.

Possessing business acumen is another form of cultural capital that my research collaborators feel accompanies being raised in the U.S. as opposed to in the West Indies. Often in conversation with West Indians raised in New York who operate in all the different levels of reggae production – dancers, promoters, music producers, DJs – there would be some reference to West Indians from "the islands" as not having the necessary business savviness to take full advantage of resources at their disposal to build the best careers for themselves. The imagining of island born Caribbean people as "unprepared" evinces the history of outsiders to the Caribbean controlling the commodification and exportation of Caribbean expressive cultural forms. This history, I assert, has placed large-scale success and progress dichotomously to Antillean spatial belonging in the social imagination of those born, or raised, in the U.S.

This view contrasts with the assertion of scholars who have located West Indian socioeconomic progress in the U.S., a supposed sign of their more equal social standing and access to education in the Caribbean country from which they came, in their business acumen and hard work (Glazer and Moynihan 1970; Sowell 1981; Reid 1970). Watkins-Owens (1996) focuses extensively on some of the business endeavors of West Indians in Harlem of the early 1900s that is evidence of their savviness. It also does not correlate with the level of industriousness and work ethic that West Indians born in the West Indies see themselves as having. For example, Nurse D. said: "I believe I should never come to America and be dependent on the

social system to live. I believe I should work hard and contribute to the American society. I came here educated and I have learned a lot in other terms and I build on what I have from experience working."

The contrasting interpretation is indicative of two distinguishing features of analysis: my research collaborators were speaking specifically about reggae business, which historically in the Caribbean has been led on an international scale almost exclusively by American and European record executives. Their imaginings of reggae business enterprise and agency within it are particularly informed by this reggae specific history. Additionally, their opinions are an example of the micro-aggressions, subtle biases and chauvinisms that are evidence of the cleavages between people geographically situated in diasporic adoptive homes and those located in the place from which diasporas have come. As there may be moments of tangible cultural overlap, mutual embracing, and harmony, there are others arising from the rupture of diasporization and the disjuncture it causes. It will later in this chapter come into view how this works both ways with West Indians situated or raised in a Caribbean country feeling they are in hierarchical position to the U.S. born, particularly in reggae.

Turning to the words of one of my research companions for further analysis, Blacka Di Danca is, as the moniker indicates, a professional reggae dancer of Trinidadian origin. He proudly declared himself to me a "West Indian American." He elaborated: "Because I have the best of both worlds. I was born and raised in Brooklyn, I was from a Caribbean household, so I was raised as a Caribbean but I still have an American mindset." When I asked what the best of both worlds might

be, he responded: “The best of each would be Caribbean, I have the rhythm of the Caribbean, as far as American, I have the intuition and intelligence to use my talent to get where I need to get.” Blacka equates intuition and intelligence specifically with Americanness. He also sees the embodied knowledge (Farnell 1999; Mauss 2007) – rhythm and dance – acquired in his Brooklyn Caribbean household as imbuing him with “the best” of the Caribbean: its corporeal expression. In effect, Blacka locates his American identity in the power of his mind while his Caribbean self is located in the movement of his body. Reproduced in his language are age-old stereotypes about American mental and intellectual vitality (“intuition and intelligence”) juxtaposed with Caribbean cultural vibrancy and embodiment of the primal (the rhythm of the Caribbean).

As a reggae professional who’s economic livelihood is dependent on his dominance of Caribbean dance, it follows that Blacka would see his embodied knowledge as an asset, “the best,” over all other Caribbean cultural attributes he may possess and appreciate. While Blacka’s remark about his “American mindset,” is problematic it is still analytically valuable as it illustrates the ways in which the Caribbean (American) body is thought. Also buried within Blacka’s words are his desires to reclaim the cultural product of the Caribbean, something that is still disproportionately in the hands of non-Caribbean people, for his own economic advancement rather than for anyone else to be the benefactor of. It is clear the intuition and intelligence he refers to is a certain business savviness – “to use my talent to get to where I need to be.” In turn, Blacka asserts a sense of agency in desiring to use what he sees as being specifically a part of his American spatial-

cultural endowment – business "intuition and intelligence" – as a form of artistic and economic vindication for him as a simultaneously Caribbean subject.

Likkle Bit, who like Blacka is a professional reggae dancer and performs internationally, similarly sees herself as possessing a sense of business agency to assert herself as an equal partner in business transactions. Also like Blacka, she attributes her business acumen to her American cultural training. The dancer, who in one conversation stated herself as being a proud Jamaican who was only American if the government were to ask, in a later conversation acknowledged herself as being an American rather proudly. She was updating me on having been dropped from the international tour of a top selling reggae artist after insisting that he sign a legitimate business contract to ensure her fair and regular pay. She saw demanding legitimacy as being an American attribute that the Jamaican born and raised reggae star was not accustomed to being confronted with. "He's never worked with an American before," she stated. When I asked what specifically that meant, she said as a matter-of fact: "My lawyer will be calling him tomorrow."

In addition to her agency in business, as her statement indicates Likkle Bit also has access to and knows how to navigate the American legal system putting her at an advantage in potentially exploitative business situations. Likkle Bit, similarly to Blacka, uses what she imagines to be her Americanness as an agentive mechanism to protect herself, in this case as a Caribbean woman within the masculine and exploitative fields of reggae music production. While in both cases my collaborators make problematic (dis)associations between business and legal agency, and Caribbean, and American cultural identities, they also integrate these

identities in aid of each other. In turn, while separating themselves from the Caribbean, they do so to reassert themselves as legitimate Caribbean cultural and economic actors within the market of Caribbean expressive cultural forms. In both cases, Americanness is not used against Caribbeanness but rather in protection of it.

Where Blacka and Likkle Bit separate their U.S. and West Indian subjectivities evinces a disjuncture within the Caribbean space in which boundary-less cultural geographies do not eclipse the diversity within that space. It is important to point out the distinctions that emerge within the Caribbean space so as not to fall into an idealism that erases historically contingent inequalities and homogenizes emergent identities within it. The fact of birthplace inevitably creates disjuncture as further exemplified by the persistence of debates, sometimes shrouded in jest, about who can legitimately claim a national identity. While there are some broadly inclusive parameters that people consider to be relevant: consumption of certain foods and music, language, parentage, knowledge of, and participation in specific social, and cultural practices; others are more exclusive: a matter of birth in a Caribbean country.

"Some people say they're Jamaican and they're born in Montefiore or Jacobi," Chavez said of people claiming Jamaican identity who are born in New York City hospitals. The emphasis on having a link to a Caribbean country by birth is often indicative of privileging the pragmatic over the symbolic. In discussion with some interviewees born and raised in one of the Caribbean nations, having experienced the social, economic, and political realities of that country is considered a criterion for claiming a national identity. Electricity black outs, no access to running water,

people walking bare-foot, poverty, and political party violence, are some repeated examples. This perspective, which places experience and memory at the crux of national identity, in turn excludes the many who were actually born in a Caribbean country but left when they were young. Just the same, those who have left the West Indies as adults loose a certain claim to its geography having escaped the placed social, economic, and political circumstances. Speaking on Jamaicans who migrate back and forth between New York and Jamaica but take permanent residence in New York, a Jamaican graduate student who I met at an academic conference in Barbados said: "When tensions rise I'm still there. Just give us your money and go."

How fixed the boundaries are conceived to be between legal-political citizens of a Caribbean country raised there, legal-political citizens of a Caribbean country raised in the U.S., and legal-political citizens of the U.S. claiming a Caribbean national identity is a subjective matter. However, even where boundaries seem rigid there are loopholes in their conceptualization that allow for significant "passing" of legal-political citizens of the U.S. for "citizens" of a Caribbean nation, an indication of their cultural belonging within a community of nationals. These loopholes become ever more apparent in Brooklyn where opting out of Caribbeanness, where the West Indian community so powerfully informs the cultural space of the contiguous neighborhoods in which they take residence, is difficult. Giving analytical attention to the fluidity between the boundaries reveals a conceptual space in which the distinctions between national identity and citizenship are skewed. It is a space where American born or American naturalized West Indians occupy mutual sociocultural grounds with transmigrants, immigrants, and family members living in

the West Indies. A conceptual space that foregrounds the cultural and social geography of the Caribbean when conceptualizing what it means to be a citizen and have national belonging.

I use the term figurative citizenship to give name to that fluid space. It describes emotional and cultural investments in places of physical or cultural origin that foment feelings of belonging to that geography. It is a subjectivity born of the political, social, and economic push and pull factors to migration, emigration, and repatriation, and is sustained through transnational social, economic, and political networks, and engagement in transgeographic places. Figurative citizenship hopes to shed light on the experiences of sociocultural navigation, economic mobilization, and cultural, and racial identity negotiation that connect diasporas to their places of origin. In turn, it acknowledges the union between legal-political citizens of adopted homes (both through birth and naturalization) with transmigrants, and immigrants in a collective sentiment of belonging to a place other than the one in which they live.

Figurative Citizenship and the Framing of West Indian Identities

A Jamaican law student on the brink of graduation from an Ivy League institution complained of Jamaicans who have U.S. citizenship and "act like they do not care about it." She detailed all of the advantages she would enjoy if she were a citizen. Her frustration evinced contrasting ways of valuing citizenship that are tied to how it is conceptualized. This student was talking very specifically about legal-

political citizenship and the benefits, and rights it yields to those who possess it; benefits and rights that others who already possess them may take for granted. Legal-political citizenship, to many of those who have it, is considered a mere practicality and does not carry a sense of emotional attachment. It is an important and convenient practicality as evidenced in James' Metrocard/passport analogy however one that lacks emotional value.

For those whom legal-political citizenship is considered more than a practicality, it tends to signify their economic achievements and to be indicative of their having successfully carried the ideals of Caribbean meritocracies to the U.S. to the benefits of their socioeconomic advancement. Legal-political citizenship in this regard still does not necessarily denote being emotionally invested in the U.S., or its politics, as it does in one's self-determination with legal-political citizenship being symbolic of it and valued as such. Even when investments in politics are made they are generally for the local benefit of the West Indian community and are indicative of strong cultural solidarity rather than a desire to affect American politics and political change on a broader national level. A part of the missing emotional attachment is that legal-political citizenship, for diasporas, naturalized Americans, and ethnic or racially marginalized Americans, does not necessarily carry a greater sense of social or cultural connectedness with the nation in which they reside. This is evidenced in the commonly asked question among New Yorkers, "what is your nationality" despite having U.S. citizenship.

Legal-political citizenship being emotionally vacuous is partly a consequence of exclusion from constructions of national belonging and greater society-wide

marginalization. It is also a result of having already existing attachments to places of physical or cultural origin, this latter point partly a reflection of diasporic conversion of U.S. geographies into satellites of their places of origin. Gupta suggests that: "Citizenship ought to be theorized as one of the multiple subject positions occupied by people as members of diversely spatialized, partially overlapping or non-overlapping collectivities" (2003: 331). Legal-political citizenship alone, as Gupta implies, is insufficient to encapsulate the many subjectivities that arise from belonging to multiple spatialized collectivities. Figurative citizenship complements legal-political citizenship accounting for the sentiments of cultural belonging that legal-political citizenship does not necessarily signify.

It is a term that gives name to conceptualizations of oneself as belonging emotionally, culturally, or socially to a place other than the one in which legal-political citizenship is possessed. While legal-political citizenship foregrounds the state and law, figurative citizenship foregrounds a community of sentiment formed through place making, cultural reproduction, embodiment, and expression. Legal-political citizenship is tied to a nation and hopes to invoke sentiments of belonging and loyalty to a national-body represented by the state, but has historically failed in these efforts. Possession of legal-political citizenship does not necessarily indicate that those loyalties to the state or national body actually exist or succeed in fomenting them. Figurative citizenship on the other hand signifies loyalty to a sociocultural body without regard to the state or legal status therein.

It is distinct from cultural citizenship (Rosaldo1989; Flores and Benmayor 1997) because the focus of cultural belonging is not to the countries of residence so

as to be indicative of a desire to belong to it. Rather, figurative citizenship privileges belonging to the places people have left or where their cultural heritage was born. It is a subjectivity that arises from the labor of bringing those two spaces together to form transgeographies and from being in regular contact with diasporic cultural forms within them. It is furthermore distinguished from flexible citizenship (Ong 1999) in that it does not attempt to conceptualize legal-political belonging to multiple places, the implications of that flexible legal status, or contingencies of exit. Contrastingly, figurative citizenship interprets rootedness in diasporic places of settlement while looking "home" to form subjectivities and to transform the adoptive home into a place of cultural belonging.

As James indicated to me in our subway conversation, he values his U.S. citizenship because it allows him to freely navigate the Circum-Caribbean space. In other words, legal-political citizenship for him is valued most for how it affords him the possibility of sustaining his figurative citizenship. James' sense of his self is vehemently rooted in the feeling that he is Jamaican. Also for Blacka and Likkle Bit, how they understand their American belonging is largely legal and related to their ability to access the legal system, and political, in terms of the powers of negotiation it affords them. In contrast to, but working in concert with, their legal and political sense of belonging to the U.S. is their sentimental, emotional, and everyday embodied sense of belonging to a nation of the Caribbean. Red Fox said of living in Brooklyn: "We speak Jamaican everyday. I never really got time to really think about being American. I'm always Jamaican at heart." They imagine and feel themselves to

be distinctly Caribbean, though they are legally, politically, and pragmatically American.

Figurative citizenship does not necessarily replace legal-political citizenship or mean that it is entirely devalued. For many it exists alongside legal-political citizenship accounting for the emotional attachments that it may lack. As such, it is possible to take pride in possessing legal-political citizenship while still feeling oneself to belong to another place as is accounted for in figurative citizenship. For the many people who are not involved in the politics of their adoptive homes, figurative citizenship becomes a more tangible form of belonging that informs and describes a diasporic subjectivity. Even for those who are involved in the politics of their residing country, their ability to affect change in their places of origin through electoral politics, staying abreast of current events, transnational political participation, social engagement, and economic influence nurtures feelings of attachment orienting them towards that place they have left. Figurative citizenship gives name to a subjectivity that is in part made possible by transnational political, economic, social, and cultural processes including those attached to reggae. These processes present the "raw materials" (Gilroy 1993: 154) to constitute Caribbean transgeographic places in which figurative citizens are created. It extends from the possibility of belonging to a liminal space like West Indian Brooklyn that exists somewhere between the U.S. and the various countries of the West Indies.

It is not an entirely deterritorialized subjectivity, rather a liminally territorialized one reflecting dual inward and outward orientations. It arises from processes of reproducing "here" the cultural references of a place "over there" in

ways that reflect the distinctions of both. It evinces the continued engagement of diasporas with their country of origin through imaginings, memories, performance, food, dance, language, transnational activity, and their construction of the spaces I have referred to as transgeographies. While figurative citizenship is connected through its liminality to geographic spaces, in this case New York City and a specific nation of the West Indies, it does not require engagement with both geographies. It instead requires that the cultural and symbolic representations of that nation be made present.

There are many figurative citizens in West Indian Brooklyn, their origins as diverse as the countries represented therein. Among the many figurative citizens there is unity but also distinction. In conversation, Dice referred to Brooklyn as the "melting pot of the islands." A more accurate rendition would suggest it is actually a "meeting pot." Borrowing the analogies Munasinghe (2001) uses to conceptualize relationships between Trinidad's different ethnic groups, the West Indians in New York are analogous to a tossed salad. They are people of various Caribbean origins mixed into a single "bowl" (Brooklyn) yet maintaining distinctions from one another as do the ingredients of a salad, as opposed to those of callaloo that become indistinguishable like in most stewed dishes. Just the same, West Indians form shared subjectivities arising from their mutual occupation of space, from the experiences of relocation and settlement, and from their shared cultural ethos that exists despite distinction. They still, however, hold on tightly to their national identities highlighting their distinctions. How my research collaborators

conceptualize ethnic, national, and racial identities reflects their negotiation of commonalities and distinctions within the Brooklyn Caribbean geography.

Conceptualizing Black racial identity specifically, my research collaborators interpret race to be a category of distinction arising from the possibility of tracing ancestry to Africa. They also feel that the stigmas attached to Blackness in the U.S. and the Caribbean result from historical injustices – slavery, colonialism, and structural oppression thereafter – that have marginalized Black people. In other words, they understand the significance of being Black, particularly the negative, as being socially and historically created. I will go more in depth into understandings of Blackness later. In regards to ethnicity and nationality, my research collaborators conceive of these terms in ways that did not necessarily correlate with scholarly understandings and reflect the specific Brooklyn, West Indian ethnographic context.

In their conceptualization of ethnicity I was surprised to find that my research collaborators spoke in less specific terms than I had anticipated. Ethnicity is generally understood to refer to one's categorization as a person hailing from the Anglophone Caribbean. Ethnic identity is then thought of more generally as a regional identity as opposed to a particular cultural one tied to a nation. Rather than being an exclusive category, ethnicity is interpreted as more of an inclusive one that takes into account the similarities between West Indians from all the different Anglophone Caribbean nations: shared language (though different ways of speaking it), similar forms of dance, having been culturally informed by British colonial history and African cultural inheritances, and incorporation of similar foods in preparation of cuisine. Additional unifying factors are shared relocation and

experiences settling in Brooklyn and predominance of families raised by female heads of household.

Gupta and Ferguson argue that identity is constructed through "relations of difference" (2007: 13) so while there may be a shared regional identity among West Indians, understood as an ethnic identity, the relations of difference that come to light in their shared living space foreground the creation of another layer of identity making: the national or one's "nationality." Relations of difference necessitate identity, and on the converse, the desire for identity creates relations of difference – their imagining or observation, evaluation, and (invented) symbolic importance. In the West Indian Brooklyn social and cultural context, "nationality" rises to the fore as the distinguishing emotive and symbolic descriptor to which people attach themselves. When legally and geo-politically speaking the nationality of many of my research collaborators is actually "American," very few offer this as their nationality, instead offering Jamaican, Trinidadian, Bajan etc. The choice is indicative of how figurative citizenship serves to orient positionalities toward places of cultural origin. The subsequent framing of nationality is much like scholars' theorizations of ethnicity.

Barth (1969) frames ethnic groups as having "membership which identifies itself, and is identified by others, as constituting a category distinguishable from other categories of the same order" and furthermore sees itself as having shared "emblems of difference" (Barth 1969: 298). This is much how the West Indians who I work with frame their nationality. The emblems of difference are intragroup decided criteria as opposed to objective criteria. When discussing national identity

these criteria surpass the level of the more general interpretations of the regional, with which their idea of ethnicity is spoken of, to the more specific: the distinct ways people from each nation speak, their specific food dishes, ways of joking, vocabulary, slang and colloquialisms, and various character stereotypes. Distinctions hold great emotive value that inspire allegiances that are called upon and invoked in reggae places.

In reggae parties DJs periodically make "country-calls" in which a specific country in the Caribbean is named and people who claim that country are called on to shout, put their hands in the air, or repeat a vocalization of the DJ's choice. Country calls always mention the nations that are most well known in the popular imagination and are most populous in Brooklyn namely: Trinidad, Barbados, Grenada, and Jamaica. The call to Jamaica, without fail, is always last and receives the most widespread, enthusiastic, or vocal response. Saving Jamaica for last and anticipation for the most excited response is reflective of a larger dynamic within West Indian relations of difference in Brooklyn: Jamaica's positioning as a popular cultural hegemon. The regular absence of Haiti in country-calls, despite Haitians being the second most populous community of a single Caribbean country, reflects the structuring of West Indian Brooklyn as a distinctly Anglophone Caribbean space, a result of members of the Anglophone Caribbean together constituting the majority and their earlier migration (ACS; Bryce-Laporte 1983; Sowell 1981).

Hierarchies and Monopolies in Reggae

Viewing the West Indian community through the lens of reggae presents the opportunity to interpret how the people who shape the culture relate to each other and how their relationships are informed by it. The dynamics that emerge in the reggae lens serve as microcosms of those existing outside of it. Reggae operates in two registers. On a macro-level, because of reggae's broad popularity locally, in the West Indies, and internationally, it is put forth as a representation of the collective regional identity of West Indians within the wider American community. However, on a micro-level of analysis within the West Indian community itself, Jamaicans claim reggae as an original Jamaican national art form. The remaining members of the Anglophone Caribbean claim soca and calypso as the music that best represents their national identities.

The "ability" of Jamaicans to claim a singular music form as their own, especially one that is so globally popular and otherwise indicative of the Caribbean space, creates an inequality in social capital that affects how Jamaicans within reggae are viewed and view themselves. Jamaica is positioned as a Caribbean cultural hegemon, a position of dominance that Jamaicans are associated with performing both within and outside of reggae places. Furthermore, that every other Anglophone Caribbean country besides Jamaica claims soca and calypso creates a musically bounded community of countries, which carries additional symbolic significances that Jamaica is excluded from serving to "other" Jamaicans. Within the heterogeneity of Brooklyn, this kind of distinction is seen as positive and, in turn, Jamaicans are known to emphasize and perpetuate their otherness. Likewise, Grenadians, Trinidadians, Bajans, Guyanese, and the Anglophone countries that

associate their national identities with soca and calypso are known to emphasize their unity and collective contrast to Jamaicans.

These musical unions have correlating significances and origins outside of music. They are representative of the shared national persona, or at least their New York City manifestation of it, that these countries are thought to share in contradistinction to, and to the exclusion of, Jamaica. This shared national persona, distinction from Jamaicans, and the symbolism of both have origins in the political and economic histories of the nations of the Caribbean. Jamaica has historically received international notoriety from having been the birthplace of singer Bob Marley, political icon Marcus Garvey, and Rastafarianism. The dichotomous placing of Jamaicans to the rest of the members of the Anglophone Caribbean is also tied to Jamaicans connoting the Anglophone Caribbean majority (79,381 Jamaicans followed by 43, 774 Trinidadians) (ACS). There, in turn, are efforts of the other national groups to assert their individual national identities, but also solidarity among them in "protecting" the Brooklyn cultural space from being overly saturated with Jamaican cultural exhibitions. Reggae complicates this latter point.

The positioning of Jamaicans/Jamaican-Americans in opposition and in many cases hierarchical position to other West Indians is also tied to the musical history of Jamaica and the commodification and exportation of reggae music. Reggae is widely recognized as being the most broadly consumed popular music of the Anglophone Caribbean. As a result, Jamaica, as one person put it, is "known throughout the world." Where people may not be able to name another country of the Anglophone Caribbean, because of reggae music, they will likely know Jamaica.

Bob Marley being an international ambassador of reggae and integral political figure whose songs advocated for the end of global political, social, and economic oppression is also relevant to Jamaica taking center stage in the Caribbean.

Interpretations of reggae as being not only fun, exciting, and danceable but also deeply prophetic, political, and healing music (particularly roots&culture) translates into grandiose ideas about its significance and effects. Fyah claimed to have read a report from the American Psychological Foundation that found reggae music has the potential to heal people psychologically, emotionally, and in turn physically. Fyah added that reggae is the "only" music to have that potential. Elaborate ideas of the significance of reggae, which non-Jamaicans share as well, place Jamaicans front and center of what to many is the best thing to emerge from the Caribbean space.

"We sort of think of Jamaica as the capital of the Caribbean. We have the music, we have the food, we had Bob Marley," Chavez said to me in conversation. He continued, "Jamaica is the New York of the Caribbean. Jamaica is the capital of the Caribbean. We have the greatest musician. The greatest musician who ever lived is Jamaican, Bob Marley. Reggae is the only music that can compete with hip-hop, or rap or pop. You can't say soca." Even Jamaican descendants in Costa Rica speak of Jamaica as the "capital of the Caribbean" and feel themselves endowed with a certain prestige as descendants of the nation because it was there that Bob Marley rose to celebrity and reached the masses through his music. The global visibility of Jamaica is indeed enwrapped in Bob Marley being, even after his death, a global celebrity with a cult following and a politically conscious singer who many revere as

a prophet. His face adorns walls, buildings, towels, cloths, bed throws, bandanas, shirts, bracelets, watches, and innumerable other material items throughout the world and Jamaicans "can" claim him as their own.

The global visibility of Jamaica is also tied to the political history of the country, which includes the rise of Pan-Africanist political leader Marcus Garvey, and to Jamaica being the birth place of Rastafarianism, an internationally recognized and commodified belief system. Both the political history of Garveyism and religious doctrines of Rastafarianism are thematically intertwined with reggae. Reggae in New York City is also the only form of music to both compete and work in conjunction with hip-hop to immortalize, represent, and serve in constitution of the identities of broad populations of Afro-descendants, whereas soca and calypso remain much less known outside of the West Indian community.

What unfolds from the cultural claims Jamaicans/Jamaican-Americans make to reggae is a robust sense of Jamaica's superiority within the Anglophone Caribbean. Elaborating on reggae being "the healing of the nation," Fyah offered:

> There's no other nation in the world who create this music. Out of all the Black people, it take a special group of Black people to create reggae: the people in the island Jamaica. Then reggae music emerge into different Caribbean countries and different Caribbean people start to express their feelings, just like the Jamaican people, through reggae. You understand? As I said reggae is the only music that transcend all boundaries, religion. You see me? Nation, language color, creed. It's accepted by anybody inna the whole Earth. You see me a say? The whole Earth.

In his assertions, Fyah places Jamaicans superior to other Afro-descendants claiming that only a special group of Black people could have created reggae, the special people of Jamaica. He furthermore imagines reggae as being a conduit of

emotive expression that when others express themselves through it conjure Jamaicanness – "different Caribbean people start to express their feelings, just like the Jamaican people."

Continuing in the vein of Jamaican hierarchical imagining, Gilly, a Jamaican man in his fifties who has resided periodically in New York over the course of seventeen years, offered on another occasion: "Everyone wants to talk Jamaican. Everyone wants to be Jamaican." Not everyone is interested in what Jamaica has to offer urban popular culture nor are the intentions of all reggae participants to "be Jamaican." Rather, reggae as the dominant (as in widely exported and consumed outside of the Caribbean) popular music of the Caribbean has become a pervasive medium through which Black, urban, lower class political, economic, and social subjectivities are communicated using Jamaican slang and language styles. In turn reggae has become a popular marker of the urban, Black, West Indian space. The privileged positioning of Jamaica/Jamaicans in relation to reggae informs how many Jamaicans and Jamaican-Americans see themselves in contradistinction to other Caribbean people and also how they are themselves perceived.

Different participants in the production of reggae culture commented on the need to perform Jamaicanness in order to be successful in reggae. Likkle Bit explained that many dancers lie and say they are Jamaican believing that is the only way they will be accepted as performers in the world of reggae. Blacka Di Danca agreed that there is anxiety surrounding the need to claim Jamaica. Though he celebrates his Trinidadian background, Blacka is frequently told he dances like a Jamaican, which is intended to compliment. He is effectively being told that despite

his Trinidadian cultural origins, he skillfully and appropriately performs Jamaicanness. The anxiety of needing to perform imagined Jamaicanness causes some to move with more trepidation into the world of reggae performance. Steppa, a twenty-five year old second-generation Trinidadian-American reggae DJ, without solicitation offered to share his experience being a Trinidadian in reggae. He spoke of a divisive DJ world in which Jamaican DJs are expected to play Jamaican music (reggae) and Trinidadian DJs Trinidadian music (calypso and soca) and if non-Jamaicans want to "crossover" into the world of reggae, they need to do so with respect.

Switching back and forth between urban vernacular English and Trinidadian accented English, as second-generationers often do, Steppa said: "It's like a big brother little brother thing. But you just can't step on they corn," referring to toe callouses that are painful when pressure is applied. He continued: "Trinis is the little brother. That's how it's always been for years. Say it's a Jamaican promoter [who] threw the event. Jamaican people [are] there but they hire one Trini DJ just to play some soca, we not gonna go in there and be like 'raar!'" he said imitating a lion's roar. "We gotta wait our turn, obvious, and just play what we know, which is soca." When I asked why Trinis are prohibited from playing reggae he responded: "Because it would be like a disrespect. It's like you steppin' into my house and you tellin' me I can't put my foot up on my own chair. I'm gonna consider it as a disrespect because you comin' into my environment and you wanna play my kinda culture of music? I mean, what is gonna be there left for me to play?" Steppa attributes his success as a DJ to his ability to "speak Jamaican" convincingly.

There are certain ideas that Steppa's words bring to bear that shed light on the kind of exclusions and antagonisms within the West Indian community that are made evident in reggae. In his anecdotal analogy he refers to Trinidadians in reggae as involved in a sort of apprenticeship in which Jamaicans are both the masters and guardians of reggae artistry and monopolize important positions within its performance – Jamaicans own the house and train those within it. He also sees Jamaicans as assuming a protectivist stance that is tied to anxiety over scarcity or cultural "loss" and "appropriation" – stepping into another's cultural space ("environment") and playing their "culture of music." He also brings attention to another concern, the over saturation of the job market in reggae DJing that makes opportunities to be hired for a party scarcer and pay less competitive. Cultural claims and Jamaican authenticity can actually have more than a social impact serving also to protect an economic position within reggae production. It seems Jamaicans want to create a monopoly of reggae.

Steppa's experience and observations are towards one extreme of the kinds of trepidation that people enter the world of reggae professionalism with and the biases they feel they experience. I interviewed and conversed with other successful DJs of non-Jamaican origin – Guyanese, Grenadian, and even Japanese – who are successful and feel accepted in the profession. However, Steppa's words do illustrate the underlying and widely accepted notion that performing Jamaicanness is the standard of reggae cultural production. His words also speak to a certain "rift" between Jamaicans and Trinidadians that arises from them having the highest and second highest Anglophone populations respectively. They compete over who

"owns" West Indian Brooklyn, a rift that is tied to narratives both within and outside of reggae.

When asked if there is a rift between Trinidadians and Jamaicans, Blacka replied that there is, and related it directly to music, making the rift more largely indicative of popular cultural hegemony and influence. He said:

> There's two important cultures, musical cultures…calypso and reggae. Dancehall comes from reggae and soca comes from calypso. A lot of Jamaicans don't respect calypso, but a lot of Trinidadians do respect reggae. So sometimes Jamaicans can be a little bit self-indulged about their culture and their music. They started everything, they brought it here they brought it there. Then you have people worldwide loving your culture. People are White, Black, Spanish dancing to your culture and you don't want to accept theirs?

Blacka underscores the affect, influence, and expansiveness of musical cultures in particular in his explication of the rift. He sees the expansive impact of reggae as inspiring cultural chauvinism in Jamaicans rooted in popular conceptions of the hegemony of reggae music, and Jamaican popular culture at large. Symbolic and ideological duals between Jamaicans and Trinidadians play themselves out in music battles.

Without fail, every night that the Trinidadian DJ at Mo'Bay Café came to play music there was some conflict between him and the Jamaican sous chefs and executive chef. This conflict was expressed through grunts of displeasure and loud shouts over the music in Patois denouncing the DJ for his selections, or through direct demands from the kitchen, yelled all the way across the bar to the other side of the restaurant, that the DJ change back to reggae. Customers never paid much mind to the shouts that blended with the music and animated the space with

Caribbean talk. In nightclubs Jamaicans similarly show their disproval of soca choosing to exit dance floors and sit waiting for the soca sets to end that are sometimes included in reggae night parties. On the converse I have heard women, presumably not Jamaican, lamenting the overwhelming amount of reggae and the unfairness of more general Caribbean music parties favoring it. These battles can only be resolved by holding separate soca only parties, which many promoters do, and at which Jamaicans are overwhelmingly absent. Contrastingly, multiple Caribbean countries are represented in reggae parties.

These musical battles remind me of the classic scene in Spike Lee's film *Do the Right Thing* in which Radio Raheem, who plays Public Enemy's politically inspired rap song "Fight the Power" on repeat from his boom box, finds himself in a volume battle with a group of neighborhood Puerto Rican men. Radio Raheem and the Puerto Ricans alternately turn up the volume of their music trying to eliminate the audibility of the other. Music, as central to place making, is a way in which people stake claim to space. The antagonisms between Jamaican and Trinidadians present a challenge to Jamaica's symbolic authority and capital on the one hand and a reassertion of the "right" of Jamaicans to exclusively claim Caribbean spaces on the other and are played out musically.

The othering of Jamaicans that comes as a result of their exclusive positioning in the reggae hierarchy and also as a result of their collective representation through reggae coupled with the remaining Anglophone Caribbean nations collectively claiming calypso and soca coalesce in imaginings of the biological difference of Jamaicans. I was surprised to learn that many different

people see the character traits attributed to Jamaicans as being rooted in their supposed physiological difference. Dice asserted that Jamaicans tend to have a "chip" on their shoulder, which according to him was reflected in reggae music and in business negotiations with Jamaicans. He further added: "Somebody made a joke and said that out of all the Caribbean islands Jamaicans breath a different air. I'm starting to believe that they do. Literally they do. Most of them, yeah, they do breathe a different air."

While Dice was speaking of Jamaican difference in jest rooted in some perception of a possible reality, Blacka is more convinced of the veracity of Jamaican biological difference. He explained:

> Someone told me every island has different animals and plants, which determines what goes into your system, and the plants and animals of Jamaica have unusually high testosterone. So that's why Jamaicans seem more violent, they seem more big headed, they seem louder, because they all have higher testosterone…they have a higher testosterone in that island, in that part of the Caribbean and that can also affect their mindset too because they have an unbalanced level of testosterone in their system and that can also cause them to think 'oh I'm the best.'

Blacka's explanation hopes to make sense of the stereotypes and some of his personal observations of Jamaicans by finding some biological cause of them that, in effect, homogenize the Jamaican character and render Jamaicans agentless in their own self-representation and embodiment. They cannot help being who they are, it is in their food.

Blacka, who is not alone in this kind of conceptualization of Jamaican biology, has formed these imaginings from observations of Jamaican enactments of authority from a privileged position within reggae culture – "oh I'm the best," and "they seem

more big headed, they seem louder." His claims reproduce discourse of Jamaican violence and aggressiveness, discourse that is converted into the visual through dancehall reggae music and imagery. The correlation between narratives of the Jamaican disposition with Jamaican representation in dancehall begs the questions: how much are people essentializing and homogenizing the Jamaican character based on imaginings inspired by the music itself? Also, how might Jamaicans/Jamaican-Americans in reggae places be responding to the assumptions made of them based on these representations in dancehall and performing stereotypes of violence and aggression?

Tying Jamaica and Jamaicanness to reggae authenticity also prompts distinction between local born Jamaicans and those born in Jamaica – the "Yankees" versus the "real Jamaicans." Subsequently a prejudice is created that impacts the reception of U.S. born Jamaicans within reggae, which again is indicative of disjuncture within the Caribbean space. West Indians in New York tend to regard the reggae that Jamaican-Americans, Jamaicans, and other West Indians living in New York City make with skepticism regarding its authenticity. In effect, Jamaican artists corner the market in reggae music deejaying and singing. There is, however, space left for producers who are behind the scenes figures. The valorizing of Jamaica undermines the contributions of Jamaicans and other West Indians in New York. It also prioritizes and creates preoccupations with actual geography in ways that contradict claims made otherwise that Brooklyn is "Little Jamaica," evincing its liminality. West Indian Brooklyn is a Caribbean space, but not Caribbean enough for its residents to represent the face of reggae at large.

Jamaicans who have relocated to New York City, and thus lost some of their authenticity having stripped themselves (even if temporarily) from the island, feel a prejudice against them as creators and representatives of reggae music. Fyarama, a Jamaican-American female DJ, explained that when she DJs in Jamaica during annual visits people look at her skeptically asking themselves: "Who's this Yankee gyal?" She feels being a "Yankee" is more of a prejudice against her than being a woman, though bias against her because of her gender is significant. Computer Paul, born and raised in Jamaica until nineteen years old before joining his family in Brooklyn, rose to international celebrity in the late 1980s through his largely Brooklyn based production of reggae riddims and collaboration with Jamaica based artists recording in New York. Computer Paul met challenges when his riddims first started to be released. Now well into his fifties and living in Jamaica, where he retuned in his late twenties, Paul reminisced:

> People would say "ahh it foreign dat" ya know? "It somethin' like a foreign riddim." So I just brush it aside. Then when I was making my beats and people in Jamaica were voicing on my beats, I started coming down [to Jamaica] and you know got the cynicism of people who are like [sucking his teeth] "yeah it sound good, but you still have a likkle foreign ting." You know there's a likkle prejudice to that foreign ting ya nah mean? But I stuck to it and proved them wrong cuz I started making hits.

The sort of concern with protecting an "authentic" Jamaican sound, for which there is none really besides claiming that it is literally produced in Jamaica, safe guards the privileged place of Jamaica as the guardian of reggae.

As have I demonstrated, Jamaican-Americans and migrants in the U.S. enjoy secondary advantages as authenticators of reggae culture in contradistinction to

other West Indians. Still the work of Jamaicans outside of Jamaica in the transnational matrix of reggae music production and the constant dialogue between NYC and Jamaica prior to he birth of reggae and throughout its development is undermined by the geographically bound symbolism of Jamaica as the sole authenticator of reggae. Computer Paul was able to navigate his way through the wall of cynics by producing excellent music. Ricky Blaze also feels the quality of his musical product eclipses the prejudices against him asserting: "I just continue to kill them with smash records." For both Computer Paul and Ricky Blaze, however, a pivotal point in their music being accepted occurred only after Jamaica based artists voiced lyrics on their tracks.

In addition to authenticity there is a novelty tied to Jamaica that gives the island a privileged position within Caribbean popular culture. "It's a psychological ting. Big psychological ting," Red Fox said of U.S. West Indians biased support of Jamaica based artists. "They're from Jamaica, they have the new slang, they have the new dance, they have the new whatever. We want to be as authentic as we possibly can." Red Fox was speaking of a diasporic community indicated by his use of "we." He personally does not have the same preoccupation but recognizes that others like him, a Jamaican outside of Jamaica, do. The novelty associated with Jamaica is in part tied to diasporic yearnings for a cultural experience in which diasporas seek to reflect and embody an unadulterated expression of their place of cultural origin, yet, simultaneously have lost the ability to claim the geography for itself. This diasporic yearning, however, misses how diasporas and their places of origin together form a cultural mirror where images reflect each other. "The source," Jamaica, is also

informed by, and a reflection of, its diaspora. The diaspora and movements of people between Jamaica and NYC are in part responsible for the development and evolution of reggae as new tastes in music and samples of U.S. sounds that migrants historically and continually carry shape all the styles of reggae. In addition to undermining the contribution of West Indians at large, the preoccupation with Jamaican authenticity undermines the global community of reggae producers and their connectivity.

As the preference for Jamaica persists, NYC born reggae singers and deejays are few. According to Ricky Blaze, two of the most widely respected artists in the NYC subcultural music scene, Screechy Dan and Mr. Easy, only became popular and successful after spending time in Jamaica. Tony Matterhorn, who was born in Jamaica but spent most of his adult life in Brooklyn, established a career in reggae as the successful soundman of the Brooklyn sound system King Addis. It was only after he moved back to Jamaica that his career as a dancehall deejay began with his epic and craze inducing international hit song "Dutty Wine." Busy Signal was little known when he lived in Connecticut but now, based in Jamaica, he is celebrated as one of dancehall's best deejays. Red Fox attributes his national success to his manager marketing him well and to the popularity of his first 1990s single "Pose Off" in the African–American community. Where Jamaica serves as the face of reggae, artists outside of Jamaica meet challenges presenting their own as reggae music makers. It is the producers, who remain behind the scenes, and dancers, who are responders to the music rather than makers of it that have better chances in their professions as

Jamaicans living outside of Jamaica and non-Jamaicans, though many dancers still feel they experience bias.

West Indian Diasporic preference for reggae music created in Jamaica sustains the Jamaican music industry and its economy. In a 2002 article in music and entertainment magazine *Vibe*, Baz Dreisinger criticizes how Japan's adaptation of reggae culture and subsequent formation of an entirely Japanese reggae industry – DJs, musicians, singers, deejays, producers, dancers – has resulted in the unfair profiting of Japanese people from Jamaican cultural product without much distribution of the economic gains to Jamaica, from which this cultural product was born (Dreisinger 2002). Japan provides a contrasting example, to the United States. In the U.S. claims to cultural authenticity tied to the island of Jamaica keep profits filtering to the island and keep the successes of reggae internationally dependent on it, though not exclusively. I will explore some of the dimensions to Japanese involvement later in this chapter.

Interplaying with regional ethnic identity, figurative citizenship and the national allegiances it inspires, and with the antagonisms formed and observed through reggae are racial identifications. Race has more unifying potential than West Indian regional identity within the West Indian community as it also serves as a medium through which Afro-descendant West Indians come to identify with African-Americans in New York City. I turn here to the analysis of Black racial identification in West Indian Brooklyn.

Hip-Hop and Reggae: Remixing West Indian Blackness

Throughout the history of West Indian immigration to the U.S. Afro-Caribbeans have been subject to U.S. racial structures, subsumed into the category "Black," and experienced the racial injustices, and prejudices that affect African-Americans (Glazer and Moynihan 1970; Sowell 1981; Rogers 2006; Kasinitz 2001). Today Afro-Caribbean West Indians continue to experience racialization, and are subject to the marginalizing ideological, symbolic, social, and class based racial formulations through which Afro-descendants continue to be analyzed, stereotyped, and engaged with by the legal system, and social, economic, and political institutions. They feel themselves a vulnerable population. My young Black West Indian male research collaborators see themselves as vulnerable to the same racial profiling and police aggression as their African-American counterparts and their lives as being similarly impacted by the realities of being Black in America. Blackness, however, is not something that becomes significant only once in the United States. Narratives surrounding Blackness demonstrate that it is thought of and experienced in dynamic ways that evince the relevance of race to West Indian subjectivities prior to immigration to the United States as scholars working within the Anglophone Caribbean demonstrate (Thomas 2004; Hope 2006; Cooper 2004).

Anglophone Caribbean national identity construction has been historically contingent on discourse of an African past and "folk blackness" (Thomas 2004: 13) as is particularly evident in Jamaica and Trinidad (Thomas 2004; Munasinghe 1997, 2001). Black racial identity is thus for many linked closely to their national identity. An interaction between James and three Mexican prep chefs at Mo'Bay Café that

transpired in the company of other Jamaican staff illustrates well the relationship between Blackness and Jamaican national identity in particular. In a moment of pre-shift conversation and friendly joking, James made Larry, a Jamaican of fair complexioned skin and light brown eyes, the center of his jokes.[27] James pointed enthusiastically at his skin and said: "You see dis? *Yo! Negro!*" employing the Spanish words for "I" and "Black." Terrence….*Negro*! Marcus…*Negro*! Jamaican…*Negro*! Larry…I dunno what. He *Blanco* [White], maybe Puerto Rican, *no* Jamaican." James delegitimized Larry's Jamaicanness by drawing attention to what he attempted to show as a lack of Blackness. While a joke, James and other staff do in fact consider Larry to be a Jamaican, the associations made are indicative of constructions of Jamaican national identity and their connection to Black racial identity.

The class and color formulations in the West Indies that Wade Marshall aptly denotes as creating a "pigmentocracy" (2006: 49) also inform ideas on Blackness prior to emigration to the U.S. and Black racial identity. The historical connectedness of skin color to political power and economic access in the West Indies is a legacy of colonial governing policies and prejudices that put the "Brown" population, mixed descendants of Africans and Europeans, or Asian, and Middle Eastern members of the merchant class, in the privileged position to lead in the transition to independence (Williams 1970; Mintz 1974; Hope 2006). What has resulted from the privileged positioning of the Brown elites, as powerfully evidenced in Jamaica, is a class and color hierarchy whereby Jamaica's upper and

[27] These names are pseudonyms to protect anonymity.

governing classes are predominantly Brown and the majority lower and working classes Black.

Within this system lies a historically contingent parallel in the power dynamics between Black and Brown, and in the structural violence against the Black majority, as exists between White and Black in the U.S. While possibilities for upward socioeconomic mobility may be greater in the West Indies in which a meritocracy prevails – there being less race based institutional and structural impediments to advancement as evidenced in the U.S's "racial dictatorship" in place until the Civil Rights Movement (Omi and Winant 1994: 67) – the relationship of Blackness to class, power, status, and political influence is one that evinces the inequalities within the histories of the Caribbean. As evidence of this history, Afro-descendant West Indians in New York City have ideas about the relevance of Blackness to life that predate immigration, an awareness that coupled with the connection of Blackness to Anglophone Caribbean national identities, shapes salient racial identities.

When I asked twenty-two interviewees: "What do you think of yourself as being first, a Black person or a Jamaican/Trinidadian/Grenadian etc.?" all twenty-two responded that they see themselves first as a Black person. These twenty-two people included U.S citizens by birth and naturalization as well as nationals of Jamaica, Grenada, and Trinidad. Rogers (2001) and Waters (1999) find that West Indian ethnic and racial identities are situationally defined. Butterfield (2004) observes that who is posing questions to West Indians regarding their racial or ethnic identity affects the answers they give. My own racial identification could have

influenced these responses. However, that not one person mentioned their national identification first, among a people for whom national distinctions are fervently celebrated at all times and proudly stood behind, remains noteworthy. Furthermore, they invariably answered with certainty and without pause.

I locate my interviewees' responses in the tangible ways they experience their racial identity in the United States. I see it also as reflecting how Black racial identity among Brooklyn West Indians, who are predominantly Afro-descendant, is unifying and celebrated in reggae. The West Indians who shared their stories with me revealed nuanced ways they conceive of Blackness and see it as relating to political, and socioeconomic status and mobility before being in the U.S. and after. In both contexts it is seen to correlate with socioeconomic disadvantage and political marginalization, a point of observation that inspires a sense of unity in a collective struggle and need to overcome historical injustices and their contemporary legacies rather than a need to dis-identify with Blackness as other scholars have indicated (Bryce-Laporte 1972, 1993; Waters 1999).

The significance of these interpretations and framings of race and subjectivity lays partly in how they resonate with the views of many African-Americans. The resonance is observable where hip-hop and reggae meet. Two urban popular music forms historically associated with Black communities in their respective places of origin, hip-hop and reggae significantly shape how both African-American and Afro-Caribbean youth in particular come to understand, constitute, and express their identities and style. As LaBennett asserts in her (2011) text I also see youth as being selective and critical consumers of popular culture and agentive

subjects in the negotiation of racial, ethnic, and gender representations as informed by and illustrated through it. My point here is that reggae and hip hop, as forms of Black popular culture, are reservoirs of visual, linguistic, stylistic, ideological, emotional, and performative information from which youth pull, albeit selectively. This role of hip-hop and reggae continues outside of the youth stage. Though hip-hop and reggae may not be as closely engaged with adult identities as they are youth, they are still for adults significant modes of performance and embodied expression and part of adult leisure, and place making.

The choice of DJs at most Brooklyn reggae nights to include a period of hip-hop music play is reflective of the shared relevance of hip-hop and reggae to urban Black populations. When hip-hop is played the ambient experience of the space and ethos of the people within it changes substantially. The response of patrons to hip-hop varies according to the age range and what generation American they presumably are. It is impossible to asses with sure accuracy through observation alone if a person is an immigrant or citizen, and if so then what generation. However, listening for accents within Caribbean spaces is always a helpful indicator of how engaged people feel with their West Indian cultural selves, for those who code switch, or how inextricably linked they are to it, for those who cannot. "Younger" patrons are understood here to be visibly from teens to mid to late twenties.

While patrons in reggae nights across age and presumed U.S. citizenship status can be seen participating in hip-hop music sets through head nods and singing along to popular choruses, younger patrons generally show more

enthusiastic responses to hip-hop as evidenced in their more complete dancing, singing along to whole songs with adamant gesturing and embodiment of performative personas in keeping with the song. There are a few points of relevance here: that hip-hop is played in declared Caribbean reggae places; that it is participated in across the crowd; that younger people more enthusiastically enjoy it; that though participated in, hip-hop is still observably not treated in the same regard as reggae. All of these points are indicative of the relationship between Blackness and popular culture, and the transnational dimensions to Blackness and its performance, and expression through urban popular cultural forms. Hip-hop is relevant to these spaces both because it signifies Blackness and because of its association with the urban spaces that these Brooklyn West Indians are a part of. While participation in reggae indicates West Indian cultural and racial identities, engagement with hip-hop also signifies Black racial identity, the urban experience (Black) American experience, and thereby invokes relationships with African-Americans. The relevance of hip-hop to West Indian Black racial identity is derived in part from its connection to modern Blackness.

Deborah Thomas conceptualizes modern Blackness as a "subaltern aesthetic" (2004: 13) born out of the digital age and exchange of information throughout the African diaspora that have served to politicize and form global representations of Blackness. She puts forth that the concept of modern Blackness is not necessarily a revolutionary one in that it may not be collectively transformative; for example, some of the representations of Blackness are tied to individualism and consumerism. However, Thomas asserts that in Jamaica modern Blackness is still

political and illustrative of the predominantly Black masses pushing back against the cultural influence of the predominantly Brown middle and upper classes. Modern Blackness in Jamaica, she argues, is an urban Black racial identity rooted in demonstrations of agency and identity in contradistinction to the upper class modes of representation and ideas of respectability.

Some examples Thomas gives are "radical consumerism," the demonstration of economic agency through consumption and ability to influence global style, and "ghetto feminism" (2004: 250) – the use of sexuality (though not sex) as a form of power within popular culture. Representations of modern Blackness are widespread in reggae, which speaks to the Black masses in their language, Patois, and pushes national colonial cultural forms aside in exchange "fi wi culture" [for our culture] (2004: 233). Hope (2006), Copper (2004) Stanley-Niaah (2010a), Stolzoff (2000), and Bakare-Yusuf (2006a) all note this priority in reggae, particularly dancehall, in which modern Blackness comes to the fore as a celebrated subjectivity. Thomas adds that modern Blackness "accepts and validates the immediacy of contemporary popular cultural practices, such as dancehall, and reflects the transnational experiences of the majority of the population" (2004: 13).

Hip-hop is also a conduit of modern Blackness in the transnational Afro-Diasporic space of the Caribbean. Marshall (2006) documents the effects of many of the ideas in hip-hop on the discursive choices in reggae, particularly as they relate to the expression of counter-cultural attitudes. Reggae as a counter-cultural narrative embedded with demonstrations of agency that bring Blackness to the fore in favor of urban Black communities, parallels with hip-hop. They are parallel music forms

that emerged out of comparable socioeconomic, demographic, and political circumstances that have played similar roles in their communities of origin as tools for alternative, to the dominant ethnoracial group, identity creation and expression. Both have also historically been mediums to assert economic, social, and cultural agency, thereby becoming conduits of modern Blackness. Furthermore, reggae and hip-hop creation has been dependent on the exchange between the Black urban communities in which they both emerged. They are, in turn, also themselves products of modern Blackness.[28] The social, historical, and political resonances between hip-hop and reggae today, and their connection to the modern Blackness of the Circum-Caribbean space together make hip-hop a relevant medium to communicate Black racial identity within West Indian communities both in the West Indies and New York City, creating a space for it therein.

In addition to the transnational dimensions to modern Blackness represented and disseminated through hip-hop, for residents of color who share urban spaces with African-Americans, hip-hop signifies a spatial urban American identity. In conversation with John, not a West Indian but a Dominican-American, he explained that his interest in hip-hop is evidence of "the American in me." John's Americanness is informed largely by the cultural references that are available to him within the American, urban New York City space in which he has spent most of his life. Hip-hop is a primary communicator of the linguistic, stylistic, and ideological, positionalities of that space thereby becoming metonymic of an Americanness

[28] The influence of American soul, funk, and R&B music on reggae is well documented as well as the impact of Jamaican sound system practices on the development of hip-hop culture in New York (Rose 1994; Lesser 2008; Chang 2005; Stolzoff, 2000).

created in urban spaces. The association John made between hip-hop and Americanness mirrors the narratives of other immigrants, first, and second generationers, Dominican and West Indian, in which claims to the American geographic and cultural space are made through knowledge of and participation in hip-hop. Along with being a reflection of sharing space, the relationship between American identity and hip-hop is indicative of hip-hop being a significant U.S. export throughout the world, which converts it more generally into a reference to the American cultural space (though one that arose in African-American communities) and also the urban, and the popular.

Hip-hop signifies the community of racial solidarity, the urban, and the popular. DJ's play it intermittently in reggae parties, some not all, because it is what people want to hear to "fit in" as Dice put it. However, for those who identify strongly with their West Indian roots, hip-hop alone is incomplete in expressing their identities, which are both racial and cultural. Reggae, as a West Indian expressive cultural form, provides an alternative within the field of hip-hop cultural dominance in the greater U.S. Reggae as a subculture underscores, strengthens, highlights, supports and celebrates ethnic distinction, West Indian cultural distinction and ancestry. It provides a medium for accentuating, bringing to attention, celebrating, and living a cultural identity instead of only a racial one.

Percy Hintzen proposes that popular culture emerges from the need for people to publicize their collective identity for it to be recognized within a larger community. In this instance, reggae cultural references and participation signify the West Indian community within the larger New York City and Greater U.S.

population. At New York City dance parties outside of Brooklyn Caribbean spaces, I have observed people presumed to be West Indian emerge from sleepy late night dormancy for a performance of Caribbeanness through enthusiastic dancing and lip synching during end of the night reggae sets. These moments are often met with the interested eyes of spectators marveling at the show that the novel and somewhat exotified "other" Blacks present. Verdery (1994) asserts that ethnic identities are situational and defined by boundaries not necessarily by cultural content itself. Boundaries and overlapping spaces between African-Americans and Afro-Caribbeans are situationally defined and are either made exclusive through reggae or momentarily inclusive through selective performance of hip-hop. The movement of Blackness between boundaries, it being the basis of overlap along with shared urban spaces, inspire the cross-referencing evidenced in both hip-hop and dancehall reggae music in which phrases, intonations, accents, cadences and popular lines are verbally and musically exchanged.

Reggae and its accompanying performance modes are internationally celebrated, and New York City is one of the most cosmopolitan, transnational cities of the world. Encapsulated within nightclubs are multidimensional Caribbean transgeographic cultural places that are also places of learning, engagement, expression, performance, and embodiment for people outside of the West Indian Diaspora who chose to patronize them. While Brooklyn reggae places are largely Caribbean, within them are important members of the New York City reggae scene, Japanese nationals.

"I wanna be the king of sounds:" Japanese Nationals within Brooklyn Reggae Culture

On one of my first ventures into Brooklyn reggae nightlife I became aware of unexpected but significant participants in New York City reggae culture, migrant Japanese nationals. In a sea of Black bodies that seemed to wave left and right in unison to the music that played, stood a group of young unmistakably East Asian men, their heads bopping up and down in communion with the mass movement to the beat. My eyes examined the young men. Their presence, for me, was unanticipated. They were a unique inclusion to the ethnoracial dimensions to the space. The style of the young men was fitting of the setting: loose fitting jeans, tee-shirts, and oversized jackets. My eyes fell on a large wooden pendant in the shape of Africa that hung from wooden beads around the neck of one of the men. My curiosity peaked. What did Africa mean to this young man? And how was he comfortable so boldly representing it on his person within the predominantly Black and Caribbean space we were in? What did these young men feel about their presence within this space?

Later in the night I saw the men had broken from their group and interspersed throughout the crowd individually or in pairs, observing and participating from different locations within the venue. When one of them was close enough for me to easily approach him, I took my opportunity. The man explained to me in unsure English that his name is Hiro, he is from Japan, and living in Brooklyn. All of his friends present, he said, are also from Japan. I would later learn they had

all relocated to Brooklyn to live in a Caribbean community and learn the artistry of reggae. Hiro and I exchanged numbers and there began my companionship with a young Japanese man who was kind enough to welcome me into his social world, invite me to attend reggae events as the lone non-Japanese person in his crew, and to introduce me to others who would also become companions, and give me insight into their experience in New York City.

Because of reggae's broad popularity, that moment in the Brooklyn reggae club was not the first time I had seen people who are not Black or Caribbean in reggae places. However, when I had prior it was generally in a Manhattan venue, or at a Brooklyn sound clash in which a Japanese or European sound system was competing, and attracted followers hailing from those nations. Not at a club in the inner parts of Brooklyn. Observing Japanese participants within Brooklyn reggae places became a regular occurrence, whereas it never was with people other than West Indians. Young Japanese men and women, and sometimes old particularly at sound clashes, could be seen in groups, pairs, or even a solitary woman in a crowd.

I eventually became so familiar with Japanese in reggae places that I was able to distinguish the sound of Japanese from other East Asian languages though I only came to understand very few words. Japanese people present themselves as observers and participators, as dancers, and DJs, and at sound clashes as complete sound systems. Their presence is indicative of how West Indian Brooklyn has become a significant stop off location and final point of settlement on the journey to reggae expertise and professionalism. Japanese nationals come to Brooklyn to be close to and a part of the vibrant reggae culture that abounds there.

Shortly after meeting Hiro I met Yasu (Yas) in another reggae club. He also became an invaluable resource for information and companionship in reggae exploration. He is a Japanese national, avid reggae lover, and aspiring DJ who has lived in New York City on a student visa for which he qualifies as an English language student. However, in his own words, he decided to come to New York City and live in Brooklyn to "learn the culture, the culture of the club." Yas is one of many Japanese who travel to New York City on student visas as English language students intending also, or alternatively, to be students of reggae.

Dance, DJing, MCing, and Patois are all parts of the repertoire of knowledge that Japanese who relocate intend to develop to benefit their professional careers. They come to New York individually to learn, work and perform, but also entire sound systems will relocate. DJs, mic men, engineers and their managers build bases of supporters, a reputation, and the social capital necessary for success in Japan. Many Japanese sound systems like Yard Beat, Risky Dice, and Barrier Free work transnationally. They have members commute between Japan and New York to participate in sound clashes and DJ at reggae parties in Brooklyn to build followers. Members in New York work to stay up to date on the latest reggae songs and purchase dubplates, an integral form of reggae capital discussed later, that will help their members in Japan better DJ and compete in sound clashes. The community of Japanese reggae participants in Brooklyn, New York has become populous enough to notice its presence at numerous Brooklyn reggae functions from dancehall queen competitions, to sound clashes, and weekly reggae nights, and observe Japanese walking down the streets of Flatbush.

The route from Japan to New York City and Jamaica and back has become a sort of pilgrimage trail that devoted practitioners of reggae follow, this travel providing significant forms of symbolic capital at each stop. Aspiring and established Japanese reggae professionals collect various forms of knowledge and artifacts, physical and digital, that will support their continued practice upon return to Japan. While Jamaica is an important stop-off location in the migration circuit, it is not a place of (semi) permanent settlement for most Japanese as Brooklyn is. New York City allows for more employment possibilities for Japanese than Jamaica does making it the preferred location to settle and study. Japanese are hired as "off-the-books" workers as most do not have work visas.

Despite West Indian Diasporic preoccupations with Jamaica's authenticity in reggae, Japanese find Brooklyn, in particular, to be a suitable site of study and career advancement. The plentitude of West Indians, many of which are immigrants or transmigrants, deems it so. Furthermore, many of the men in particular come to develop their skills in sound clash technique, a popular practice throughout the global reggae community. As indicated prior, Brooklyn has internationally come to be known as the sound clash capital. Visiting New York, however, does not replace Jamaica. The island is still seen as the most central location to reggae cultural production. Transmigrating Japanese dancers, the majority of which are women, prioritize Jamaica over New York in deciding where to best master reggae dance as Jamaica is the site of the most internationally renowned dancehall queen competition, a dance contest determining who has the best skill in dancehall style dance.

Overcoming the language barrier between myself and Japanese research collaborators, and interviewees was a challenge but not impossible. Many of the Japanese with whom I spent the greater portion of my time had conversational knowledge of English from very basic to intermediate and in rare cases advanced. I was able to get more in depth and detailed information about Japanese involvement in reggae, their migration, and participation, learning, goals, and objectives, through regular conversation and time spent with Yas, Hiro, and later Toshiyuki (Toshi) with whom I built rapport. They took advantage of the opportunity to speak and learn more English and I the opportunity to learn more about their experience while spending time doing something we both enjoyed, being in reggae places.

Toshi is an advanced English speaker, however, when I wanted to gain further insight into the thoughts and observations of others, and to understand how they conceptualized their presence in Caribbean places, I set up focus groups with my friend Lila who served as a Japanese to English translator. Lila was born in Japan to a Black American mother and White American father and was subsequently raised there until she went to college in the U.S. Her ethnic and racial background, and strong Japanese national identity that evidences her rootedness in Japanese culture gave her a dynamic view into the words of the other Japanese present and made for lively discussions. Sessions with Lila were some of the most informative and productive to my understanding of Japanese involvement in reggae in New York City.

Most, if not all, of the Japanese I interviewed in conjunction with this research live in what they refer to as Japanese guesthouses, residential spaces that

traveling and temporarily settling Japanese occupy. There is a certain level of secrecy regarding Japanese guesthouses as they form an enterprise that might function off of mainstream economic radars. All of the guesthouses of which I learned are in the heart of the West Indian area of Flatbush in close proximity to Caribbean food restaurants, stores, and reggae music venues. They are a series of apartments in which Japanese take up temporary residence, some more extended than others. Some alleged that they are Japanese only residences, while others challenged the idea that they are specifically and intentionally designated to be so. When I asked a Japanese companion if I would be welcome to stay at a guesthouse he answered: "Oh, I don't know" but seemed doubtful, and chuckled at the thought.

Japanese guesthouses are important to transnational voyages, many commuting from one in Brooklyn to another in Kingston. A Jamaican co-worker from Mo'Bay Café has a friend in Jamaica whose job it is to pick up Japanese travelers at the airport and shuttle them to a guesthouse in Jamaica. When these Japanese reggae participants travel to Jamaica it is not to vacation in the rural areas known for their Caribbean beauty, it is to work, learn, acquire music, and be seen in the centers of reggae activity in Jamaica – Kingston. Traveling to Jamaica also helps those residing in New York City circumvent visa restrictions on periods of stay in the U.S. For many, temporary settlement becomes more fixed or even permanent.

Among the Japanese aspiring reggae professionals with whom I spoke, most had service industry jobs in New York working in Japanese restaurants, particularly those frequented by traveling Japanese business executives. Two Japanese I met worked in a Caribbean fusion restaurant in the chic Nolita neighborhood of the

Lower East Side of Manhattan. They chose to work there because of the Patois language skills they would gain working in close proximity to Jamaicans. At a reggae night in Brooklyn a Japanese selector Maki Jam, was playing music. Over the dancehall rhythms that blared from the speakers stacked over ten feet high on either side of him the voice of the crowd animator shouted commands and chanted to the audience in Patois. I looked harder to see where the voice was coming from to learn that it was Maki Jam himself who was working as his own mic man and speaking in Patois.

When his set was finished I approached Maki Jam and, anticipating he would have some command of American Standard English based on his use of Patois, asked how he learned Patois. Appearing to be rather stumped by my question I repeated myself loudly and closer to his ear assuming that he had not heard me, but when his face betrayed confusion I employed the more mindfully enunciated and slower paced speech I used when speaking with my other Japanese research companions, after which he understood me. Maki Jam explained that he worked at a Jamaican restaurant and learned Patois from the Jamaican employees there. When I inquired further as to where this restaurant was and how long he had worked there Maki Jam evidently did not understand me. I realized his knowledge of Patois was a working knowledge of how to professionally use or perform the language in reggae work. It was a very specific language knowledge pertaining to the use of Patois in performance, as a tool of communication between the different actors in reggae places – DJs, mic men, and crowd. It did not necessarily translate into conversational Patois or command of American Standard English.

I recognized this trend among my Japanese research companions. They know many Patois catch phrases that facilitate communication in reggae places and cordiality, but not much more. Some, however, do in fact have a better command of Patois than they do American Standard English. Toshi, who is also known as Doctor the captivating mic man of the sound system Barrier Free, considers Patois his second language and American Standard English, which he is learning in NYC based courses, his third. One day after class he shared that his English teacher asked him to recite a story in English and added: "Not in Bob Marley English." The teacher was familiar with Toshi's command of Patois and tendency to use it in the class. He developed his language skills traveling to Jamaica and speaking to his Jamaican neighbors, and friends in Brooklyn. After an additional try at asking where Maki Jam worked he typed the restaurant's name into an email in my phone. I later dined at the Jamaican restaurant where Maki Jam was one of three other Japanese staff – two busboys and a resident DJ named Mitch.

The level of commitment to their craft that my Japanese research collaborators demonstrate is dedication that is rooted in sacrifice. Both young men in their twenties, Hiro and his comrade in music Nankin explained that through their engagement in reggae in Japan and by relocating to New York City, they had forfeited other career options in exchange for a life in reggae. Exchanging the possibility of a career that they assumed had been expected of them for professionalization in reggae was a decision they embraced with much conviction. A career outside of reggae, Nankin explained, would divert focus from his goals in reggae. Hiro agreed. It is more important to them to travel to Jamaica to collect the

fruits of the culture, and live in New York City to gather more knowledge and practice and be more successful in Japan as reggae professionals than to establish themselves in any other career. Again, the symbiosis between Brooklyn and Jamaica comes into view.

Similarly Toshi and his sound system partner decided to abandon their studies in engineering to form their own sound system. They knew that doing so would mean risking financial certainty and career security but felt it was well worth establishing a place for themselves in reggae. Toshi supports his wife and two kids from the earnings he makes DJing and competing in sound clashes in Japan and internationally. His career in reggae also means, however, that he spends months at a time away from his family when he is in New York and traveling to Jamaica. Toshi maintains that he has his wife's unwavering support. For others, the careers they establish for themselves outside of reggae are intended only to support their work in reggae.

Mitch is a naturalized U.S citizen who came to New York City in the mid 1990s to continue to develop the career as a reggae mic man and selector that he had begun in Japan. He was drawn, like many others, to Brooklyn's sound clash scene and there he established himself as the central figure in the internationally performing sound system Yard Beat. He is the sound's mic man, the face of the collective. Now in his early 40s, Mitch is considered a knowledgeable and well respected elder among Japanese in New York City reggae. Mitch is also a successful banker, information he keeps very private. One might think he would keep secret his career in reggae. Late night parties, dark clubs, and a lesser known form of Black

urban music might be too provocative a thought for the offices of bank executives. However, it is alternatively his employment in banking he wishes to keep private. Being a banker can be used as ammunition against Mitch in a sound clash. He said: "I work for bank for like long time now, but, I don't really tell nobody. It's not a shame but somebody could say in Japan in sound clash 'oh you work for bank and you're selector what kind of idiot ting dat? [stupid thing is that?]' People can say that. I have to have a counteraction speech to that."

According to Mitch, his work in banking is to support his work in reggae**:** "The reason why I work for bank, the reason why is to be honest with you, doing the sound system and make a living is really hard. But if I work, if I have second job, I can do this forever. So I think I will do this until I get fifty or sixty probably. I work for bank in order for me to do the music. In order for me to keep doing the music I need to work at bank." For Mitch reggae is not a hobby, rather, it is a professional goal that he structures other important economic and personal decisions around. In addition to the necessity of economic self-sufficiency, having another job allows for the capital necessary to purchase expensive dubplates which are at the foundation of, and integral to success in, sound clashes. Mitch added: "We are very addicted to dubplates. Even if it costs a lot of money we keep cutting dubplates."

Cutting (making) dubplates is crucial to developing a sound system's arsenal of music. Dubplates are instrumental musical tracks, very often of a famous riddim or well-known, novelty song, on which a reggae artist will record tailored lyrics that mention the name of the sound system soliciting the dubplate. On behalf of their dubplate seeking clients, deejays will also infuse these lyrics with braggadocio that

boasts the excellence of the sound system in comparison to others. The more boastful and insulting of competitors a dubplate is, the more successful it is in a clash. In preparation for a specific clash, sound systems might even acquire dubplates in which the artist commissioned for the track will discuss the metaphorical assassination of their future competitor. The more famous or historically rooted in reggae the artist is, the more valuable, expensive, and effective the dubplate in the clash. Roots&culture dubplates are more impactful in Brooklyn based sound clashes than dancehall ones and are almost exclusively played, a notable contrast to sound clashes in Jamaica in which dancehall dubplates are important to a win. The privileging of roots&culture is further evidence of the diasporic preoccupations with "roots" that I indicated in chapter two.

The cost of dubplates varies from $300 to as high as $5,000 for roughly one to three minutes of lyrics. Working in banking surely puts Mitch at an advantage. According to Toshi, the expense of dubplates is worth the intoxicating feeling and notoriety of a win. "Dub fi [for] dub…I wanna be the king of sounds," he said, meaning the reigning king of all sound systems. When I asked how much money he has spent over the course of his career on the many hundreds of dubplates he has acquired he chuckled and said: "Enough to buy a house. A really big one." This is the nature of the sound system craft. As Mitch stated: "It's all about music and war." Their commitment to buying dubplates and developing their sound system skills have earned both many wins in the U.S. and internationally. Toshi's sound system Barrier Free has also taken a win in Jamaica, one that he said made news in the *Jamaican Gleaner*. For well-established sound systems like Yard Beat and Barrier

Free, having already existing contacts with reggae artists allows for dubplates to be acquired digitally. The sound system will send the instrumental track to the deejay via email to voice the lyrics on and the deejay emails it back afterwards.

My Japanese research collaborators who travel to Jamaica spend most of their time in studios recording dubplates with artists. Dubplates are also recorded in New York City but less commonly so because most known reggae artists are based in Jamaica. Considering the cost of dubplates, acquiring them has a significant economic impact that Japanese are in part responsible for. Dreisinger's (2002) *Vibe* magazine article fairly critiques the disproportionate financial gain of Japanese in comparison to Jamaicans in reggae that results from their formation of a multi-million dollar Japanese reggae industry. However, Japanese participation is still significant to the movement of capital throughout the circular pilgrimage route through the purchase of DVDs, patronage of reggae venues, participation in reggae events, commissioning of dubplates, and the various smaller forms of participation in economic markets that reggae has helped to form from food to fashion. Japanese participation brings financial return.

Andrew Digital offered as evidence of the positive impacts of Japanese involvement, and sound clashes in general, that reggae artists in Jamaica patiently await the arrival of dubplate seekers who provide them with a regular income. He said:

> Most of the artists aren't making money from 45s anymore. They are making money from dubplates. When you go to the studio, you find a bunch of artists there for the entire day waiting to see who is going to come by the studio. That's how they live. Slowly by dubplate money.

Though Japanese are not the only sources of "dubplate money," or seekers of dubplates they are significant participants in the transnational economic circuit formed through reggae. A New York City based Japanese music journalist and avid sound clash spectator, furthermore, shared with me her suspicion that NYC clashes are occasionally rigged so that Japanese sound systems win. She explained that the sound clash DVDs videographers make are sold and exported in much greater numbers when Japanese sound systems win, the benefits of which extend beyond the immediate videographer.

Andrew doubted that there was any truth behind the journalist's supposition pointing out that it is the crowd's enthusiasm that determines which sound system wins and audience members are not invested in the capital of videographers or promoters. However, it is a single judge that assesses crowd enthusiasm and that judge can be biased in reading the audience despite crowd protestations. The journalist's suspicion is evidence of the economic significance of Japanese involvement in the transnational reggae matrix. Their investments in material goods and symbolic capital – prestige, dubplates, DVDs – in Jamaica and New York are then converted into a source of lucrative financial gain in Japan. Beyond the need to acquire dubplates, Japanese travel and locations within New York City reggae culture begs the question: Why of all the global participants in reggae is it Japanese nationals that are most readily visible within Brooklyn and Jamaican, Caribbean, reggae places?

In his (2010) exploration of reggae in Japan, Marvin Sterling offers that Japanese prioritize going directly to a source of knowledge as a legacy of the ancient

practice of *iemoto*, a system of apprenticeship with a master that is historically a part of Japanese learning. My Japanese research collaborators, however, were not familiar with *iemoto*, with the exception of Toshi. Toshi disagreed that *iemoto* had anything to do with Japanese commitments to learning reggae and traveling to sources of reggae knowledge. According to Toshi, *iemoto* also required that the position of master be filled by one of his sons regardless of other apprentices maybe having superior talent. In reggae it is quite the opposite. Japanese female dancer Junko Judo winning the 2002 Dancehall Queen contest in Jamaica (the first foreigner ever to win), Barrier Free's sound clash win in Jamaica and numerous wins in other West Indian communities in the U.S. are indicative of the fact that the title of "master" can be assumed by an apprentice (a Japanese) rather than only a son (another Jamaican).

My Japanese research collaborators do nonetheless feel strongly that it is a part of the Japanese national character to want to become full masters of something, and that doing so requires learning directly from and living among the cultural and artistic creators of reggae. Mayumi, a dancehall reggae dancer, best stated these sentiments when she said:

> Japanese people carry *otaku* cultural tendencies. When we find interest in something we try to learn every detail of it. That is our human nature, and that's our nation's character. For example, when you are interested in Jamaican music, Jamaican dance, if that's the case, we go to Jamaica and meet the people and experience the culture with the people and absorb all of it. I believe that's the type of national characteristic that Japanese people have (Lila translation).

Toshi has also mentioned *otaku* in describing his love of reggae. "Japanese people are very *otaku,*" he said struggling to choose a comparable English word. After

giving it some thought he added questioningly: “Geeks? We geek out.” Geek signifies the desire to have specialized expertise that arises from extreme enthusiasm and commitment so as to “geek out.” To Toshi and Mayumi, Japanese *otaku* is the origin of their dedication to reggae and their expression of it, and explains their desire to be masters of their respective positions within it.

For Mitch, his desire to learn about reggae is tied to an interest in learning more expansively about Caribbean culture. He said: “Reggae music is a part of Jamaican culture. So I also study a little of Jamaican culture. How to cook stew chicken, curry chicken, you know? Not only about the music you know? We also appreciate the Jamaican culture.” Travel is then constructed as an important source of symbolic capital. The prioritizing of travel to a source of knowledge might explain why though reggae is a popular form of music with large communities of practitioners in Germany, Italy, and Israel, only Japanese people are rather permanently visible within Caribbean communities and reggae places.

Considering their visibility, Japanese in reggae places are treated without pretense. They are not given extra attention, not looked upon oddly, or met with animosity. I once saw a lone Japanese girl, who was accompanied by three other Japanese, independently enter the center of an empty dance floor and dance in the reggae style until her knees were on the floor where she continued her movement. Her display did not call extra attention from spectators. The benign lack of specific attention paid to Japanese in reggae places evinces a certain belonging. They are not spectacles or people of intrigue to anyone as they were initially to me. The belonging of Japanese people and their taken for granted presence in reggae places is evidence

of the history of Japanese engagement in reggae both in New York City and in Jamaica, an involvement that has contributed to the development of the current multi-million dollar reggae industry in Japan. Some reggae artists reference Japanese in their songs in acknowledgement of their participation as Mr. Vegas exemplifies in "Lean with It" when he sings "the Japanese dem want see how it go," in reference to the many Japanese who travel to Jamaica to learn reggae performance.

While Japanese are "insiders" to the Brooklyn reggae scene, they often have invisible borders around the immediate space they occupy. Beyond brief exchanges or salutes, Japanese rarely socialize with others within reggae places. Even lone Japanese do not mingle with others around them. They are insiders to the place but perpetuate outsiderness in their isolation. Much of the isolation is language related and indicative of already existing bonds between Japanese and between others within reggae places. Moments of interaction that Japanese and West Indians share are facilitated through reggae performance mediums. Nankin for example makes efforts to dance only with Caribbean women. The Japanese dancers of the all female reggae dance collective the Bruk Wine Girls also dance with men who are not Japanese rather exclusively. Additionally, Japanese mic men will engage full audiences in their communications to the crowd. Recording dubplates connotes another form of performance related interaction.

While Japanese do not seem to receive more active attention in reggae places than West Indian participants, their presence is actively engaged in West Indian cognitive spaces. West Indians meet Japanese with humor about what are often

spoken of as Japanese "antics": "Dem Japanese crazy they go *any*where!" or "how the Japanese dem love Africa." Others find it odd that though Japanese people want to know and learn reggae they are rather insular within reggae places. Japanese demonstration of their commitment to reggae through learning and evidence of their skill, however, eclipses negative sentiments about their insularity. Only once did a West Indian research companion express direct discontent about Japanese in reggae. She said: "Who knows *what* they do over there [in Japan]. They don't bring anyone with them. They just go back after they've learned what they wanted." She interpreted Japanese involvement in exploitative terms, seeing Japanese people as extracting and not sharing.

Feeling concern that Japanese intentions in reggae might be misinterpreted, Mitch chooses to preemptively address the issue. He said: "I want to be part of it. That's what I try to do. I've been building my sound reputation over the years. Not take over the reggae music scene. I always say that on the microphone. We not come to take over. We want to be part of it." I witnessed other Japanese sound system members give similar explanations of their purpose in sound clashes against West Indian competitors. Once, however, a Japanese sound system began its set in a clash with the Japanese national anthem playing as the members entered the stage and took their positions. They were met with loud and passionate booing from the crowd. The audience eventually forgave this lack of humility within the Caribbean space as the night went on and the sound system demonstrated its knowledge of the most significant in roots&culture and stated their place and appreciation as invitees.

The level of possessiveness that Jamaicans and Jamaican-Americans feel over reggae and desire to monopolize it does not seem to correlate with the relative openness with which Japanese are treated. Japanese people evidently being transient and only temporarily situated plays a role. The threat of them "taking over" reggae is not there. Most of these Japanese, as it is widely known, come to learn and leave and be better producers of reggae culture in their home country. Additionally, as cultural outsiders to the Caribbean geography, and constituting a minority in Brooklyn, there is little competition over who can define West Indian Brooklyn as there is between West Indians, with monopolies over reggae being symbolic of dominance. Lastly, their sound clash participation, and wins, are evidence of Japanese dedication to learning from "masters" something that is made clear in the ways they engage with West Indians and ultimately in their efforts to embody West Indian performativity.

Respect remains there. Where it is not given, as in the example of the sound system beginning their clash performance with the Japanese national anthem, conflict arises as evinced in them being emphatically booed. With all of this said, Japanese are not simply given a free pass to navigate through the reggae subculture as professionals. Outside of sound clashes, which are performed combat, Japanese receive second rate positions within the competitive DJing world of Brooklyn and are relegated to opening of the night set, final slow down sets, or brief periods of play in between. It is additionally a difficult job to book without connections to more well-known DJs. As Diaba, the manager of Risky Dice said: "It's hard out here for

Japanese." Still, Japanese are out there in every navigable Brooklyn Caribbean and reggae place.

While many New Yorkers express fear of traveling to the un-gentrified parts of Brooklyn, and White people in particular to predominantly Black parts of inner-city New York, young Japanese men and women feel open and comfortable traveling to the deep recesses of Brooklyn in pairs, groups, or, in the case of a young woman I once saw on her own in a reggae party, alone. One Japanese man felt so comfortable he wore an African pendant in a predominantly Black space. In addition to feelings of belonging, I assert that Japanese senses of confidence are indicative of their distance from the types of cognitive reasoning that are common in racially and ethnically diverse societies historically implicated by systemic violence against ethnic or racial minorities, and the economically marginalized; forms of cognitive reasoning that inform how people think about race, culture, and place shaping their actions, habitus, and forms of self-representation accordingly. They are forms of cognitive reasoning about race, culture, and place that are both irrational (widespread fear of Blackness or Black communities), and rationale (considering the taboo of claiming cultural signs and symbols as ones own).

Japanese brazen yet refreshing sense of self-assuredness within Black and Caribbean reggae places is also illustrative of their reflexively viewed and experienced outsiderness to the ideologies, and incumbent narratives, and positionings regarding race, culture, and place that are pervasive in the U.S. Conducting focus groups with Lila serving as translator, my questions about race directed towards the Japanese participants were consistently met with a benign

ambivalence. In response, Lila continually asserted, “Japanese culture is deep, but not that deep” elaborating that there is not much thought or consideration given to matters regarding race, or racial and cultural subjectivities in space.

This is not to imply that my Japanese research companions do not see, think or understand race, marginalization, poverty, violence, cultural protectivism, or the relationship between them, or that there is no racism in Japan. To the contrary Lila has shared her experiences with racial prejudice growing up there. Rather, the point being made is that these complex social issues and their connection to race, place, and culture do not inform social actions and habitus in the same way they do people who have been subject to their historical formations. My Japanese research collaborators, and observably the others around them, do not see themselves as being implicated by these historical formations and their contemporary expression. In turn, the questions of who can or cannot possess and represent Africa or who should or should not be afraid in predominantly Black Brooklyn spaces are left behind.

According to Hiro, whose friend wore the wooden African pendant, and other Japanese with whom I inquired about the significance of wearing an African pendant, it is rather simply a demonstration of adherence to the reggae style. Africa, consistently invoked in roots&culture, and Blackness, fervently celebrated in dancehall, is an iconic symbol of reggae and as such is a part of its consumable style. Africa and Blackness are not necessarily significant as experiential references or connected specifically to people of the African Diaspora. Sterling (2010) makes a similar observation of the invocation of Blackness among reggae lovers in Japan. He

argues that Blackness functions largely as a symbol, specifically a symbol of oppression, resistance, and defiance, and is not necessarily attached to human referents. To my Japanese interviewees, to celebrate Africa as style is not problematic, nor is the possibility considered that it might be. If there is consideration given, it was never explicitly or indirectly expressed.

Beyond style, aesthetics, sound, and capital, like the identities of West Indians investigated here, reggae is also significant to Japanese participant identities. For Hiro, who did not grow up wealthy in Japan, he is drawn to the message of togetherness and community in reggae. "The idea of everyone moving up together, not leaving anybody behind, and the idea of being with your friends, that's a part of reggae that really speaks to me," he said (Lila translation). Reggae provides an alternative voice to the economically successful in its celebration of working and lower class positionalities.

Toshi similarly identifies with reggae as an expression that celebrates marginalized communities while contesting their marginalization. He said having grown up in the Japanese *danchi,* low income housing communities, oriented him towards reggae because of its celebration of working class identities and storytelling the experiences of the poor. Nankin is drawn to the open expression of embodied subjectivities in dancehall performance, a principle he sees as contrasting with Japanese culture. Using women in reggae dance as an example he said: "Japanese culture on its own is somewhat of a shy culture, like you don't really put out that [sexual] side of yourself publically. You might show that [side] in a different setting but publically to do it is somewhat of a no no" (Lila translation). Dancehall, in turn,

is a mechanism for freeing modes of expressing subjectivities and inverts rules of the "appropriate" locations of those expressions. Also, simply pursuing careers in reggae and physically traveling to New York City and Jamaica are forms of figurative and literal exit from the Japanese social and economic structure at large that many Japanese in reggae find empowering. Not totally social pariahs, those who do exit renounce certain economic possibilities within their own country and openly exalt performance modes that are within Japanese society considered taboo.

Rather abruptly and without ceremony Hiro returned to Japan uprooting a life and career he had been building in New York City. He had overstayed his visa and trips to Jamaica were not enough to untangle the immigration situation he had gotten himself into. Hiro lamented over email not being allowed to travel back to the U.S. for five years but is confident his time spent will propel his career. After he left I remained in contact with Yas, Mitch, Toshi, and Mayumi while watching Hiro's excelling career in Japan from New York City through social media. Hiro, Yas, Mitch, Toshi, Mayumi and many others in New York City reggae are Japanese migrants of the transgeographic reggae places that bring the Caribbean and West Indian communities in New York City close. Temporarily settling in New York City they also contribute to the transnational dimensions to the city's geography that bring people from opposite latitudes together in exploration of the places that the city's many ethnic groups create to connect to their places of origin, many worlds meeting in one small geography.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have interpreted the formation of West Indian ethnic, racial, and national identities and demonstrated how they are in relationship to reggae and to Brooklyn transgeographies. Particularly significant to this analysis is the theorization of figurative citizenship presented that aims to account for sentiments of belonging to a Caribbean nation. I have furthermore explored some of the cleavages that exist within West Indian Brooklyn that evidence the salience of national identities despite examples of Caribbean regional ethnic unity. Also conceptualized is the disjuncture between Caribbean people situated in the West Indies and those outside as members of the diaspora, and hierarchies that form in efforts to monopolize reggae.

Integral to this latter investigation is the inclusion of Japanese nationals in Brooklyn reggae. The exploration into Japanese locations demonstrated the sociohistorical contingencies of interpretations of race and culture, incentives for temporary relocation to Brooklyn that are evidence both of the Japanese national persona, as my collaborators conceive of it, and of Brooklyn being an epicenter of reggae and Caribbean cultural production. What was further brought to light is the significances of reggae to people beyond the West Indian Diaspora so as to constitute a socially and economically connected global reggae community. In the following chapter I take an in depth look into a particular transgeographic reggae space – reggae dance places. I consider the significances of embodied experience to reggae dance, as well as the connection of dance to familial engagement and cultural continuity.

CHAPTER FOUR
LOVE DEM BAD: GENDER NARRATIVES AND CULTURAL CONTINUITY IN DANCE

Taking in the many elements of the steamy space that exhaled deep rumbling dancehall bass lines and hi hat symbols, my eyes fell on a woman dancing. She was pressed closely against a man who found himself trapped between her undulating and rocking body and the lounge wall. Her display of dexterity while dancing held my attention. She spiraled her waist up and down a vertical axis, rocking her torso forward and back simultaneously, and paused every so often to change the direction in which her hips moved from clockwise to counter clockwise. The man with whom she danced fixated his eyes on her behind while holding his hands up at his shoulders performatively gesturing his surrender and entrapment by this beautiful body that would not stop its complex movements with which he struggled to remain in perfect time and synchronization.

While the man rather humorously tried to keep up to the dancing woman's rhythmic tempo and skill, her face dramatically illustrated boredom evincing that this was her intention – eyes turned up toward the ceiling or down toward floor, lips pursed, one eye brow raised – as if to demonstrate that she was not being met by an adequate partner. She could have just as well danced by herself but chose to indulge in a little test to see if her partner could meet her at her level in this dancing challenge and pleasure of performance. Her disinterested facial expression illustrated her assumption of a dominant position in the partnership. She could exit at any moment leaving the man in defeat. She would be the champion of this deeply connotative gendered dialogue having wasted nothing of her energy to outdo him

and render him inadequate in this display of skill. This is what her disinterested face seemed to communicate as she continued to manipulate the man behind her. She was doing him a favor.

The lyrics of popular dancehall artist Vybz Kartel shattered the momentary deafness that resulted from my captivation: "Love them/Tender touch them/Different gyal everyday/Love them/Tender touch them/Mi have gyal everywhere." What a contradictory coincidence in this moment, I thought. The words of the song, in which the male singer vainly boasts of his access to and possession of multiple women, contrasted with the physical representation I was seeing before me. The woman in this dancing scenario seemed to be in control of the temporary union that was transpiring while the man was left to keep up in the wake of her moves. She seemed to have the choice of man and access while being both the guardian and gatekeeper of her desirability. In this way the dance exchange seemed also to make a performative statement about agency while also being a representation of gender, skill, the performance of dominance, and sexuality.

Similar performative displays are regularly witnessed in dancehall reggae places – a woman dances with a man, they are both engaged in skillful dance play in which the man is either being outdone or if he does dance skillfully, the woman might still demonstrate through a disinterested expression that she is still not impressed. Man and woman part and go about their separate ways. Man is lucky if he can find a woman who actually looks as thrilled to be dancing with him as he does with her. These instances reflect the art and performance of dance between women and men in which gender narratives are inscribed on movement and politics

of gendered power within it. The lyrics of the Vybz Kartel song cited above told a story of gender politics and power dynamics that contrasted with the dance performed to it. The possibility of creating and arranging narratives through movement potentiate dance as a mechanism to transgress and challenge structures of gender power that form outside of dance and for dance to serve as a demonstration of individuality, agency, and authority.

Seeming to contradict authoritative exhibitions of women's agency are instances in which men perform dominance in erotic, even to the point of being comical, dance acts. Participants possess savvy knowledge of the intricate politics of performance in reggae places and of the wavering between extreme representations of gender power that reggae dance exemplifies. The tensions between dances evidence the fragility of agency in gendered communication and the tenuousness of positions of dominance within them, a reflection in dance encounter of gender relationships outside of dance spaces. Nevertheless, dance forms a narrative space within reggae places through which women can positively assert gender agency and authoritative positions. They do so by exercising their guardianship of men's engagement with them, their right to refusal, and by making it clear through disinterested facial expressions that women do not "need" men. This all becomes part of the performance.

Predominant conceptualizations of Black women in popular dance, of which reggae is an example, are concerned with hypersexual representations. These perspectives are widespread in debates aired on popular media and accessible in scholarship. Theories on the supposed hypersexuality of Black women in dance,

which are also used to understand women in reggae, view women as responding to histories of dehumanization and sexual objectification arising from the plantation slavery complex and marginalization of women thereafter. According to these interpretations, women are positioned as agentless victims of history, inherently disempowered, living out inferiority to men.

The analysis of Black men in popular dance is nearly lost to the concern with women and their supposed oppressed subjectivities. There is much that needs to be added to discourse on women in dance and more attention due to men. Looking through the lens of history is imperative to understanding the complex manifestations and dynamics of the Black experience, and popular expression. However, other lenses must be used as well in order to interpret the nuances of how in the present, Afro-descendants have evolving interpretations of movement, experience, and self-representation, which though perhaps emerging from the past, cannot always be analyzed through the lens of it to fully take account of, and give value to, current understandings.

Based on my fieldwork, I have found that how women reggae dancers interpret their movement and agency is more complex than scholarly theorizations account for. They conceive of their dance as freeing, exemplary of how they love their bodies, as demonstrating confidence in themselves, and as illustrations of their experience feeling music. The gender power dynamics that unfold on dance floors also contradict assumptions of male superiority. Additionally, for men, reggae dance provides a productive and important space to resolve social tensions and manage

the stresses of the world outside of reggae places, a role of dance and the place of men within it that deserves analytical attention.

What follows is a reading of reggae dance in New York City that includes efforts to contribute to debates on Black women in popular dance and redress the absence of men within them. The former approach is intended to disengage the strict focus on the "hypersexuality" of women in dancehall in order to interpret the nuances of dance engagements and reggae dance places in general, nuances that tend to be obscured by myopic focuses on the sexual. In the exploration of men in dancehall that unfolds here, the goal is to demonstrate how men are active members of dance spaces rather than simple gazers, who embody a position of hierarchical patriarchy, or sexual advancers, as many readings of gendered relationships in Black dance might have it.

Why read dance? Dance provides an active site for the analysis of gendered representations and a lens to view the agentive mechanisms tied to reggae expression. I argue that interpreting embodied experience and analyzing gender inscriptions in dance is significant to understanding representations and aesthetic choices. More specifically, I offer that dancehall style dance creates a distinct site for the unfettered celebration of the body's diverse physicality, is a feeling oriented dance geared towards the attainment of sensuous experience and, in turn, the performance of it is anchored partly in self-appreciation and enjoyment. Furthermore, women make efforts to assert themselves in male dominated reggae places through overt representations of their gendered difference. Some of these sentiments and displays are realized through illustrations of sexuality, the feminine,

and even the erotic. However, these illustrations are not necessarily attached to male desire, patronage, or sexual objectification, nor do they arise necessarily from the cruel legacies of plantation slavery, and the continued marginalization and sexualization of the Black female body thereafter.

I additionally assert that reggae provides a productive space for bonding and kinesthetic release forming the bases of constructive relationships between men and dance, and men with each other in their engagement in reggae places. The exploration is divided into different parts that each interprets a facet of reggae dance movement, sociality, and experience. The analysis begins spatially in nocturnal reggae parties in which dance, embodiment, gender narratives, and constructive gendered engagement is interpreted. After, the spatial view shifts to familial and digital spaces to elucidate the ways in which dance is central to Caribbean cultural continuity and the uniting of Brooklyn and Antillean cultural geographies. The chapter ends with a look into the grassroots commodification of dance. First a basic explication of reggae dance is in order to foreground the subsequent analyses.

The Elements of Reggae Movement

Reggae dance is a form of Afro-diasporic dance. "Afro-diasporic dance" is used here to refer to a range of movements that incorporate West African dance vocabulary and are evident in the ritual, social, and performance based dances of members of the African diaspora. I avoid "Black dance" as a concept because it

specifically racializes a repertoire of movement making it exclusively the corporeal expression of people identifying as Black. Afro-diasporic dance evinces the historic cultural legacies and passing on of corporeal knowledge throughout the diaspora and continued performance of these movements by members of the diaspora who both do and do not identify as Black. Afro-diasporic dance hopes to acknowledge the inherent hybridity of its incumbent dance forms, and particularly, for purposes of analysis, its African vocabulary. But what is Afro-diasporic dance and what are the elements of African dance vocabulary that give it its character and are also found in reggae?

African scholar Kariamu Asante (2001) explores the aesthetic foundations of West African dance that form vocabulary reflected in the dances of the diaspora. His analysis complements other scholars' analyses of Afro-diasporic dance including samba (Browning 1995), hip-hop (Huntington 2007), Brazilian Candomblé (Browning 1995), forms of African-American social dance (Emery 1988), soca (Miller 1991) and reggae (Stanley-Niaah 2010a, 2010b). Of the aesthetic priorities Asante lists as being central to West African dance vocabulary, I have most closely observed the following in reggae dance: polyrhythm, polycentricism, curvilinearity, dimensionality, and interchanging between collective and individual exhibitions of artistry.

Polyrhythm in movement refers to the identification of one rhythm in a multi-rhythmic sound and a part of the body responding to that isolated rhythm (Asante 2001; Browning, 1995). One body part moving to an isolated rhythm tends to happen simultaneously with another moving to an additional isolated rhythm.

Parts of the body might move on different axis, horizontal and vertical, forward and back, yet the total body movement appears as one fluid, cohesive, complexly moving whole. The body follows the polyrhythm of the music displaying an exact visual harmony. Polycentricism refers to the movement of the body in space. Asante (2001) describes polycentricism as the prioritizing of time frames in the music, as opposed to moving from one point in space to another. Polycentricism in reggae dance allows for the body's curvilinearity to take form in multiple places.

Curvilinearity describes the foregrounding of circles and curvilinear body structures, bent backs and knees, in dance movements (ibid). It is evidenced also in the foregrounding of circular waist and torso movements. Dimensionality is achieved through the body's creation of texture through its movement: a leg or arm forming a shape, vibrating, contracting, or shaking (ibid). Lastly, in reggae promoting the collective is demonstrated through simultaneously executed group choreographic moments in which a collective will perform the same moves, or different moves that are still executed with the visual of the whole collective in mind. Complementing the work of the collective are the moments in which individuals display personal skill and movement through improvisation.

The aesthetic priorities that Asante (2001) details and are visible in reggae dance also closely match the sonic priorities of reggae music, particularly the emphasis on polyrhythm, heavily, multi-layered sound (dimensionality), repetition, collective sound with individual emphasis executed in isolated "free-style" moments, or improvisation, all of which are techniques comprising the Afro-diasporic music aesthetic (Pond 2005; Gilroy 1991a, Osumare 2008). Rhythmic

bouncing, jumping, swaying, with arms matching the movement of the legs and feet are staple to reggae dance. They are complimented by wining, rhythmic circular or forward and back motions of the pelvis and torso observable also as being a principal stationary movement in West African dance.[29] Together these ways of moving compose the blueprint for Anglophone Caribbean dance more generally, readily visible in soca and calypso as well.

The stylized movements and choreographed steps of dancehall aside, reggae dance more generally, as observed in roots&culture, rockers, one drop, etc., resonates with movement performed to the various music of the Caribbean the space. What distinguishes how bouncing, jumping, swaying, and wining are done is mainly the tempo with which they are executed, how much the torso joins in on the movement of a wining waist, and the extent to which jumps, bounces, marching feet and arm movements accent dance expression. Because of the resonances of reggae dance movements with those performed to other Caribbean music, dancehall reggae dance in particular stands out as a distinct style within the reggae aesthetic. It is also the foundation of a dance scene within the reggae subculture that is the focus of this exploration.

Dance is central to the listening of reggae music, whether they are small movements, sways, bounces, waist twirls and jumps to roots&culture, or the highly stylized and energetic moves that characterize dancehall. The closeness of reggae dance and reggae music, their interplay and even mimicry, create an interdependence that fosters many of my collaborators sentiment that reggae music

[29] Wining is alternatively spelled "whining." I choose the spelling "wining" in acknowledgement of the likely origins of the word in "winding," as in twisting the body.

could not exist without dance and vice versa. In dancehall in particular the music, as in the actual sound composition, is created to be danced to and the dances intended to follow the intricacies of the music. So connected is dancehall music to dance, many deejays have dedicated whole songs to the instruction of a specific dance's steps. Furthermore, even songs with lyrics that do not seem conducive to dancing, perhaps they are directly political, can still become popular dance hits because their beats, tempos, and rhythms are intentionally constructed to be danceable. In this way dancehall makes its political messages available to wide audiences in moments outside of introspective and retrospective thought.

With some dancehall style movements the connection to West African dance is impossible to ignore making obvious the locations of Jamaican dance and dancehall movement within West African originated expressive forms of drumming and dance like Kumina (Stolzoff 2001; Niaah 2010). Many of the transitional moves stand as examples including, but not limited to, the shuffling backwards on a horizontal axis across the floor, then pausing and reversing the direction of the body before shuffling backwards on the same axis in the opposite direction. One motion in particular is nearly identical to a principal move in the dance representing the Orisha Ogun in the New World that have origins in the ritual dance of the Bantu and Yoruba peoples of Central and West Africa (Browning 1995; Farris-Thompson 1983; Deren 1983).

As the Orisha associated with iron smelting, the dance simulates Ogun raising his hammer overhead before bringing it down hard on hot iron waiting to be formed. Clasped hands move high above one's head before executing a vertical

motion that ends below the waist. The motion is completed in rhythm with the percussive beat while the head moves up and down as in a nodding motion and the left foot forward and back. The torso follows the momentum of the arms and head. The visibility of a nearly identical movement in reggae dance is evidence of the migration of people from the countryside of Jamaica, where West African derived drumming and dance continues as art and ritual practice, to Kingston the historic urban center of dancehall's creation (Stanley-Niaah 2010; Stolzoff 2000; Hope 2006).

The most vibrant form of reggae dance is dancehall style dance – the repertoire of movement most often performed to dancehall music. Dancehall dance encompasses a broad variety of movements much of which are theatrical in their dramatic reenactments of real life events, powerful allusions to emotions, and intense execution. Dancehall might bring into stylized motion a police arrest, bodies receiving bullets from pistols vibrating upon their impact, or soldiers launching missiles into the air. One of my favorite reenactments is the "matrix," a move borrowed from the popular film from the early 2000s in which people with super human powers in virtual worlds execute impossible back bends and sway their bodies in circular motion to dodge bullets. When this is done on the dance floor, however, there are no special effects. I have seen backs of heads almost touch the ground in backwards sways that circumvent the imaginary bullets of dancing opponents.

The enactments of street violence, war, and urban realities are common in dancehall dance, demonstrating ways in which the violence of society is

carnivalized, converting its seriousness and harm into leisure kinesthetic release in reggae places, keeping out the heaviness of the outside world.[30] Enactments of violence illustrate metaphorical allegories exchanged between dancers who vie with each other for the adoration of spectators. The "Gully Creepa," is a dance that embodies the murkiness of urban gullies in movements that imitate the viscosity of slime and objects carried through their waters. It simultaneously illustrates the sneakiness of individuals maneuvering their way through ghetto spaces. In its clever and creative recreations, dancehall dance can also be quite comical as evidenced in the "Wounded Dog" in which people gesture a scolding finger reprimanding the imagined person who "licked" (hit) their dog and then mime dog paws running through space.

Allusions to emotions in dancehall are made through pained facial expressions, the clenching of fists, the increased speed or slowing down of foot, shoulder, or leg movements. Signifying movements are performed through literal corporeal gesturing and through figurative symbolic gesturing. A great example of literal signifying can be seen in the popular dance "Nuh Linga" (don't linger). In the "Nuh Linga" dancers lean to one side swaying their opposing leg inside and out, rocking their shoulders forward and back as hands control the movement of the legs as a puppeteer might. In the moment before the artist commands "nuh linga" (don't linger) dancers sway to the opposite side and back before he calls again "nuh linga."

[30] Reggae parties are commonly assumed to be violent and dangerous, however, neither in the two years of my fieldwork nor in the numerous other times I was a patron at a reggae event prior did I witness minor or major violence inside a reggae club, bar, or lounge. Nevertheless, bouncers and private security oversee parties, and, particularly in Brooklyn, the New York City Police Department is always present outside of reggae venues contributing to the imagining, supposition, and anticipation of violence.

Movements can also signify more figuratively, particularly in individual improvisation. In response to reggae artist Sizzla singing in "Solid As Rock": "They can't keep a good man down/Always keep a smile when they want me to frown/ Keep the vibes and I stood my grounds/They will never ever take my crown," I observed a dancer with one leg bent, stomp the foot of the other, then outstretch his arm and hand of the same side, bring his hand low to the ground, then slowly raise it palm facing up until his finger tips pointed high above him while he shook his head. It signified a marching forward, an intention to rise and overcome that refused to be suppressed.

Much of the dimensionality given to a particular movement – vibrating, shaking, pulsing – mirrors the rhythmic or percussive element of a song. In this way the intensity of dancehall songs themselves are mirrored in the intensity of the dance steps and body movements. The footwork of dancehall is as complex and in tune to the music as the body is in creating dimensionality. Feet tap inside and outside of invisible perimeters around dancers, forming shapes on the ground, interjected with leg swirls, and slaps of hands to thighs while torsos move in counterposing directions, the rhythms of movement constantly changing but in such perfect harmony with the music, dancers seem to redefine the space around them and aural vibrations within it. The rhythmic complexity of reggae dance is also evident in one of the most significant forms of movement within the dance vocabulary, wining.

Wining is a gender-neutral movement, however, elaborating on the basic circular pelvic and shoulder swirls that connote wining to give them texture and

heightened complexity remains more specifically the artistic terrain of women. Men rarely wine by themselves but when they do it is a less accented movement and rather subtle swiveling in response to the music. It is not a vehicle for expressing artistic creativity and displaying skill as it is for women.[31] The highly stylized wining of women refers to the complex turning of waists, torsos, shoulders, bent knees, and feet in circular motions. There is truly an art of wining that extends from the careful and skilled movement of these body parts all at once and sometimes in opposing directions, regularly changing tempo, direction, and rhythmic and percussive accentuations. Choices a dancer makes in how to best accent a moment in the music with the body – a flick of the head causing the hair to cascade, an energetic bounce, change in tempo from slow to fast or vice versa, a quick arm movement – all infuse creative moments into the improvised choreography. The movement of different portions of the body in different directions, tempos and rhythms creates visual play.

The elaborate improvised or choreographed moves that women dancers execute in nightclubs have wining at their structural core and build on it. New dances that arise and become widely popular also use wining as a central reference. Additionally within the repertoire of dancehall movements women perform are acrobatics. Posing on top of one's head with legs spread wide like scissors, hanging upside down from architectural fixtures, rolling backwards on the ground, or bending the body into unimaginable contortions are all within the realm of dancehall acrobatics women perform in time to music and can be seen doing on a

[31] This mild mannered male wining in NYC differs dramatically from the male wining I have seen prior in Jamaica and even Costa Rica. I surmise that the repression of the male hips moving in circular fashion has a bit to do with the views of such movements as feminized within African-American dance, unless moving forward and back.

particularly vibrant night out at a party promoted to draw dancers; though, such movements are most often reserved for the dancehall queen competitions explored later.

More regularly in nightclubs, women's style of solo dancing is structured around wining. Mutual wining and performed eroticism characterize partnered dancing in which women lead men. I refer to partnered dancing as the performance of eroticism because it reads as a form of play and challenge, one that intends to allude to the erotic rather than actually lead to erotic engagement. Even when men perform their eroticism with bravado and gusto through back bending pelvic swirls and pulses, their gestures illustrate an intentionally overstated arrogance that emphasizes the dramaturgy of dancehall dance.

Women's dancing in particular has received much attention and been at the center of discussion among scholars and non-scholars alike. Deemed hypersexual sometimes to point of taboo, theorizers and critics aim to interpret the style of dance that often places the vagina front and center of performance through its figurative display in head stands and splits, and more generally the role and location of women in reggae places. Much of this criticism is voiced in everyday conversation, read in scholarly texts (Lake 1998; Stolzoff 2010; Bakare-Yusuf 2006b), or op-ed sections of periodicals. Literature and popular discourse that hopes to theorize female reggae dancers' corporeal movements and position within dance spaces see them as responding to a history of dehumanization as a result of colonialism and slavery, and the sexual objectification these histories inspired. Women are seen as being in search of the male gaze, in extreme cases as Olsen and

Gould assert in Jamaica, for economic patronage (Olsen and Gould 2008; Hope 2006).

Many of these interpretations are well intentioned, hoping to undo stereotypes that delegitimize Black female bodies and pay heed to present day legacies of the violence of colonialism and slavery. Furthermore, they are analytically significant conceptualizing the very real impacts on Caribbean life and gender representations. What these narratives also serve to do, however, is police women's bodies, implicitly reproducing histories of shaming, delegitimizing, and silencing. They also ignore women's cognizance in a way that continues their patronizing and infantilizing. Furthermore, embedding analysis strictly in history creates a linear analysis that ignores how the contemporary moment might yield new ways of interpreting the execution of heavily critiqued movements and styles of dance both individual and partnered. Lastly, the overreliance on these same thematic interpretations obscure other ways of analyzing and understanding women in reggae dance, their style of dance, and do not give voice to their own interpretations and inspirations. Historical lenses should not be abandoned, rather, can be complemented by lenses that take into account the present moment and evolving meanings. Furthermore, interpreting embodied experience can give historical views analytical nuance conceptualizing what unfolds in moments of dance action.

What transpired in dance spaces while conducting research challenged views of women in popular dance that relegate them to a place of indiscriminate and indeterminate passivity in which they act out their own marginalization, fulfilling a

historic prophecy. On the converse, the women who I observed and interviewed performing reggae style dance acted as focused agents of their corporeal expression and self-representation, and had alternate interpretations for them, that are theoretically valuable. They demonstrated themselves to be authors of their own gendered scripts, directors of their being and its representation through dance, though this did not necessarily preclude the performance of eroticism. Furthermore, my research revealed that women dance for themselves more than they are presumed to, assume inward looking views rather than strictly external and male oriented ones, and move in tune with their personal motivations.

The motivations behind women's dance are multifaceted. They are grounded in the liberating potential of the body in movement and how it serves as a medium to express gender identity and sexual agency, performing them in reggae dance spaces in ways they cannot outside of them. Celebrating sexuality and agency is more commonly described as a form of self-appreciation and claiming ownership of one's body as opposed to being outwardly focused on men. Miller (1991) refers to a similar phenomenon as auto-sexuality in his reading of carnival dance in Trinidad. Agentive illustrations of gender and sexuality through dance also create a space in which women actually celebrate their physical body's appearances in all of its variations and deviations from images put forth in popular media. All of these elements collide with music to create sensuous experiences that push dancers into the realm of ecstatic experience.

The movement of hips, butts, waists and pulsing movements of chests draws attention to parts of women's bodies associated with the feminine. Dancehall is a

profoundly masculine art form, men dominating all areas of musical output. Through displays in dance of their gendered difference, firmly rooted in the feminine, women assert and insert themselves within male dominated reggae places. They do this by putting on display their gendered difference specifically and intentionally in contradistinction to men. In this way there lies a potential within the heavily gendered spaces of reggae, in which both sexes perform their gender subjectivities, for the "hypersexual" dance of women to instill them with a sense of empowerment. It becomes clear how the incentives for erotic dance movements, the focus of widespread critique, might originate within women and pertain to their own enjoyment as opposed to male pleasure and enjoyment.

I feel it important here to include an aside about the phenomenon referred to as "daggering." Daggering disrupts the women centric and embodied experience frameworks to interpret women in reggae dance outlined here. Daggering, in brief, is a style of dancehall performance in which men at rapid speed repetitively thrust their pelvises into a woman's behind as she is standing bent over or as he hoists her around his waist wrapping her legs around him, her eyes facing the ceiling or floor. The more a woman can appear to be moving involuntarily in response to the male dancer's gesturing, appearing to have no physical substance as a rag doll might, the more in keeping with the aesthetic of the dance she is. Daggering is also replete with circular swinging of women by their legs, as an adult might a child by its arms, and men climbing structures (chairs, large speakers, tables) and launching themselves into the air before performatively landing on a woman's upturned behind as she is bent over or her upturned pelvis and spread legs as she lies on the floor. The

arrangement of these positions is rather fragmented and awkward. The more outrageous the display can be, the more successful the performers are in fomenting crowd excitement.

This incredibly male centric performance falls short of being dancehall dance as it makes little reference to the time or rhythm of music as is central in dancehall otherwise; hence why it is most often referred to as a phenomenon rather than a dance. It is an extreme exhibition of just how far gender scripts and gender encoding on bodies goes in dancehall performance. Daggering is also ultimately playful, though undeniably offensive to the outside and sometimes inside viewer, in its depictions of gender exchange. I exclude daggering from my exploration here because it has proved itself to be nothing more than a short-lived fad in dancehall reggae, rather than a longstanding characteristic of the culture's dance at large. At the time of my research, daggering was so advanced in its stages of decline that I only witnessed occasional references to it in much less dramatic forms in what seemed comedic displays of a "throw back" moment. Though it may be useful as an independent phenomenon in the analysis of gender within dancehall reggae, daggering is irrelevant to the larger and more enduring trajectories of reggae dance.

Foregrounding the Body in Dance

Reggae, dancehall in particular, celebrates full figured women in addition to thin putting forth a diversity of images than what is seen in popular U.S. media in which waif thin White women or Black and Latina video vixens, with narrow waists

that mathematically defy proportions to their busts and hips, dominate visual fields. The recognition and appreciation of a diversity of figures in reggae creates places on dance floors for alternative notions of beauty to be asserted. In this place processes of negotiating racialized constructions of gender and physicality take shape in which women claim ownership of and pride in their bodies.

A dance scene that unfolded in a weekly Thursday night reggae party devoted specifically to dancers illustrates well the possibility for self-appreciation in dancehall narratives that are embedded in the expression of the feminine and sexuality, and the liberatory dimensions therein. Dancers were in their respective crews occupying corners of the dance floor. The videographer moved throughout the crowd, the bright spot light of his recorder illuminating different groups performing their most energetic masterpieces. All crews vied for the attention of the camera, some individual members hopping in front of the camera's lens to draw attention to his crew with assertiveness and self-assuredness.

Onto a dark area of the dance floor stepped a woman. In keeping with the fabulous and calculated names dancehall dancers give themselves, I will call her Divine. With sneakers on Divine was still much taller and significantly wider than other women in the place. Her flesh spilled out of all places that were uncovered by her tight jeans and cropped, tight tee shirt. Her jeans could not accommodate her rear end leaving a gap between the waistline of her pants and her lower back, which was exposed because her too tight tee was sliding up her back. Divine's hair was tightly pulled into a perfectly brushed and kempt high ponytail with curls that

perfectly followed the contours of a curling iron cascading down. She looked in her late twenties.

When Divine made her grand entrance into a vacant space on the dance floor, the crowd instantaneously further parted to give her center stage. The camera and its shining lights immediately found her. She froze in the spotlight to stir anticipation in spectators then abruptly bent her knees and began the fastest wine she could. Her flesh bounced and wavered in delayed time to the movement of her waist. The DJ, catching sight of her as all others on the dance floor had, began to shout and cheer. As she continued to wine in circles she alternated leaning from one side to the other and sticking out the counter posing foot to the side. The crowd around her cheered and excitedly waved their arms up and down as she held the spotlight with her visual magnificence and dexterity at maneuvering all of her parts.

Water Boots, a locally well-known dancer, jumped behind Divine and performatively trying to keep up with her fast wine. He quickly stumbled away feigning exhaustion and having been defeated. The DJ responded with jeers, heckling Water Boots for not being able to contend with Divine. In her *coupe de grace*, Divine lowered her knees until they were almost touching the floor proving her agility despite her size, then popped up to a standing position and nonchalantly walked out of her spotlight, with her body language and facial expression giving off an air of arrogance, to demonstrate her self-absorption and self-gratitude.

This is the spirit felt within dancehall spaces and the liberatory possibilities it makes available. Divine was not heckled. She was not made into, nor did she make herself into, an object of mockery or comedy. She was outright praised and took

advantage of the safe space therein to illustrate her self-appreciation and confidence through dancehall moves that drew attention to all the places her large body spilled and vibrated, turning the tabooed body of the outside world into the object of marvel and indulgence in the dancehall world. It is significant that reggae forms a cultural space in which bodies that contradict prevailing ideas of beauty are not shamed or ridiculed but rather have a place for full expression.

Anthropologist Oneka LaBennett (2011) explains that despite their selective consumption and internalization of representations in popular culture, the Brooklyn West Indian girls with whom she worked were still vulnerable to images of women of color in television shows like *America's Next Top Model*. The models who are paraded in front of viewers eyes as idealized Black beauties are tall, impossibly thin, and predominantly fair skinned. Within reggae places these constructions of beauty and corporeality are expanded. Within reggae, the body in all of its epic or diminutive proportions is celebrated imbuing movement with an expressive and liberatory potential that is self-referential.

The centrality of the self, the body, and appreciation to movement in reggae places undergirds the experience of feeling. Feeling take a few forms: feeling the music – a physiological experience that both invokes and is dependent upon movement – and feeling one's self – a popular expression referring to taking pride in one's self and demonstrating it through self-referential actions, indicating self-praise or being consumed with oneself. Women express both of these experiences and principles of feeling through movement that embodies the sensuousness that is feeling.

Feeling It

The professional and social dancers with whom I conversed invariably spoke at some point of "feeling the music," moments in which their bodies became lost to and within music, and music lost within them. Music, as it was described, seemed to inhabit the cavernous spaces of their bodies until they embodied its sound. The embodiment of sound for many leads to sentiments of joy, freedom, and ecstatic experience. The kinesthetic release of dance and centrality of feeling the music imbue dance with sensations that allow for sensuous experiences that are illustrated through the reggae style of movement. The illustration of feeling the music through the dancehall repertoire of movement presents an alternative analysis of women in dancehall to interpretations that focus strictly on the hypersexual body intending to draw the male gaze. Wining hips, percussive chest or butt bounces, swaying torsos and even splits on the dance floor coupled with pelvic pumps exemplify the sensuous experience of embodying sound.

An excerpt from Michael Thelwell's novel *The Harder They Come*, a literary adaptation and expansion on the film of the same title, illustrates well the embodiment of sound. The excerpt describes Rhygin, the main protagonist, in a bar where music plays from a juke-box:

> He couldn't keep from dancing as the music broke hot and funky around him, and every throb resonated along his spine…The music surged into his limbs as it had done in the *Kumina*. He seemed to be hearing it with his entire being, in a way he had never heard music before (Thelwell 1980: 152).

Rhygin surrenders to music as its sound begins to inhabit his body. His embodiment of sound becomes a way of hearing and his dance an expression of the sound within. Music's complete inhabiting of his body induces a state of self-absorption. Rhygin is not concerned with those around him, rather with what he is experiencing corporeally almost involuntarily, but very happily. The sensation of feeling the music is physical and physiological.

My research collaborators often described feeling music in physiological terms that hoped to explain the ecstatic sensuous experiences they had while dancing. Their movements bypassed moments of reflexive thought becoming instinctual and self-consuming. Blacka Di Danca, a professional reggae dancer and instructor, spoke of feeling music first in his heart. He also added that when performing on stage it is important for dancers to not feel the music too completely or their movements can look uncontrolled evidencing how all consumptive, and non-reflective, the experience of feeling the music can be. Fyah not a professional dancer rather a social one, explained feeling dance in his soul. Observing Carlos, a deaf resident of a small Caribbean coastal beach town in Costa Rica, dance at a reggae night party exemplified well the somatic experiencing of sound. Carlos stood close to a large speaker where sound frequencies were the strongest and could penetrate the body with their vibrations. There he danced all night with as much passion as others and in equal time. He was quite literally feeling the music, which replaced the need to hear it.

Internationally touring reggae dancer and instructor Tamara, of the duo Tavia and Tamara, further illustrated to me the embodiment of sound and the

somatic experience it induces – together forming sensuous experience. She said: "When you're listening to music you like, take it in and you just kinda let your body go." She spoke of the body consuming music to inspire action. Her description is simultaneously physical and physiological. Notions of embodying sound challenge conventional wisdoms about somatic experiences and their exteriority by demonstrating what it means to feel from within.

The meeting of the ways in which music can be felt create the possibility for ecstatic experience. Ecstatic experiences invoke sentiments of extreme joy, transcendence, and escape of seemingly divine inspiration, or felt as such (Miller 1991; Browning 1995; Banes 1999). Tsidiquah, an extremely adept social reggae dancer explained to me: "Feeling the music, it's like a burst of energy and joy, and like…it's ecstasy! Pure, pure, bliss and your heart races but its not nerves it's excitement…it's pure freedom. You surprise yourself with what you do…the music is your guide." According to many of the women dancers I spoke with, getting lost in and consumed by music and the subsequent ecstatic experiences these phenomena induce also make them loose awareness of who is around them or watching them contradicting notions that women dance for the male gaze.

Speaking on moments when she is consumed by music, dancer Likkle Bit, explained: "I don't think you see anything else around. I think it's just you and the beat. Sometimes I don't even hear the words it's just me and the beat." Tsidiquah seconded Likkle Bit's sentiment about the all consumptiveness of music and loss of self in space to sound and the body's movement. Though not a professional reggae dancer, Tsidiquah's exquisite wining and expertise at reggae dancing could put most

to shame. She said: “I dance for myself. For me it’s inside, it’s for me, and what makes me feel good. I can’t even remember what I’m doing. I just know it feels good.” She, like the other dancers quoted here, described music as stirring within her, which when combined with the movement of her body, feels good. It is a self-encompassed and encompassing sensuous experience. The dancing that emerges from that sensuous experience is for herself without attention to anyone else.

Tsidiquah, Likkle Bit, and Tamara, mirror the sentiments of many other female dancers with whom I spoke and directly counter the notion that women, even in their execution of provocative movements in reggae dance, do so for the male gaze, sexually objectify themselves, and reproduce their own historic dehumanization. According to their statements, they are on the contrary dancing for the enjoyment of their own sensuous experience that is not necessarily tied to the sexual. None of them mentioned sex, desire, or men, only themselves and their individual experiences of feeling the music, which they narrated through the vocabulary of dancehall movement, a vocabulary that is read as sexual to outsiders of the corporeal language more so than to insiders.

Tsidiquah recounted to me the impromptu dance competitions of her childhood that were initiated at outdoor parties and were judged by adult family members. She said: “Wining from a little girl, that was okay. It wasn’t fresh or bad. It wasn’t off limits it was something we did just for freedom and no boys were allowed. It was just us.” Her memory speaks of the possibility of detaching moving hips, butts, and waists from allusions to sex. Moving hips and behinds cannot and

should not always be read as invoking of sexuality but also, quite simply, as an aesthetic.

I have argued here that assumptions of sexual objectification and male centered interests of women in reggae dance should be problematized and that how feeling the music is expressed through the dancehall style of movement should also be considered as an inspiration for women's self-representation. The sensuous experiences dancers indulge in and possibilities for the ecstatic they conjure, I assert, provide alternative motivations for movements deemed hypersexual than are commonly conceptualized. I will add here that embedded within these principles of reggae dance are the enjoyment and self-possession that make feeling "oneself" possible.

To say a person is "feeling herself," "himself," or "I'm feeling myself" refers to the observance of a person (or one's self) in a moment of self-indulgence, assuredness, and centeredness that in dance might be witnessed through enthusiastically executed solo moves or even touching one's own body. The "feeling" in the latter example, though, refers not to the literal touching of the body but rather the feeling of pride, confidence, and self-indulgence the touching implies. The concept of feeling oneself makes room for the corporeal narration of sexuality but a narration that is not necessarily intended for male or spectator consumption. Rather, feeling oneself through corporeal narrations of sexuality is a practice of self-adoration that derives from the process of self-authoring (Lindsey 2012) through movement. Self-authoring, feeling oneself, and narration of sexuality takes form through motions that allude to the auto-erotic.

Authoring Sexuality and Illustrating Self-Adoration

Self-adoration's embeddedness in the illustration of sexuality is evidenced in the words of Tavia and Tamara to the dancers in their reggae dance class. Tavia and Tamara are two professional dancers who after spending years touring with Grammy Award winning Jamaican dancehall artist Sean Paul, turned themselves into a full fledged brand, created a group of dancers called the Bruk Wine Girls, established a dance apparel line, and began a reggae dance instruction enterprise. There began their careers as international reggae dance instructors and entrepreneurs. I decided to take a few of their classes to see how reggae dance is taught and learned in a studio setting, hoping to also engage these difficult to access women in some discussion. The class was titled "Reggae Heels," a play on the popular sentiment that "reggae heals," but also quite literally a reference to the goal of showing women how to perform reggae dance with high heeled shoes on, a staple in many women's nightlife attire. A coworker from Mo'Bay Café who had previously taken the class suggested to me that I wear the littlest shorts I could find at home because the other women in attendance would be dressed in dare to bear dance attire.

When I arrived to the class, which was held at a very prestigious dance studio in midtown Manhattan, I was immediately taken by how physically and racially diverse the group of dancers in attendance were in comparison to previous dance classes I had taken in other genres. The majority were women of color of observably

very different backgrounds. There were Asian women, Latinas, Black women of different national backgrounds, a few White women, most of which after hearing them speak I realized were European, and other women of color of origins I could not pinpoint. On one occasion there was also a man present who, true to form, was wearing his best pair of stiletto heels.

The majority of the women present were also full figured. Being on the slim side I felt quite out of place, an unusual feeling for me in a dance class, and silently wished that the food I ate grew me a body like theirs. This was evidently an alternative dance class space because it was a reggae dance place. The curtains of the studio were always drawn to block out the light of day, further converting the other wise bare and drab dance space into a reggae place with a distinct atmosphere. Floor lamps with red light bulbs were used to illuminate the studio, simulating the lighting of a nightclub. After a thorough warm up and stretch, Tavia and Tamara interchangeably taught us the movements of a short dance sequence performed to a popular dancehall song. The routines were an intense workout. I had never sweat more in a dance class prior.

The words of encouragement and language Tavia and Tamara used to animate the class and pull shyer members out of their shells were evidence of their goal to instill a sense of body image confidence in us all, which we would then illustrate through our performance of the dance routine. The description that follows is a microcosm of what occurs within the dance club and an illustration of some of the priorities of dancehall movement and women in dancehall dance. The choreography of one routine was composed of movements that brought female

gender identity to center stage by emphasizing body parts associated with the feminine, and motioning them in ways that suggested the auto-erotic. We moved our torsos and shoulders to form rippling waves that began at our heads and ended at our toes and accented footwork that carried us across the floor with wines of our waist. “No matter what never stop wining!” was the mantra they chanted. We then paused and stylistically threw our hands over our heads so our chests jutted out and slapped our thighs before beginning the concluding move: a staccato wine low to the ground. We staccato wined to the tempo of the music while pulsing our behinds from the center and back to the beat of the singer’s words formed. The routine ended when our behinds nearly touching the floor between our bent and splayed legs. This was not like any other dance class I had taken before.

At one point in our practice we must have as a collective looked stiff in our execution of the movements. Tavia paused the music and instructed us to not be afraid to touch ourselves explaining that we were touching our own bodies and so it was okay to touch and “get free.” She likened successful execution of the movements to embracing our bodies and more confidently illustrating auto-eroticism. To Tavia, comfort in our bodies and its narratives were fundamental to our feeling free, and looking free, in the routine. Tavia must have liked the change her instruction invoked in us because we got less shouts to “feel the movement” – read, tap into the sensuous experience – and more “yes ladies yes!” Our ability to feel the music and movement was inextricably linked to our ability to feel ourselves, literally and figuratively, bringing us back again to the importance of sensuous experience. That the dance be performed exuding an air of sexiness was a reference more to auto-

appreciation as illustrated through allusions of auto-eroticism than to efforts to develop our attractiveness to men or sexually objectify ourselves.

"Ass to the glass ladies!" Tavia and Tamara shouted at us interchangeably throughout the class. "*Ass to the glass*!" It was instruction to not be afraid to exude our gender identities through the narration of our sexuality, which was being constructed and articulated in overtly feminine terms: through the emphasis and movement of the curves of the body and indulgence in sensuous experience. Even for the man in heels. Tavia and Tamara's shouting of "ass to the glass" was a call not only for us to make our bodies curvilinear and bring into focus one of its most distinct parts but also a play on the expression "balls to the wall." "Balls to the wall" is used to describe reaching one's full enthusiasm or extent of excitement by invoking male virility originating in the testicles. Tavia and Tamara's rearranging of the phrase in feminine terms exemplified their desire to assert the omnipresence and omnipotence of the feminine in the space and its connection to our movement, again, even for our male companion in heels.

Their intention was also to instill a sense of confidence in us through embracing our bodies and exhibitions of its movement. Asked about what they want participants to get out of the class, Tamara responded: "We want you to come here and feel confident, feel comfortable in your body, get to know your body and feel okay with it." Tavia added: "Everybody comes in different shapes and sizes and we want everybody to embrace their body…We want everyone to be empowered." They aim to achieve these goals through movement that explores the contours of the body by moving each individual part of it in space according to the aesthetic priorities of

reggae dance. The principles of feeling movement, music, and self-adoration are embedded within the authoring of sexual selves through movement.

The expression of sexuality forms a liberatory space that is not necessarily referential to sex or partnership. Other scholars have focused on the liberating potential of expressing sexuality. Women studies scholar Carol Batker (2012) asserts that for women the expression of sexual desire as sung in the blues was freeing for both singers and listeners who identified with it. Jamaican scholar of literary and cultural studies Carolyn Cooper offers that women of the African Diaspora have a myriad other mediums to construct their sexual identities than "airy-fairy" Judeo-Christian representations of sexuality (Cooper 2004: 99). She cites the Orisha Oshun as a signifier of alternate ways to represent femininity and sexuality available to women of the diaspora, ways that are grounded in overt corporeal narration of gender and sexuality. Cooper sees the availability of forms of identification outside of Judeo-Christian imagery and ideology as being freeing from rigidity. Performance studies theorist Beth-Sarah Wright explains "pum pum patting" in dancehall dance – a woman repetitively and rhythmically patting her genitalia as she dances – as an example of "choreographed pleasure" and furthers argues that "in this sense is not to be conflated with sexual orgasm but rather, a seditious principle, self generated and associated with emancipation, empowerment, and the cunning of resistance" (Wright 2004: 49).

Similarly, Mimi Sheller observes that "bodies, sexuality, and sexual orientations remain the most contested yet crucial terrains for the elaboration of freedom" (Sheller 2012: 9). In turn, she offers that "the historian of freedom who

seeks traces of subaltern agency must look beneath conventional definitions of political agency and of citizenship and seek out the unexcavated field of embodied (material and spiritual) practices through which people exercise and envision freedom" (Sheller 2012: 6). Her words underscore the importance of employing alternative frameworks to interpreting subaltern agency and how people envision liberation particularly as related to the embodied practice and corporeal illustrations of sexuality.

Looking at the dances of two popular R&B videos, and "unabashed sex-positivism" therein, historian Treva Lindsey elaborates on these analyses of sexual expression and liberation arguing that in dance "black women carve out spaces for self-actualizing and authoring fully sexual selves" particularly within a context in which historical legacies of the effacement of the Black female body have made self-authoring and embracing erotic selves difficult, if not taboo (Lindsey 2012: 2). She furthermore sees what she refers to as sex-positivism as not necessarily being about embracing sex itself, but rather being the decision makers of sexual-identifications and engagement. The actual assertion of sexual subjectivities is itself a freeing rejection of stereotypes or the fetters they impose on corporeal expression, a stark refuting of the regulation of one's own body.

In his analysis of Japanese women's performance of dancehall dance, anthropologist Marvin Sterling (2010) similarly sees dancers as enacting independence through dance and even sexual dissent, though the dances may be alluding to the erotic. Japanese women in reggae dance, he argues, are not necessarily intending to attract men, but rather, demonstrate their *lack* of

accessibility making their provocative dance liberatory and transgressive, additionally contradicting patriarchy as opposed to affirming it. The vignette I detailed at the start comes to mind in this regard. All of these scholars underscore the liberatory dimensions of the expression of sexuality. In my reading of reggae dance, gender, and sexuality I offer that reggae dance creates unique cites for the celebration of the body's diverse physicality, is a feeling oriented dance geared towards the attainment of sensuous experience and the performance of dancehall dance is rooted, thus, in self-appreciation and enjoyment. It provides a space where women are illustrators of their gendered representations and sexuality in a liberating way. They in turn create spaces where the embodiment and enactment of gender through movement foments a sense of power and agency that is an individual process and experience.

The focusing of women on themselves in their narration of their sexuality is evidenced by the consistent choice women make to dance by themselves as they will when men are present also when men are not. In one Bronx club in which the walls and supportive pillars of the venue are covered in mirrors, I observed women facing the mirrors and dancing alone while watching their reflections during the slower period of the night when the club was still empty. At first I thought the self-centered focus of women in the space was anti-social and vain. Women were interspersed throughout the space ignoring all others around them focusing on their own images. No one was really interacting with each other. However, after some time at the club and witnessing similar self-focused solo dancing thereafter, I noticed the value of these self-indulgent moments. I understand them now to be expressions of sexual

independence. Rather than inviting men, these displays present a challenge to them evincing a rejection of sex as a form of exchange (Miller 1991) rather than affirming it.

Another contradiction to theories of women's focus on men in dance spaces is their support even encouragement of each other, which is inconsistent the competitiveness that dancing for the male gaze assumes. When women are not being self-involved or dancing with men, they are spectators of other women dancing. Between friends women encourage each other with enthusiastic shouts, smiles, and hand claps to wine beyond a vertical or horizontal point some might not think possible. Encouragement is at times given to women who are not friends. I once observed a group of women at a party who were evidently friends adamantly dancing, eventually capturing the attention of the party's videographer. As the camera moved from one woman in the group to the next there were cheers, smiles, and shouts of "Oooooh's!" in support of each girl as she took her turn showing her best in the spotlight.

As their energy waned, a woman who was not a part of the group entered the circle. The camera quickly reset its focus on the new girl who manipulated her body in response to the different percussive and rhythmic elements of the song playing, bringing excitement over the dance scene that unfolded to its greatest climax. Throughout her performance the group of girl friends became increasingly animated and cheerful with every additional perfectly executed movement the new girl completed. She seemed to feed off of the encouragement of the female collective that formed the circle.

This level of group support is observable mostly in social dance spaces. dancehall queen competitions, contrastingly, are very competitive. Contestants dance for the support of the audience, judges, and with hopes to win the dancehall queen title, cash prize, and the international notoriety that their YouTube videos and name garner thereafter. As a more formal and measurable stage performance, dancehall queen competitive dance is also less about sensuous, ecstatic experiences and more about the execution of previously planned moves. Because of the formal performance orientation and competitiveness of dancehall queen competitions, it can less so be argued that the movements of dancers are derived from the spontaneous embodiment of sound, or sensuous, embodied experience. Yet the movements of dancehall queens are some of the most provocative in dancehall dance and worthy of analysis in conjunction with the arguments that have hereto been made. Contestants take the hip, waist, and buttocks centered movements of reggae dance to an extensive, heightened degree. Crawling or writhing on the floor before executing a back roll and split in which dancers rhythmically pump their pelvises on the ground are common transitions between the more acrobatic moves that characterize contestants' dances. Many dancehall queen movements are clearly intended to be suggestive of sex in a very exaggerated way. How, then, can these forms of movement and body play be interpreted within the framework of the larger discussion here as something other than hypersexuality?

Dancehall Queens

There is a repertoire of movements that more generally make up the dancehall queen aesthetic. Many of these movements are reflective of the extremism and corporeal play that characterizes the competition and upon which a contestant's success is predicated. Pushing the boundaries of visual suggestions of private bedroom behavior and enacting it in a public space in front of an audience, is a part of the spectacle that positions a dancer as ultimate entertainer and crowd captivator. These dances generally do not actually read as being seductive and according to judges, are not examined on these grounds, but rather as skilled engaging of mimed exaggerations. The object is for dancers to blow minds with the extremity of their dramatizations and the speed with which their pelvises can be rotated or vibrated forward and back. The ability to play with the time of the music (moving in double time or even triple time), experiment with polyrhythm, accent choreography with acrobatic poses, and creatively transition between moves are also a part of a dancer's lasting impression.

The outfits dancehall queen contestants wear are as over the top as their movements and also, because of their minimal coverage, highlight the corporeal shapes dancer's bodies take. Each woman's outfit generally has a theme – flag colors, animated characters with pink wigs and pastels. There is much dramaturgy at dancehall queen competitions. In one round of a Brooklyn competition I attended, a woman fainted on stage before her supporters rushed to her side to fan her, and escort her off. Shortly after she dramatically reappeared and dove right back into dancing as if she had never missed a beat. On stage dancers execute their movements with high energy and aggressive attacks, perhaps causing this woman to

faint. In a speed round during which each dancer was allotted less than a minute to show up their competitors, one woman danced so wildly that her bright red wig almost flew completely off her head. She aggressively and carelessly pulled it back on her head without the least concern for its placement, leaving it twisted on the center of her forehead while she continued to move her body as fast as possible. In some instances in dancehall queen competitions, dancing in time to the music is not considered a priority, totally contradicting the importance of feeling the music emphasized in social dance. The focus is the embodiment of the energy of competitiveness, play and impressing the crowd with mastery of acrobatic moves.

Neither writhing on the floor, vibrating, rotating or graphic and exaggerated parodying of sex necessarily wins a woman the competition. The inclusion of creative footwork to transition between moves, and the skillful and precise execution of cleverly conceived acrobatic movements more often do. Acrobatic movements include, but are not limited to: head stands with flexed legs turning or forming shapes in space; bending forward and placing torso, head, arms and shoulders through standing legs; back bending from standing positions and flipping legs to end back in a standing position; doing full side splits then rolling like a pipe across the stage; in addition to others. While the principles of dancehall queen dance particularly as related to the body, the self, and sensuous experience, are quite different from social reggae dance, to reduce the movements to crass hypersexuality misses the beyond imagination theatricality and shock value at the heart of the competition. Pushing the boundaries of "appropriate" decorum is a long held part of dancehall performative culture. It has origins in the antagonism between the upper

and lower classes in Jamaica and emergence of dancehall as a counter-hegemonic expressive cultural form of the lower class masses (Hope 2006; Stanley-Niaah 2010a; Bakare-Yusuf 2006a). These boundaries are evidently pushed in dancehall queen competitions.

Outside of reggae dance spaces, at work, school, home, people are made responsible for the "proper" or appropriate expression of their subjectivities resulting in a sense of self-containment and one dimensionality. Within dancehall places the barriers of containment are broken down, bodies moving as they please, the rhythmic contours of the music inhabiting its internal spaces and moving the exterior ones. Women who occupy reggae dance spaces are multi-dimensional and dynamic. Most are gainfully employed, many are college educated, some are civil servants, others health workers, some service industry workers. Most of those with whom I came into contact with are independent and economically self-sufficient fitting within broader societal notions of respectability. All of them deserve for their intentions in dance to be read without simply reducing them to hypersexuality, which presents a flat and homogenous view of these women and their incentives in dance. Interpretations must be expanded to consider how women in dancehall challenge the attachment of liberatory corporeal expression to constructions of respectability and appropriate illustrations of female subjectivities upheld outside of reggae dance, in turn rejecting outside social scripts and attachments. Furthermore, they demonstrate that the embodiment and enactment of gender is not the exclusive terrain of men.

I have thus far presented an argument that dancehall dance cannot simply be analyzed within frameworks that interpret hypersexual representation, the impacts of patriarchy, and the historic effacement of Black bodies alone. Analytical lenses must also consider embodied experiences in dance and narrations of sexual agency. Another concept that undergirds the emphasis on narrations of sexuality in reggae dance is women writing themselves into male dominated reggae places. By putting their female gender identity on display through gendered dancehall style movements, women inscribe themselves in reggae places.

Gender Inscription and Dance

Reggae dance is divided between common forms of movement men perform and common forms of movement women perform. Though it is rare to observe women dance in the ways that men do, it is not entirely impossible though the converse is not true. The few women that can be seen dancing along with predominantly male dance crews embody all the aggressive energy of a movement's sharp attack characteristic of men's dancing contrastingly to women's more languid movements. She is usually the only woman in the crew, but one who seems to occupy an equal position within the collective. More commonly, if a woman commands the center of a dance floor or displaces a man within it, she does so by moving in ways that explicitly illustrate her gender difference through her performance of femininity, illustrated in ways that point to her corporeal difference and skillful execution of the women's aesthetic in dancehall dance.

The asserting and centralizing of the feminine in reggae places to displace men might present another explanation to pum-pum patting. Where men dominate most fields of reggae practice, dance is one area with significant female participation. Leg splits, wining dramaturgically, and pum-pum patting, are all ways in which women draw attention to the symbols of femininity. Women call attention to signifiers of the feminine to make a place for themselves within dancehall spaces. In doing so they enter center stage of male dominated play through dichotomous gender signifying, empowering themselves to contend for space. How are these dichotomous gender constructions displayed in dance spaces? If the male's dance is mimicking violence, aggression, power, trickery, and artful play a woman's is exhibiting sensuality, softness, as exemplified in slow seductive movements, and artful play in ways that are restricted to women, precisely to emphasize this difference, as in the example of dancing on one's head. When a woman dances on her head, the praise she gains from the crowd, I argue, is garnered because she is doing something that no male can, according to what is deemed appropriate movements for men within dance spaces, and because it is an impressive display of athleticism that has no equivalent when it comes to the dances that men do.

In *Choreographing Difference: the Body and Identity in Contemporary Dance,* Cooper-Albright asserts that feminists have historically made "spectacles" out of themselves through physical displays of rebellion as a means to reclaim their bodies. Cooper-Albright's words might shed light on how the intention of a dancer performing movements seen as hypersexual might be transgressive and egalitarian rather than complying with sexual objectification. Why are corporeal, symbolic, and

discursive illustrations of male power located in exhibitions of male sexual virility considered celebrations of masculinity and power but when they are located in female sexuality and eroticism, they are considered oppressive and victimizing? This question can potentially open up discourse to interpret how women might be intentionally corporeally narrating their sexuality for their own purposes pertaining to their sense of gendered power rather than because they are passive subjects of historical violence or complicit with patriarchy.

Complicating social and sexual egalitarianism are the ways authorial gestures might unconsciously reproduce existing gender inequalities in their evidencing a lack of diversity in the gestures available to women as in comparison to men. The ways of expressing agency and illustrating self-appreciation explored here are a part of the expressive terrain of reggae culture. Understanding how these movements are mobilized and why, and what they are interpreted to mean within the context of dancehall reggae is equally significant to understanding their origins. Myopic focuses on the victimization of women have the stifling effect of curtailing individual agency to express oneself in ways that makes sense within a specific performance culture. Additionally, it curtails expression in places where it should be most free – outside the representational boundaries imposed by the worlds of work, school, family or other institutions or social bodies that exercise control over personal representation, or adhere to hegemonic notions of appropriate representation that people are forced to conform to in these spaces. Sexual subjectivities and feminism are not mutually exclusive in dancehall. The carnivalesque nature and shock value of dancehall make ideologies extreme in their utterance and illustration, but buried

within the text are sentiments demonstrating that sexuality, eroticism, morality, self-value and worth are not mutually exclusive.

In reggae dance men also embody and illustrate gender identities, and demonstrate social agency. While the embodiment of sound and introspective, sensuous and ecstatic experiences are part of men's dancing as well, men tend to foreground the connection of these experiences to auto-appreciation, esteem, and positive self-consciousness less. Alternatively male dancers articulate the significance of the cathartic release of dance to their expression. I have observed that this potential of reggae dance also creates productive spaces for male bonding and demonstrations of solidarity.

Men in the Dance Hall

Men's dance is characterized by complicated footwork as exemplified by moves executed on the tips of toes as in ballet point, with bent knees, curvilinear postures, rhythmic dexterity, and perfect balance all at once. Delicate moves done on point are juxtaposed with feet pounding the floor in marching movements or as if to dig a whole through the dance floor into the Earth's surface. The energy expelled in each movement when men dance is forceful, intense, and sharp. They might dance with grimaces or frowns together making their moves markedly different from women's and illustrative of constructions of masculinity that anchor it in strength, momentum, potency, and aggressiveness.

While sensuous experience is also significant to men in reggae dance its effect is articulated differently. Particularly of significance to the male sensuous experience in dance is the cathartic release of tensions, anxiety, aggression through movement that is either demonstrative of those sentiments or allow for interactive play. Water Boots said: "When I'm feeling stressed or angry or mad, or even if I'm sad, I just go to a party and let it all out on the dance floor. I dance so hard. It makes me feel relaxed and in my zone[…] It's like a spiritual thing for me. Yeah some people may say that 'Oh it's the liquor it's the alcohol you drink,' no it's not. Because I know the difference between feeling tipsy, and feeling the spirit of my dancing […] I swear I think there would be more violence if some of these kids didn't dance." Water Boots' illustrates how dance mitigates street violence by providing release from daily anxieties through somatic and kinesthetic experience (Stanley-Niaah 2010b).

Scholars writing about urban forms of social dance – break dancing, dancehall, krumping – focus on how the intense energy that is expelled through physically exerting moves or gestures, provides catharsis for intense sentiments and energies that are forced to be repressed and contained outside the world of dance, in turn serving as an outlet for violence and social anxieties (Banes, 1994; Perkins, 1996; Stanley Niaah, 2010b). In this sense, dance allows for a productive kinesthetic release that simultaneously liberates the body from the fetters of social restriction, discipline, and self-control, a sensuous experience of individual making and collective enjoyment and participation.

The centrality of dance to Water Boot's mental and spiritual state ("its like a spiritual thing for me") is what brings him closely to the movement and is also where he locates the constructive potential of dance for urban youth. The opening of some dance focused reggae parties to people under twenty-one but older than eighteen welcomes younger men and women into nocturnal reggae places for dance relief. In reggae places music invokes the want of this therapeutic, kinesthetic experience. The therapeutic and kinesthetic benefits of dance are in no way exclusive to men. However, Water Boots feels strongly that they are of particular and unique significance to men who are more frequently faced with street violence and aggression from peers and police and are less likely to engage in mutually supportive dialogue and conversation with friends about their struggles as women might. His interpretation brings to the fore the ways dance can also create a space for male bonding and displays of camaraderie.

The ways solidarity unfolds between men is different than with women. The difference lies mainly in the choice men make to engage with each other in interactive, as opposed to simply providing supportive spectatorship as is evident between women. The male bonding captured in joyful displays of camaraderie, partnership, and group work between men within reggae dance places contrast greatly from the rather somber, cold, or sharp engagements, and icy chauvinism, witnessed on Brooklyn streets and in the work place between men, even those who are friends. In this case dancehall reggae places present a possibility for transgressive gender experiences for the reclamation of solidarity, and provides a

site for liberation from the traditional mores of male interaction adhered to in the outside world.

Bonding between men is illustrated through dance movements they coordinate together on the spot or that seem to have been arranged prior. They take over the center of a dance space in two's or three's and execute their shared movement, clearing out space, and bringing attention to their collective. Often men play follow the leader in dance, one man executing a move that another will repeat as the initiator pauses and performatively watches. The new dancer might repeat the move with a slight accent to accentuate his distinction within the partnership. It is also a display of individuality within the solidarity, each man still needing to demonstrate his distinct skill within the collective. Sometimes in larger groups men alternate being the leader. Men's dance moves also frequently play off of one another, building dance movement sequences and counter-posing movements that mirror each other.

There are many smiles and much laughter shared between men in their group dancing that contrasts with the more serious facial expressions characteristic of their solo performances. Sometimes dancing between men reads as clear joyful dance play, particularly when they rhythmically weave themselves in and out of their own collective or throughout the crowd in jovial and youthful ways. The more lighthearted dance evidenced within dance groups contrasts with the more stern engagement between dance crews. However, even competitive dance between crews is reflective of positive and constructive interactions between men. Dance crews assume opposite positions in a space they clear on the dance floor and take

turns demonstrating their previously choreographed moves in unison individual members occasionally performing solos. Facing their competitors they dance their way into the space between them, march, or even charge their way in. Competition between dance crews never results in violence.

Where do the people who do not define themselves according to or embody the gender subjectivities outlined in dancehall fit? In many ways dancehall dance is structured around overtly feminine or masculine representations with little fluidity between the two. Water Boots expressed his preoccupation with some male reggae dancers being labeled as gay, particularly if they do not take moments to dance with women, indicating the anxieties these strict narratives create. He explained that a DJ might shout on the microphone at a male dancer who wines on his own, as opposed to the more accepted way of with a girl. As I indicated earlier, wining is a complex form of reggae dance that requires skilled corporeal maneuvering and allows for sensuous experiencing of one's own body giving good reason why a male dancer, wanting to show his dexterity and feel the music, would wine. Additionally, in Costa Rican and Jamaican dance contexts I have observed wining to be inclusive to men. I surmise that the New York City preoccupation with male wining is connected to the feminization of circular hip, waist, and torso movements in hip-hop dance.

The vulnerability of reggae to the politics of representation evident in hip-hop demonstrates the influence of African-American forms of popular culture on the expressive practices of West Indians where they meet in New York. The converse is also true. As ways of moving are mutually informing so are interpretations of them. These points aside, ultimately what is communicated through the shaming of male

dancers indicates is that gender dichotomies are rigid and policed leaving little room for ambiguity in gendered illustrations or detachment from them. This holds especially true for men who, as I indicated prior, are never observed dancing in typically feminine ways whereas there is more freedom for women to perform the movements associated with men.

The relative absence of dancehall king competitions in relation to dancehall queen competitions provides further evidence of anxieties that surround being read as gay. While dancehall queen competitions of various types are rather common, I never caught wind of a single dancehall king competition. I did once hear of a group of gay male reggae dancers called the Cocky Ninjas. Who and where the Cocky Ninjas are remains the most pressing question and unsolved mysteries of my research experience. Only a few other dancers have ever heard of them and no one seems to know how to contact a member or where to see them dance. I once got a lead about a possible venue they might frequent but it turned out to be a dead end. Those who have heard of the Cocky Ninjas are unwilling to be of assistance in investigating further, a lack of interest that is always articulated with demonstrations of disapproval. The invisibility of the Cocky Ninjas and the secrecy that surrounds them, if they even exist, reflects the secretiveness with which the LGBTQ community is shrouded more generally within New York City reggae culture at large.

Along with its role in the authoring of self and the performance of gender, and arrangement of gender scripts, dance also provides bases for the continuity of West Indian cultural forms and individual, and collective identity construction in

NYC. Nocturnal reggae dance spaces, familial dance spaces, and digitally accessed dance spaces come into view as significant sites to the continuity of Caribbean embodied culture. Within these spaces kinesthetic links to the Caribbean are formed becoming part of the sensory experience, performance practice, and imaging that constitute them as transgeographic places.

Dance, Cultural Continuity, and Creation

Dance is a central way West Indian community members shape and experience their Caribbean subjectivities and nurture transnational identities. Both U.S. born and Caribbean born West Indians embody and enact their cultural identities through dance. Of all the components that people feel constitute their West Indian selves knowledge of West Indian foods, music, and dance, are consistently the first mentioned. Reggae style dance is one among other forms of West Indian dance that people feel are expressions of their Caribbean identities. Soca and calypso are others. As indicated prior all of these dance forms, outside the specificities of dancehall, on a more general level share vocabularies of movement making them relatively indistinguishable outside of tempo and accented stylistic notes. Dance performed in the home is also a primary medium for cross-generational social engagement and exchange of cultural knowledge between elders and children through dance movement.

For those who have never known a Caribbean country, dance is considered a central form of knowledge passed through family that links them to one. It is a form

of embodied knowledge that is thought to accompany being West Indian. My research collaborators tend to interpret their specific connection to West Indian dance in primordial terms. It is inherently within them, carried within their blood. Imaginings of dance as originating within the blood are prompted by the centrality of reggae dance to familial celebrations – birthdays, baby showers, holidays – taking place in the home or other spaces transformed into places for familial leisure and celebration – backyards, closed off streets, and catering halls.

The ritualized listening and dancing to reggae and Caribbean music with family is both the basis on which primordial claims to Caribbean dance are made and on which dance becomes constitutive of West Indian identities. That other people can learn and practice reggae and other Caribbean forms of dance is irrelevant because not everyone grows up learning them in the intimacy of familial spaces within moments of more sacred and ritualized family socialization. In other words, not everyone's experience with Caribbean dance is in dialectical relationship to his or her familial socialization and celebrations. In turn, according to these views, West Indians subjectivities are in distinct relationship to dance making it particularly constitutive of their identities anchored in family rooted embodied cultural practice and the transference of knowledge. The exclusivity that primordial claims allow for also foregrounds dance as a medium to collectively celebrate Caribbean identities so as to bridge the differences between U.S. born and raised West Indians and those born, and raised in the West Indies. With many families being blended – having members with different citizenship statuses and time spent

in Brooklyn – having a common ground for identity celebration and sharing is significant to both cultural continuity and unity in practice.

The anthropology of experience is useful to elucidating this process. Turner and Bruner (1986) put forth that shared participation in the communication of culture through aesthetic forms reproduces culture and constitutes collectivities. Performance and dance studies scholars second his perspective (Askew 1997; T. J. Buckland 2001; Roach 1996). Before their appropriation and popularization, aesthetic forms are the creations of socioculturally connected individuals and become markers of the collectivity. Enactments of culture through dance allow it to be lived creating overarching senses of togetherness and overcoming fragmentation (Fernandez 1986; Myerhoff 1986). Popular dances of the moment linked to the dancehall style are generally, however, not learned at home. Dance clubs and digital dance spaces evidence the flows of dance knowledge throughout the Caribbean. Demonstrations of this knowledge in dance clubs shape the transgeographic kinesthetic, visual, and performance dimensions that make the Caribbean present within them.

Tapping into digital media is a way in which dancehall reggae dances made in Jamaica can be accessed and practiced for nightclub presentation in New York and NYC based dance can be viewed in Jamaica and throughout the world, creating a global digital dance space that the West Indian Diaspora and greater community of reggae listeners at large access. As noted earlier, Jamaica remains the center of export of reggae music listened to in the United States. When new reggae songs are released in Jamaica, dances are created alongside them. The opposite is also true. A

new dance move inspires a song to match. People access music videos and homemade YouTube dance videos on the Internet to stay up to date on the latest dances released in Jamaica.

Through connectivity in the inter-webs, dance constitutes a significant way of communicating embodied culture across the West Indian Diaspora and throughout the Caribbean space ensuring the continuity of Caribbean dance forms. While the digital dance space the Internet forms unites the creative geographies of the Caribbean, the committed dancers of Brooklyn, for whom dance is more than a pastime, value local styles of reggae dance and individual creativity over the dances of Jamaica. A notable characteristic of the New York City dancehall style is its occasional referencing of hip-hop dance movements including: popping (the popping up of heads, chests, knees and legs), locking (locking joints into position and contracting and relaxing muscles to accent movements), gliding (footwork that carries dancers across floor space), robotic moves, and weaving (passing the head, torso, arms or legs through clasped hands). The aligning of reggae and hip-hop dance reflects the meeting of West Indian and African-American aesthetic forms in New York City in their neighboring communities. It is an illustration of artistic forms narrating shared experiences as New Yorkers whose art forms signify their mutual recognition.

The classic dancehall reggae styles and the styles that are specific to New York City meet in reggae nightclubs where they are performed together evincing the dual orientations of these performance spaces. Dice, who is a central figure in the promotion of Brooklyn dance themed parties explained that he, in the crescendo of

what he described as a dancehall dance craze, flew dancers from Jamaica to attend his parties putting himself in charge of acquiring their travel visas as well. The money that excited reggae participants brought to his parties to see these reggae subcultural celebrities dance made his investment well worth it. The traveling of reggae dancers based in Jamaica to local Brooklyn parties to make appearances, often without pay only travel expenses taken care of, is evidence of the union between the two spaces in reggae music production that is observable in dance as well. The union is not only about Brooklynites wanting to bring people from the West Indies but also aspiring reggae professionals situated within the West Indies understanding Brooklyn to be significant to the acknowledgement of their work within the broader Circum-Caribbean space.

A dancer known as Ding-Dong, who worked closely with Ricky Blaze is one of those dancers. According to Ricky, during the dance craze of 2000-2006 Ding-Dong traveled to Brooklyn to dance in the local clubs and further build a reputation for himself. The close-knit world of reggae and family, and the intimacy of the Brooklyn West Indian community combined with Ding-Dong's local celebrity led him to performing at baby showers and birthdays at the request of interconnected friends and family members. It was during one of his stays in Brooklyn that Ricky Blaze produced the track on which Ding-Dong would record his lyrics to the song "Badman Forward Badman Pull Up." The song boasts the popularity of the dance that accompanies it, which Ding Dong also created. Amid mention of Jamaica based dance crews Ding-Dong chants: "The whole of Brooklyn ah do the Badman Pull Up! New York Crew ah do the Badman Pull Up!" Both the song and dance went on to be

an international sensation, again, with no acknowledgement of it having creative origins in New York City in which the meeting of reggae music making and cultural production cohered to form a new song and dance that is a product of the union between Brooklyn and Antillean cultural and geographic spaces.

The reggae dance crews, duos, and solos in Brooklyn that define artistic, social, leisure, and familial spaces with their dancing bodies make a significant imprint on the expressive fields of Brooklyn and constitute reggae culture at large. The intersubjectivity of dance that imbues it with the potential to shape and assert collective identities, and reflect changing cultural geographies is also what foregrounds it as tool to foster togetherness between people across racial, ethnic, class, and gender distinctions. The communal act of dancing and sharing dance space shapes a community of its own, the community of the club, the park, or wherever a dance scene unfolds. Dance events allow for the structuring of shared experience through the medium of performance and, in turn, shape a collectivity based on that shared experience (Kapferer 1986). Even if meanings are not shared, simply witnessing and partaking in the enactments together allow individuals to "commune" in a single experience in which shared symbols are invoked even if only shared within that performance space (ibid: 191).

Through widely sharing music and dance experiences the particular becomes universal. In this way, reggae dance is significant to the formation of an expansive multi-racial, ethnic, and national, global culture. The significance of dance to the production of local and global reggae communities kept in contact through digital

dance spaces, combined with the simple fun and entertainment of dance make it prime for commodification.

The Commodification of Reggae Dance

"My cell phone was blowing up!" Devin the executive chef at Mo'Bay Cafe told me with excitement and pride.[32] He was referring to the rapid influx of text messages to his cell phone after international R&B singer Beyoncé did the popular dancehall dance the "Dutty Wine" during her 2013 Super Bowl half-time performance. Devin said his friends and family were texting him from all over, including Jamaica, during and after the show taking pride in dancehall reggae culture being on an international stage. The year before, Rihanna, an international pop icon of Barbadian origin, opened her Grammy Awards showcase performing the "Willie Bounce," another popular dancehall dance invented by the late Jamaican dancer Bogle, causing much excitement in reggae and West Indian communities. Beyoncé and Rihanna performing well-known dancehall moves probably escaped the attention of most Super Bowl and Grammy Award viewers. However, it was a source of pride for many Caribbean people who witnessed representations of reggae culture on such large, internationally viewed, mainstream stages. It was a sign of the spread of reggae outside of Caribbean and reggae communities, and not just the music, also the dance.

[32] I have assigned a pseudonym to protect anonymity.

The popularity of reggae dance has made it into a lucrative career for those successful enough to reach a stable position within the industry and an aspiration of many more. The work of grassroots professionals who have built careers for themselves as reggae dancers, touring with artists, or visiting countries in Europe and Asia to give instruction on reggae dance make a profession in reggae dance seem a glamorous career option. Their labor also makes reggae dance a readily commodifiable art form with lucrative potential.

The professional dancers who I interviewed for this research have built their careers through similar means. They first began to form a reputation as a dancer within their local communities by dancing in nightclubs. As teenagers, Likkle Bit and Amanda were able to circumvent entry regulations against people under the age of twenty-one because they were known neighborhood dancers. Likkle Bit described attending parties by herself and dancing, which drew attention to her exceptional skill. Comparatively, Amanda teamed up with girl friends and formed a crew. They would show up at Bronx clubs as young as fifteen to dance in matching outfits they designed. Water Boots described anxiously waiting until he was old enough to go to parties. Clubs are firmer about their age regulations when it comes to young men than women. Before he was old enough, Water Boots danced in local talent shows that aired on Brooklyn public access television. Through local community exposure, these dancers built names for themselves to brand and self-advertise on social media. Once a dancer has reached a certain level of recognition promoters will pay them to attend parties in hopes of drawing larger crowds.

The larger scale success of dancers depends on gaining recognition outside of the local Brooklyn dance community and being noticed. I met Blacka Di Danca at a 2011 Manhattan album release party for top reggae recording artist Konshens. It was an industry event with the VIP section filled with reggae label executives and Billboard writers. All night Blacka remained at the center of the dance floor energetically dancing without exhaustion. Konshens at one point during his performance invited dancers in the crowd to join him on stage. Moments later Blacka reappeared from the crowd on stage. It was a while before Konshens was able to reclaim the spotlight. It required much insinuation that Blacka's moment was over. Three years later I would see Blacka on T.V. dancing at the 2014 to 2015 Times Square New Years Eve ball drop ceremony alongside new house music artist Kiesza.

Dancing at more exclusive events where artists and industry personnel are present provides opportunities for the exposure that turns local Brooklyn dancers into internationally touring backup dancers for big name reggae artists. Gaining access to the more exclusive reggae parties requires consistent and dedicated social networking. Parties like Konshens' album release are open to a smaller pool of the public allowing admittance only if a person's name is on a guest list. Being placed on the guest list generally requires knowing even just one friend of a friend who might be willing to add a distant associate's name. In this case, six degrees of separation can gain a person admittance underscoring the importance of social networking to being in the right place at the right time where careers can take off.

Being captured on videographers' cameras and having access to one's own image for self-promotion and marketing also brings dancers into a spotlight outside

of the immediate club. Their calculated and active use of social media helps them to geographically broaden and solidify their fan base and easily access it further advancing their branding in a global digital dance space. Applications like Twitter and Instagram in which users gather followers are particularly useful. They come in handy because they create a snowball effect in gathering followers. If friends notice that other friends follow a particular person, they might follow that same person ever expanding the network as the cycle repeats itself. People are able to establish celebrity simply through gaining Twitter and Instagram followers and directing them to their YouTube videos and personal websites. In turn, a once little known dancer can gain a large base of followers, supporters, and fans. Instagram – which allows people to post pictures and fifteen second videos that are viewable by anyone who follows their account – and Twitter – an application that allows people to broadcast statements of up to 140 characters and pass through followers newsfeeds, are of particular importance to self-promotion. All of these applications and websites – YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook, can be linked to each other creating large webs of interactive communication and access imperative to self-promotion and networking. All of the professional dancers with whom I communicated see social media as being as significant to their career success as dancers as dance itself.

Anytime Blacka goes out to a party he tries to gather footage of himself to put online. Now that he is a well-known dance figure in the New York City reggae dance scene, he makes instructional dance videos and his own dance centered music videos to popular songs. Because of the strength of his social media presence,

success of his YouTube videos, and amount of viewers they have amassed, Blacka has been invited to teach reggae dance classes at studios in France, Holland, Belgium, Switzerland, Sweden, Spain, Italy and Russia as well cities in the U.S. He described being blown away by his first experience teaching in Moscow, Russia. Each class was at full capacity. People from Siberia, Ukraine, Germany, and parts of Asia were in attendance. Blacka said he went expecting to teach older and easier dances but was met with a group of knowledgeable dancers who had the newest dancehall songs ready for class instruction and were already very familiar with the dance aesthetic. "Reggae is worldwide," he explained to me, "just because these people don't speak the language, they speak dance, they watch the videos, they're on everything. They're on every single thing that we do." The reservoir of knowledge and images, movement, creativity, and forms of corporeal expression are made available in global digital dance spaces because of the work of grassroots professionals like Blacka Di Danca, Water Boots, and Likkle Bit and their commodification and exportation of reggae dance.

The international undertakings of dancers broaden the global, multi-racial and national reggae community, forming the foundations of a transnational matrix of reggae related economic activity in New York City. The international commodification of reggae dance is seen as positive and necessary because it is undergirds dance as a means of subsistence. Likkle Bit hopes the markets will grow even further so that the demand for reggae dancers will meet the demand of hip-hop dancers, and result in a comparable pay, which is apparently much higher. She saw Beyoncé and Rihanna's Super Bowl and Grammy performances as indicators that, as

she put it, the European and American markets are opening to reggae dance which will give her more negotiating power and more professional performance opportunities.

Savvy business acumen and negotiations of power that launch dancers into successful careers in dance can be compromised, however, by the same power structures that attempt to inhibit women from assuming full authoritative stances in their careers, lives, and futures. Likkle Bit claimed to have been dropped from a top selling Jamaican reggae artist's international tour after requesting he sign a contract to secure her rights as a performer, member of the tour, and her pay. The frustration she articulated was well founded. The circumstance in which she found herself is indicative of the vulnerability of women within the reggae industry and their position as commodities within it rather than actors who should receive due compensation for their work.

What Likkle Bit's predicament further illustrates is that the social and economic happenings of the reggae subculture still function within and according to the relationships between gender, power, and capitalism of society at large. Likkle Bit's situation is also a microcosm of a larger problem within reggae, the scant numbers and minimal representation of women in the professional arenas and as producers of the culture as DJs, recording artists, party promoters, and bloggers. I asked many men how they might explain the absence of women in the industry besides dance and they all related it to women being vulnerable to exploitation. Female selector Fyarama agreed adding that women are assumed not to have the same talent to rival men. Nevertheless, women find ways to circumvent the

challenges that confront them and fully assert themselves as economic agents. The careers of Tavia and Tamara, the resilience of Likkle Bit, and Fyarama's position as a well respected top NYC reggae DJ are evidence.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that analytical lenses to interpret women in reggae dance should be expanded beyond the view of history alone to consider embodied experiences. Furthermore, I demonstrated that women in reggae dance are not passive subjects of history or patriarchy. Rather, they assume authoritative positions in the narrating of their sexuality partly to illustrate their self-appreciation through the auto-erotic and also to inscribe themselves in heavily male gendered spaces by performing their difference. Interpreting men in dance, I shifted the view from its regular focus on hyper-masculinity to interpret the productive dimensions of reggae dance to male bonding and kinesthetic cathartic release. Moving outside of social, nocturnal reggae dance spaces to familial and digital ones, this chapter also focused on the centrality of reggae dance to cultural continuity and the transference of embodied knowledge. All of these dimensions to the exploration in dance cohered in the analysis of the commodification of reggae dance.

The next chapter delves further into the commodification reggae. It begins first by looking at how the grassroots work of NYC based reggae professionals is juxtaposed with corporate endeavors that on a much larger scale profit from the commodification of reggae and Caribbean culture more generally. It then shifts the

view to a hereto less focused upon industry within reggae, grassroots media, to show how all of the elements of the local Brooklyn commodification of reggae serve to constitute a reggae based, West Indian led and pan-regionally produced economic enclave.

CHAPTER FIVE
CONTRUCTING THE HYPERREAL: PIRATE RADIO AIRWAVES AND THE COMMODIFICATION OF REGGAE AND CARIBBEAN CULTURE

The vibrant aural, visual, performative, and ideological elements of reggae have become indispensable tools for West Indian identity construction, expression, and formation of transgeographic cultural places. They are also crucial to the formation of a Brooklyn based, West Indian created economic enclave. I have hereto demonstrated some of the ways that the establishment of Brooklyn's reggae culture is dependent on collaborative West Indian economic enterprises, which include professionals and commodities related to reggae. Dance performers and instructors, party videographers, photographers, promoters, DJs, MCs, and music producers are some of the professional positions people fill. Commodities include not only tangibles such as DVDs, CDs, stylized dance wear, Caribbean food items, but also importantly reggae knowledge and experiences. Caribbean food restaurants while more largely a part of West Indian place making and formation of cultural institutions are also connected to the local reggae industry as places of listening. Dollar vans, though not directly related to reggae are still a constituent component of West Indian run enterprises that form the economic enclave in which reggae thrives. The appeal of reggae and its invocation of Caribbean culture, however, extend far beyond the West Indian community making reggae and its associated cultural elements prime for commodification outside their moorings in Brooklyn.

This chapter focuses on the commodification and consumption of reggae and Caribbean cultural forms beginning first by examining these processes outside of

Brooklyn and West Indian leadership then returning to that site to explore West Indian agency. Outside of Brooklyn I examine Mo'Bay Café, a restaurant that exemplifies the dynamics undergirding commodification and consumption outside of West Indian Brooklyn. I argue that the commodification and "sale" of reggae and Caribbean cultural forms in Mo'Bay is dependent on the creation of hyperreal spaces and experiences for touristic indulgence and cultural voyeurism. It is shown how reggae is both a conduit for the formation of the hyperreal and one of its commodities.

Interpreting Mo'Bay Café, it comes into view how the threatening elements of class and cultural encounter are domesticated so as to create a more comfortable space for cultural voyeurism and indulgence. Furthermore revealed within the microcosm are the historically contingent privileges of power, access, and global economic influence of White American and European men. Subsequently, I shift the view to take a cursory look at the creation of Manhattan based reggae parties to explore how they, like Mo'Bay facilitate the comfortable consumption of reggae and Caribbean culture for outsiders to the Brooklyn Caribbean cultural space.

Despite the protectiveness of reggae exhibited in Brooklyn the commodification and consumption of reggae and Caribbean cultural forms that non-West Indian people undertake is looked upon as a benefit to the culture at large as opposed to a threat. In examining this perspective I juxtapose it with the antagonisms arising within the African-American community in response to White adaptation of hip-hop and Black cultural forms. I argue that these counter posing views are historically contingent arising from contrasting experiences with racial

domination that are evidenced in the reggae music industry. I furthermore demonstrate how the circulation of reggae does not erase, but rather emphasizes its origins in Jamaica and the West Indian community in New York City, its commodification by outsiders thereby being viewed as a welcomed economic benefit to all.

The chapter ends by returning to Brooklyn to focus on hereto unexamined examples of West Indian commodification of reggae: alternative media outlets, which include pirate radio. I argue that the creation of reggae media forms a constituent component of the West Indian led economic enclave in Brooklyn and economic self-determination. In turn, it is exemplified how alternative media outlets of which pirate radio is an example, in conjunction with the many other ways of producing reggae explored, betray stereotypes of West Indians as not having the acumen to successfully commodify and market reggae. Finally, I assert that the formation of reggae media is furthermore constitutive of the West Indian community at large, their transnational connections, and the continuity of cultural expression.

Ventures into the Hyperreal

Mo'Bay Café is a Jamaican food bar-restaurant in the chic and wealthy SoHo area of downtown Manhattan, often dubbed a "reggae" bar-restaurant. I had heard about Mo'Bay Café long before seeking employment there. It was an "A List" restaurant that celebrities regularly frequented. Dinner seatings were fully booked a

week in advance and supposedly only models worked there. It was also a Jamaican restaurant with resident DJs who played the latest in dancehall music, which seemed at odds with conventional hallmarks of SoHo dining as dancehall is the more urban and fast paced of the reggae styles. My curiosity was peaked. Did West Indians go there? Why was Mo'Bay the popular place it was while the chain of mom-and-pop Caribbean food restaurants that course Nostrand and Flatbush avenues in Brooklyn, and Gun Hill Road in the Bronx are never mentioned outside of the residents who live there? What had its owners done to make what had already been a part of the New York City cultural fabric – Caribbean food, music, and vibes – so popular where it had not been before? Or had it always been popular but too far outside of comfortable reach?

I first went to the restaurant in February, the coldest winter month in New York City. Entering Mo'Bay Café I was inundated by the warmth and overwhelming scents that wafted from the exposed kitchen in the main dining area. The restaurant had achieved the exposed kitchen look of restaurants I had observed in the Caribbean. In fact, the entire front area was modeled after family owned restaurants and fruits stands: bench seating, overhead menu signs that detailed food and drink items in illuminated yellow letters on a black background, fruit displays behind the bar, paper menus with paisley designs in plastic sheaths, and paper doilies for place matts. The back dining area resembled a lounge and discotheque. A disco ball hung from the ceiling's center reflecting little squares of multicolored lights onto black leather couch seats with red, gold, and green accents that encircled matching formica tables. The walls were covered ceiling to floor with album covers of classic

reggae vinyl records. Speaker boxes were painted onto ceiling fixtures and areas of some walls to give the appearance of a sound system. The illumination throughout the restaurant was dim and golden, but the quiet of the lighting was overcome by the shouts of food orders of the Jamaican chef to his staff, and the voices of eager bar customers, diners, and dancehall music that played many decibels above typical restaurant ambient music volume. The main dining area was densely packed with bar customers and impatient parties waiting to be seated, occasionally parting to make way for the tall, svelte, elegantly dressed, hostess whose jewelry flashed against her rich dark skin as she wisped her way through, guests quickly following in her wake.

The staff matched the ambient space and décor. They were tall, slim, brown skinned women of various hues ranging from very dark to light who gracefully slid their way through the crowd taking orders and artfully balancing trays of garnished cocktails. Their outfits strikingly deviated from the subdued colors and uniform wear that is more typical of high-end restaurants. These women were splendidly dressed in vivid colors and eclectically combined pants, skirts, blouses, head wraps, and swaths of cloth. They looked like moving replicas of models in fashion magazines adorned in vibrant color and geometric designs. In the kitchen mixing, stirring, and plating, Black Caribbean men stood alongside Mexican coworkers. The owners of Mo'Bay Café had done it, combined the most indulgent, succulent, fragrant, tangible, aurally stimulating, and visually titillating elements of a Caribbean fantasy, save for the sand and sea, and packed it inside a small SoHo space. Therein I sat with my five friends picking very slowly at overpriced morsels

of a Jamaican fusion dish: ackee and saltfish (Jamaica's national dish) served inside corn tortillas. The rest of the menu boasted items from classically Jamaican but triple the Brooklyn prices (oxtail stew, jerk chicken, rice and peas) to classically SoHo (fish tacos served on jicama root instead of high carbohydrate tortillas).

We sat in a Caribbean fantasy place having a momentary look into the commodification, marketing, and consumption (literally and figuratively), of Caribbean culture and reggae. I wanted a better view and the opportunity to build relationships with more West Indians within the intimacy of a workspace. I heard from an artist friend who had started working there not long before that the owners and management treated their staff well, a rarity in the service industry, that income was substantial, and they were hiring a bartender. She agreed to put in a good word for me. The restaurant had a fashion lookbook – typically a set of photographs displaying a designer's new line of clothing, but in Mo'Bay Café's case presenting style guidelines for their front of house staff.[33] Considering this I was hoping her good word would be enough to get me through the door.

Following my friend's instructions to wear high heels, bright colors, and my hair as voluminous as possible, I later revisited Mo'Bay Café with my most tailored service industry resume in hand developed from my college summer work experience. Upon entering I was greeted by a short, petit, bare faced, casually dressed, and very beautiful woman who I assumed to be a hostess but quickly learned was the general manager. She was not the general manager I expected of

[33] "Front of house staff" refers to those who engage with and work in direct service of restaurant clientele: servers, bartenders, maître d, hosts and hostesses, and bussers. "Back of house staff" refers to those who work in the kitchen, in maintenance, or cleaning. Bussers were exempt from style guidelines.

this establishment, which I knew to be owned by four European men. Women general managers are extremely rare and women of color even more so. She looked me over from head to toe and back up again and asked: "Can you make your hair bigger? I want your hair big. I mean really, really big." "It gets really big," I assured her, "it's just a little wet now," I added sheepishly. "Good, make it big" she said before offering me to work beginning right then bartending at a private party a fashion magazine was hosting in their upstairs private room. Of course could not decline. After receiving a few brief instructions I made my way upstairs to the private party feeling both accomplished and conflicted about having successfully "sold" myself to the Mo'Bay Café establishment. Making my through the event door, I disappeared into a Caribbean fantasy that is Mo'Bay Café. I spent the next year there examining the elements that cohered to create the experience that captivated patrons and made the establishment a sensation. At the heart of Mo'Bay Café's continued success is the creation of a hyperreal Caribbean space for cultural touristic indulgence.

Caribbean Cultural Tourism in the Hyperreal

A hallmark of tourism is how it facilitates social and cultural encounters through cultural voyeurism. Touristic observation of culture generally implies travel from a familiar space to an unfamiliar one to experience, taste, smell, admire, and marvel at life as others outside the mundanity of one's own familiar world live it. The interplay between cultural observation and cultural exhibition convert what is

tasted, smelled, heard, and watched into commodified material and immaterial objects. The commodification of the elements of place and culture fetishizes the material and immaterial by severing them from their human referents thereby allowing for the reproduction of these now detached and mobile attributes of culture and place outside of their original location. Through their commodification they become alienable cultural products. As commodified, alienable, fetishized cultural products they can be recreated anew for the indulgence of the cultural voyeur. The cultural products now (re)placed in a new space and context, acquire new meanings and their original contextually specific significances are lost.

Mo'Bay Café exemplifies the (re)placement in space of commodified West Indian cultural products – food items and dishes, music albums, plates redesigned into lamps, music itself – delivered in fantasy form in a safely consumable way in a safely occupied space. The possibility for cultural tourism is created in a geographic space it would not have existed prior to the commodification of the products of culture. In the new context, the rough edges that make unfamiliar spaces of encounter difficult to navigate are smoothed out. The lesser-known ackee is presented in the more familiar form of a guacamole-like dip. The Caribbean is placed in the comfort and accessibility of the familiar SoHo, rather than the Caribbean geographies of Brooklyn that make class and racial encounters inevitable.

Urry (1990) asserts that cultural tourism arises from the postmodern desire to collapse boundaries. Contradicting his assertion is the reification of boundaries between the observer and observed that results from the absence of participation and interaction between the two. Cultural tourism is not predicated on

intersubjective exchange. In turn, it has the potential to dichotomize the positionality of the observer and observed, underscore their contrasting roles and perspectives, and solidify the boundaries between them rather than collapsing them.[34] The differences between observer and observed that reflect and create boundaries, and mutual awareness of boundaries can create discomfort. While the goal of the tourist may be so see and enjoy, satisfying these desires is not dependent on understanding or knowing the experience of the observed, breaking down, or crossing boundaries. When cultural commodities are out of their sociogeographic context they can be comfortably enjoyed and indulged in, without the social awareness on which contact with the "Other" – observable subjects and cultural creators – makes inevitable. These cultural commodities are detached, relocated, and claimed out of context. Effectively a fantasy world is created in which free-floating cultural commodities are at the crux of its creation. Mo'Bay Café is many ways like this fantasy world. It is a utopian space, in which Caribbean cultural commodities are free floating detached from their historical, social, economic, or cultural context, or their human referents and creators. Fjellman's (1992) analysis of Walt Disney World and Baudrillard's (1988) theorizations on simulations and the hyperreal are useful to illuminating these dynamics.

Fjellman offers that Disney World is a place that "produces, packages, and sells experiences and memories as commodities" through the creation of utopia

[34] In the example given the positionalities of observer and observed can arguably be interchanged or mutually conceived. The observer is also being observed and the observed fulfilling the role of an observer. My delineation of observer as tourist and observed as person or people encountered through touristic travel is not intended to make passive the subjectivity of the latter. Rather, it is intended to bring into relief the oppositional relationship between the traveler/outsider/visitor, whose direct action and planning facilitates encounter, and the person or people visited when there is no intersubjective engagement.

(1992: 11). Trains are always on time, the streets are clean, there is never traffic because cars are not allowed, people are kind, it is safe at night, and children are protected. Disney World satisfies desires for peace, ease, and predictability, an exit from the unregulated, imperfect outside world of stress, obstacles, and chaos. A part of Disney World's success is its ability to sell something that is not real (the utopian) as something real and allow people to experience it as such, because for the moment it suspends their encumbered reality. Fjellman says: "In a world of images to be consumed, it is hard not to be carried away. It becomes difficult to tell what is real and what is fake" (1992: 6). The work of constructing this fantasy is undertaken by "imagineers," Walt Elias Disney Enterprises, the planning and engineering division of Disney World. They are engineers of the perfect imaginary, the hyperreal.

Baudrillard (1988) describes the hyperreal as the creation of a real without an origin or reality. Simulations, he puts forth, are examples of the hyperreal having become something unto itself. They are no longer mere referential entities. He offers a map of a territory as an example: "The territory no longer precedes the map, nor survives it. Henceforth it is the map that proceeds the territory… it is the map that engenders the territory and if we were to revive the fable today, it would be the territory whose shreds are slowly rotting across the map" (Baudrillard 1988: 166). The burying of reality (an existing territory) within a simulation (a representation of it) converts the simulation into its own real that survives the actual territory, which might disappear through historical transformation. The map, the simulation, will remain. That which was derived from reality becomes its own reality existing beyond the disappearance of what it once referred to.

Mo'Bay Café lies at the intersection of commodified culture, cultural tourism, and the hyperreal. The imagineers of the restaurant, like those of Walt Disney Enterprises, create a utopian Caribbean space in which experiences and memories are produced, packaged, and sold, one that is intended to be a simulation of the "real" Caribbean.[35] These memories are both reproductions of past experiences indulging in touristic travel to the Caribbean, satisfying nostalgia for the good times one had, and also new memories created in the moments of enjoyment at Mo'Bay that will be reminisced about the next day. This is an intoxicating combination that has a firm grip on customers and keeps them coming back. In its design and creation of ambiance, Mo'Bay is intended to reflect a "real" genuine Caribbean space. One of its owners, Charles, expressed to me:

> If you want to explore a cuisine you want to do it in a way that provides an authentic experience to the guests that come in whether they be Jamaican or Caribbean, or from wherever else they are. I still think having that authenticity is a crucial part of the success.[36]

However, the bar-restaurant is actually a utopian simulation. It is a Caribbean without violence, economic hardships, and political turmoil. A Caribbean where the visitor is spared the discomfort of race and class encounter, and the awkward feelings that arise from the awareness of occupying dichotomous socioeconomic positions to locals, and the inconvenient truths that awareness brings to bear. The restaurant is an example of a hyperreal space without origin in reality.

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[35] One of the owners of Mo'Bay Café doubles as the creative designer of the restaurant. The remaining three owners collaborate in determining what ambiance they want to achieve and overseeing its successful creation. They are regularly involved in the activity of the restaurant, ensuring the correct placement and order of objects and people within it in a hands on and involved way that is not typical of restaurant owners. Collectively the four owners imagine and engineer (imagineer) the Caribbean in SoHo.

[36] I have assigned a pseudonym to protect anonymity.

Another component of Mo'Bay's hyperreality is the staff that is imagined to represent the cultural creators of the commodities and experiences being sold. In addition to serving guests, the staff is there to embody the Caribbean. During the time I worked at Mo'Bay sixteen of the seventeen front of house staff were either Black or ethnically ambiguous people of brown complexion. Our origins varied from South Sudan, and Atlanta (African-American), to Jamaica and Sri Lanka via Britain. We were all, however, unequivocally assumed to be West Indian. All of our brownness of varying hues and origins homogenized into a perfectly packaged and consumed (in)authentic Caribbean product. Fourteen of the seventeen front of house staff were women. The only individual who was not of color was a White male. Who the owners of Mo'Bay Café wanted to represent their brand (composed of the alienated cultural material and immaterial products of the Caribbean) was evident – eclectically dressed, adorned, and styled (read exotic), women of color as we composed the majority.

Of the three male staff, two were openly gay, tall, slender men who could have easily graced the covers of magazines. The third was a well built, six foot three, White male who was very open with female bar customers about his heterosexuality. In this utopian Caribbean space the front of house staff were illustrative signifiers of erotic fantasies associated with touristic escape, from the various sexual preference represented, and in their most romanticized physical forms, to the presence of majority women who fit within popular conceptions of women of color as exotic Others. Yet we were more intelligible and accessible as Caribbean recreations within an ethnographic and geographic context in which the

observers were familiar and had control. This comfort and sense of authority was made evident in the comments male and female guests directed towards us.

The Jamaican executive chef, who oversaw food output from the kitchen, and the two Jamaican sous chefs who worked closely with him were also part of the created environment. Their integral place within the fantasy construction was partly made possible by their location within and in front of the restaurant's central, exposed kitchen. They were important parts of the visual field and the Caribbeanizing of it. Additionally, because of their food related, shouting, calls and responses, and, during less intense moments of the night, singing, laughing, and joking, they were significant to the Caribbeanizing of the aural field, along with the reggae music played. Management turned a blind eye to the executive chef cursing at the kitchen staff in Patois, which guests could not understand to be cursing anyway, and drinking beer throughout the shift. His behavior added (essentialized) Caribbean character to the place, but furthermore, the head chef had privileged immunity because of his culinary skill and his role as the Jamaican visual and aural glue to the mixed pieces of the fabricated Caribbean puzzle.[37]

The connections between marketing and sex, sex and the Caribbean, sex and tourism are all too evident. Would there have been the nightlife dining or fashionista

[37] Also present in the restaurant were Mexican and Central American workers that were back of house prep chefs and front of house bussers. Throughout the New York City service industry there is so much demand for these positions among Mexicans and Central Americans in particular and they so overwhelmingly occupy them that they tend to not be included in the intentional construction of a restaurant's ethos. Customers additionally imagine them to not to be present within it. Imagineers and restaurant clientele rendering these Latino workers invisible and the ways their invisibility is manifested and acted upon have significances and implications related to dichotomies between class, color, citizenship, and privilege that are imperative to interpret but well outside the scope of this text. However, I did not want to ignore the presence of these staff members that were very much a part of our sense of community at the restaurant.

allure of Mo'Bay Café without the Mo'Bay Café Girls? Management instructed us to make people laugh, entertain, give people the feeling of being invited guests in our home, and to feel free to have fun and be ourselves, but always while providing excellent service. A part of providing good service were the never directly expressed but widely understood instructions to dance to the reggae music, look our prettiest and according to the style of the restaurant, be appealing, and be and create everything that tourists come home from the Caribbean raving about. Staff urges for cathartic release were often in service of this latter objective. Imaginings of the debauchery of the Caribbean that are exemplified by one of Jamaica's top resorts being named Hedonism were realized in Mo'Bay Café. Dancehall, the more fast paced party oriented style of reggae, was the most commonly played and at high volume. The staff would take celebratory shots of alcohol with customers, dance with each other and diners during and after shifts, laugh and cheer as excitement in the restaurant swelled. Celebrity patrons often partook in the revelry. The owners of the restaurant were at varying levels of approval or disapproval of just how far Mo'Bay Café celebrations would go; but ultimately the restaurant was nearly always close to capacity, an indication that business was going well in spite of the debauchery or perhaps because of it.

The cultural touristic experience made possible in Mo'Bay facilitates a collapsing of boundaries between observer and observed, allowing for the kinds of indulgence in culture (albeit falsely recreated) that is an objective of cultural tourism. The boundaries evident in true touristic experiences are not there. Factors that are otherwise present when exiting one's place of familiarity and make

boundary crossing difficult are not actually in place; cultural tourism without the anxiety.

Working as a bartender I could easily overhear the conversations of Mo'Bay Café guests, whether I desired to or not. What non-West Indian clientele would say revealed the success of the imagineer's work in creating a utopian, hyperreal Caribbean space. "This is just like the Caribbean," or "It reminds me so much of Jamaica." People would point to different details of the material space or speak of the aura and experience of being in Mo'Bay Café as an authentic and familiar one from past travel. These perspectives contrasted with those of the rarely present West Indian clientele, the majority of whom expressed disenchantment with the food, particularly that it was not "real" Caribbean food and was exorbitantly priced considering the same items could be found much cheaper elsewhere. Celebrity reggae artists, for whom cost and authenticity were placed second to exclusivity and distance from adoring fans, were an exception.

The pleasure people experience indulging in Mo'Bay Café's Caribbean hyperrealism support Umberto Eco's claim in *Travels in Hyperreality* that American's have a love, even a preference for, the inauthentic, the fantasy, and recreations of the real as evidenced in Disneyland and Graceland. While his assertions betray an essentializing and homogenizing perspective of the American character, the relevance of his views to the example of Mo'Bay Café is uncanny. What is perplexing about customer appreciation for Mo'Bay Café is how convinced patrons are that they are having an authentic Caribbean experience underscoring just how effective the construction of the hyperreal is. It exists as authentic in the

imagination and is experienced as such, partly because it recaptures Caribbean tourism while allowing for more intimate interactions with "the people" and "culture." Therein lies the preference for the inauthentic – reality with complexities stripped away, cultural tourism without anxieties and boundaries thereby allowing people to safely enact intimacies.

It was an intention of the owners of Mo'Bay Café to create a "crossover" – read domesticated, accessible, comfortable, and familiar – Caribbean space outside of the city's Caribbean geographies despite how that effort contradicts their objective of also constructing it as authentically Caribbean. Charles said: "[Caribbean] culture is so rich that there was an opportunity to kind of create a place that kind of appealed to a broader demographic while still appealing to the diaspora." Constructing a utopian, hyperreal, cultural touristic simulation, in which commodified cultural forms are free floating, may not have directly been their goal. In fact Charles directly explained to me: "It's a pretty daunting task to open in New York a restaurant of a culture that you're not really a part of… You don't want to do a theme park; do you know what I mean? You don't kind of want to be the Disney version." Nevertheless it became an irrevocable part of attempting to create authenticity through replication, and replication not tied to a cultural, and social continuum connected to the West Indies or Caribbean in Brooklyn, but rather outside of it for those to enjoy who can financially invest in it through their patronage: the crossover SoHo – read White and wealthy – crowd.

The commodification of Caribbean cultural expression evidenced in Mo'Bay Café is mirrored in corporate commodification of reggae music in which

predominantly White executives and music producers manage and creatively imagine artists and their expression. Allyene (1998) and (1994) focus extensively on these dynamics and the alterations to reggae that occur as a result. The music of Sean Paul, a dancehall favorite of the mid to late 1990s, serves as an example. Following his early 2000s signing to Atlantic Records, a joint distribution agreement with VP Records the independent reggae record label/distributor with which he was previously associated (Meschino 2014), Sean Paul's music has transformed dramatically. The rhythms of his songs have become decreasingly less like reggae and more like pop and dance music, two top selling genres in the U.S. Additionally, pop singers and hip-hop artists are featured on his albums distancing him further from reggae. Sean Paul's transition from popular dancehall artist who added vocals to popular riddims, to popular pop artist whose music is copy written has, however, yielded greater capital and exposure to wider audiences, and two Grammy awards. Furthermore, VP Records, decades after Chinese-Jamaicans Patricia and Vincent Chin founded it in the 1950s, is now a worldwide name winning Billboard's Best Independent Record Label in 2002 and 2003 (Meschino 2014).

Like in Mo'Bay Café, corporate involvement results in transformations and recreations made to suit the preferences of targeted consumers, Americans and Europeans. It also reveals, and reproduces, historically contingent and geographically situated privileges of access and power. There is a common narrative among non-West Indian commodifiers and benefactors of Caribbean cultural products that while Caribbean people are excellent producers, they are not adequately prepared to market and effectively sell their cultural product. The

parallels to colonial logics explaining the pervasiveness of Black labor under White control are not so subtly communicated, or easily perceived. Whether it is in reference to music, advertising, business strategies, or culinary design the sentiment is that Caribbean people have not mastered the art of marketing to broad consumers. Some examples given are the "distasteful" flyers promoting Brooklyn reggae parties, the insistence of some reggae artists in using homophobic language, and a supposed lack of professionalism, consistency, and customer service in Brooklyn based Caribbean run businesses. While business practices, promotions, musical, and imagery design might satisfy local Caribbean audiences, the argument holds that they will not draw broader American or international ones with greater purchasing power.

The popularization of reggae and its attached Caribbean cultural forms that its commodification has facilitated bring reggae and its performative modes outside of West Indian neighborhoods in the Bronx and Brooklyn and create a demand for access to reggae and to racially, and economically diverse reggae scenes. Dave Susser, more widely known as DJ Gravy, is both co-founder and publisher of the internationally viewed online Caribbean culture, music, and style magazine LargeUp.com. He is also the founder of a well attended almost exclusively Manhattan based reggae party and collective – Rice and Peas, named after the main accompaniment to Jamaican meals. In discussion with Gravy about his incentives founding Rice and Peas in 2006 he said he wanted to create a party for "people who love reggae but aren't going to go to Brooklyn, and who aren't going to look for it; people who like to go out in places in downtown Manhattan. The people who would

look at the flyers of these Brooklyn parties and go…" as he made a shocked and disgusted facial expression.[38] He elaborated that he was frustrated with being in reggae parties and feeling like he had to "babysit" his female friends who were used to "hippie festivals" and did not necessarily want to dance with "the first dread who grabs their arm."[39] Gravy described himself as having been inspired by "the 80s golden era for New York and for the world of art and music and culture" that brought Bronx break dancers, the rock band Blondie, rapper Fab Five Freddy, newly arrived Rastas from Jamaica, and fashion models together in a single party scene. He said:

> It was obvious we needed to create our own scene where we could do reggae and bring all cool different people and make it something. I wanted to do something that the industry could appreciate, that all my industry kids that I knew were blowing up in music and fashion and art. They all loved what I did [as a DJ] at their parties and I wanted them to come to a party where they could really absorb more of where I was getting it from, all of the Brooklyn DJs I was inspired by and create a crossroads basically you know?

He has achieved many of these goals. Since 2006 Rice and Peas has been a successful monthly reggae party located in the East or West Village, Manhattan and more recently on occasion in Bushwick or Williamsburg, the rapidly gentrifying or fully gentrified, art, and music centers of Brooklyn that draw exactly the crowds he

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[38] Flyers and posters for Brooklyn parties often include seductive or rear end shots of women in bikinis and seemingly disconnected images of palm trees, liquor bottles, DJs, and celebratory fare like spangles. Making women the focus of ads is intended to draw male patrons who are believed to be responsible for liquor sales purchasing drinks for themselves and the women they are courting.

[39] This latter point is in part a reference to the occasionally overwhelming ratio of men to women in Brooklyn parties where bouncers tend not to monitor the ratio, as is common practice in Manhattan venues. It is also a reference to the more direct way some men in Caribbean Brooklyn reggae parties signal their interest in women, which might include a tug of the arm, hand grab in passing, or giving compliments intended to flatter, all of which can be received as too direct, aggressive, or threatening to a person unaccustomed to this mode of courting or who does not understand the benevolence of the gestures.

intended – a diverse mix of arts professionals, music industry people, reggae celebrities, multi-ethnic and racial reggae appreciators, DJs that have a knowledge of reggae outside of the commercial music, and includes a mic man, a central figure in reggae.

The Rice and Peas mic man, Micro Don, describes Rice and Peas as "a selective dancehall party." He elaborated: "Not meaning selective as we don't want a certain crowd to be there, but more of something that's not happening in Brooklyn. Give it a twist, like models ya know? That's what we've always had. Models come in, celebrities, that kind of environment." As evidenced in his words, the process of presenting reggae to wider audiences relies on making it not only accessible outside of the heavily West Indian, Brooklyn, reggae, Caribbean, cultural context but also comfortable for people outside that context. West Indians still do attend these parties though in conversation with Micro Don, who is West Indian and from Brooklyn, he indicated that there is some resistance of people "from the boroughs" to go to the Manhattan parties. His specification "from the boroughs" is laden with underlying meanings that are important to understanding the significance of his observation.

Micro Don uses "from the boroughs" to indicate "not from Manhattan," which although being one of the five boroughs of New York City, is predominantly White, is home to the city's wealthiest residents, and is the most cosmopolitan in the fashion and arts world. His phrasing then carries class connotations tied to income and worldliness as well as racial ones. He sees Manhattan's cosmopolitanism and class privilege as creating boundaries that cause people who are not from there or as

familiar with its nightlife to feel like outsiders. Keeping in mind that our discussion was about reggae parties, it was evident that he was talking if not only about, then at least partially about Brooklyn West Indians in particular feeling like outsiders resulting in sentiments of resistance. He went on to offer that people from the boroughs might be reluctant to attend Manhattan parties because they are "scared that people are a little more educated about certain things" and bring a certain "attitude" that can be off putting to people not familiar with it. According to Micro Don, this attitude is both a specifically Caribbean public habitus and response to being in unfamiliar spaces. On the converse, he described Brooklyn parties as being potentially intimidating to "people from the suburbs" (read White). Micro Don in his observation and analysis was commenting on the discomforts of social, economic, and racial encounter and assuaging it through avoidance – creating distinct parties.

Though efforts to commodify reggae and Caribbean culture might exclude West Indians from being full benefactors or even participants, the majority of my West Indian research collaborators are in support of non-West Indian efforts. They feel it gives greater exposure to reggae and the Caribbean, exposure that will benefit their smaller industries even if not to the same extent. As reggae flourishes internationally, a result of both local Brooklyn and larger corporate actors, more possibilities are created for international work as DJs and dancers, reggae audiences that Brooklyn reggae professionals rely on are expanded, and a greater market of consumers of reggae commodities is formed. There is also a sense of West Indian pride in the international recognition of their music, dance, images, celebrations,

and cuisine whether or not it be for their direct financial gain or represented by West Indians themselves.

On the adaptation and commodification of reggae and Caribbean cultural forms Andrew Digital, who is a central figure in hosting Brooklyn sound clashes that draw international competitors, offered:

> I think it's good for the business. Ya nah mean? We can't feel jealous that people trying to take our culture. Because we know the roots is Jamaica, but also you have to build on it. It's just like the reggae music itself. It's from Jamaica that's where the roots is. People will never forget where it's from. So it's also a good thing to build on it ya nah mean? To keep it alive, to preserve it.

Similarly Ricky Blaze, who produces reggae tracks, contributed:

> At the end of the day it all comes back to Jamaica in some way; for instance: [Mississippi born music producer] Diplo, he has [electronic dancehall collective] Major Lazer. He went to Jamaica and started reggae electric stuff that is doing really well and it's a new sound; but, there are people who want to know where it came from and it all leads back to reggae music and it all leads back to Jamaica.

Speaking on the merging of Jamaican dancehall artist Mavado with Palestinian-American DJ Khalid's We the Best Music Group, a subsidiary of Universal, Trinidadian-American party promoter Reemo commented:

> It's good to see Caribbean people move to the next side of the world. It's hard for people to migrate to the other side of the world. Meaning it's hard for somebody from the Caribbean to be mainstream. It's good to hear Mavado can do mainstream and be accepted, he can do a mainstream radio show and be accepted. More money comes with the labels.

An interesting point of observation is how Reemo spoke of mergers as moving artists "to the other side of the world." He positions the Caribbean dichotomously, and in hierarchal subordination to U.S. markets and executive leadership such that it

is pushed to the nether regions of the world, made invisible and insignificant. Power and visibility are defined in purely economic terms. His statement is indicative of the dependency he believes Caribbean music, and by default its people, have on the U.S.

Yet, the successes of this merger are debatable indicating that the benefits of crossover that Reemo feels strongly about do not always come into fruition. A once very prolific and popular deejay, Mavado, who is now based in Miami, has been a less visible figure in the world of reggae. As DJ Gravy stated, Mavado may have lost "street cred [credibility]" pointing to the assertions I make in chapter three about the importance of being closely associated with Jamaica to authenticity within reggae, even more so within dancehall specifically. Mavado is also unlikely to transform into a pop artist, making his appeal to reggae fans ever more imperative. Record labels often do not invest equally in their artists, which might also play a role.

What Digital and Blaze's perspectives share in common is the belief that the adaption and commodification of reggae benefits Jamaica by putting it on international music and imaginative radars building interest in a little island with big musical impact. Even though their work in reggae is from a diasporic position – Andrew Digital in sound clash hosting and Ricky Blaze as a music producer – the outgrowth and connections between Jamaica, and New York City make Jamaica's success their own. Furthermore, reggae and Caribbean cultural expression is preserved as it is archived internationally in the musical creations of people from around the world. Its transformation is secondary. They do not mind international

performers taking on Caribbean accents in their reggae songs. It is thought to be a part of reproducing reggae rather than being seen as a practice that strips a way of speaking that is specific to a certain cultural and racial community from that community and representing it internationally without its human referents, leaving them without recognition. It is instead a source of recognition.

The general approval of reggae and Caribbean cultural representations growing globally has not translated into West Indian consumption of reggae produced outside of Caribbean communities. As I indicated in the previous chapter, there are preoccupations with authenticity that are tied to the Caribbean space, and in particular Jamaica. While German artists taking on Caribbean accents in the English language reggae songs they make does not offend my research collaborators nor does an Israeli reggae artist performing at a New York City based annual summer reggae concert, they do not necessarily feel that it is "true" reggae. Similarly, while recreations of Caribbean culture outside of Caribbean spaces by people who are not Caribbean are not looked upon as parasitic cultural appropriation, there does exist doubtfulness and concern as to whether it is true to form. The disappointment of Mo'Bay's West Indian customers, many of which would never return to the restaurant again, with the rendering of Caribbean food is an example.

The lack of cultural protectivism that my research collaborators demonstrate contrasts greatly with the level of protectiveness and possessiveness African-Americans exhibit over their cultural forms, particularly music, with which I am more familiar. Reid (1970) and Glazer and Moynihan (1970) interpret how

perspectives on race of Afro-Caribbean people contrasts with African-Americans in part because of the contrasting sociohistorical racial contexts of the Anglophone Caribbean and the greater ratio of Afro-descendants to Euro-descendants. These differences, they argue, cause Afro-Caribbean people to not suffer from the same racial complexes and insecurities as African-Americans. In the previous chapter I argue against the notion that Afro-Caribbean people have drastically contrasting experiences with and interpretations of race to those of African-Americans. It is still useful, however, to consider how the different structural relationships between race and power, racial demographics, and histories of race relations might differently affect views on race even if not to argue that race is irrelevant to shaping subjectivities or informing social engagement.

The more accepting attitude my West Indian research collaborators hold in regards to White adaptation and commodification of reggae culture seems an example of how these differing dynamics might inform perspectives on adaptation of their cultural forms. Of specific relevance is the absence of racial dictatorships in the Caribbean (Omi and Winant 1994) in which one racial group has historically defined itself as the sole representation of the national community at the expense of racial minorities whose oppression has helped to secure the power of that dominant racial group. A part of systemic racism in the U.S. has been the denial of the cultural contributions of historically marginalized people, particularly African-Americans. When subsequently the dominant racial group, in the U.S. White Americans, claims the cultural production of marginalized people, the stage is set for conflict and contention over ownership.

These aspects of U.S. racial history have filtered into and dramatically informed how African-Americans view White adaptation of music forms originating in Black communities. They are dynamics that have not similarly informed the reggae industry. There is not a parallel history of Caribbean artists or music listeners witnessing the very people who historically denied their humanity and cultural contributions, claim ownership and become the faces of their cultural product within that country. There is not a parallel history of their artists being denied access to the hotels they were hired to perform in, or entry in the front doors of venues they were to perform at, or having to surrender their music to a power holding racial group without financial compensation or acknowledgement in order for them to perform as their own.

This is not to argue that there is no history of exploitation in the reggae music industry. It is instead to illustrate how U.S. exploitation has been historically connected to and directly illustrative of a systematically enforced racial binary that has come to define how the exploitation of artists and cultural producers has taken shape in a way that differs from the history of reggae. I argue that this contrasting historical dynamic accounts for West Indians not feeling sensitive about outside adaptation, commodification, and performance of reggae and Caribbean culture. My research collaborators see trying to "be Jamaican" as a source of pride and impersonations of West Indian accents as flattery, and commodification as a benefit to the culture, and as cultural preservation, rather than as a threat to it or its authenticity. Contrastingly, White commodification and adaptation of African-American music forms is largely considered a form of appropriation, as evidenced

by the issues taken with White female rapper Iggy Azalea being named the "Queen of Hip-hop" and continued assertions that Elvis stole Black music along with his contemporary successors Robin Thicke and Justin Timberlake. The shared perspective of my U.S. born research collaborators with those born in the West Indies is indicative of their orientation towards the Caribbean in interpreting the costs and benefits of the commodification of cultural and expressive forms. It is furthermore indicative of their investments in the Caribbean as a social and cultural space, including the Caribbean in NYC.

West Indian perspectives of non-West Indian commodification and consumption of reggae contrast with the level of cultural protectiveness of reggae that Jamaicans demonstrate toward other West Indians. The difference lies in the insularity of the reggae economic system in Brooklyn and the competition that develops between reggae professionals within it. Additionally, as Digital explained, "we know the roots is Jamaica," Ricky Blaze adding "it all comes back to Jamaica" but when other West Indians are involved in reggae production it is less clear who "owns" reggae. Jamaicans being globally recognized and credited with creating reggae and serving as its international ambassadors is at stake when other West Indians participate. Non-Caribbean commodification poses less of a threat in this regard.

Outside of the commodification of reggae and Caribbean cultural forms that outsiders to the Caribbean cultural and geographic space undertake, West Indians in Brooklyn continue to be leaders in these efforts. Examples of their work to economically expand on reggae and Caribbean cultural production that have been

hereto unexplored are the creation of alternative to mainstream media outlets including pirate radio stations. Carib Spotlight TV is an example of a reggae entertainment news outlet that exists outside of mainstream corporate production. At a number of reggae music industry events I observed the bright lights of a small production crew that included a cameraman, boom operator, and anchorwoman. Her name is Kshoya, the face of Carib Spotlight TV. I observed Kshoya pulling artists aside for photo opportunities and brief interviews that I learned would later be aired on the Internet or BCAT – Brooklyn Community Access Television. Kshoya shared her history in reggae entertainment to give me an idea of how alternative media outlets work.

Brooklyn Airwaves: Media Takeover and Pirating the Radio

Kshoya began her career by submitting ideas for TV shows to Brooklyn Community Access Television, a network that airs programs Brooklyn residents create for free. The programs are only viewable within Brooklyn. Kshoya and a friend put together a public access television show they called Skull Masta TV, which focused on reggae news and entertainment. They attended and reported at reggae events, concerts, and conducted interviews with reggae artists making appearances throughout the city. Skull Masta TV also provided an outlet for local, independent artists to showcase their work. Kshoya and her colleague made a profit from the show by hosting talent showcases in which performers were charged fees to participate and from being hired by promoters to host, record, and air their events

on BCAT. The income earned from Skull Masta TV was just enough to offset the costs of production, yet, Kshoya and her colleague continued forth with episodes. "I was doing it for the love of it," she said, "I have a natural love for the entertainment business and I always wanted to be a part of it professionally. It's almost like a second home, a natural environment to be in." She elaborated that the entertainment business feels like a second home because of her familial background.

Her parents are both from Jamaica where her father established himself as a successful reggae selector. When her parents migrated to the United States her father continued his work in reggae music. Kshoya grew up in a household where well-known selectors regularly passed through and she attended the parties her father would play at. "I'm drawn into the reggae market because of my family, my culture. My background is Jamaican. It feels like I'm just drawn to it naturally." Kshoya's childhood experiences and interest in media and entertainment mirror those of artists and celebrity children who grow up in entertainment and aspire to their parents' careers. For Kshoya, however, there are also significant cultural implications to being raised in the reggae entertainment world and to her career pursuits. Her work within the New York City reggae scene and development of alternative media outlets serves to directly nurture a performance community and cultural institution that is contingent on the practices of the West Indian Diasporic community and serves to strengthen it.

Kshoya and her partner from Skull Masta TV eventually parted ways. She subsequently established Kshoya Entertainment, a company that covers many areas of reggae industry business: marketing, public relations, interviewing, and talk show

hosting with Kshoya herself wearing the different professional hats. Along with running her company she is a host and co-producer of Carib Spotlight TV, and single mother of three. Carib Spotlight TV is a network that covers reggae news, events, and entertainment with the different programs made viewable on online. The success of the different shows is measured by the number of viewers tallied every time a person clicks play on one of the recorded episodes. The income is generated from their informally contracted work reporting at events with a promise for later incorporation of recorded segments into programing. Beyond income, working for Carib Spotlight TV has given Kshoya exposure that helps with the promotion of her company and expands access to reggae celebrities. She was recently offered a job working as a host for an entertainment network in Jamaica but was not in the position to relocate or divert attention away from her company, and turned down the opportunity. The recognition in Jamaica of her work in New York is indicative of the interconnectedness of the two sites.

Carib Spotlight TV is just one of many alternative entertainment news outlets that cover topics of interests to reggae lovers, whose interests are not fully captured on mainstream outlets. They are examples of the ways in which people in West Indian New York are on a grassroots level building the reggae industry and finding entrepreneurial possibilities therein. Pirate radio stations are another example of alternative to mainstream avenues through which entrepreneurs deliver reggae to interested audiences and contribute to reggae based economic, and professional ventures.

Pirate radio refers to unlicensed, unmonitored public radio broadcasts that individuals make through their illegal access of unused FM or AM radio airwaves.[40] All a person needs to establish a weekly radio show are a basic radio transmitter, an antenna, cables, and a programming source, usually a computer. Reggae in Brooklyn has historically been dependent on pirate radio sources, the first and for a long time only, radio stations that aired reggae, and soca and calypso for that matter. As a clandestine enterprise, pirate radio operators are often involved in what one described as "cat-and-mouse broadcasting" to evade the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). Consequently, broadcasting may disappear for days at a time, sound quality may be low, or a song might play on continuous loop for hours.

Terrence, a Trinidadian friend and avid listener of reggae pirate radio feels that "the grittiness is endearing compared to the super polished presentation at Hot 97," one of New York City's corporate run hip-hop radio stations that has a weekly two hour slot dedicated to reggae. Despite the occasional hiccups in broadcasting, pirate radio stations are a significant part of reggae listening. Terrence, recalling some of his favorite listening experiences, added with enthusiasm:

> [Radio hosts] would bring up Jamaican sounds to play segments late into the night that were truly classic. The entire reggae loving population of Brooklyn has something to listen to and drive home to, and do their hair to, and smoke weed to, from the time they leave work 'till they fall asleep. It's hard to find reggae in the morning, even on pirate radio.

[40] FM radio stations usually have clearer signals but short range while AM stations have longer range but poor quality sound.

Ultimately, these stations function at the will and desire of their operators making morning shows less popular and tuning in to static more common in the early hours of the day.

Pirate radio also serves listeners beyond access to Caribbean music. Terrence explained that it is a "vital link" for his immigrant family to their community in Trinidad. He recalled being a kid and gathering with his family to listen to a station that was airing live coverage of a 1990 attempted coup. Along with playing music, these stations disseminate political information and ideologies, and current Caribbean news to their community of listeners.

Although it is an unmonitored and technically illegal enterprise, pirate radio still manages to have local economic significance, an indication of its community impact. Interspersed between reggae songs and Patois chatter, commercials are aired, seemingly contradicting the underground dimensions and counter-hegemonic implications of piracy. Paid advertising is a source of income for radio show hosts that not only serves them but also the local community business ventures that are advertised: parties, restaurants, and businesses offering financial assistance for suffers of poor credit or health guidance for sufferers of high blood pressure. According to one research companion, the financial transactions for paid advertising are conducted informally, or perhaps clandestinely, money passing between business partners at barbershops and restaurants.

Though involved in "cat-and-mouse" broadcasting, pirate radio is not off corporate radars. Steelie Bashment, a pirate radio personality who hosted "Wha Gwaan Radio" eventually became the host of a weekly reggae segment and

representative of reggae listeners at Power 105.1 the corporate radio competitor of Hot 97. Another popular station was supposedly commoditized and merged with Hot 97 unbeknownst to listeners, apparently still exhibiting poor radio quality after. Pirate radio stations are also not off FCC radars.

A 2014 article from the *New York Post* reported that the FCC is privy to "illicit Caribbean" stations "squatting" on airwaves and took forty-six field actions against radio pirates in 2013 (Briquelet 2014b). However, FCC budget cuts, the mobility of pirate radio equipment, and possibility of easily reestablishing transmission on another FM or AM airwave make enforcing laws against rogue stations difficult. Pirate radio continues to thrive and much to the liking of its supporters. "The DJ's enjoy being in the vanguard and playing for the people. The people of Brooklyn really enjoy it and are honestly thirsty for good music, good vibes, relatable DJs, and hilarious callups," Terrence said. He refers to a cultural community ("the people," read Caribbean people) whose interests and preferences (music and vibes) go ignored by mainstream outlets, leaving them "thirsty" with desire for the familiar that is satisfied by community members they can relate to on their local airwaves. His words bring into relief another dimension to the symbiotic relationship between reggae, the production of local reggae industries, and the West Indian community's cultural continuity.

While not all of the various professional outlets and ways of locally producing reggae culture and disseminating Caribbean cultural forms yield large income, they still serve to form a small economic enclave and reggae industry in Brooklyn. The local expansion and successes of reggae promotion, industry

formation, and professional engagement demonstrate that the marketing and promotion techniques that entrepreneurs working outside of the West Indian Brooklyn cultural and geographic space criticize are effective within the community at which they are targeted. Their work evinces savviness in reggae business and marketing that others, including other West Indians themselves, have not credited West Indians with having. While the case may still remain that the level of capital generated pales in comparison to corporate endeavors, people persist because their motivations are not capital driven alone. Their efforts undergird and serve the interests of a West Indian led, collaboratively formed, Brooklyn based reggae community. Furthermore, the work of local reggae media undergirds reggae as a medium to construct West Indian Diasporic identities that are dependent on, and rooted specifically in the New York City Caribbean cultural context.

EPILOGUE
DISAPPEARING PLACES

At the time I write the closing to this exploration into West Indian identities, living reggae culture, and the distinct ways West Indians transform Brooklyn cartographies, I feel a sense of sadness. It a sense of sadness quickly growing among native New Yorkers prompted by an exponential growth in income disparity and surge in gentrification. The sadness stems from observations of loss, from fear of vanishing cultural diversity, and the disappearance of ethnic enclaves that give New York City its character, and have been integral to its history. The sadness grows from unrecognizability, unaffordability, inaccessibility, and from identifying with the growing outsiderness that many long time New York City residents feel in the communities in which they were raised. These changes are in part due to the rapidly increasing influx of middle and upper class people from the various states of the U.S. who want to make New York City, an important cosmopolitan center and axis of the fashion, arts, and music worlds, their home. People who want to test the limits of the New York City adage "if you can make it here, you can make it anywhere." The resulting changing economic demographics are transforming New York City's residential spaces.

When Taylor Swift, a country turned pop singer from Tennessee, was declared the "Global Welcome Ambassador" of New York and began appearing in commercials and sidewalk ads as representative of the city, New Yorkers of various economic and racial backgrounds felt it was an affront, but not a surprise. Swift being named ambassador is indicative of the changes the city is witnessing whether

native New Yorkers like it or not. Like Taylor Swift, other U.S. migrants are moving to New York and being branded the new locals. However, unlike the singer, they are seeking homes in communities that still have reasonable rents – predominantly working, lower, and middle class communities of color. As a result of the influx, eager tenants with more available funds drive the market rates for inner-city residences into unrecognizably high costs.

What is the gain of new New Yorkers is the loss of local residents. Predatory evictions, manipulation, and buy-outs, a low cost for residential property owners to pay, are just a few of the ways landlords are pushing tenants out of their long-held rent stabilized or rent controlled apartments to bring them up to market price. Seeing the potential in these communities, as their racial demographics change, real estate developers are buying deteriorating buildings and converting them into luxury residential units far out of the financial reach of the community members who have always lived there.

A secondary result of the influx of out of town people to the city is that the middle and upper class children of long standing Manhattan residents are moving to Queens and Brooklyn. The Bronx is expected to be next. Popularly associated with poverty, crime, destitution, and vibrant urban cultural production from which hip-hop sprung, the South Bronx has recently been dubbed "SoBro" in real estate lingo. The term is a reflection of the eyes on its lucrative investment potential prompted by young White artists moving into the spacious high ceiling loft spaces found there. As the outer boroughs become more "developed" – full of bars, cafés, restaurants, clothing boutiques, vintage stores and bustling nightlife – they become trendy

places to live for New York City's middle and rising upper classes, which carries considerable racial implications as well. Brooklyn residents in particular are feeling, and seeing, these changes that are very evident in West Indian Brooklyn.

I stood in shock as a group of White twenty-something-year-olds walked by me on a block that if someone had told me in high school I would in the future see White people I would have laughed incredulously. Organic and gourmet food grocery stores are seemingly springing up on every corner. Cafés, bars, and restaurants drawing "hipster" crowds are popping up between longstanding mom-and-pop businesses. The food cart selling "doubles," a Trinidadian delicacy, moves further down the avenue, and everything becomes more expensive. Neighborhood bodegas, bodega being the word Puerto Ricans have used to refer to corner grocery stores that is now a widely used term (as Taylor Swift has reported), are unrecognizable too. Their facades more modern, interiors renovated, and items in stock reflecting the tastes of the new locals. While many of these changes are framed as positive – there is more food availability, neighborhoods are becoming more racially and economically diverse, there are more businesses, infrastructure is improving – these framings ignore that the changes are to the benefit of the incoming residents not the longstanding ones and are often accompanied by exclusion. Greater diversity is not necessarily resulting in greater social integration or exchange.

The idea of "crossing Nostrand," the avenue that separates a still strongly West Indian neighborhood from an area undergoing rapid redesign, carries implications that many new residents care not to explore. A couple that wants to

enter a bar in sweatpants in winter is denied entry because they are not properly dressed. Dress codes are an easy way to exclude certain demographics of people. New businesses tend not to hire the longtime locals, rather the new residents that mirror their desired clientele. Terrence does not care that he can now buy hummus right down his block. He wishes "the doubles man" was still there. Caribbean food restaurants and grocery stores are now in competition with much larger company owned businesses that appeal to the growing population of non-Caribbean people. Old neighborhood patrons feel they must now hurry out of bodegas after making purchases because their redesigning and new growing clientele makes obvious that this is no longer "their" space of leisure conversation. Community businesses begin to follow the rules of the incomers who are bringing the money, the numbers, and consequently, indirectly demanding that the cultural terrain change.

These changes are not being taken lightly, but really, what can anyone do? Gentrification is a products of access and capitalism. Two young Flatbush women, however, took their frustrations out on two men and one woman in a crime believed to have been motivated by class and race resentment. The two women, identified as Black with no ethnic specification, knocked on the door of an apartment that is in what is still a strongly West Indian neighborhood and at gunpoint forced its three White residents to leave. They allegedly said they were "tired of white people moving into the area." The two women, who also robbed the trio, proceeded to squat in the apartment until they were arrested there two days later (Green and Stepansky 2014). Their decision to squat in the apartment, which would surely facilitate their easy arrest, went unanalyzed in media reporting though it seems a

clear political statement. Others have taken to social media and blogs to vent their frustrations. Vanessa Mártir writing for the "Latino Voices" segment of *The Huffington Post* has written various articles about sentiments of displacement, sadness, and loss resulting from the changes witnessed in her Bushwick, Brooklyn neighborhood, once predominantly Latino.

In the wake of the growing unavailability of affordable housing caused by the influx of people and growth of luxury condos to accommodate new wealth Democrat Bill de Blasio unexpectedly won the 2013 mayoral election. He ran on a campaign that promised to ensure native New Yorkers continue to have a place to live and that the diversity of the city be protected. Formerly a little known New York City Public Advocate, there was little anticipation that de Blasio would win. His landslide victory was evidence of voters' belief in the dire need to address the issues his campaign promised to target. While the Mayor's intentions to narrow income disparity and expand housing equality are meaningful, they cannot fully address the gentrification that threatens the future of ethnic enclaves.

Little Italy is an example of an ethnic enclave that has been dramatically reduced by rising rents and changing demographics. One longtime business owner reported his rent more than doubled when a developer bought the building that houses his business making it difficult for him to sustain it. He has witnessed many businesses that made Little Italy into the distinct place it has historically been disappear under the weight of such changes (Briquelet 2014a). Developers are buying buildings and converting them into hotels and retail spaces that mirror the SoHo businesses, largely fashion related, just a little further west. Now, an ethnically

defined business and residential community that used to extend a mile from north to south and east to west is only three blocks long. There is, however, a significant difference that continual transmigratory flows or (semi) permanent settlement patterns can have on the distinctiveness of ethnic enclaves and helping to maintain them. This is where the analyses and observations of this ethnography come into play to illustrate the various ways the continuity of certain ethnic communities is ensured.

Using reggae as an ethnographic lens, I have demonstrated that popular (expressive) cultural forms and the subcultures that surround them are analytically useful to interpret the creation of transnational, racial and cultural, subjectivities. Integral to my analysis of the reggae subculture have been the wider dimensions to West Indian cultural recreation, performance, embodiment and social, and economic practices that not only undergird reggae but also sustain the community at large and define its contours. Actions that transform space, make Brooklyn "the flesh and blood," and form transgeographies that bring West Indian neighborhoods into a Caribbean space. Within this space figurative citizens of Caribbean nations continue to be born. Observation and interpretations of these actions have looked at the structuring of both reggae and Caribbean places and the social, performative and economic practices that unfold therein. These practices include, but are not limited to: Djing, the work of the mic man, dancing, informal business ventures, including dollar vans, food vendors, the sale of DVDs, CDs, and, reggae pirate radio and media outlets.

All of these sociocultural and economic practices come together to build transgeographic places that connect West Indian Brooklyn to the nations of the Caribbean from which its residents have come. The demand for ethnically specific goods and business types that the continual replenishing of the West Indian population maintains also gives smaller businesses more of a chance of survival. Fundamentally, the West Indian community, its geography, and Caribbean subjectivities are consistently being remade as is evidenced in figurative citizenship. I have furthermore shown how the vitality of this community reflects pan West Indian collaborative efforts to produce reggae culture and form transgeographies, despite antagonisms. This ethnography has also shed light on the salience of Afro-Caribbean Black racial identities that are indicative of the West Indian communities' rootedness in the NYC ethnographic context while also illustrating the transnational communication of Blackness that popular cultural facilitates.

The arguments presented here cohere to predict the continued vibrancy of the West Indian community in New York City despite gentrification and changing economic patterns. They can also be used to understand similarly robust diasporic communities that have corresponding patterns of consistent immigration or transmigration. The Dominican community in Washington Heights, uptown Manhattan (*Dominicanita*), a neighborhood that is difficult to navigate without a command of Spanish, provides an example. The borders of the enclave may change but as long as the sociocultural, performance, and economic practices that sustain the community are engaged in as the population circulates through Circum-Caribbean webs (physical and digital) a distinct community will survive.

Additionally, where the desire remains to recreate in order to satisfy the nostalgia of diasporic communities and nurture their imaginings, figurative citizens will be produced through these processes and the West Indian community will thrive. Reggae culture will exist in symbiotic relationship it. The creation of the vibes and performance practices that undergird the reggae complex will reflect symbiosis and be visible on the physical, embedded in the symbolic, and made tangible through sensory creation witnessed in the liminal transgeographies that illustrate what exists when here and there are connected.

APPENDIX

Cham "Hope"

Verse 1:
You know say dem trick we/Dem trick we you know?/ Food can't buy/ Bills sky high/Money ah thief/Politician ah tell lie/What unu [you all] ah do?/ Unu nah [you all don't] see poor cry/ Sixteen and fifteen year old you ah die/Election called/Things rearranged/New government in but nothing' ah change/All dem ah do ah buy up new Benz and new Rang [Rover]/ And treat people like mange/(unu hear me now?)

Chorus:
Where there is life there must be hope/The leaders them nah understand the scope/ Just the grace of God make we cope/Society ah slide down a very steep slope/Round up the politicians and some rope/Dem a treat we like dem take we fi some dope [like they take us for stupid]/So next election when dem want we fi [to] vote/ Mek [let] we come together tell the thief them 'nope!'

Verse1:
Last election we ah watch TV/ Heard a boast statement from one nominee/ Him say "when I win education will be free!"/ Wonder a who did him a talk? Look like it never we [I wonder who he was talking to? Looks like wasn't us]/'Cause Momma Jenny still can't afford school fee/Plus text book alone ah run 'bout 40g/ Man hafi [have to] wear back [wear again] dem old khaki (dat nah right) [that's not right]/Rise and make dem 'fraid 'cause the power inna we

Cham "Ghetto Story"

Verse1:
I remember those days when hell was my home/ When me and mama bed was a big piece a foam/ And me never like bathe and my hair never comb/ When mama gone a work me go street, go roam/ I remember when Danny them take me snow cone/And make him little brother them kick up Jerome/I remember when we visit them with pure big stone/And the boy Danny pop out something with full chrome/ I remember when we run/ Fatta get him knee blown [shot]/ And me best friend

Richie get two [gun shots] in a him dome [head]/ I remember so the avenue turn in a warzone/ And Mikey mother fly him out, cause she get a loan/ But, Mikey go to foreign and go turn Al Capone/ Make whole heap a money and send in our own/ Now a we a lock the city and, that is well known/ Yesterday Mikey call me 'pon me phone/ Me say Mikey

Chorus:
We get the ting them, them outta luck now/ Me squeeze seven [gunshots] and the whole a them a duck now/ We have whole heap a extra clip cause we no broke now/We get the ting dem, so dem haffi [have to] rate we/ 'Cause we a take it to them wicked as of lately/And now the whole community a live greatly

Verse 2:
I remember bout '80, Jamaica explode/When a Trinity and Tony Hewitt dem a run road/ That a long before Laing dem and even Bigga Ford/When Adams dem a Corporal nuh know the road code/I remember when we rob the Chinese shop down the road/And rumor have it say the Chinese man have a sword/But we did have a one pop [sling shot] we make outta board/So you know the next day mama pot overload/ I remember when we skip the poll clerks/And dump the ballot box pan Tivoli outskirts/And hold a plane ticket and go chill over Turks/When me come back a still in a the hole me a lurk/I remember those days when informer Dirks get one in a him face and me nuh get nuh perks/And the bigger heads dem are a couple of jerks/'Cause a dem a make the money when a we mash the works

Chorus:
We get the ting them, them outta luck now/ Me squeeze seven [bullets] and the whole a them a duck now/ We have whole heap a extra clip cause we not broke now/We get the ting dem, so dem haffi [have to] rate we/ 'Cause we a take it to them wicked of lately/And now the whole community a live greatly

Verse 3:

Jamaica get screwed through greed an glutton/Politics manipulate and press youths button/But we rich now so dem can't tell man nothin'/ 'Cuz a we a make mama a nyaam [eat] fish and mutton/Hey over there so mek [let] me tell unnu [you all] something/True me they a foreign now a guy kill me cousin/ And me hear say TD dead but him said he wasn't /Anytime me fly down him get bout a dozen 'cause

Chorus:

We get the ting them, them outta luck now/ Me squeeze seven [bullets] and the whole a them a duck now/ We have whole heap a extra clip cause we not broke now/We get the ting dem, so dem haffi [have to] rate we/ 'Cause we a take it to them wicked of lately/And now the whole community a live greatly

Morgan Heritage, "Brooklyn & Jamaica"

Intro:
Don't bother ask mi 'bout what I don't know/ Ask mi 'bout how the youths flow/ It's a reality show

Verse 1:
I don't know nothin' much about Beverly Hills/I don't know about working for the system/I don't know about life on Miami Beach/But know a little 'bout the streets

Chorus:
Just ask me 'bout Brooklyn/And how the ganja move in the street/And when you're poor you can't sleep/Ask me 'bout Brooklyn/Where everyday another bites the dust/True so much gunshot a bust [fire]

Just ask mi 'bout Jamaica/Where life is gettin' harder/And if you ever come on yah Ask me 'bout Jamaica/Where the policeman and soldier/Nuh stop charge man fi [for] murder so

Verse 2:
No bother ask me 'bout things that I don't know/Ask me 'bout reality and I will show/Show you just how di ghetto yutes flow/This is real life livin' a nuh [not a] puppet show/We don't know about owning yachts and fancy cars/But where we come from those/who show off become victims/'Cause in the ghetto everyone is a superstar/And everyone is packing heat [carrying guns]

Chorus:
Just ask 'bout Brooklyn/And how the ganja move in the street/And when you're poor you can't sleep/Ask me 'bout Brooklyn/Where everyday another bites the dust/True so much gunshot a buss

Just ask mi 'bout Jamaica/Where life is gettin' harder/And if you ever come on yah Ask me 'bout Jamaica/Where the policeman and soldier/Nuh [don't] stop charge man fi murda

Verse 3:
'Cause it's hard, yeah/This life/It's not a pretty life/When ya live in this here ghetto life, yeah/Upon the east side/ 'Cause this life, yeah/It's not a pretty life/When ya live in this here ghetto life, yeah/Over on the west side

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