

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

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Exploring the Perspectives of Los Angeles Based Jamaican Community Organizations

Serving Immigrant Origin Jamaican Adolescents.

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by

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Exploring Community Cultural Spaces
Serving Immigrant Origin Jamaican Adolescents
in Los Angeles.

by

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Very little research has been done on Jamaican immigrants in Los Angeles. Existing research has focused on the majority Latino immigrant population, while others have lumped Jamaicans in with the broader African American demographic. This paper seeks to begin to uncover the experiences of Jamaicans in Los Angeles by investigating the role that community based Jamaican organizations play in the assistance and adjustment of immigrant origin Jamaican adolescents in locally. Representatives from five local Jamaican Community Organizations, with initiatives focused on Education and Youth, were interviewed using semi-structured qualitative interview methods to uncover what they do to assist Jamaican Immigrant adolescents in the county. Overall, the findings show that minimal direct service is provided from these organizations, even though they offer opportunities for scholarships and involvement. Organizations express a desire to do more and offered their insights and ideas. Further research should explore the perspectives of the Jamaican Immigrants Adolescents,

Parents, Guidance Counselors, and Teachers who work directly with Jamaican Immigrants adolescents in schools within the Los Angeles Context. Having this data will enable organizations and service providers to be able to uncover the full picture and in response, create services to meet their needs adequately.

The thesis of Diane Marie Allen is approved.

Pedro Antonio Noguera

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2019

DEDICATION PAGE

This study is dedicated to all my fellow Caribbean Immigrants and their families who took the bold step to move to another country to make the life of their dreams a reality.

I honor our cultural pride, resilience, creativity, and the ways in which we stand out in a society that often lumps us in with others.

To all the Caribbean Organizations and the individuals who so generously do great work in our communities, not just with keeping us connected us with our island homes, but also in keeping us connected as a community.

I applaud you, and I thank you for paving the way for newbies like me to come on board and join the force to continue to build a bridge to success for the many others coming behind us.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

MPI- Migration Policy Institute

CYC- Caribbean Youth Club

JAAC- Jamaica Awareness Association of California

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Introduction

There is an African proverb that says “it takes a village to raise a child,” but does that village still exist when that child moves from one country to another? In Jamaica, a culture built on a interdependence/collectivism (Hofstede, 1991), support can be found for its young people through the community. In this community, the mesosystem—a concept defined by Bronfenbrenner (1994) as a part of his ecological systems theory - contributes to children’s development, not only through the influence of their home environment (parents and family) but also through their surrounding environments (Paat, 2013). Those surrounding environments are made up of various institutions such as school (teachers and guidance counselors), the church (pastor & church members), peers (classmates, community friends), and their neighborhood (neighbors, shopkeepers, community members). As Jamaican immigrant adolescents migrate to the United States, little is known about their community supports, especially in Los Angeles, where there is a smaller percentage of Jamaican Immigrants as compared to the East coast. Thus, this study seeks to explore the community support provided by an education or youth-focused Jamaican Community Organizations in the Los Angeles Metropolitan Area to Jamaican Immigrant Origin Adolescents.

The study will report on the Los Angeles context for Jamaican immigrants, an area where the immigrant youth and education research has mostly focused on the majority Hispanic immigrant population. It will discuss the immigrant origin adolescent story, and the research that surrounds the assets and challenges immigrant adolescents face in particular. As community cultural spaces show promise for easing acculturative problems, leaders of the Jamaican community organizations were interviewed to garner their insights. Based on these interview results, recommendations, and directions for future research suggestions are shared.

Literature Review

The Story of Jamaican Migration to the U.S.

Jamaicans have been a part of United States history for many years. Known for being hardworking, and rebellious, Jamaicans to this day have made their mark in the world over for being the first at many things: creating and beating records (e.g. in sports, Usain Bolt), shaping culture (e.g. in music, Bob Marley) and being leaders (e.g. in politics, Colin Powell and Kamala Harris etc.).

Today, there is a large population of Jamaican immigrants in the United States. According to the 2017 American Community Survey, 13.7% (44.5 million) of the United States population are foreign-born immigrants. Ten percent (4.4 Million) of those foreign-born immigrants are Caribbean immigrants, of which 16.9% (745,000) are Jamaican immigrants (MPI, 2017). [See Table 1 and Figure1].

[Table 1]

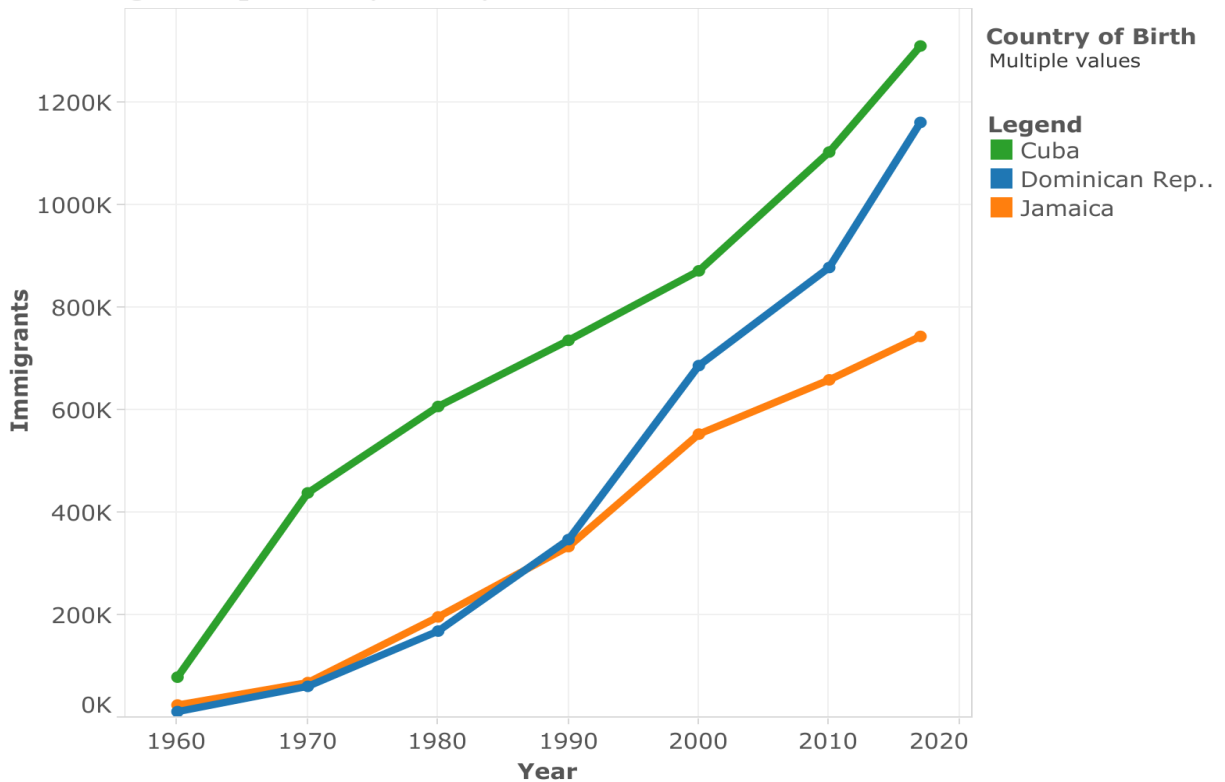
Table 1. Distribution of Caribbean Immigrants by Country of Origin, 2017

Region and Country	Number of Immigrants	Percent (%)
Caribbean	4,415,000	100.0
Cuba	1,312,000	29.7
Dominican Republic	1,163,000	26.3
Jamaica	745,000	16.9
Haiti	680,000	15.4
Trinidad and Tobago	235,000	5.3
Barbados	56,000	1.3
Grenada	34,000	0.8
Dominica	34,000	0.8
Bahamas	33,000	0.7
West Indies	25,000	0.6
St. Vincent and the Grenadines	24,000	0.5
Other Caribbean	76,000	1.7

Source: Migration Policy Institute (MPI) tabulation of data from the U.S. Census Bureau 2017 American Community Survey (ACS).

[Figure 1]

U.S. Immigrant Population by Country of Birth, 1960-2017



Migration Policy Institute (MPI) Data Hub
<http://migrationpolicy.org/programs/data-hub>

The data also shows that the majority of Caribbean immigrants settle in port-of-entry East coast states such as New York and Florida, which have the 3rd & 4th highest foreign-born population in the U.S., respectively. However, some Caribbean Immigrants have also migrated to the West coast states like California and Texas, which rank 1st and 2nd, respectively in having the highest foreign-born population (MPI, 2017).

[Table 2]

Table 2. Top Concentrations of Caribbean Immigrants by Metropolitan Area, 2013-17

Metropolitan Area	Immigrant Population from the Caribbean	% of Metro Area Population
New York-Newark-Jersey City, NY-NJ-PA	1,352,000	6.7%
Miami-Fort Lauderdale-West Palm Beach, FL	1,263,000	21.0%
Boston-Cambridge-Newton, MA-NH	155,000	3.2%
Orlando-Kissimmee-Sanford, FL	127,000	5.3%
Tampa-St. Petersburg-Clearwater, FL	100,000	3.4%
Atlanta-Sandy Springs-Roswell, GA	81,000	1.4%
Philadelphia-Camden-Wilmington, PA-NJ-DE-MD	74,000	1.2%
Washington-Arlington-Alexandria, DC-VA-MD-WV	66,000	1.1%
Houston-The Woodlands-Sugar Land, TX	47,000	0.7%
Los Angeles-Long Beach-Anaheim, CA	36,000	0.3%

Source: MPI tabulation of data from the U.S. Census Bureau pooled 2013–17 ACS.

The California Context

The state of California is reported in the U.S. Census Bureau’s most recent 2017 American Community Survey [ACS], to be the largest immigrant destination in the U.S. There are over 10.4 million immigrants, 27% of the total state population, residing in California, majority of whom are Latino (Zong, Batalova & Burrows, 2019). Los Angeles County (Los Angeles- Long Beach - Anaheim) is home to 36,000 Caribbean Immigrants making up 0.3% metro area population. Jamaicans, the largest English-Speaking Caribbean Immigrant group in California, has approximately 6,000 people documented as living in this region. (MPI, 2017)

History of Jamaican Immigrant Migration

The first massive wave of voluntary migration to the United States from Jamaica was in the early 20th century, which included laborers and guest workers in the fields of agriculture and hospitality. Another big wave came in the 1960s. Some immigrants were pushed by factors such as the political and civil unrest in Jamaica and the economic instability during that time. Therefore, those who had the means migrated to the U.S. Many

took advantage of the recruitment of professional and skilled labor by U.S. companies (Nurse, 2004). For others, their migration came in light of the passing of the Hart-Cellar Act of 1965 which opened the doors for family reunification and immigration from countries that were previously restricted by the quota system of the 1924 Johnson-Reed Act.

The Jamaican immigrant story of migration to the United States resembles the story of other foreign-born immigrants from other countries-yearning for a better life. The move offered more significant economic opportunities - the ability to earn more, send remittances home, and access steady employment- serving as a pull factor and motivation to migrate (Dunlevy, 1991). Jamaican immigrants over the years have taken advantage of these socio-economic opportunities in the U.S. that would allow them to provide for their families more adequately than they could if they sought employment in Jamaica. In doing so, many immigrants leave behind their young children to be raised by extended family members and to receive their early education and socialization in Jamaica while they create a foundation for their family in the U.S.

Adolescent Immigrant Youth Experiences

The process of immigration for many people is a taxing experience (Thomas,1995). During this process, Jamaican immigrants, like other immigrants, frequently separate for several months or years from their family when they migrate to the United States. During this time, if they have the means, some immigrants travel to Jamaica occasionally to visit, or they have their children and relatives visit them in the U.S. Most Jamaican Immigrants, however, in the interim, send home remittances and goods (for example in barrels) to care for their children and contribute to the family household (Crawford-Brown & Rattray, 1994). The goal from the moment of migration is to reunite with their immediate families as quickly as possible. So over time, after finding stability, many send for their children and immediate relatives to join them permanently in the United States. However, the immigrant story is not

without its challenges for the immigrant adult, but also for the children who were left behind (Bakker, Elings-Pels & Reis, 2009).

Pre-migration.

When Jamaican immigrants, like other immigrants, decide to leave their children behind in their home country, it is one of the hardest decisions they have to make (Suárez-Orozco, Bang & Kim, 2011). The children and family they leave behind are often faced with the emotional adjustment of the migratory separation, as well as the restructuring of the household. Many children end up staying with, and being raised by, either their other parent or a guardian; which in many cases are extended family members like aunts, uncles and, grandparents. These arrangements allow the children to continue to develop their early educational career and value system inside of the Jamaican familial and cultural context. However, growing up without one or both of their parents, especially for long periods of separation, has been reported to cause many psychosocial & emotional issues. Some of the issues have been reported include: low self-esteem, depression, and feelings of abandonment. In some cases, the difficulties caused by family separation turn into problem behaviors such as: disciplinary issues in school, oppositional behavior, and poor academic performance. Prior research suggests that many of these issues can be attributed to the lack of proper adjustment of the child to the parental migration (Crawford-Brown et al., 1994; Bakker, Elings-Pels et al., 2009; Pottinger, 2005; Pottinger, Stair & Brown, 2008; Valtolina & Colombo, 2012).

Ultimately, the material goods and remittances the Jamaican immigrant parents send for their children's physical care do not replace the need for the emotional care needed to counteract the emotional deficit that can arise from their feelings of neglect and abandonment (Crawford-Brown et al., 1994). Fortunately, technology has provided a way to maintain the emotional support and connection, as cell phone and internet access facilitate

frequent communication between parents and children, providing more opportunities for bonding (Horst, 2006).

Other protective factors come from having a reliable family support system and caregiving, which offer a safe space for the child to talk to about their feelings surrounding the absence of a parent due to migration, enabling them to more successfully navigate the separation and maintain their bonds with their parent (Pottinger, 2005).

It is also worth noting, that as technology and globalization have become more commonplace, Jamaica, an island country only 712 miles away from the United States, has also seen an increase in remote acculturation. Defined by Ferguson and Bernstein (2012) as “indirect and/or intermittent contact between geographically separate groups,” when children grow up in their home country, while still embedded in that culture, they can also gain exposure to other cultures. In Jamaica, the American culture is most prominent and has had more of an influence on its children and youth (Ferguson et al., 2012). This influence comes most popularly through the U.S. media available via cable television channels, entertainment platforms, and social media, as well as through the consumer products often given as gifts by relatives living in the United States. This remote acculturation begins to shape the perception and expectations of the American life and in some cases, causes a shift from Jamaican cultural ideals toward American values, beliefs, and desires (Josephs, 1995; Ferguson & Dimitrova, 2019).

Reunification

Moving to America is a milestone event in one's life, and immigrant children have reported feelings ranging from excitement to the fear of the unknown (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2009). Immigrants ages 5-17 account for 5% of the immigrant population, according to the 2017 Migration Policy Institute. Migrating after the age of 12, the adolescence stage (ages 13 to 17), according to Rumbaut (2004), is considered the 1.25

generation. This generation having been born in their country of origin, and having lived there for the majority of their formative years before moving to a new country of residence, they have a solid memory of their country of birth and are well versed in the values and traditions upheld by the culture.

Immigrant adolescents arrive with a variety of backgrounds, values, assets, and challenges that they have to manage. On arrival to the United States, their pre-exposure to the U.S. culture, preparation, and capacity to take on the adjustments required to function successfully in this new environment will vary (James, 1997; Titzmann & Juang, 2015).

Acculturation

One of the first pieces of the adolescent immigrant story is their experience of acculturation. What they know to be the norm-the Jamaican culture- is challenged in the face of the new culture. Acculturation is defined as a confluence of social, psychological and cultural values, attitudes and beliefs that occur when one culture meets another dominant culture (Phinney, Berry, Vedder & Liebkind, 2006). As time goes by, challenges arise from the changing values and attitudes, which come from the interaction between the culture of their country of origin, in this case, Jamaica, and the host culture, the American Culture. This negotiation occurs between the amount of cultural maintenance -valuing and preserving cultural identity- and the amount of contact or participation with the dominant culture and other cultural groups. John W. Berry (Berry, 1997; Berry, Phinney, Sam, & Vedder, 2006) defines four acculturative strategies in which new immigrants may choose as they engage with the new society. These strategies include assimilation (full acceptance of the new culture and rejection of old culture), separation (maintenance of the old culture and rejection of the new culture), integration also expressed as biculturalism (incorporation of old & new cultures), and marginalization (rejection of both old & new cultures).

The acculturation strategy chosen by the immigrant adolescent begins to color every other area of their life such as: how they navigate the phase of adolescence itself, how it shapes their identity, their cultivation of relationships with the parents at home, and how they understand and successfully operate in school and new social environments. All of these areas have implications for the overall successful adjustment of Jamaican immigrant adolescents measured by some researchers by their academic outcomes, quality of relationships, and mental health (Thomas,1995; Williams & Butler, 2003).

The Adolescent Phase.

During adolescence, the transition period from childhood to adulthood, teenagers go through a variety of changes. Physically they are growing, and cognitively, adolescents are developing their ability to think abstractly (formal logical operations) building upon previously learned concrete thinking. From this foundation, they eventually gain the capacity to make plans and set long-term goals. Socially and emotionally, this is a time where teenagers struggle for independence and control, mostly from their parents. Simultaneously, peer influence and acceptance become increasingly crucial, along with romantic/sexual relationships (Erickson,1994; Steinberg & Morris, 2001).

For many teens, their cultural values dictate their beliefs and practices during this phase. However, when they bump up against another culture and its norms, this other cultural influence may challenge the immigrant adolescent's previously held norms which come from their family and culture. This negotiation can add stress and strain on adolescents as they navigate their sense of self (Gibbons & Poelker, 2019).

Identity Navigation.

Adolescents often experience identity navigation as a tug of war. During this phase they are focused on seeking independence from their parents, building social connections with their peer group, gaining a sense of self, and figuring out how to manifest themselves in

their next steps towards discovering their purpose and place in the world (Erickson, 1968, 1994; Phinney, 1993; Giang & Wittig, 2006). In doing so, they begin to engage in various activities and take on roles inside and outside of their family, to uncover multiple expressions of themselves. During this process, adolescents also start to compare themselves to the peers they encounter in school or those depicted in the media (Waters, 2009). They use the feedback from these relationships, observations, and experiences to inform the creation of their sense of identity. In response, they begin to make deliberate choices in their selection of environment, activities, and people they want to be around that align with their unfolding sense of identity (Connell & Welborn, 1991). Adolescents also simultaneously try to understand and live up to cultural and societal expectations. However, some find that their developing identities are at odds with various people's (parents, teachers, friends) expectations about who they should be and what roles they should play. It is this struggle between the need to stand out and the need to belong that Erik Erikson (1968, 1994) describes as identity vs. role confusion, (stage five of his eight-stage model of psychosocial development). As a result, as adolescents begin to discover themselves, they also have to learn how to express that self in the various environments of home, school, and in their social situations with peers.

Parental Relationships.

A second challenge involves adjusting to living and building relationships with their parents from whom they may have been physically separated from for a while (Smith, Lalonde & Johnson, 2004, Suárez-Orozco, Todorova & Louie 2002). Even though parents may have kept in touch during the separation phase of migration, immigrant children, having been raised by other family members during that time, grow used to the rules, expectations, and allowances set by their guardians. As a result, the re-orientation process with their parents upon migration has been reported by immigrant youth and their parents to consist of conflicts that arise with having to adapt to a new set of rules and parenting styles (Morrison, Bryan &

Steele, 2016; Suarez-Orozco et al., 2011). Addition of new members to the family, such as step-parents and siblings also can create conflict (Smith & Moore, 2013). Conflicts also stem from the fact that many adolescents acculturate faster than their parents. This dissonant acculturation is the source of “intergenerational culture lag” in families that puts a strain on the parent-adolescent relationship and can create rifts that continue over time (Ferguson, & Bornstein, 2012; James, 1997; Kagitcibasi, 2007; Pottinger et al. 2008; Rumbaut & Portes, 2001).

Parents, during the adolescent phase, often find that they are less influential on adolescent behavior and development because of the growing influence of peers and mass media (Phinney & Onwughalu, 1996). Many Jamaican parents work long hours or multiple jobs to support the household, which impacts the amount of time they can spend with their adolescents. The adolescents without the extended family structure or community support may remain unsupervised and have to manage themselves in their new environment, creating the potential for the introduction of negative influences (Roffman, Suarez-Orozco & Rhodes, 2003).

Education/ School Context & Academic Outcomes.

An additional challenge occurs as adolescents enroll in American schools and find themselves having to get acquainted with a whole new educational system which differs in varying degrees to their country of origin’s system of education. A period of adjustment is necessary depending on their educational history and proficiency of the English Language; some also have to make the extra effort to gain new skills to advance and achieve academic success (Suárez -Orozco, Gaytan, Bang, Pakes, O’Connor & Rhodes, 2010; Jones et al., 2017). Some schools, in response to their growing immigrant population, have built-in support in the form of teachers, guidance counselors, specialized orientations, classes, and clubs. Other schools, simply test students and place them in classes according to their proficiency as

determined by those tests. For this reason, some immigrant students get placed in classes that are either below their level or in a class where they are deemed to require special education often because of lack of English language proficiency. With a lack of support and misplacement comes the labels and challenges of the academic adjustment that causes negative impacts on immigrant adolescents. This results in misbehavior, teasing by peers, loss of motivation and placement on the pipeline for failure and delinquency (Suarez-Orozco, Rhodes & Milburn, 2009), all of which impact their mental health, self esteem and academic trajectory (Mitchell, 2005).

For the students that do well academically, they tend to have a higher English proficiency level, come from quality schools in their country of origin, attend schools that provide the adequate support for immigrant students, and have a supportive and stable home environment that values educational achievement and have the means to fund the added support to assist them with making the transition and adjustment (Areepattamannil & Freeman, 2008; Cortes, 2006; Portes, 1999).

Social Environment/ Peer Network.

Another piece of the immigrant adolescent adjustment comes with creating their social network. School, where they spend a significant portion of their time during the week, offers a variety of opportunities to develop friendships. However, immigrants students may find it difficult to establish these new friendships and build a peer group because of how they are different from the status quo (Akbar, Chambers & Thompson, 2001; Suarez-Orozco & Todorova, 2003). Unless there is a significant portion of students who already come from a similar ethnic background, this process is not always easy as students come with an accent, a different way of dress and mannerisms, as well as and not knowing how to navigate the culture (Titzmann & Jugert, 2015). These differences may instead attract ridicule or bullying from their school peers and ultimately cause immigrant adolescents to experience the feeling

of otherness and a lack of belonging (Cortes,2006). Without a culture of acceptance, and intentionally created spaces to socialize and express their Jamaicanness where it can be valued and appreciated, they may not be included or accepted in their school peer groups as quickly.

Mental Health

Acculturative stress, the psychological impact of the adaptation to a new culture (Smart & Smart, 1995), arises from the experiences of the racial stereotyping and discrimination immigrant adolescents face, differences between country of origin and U.S. schools, language barriers, parent/child separation and reunification, and discipline (Morrison, Steele, & Henry, 2015). Cumulatively, these adjustments challenge immigrant adolescents mentally, which manifests both in internal and external symptoms (Achenbach & Rescorla, 2001). A higher incidence of internalizing symptoms such as depression, anxiety, somatic complaints, and low self-esteem, is seen in this first generation immigrant adolescent group and for girls more than boys (Mena, Padilla, & Maldonado, 1987; Sirin, Ryce, Gupta, & Rogers-Sirin, 2013). Externalizing symptoms such as aggression and delinquent behavior in immigrant adolescents is seen to create conflict in their various relationships and environments (Sirin et al., 2013; Grant, Compas, Thurm, McMahon, & Gipson, 2004; Reynolds, O’Koon, Papademetriou, Szczgiel, & Grant, 2001). The evidence of these mental health outcomes, as a result of the acculturative stress immigrant adolescents encounter, should encourage a collective and coordinated effort between schools, counselors and community partners and supports to serve their mental health needs better. During this time, the acculturative stress may be at its highest (Seluk, Ryce, Gupta, 2013) and so such efforts would help to increase their ability to make a smoother adjustment.

Overall Adjustment

With all of these challenges, this in mind, there is value in offering tangible support through Community Cultural Spaces during this critical phase of adjustment for Jamaican Immigrant Adolescents. In places like Los Angeles, where Latinos and Black Americans are the majority, there are few spaces where Jamaican adolescents can find that is carved out just for them. To find community, many have to assimilate to their closest racial demographic. For many Jamaican adolescents, this means gravitating toward Black American spaces and groups. However, what is often not acknowledged is the diversity in the black community between Caribbean blacks, African Blacks, and African Americans (Akbar et al., 2001). Historically, Jamaicans have moved into local communities where there are African-American blacks and have had to employ survival and adjustment techniques to navigate that environment. For example, hiding and suppressing pieces of their Jamaican identity to fit into and take advantage of social groups and resources available to African-Americans. However, the differences in the value system, work ethic, cultural pride, and resulting stereotypes have also caused a kind of clash manifesting as within-group discrimination, which adds to the stress and strain of adjustment (Waters, 2009). Having created intentional spaces to be themselves-being able to express themselves in the fullness of their cultural and ethnic identity- and have access to resources tailored to their unique needs especially in the initial adjustment stages is vital to their successful transition to the mainstream American life.

The Role of the Community

When an adult immigrant moves to a new country, it is natural for them after getting situated with their basic needs- like housing and employment- to next focus on building their community. Surviving in a new place often means plugging into the familiar to provide grounding as one adjusts to all that is new and unfamiliar. For immigrants, this provides opportunities for engagement with elements of their country of origin and eases the process of adjustment. For immigrant origin adolescents, their social and cultural capital will come

most directly from the community their parents/guardians were able to curate before their arrival, as well as through their schools (teachers, guidance counselors, peers). What is accessible to them, is dependent on such factors like the neighborhood they live in, and the quality, resourcefulness, and commitment of schools they attend in assisting and catering to immigrant students (Roffman et al., 2003).

Context & Community Matters

As a community is built, so are the informal and formal places of gathering established. In the Jamaican community, such informal spaces include restaurants, churches, associations, cultural & sporting events, barber shops & hair salons. The more formal places are centered on cultural engagement and civic participation. Organizations like Jamaican associations, pool resources of money, talent, and time to give back to their country of origin-Jamaica in attempt to meet the needs and gaps in health & education in the neediest areas. However, little is known about how they help newly arriving immigrants seamlessly join the Jamaican community, especially in the Los Angeles context. Recognizing that adolescents are rebuilding their social relationships- as they would have left all of their family, teacher allies and friends back in their home country, it is essential to consider that the community might need to be the first to reach out to assist them in this process. Each adolescent will vary in personality, drive, and ability for coping with this process of adjustment. Given these challenges, communities can serve as useful buffers and guides.

What are Community Cultural Spaces?

Community cultural spaces allow for exercising cultural practices and an opportunity to be reminded of one's origin country values. Many of these values are central to healthy social-emotional development and academic success for immigrant adolescents (Yosso 2005).

There is value in the existence and services provided by community cultural spaces that benefit immigrant students in a variety of ways. In the initial stages after the migratory

transition, being able to engage with members of one's culture of origin provides the opportunity of sharing the experience of living and adjusting to the new culture with people from a similar background. Within a community cultural space, rather than feeling like an outsider, newcomer immigrant adolescents can start to feel like they are immediately understood, safe, and gain a sense of belonging. In a culturally safe space, they can begin to figure out how to reposition themselves and how to negotiate their new identities, whether it is national or cultural or ethnic (Rumbaut, 2005). They also have an open space to discuss and learn how to deal with the identities being given to them by society and how best to deal with the within-group racial discrimination and bullying that is a prevalent problem.

The Caribbean Youth Club

In places like Boston, Massachusetts that has the 7th largest foreign-born population, approximately 4.2 % of their residents are Caribbean Immigrants; organizations like the Caribbean Youth Club recognize the need to provide the added support for the youngest and most vulnerable members of the Caribbean Immigrant community. The Caribbean Youth Club (CYC) was established in October 2010 with a mission “to help newly arrived Caribbean youth make successful transitions into American life and succeed through higher education” (www.caribbeanyouthclub.org). This mission was driven by the many reports from teachers and parents of newly arrived (1-3 years) Afro-Caribbean youth who were enrolled in Boston public schools who were having a hard time adjusting to their challenges at home and school. These adolescents had no place to go to get the support they needed to cater to their unique needs. "Latino" programs for Dominicans and Puerto Rican youth, who are also apart of the Caribbean exist, but those groups see themselves more as Latino than Caribbean, so the CYC program filled that gap by targeting the Afro-Caribbean adolescents and tailoring the programs to their afro-identities and backgrounds. Caribbean Youth Club carries out its mission by providing academic support, leadership development, employment opportunities,

recreational activities, college preparation and higher education assistance, gender-specific mentoring, and culture-based performing arts programs. They report their successes as the following:

- 99% attendance rate in our program - youth attend most/all sessions
- 95% complete a full year of our program - Strong retention rate
- 90% of all participants pass all of their classes and meet academic benchmarks
- 3% or less involved in juvenile crime or delinquency
- 80% are college bound (attend fairs and express interest in attending college)
- 20% are interested in post-high school vocational programs
- 90% involvement in extracurricular activities and clubs (after-school activities)
- The first cohort has 80% college graduation rate, and the 2nd cohort is still in college.

(source: [www.caribbean youth club.org](http://www.caribbeanyouthclub.org))

The Caribbean Youth Club, which started in the small staff lounge of a local school and then expanded to its current facility in a community building, proved itself successful in delivering on its mission to this once overlooked group of immigrant youth. This has demonstrated that the investment of creating a space with programming directed to serving the unique needs of youth of a specific cultural or ethnic groups, run by members of sharing that cultural background or by caring adults possessing cultural sensitivity and knowledge will increase their positive adjustment and academic success and decrease their chances of maladjustment or delinquency (Roffman et al., 2003).

The Value of Community Cultural Spaces

Overall, community cultural spaces provide emotional, psychosocial, academic, and relational support. It is a space for adolescent immigrant youth to develop their initial social connections and leverage the social capital available to them, especially soon after immigration. It is essential to locate the greatest need of adolescents and build in services

and programs at various scales according to the population size of the community within the city. Community stakeholders should be encouraged to participate and invest in the creation of well-designed programs and provide access to much-needed resources. These programs will ensure that both the services and the providers are culturally responsive, competent, and capable. It is worth setting up these spaces to ensure that these students know they are supported, that help is available, and that they do not have to go through their adjustment alone (Rong & Brown, 2002).

For immigrant groups like the Afro-Caribbean immigrant population there is a sense of urgency, to keep youth productive and away from the various risks factors, especially given their higher risk of being targeted by structural racism. We see the prevalence of the black and immigrant arrests, and sadly, young people are not excluded from the injustice because of their age (Patel , Strambler & Eltareb, 2015; Phinney, Madden & Santos, 1998). For immigrant parents who are working multiple jobs to provide for their family, it is hard for them to give the necessary supervision and support. Having these community cultural spaces, then, are essential and tackle the unmet needs of these adolescents for attention, engagement and belonging which lead to depression (Perreira & Ornelas, 2011), disengagement, and dropping out of school (Suarez-Orzoco, 2008). It would also deter adolescents from choosing to join gangs, and participating in misdemeanors that would result in an eventual fate of arrest, possible deportation back to the country of origin or even death. Providing a safe space that enriches, empowers, and protects its youth is essential when the structural systems that the students engage with daily, like school, may not share the same priorities.

METHODOLOGY

In Los Angeles, there are no community cultural spaces like Caribbean Youth Club, set up for Jamaican immigrant youth. To conduct an initial needs assessment, this study, using

qualitative semi-structured interviews of Organization leaders (Executive Directors or Committee Chairs of the Education/ Youth committees) of local Jamaican community organizations, discussed the organizations' missions, expertise and perspectives on both strengths, challenges and gaps in the services available to immigrant origin Jamaican adolescents in Los Angeles. The audio-taped interviews of the five participants were conducted by the principal investigator using an interview protocol (see appendix). Participants were probed to understand what they do to serve the local Jamaican immigrant adolescent population, as well what they deem their role to be and their perspectives on the Los Angeles landscape as it relates to these pursuits in establishing such programming or resources. As such, this study also sought to gain their views on the services and resources available to immigrant origin Jamaican adolescents as well show the gaps in this area, between what currently exists and what is desired from the organizational leader's perspective. This will begin to offer valuable insight for further research which would compare organizational leaders' view with those of parents and guardians, guidance counselors within the schools and most importantly, the Jamaican immigrant origin adolescents themselves. Having these multiple perspectives can inform these organizations as well as the community at large, on how to effectively serve the Jamaican immigrant adolescents and meet their needs effectively and sustainably. After reviewing the transcribed recordings of the interviews, the responses were grouped according to prompt questions. The themes and responses are discussed below.

RESULTS

The interviews of the leaders within Los Angeles based Jamaican Organizations yielded very similar responses demonstrating consistency across perspectives. The interviewees consisted of four women and one man, between the ages of 45 -75 years, all of whom were first-generation Jamaican professionals in the fields of education, entertainment, health,

finance, law, and transportation, who have lived in Los Angeles for more than ten years. The themes of the responses are reported below.

History of Jamaican Migration to California

The interviewees verified that many Jamaicans migrated to the United States in the 1960s-1980s through the U.S. solicitation of professional services. Later groups then came through the family reunification process. In Los Angeles in particular, the majority of those individuals were in the health field and served in the capacity of doctors and nurses, some others were in education. At that time, they established a strong presence in the Inland Empire (Riverside) and San Diego, and over time moved into more metropolitan areas of southern Los Angeles in cities such as Ladera Heights, Baldwin Hills, Crenshaw and Inglewood. During that time, some Jamaicans also entered the country without documentation status through Mexico or some overstayed their visitor's visa. Jamaican gangsters who were dealing in drug trafficking ran from the East coast to the West coast and added to the gang war, violence and crime happening in the South Los Angeles area. As a result, Jamaican immigrants who were able to afford it dispersed to other areas like the San Fernando Valley, San Gabriel Valley (e.g., Rancho Cucamonga), and San Bernardino County (e.g., Chino Hills, Victorville). The impact of such negativity not only forced "stalwart" Jamaicans to distance themselves geographically, but also for the many Jamaican professionals integrated in the mainstream society, to begin to hide their identity as Jamaicans for fear that they would be targeted or discriminated against as a result of being stereotyped as criminals or having criminal affiliations.

View of Jamaican Community

The interviewees described Jamaicans in Los Angeles as diverse, vibrant, helpful, hardworking, ambitious, and proud. They reported that the majority of the Jamaicans in Los Angeles are said to uphold a "go-getter mentality" and follow through on their goal to "make

a better life” in the U.S.. Many Jamaicans are described as “affluent,” “successful,” “doing very well,” not just economically, but also in their influence as they occupy various levels of leadership in a variety of industries like law, medicine, business, entertainment, trades, etc. They are said to teach their children the value of education and ensure that their offspring push to pursue professional success as well.

There are other Jamaicans immigrants; however, who come here without recognized documentation status that have a more difficult time establishing themselves. Without the proper paperwork, they find it challenging to find a decent paying job; and so many get their start with accepting low-paying jobs and being paid “under the table.” They do this until they can get “straight,” that is going through the process to get the paperwork for legal U.S. residency. Some, however, “fall through the cracks,” “getting in with the wrong crowd” and end up in the life of drugs and crime to make ends meet. However, choosing this life often ends in death or imprisonment and eventually deportation as a result of their involvement in that underground industry.

Community Building in L.A.

As the Jamaican communities were being formed in Los Angeles, they were, and still are today, brought together by cultural events and social gatherings. The honorary consul Cleveland O. Neil, during his tenure 1969-2003, was credited by many of interviewees as being effective at bringing the community together in those early days. The oldest Jamaican organization, Jamaican Awareness Association of California (JAAC), established in 1987, worked in collaboration with local businesses to organize opportunities and events for Jamaicans in Los Angeles to engage as a community. These events were held at food locations (groceries, restaurants, bars), entertainment spaces (record shops, clubs and concert venues), parks (family fun day and sporting event -cricket and soccer) and fundraising events (fish fry, etc.). These events grew larger and larger each year as Jamaicans from all over Los

Angeles would travel to the various event locations to fellowship and fundraise for the mission trips to Jamaica and other local projects.

Over the years, however, as the population grew and people began to live in other areas that were further outside of South L.A., more Jamaican organizations also arose. Some birthed from the internal conflicts within the older organizations, and others got started to bring together Jamaicans who had similar interests, goals, and missions ranging from health, education, culture, and entertainment. This led to the Jamaican community being described today as “fragmented” and “competitive” rather than supportive and collaborative, contributing to a culture of mistrust that still lingers to this very day.

These days when a Jamaican immigrant arrives in Los Angeles, the tendency is to ask, “Where are all the Jamaicans?” Los Angeles, being the geographically sprawling city it is, can prove quite a challenge make connections with other Jamaicans unless one moves to Los Angeles to reunite with family or friends who are Jamaican or are embedded within a community populated with Jamaican/ Caribbean people like Inglewood. For many of these Jamaican Immigrants, the starting place typically ends up being the local Jamaican restaurants, which serve as informal cultural meeting spaces, found through an internet search or word of mouth recommendations. A Google Map search locates these restaurants in areas such as South & Central Los Angeles, South Los Angeles Area (which includes cities like Inglewood, Hawthorne, and Gardena), Long Beach, Pasadena, and the San Fernando Valley. There, the owners and operators sometimes can direct new residents to individuals or organizations, or promote events their patrons can connect to and participate in according to their needs and interests. Another way of connecting to the organizations also comes through an internet search, which produces a list of Jamaican Organizations in Los Angeles where one can find association. It is these places that mainly provide sources of initial connection to the Jamaican community and culture in an informal and non-structured way. But what happens

next after making the connection? Finding one's community is one thing; being able to connect in a meaningful way is another.

Connection with Schools

All of the interviewees said their organizations relied on their website, social media, blasts, word of mouth referrals, and direct phone calls to market their organizations and their events. However, making a direct connection with schools was not noted to be a high priority. Even though some interviewees mentioned that their organizations have engaged with schools and students, from elementary to college level, they did so only after being invited to do cultural presentations about Jamaica. One organization has more frequent contact in the form of an annual service day where they read to elementary school children. Other organizations have scholarship programs that they make available to local students, Jamaicans and non-Jamaicans alike. However, they mentioned it was a challenge to market it to students to get a significant amount of applicants. To reduce that problem, one of the organizations partnered with a high school, where it turns out the number of Jamaican students was very low. Interestingly enough, this same organization mentioned that they were aware of another school that had more Jamaican students, but across the board, it seems that these organizations had been limited to the schools they were able to make relationships with through the educators or guidance counselors who often were Jamaican themselves. Thus, the extent of their direct support to Jamaican Immigrants has been limited to those people who have made direct contact with the organization. When they do make contact, all of the interviewees said that representatives of their organizations readily offered resources and support according to a person's needs to the best of their ability but more on a one on one/ case by case basis.

Overall, none of the organizations interviewed had a formally structured program readily available to receive students. Their programs instead focuses on curating annual local

fundraising & community service and entertainment events according to their missions, supporting projects back in Jamaica and doing local work with the homeless, a viable area to help because of the availability of grant funds in that area and based on the interests of the local Jamaican and non-Jamaican members within the organizations.

When asked about their perception of Jamaican Immigrant Adolescents, they described them as “prideful,” “stubborn,” “talented,” and “technologically savvy.” The interviewees all spoke about the importance of a strong value system which they believed should be established at home. They emphasized that values such as education, hard work, and respect, were integral parts of Jamaican immigrant adolescents achieving their success and upward mobility in this land of opportunity. It was also shared that Jamaican immigrant adolescents that don’t have the positive influence or guidance of a family member or mentor tended to lack focus and direction, and as a result, get involved in the wrong crowd and choose a path that leads them into trouble.

Discussion

Where there is a critical mass, it is crucial to advocate for the establishment of services to meet the needs of the represented population. Jamaicans in the Los Angeles Metropolitan area are 6,000+ strong (U.S. Census, ACS 2017). In Los Angeles, Jamaican Immigrant adolescents are often the minority within their schools, and so unlike states where they are the majority, there may not be structures in place to support their specific need (i.e., teachers who are culturally responsive or aware of Jamaican culture and values, or people who they can see themselves represented in). These are just some of the elements where they can feel safe to fit in as Jamaicans, especially in the early years of their move. Racially, they can blend in with the African Americans, but once they open their mouth, their accent can bring about their otherness, and may cause them not to be drawn into a peer group as quickly. This stress can lead to mental, emotional, and academic challenges.

However, having a space with people who look and sound like them, can ease their stress, and can provide safety, especially for newcomers, where they can unfold and adapt.

In response to that observation, this thesis project was a way of conducting a needs assessment for the Jamaican Immigrant Community in Los Angeles. The qualitative ethnographic interviews with Leaders of Jamaican Organizations focused on Youth and Education, explored and uncovered their perspectives, as it relates to the provision of cultural engagement and social-emotional support to Jamaican Immigrant Adolescents.

The findings showed that organizational leaders believed that creating a central space for Jamaican Immigrants adolescents and adults alike, to have as a starting point to navigate their way in Los Angeles and the U.S. was critical. The community would own this neutral space, driven by stakeholder needs, and as such, be a space where several organizations could collaborate and contribute their support to the local community. A second recommendation was the need to repair the fragmentation in the community, which they anticipate would then encourage more collectivity and collaboration. Finally, they believed that finding ways to create renewal in the sense of pride of one's Jamaican identity, would allow many Jamaicans in the shadows to re-emerge and re-engage in the Jamaican community in Los Angeles.

Overall, the interviewees noted three common areas they thought efforts should be directed to make a difference not just for supporting Jamaican Immigrant adolescents, but also for the Jamaican Community in Los Angeles as a whole.

Recommendation #1: Creating a Central Space for The Community

A common thread throughout the interviews was the need for centrality. In Los Angeles, there is currently no central place for the Jamaican community to go directly to gain information, access to resources, and support. This “hub” would be required to be “neutral territory,” “owned by the community for the community.” It was recommended that it should

fall under the jurisdiction or supervision of the office of the Honorary Consul of Los Angeles, rather than be a project of any of the Los Angeles based Organizations. This neutrality, the interviewees believed, would encourage collaboration amongst individuals and organizations. It would be a popular place for locals as well as newcomer Jamaican Immigrants, and an ideal resource for adolescent immigrants. It would also be a formal space that promotes cultural identity and engagement, assists with strategies surrounding acculturative stress, and provides orientation to support their adjustment to U.S. and L.A. life.

They also thought that it could be the solution to help to gain access or contact with the Jamaican immigrant students within the Los Angeles schools. It was suggested that this central community space's staff could broker the relationships between the school and community to create opportunities for mentorship and support in a structured way where they are currently lacking. This would also assist the organizations in being able to share their events and opportunities to the Jamaican community more effectively, garnering more beneficiaries who are of Jamaican origin to their scholarship programs.

Recommendation #2: Resolving the Community Defragmentation-“Bad Blood”

Another suggestion was made to get to the root of the fragmentation and lack of trust that has over the years created a barrier between Jamaican Organizations in Los Angeles working together or that maybe also hindered the participation of individuals. Again, the Honorary Consul was pinpointed as the ideal facilitator of this conversation. Organizations do great things individually, but there was room to “do even greater things together” here in L.A. for the local community.

Recommendation #3: Renew the Pride in Jamaican Identity

Finally, it was considered essential that there be ways to renew Jamaican pride in their Jamaican identity, especially for those immigrants who remain in the shadows. These efforts would deal with any remnants of the stigma of crime allowing more Jamaicans in Los

Angeles to reshape their perspective of being Jamaican, and hopefully, as a result, encourage them to participate more in organizations and become more visible in the Jamaican community.

Conclusion

Where there is a critical mass, it is crucial to advocate for the establishment of services to meet the needs of the represented population. Jamaicans in the Los Angeles Metropolitan area are 6000+ strong (U.S. Census, ACS 2017). In Los Angeles, Jamaican Immigrant adolescents are often the minority within their schools, and so unlike states where they are the majority, there may not be structures in place to support their specific needs: i.e. teachers who are culturally responsive or aware of Jamaican culture and values, or people who they can see themselves represented in. These are just some of the elements where they can feel safe to fit in as Jamaicans, especially in the early years of their move. Racially, they can blend in with the African Americans, but once they open their mouth, their accent can bring about their otherness, and may cause them not to be drawn into a peer group as quickly. This stress can lead to mental, emotional, and academic challenges. However, having a space with people who look and sound like them, can ease their stress, and can provide safety, especially for newcomers, where they can unfold and adapt.

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Limitations and Future Research

This preliminary research study started with addressing adult and organizational perceptions through the interviews of the leaders of Los Angeles based Jamaican Community organizations. Since this study only included five interview subjects, I do not claim to generalize about the experience of all Jamaican immigrants in LA based on such a small sample. Future research should include a larger sample along with additional perspectives on this same issue of providing resources and support for Jamaican Immigrant Adolescents in Los Angeles. These other perspectives should come from parents/guardians, guidance counselors/teachers, and most importantly, the Jamaican Immigrant Adolescents themselves to compare and contrast what they see as the gaps in service. This will allow the Jamaican community to be far more effective at meeting the needs of the Jamaican Immigrant origin adolescents, which will ultimately create a strong foundation for the future of the Jamaican community as a whole in Los Angeles.

APPENDIX

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS & TOPICS

Leaders of Los Angeles based Jamaican Organizations with Education Focus.

History of Jamaican Migration to California

- What do you know about the history of Jamaicans moving to California, Los Angeles specifically?
- What specific areas do they live?
- Are there certain pockets/ ethnic enclaves? Why is it centered there? How did it develop there?

View of Jamaican Community

- How would you describe the landscape as it relates to Jamaican youth in Los Angeles today?
- Successes
- Assets
- Challenges
- Areas of Improvement

Timeline of Affairs - Community Building

- How is the Jamaican immigrant community built and maintained in Los Angeles ?
- What is distinct/unique about the Jamaican Community in Los Angeles?
- What is your role/ commitment / platform to the Jamaican Community in Los Angeles?
- How have you built your association's member base/ marketed your events/ connected with the public wider Jamaican Community in Los Angeles?
- How do you believe your organizations role and contribution is received by the Jamaican Community?

Local Efforts: Connection with Schools

- What kind of local efforts do you have going on in Los Angeles?
- How have you / are you partnering with local agencies (including schools, youth-serving agencies)?
- How do you view the Jamaican young people arriving in the US from Jamaica today?
- What kind of assets do you think they arrive with? What are the challenges you see that they are facing?
- Have you noticed differences those that have moved here directly from Jamaica compared to those who have lived in another state for some time before moving to LA? If so, in what ways?
- What do you view your role as in their development/ adjustment (if you do)?
- What kind of support do you offer to Jamaican Immigrant youth specifically through the organization?

Recommendations

- What do you think you can do as an individual, organization and community to meet the needs you highlighted to serve the needs of incoming first -generation high school/adolescent Jamaican immigrants?
- What kinds of further services do you think may be needed?

RECRUITMENT SCRIPT IN PERSON OR OVER THE PHONE

Hi I'm [NAME], and I'm a grad student at UCLA's School of Education, and I am looking for **non-profit board members or education/ outreach committee chairs of *Jamaican / Caribbean Organizations in Los Angeles*** who want to be interviewed in my project on serving Jamaican immigrant youth in Los Angeles.

As a youth development professional I am conducting my research on the availability of services and support for Jamaican Immigrant Youth by Jamaican/Caribbean Organizations in Los Angeles.

I would love to hear your perspectives because I anticipate that organizations have their own unique missions, objectives and challenges. Also, I value your opinion and insights and am inviting you and/or any fellow board members youth think may be interested, to participate in an interview.

The interview will take place in your area at an easily accessible location, lasting one to two hours. Of, course, any information you share will be confidential.

Would you like to participate?

If the participant agrees to participate:

Fantastic I look forward to hearing your thoughts. First Could you provide me with your best contact information? [DOCUMENT NAME, ROLE, EMAIL IN RECRUITMENT SHEET]. Be on the lookout for an email from me at [EMAIL] so you can get a hold of me if you have any more questions.

The next step will be that I will reach out to you to schedule your interview. You will hear an update from me within the next few weeks. In the meantime, if you have any questions, please email me at [EMAIL] Or call me at [PHONE NUMBER] to speak to me, or Dr. Carola Suarez-Orozco at [PHONE NUMBER] or [EMAIL].

[ASK FOR REFERRALS ONE MORE TIME] One final question, do you happen to know any fellow organization leaders who you think may be interested?

If they do not agree to participate:

I understand, do you happen to know any fellow organization leaders who you think may be interested?

Thank you for your time!

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