

**Redefining Ethnicity: The Experience of the Garifuna and Creole in  
Post-independent Belize**

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## ABSTRACT

Partly due to high geographic movements of peoples in post-independent Belize, ethnic intermarriages resulting in offsprings are prevalent. Hence, it is no longer valid to demarcate ethnic identity by surnames, physical appearances, and antiquated definitions. Notwithstanding this, ethnic definitions and identity based on the 'old', 'colonial' school of thought, are still the main component for identification. This investigation examined self-identity and ethnic affiliations of offsprings, resulting from the intermarriage of the Creole and Garifuna residing in Belize City. Using the respondents' genealogies to construe ethnic self-identity, the offsprings or GariKriols, have opted to identify as Creoles, but one that is culturally different from their parents', called Kriol. The urban Garinagu in this study, are migrants to Belize City, from traditional coastal village communities. They have created niches in a ghetto area on the outskirts of Belize City, and have quickly assimilated Creole culture, facilitating their offsprings' absorption of Kriol culture. The physical appearance of the niches exhibited symptoms of poverty. Augmented by the desperate economic situation of its residents, who are the "nouveau poor", this is ethnisizing poverty.



## Chapter I

### INTRODUCTION

#### AN OVERVIEW

##### About Belize

This investigation is about ethnicity in Belize City, Belize. For the purpose of this study, **Ethnicity** is concerned with symbols perceived to be associated with differences in groups of peoples. It involves the "selection of symbols for purposes of self-identification and for the identification of others from a range of available symbols" (Howard, 1990: 120). This study embraces three concepts of ethnicity, namely, ethnic group, ethnic culture and ethnic identity. **Ethnic group** is a collection of persons who perceive themselves as alike, due to common heritage and historical origin. **Ethnic culture** includes the beliefs, customs, traditions, and patterns of behavior that makes one ethnic group different from the other. **Ethnic identity** is a sense of belonging to, and/or affiliation with an ethnic group. The first and second concepts are social and cultural respectively. The third is "symbolic" in that it is about, 1) "perceptions of differences" among ethnic groups, and 2)



"feelings of attachment and pride" in one's ethnic group. (Spratt, 1994: 316).

**Belize City**, the former capital of the country of Belize, was the target site for this investigation. **Belize**, a 9,000 square mile expanse, lies on the northeast coast of Central America, bordering on the south and west with Guatemala, and on the north with the Mexican state of Quintana Roo. The country is divided geographically into six districts (Fig. 1), each with a district town, and **Belmopan** as the capital. Some fourteen years ago, September 21, 1981, Belize achieved political independence from Britain. It is a democratic country with two major political parties whose system of government is based on the Westminster model.

Belize's present population of approximately 200,000 comprises several ethnic groups, being mostly Mestizo 43.6%<sup>1</sup>, Creole 29.8%, Mopan and Kekchi Maya 7.9% and Garifuna 6.6% (Table 1). Ethnic distinctions are to be found in language, dress, religion, food, belief systems, and geographic boundaries. The Garifuna and Creole of Belize City were the target population for this study. They represent the **African/Afro-Belizeans**, who are those of African descent. For the purpose of this study, **Belizeans** are born or naturalized citizens of Belize (see African Belizean section).

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1 This figure includes Belizean Mestizo and Central Americans, both phenotypically Hispanic, but are two distinct groups--a corollary of ethnic classifications in the census.

Figure 1  
Map of Belize

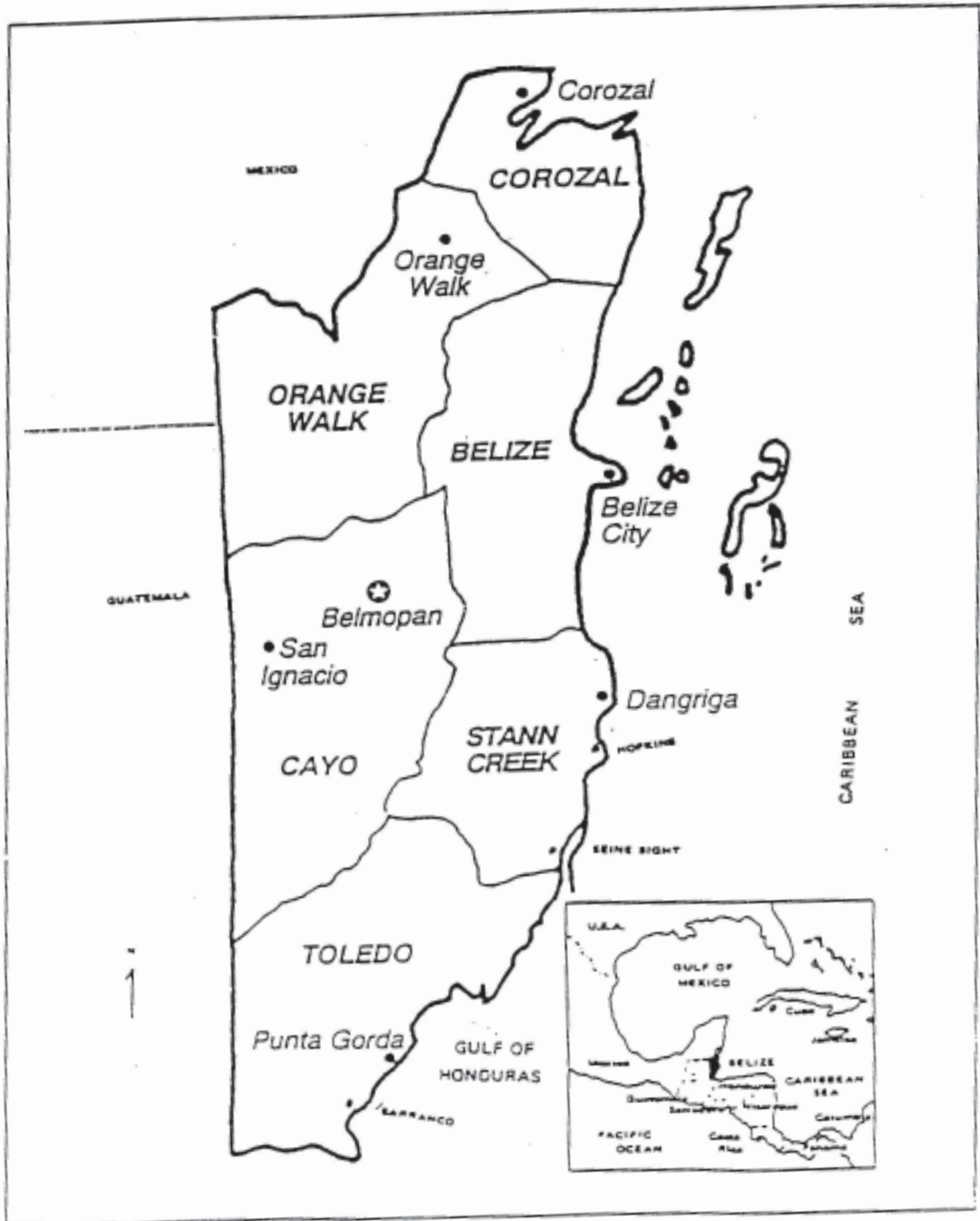


Table 1  
POPULATION BY ETHNICITY 1991

Ethnicity	Number	Percentage
Total	184,722	100
Mestizo	80,477	43.6
Creole	55,051	29.8
Garifuna	12,274	6.6
Mopan Maya	6,770	3.7
Kekchi Maya	7,954	4.3
Yucatecan Maya	5,686	3.1
E. Indian	6,455	3.5
Mennonite	3,591	2.5
Chinese	747	0.4
White	1,867	1.0
Not stated	17	0.0

Source: Census Report 1991

Belize's economy is based on the export of basic commodities such as sugar, citrus, fishery, banana, and forestry. Since 1989 there has also been great emphasis on tourism. The extreme dependence on foreign markets and international credit, however, creates a fragile, local economy. Presently, Belize boasts 3.8% growth (Budget speech, 1994). However, growth still needs to be seen at the community level. The development strategy in Belize today is more structural adjustment/export oriented. The past two years have seen divestment of state owned enterprises to the private sector, foreign investment encouraged by the Chamber of Commerce, and the promotion of Export Processing Zones.

Belize City underwent name changes parallel to its growth and development. It was first the Settlement of Belize, then Belize Town, and now Belize City. Its inception and growth

was via the logwood trade. Belize City was, and still is, the major population and commercial concentration of the country. Approximately one-third of the population reside in Belize City, making it the largest job center for both government and private sector organizations. Also Belize City was the political center, as political actions were initiated here. The leaders of the political actions were residents of Belize City, some of whom were working class Creoles. Some examples of these political actions are: the laborers' or race riots of 1919, when working class citizens rioted against repressive labor laws (Shoman, 1987); during the process of decolonization (Shoman, 1987; Young, 1994), when several public meetings and demonstrations were staged; and the riots of 1968 over the Webster<sup>2</sup> proposals (Young, 1993).

Presently Belize City is virtually the political powerhouse of the country--both political parties' headquarters are housed there; and most important, one-third (33%) of the government's seats or constituencies are in Belize City, and 63.2% (10/16) of the Cabinet members reside in Belize City. Being the political and economic hub of the country, Belize City dictates to the rest of the country. It is the place to be for those who are upwardly mobile. Therefore the residents, primarily Creoles, are perceived to

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2 Proposals presented by the U.S. appointed mediator, Bethuel Webster, in an attempt to resolve the historical, territorial dispute, whereby Guatemala claims rights to Belize since 1859 (Young, 1993: 129).



be the dominant group, a title that they wore well as it "showed in their attitude".

Social stratification has widened since the attainment of independence, ushering in increased suburbanization. The first such planned community, was introduced in the design of Belmopan, the new capital for Belize, constructed approximately a decade prior to political independence. The present expansion of suburbia is ubiquitous and demonstrates wide socio-economic differences. It is more outstanding in Belize City, the receiving area for Garifuna and other peoples, and where social status has become identifiable by residential pattern--style of house, location, and physical dimension.

The widening socio-economic gap in this post-independent era, introduced new urban problems, such as increased crime rate, drug activity (Young, 1990), and North American type gang activity (gang names such as, Crips and Bloods are direct imports from South Central, LA). Central Americans were first blamed for the social ills (Young, 1994), but increasingly the accusations are being directed toward Belize City Creole males. Therefore, to the wider community, to be Creole, and male in particular, has negative connotations.

## The Problem

For the purpose of this investigation, redefinition of ethnicity, the main topic, connotes a change to delineate clearly what constitutes each ethnic group. It is to arrive at a meaning of an ethnic group, as defined by the actors themselves. Ethnic redefinition is important because Belizeans are identified by ethnicity, which is defined by ethnic make-up--for example, Creoles are an amalgam of two groups, the African and British. This investigation hypothesizes that the vast interactions of peoples in Belize City, since the past two decades, have prompted adjustments or accommodations in such a way that the ethnic make-up of groups has changed. Therefore, peoples' self-ascribed differences have changed.

Ethnicity in post-independent Belize is a complex issue for two reasons: it is uniquely dynamic and changes over time, and therefore is difficult to replicate; and scholars and policy makers have not defined it from the actors' perceptions. As recently as the Central Government 1991 census, ethnic classifications were limited to those of traditional, taken-for-granted images of ethnic identity. The result was a mal-categorization of groups of peoples. For example, the 1991 census lumped together as Mestizo, two physically similar, but culturally distinct groups, the

Belizean Mestizo<sup>3</sup>, and Central American Hispanic. Serious repercussions arising from this are discussed in a later paragraph.

In the past ten years, Belize experienced growing outmigration, when its more educated/skilled citizens found lucrative jobs abroad (Palacio, 1993). The Creole population lost approximately 60,000 of its group members, when they relocated to North America and Britain, starting in the mid 1960's (Young, 1990: 116). On the other hand North Americans, Asians, Central American refugees<sup>4</sup>, and other immigrants<sup>5</sup> from neighboring Central America migrated into the country. The 1991 Census Report claimed that some 25% of the population was foreign born, and 75% of these are Central Americans. Palacio (1993) has placed Belize as a country with the fourth highest refugee population per capita in the world. Young claimed that including the illegals, there are some 40,000 Central Americans in Belize (Young, 1994: 116).

The social and economic effects of immigration and emigration have surfaced in many forms. Immigration ushered in Central Americans, who beside having 'un-Belizean' values

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3 Those born in Belize of Mayan Indian and Hispanic mix. This population was overstated when both groups were lumped together by the 1991 census.

4 Those legally recognized by the government. There are Central Americans residing illegally in Belize, many of whom claim political persecution as the cause for flight. Young claimed (1994: 116) that there are 40,000 Central Americans in Belize.

5 Those with legal status who are not refugees.



and language, precipitated tremendous strain on the social sector, at Belizean taxpayers' expense. By sheer numbers the Central Americans have overwhelmed Belizeans, resulting in some underlying tensions--African Belizeans versus Central Americans. The very presence of the Central Americans changed the ethnic landscape and "sharpened the difference" between the Creoles and the Mestizos (Young, 1994: 115). One serious social repercussion from this is the 'latinization' or 'Mestization' of Belize, when for the first time Mestizo became the largest ethnic category instead of Creole (Young, 1994: 116). Although this was in principle, a statistical issue, some Belize City Creoles felt threatened by the perceived social implications from not being numero uno, as has been the case since Belize's inception. This made ethnicity an issue (Young, 1990: B218), particularly in Belize City. For example, there were rumors of "violence"--African Belizeans against Central Americans. The Central Americans were labeled "Alien", and other derogatory names. However, the ethnic issue is significant to the new-found relationships between the Garifuna and the Creole, in that it may have forced them to look more favorably to each other.

Emigration prompted a 'brain drain', which is a permanent removal of the skilled; leadership has been uprooted from communities; and family life has been disrupted. Emigration also prompted the exposure of Belizeans to many different groups, and to outside influences, in an unusually short time,

due to geographic mobility within the country, as well as outside of Belize. Within the country for example, the Stann Creek District which is predominantly Garifuna, lost 3.4% of its population between 1980 and 1990 (1991 Census Report). During this same ten-year span the Garifuna population decreased by 1% of total Belize population, but in absolute figures grew by approximately 1,000 only. At the same time, the census data revealed that the Garifuna population in Belize City doubled since the 1980 census. We will argue that the population loss cited above, can also be attributed to Garifuna people in Belize City identifying with other ethnic groups, particularly Creole. Outside the country, the 1980's saw the introduction of North American pirated television programs, and increased mobility between Belize and large North American cities. The mobility was prompted when African Belizeans and Belizean Americans, started to visit each other on a regular basis. For example, Belizean families spend entire summer vacations with other family members in the United States and vice versa. Therefore North American culture infiltrated the Belizean way of life, particularly the Creole culture.

Five elements brought on by movements (emigration and immigration), mentioned above, will be discussed in this thesis as pertinent to the topic, such as, interethnic marriages, assimilation, symbolic dominance, and ethnic consciousness. First, movements have invoked another period

of heightened social interaction between the Garifuna and Creole--this time in Belize City. The last such documented occurrence, was the aftermath of the 1931 hurricane. Belize City was devastated and its Creole refugees were hosted by Garifuna people in Stann Creek Town (now called Dangriga), (Cain, 1932). Secondly, the Garifuna people have made mass movements from their traditional, coastal, village communities to Belize City. In Garifuna society, this represents a first, and has tremendous implications for the future. The close proximity to the Creoles may have fueled the third feature, that of prevalent interethnic marriages between the two groups. Therefore, ethnic make-up changed for the resulting offsprings.

The fourth feature of these movements is the possible assimilation of the Garifuna by the Creole in Belize City. For the purpose of this investigation, **Assimilation** refers to the process whereby "cultural differences are reduced" as opposed to the process of "differentiation whereby cultural differences are increased" (Keyes, 1981: 37); that is when smaller groups are incorporated into larger ones in the creative process of ethnicity (Barth, 1969). Assimilationists claimed that this is a result of urbanization--that in the urban areas, ties to ethnic groups become less important with weakening of the "political and economic reasons for maintaining ethnic solidarity". Therefore, ethnicity is only "invoked at will", and so becomes a mere "symbolic attachment"



(Waters, 1990: 4). Sanford (1974) cited such as "completed acculturation" of one group by the other, when both groups "subscribe to similar basic values" (Sanford, 1974: 504).

Lastly, a rise in ethnic consciousness has taken many forms. One is the emergence of voluntary, ethnic organizations or councils, such as National Garifuna Council; Toledo Maya Cultural Council; Kekchi Council; National Creole Council; Creole Association for Retrieval, Retention and Promotion, and an Afro-Belizean Organization. The general goals of the councils are the preservation of culture, and advocacy for economic development. Some social scientists (Topsey, 1989) perceived this as "perpetuating differentiation", which is contrary to the spirit of tolerance and cooperation essential in nation building. Other social scientists (Palacio, 1988) attributed it to an "emerging Belizean identity", evolving from a colonial past.

The first four features are interrelated and speak directly to the question of redefining ethnicity in post-independent Belize. Ethnic redefinition has to do with changes in the ethnic make-up of groups. In this case, and logically so, interethnic marriages will change the ethnic elements of the offsprings, and assimilation reduces cultural differentiation. The fifth feature appears to be just the opposite. For example, the goals of the emerging ethnic organizations can be perceived as maintaining ethnic solidarity. But it is also indirectly related, as these

organizations respond to the effects of assimilation and interethnic marriage.

As Belizeans emerge from the initial stage of political independence, one of their most compelling concerns is that of self-identity. The social organizations that kept groups of peoples apart before independence, are quickly disappearing in the wake of vast economic and political developments in post-independent Belize. During this process, a narrowing of geographic distances, increased exposure to others, and increase in educational institutions may have also contributed to interethnic marriages, and wider personal choices in partners. Therefore, the hypotheses evaluated were: 1. assimilation of the Garifuna by the Creole; 2. the offsprings resulting from interethnic marriages have created new ideological, cultural, and social contexts within which they define themselves.

### **PURPOSE, RATIONALE AND SIGNIFICANCE**

This investigation took some views of feminist standpoint theory: that of accurately describing the way people experience the world, respondents being recognized as subjects and not as objects of study, and the right to study your 'own' (Smith, 1987). I am of Garifuna and Creole descent, my father being Garifuna. My formative years were spent with my

paternal great-grandmother and grand aunt, in a very traditional Garifuna setting in Dangriga. Therefore, I identify as Garifuna. My father, an economist, was on study leave in England then.

I was exposed to my mother's Belize City Creole relatives around age nine, and was grudgingly allowed short stays with them. On my father's return at age eleven, I continued to live in Dangriga with my grands, with whom I had greater attachment, but visited with my parents in Belize City during the holidays. After my great-grandmother passed away, I moved permanently to Belize City, where I attended high school. Due to my father's position in the civil service, we lived in one of the two high socio-economic areas, reserved only for British expatriates, and called 'South Africa' by Belizeans. So that as a child I was exposed to typical Garifuna and Creole lifestyles, as well as 'foreign' values in upper class Belize City.

As an adult, I have conducted community work at all levels throughout Belize City. My husband, the son of a school teacher, is Garifuna from a traditional Garifuna village. We are both fluent in the Garifuna language. Our two children spent their formative years in Berkeley, California in the late 1970's and early 1980's, among children of Ph. D. students and professors, and upper middle level white North Americans. Their exposure to Garifuna culture, though intense, has been primarily second-hand. This was



mainly through our involvements with Belizean cultural groups in Los Angeles, ethnic councils, and other Garifuna community groups in Belize City. Therefore, this research has served as a re-birth of personal experiences and took on a meaning that only the "situated knower" (Collins, 1990) can experience.

The purpose of the study is exploratory, explanatory and descriptive. It is exploratory as it investigates the misunderstood phenomenon of ethnic revival in Belize; it is explanatory because it explains the forces causing interethnic marriages, and the resulting offsprings; and it is descriptive, as salient events are documented (Marshall and Rossman, 1989).

The primary goals of this research are to explore whether there is assimilation between the Garifuna and the Creole. It highlights the ethnic self-identity of the offspring. As the main residential sites are relatively new areas in Belize City, the environmental scan conducted will be informative. Therefore, the findings can be used to influence urban policy as awareness of identity is intrinsic to human services and citizen participation. The information will educate as it evinces new urban problems, that of 'ethnization' and 'genderization' of poverty. It will also contribute to the field of urban studies in the areas of social/policy planning, community development; and to the field of urban anthropology, in the areas of ethnic/cultural differences, and research (needs assessment).



Social scientists (Gonzalez, 1959, 1989; Sanford, 1974; Palacio, 1976, 1988; Macklin, 1986) and others have pondered over ethnicity in Belize through themes such as interethnic ties, and ethno-history. However none has looked at the question of self-definition of a people, and the phenomena caused by self-questioning. In this light, this research is significant to the contribution of social science literature in the Caribbean and Central America.

Lastly, I am a member or insider of the Belize City community, and both ethnic groups targeted. Therefore, I have ethno-methodological insights through an understanding of the 'nuances' of the culture, which helped to enrich the findings (Smith, 1987; Collins, 1990). For the purpose of this study nuances refer to understanding group ethos. For example, I am fluent in both languages, and can understand fully both verbal and non-verbal communications. The concept of feminist standpoint theory whereby research is conducted on your 'own' for your 'own' empowers me as the researcher, to be better able to grasp "empirically and formulate conceptually", ethnic phenomena (Standfield II: 1993).

### **FEASIBILITY AND LIMITATIONS**

This research took place in my home country, Belize, where my social involvements included community work, as well

as conducting surveys and field research on topics of a socio-cultural nature. Recently I produced two monographs, one of which is a descriptive statistics of the socio-political history of Belize; the other is an ethno-history of the Garifuna people. While the current research topic is not about politics per se, ethnicity in a multi-ethnic setting is not politically neutral. One can expect competition among groups over access to economic resources and political power (Howard: 120). I was then aware that ethnicity is influenced and therefore responds to current social situations that may be purely political and/or economic in nature.

Conducting research in one's own community, referred to as "indigenous anthropology" by Bernard (1994), can both be advantageous and disadvantageous. The immediate benefit was that I did not have entry problems into the Belize City community; but more important, as an 'insider' I had "no social distance". My lived experiences in the "nuances" of the culture, offered distinctive perspectives on the society to be able to formulate concepts (Standfield II and Rutledge, 1993). Bernard agreed that "indigenous anthropology" has its "plus side", that of knowing aspects of the culture (Bernard, 1994: 154). On the "minus side", Bernard (1994) suggested that ". . . objectivity gets its biggest test when you study your own culture" (Bernard, 1994: 154), due to the possibility of overlooking characteristics that outsiders may not. As recommended by Bernard (1994), one way I surmounted

this was through education, and awareness of the experiences of others in similar circumstances, before attempting field work.

The principal delimitation therefore, is objectivity, as generally it is viewed that to be objective, the researcher should have no "presence". This view (no presence) is the teachings of 'unbiased objective' in scientific research, where it necessitates the researcher to deny her 'station' in shaping knowledge. Feminist theorists do not speak of objectivity in research, because when taken to its full extent, objectivity in research ". . . discredits and deprives [the researcher] of the authority to speak for those who know society differently . . ." (James and Busia, 1993: 27). In this situation, by being myself, I as the investigator facilitated and not hindered the shaping of knowledge. Therefore, my perspectives in this study remain sympathetic to Belize, and to the Garifuna people in particular. It is an attitude which has not been frequently attempted in the literature on the Garifuna people, most of which retains an etic and impersonal perspective.

Feminist scholars theorize that when researchers separate themselves, they do so also from respondents' subjectively lived experiences (Smith, 1987; Tong, 1989). Feminist standpoint theory places importance on personal knowledge, that is lived experience, over the objectifying tendencies of traditional sociological practice. The argument is that

social concepts and categories express social relations (Smith, 1987, 1990).

Race was not a variable in this investigation. As late as February 21, 1995, race as biological differentiation was declared "no longer valid" by geneticists at Stanford University (Alvarado, 1995). Race has been ". . . considered neither a rational explanation nor a scientific basis for the study of human differences . . ." (Shanklin, 1994: vi, 5). The focus was ethnicity, with culture as the main ingredient of ethnicity. I focused primarily on the analysis of cultural traits to benefit responses to cultural change, cultural accretion, and the interpretation of cultural borrowing (Barth, 1969).

Other delimitations are: 1. that the analysis was evaluated from the perspective of the respondents, and did not generalize for the population of Belize City, and/or Belize. Though appropriate for qualitative research, the sample was not randomly selected. 2. due to the dynamism of ethnicity and the nature of qualitative research method, an exact replication of this study may not be possible. 3. the two groups of respondents are primarily of low socio economic status. However, there are Garifuna and Creole households in the upper echelons of the Belize City society.



## BACKGROUND ON BELIZE'S ETHNIC GROUPS

### The African Belizeans--Some Commonalities

African Belizeans are persons of African descent, who are born or naturalized citizens of Belize. Two ethnic groups, Garifuna and Creole, represent the African Belizeans. Together they comprise 36.4% of the Belizean population, 29.8% and 6.6% respectively. They reside primarily in Belize City and Dangriga (Fig. 2), where they have remained apart physically and socially until the mid 1960's. Historically, their differences were perpetuated by the British through 'divide and conquer' tactics. This allowed negative myths to grow, prompting much tension between the two groups, and stigmatization of the Garinagu by the Creoles.

The African Belizeans however, share commonalities overlooked by scholars: both groups were formed in the Caribbean region; are of African ancestry; underwent the same scheme of dependency through the 'advance'<sup>6</sup> system in the logwood trade of the mid to late 1800's (Bolland, 1987); and both were useful to different groups of colonizers before self-government. The Roman Catholics recruited Garifuna males as teachers in the remote expanse of the country to spread

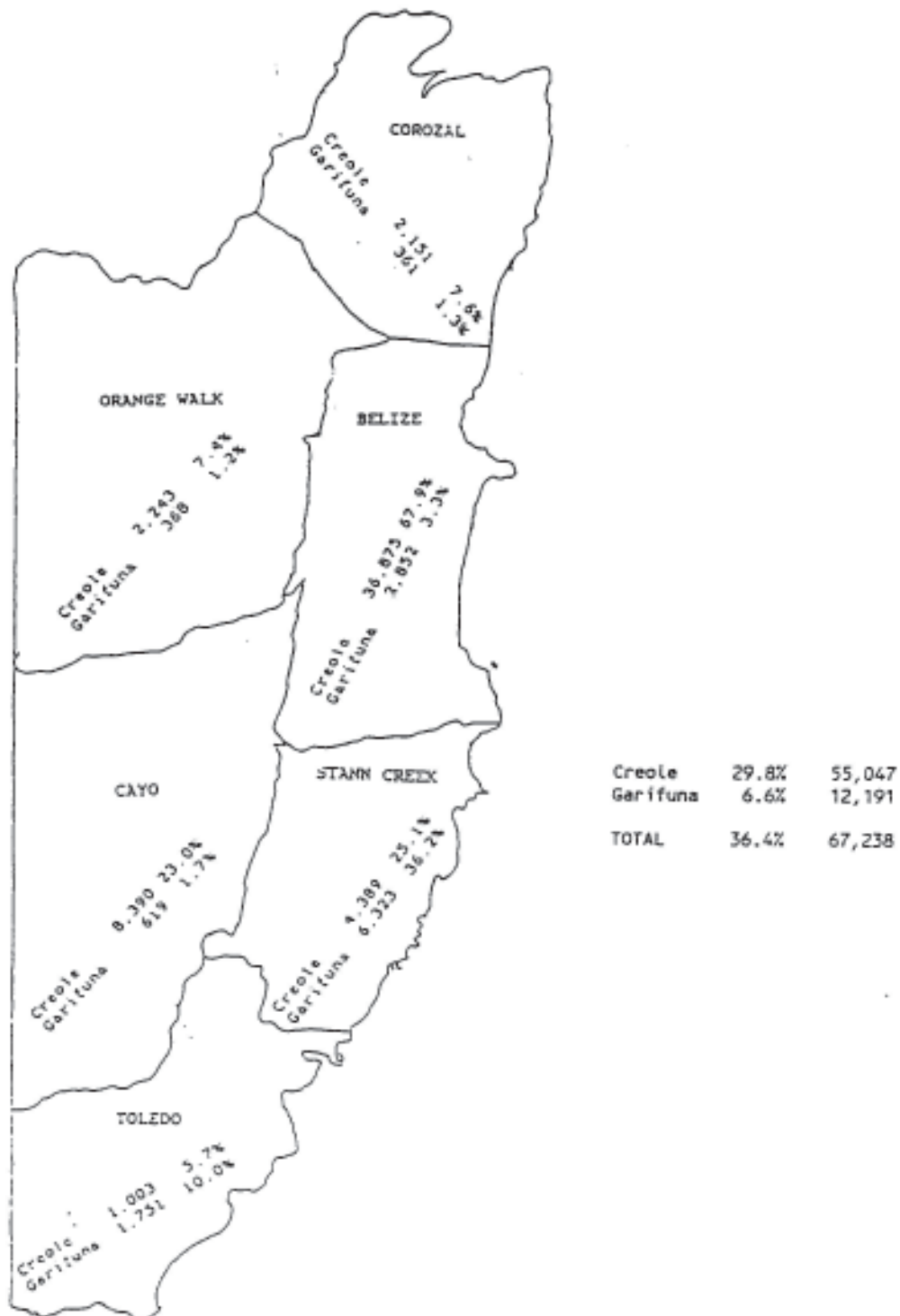
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<sup>6</sup> The workers were credited with food to take on their long journey; thereby receiving little in cash payment at the end of the work, perpetuating dependency.

Figure 2

## African Belizean Population

Source: 1991 Census Report



Roman Catholicism (Palacio, 1976b). Simultaneously the Creoles were recruited as civil servants by the British administrators. Also both groups, the Creoles (since 1960's), and the Garinagu (since 1970's), voted with their feet when they relocated in large numbers to metropolitan centers of the United States, to improve their "economic situation".

Both groups experienced heightened intermingling<sup>7</sup> in two different historic periods, which may have resulted in interethnic mixing: 1830-1870 and beyond, when groups worked together in logwood camps for long periods; 1931, as aftermath of the September 10, 1931 hurricane, Creole refugees from Belize City were accommodated by the leaders of the Carib (Garifuna) Development Society in Dangriga (Cain, 1932: 127).

To reiterate, intermingling between both groups occurred shortly after the Garifuna first arrived in Belize. Both groups were inserted into a society where each group was heavily impacted by the colonial economy through the proverbial mahogany and chicle camps. Located deep in the hinterland and accessible to mahogany and chicle, these camps were the living quarters for scores of men and women for months on end (Bolland, 1981; Stone, 1994). While this needs to be researched, my suspicion is that they became literally

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Intermingling is a continuous process. These historical periods are times when the mixing was more than at other times--heightened.



the hotbeds of extensive cultural and biological intermixing<sup>8</sup>.

Today, interethnic marriages between the two Afro-Belizean groups, which partly resulted from the integration process started above, are more prevalent than is generally accepted (Palacio, 1990). Therefore, the integration process is significant to redefining ethnicity in Belize. What is phenomenal is that the prevalence is recent, transpired in a short time, and can be translated to any two ethnic groups in Belize today. For the purpose of this study, Integration is blending in, an interaction, a coming together instead of remaining geographically segregated. Ethnic integration in the 1960's and 1970's has been linked directly to economic development (Brockman, 1985), and Howard (1987). The sugar industry in the north attracted migrants who were seeking employment, from other parts of the country. Hence ethnic integration increased (Brockman, 1985) when Mestizos, Creoles, Garinagu, and others worked together in the sugar factory, but also when they bore membership in the same labor union and political party.

Among the African Belizeans, the integration process was slower for several reasons, including the 'divide and conquer' tactics by the British (they set one group against the other) for their own political aggrandizement; and the groups' forced

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1. Surnames accepted as Garifuna such as Daniels, Lewis, Thomas, etc. have English origins. 2. Some Garifuna songs of celebrations are mixed with English, which the older folks claimed were initiated in the mahogany works.

geographic separation. These reasons are social and political, but also economic, in that these dictate the day to day existence in terms of upward mobility. Also while the Creoles were pro-British and emulated the British culture, the Garinagu, were anti-British<sup>9</sup> and maintained a very distant relationship, even from the Creoles. In the pecking social order, the 'anti-British' sentiment impacted negatively on the Garinagu. They were stigmatized through negative descriptions, some of which are still used in the literature on ethnicity in Belize (Grant, 1976: 11). Although this has changed somewhat it still exists among certain cliques, to the extent that some respondents' in this study, perceived that stigmatization is still attached to being Garifuna.

### **The Creoles**

British buccaneers in the mid 17th century first settled Belize when they used it as a base to plunder Spanish logwood ships. The treaty of Madrid in 1670 between Spain and Britain discouraged piracy. As a result the buccaneers shifted to cutting logwood, hence beginning the establishment of a permanent British presence in Belize Town (Bolland, 1987).

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<sup>9</sup>

They always regarded each other with suspicion for historical reasons (see section on Garifuna).

Several skirmishes with the Spanish continued over rights to the logwood. The last of such, the Battle of St. George's Caye on September 10<sup>10</sup>, 1798, was won by the British (King, 1992). Located at the mouth of the Belize River, Belize Town was the hub of economic activity, an ideal site for logwood shipping. However, St. George's Caye, a small island in the Caribbean, located approximately 20 miles from Belize City, remained the primary British settlement.

Around 1724, African slaves were brought in from the West Indies to work the logwood trade, which was the mainstay of the economy.(Bolland, 1987). The African slaves were sent to remote areas north and west of the country for months at a time. After emancipation, an "advance" scheme of payment was used as a system of further control. This included the issuing of provisions by the 'Masters' prior to the laborers' departure to the work sites. The cost was subsequently deducted from the laborers' wages at the end of the work period. This left them with very little money, and so the cycle continued. Land distribution was discouraged by the British settlers after emancipation, "for fear that allowing the ex-slaves to obtain land might discourage labour for wages" (Bolland, 1987: 66). Whatever agriculture undertaken,

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This is a public holiday to celebrate the battle. The Creoles claimed to have saved Belize from Spanish rule when they fought "shoulder to shoulder" with the masters. However, the concept of a battle has become a political and an ethnic issue.



was only for home consumption, and did not "encourage the development of a settled agricultural system" (Bolland, 1987: 66). This may be the reason for Grant's findings, that the Creoles had a "strong" "distaste" for agriculture and regarded it as an ". . . inferior and transitory occupation" (Grant, 1976: 15).

The census data by the late 1700's indicated a mixing of African slaves and their British masters, giving birth to a new group, the Creoles in Belize Town (Bolland, 1987). The term Creole originated from the Spanish word Criollo, meaning "native of the locality". It gained currency in Belize Town in reference to being non-Amerindian and non-Asiatic, but born and settled in the area (Grant, 1976: 8). Therefore, Creoles were an amalgam of African and English, born in Belize, and carried English surnames. Many Creole communities were established along the banks of the Belize River during the logwood days. But Belize Town, later called Belize City, became the main concentration of Creole people and the home of Creole culture.

Skin color and other physical traits were principal determinants of social and occupational status in Belize Town. For example, Europeans and "persons of light complexion" were compensated with top positions in the civil service and prestigious businesses (Grant, 1976: 9). To maintain the social and political system, the British rewarded others perceived as having closest "social and cultural affinity".

To be able to fit in, the Creoles "readily emulated the colonial values" (Grant, 1976: 9) .

Creole culture is distinctive in values, language (termed dialect by Grant), lifestyle, and in occupational pattern. Their lifestyle included more British traits as these were valued more than the African heritage. The language also called Creole, is often described as "broken English", as it derives from the English language. It is alive today as one of the contributions of the Creole people to Belize. Creole (language) has been adopted by Belizeans as the lingua franca, and efforts at Creole orthography are ongoing. The Creole elite, and those in the high socio-economic status, were the lawyers and civil servants. The middle socio-economic group, whose "membership was based on achievement" were the professionals. While those of the lower income brackets embraced forestry operations, domestic, and positions in the construction industry (Grant, 1976: 9). The Creoles targeted for this study were persons from the latter socio-economic groups, namely, low and middle.

The Creoles, due to close proximity to the British culture and rule in Belize Town, gradually lost most of their African heritage, when they assimilated that of the colonizers'. This may be the reason for the common perception among Belizeans that Creoles do not have a culture, which is believed even by Creoles themselves. In adopting the 'Masters' world, the Creoles lost their African languages,



dances, musical instruments (drum and shaka), and indigenous religious practices. This occurred through a process of selection of "symbols for purposes of self-identification" (Howard, 1980: 120). At the same time the reinforcement of African heritage was interrupted in three avenues--the fire of 1819 that gutted Eboe Town, the home and cultural center for Blacks; the halt of the arrival of 'fresh' slaves after emancipation (1834); and the draconian laws at the time which prohibited the practice of African culture. Of significance was the outcome of the emulation of the 'Master': the Creoles were bestowed with white collar clerical positions as civil servants, an envious position to be in then. They consequentially gained access to power and wealth over all other ethnic groups, and subsequently were perceived as the dominant group both politically and economically.

Belize City, though no longer the country's capital, is still the commercial center, and home of Creole culture. Although their population declined countrywide, the Creoles still enjoy majority population status in Belize City (1991 Census Report). Emigration was partly responsible for the drastic decline in the Creole population, via mass exodus of Creoles to the United States, Canada and England since the 1960's (Young, 1994). The exodus was for economic reasons, but also for political reasons when they refused to participate in the perceived Mayanization/Latinization in Belize's nation-building by the government of the day (Young,

1994). 'Latinization' became an issue in 1992 when the Creole sentiment was that Belize "gone Mestizo". The headline in the Amandala newspaper on reporting the Census results read, "Belize now Belice"<sup>11</sup>, reinforcing the sentiment (Amandala, Sept. 11, 1992). In Belize City, immigrants were "harassed" on their work-sites by 'Creole' men. One possible outcome of all this is that with Garifuna people moving into Belize City, the abovementioned suggestions may have been enough reason to physically push the African Belizeans, Garifuna and Creole, together.

### **The Garifuna People (Garinagu)**

The Garifuna people, formally called Black Caribs, were an amalgam of three groups, Carib, Arawakan Indians, and African slaves marooned on the Eastern Caribbean island of St. Vincent. Having lost the Carib War (1795-1796) for control of their homeland to the British, the Black Caribs were immediately expelled from St. Vincent by the British. In 1797 some 2,026<sup>12</sup> Black Caribs including women and children landed

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<sup>11</sup>

'Belice' is the Spanish word for Belize.

<sup>12</sup>

This figure represented approximately 50% of the initial group, as some died during preparation for deportation, and during the journey itself.

on Roatan in Honduras, and subsequently settled along the Atlantic and Caribbean Coasts, including Belize (Gonzalez, 1988). They arrived in the settlement of Belize in 1802 into an atmosphere of hostility, from the British, whom they engaged in war less than a decade earlier. They were allowed to settle in the uninhabited south of the country, which was still under dispute according to the 1786 Convention, between Spain and Britain (Bolland, 1981). To the British, the Black Caribs made convenient allies against the Spaniards, and valuable as logwood cutters, because slave ownership had become expensive, due to lack of replenishment. The British restricted the movements of the Black Caribs by law to remote mahogany camps as laborers through the 'advance' system (Bolland, 1987). Since the experience in Honduras, they have carried Hispanic surnames.

The mass movement of Black Caribs to Belize was from Honduras in 1832, when large numbers escaped to save their lives. The triggering factor was the defeat of conservative Spanish forces who had enlisted the support of the Black Caribs in their effort to regain colonial possession of Honduras. The Belize population count of 1860 showed approximately 2,300 persons of Black Carib descent, and approximately 25% had mixed with other groups, particularly Creoles and 'Indians' (Cosminsky, 1984). As with the Creole experience, land was not readily available. So it became very difficult for the Black Caribs to permanently establish

themselves within their own communities in southern Belize, as the men were absent for long periods at a time. Whatever agriculture and fishing they did were primarily for subsistence. Thus, economic existence was through migratory wage labor.

The migratory wage labor which started in St. Vincent, has been significant in Garifuna livelihood, and continued to this century. From the early 1800's to the first half of this century, Garifuna society was slowly being transformed from a rural peasantry to a group increasingly dependent on wage labor. In Belize young men were recruited into teaching in very remote non-Garifuna communities all over the country to spread Roman Catholicism. In the early 1900's large numbers of men moved to Puerto Barrios in Guatemala for brief periods during the heights of the banana industry. They used their knowledge of English to secure clerical jobs with the United Fruit Company. Later some went further away as merchant marines or on contract labor to Panama, Great Britain, and the United States. The 1980's showed significant migration on a permanent basis from rural to urban, with movements out of the country primarily to large cities in the U. S. Some Garifuna communities have experienced the disadvantages of out-migration--that of uprooting leadership, and disrupting<sup>13</sup> family life, which together is helping to erode the culture.

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This became evident after the mid '70's when the kinship system of sharing scarce resources began to weaken.



In the past the economic contribution of the Garinagu as a group to the country of Belize was in education, as teachers in the rural areas of the country. Although some are still teachers, Garinagu may be found in all careers. Besides, several other groups have entered the teaching profession, taking away the lead that the Garifuna had long established. However, one social and economic contribution--more a potential than a reality--is the Punta rock which has received national acceptance as Belize's own popular dance music.

Unlike the Creoles, the Garifuna people's isolation by the British helped them to maintain some of their African and Amerindian culture. Today, culture is alive in language (Garifuna) which is primarily Cariban and Arawakan; foods, some of which are African in origin, like the hudut<sup>14</sup>; and others Amerindian, as the ereba<sup>15</sup>, both of which are shared with West Indian Blacks, and Amerindian counterparts.

Garifuna or Garinagu (in the singular and plural forms respectively), their name in their language, is preferred to Black Carib. It is a way of expressing identity which gained currency in the mid 1970's, when it was legitimized. There are presently 12,274 Garinagu in Belize, representing 6.6% of the total population. Where once they were found only in the

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Green plantain boiled and pounded, then served with a gravy made of coconut milk and fish.

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Cassava bread made from the bitter cassava tuber.

southern districts (65%), they now predominate in the urban areas of three districts (Fig. 2), namely: Stann Creek representing 36.2% of the total district's population and 51.1% of the country's Garifuna population, Belize with 5.3% and 23.2% respectively, and Toledo with 10% and 14.2% respectively. The primary areas of residences (Fig. 1) are Barranco, Punta Gorda, Hopkins, Seine Bight, Dangriga, and Belize City.

Significant to this study is the demographic shift from traditional coastal communities to Belize City and abroad. One-quarter (23.2%) of the country's Garifuna population reside in Belize City. In the 1960's, the Garifuna population in Dangriga was overwhelming, that of 80%, compared to 55% now. This observation is exemplary of the other traditional Garifuna communities.

### **Belize's Other Ethnic Groups--A Historical View**

The first people of Belize were the Yucatecan Maya. In the early 1600's some fifty to sixty British stragglers arrived in Belize and eventually took up the logwood trade. In the mid 1700's Blacks were transported to Belize as slaves via the Caribbean. The offspring resulting from intermarriage of Slaves and White Settlers, formed the Creoles by the late 1700's (Bolland, 1987). The Garifuna arrived from St. Vincent

via Honduras in small amounts in 1802, and in large numbers after 1832 (Gonzalez, 1988), and were immediately disbanded south of the country.

The Caste War of Yucatan in 1840 brought three sets of refugees to northern Belize, doubling the country's population to nearly 30,000 (Bolland, 1981). These were Yucatecan Maya, Spaniards, and Mestizos, who are mixtures of the first two. After the war most of the Spaniards returned, but the Yucatecan Maya and the Mestizo remained in northern Belize, and continued to intermarry. In the 1860's the first groups of Chinese were brought in as indentured laborers. In the early 1880's East Indians arrived after slavery was abolished as agricultural laborers, and being very few, were quickly assimilated by other ethnic groups. In the late 1880's the Mopan Maya came from Peten in Guatemala to the Cayo District; and the Kekchi came to Toledo (Grant, 1976).

By 1900, Belize had formed a clear geographic map by ethnicity resembling a checkered regionalism, which remains relatively so today. The Mestizos are predominant in the north in Corozal and Orange Walk, and in the west at Cayo, which always accommodated a melting pot of groups; the Garifuna and Kekchi in the south, that is, Stann Creek and Toledo Districts respectfully; and Creole in the Belize District.

Since the turn of the century, and with more geographic and economic mobility, new groups have come and made their

home in Belize, such as: in the 1920's, the Syrians who moved west to Cayo; in the 1950's, the merchant Chinese to Belize City; in 1959, the Mennonites came via Mexico and Canada, to the west and north (Grant, 1976); in the 1980's, the Central American refugees, and East Indian merchants from India; and in the 1990's some Asians, North Americans, and Europeans (1991 Census Report). In the past ten years, the high rate of emigration and immigration generated tremendous demographic shifts. The Central American influx contributed to the large demographic change from urban to rural, which is the reverse of what is occurring in several countries (1991 Census Report).

Belize is a country of immigrants. Apart from the Mopan Maya, all other groups immigrated to Belize. Two immigration periods drastically altered Belize's demography. These are: a result of the 1840 Caste War when refugees fled to Belize from Mexico; and 1980-1990, during the period of unrest in some Central American countries, when people fled to Belize seeking refuge. Belize and Belizeans are presently confronted with the social and economic distress resulting from the latter. What contributions the Central Americans will offer to the prevalent interethnic mixing in Belize are yet to be seen.



## Chapter II

### ETHNICITY REVISITED: Literature Review

#### ETHNICITY, ETHNIC GROUP--A DEFINITION

This research embraces Fredrik Barth's view of ethnicity and ethnic group, as it reflects the Belize situation--that of ethnic plurality (more than one ethnic group), with culture as an important element. Michael G. Smith's theory of the Black/White dichotomy in a Creolized Caribbean does not interpret the dynamic circumstances in multi-ethnic Caribbean nations as Belize, Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana, and Dominica. These situations were dismissed by Smith (1965) as "complex" and as "historical accidents" (Smith, 1965: 4, 10).

Smith (1965) defined culture as "a product; is historical; includes ideas, patterns and values; is selective; is learned; is based upon symbols; is an abstraction from behavior and the products of behavior" (Smith, 1965: 1). Barth described culture as "nothing but a way to describe human behavior" (Barth, 1969: 7), and perceived culture as only one but significant characteristic of an ethnic group. Keyes (1981) averred that social scientists are predisposed to regard culture as a "mere epiphenomenon of ethnicity", so that culture is secondary in the "ethnic scheme to things" (Keyes, 1981: 90).

Ethnicity is a social construct (Smith, 1965; Barth, 1969; Keyes, 1981; Glick, 1985), and ethnic groups are characterized by the "actors themselves". Keyes (1981) affirmed that ethnic identity implicates a relationship between people which is determined at birth. As ethnicity derives a "cultural relationship of descent" (Keyes, 1981: 3), then cultural heritage is learnt through exposure. One suggestion of consequence by Keyes was that patterns varied in the characteristics selected as "emblematic of ethnic identity" (Keyes, 1981: 3). For example, language or religion as a distinctive characteristic for one ethnic group, may not be so for another; two groups can speak the same language and yet be distinct ethnically.

Barth (1969) delineated four characteristics in his definition of ethnic groups, two of which cogently reflect my target groups, the Garifuna and Creole, and the contemporary ethnic circumstances in Belize. The two characteristics: 1. shared fundamental cultural values, and 2. distinguishable from others, indicate boundary maintenance, language and cultural difference, and social separation. The target groups in this study have distinct languages, and way of life, which is typical of each ethnic group in Belize. It then implies an ethnically plural population in Belize.

The second characteristic by Barth (1969), classified ethnic groups as forms of social organizations; with ascription by others and self, based on "origin and

background". He interpreted an ethnic group as one that is exclusive with clear, social boundaries. Ethnic boundaries assume social relations, in that identification of a fellow group member "implies a sharing of criteria for evaluation and judgement" (Barth, 1969: 15). According to Barth one feature is boundary maintenance. As long as there is "marked difference" or "persisting cultural difference", when social contacts with peoples of other cultures occur, ethnic groups will still survive as "significant units" (Barth, 1969: 16). Some aspects of an ethnic group may change--for example, the organizational form, the cultural characteristics of its members, and the cultural features that demarcate the social boundary. But the continuing interaction between members and outsiders allows one to "specify the nature of continuity, and investigates the changing cultural form and content" (Barth, 1969: 14). If members from one group identify with members of another, to the extent that their behavior is "interpreted and judged" as that of the other, then socially they have "declare[d] their allegiance" to the other group (Barth: 1969: 16).

Contrary to what scholars have been led to believe, that each ethnic group develops its "cultural and social form in [geographic and social] isolation", this is not always the situation (Barth, 1965: 17). Instead, ethnic distinctions and therefore cultural diversity, "entail social processes of exclusion and incorporation whereby discrete categories are

maintained despite changing participation and membership in the courses of individual life histories" (Barth, 1965: 10).

Smith (1965) acknowledged the importance of cultural traits and postulated that cultural pluralism (more than one), is "quite clear" for the British Caribbean, but that ethnic pluralism is clouded with "ambiguity" (Smith, 1965: 14). Smith intimated that ethnic differences are "less precise" in that ethnicity sometimes connotes race, at times culture, and oftentimes nationality. In ethnicity connoting cultural differences, as in the United States, Smith suggested that the differences are minor variations of cultural patterns; for example food habits, language, marriage rituals and family organization (Smith, 1965: 15). He concluded that due to acculturation and assimilation, the concept of ethnicity in the British Caribbean has "doubtful utility" (Smith, 1965: 16).

Even though Belize is as a member of the British Caribbean the conditions painted above by Smith did not completely reflect Belize. While Belize may be presently undergoing a similar process, it is too early to predict a Creolized outcome. Regarding race, it is considered "no longer valid" as biological differentiation (Alvarado, Times Picayune, February 21, 1995). This was declared by geneticists of Stanford University, who further pronounced that the purity of race is a myth, as it does not exist for homo sapiens; and that differences in skin color and facial



characteristics resulted from adaptations to environmental conditions. Shanklin (1992), also maintained that race is not a "scientific basis" for the differentiation of human beings (Shanklin, 1992: 5).

Ethnic group identification is by the cultural characteristics of group members. The classification of members of an ethnic group is predicated on the particular cultural traits they exhibit. Therefore differences between ethnic groups are evident in differences identified in an inventory of their cultural traits (Barth, 1969: 12). So, this research focused primarily on the analysis of cultures. This viewpoint gives scope for recording cultural change, cultural accretion, and interpreting cultural borrowing (Barth, 1969). The "culture-bearing" aspect of ethnic group characteristics responds to the "overt cultural forms" resulting from the effects of ecology on the behavior of the group (Barth, 1969). It explains how participants embrace new surroundings. For example, one ethnic group spread over varying ecological circumstances and territory demonstrates diverse overt behavior which does not necessarily reflect differences in cultural orientation. This is the situation of the Garinagu of Belize with those of Honduras and Guatemala.

## ABOUT POLY-ETHNIC RELATIONS

A poly-ethnic society is defined by Barth as one ". . . integrated in the marketplace, under the control of a state system dominated by one of the groups, but leaving large areas of cultural diversity . . ." (1969: 16). In such a system, ethnic identity is regarded as a status that is "superordinate" to most. In Belize, ethnic identity is present in every social situation.

Post-independence ushered in vast interactions between different groups including my target groups, but cultural differences persisted. This is because the business of interaction connotes a tacit understanding of rules, values and structures (Barth, 1969). Structuring of interaction allows for "persistence of cultural differences". It sets 'prescriptions' to "govern the contact" in some social situations, and also 'proscriptions' "to prevent contact" on some social situations, thereby protecting the culture (Barth: 15). In this way some aspects of the culture are protected from outside influences, so that cultural differences persist despite interethnic contact.

However looking from the ecological and demographic perspective of ethnic group interdependence, indications are that cross-over ethnic boundaries occur, resulting in identity change. For example, migration results in population redistribution and hence changes in relations; also there are

changes in a group's economic situation, depending on the new environment. This is reflective of the Garifuna people who migrated from their hometown Dangriga to Belize City. In pursuing involvement in the "wider society", groups may choose between the following strategies (Barth, 1969: 18).

1. "they may attempt to pass and become incorporated in (an ethnic group)
2. they may accept a 'minority' status
3. they may choose to emphasize ethnic identity"

In the first example, the group may remain "culturally conservative", while the second may lead to the assimilation of the minority. All three are prevalent in Belize today, and my theory is that Garifuna as a group is undergoing the second by being assimilated by the Creole.

### **ETHNIC PLURALITY OR A CREOLE CARIBBEAN?**

Smith (1965) argued for cultural pluralism in the Caribbean and not ethnic pluralism, based on a Black/White dichotomy, on Creolism. I conclude that ethnic pluralism is alive, even today, in Belize, Trinidad, Guyana, and Dominica, all members of the Commonwealth Caribbean.

The names, Caribbean, Commonwealth Caribbean, British West Indies, and British Caribbean are used interchangeably. It is in reference to thirteen nations identified as the

"British Caribbean" by Michael G. Smith (1965). They are, Jamaica, Barbados, Guyana (formerly British Guiana), Belize (formerly British Honduras), Antigua, Monsterrat, St. Kitts, British Virgin Islands (formerly Virgin Islands), Trinidad and Tobago (formerly Trinidad), Dominica, Grenada, St. Lucia, and St. Vincent. All these countries share the aftermath of colonialism--"that system of social, economic, political, cultural, and even psychological domination . . ." (Bolland, 1981: 23); whose people are products of a plantation society/economy propelled by their enslavement.

Using a twenty year old, 1946 census of colonial populations (Table 2), M. G. Smith (1965) illustrated that all these nations were 'multiracial', consisting of Chinese, Indians, Lebanese, and 'others', as well as Europeans and Africans, all from Old World stock. M. G. Smith identified the various groups within each country, yet he maintained assimilation as his main theme; that of a Creole British Caribbean, where all thirteen nations have a common Negro/White racial and cultural basis (Smith, 1965: 14). The Negro/White is in reference to the combination of European and African traditions, which Smith recognized as the "most important feature in Creole life" (Smith, 1965: 6). In this tradition, the European culture was regarded over the African, which was "devalued".

Smith down-played group differences when he referred to the mainland nations (Belize and Guyana), "complex" and



"historical accidents"; and that the others "contain no significant indigenous elements" (Smith, 1965: 4, 10). The contradictions in this last statement by Smith are two-fold. First, he failed to recognize the indigenous peoples, as did the 1946 census data--for example, the Caribs of St. Vincent, Dominica, Trinidad and Tobago, and possibly Belize. The data (Table 2) placed the Black Caribs (Garinagu) of Belize in the category 'other', with no explanation from Smith.

This brings me to the second point. M. G. Smith failed to identify the Black Caribs in his narrative, who they were, and where they fitted into his Black/White (Creole) dichotomy. In reference to Belize's 'colored' category, Smith recognized a "31 percent of British Honduran [Belizean] population classified "colored"" (Smith, 1965: 11), as Creole (Table 2). However, the 31% "colored" for Belize included Creoles as well as Mestizos (Grant, 1976: 8), two distinct ethnic groups, a fact Smith chose to ignore. In his zeal at explaining away the Commonwealth Caribbean as a cultural rather than an ethnic pluralism, and emphasizing the Black/White cultural accommodation, Smith overlooked peoples' self-ascribed differences.

Jamaica may be a good example of a Creole society whose groups such as the Chinese and East Indians seem totally assimilated by the dominant Creole group. This is not the case for other Commonwealth Caribbean nations such as Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago, and Belize. For example, in Guyana as in

Table 2  
 Approximate Racial Compositions of Various  
 Colonial Populations, 1946  
 (Unit = per cent)

Territory	White	Black	Colored	East		Amer- indian	Chinese	Other
				Indian	Indian			
Jamaica	1	78	17.5	2	--	--	1	0.5
Barbados	5	77	18	--	--	--	--	--
Br. Guiana	3	38.1	10	43.5	4.3	--	1	--
Br. Honduras	3.9	38	31.8	2.3	17	--	--	7*
Antigua	2	85	13	--	--	--	--	--
Monsterrat	0.5	93	6.4	--	--	--	--	--
St. Kitts	2	86.5	11	--	--	--	--	--
Virgin Is.	0.5	87.2	12.3	--	--	--	--	--
Trinidad	2.7	46.8	14.1	35.1	--	--	1	--
Dominica	0.3	24.9	74.6	--	--	--	--	--
Grenada	0.9	73.6	20.4	4.8	--	--	--	--
St. Lucia	0.5	58.1	37.6	3.8	--	--	--	--
St. Vincent	3.1	73.1	20.5	3	--	--	--	--

\*Black Caribs

Source: Reproduced from M. G. Smith, 1965: 11

Belize, the various indigenous peoples aggregated as Amerindians by M. G. Smith and the 1946 census, perceived themselves as distinct ethnic groups, even today (West Indian Commission, 1992). In Belize, there still exist four such indigenous groups, the Garifuna, Kekchi, Mopan Maya, Yucatecan Maya, each with a different language, food, ethnic religion, and ethnic dress. Not to mention the several non-Amerindian groups who perceive themselves as distinct from each other, such as the Creole, Mestizo, East Indian, Mennonite, to name a few.

Unlike the rest of the Caribbean, with the exception of Guyana, Belize's significant difference comes from its geographic location (Macklin, 1986) on the mainland Central America. Its proximity to Mexico and Guatemala infuses distinct, non-Creole, non-Caribbean cultural influences. Also Belize has two distinct Black (African-Belizean) ethnic groups, the Creoles with similar ethnic mix as described by Smith above; and the Garifuna, not recognized by Smith as having African heritage and culture.

Smith (1965) maintained that Creole culture contains many elements of African heritage which is present in language, diet, folklore, family, medicine, magic and religion. One example offered was "the local obeah complex" (Smith, 1965: 6). Nancie Gonzalez observed some African characteristics in the Garifuna similar to that reported in the West Indies. Some examples of these are (Gonzalez, 1959: 304-305):

1. "Caretaker" system--whereby a child is brought up by a family of greater social status.
2. Customs surrounding death similar to that described in Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago.
3. The belief in the practice of obeah.
4. A dance called 'punta' which is similar to the 'plays' danced in the Caribbean.
5. The john canoe dance also predominant in the Commonwealth Caribbean.

Two of the abovementioned attributes were reported by Smith as characteristics of African features present in British West Indian Creole culture. Three of these were reported by Bolland (1987) as features of African culture once practiced in Belize by Creoles and slaves up to the late nineteenth century. But he did not link these traits to the Garifuna people, who have maintained such to present day. So that there are some traits that the Garinagu of Belize share with the 'Island' Creoles.

Like Smith, other social scientists and historians (particularly the Belizeanists), have failed to make a connection to show, 1. the coexistence between both Black groups which started during the logwood days, and 2. the African heritage still practiced by the Garinagu as opposed to the Creoles. Such limited characterization of African Belizeans, and the Caribbean ethnic situation by M. G. Smith and others have extensive repercussions when "unwelcome legacies" are disseminated as literature (Macklin, 1986: 104).



In summarizing, there are two main arguments. The first is, that due to distinctiveness, ethnic pluralism is alive in the Caribbean. Each group's ethnic distinctiveness, and people's self-ascribed differences, notwithstanding the group's size are important to them as the actors. Therefore, these differences cannot be theorized away by Smith (1965). Also, there are Caribbean countries whose cultural dynamisms were influenced from within as well as outside these nations, and include more than the black/white situation argued by Michael Smith. Therefore, the black/white dichotomy of Creolism offered by Smith (1965) cannot be generalized for the Caribbean. This brings me to the second argument. The need to look at historical and cultural perspectives from peoples own experiences cannot be overstated. Feminist standpoint theory encourages this perspective, in that research should be conducted in "the actualities of their [respondents'] everyday world" (Smith, 1987: 1). Recognizing respondents as subjects and not as objects of study ( Smith, 1987) supports the second argument, and is also a view of feminist standpoint theory.

## METHODOLOGY

### Conceptual Framework

The study was based on interest provoked by the works of social scientists who have traced the ethno-history of the Garinagu, but continue to identify ethnic groups by etic denotations. Studies have also been conducted on poverty (Lewis, 1994) and other contemporary urban phenomena (Palacio: 1982, 1990; Edwards, 1994; Young, 1994) in post-independent Belize, but not on ethnic identity change, resulting from interethnic relations.

The recent interethnic mixing in Belize is extensive. However, two pivotal elements in ethnic redefinition in Belize were targeted for special scrutiny. The two groups, Garifuna and Creole, represent the 'black'<sup>16</sup> groups in Belize and, as such, phenotypic attributes of their offspring are the same. Hence physical differences are not distinctly visible, relative to other groups, to objectively define ethnic identity.

By sheer numbers the Creole is the dominant population culturally in terms of language. They are also considered dominant politically and economically. The music, ethnic

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Those of African phenotypic traits, so there is a wide range of 'black' skin color.

celebration, and dress of the Garifuna have taken national attention and heightened awareness of ethnic identity. The concept of ethnic self-definition of the offspring is predicated on this investigation.

### **Research Design**

The research was conducted in the country of Belize, and focused on Belize City. It is the largest populated urban area (one-third of the country's population), and more ethnically diverse part of the country. It is also home to a large population of Afro-Belizeans of Garifuna and Creole ethnicity. As a study site Belize City was appropriate because it was easily accessible, and the residence of the target ethnic groups. Field work was conducted between May and July 1995, for six weeks. For strictly confidential reasons, I have withheld names of respondents and some specific neighborhoods.

Three households were identified for initial interviews by community workers or 'knowers' of the community. Utilizing snowball sampling, each respondent recommended three additional households for possible inclusion in the study. Of the nine households recommended, four were selected for inclusion in the study, with assistance from community workers mentioned above. Members from each of these four

households also recommended three more households for possible inclusion in the study. This process continued until data saturation<sup>17</sup>. In all, respondents from 18 households were interviewed. Along with offsprings, ethnic leaders, etc., some 78 respondents were interviewed for this study. The respondents consisted of members of the target groups, Garifuna and Creole adults, (male and female), who have experienced inter-ethnic marital relationships, their children (over 14 years), a leader and a member of each of the existing ethnic organizations. The offsprings who are the result of the 'mixing' represent the new' generation who will identify their ethnic ties.

Because this research is about lived experience, self perception and determination across ethnic boundaries, qualitative research method was applied to allow for indepth, face-to-face assessment using open-ended inquiry. Indepth interviews (Marshall and Rossman, 1989) provide richness in research findings, where the analysis yields more valuable and valid explanations, a strength of qualitative research. Using the social constructivist/interpretivist theory in narrative analysis, indepth inquiry elicited from respondents, the stories of their lives as they perceive themselves. Narrative analysis offers advantages, in that ". . . personal stories are the means by which identities may be fashioned . . ."

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17

When information received form respondents begin to repeat.



Since ". . . culture speaks itself through an individual's story . . .", what the story reveals about social life is important (Riessman, 1993: 2, 5).

Two research strategies were utilized, namely, field study and focus group study. Data collection techniques included participant observation and indepth interviews, as this mix provides for greater strength in data collection. Most interviews were conducted in the home setting. This provided a natural, informal, ambience, an advantage of qualitative research. In a home setting, informants feel more relaxed to participate in open dialogue, to give account of events, and analyze these events. This atmosphere was also ideal for participant observation, another advantage to qualitative research method.

In April 1995, I first conducted preliminary field-tests through interviews with two households, to develop questions and vocabulary for further investigation. I also conducted quick environmental scans of neighborhoods identified as predominantly Black. For the actual study, I interviewed the following:

1. Parents and their offsprings over fourteen years old, totaling 78 persons
2. Four leaders of the National Garifuna Council
3. Four leaders of the Belize Creole Council
4. Two community leaders from each ethnic group
5. The Buyei<sup>18</sup> of Dangriga, the town with the largest

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18

Buyei is the Garifuna priest who presides over the Dugu (Garifuna religious ceremony). It is defined in The People's Garifuna Dictionary (Dimureiágei Garifuna) as a

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generations, ego and her/his children. When both parents were available as was the case in ten households, then both genealogies were plotted. The genealogy was the starting point of life stories, commencing with ego, the parent respondent. Discussions were based on ethnic identity, cultural practices, and the social and cultural environment of childhood neighborhoods. This was always a good conversation opener. After ego, the next favorite topic of conversation with respondents was their children--how they identify ethnically, how different they are from them in terms of education opportunities, and culture choices. Using the same line of questioning, the conversation moved to ego's parents and grandparents. Usually by this time the dialogue was flowing with inputs from the spouse or other resident adults. In five households, ego's parents (mother or father) participated and served as another source for cross-checking findings, to satisfy reliability and validity (Marshall and Rossman, 1989).

During the conversation, the genealogy chart was plotted on white 'shop' paper backed by a manilla board, which I posted on an available wall or tree. The significance here is that respondents willingly participated in drawing, with my guidance, the various relationships on the genealogy chart. The chart was always helpful as a point of reference from time to time. By being participatory, the presence of respondents was preserved as "knowers" and "subjects", rather than as

objects of the research (Smith, 1987; Collins, 1990). Other data gathering tools used were, a tape recorder and a note pad. I recorded the conversations only when permission was granted by the respondents, and when I was certain that they were comfortable with the tape recorder.

Some respondents perceived a stigma on one of the two groups and found it embarrassing to discuss or admit to their ethnic mix. In such situations I informed them of my ethnic mix, which helped to stimulate confidence in the individual respondent. Invariably, the respondents' satisfactions were that I can understand the dilemma, and I did. This is one advantage of "indigenous anthropology" (Bernard, 1994), that of knowing the 'nuances' of the culture. The feminist standpoint theory also empowers the 'indigenous' researcher as the "situated knower", the "outsider within" to use the "tension in [her] cultural identities" to generate insights (collins, 1990: 89). It encourages the researcher to "draw on the traditions of the discipline of training and [her] experiences . . ." in shaping knowledge (Collins, 1990: 102).

For purposes of manageability, I divided the offsprings into three focus groups. They were grouped mainly by day and time of availability, so that some siblings were split into different groups. The first group met in a nearby school yard, while the other two met in the backyard of one respondents' home, which was normally a regular 'base' or meeting place. Both sites were ideal being far away from the



earshot of adult persons. I had observed earlier when interviewing parents, that they invariably interfered or interrupted in small discussions with the offsprings.

Because parents' knowledge of my dual ethnic background helped to ease their discomfort when discussing their ethnicity, I brought a young informant to the first focus group. This was a teenager of 'mixed' parentage (Garifuna and Creole), and also a trained peer counselor. Her presence was an icebreaker, as it turned out that she knew three of the twelve offsprings. As planned, the informant initially took over by introducing herself, stressing her ethnicity and that of her parents. She then introduced me, after which she asked the three offsprings she knew to introduce the others. During this time a vendor passed by selling 'shaved' ice with syrup, and my informant offered some. This rousing introduction initiated a general discussion which led into my topic.

After the success of the first focus group study, I invited my informant to the other two. Of the three, group one was the most outspoken and informative. It took two attempts to get the third group together. The reason was a minor rivalry over an ex-boyfriend. To solve the problem, I interviewed the person bearing the grievance separately.

Other interviews were conducted as background information to the study, such as the opinions of political area representatives, the leading newspaper editor, and leaders of ethnic organizations. Although these were conducted in the

office atmosphere, the discussions were informal and informative.

As participant observer, I attended ethnic council meetings organized by both groups, as well as cultural functions, such as, set-up, wake, arisaruni, and nigh-night<sup>19</sup>; social functions, such as church services, dances, discussion circles, basketball games, and home visits. I also had the opportunity to observe young people interacting, "hanging out" or "chilling out" twice in each of three neighborhoods. This gave me a better insight into their way of life. I accepted social invitations to five households, where I assisted with food preparation, observed the physical surroundings, and behavior. A knowledge of the languages spoken took on a most useful turn in participant observation.

I elicited feedback from the target group, and shared findings with the community organization that assisted in respondent identification and selection. This was one way to 'preserve the presence' of respondents as 'knowers' and 'subjects' (Smith, 1987; Collins, 1990). The sharing also served as one method of reciprocity which responds to the ethical dilemma of the "[researcher's] unduly disrupting" the daily routine of the respondents (Marshall and Rossman, 1989: 69, 72).

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19

Wake, arisaruni, and nigh-night are cultural activities/ceremonies conducted after the death of a relative. Creoles call this a set-up.

Other ways of reciprocating were, showing household members their genealogy charts including instructions to design one; disseminating information on a community radio program called "Women's Round Table"; and lecturing on concepts of community development to a group of community workers, in a course sponsored by the University of the West Indies. Reciprocity by the social scientist is a necessity ". One suggestion offered by Palacio (1976a) was that the social scientist ". . . makes the information he [she] collects available and understandable to the subjects themselves so that they can use it to improve their own lives . . ." (Palacio, 1976a: 486). I will continue to disseminate research findings among other community organizations who can use the information to enlighten their constituents.

## Chapter III

### RESEARCH FINDINGS

#### Background

The main thrust of the research is the actual fieldwork. It is divided into two sections, namely, the Findings and Analysis of Findings. The Findings which are presented in this chapter are the actual data accumulated from the field. Presented in narrative form, the details include exact quotes from the respondents, to give more depth and meaning to the study. Several themes surfaced in the fieldwork, and I have selected five to satisfy my goals and interests. These are: Creole/Garifuna relations, marital union pattern, ethnic identity, cultural characteristics, and state of mobilization.

My fieldwork was concentrated in the African-Belizean community, particularly households with interethnic mixing. The households were evenly distributed by ethnicity of the mother--nine Creole mothers and Garifuna fathers, nine Garifuna mothers and Creole fathers. Most of the households were of stable marital<sup>20</sup> union. The household heads'

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20

Marital union as defined in Operational Definitions--a union recognized by the Actors whether legal, common-law, or visiting union.



occupation extended from the professional (one was a lawyer) to the blue collar type, but skewed toward the latter. The four female headed households were directed by Garifuna women. There were three households where the mothers were full-time homemakers, two Creoles, and one Garifuna; and four households were extended family households, headed equally by Creole and Garifuna women. Approximately five households consisted of siblings who are 'full' Creole or Garifuna along with 'mixed' siblings, on the same line, and in the same household. This is the result of one woman bearing children for multiple partners, and in this example, for partners from more than one ethnic group. The 'full' offsprings were not interviewed and therefore not a direct component in this study.

I recognized two groups of Garinagu, Central American immigrants from neighboring Guatemala and Honduras, and Belizean Garinagu. The first, also locally called "Black Spanish" and/or "alien"<sup>21</sup>, have intermarried with Belizean Garinagu and Hispanic Central Americans. They were generally perceived by the Belizean public, including Belizean Garinagu as low on the socio-economic totem pole. Invariably they were undocumented (illegal immigrants), unskilled, fluent only in Spanish, and live in close proximity to each other in overcrowded tenements, in ghetto areas of Belize City.

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21

Alien means not belonging or not a member. It is a terminology used for Central Americans only, whether they are legal or illegal immigrants.

The second group was the Belizean born Garinagu, the majority of whom migrated from traditional Garifuna communities. Some came from urban Dangriga, but a larger group hailed from the villages of Barranco, Seine Bight, and Hopkins (Fig. 1). These left their rural communities in search of economic and educational opportunities, such as: better paid jobs, wider choice in educational institutions for their children, and the availability for tertiary and/or adult level training for themselves. They brought with them some traditional cultural practices and values. Their children are the first generation Belize City born, a highly valued characteristic between offsprings and their parents. There are two main reasons for highly valued characteristics-- belonging to Belize City and not the village is a status, as it gives the perception of "better"; and being a villager connotes "backwardness" among the respondents.

The Belizean Garinagu live in several parts of Belize City, with two large clusters residing in dilapidated areas of the City. Some have obtained the coveted low income government housing<sup>22</sup> on a hire purchase basis. The third cluster lives on "captured"<sup>23</sup> land in two swampy areas on the

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22

These are very small, two and three bedroom concrete houses, built in high density fashion, as low income housing project by the government.

23

Capture means that they have taken over the land, they are squatters on the land. The action demonstrates empowerment, though it is illegal. A similar practice in another area of

outskirts of Belize City. This group represented migrants from Hopkins and Seine Bight (Fig. 1), some of whom have lived here for over five years. They have constructed temporary, make-shift houses<sup>24</sup> on stilts, carved out pathways and constructed 'London bridges'<sup>25</sup> necessary to access their homes from the end of the last street during the rainy season<sup>26</sup>. The Creole spouses (male or female) who have moved into the area were accepted by the community members. The area lies beyond the present physical development of Belize City, where some services, as water for plumbing facilities, are not yet available to the homes. Their only means for potable water was via a public water pipe ("stand pipe") provided by the government, and was located several hundred yards away from the homes. Vicinities such as these represent the worst examples of unplanned growth, but one encouraged by political leaders, for one main reason--votes. A person's physical presence is one criteria to vote in a constituency.

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the City by Creoles, had proven successful, in that the occupants will be granted legal title.

24

These more resembled shacks, some hastily put together, but were referred to as house or home by the respondents.

25

Make-shift, narrow bridges/passageways made from discarded wooden planks as a means of elevating low sections of the pathways during the rainy season, June to November.

26

The rainy season extends from June to November. During this time some of the houses sit on top of swampy water, leaving no yard space for children to play.

The Creoles, who constitute over 60 percent of the Belize City community, was the second group I observed. As is to be expected they reside all over the City, but generally in dilapidated areas as well. Skin color with this group varied widely, and in the social order of things, more value is still placed on the lighter skin color. Therefore it is not surprising that the majority of the Creoles who shared the two main low income areas with the Garifuna, were those of darker skin color.

#### **Creole/Garifuna Relations in Belize City**

Respondents claimed that there is now a closer relationship between the Garifuna and Creole in Belize City, something that was nonexistent up to the last twenty years. They assumed that the prevalence of interethnic relations heralded new openness, socially and physically. I was surprised however, to encounter myths on behavioral patterns and physical appearance from both camps. In some circumstances, the myths were shared in the presence of a spouse. I did not get the impression that this was prompted by any openness in the relationship, as indications of amazement were frequent, when one spouse touted certain myths about the other's ethnic group. This was invariably a Creole spouse. For example, even when parent respondents and their



children claimed not to see any physical differences between both groups, yet when asked to describe a Garifuna or a Creole, the response generally remained the same stereotype such as the comparative list below:

<u>Creole Features &amp; Mannerisms</u>	<u>Garifuna Features &amp; Mannerisms</u>
1. narrow face	broad face
2. sharper nose	broad nose
3. proud	smart
4. always aspiring to be better	very educated
5. secure attitude, so bombastic	reserved
6. afro hair (tough hair)	afro hair (quality)
7. bregging walk	shuffling walk
8. consumption ethic	puritan type ethic,
9. family disunity	strong family unit

There was great emphasis by the Creoles about the "smartness" of the Garinagu and have credited the Garifuna genes when an offspring happened to be "smart", or has performed well academically. Two respondents (Creole mothers), went to great lengths to compare the academic performances of their offsprings, one fathered by a Garifuna and the other fathered by a Creole, in order to prove this point. This gesture alone demonstrated that "smartness" was a highly valued characteristic to the actors.

Although the Creoles perceived the Garinagu as "smart", "more educated", "have a more stable family life", they have the underlying feeling of themselves as "superior" or "better". The Garinagu acknowledged this through defensive responses, such as, the "Giou"<sup>27</sup> (Creoles) are not to be

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27

The Garifuna word for Creole. Oftentimes the intent is to be derogatory. It depends on the intonation.

trusted as "they think they are better". This statement may even sound contradictory, as the respondents who made it were in a marital or visiting union with a Creole, and whose children claimed to be Creole.

To add to the contradiction, both groups agreed that the Creoles were "better looking", as they were perceived to have the near white features, such as "narrow face", "sharp nose", etc.; that the Garifuna had the "better quality hair"; that as one respondent blurted out "sometimes you can find some good looking Garifuna". By this comment the respondent was insinuating that in addition to the smartness, one may invariably find a handsome/beautiful Garifuna spouse; but that 'beauty' was the Creole's domain. Both groups placed importance on the non-black component of their ancestry--Carib Indian for Garifuna and White for Creole--over their common African heritage. So that the "lighter skin" color and "quality" hair were very much valued characteristics. This was also reflective of the mind-set of leaders. One Creole leader interviewed defined Creole as one who was 70% Black, 23% White, and 7% Indian, although he could not identify the source for his information. The informant was equally convinced that a Garifuna is one who was 70% Black, 23% Indian and 7% White.

### Mobilization--State of Organization

Amid all this confusion, a few mature, Belize City based, upper middle class intellectual Creoles embarked on a mission to rescue the Creoles from fast growing stigmatization. In March 1995 they spearheaded the formation of the National Creole Council of Belize (NCC), headquartered in Belize City. One criterion for membership is "Creole heritage" (CARP's<sup>28</sup> brochure), but this had not been defined by the NCC. As far as I know, this was the first, public and national mobilization effort around ethnicity by the Creoles.

One informant explained that the reason for organizing was to help ameliorate the social ills plaguing the Creole Community. Some of these ills are: a large population of prison inmates (70%) was of Creole descent; the street beggars were Creole boys; and the "Creole society was slowly destroying itself through violence, drugs, and Crime" (CARP's brochure). Another source indicated that the idea came from leaders of the National Garifuna Council (NGC) during a meeting of ethnic leaders called by the Belize Tourist Board. The National Creole Council will serve as an umbrella to two existing organizations, namely the Bileez Kriol Projec<sup>29</sup>, and

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28

CARP--Acronym for Creole Association for retrieval Retention and Promotion.

29

Creole translation for "Belize Creole Project". The projec's goal is Creole orthography.

the Creole Association for Retrieval Retention and Promotion (CARP).

Formally inaugurated a year ago in June 1994, the main goal of the Bileez Kriol Projec is the orthography of the Creole language, which includes the production of a Creole dictionary. The projec publishes in Kriol<sup>30</sup> (Creole language), a weekly article on topical issues in the Amandala newspaper (Fig. 3), including lessons on how to read and write Kriol. CARP's goal is "to promote the quality of life for all Creoles specifically, and Belizeans generally, through education . . . ." (CARP's brochure). The National Creole Council of Belize in its embryonic<sup>31</sup> stage is presently a top/down organization, even at a time when community planning is calling for citizens' participation. It is patterned after the NGC whether consciously or unconsciously--its name, its goals and objectives. Presently the leaders are mounting a campaign to demand a day for the Creole peoples, "just like the Garifuna them".

Since 1926 efforts at organizing Garifuna movements have been documented (The Belize Independent, 1941). Advocacy efforts in which several leaders emerged, have extended from education and economic development to cultural awareness. One

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30

The emic name for Creole as proposed by the Bileez Kriol Projec.

31

It was formed in March, 1995.



## Figure 3

## Sample of Kriol Language

(Source: *Amandala Belize*, May 5, 1995, pg. 16)

## WEH AH GAT FI SEH

*by Helen Rocks/Teecha da St. Maria de Porres School*Uman Biznis Eena Di Hous -  
Bot Tideh Wi Kyaahn Affod It.

Note: Dis da di 4th time Helen Rocks di rite wahn aatiki eena Kriol fu mek wi read. Wi tink unu wahn enjai dis aatiki...an nex week Sandra Decker an Silvana Woods wahn deh bak wit Lesn #4 pahn how fi rite eena Bileez Kriol. Enjai...

Michelle shoe kohn home wan day seh ih est wahn important essay fi rite bout. Di tapik da-mi, "A Woman's Place Is In the Home." Ih seh dat eena ih essay ih haffu gree er noh gree wedda uman biznis eena di hous er nat.

"So weh yu wudda gree pahn?" Ah aks ahn.

"Ma, Ah tink uman biznis eena di hous kaaz deh da weh ih kud mek shore ih di tek prapa kyare a hozban an pikni." ih ribly.

"So maku, weh yu di tell mi? Dat uman noh fi go werk an stay home fi mine hozban an pikni?" Ah aks ahn wid moch kansaan.

"No ma, Ah noh seh dat. Jos dat mose uman eena Bileez fose fi go werk pios tek kyare a di hous adawize dehn noh wahn hav nof dallaz fi mek ent meet." ih ansa.

Ah mi waahn si how fax ih di tink, so Ah gahn eena sohn deep kweschanan.

"Weh yu mean by uman fose fi werk?" Ah aks ahn.

"Ah gat lat a ream frahn weh Ah si bout evryday. Fos ting dehn gat lat a singl madaz weh haffu mantayn dehnself an dehn pikni. Wy Ah seh dat da bukaaz eena si wi sasayaty lat a faadar like lef dehn respansibility fi di madaz tek kyarea. Dehn only help mek di pikni dehn, den expek di uman fi du di res. Den fi mek tingz wos, di poe uman dehn only di mek lee bit a mony weh haadly kud feed di pikni dehn faa less pay di ada billz.

"Bot how di uman dehn weh dehn hozban di werk? Yu noh tink seh dehn kudda stay an tek kyare a di home?"

"Ma, dat da weh wahn nex problem wudda kohn. Sake a weh dehn jab only di pay lee bit a mony an kaaz a livin so hai - di mony hozban bring home no nof fi pay di bil dehn. So den di wife haffu geh op an werk fi mek nof mony fi ron tingz.

Bot tinkin bout it, dis bring mi tu wahn nex kansaan. Sohn a di man dehn noh spreeshyate weh di uman di du fi help. Fos ting dehn halla how di uman di luk tayad an oala evry day. Bot weh dehn expek if di uman haffu werk out pios tek kyare a di home?"

Ah mos seh Ah mi impress wid shoe pinte a vyue dehn. Fi wahn yoot, ih mi di tink deep fi true. Ax ih mi di pinte out - di plase a di uman da eena di home bot bukaaz a di kaaz a livin wid chinchy pay an sohntime krenki man, ih no pasibl fi uman jos stay home.

Wan time eena di oala dayz, uman doz stay home an du wahn byootiful jab a kip di hous klean, kuk gud food an tek kyare a hozban an pikni. Ah mos seh (frahn weh Ah yer) dat dende dehn dayz pikni doz eat gud, luk gud an ak gud. Madaz doz si tu dat. Tideh tingz difran - no kaaz wi waahn bot bukaaz wi haffu kip op wid dimanz fi bee able fi put da meal pahn di table adawize di hole faamly gwine hongry.

Ih noh fenny fi tink bout di lat a ting dehn weh werkin madaz mis out pahn sake a haffu go out an werk. Sohntime hous haffu lef doty, kloze noh wash an aal kine a kwik food kuk op. Noh aks tu weh pikni get way wid. Ah noe lat wudda aagyue wid di faks weh inklude eena disya aatiki bot if wahn yoot kud noatis weh uman realy biznis, den wy wi oala pipi kyaahn si distruste.

Anyway, Ah tell Michelle fi sidong an rite out di pinte dehn weh mek ih gree wid ih aagyue ment an Ah shore ih wahn able fi rite wahn essay weh noh only kudda mek waan gud grade.

bot kudda mek sohn pipi chanje dehn vyue eena dis ya kansaan.

(Tanks tu Helen Rocks, *Amandala* unu oal a unu pipi weh kip di sapsot di standud spelin a di Bileez Kriol Langway!)

leader, T. V. Ramos<sup>32</sup> of Dangriga, successfully advocated for a day to recognize the contributions of the Garinagu (Belize Independent, February 5, 1941). This is November 19, Garifuna Settlement Day, which was first celebrated in 1941 and is presently a national holiday.

After the 1970's other leaders surfaced to further expand the Settlement Day Celebrations to the entire country. Other successful results of advocacy by Garifuna leaders were: changing the name of Stann Creek Town to Dangriga (emic name), renaming the Princess Margaret<sup>33</sup> Park in Dangriga to Elejo Beni<sup>34</sup> Park; their name as a people to be in the 'native' tongue--so Garifuna/Garinagu and not the Anglicized version, Carib.

The principal Garifuna movement presently, is the National Garifuna Council (NGC). Formed in 1981, the NGC is a legal entity and the formal replacement for many ad hoc groups of the mid 1970's. The goal is to advance the economic, cultural, and social well being of the Garinagu. It is a grassroots organization with ten branches throughout Belize. There are no membership lists because members have

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32

A native of Honduras, he made his home in Dangriga from 1924 until his death in 1956.

33

Princess Margaret is sister to Queen Elizabeth II.

34

One of the initial leaders of the Garinagu who safely brought his people across the waves to Belize in 1832.

not seen it fit to officially become members as stipulated by the constitution. So, to them the criterion for membership is ethnic identification.

The NGC was the only vocal and visible ethnic organization until 1990. Since then, the organization has been perceived by outsiders as one representing the Garifuna people. The day to day coordination, when such existed, was through the voluntary efforts of its members. This is a disadvantage, in that it leaves room for very little continuity. Compounding this was factionalism within the ranks of the NGC, which occurred from time to time, primarily as a result of differences in political party ideologies, and religious denominational politics. The longest tension caused by a political standoff in 1993, is still ongoing<sup>35</sup>. While these have been disorganizing and divisive, they have not yet led to the disruption of the NGC. Hence there is the perception within the community at large that the organization is one of "unity", "cohesiveness", and "togetherness".

What has held the NGC together? According to Blu (1981), people act together because there is no other choice, even when they don't agree, because they have developed a sense of the "common good". So it was with the NGC, whose subliminal message at annual celebrations had been "uwa la busiganu", literally translated as, "be proud of who you are". The

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35

As deciphered from an interview with the National President on Radio KREM on Sunday, June 25, 1995).



grassroots were the uniting force behind the NGC. In the period 1991-1993, under the leadership of a grassroots member, NGC was most productive in terms of goal accomplishments, planning, and public awareness. Through various media houses and publications, the public was educated about things Garifuna. With the onslaught of mass integration to Belize City, the council's exhortations may have proven to be too successful.

Some of the achievements are as follows:

1. sponsors training workshops
2. negotiated and received from government free title to two prime properties in Dangriga
3. the near completion of the people's culture house in Dangriga, on one of the properties above
4. produced a People's Garifuna Dictionary (Fig. 4)
5. broadcasts a weekly cultural radio program called 'Hamalali Garinagu'<sup>36</sup>
6. produced a quarterly newsletter called 'Win Win Gua Wadabagei'<sup>37</sup>
7. sponsors high school scholarships
8. organizes and finances the national Garifuna Settlement Day celebrations, and annual national conventions
9. presentations by member representatives at workshops and conferences at home and abroad

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36

Literally translated as 'Voice of the Garifuna People.'

37

Literally translated as the call or message from the conch shell.



Figure 4

Sample of Garifuna Language  
(Source: The People's Garifuna Dictionary)

gahoun	GARIFUNA - ENGLISH	gáraru
gahoun <i>n.-f.</i> , coffin	gamaroun <i>n.-c.</i> , salt-water shrimp	
galá- <i>adj.</i> , brown; dyed; coloured; of light complexion	gamisa <i>n.-f.</i> , cloth	
gála- <i>adj.</i> , not empty; having contents	gamuigese- <i>adj.</i> , playful	
-gala <i>n.-f.</i> , fruit put by to ripen. See igalaü	gamuri- <i>adj.</i> , loud; to have sound	
galali <i>n.-c.</i> , silk snapper	gan <i>n.-f.</i> , glove	
galasun <i>n.-f.</i> , pants	ganali <i>n.-m.</i> , deep sea; high seas; ocean	
galasunsiú <i>n.-f.</i> , unde; pants; brief; panties	ganaru <i>n.-c.</i> , duck	
gálidi [ <i>pl.</i> : + gu] <i>n.-m.</i> , alcalde, a village leader; mayor	ganansia <i>n.-m.</i> , profit	
galigandei <i>n.-f.</i> , a very big building	gánbirua <i>n.-m.</i> , waves in the sea	
galoun <i>n.-m.</i> , gallon	ganbusáundu <i>n.-m.</i> , cemetery	
galufa <i>n.-m.</i> , club; truncheon	ganchu <i>n.-m.</i> , horn, of animal	
galugurahadi- <i>adj.</i> , 1. good at selling. 2. contagious	gánharadi- <i>adj.</i> , agreeable; not stubborn	
gálule- <i>adj.</i> , having developed tubers eg., mature yams, cassava or potato plants.	ganibisi <i>n.-m.</i> , piss-a-bed, herb for belly ache	
gálulehei- <i>adj.</i> , productive, of root crops	gániesi <i>n.-m.</i> , sugar cane	
gáluma- <i>adj.</i> , calm	garaba <i>n.-m.</i> , coconut oil	
gálumougá- <i>adj.-impr.</i> , calm, absence of breeze	garabagua- <i>adj.</i> , 1. upside-down 2. inside-out	
galurudun- <i>adj.</i> , having laws; law abiding	garabagua <i>v.-intr.</i> , 1. to topple over 2. <i>v.-tran.</i> , to turn over	
gama- <i>adj.</i> , propertied; having property; wealthy	garabali <i>n.-m.</i> , breeze, wind, air	
gamadóu- <i>adj.</i> , friendly	gáradan- <i>n.-f.</i> , 1. book 2. paper 3. letter	
gamalali- <i>adj.</i> , having voice	garadun <i>n.-c.</i> , rat	
gamalaliti nun I heard it; it sounds to me	garafun <i>n.-m.</i> , demijohn, large jug	
gamalaligua- + -un <i>adj.-impr.</i> , to hear or think one heard;	garana- <i>adj.</i> , stout	
gamalúmoun <i>adv.</i> , moreover	gárani- <i>adj.</i> , having medicine	
gamanihari- <i>adj.</i> , in charge	garani <i>n.-f.</i> , giant plantain	
	gáranina- <i>adj.</i> , curable	
	garara- <i>adj.</i> , round	
	garara <i>v.-tran.</i> , to spin	
	gararagua <i>v.</i> , to turn around	
	gararawa <i>n.-c.</i> , macaw parrot	
	gáraru <i>n.-c.</i> , hawksbill turtle	
	gáraru <i>n.-m.</i> , wooden instrument used to turn ereba while baking	

The NGC has collaborated with government, non-government (NGO's), and private sector organizations in its effort at accomplishing its objectives. The achievements listed above were spearheaded by the first grassroots president, with the cooperation of the cerebral, and influential Garifuna community of Belize City and Belmopan.

### **Pattern of Marital Union**

For the parents, ethnicity emerged as significant in selecting partners. In doing so, their marital union pattern revealed that skilled Garifuna women, such as primary school teachers and office clerks intermarry with blue-collar Creole men, or on the same vocation and skill level, with teachers as themselves; highly skilled Garifuna men with skilled Creole women. This indicated that Garinagu male and female were predisposed to intermarry "below" their socio economic status. As the 'dominant' member and head of household, this was socially acceptable as "okay" for the male. It is the reverse for the Garifuna woman which left a more profound social effect on them and their children. The women were conscious of the predicament, but considered it their destiny or "sinu", expressing that their culture dictates that men seek out wives, and not the other way around. One respondent

explained it as "da man look fi woman, wabati le ya"<sup>38</sup>. The aspiration was for their children both male and female to marry "better". Skilled Garifuna men marrying down, outside their ethnicity generally caused comments of dissatisfaction from other Garifuna, males and females. For the Creoles (male and female), finding a mate carried economic considerations. One male respondent remarked that one criteria in selecting a mate is one "who could knock head wid you". One importance attached to this criteria was that the woman holds a job outside the home.

The marital union pattern was reflective of patterns for meeting in the first place--largely social--the most common being at a "party" or "dance". The Flamingo dance hall was the most frequently listed venue for Garifuna policemen to meet with Creole women in the 1960's. Next were the work place, and educational institutions. Four of the respondents met their husbands at the Belize Teachers' College when both were undergoing training. Lastly, but just as frequent was the immediate neighborhood--meeting in the street, the grocery store, or literally over the fence. The offsprings' marriage pattern was principally along ethnic identity (Fig. 5). Those who identified as Creole continued to marry Creole. Also some of those who identified as Garifuna continued to marry

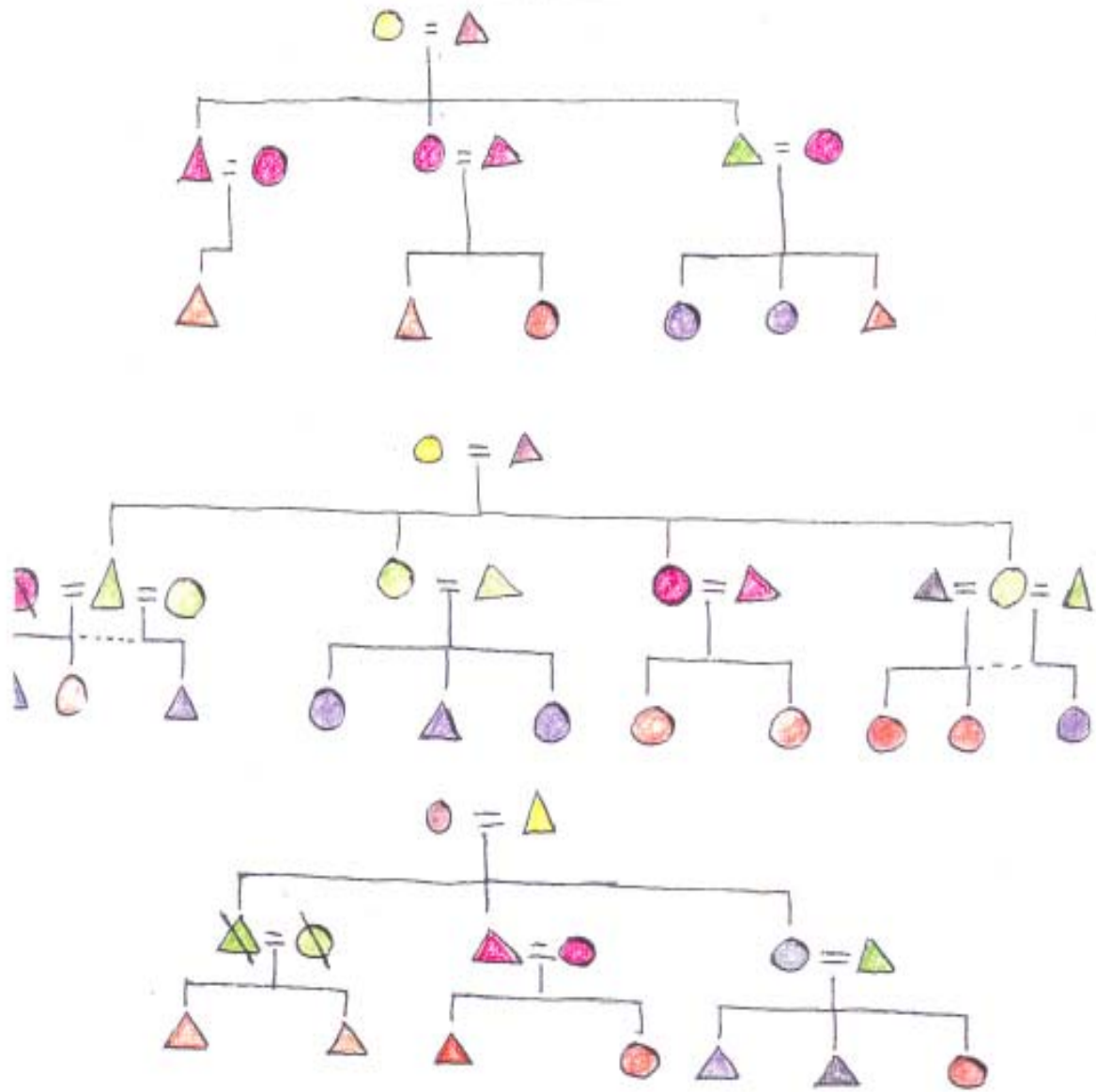
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38

Wabati le ya, literally means the rule was here before us, that they have very little or no control. The entire italicized sentence is a good example of mixing both languages.

Figure 5  
 GENEALOGY CHART OF HOUSEHOLD

#'s 2, 3 & 5



- first generation Creole
- first generation Garifuna
- second generation Creole
- second generation Garifuna
- third generation Creole
- third generation Garifuna
- don't know
- female
- △ male
- dead



Creole, but within the same socio-economic strata, or below. Household #2 of the genealogy chart is exemplary of this.

### **Ethnic Identity—Who They Say They Are**

In Belize, the offspring normally carries the father's surname as it is a patrilineal society. Therefore I used Father's ethnic identity in Table 3 to distinguish two types of households, namely, Creole Father and Garifuna Father households. Although it commonly indicates the paternal side of the ancestral line, for this purpose, it is justified to use surname as family self-identification. To conserve on space, only eight households out of eighteen are displayed in Table 3.

The responses to choice of ethnic identity in Table 3 indicate individual determination rather than a household or group decision. With the exception of Family #1, individual responses within each household unit varied. The primary reason for individual determination was personal experiences as evidenced in the list below:

1. Discrimination by Garifuna relatives--One respondent felt strongly that as a child she was treated differently than the other grandchildren, when she visited her grandparents' household. Her aunts and grandparents referred to her as

Table 3  
OFFSPRING'S CHOICE OF ETHNIC IDENTITY BY HOUSEHOLD

#	Father's Identity	Offspring's Ethnic Identity (Gender--Ethnic Choice)				
		1	2	3	4	5
1.	Creole	Male Garifuna	Male Garifuna	--	--	--
2.	Creole	Male Creole	Female Creole	Female Garifuna	--	--
3.	Creole	Female Garifuna	Male Garifuna	Male Creole	Male Garifuna	--
4.	Creole	Female Garifuna	Female D.K.	--	--	--
5.	Garifuna	Female Garifuna	Female Creole	Male D.K.	--	--
6.	Garifuna	Male Creole	Female D.K.	--	--	--
7.	Garifuna	Female D.K.	--	--	--	--
8.	Creole	Male Garifuna	Female Garifuna	Male Creole	Male Creole	--
9.	Creole	Female Creole	Female Creole	Female Creole	Male Garifuna	--
10.	Creole	Female D.K.	Male D.K.	Male D.K.	Female Garifuna	--
11.	Creole	Male Creole	Male Creole	Male Creole	Male Garifuna	Male D.K.
12.	Garifuna	Male Garifuna	Female Creole	Male Creole	Female Creole	Male Creole
13.	Garifuna	Female Garifuna	Female Creole	Male D.K.	Female Creole	Male D.K.
14.	Garifuna	Male Creole	Female D.K.	Female Creole	Female Creole	Male D.K.
15.	Garifuna	Female Creole	Female Garifuna	Male Garifuna	--	--
16.	Creole	Male Garifuna	Male Garifuna	Female Garifuna	Female D.K.	Female Creole
17.	Garifuna	Female Garifuna	Male Creole	Male Creole	--	--
18.	Garifuna	Male Creole	Female Creole	Male Garifuna	Female Creole	--

"Giou"<sup>39</sup>. Her other siblings are much younger and did not share the same experience.

2. Through the influences of friends and the community--according to one respondent, "Because of my surname and [physical] looks, my teacher and my friends consider me Creole, so I choose Creole, and what is wrong with that." Another offered, "All my friends den da [they are] Creole. Maybe some a dem must be same like me even". The use of surname as ethnic identification is still a common occurrence, which can be negative or positive depending on the social situation, making life's experiences difficult or easy for a young adult. Hence the defensive response from the first respondent.

3. The value attached to one group over the other--The perception of higher social acceptance of the Creole over the Garifuna still prevails with some respondents, even when the mother is Garifuna. This was more prevalent among the older or mature offsprings, seventeen years of age and over. On the other hand a few respondents with Garifuna fathers, said that the name foretold all, so why "run away from it". This attitude also reflected how individuals are received by others, and demonstrated a feeling of martyrdom, as if accepting this identity was a sacrifice.

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39

Giou is a Garifuna word for Creole. As mentioned earlier the intonation sets the meaning. The intent is to be derogatory.

4. The perception of not having a culture (Creole's said this)--This has been used against the Creole by the Garifuna and other groups. One respondent offered "I prefer be the big 'G' because den gat [they have] culture; Creole no have no culture at all mein". It must be noted that the respondent stressed den or they, and that he used the second person instead of the first person, an indication of distance from those with whom he claimed identification.

5. For solidarity with the mother or some female person within the extended family, whether Creole or Garifuna--This was the most frequent response by both sexes. The nurturer, invariably a mother, grandmother, aunt, etc. was the most influential. For example, in one household with two children, a Garifuna father and a Creole mother, one daughter identified with the mother, the other with her father through his mother. She felt a closer relationship with the grandmother than with the parents. Another respondent explained it as, "Mi [My] Ma da dat [is that], so me da dat too". 'Dat' meaning 'that' in English refers to being Garifuna, and has a somewhat negative, impersonal connotation which the respondent has accepted.

In both types of households, no one ethnic group overwhelmingly dominated ethnic preference overall. However, by individual's option, the choice of Creole was more frequent (27 to 23). Also by household preference, there were seven households (household #'s 2, 9, 11, 12, 14, 17, 18) whose members overwhelmingly chose Creole, as opposed to four



households (household #'s 1, 3, 15, 16) whose majority chose Garifuna (Table 3). Only one household #1 overwhelmingly (100%) selected one ethnic group, Garifuna. What does this mean for ethnic identity in the future? There were thirteen individuals from nine families who responded with Don't Know. The Don't Knows were those who refused to identify with any one group over the other, due to "confusion", or upbringing, as in outright solidarity with both parents. Household #10 was a classic example. The first three offsprings were more mature, first generation Belize City born. The youngest who was only fourteen years old identified with her mother.

A few exceptions to the abovementioned need to be elucidated. Household #11 has a Garifuna mother but her children who are all male overwhelmingly (3 out of 5) identified as Creole. Only one identified as Garifuna in solidarity with the mother. This was a case where the mother grew up, and was socialized in Belize City, and subsequently opted to live away from the Garifuna Community, hence minimizing her participation as a Garifuna. There was a similarity with household #9, except that these were female offsprings who opted to ethnically identify differently than the mother, even though she was the nurturer.

Three observations from Table 3 above are of great import to the objectives of my research. First, ethnic identity by surname is now an unreliable marker. For example, in Household #1 the two male offsprings bore their Creole

father's English surname but identified as Garifuna. Even if they were to identify as Creole, it is still contradictory to the general perception and literature on Creole and Garifuna ethnic definition and identity in Belize (Macklin, 1986; Gonzalez, 1988; Bolland, 1987; Stone, 1994), etc. That is the literature upholds the past mixtures of 200 years ago--White with African for Creoles and Amerindian with African for Garinagu. The situation was the same for Household #5 where the male offspring used his Garifuna father's Hispanic surname, but identified as Creole.

Secondly, among siblings of the same household, ethnic identity varied by individual choice, as in the case of Households #'s two to six. For example, in Household #3, three siblings claimed to be Garifuna and one claimed to be Creole. So that traditional Creole names as Hyde, Flowers, Tillett, etc. were carrying either Garifuna or Creole identity, and in the same household. The reverse was that traditional Garifuna surnames as Palacio, Ciego, Martinez were also already carrying either a Garifuna or a Creole identity, also in the same household. Thirdly, the direction toward opting to identify as Creole though not overwhelming, has indicated distinct preference for Creole.

The parents, particularly the Garinagu were at times charged with emotion in defending their ethnic identities and culture. Their children however, were not as serious about this "ethnic thing", and generally dismissed it as "no big

deal". They even related "games" they played on "officials", that of varying their ethnic identity to "fit" the situation. The "Don't Knows" claimed to be neither Garifuna nor Creole.

### **Whose Cultural Characteristics?**

None of the offsprings spoke Garifuna, while two from different households claimed to comprehend the language. Among the many excuses given by the offsprings for not speaking Garifuna was: "It [Garifuna language] is too hard to learn"; "My parents no teach we"; "I was not brought up speaking Garifuna"; "Garifuna no important once you lef [leave] Belize"; "The only time I hear Garifuna in a di house da when den di talk secret". I have encountered only one Garifuna household in all of Belize City whose children's first language was Garifuna.

Therefore, the mode of communication in all the households was Creole. It was common practice primarily by parents, to combine both languages in forming complete sentences. The Creole language has also seen changes with numerous North American slang intrusions favored by the youth. It was the first language of all the offsprings, as well as the language of the immediate neighborhood and community at large, whether Garifuna or not. It was also the medium of

communication at a National Garifuna Council meeting<sup>40</sup> I attended on June 2, 1995.

The respondents shared a list of eleven cultural items (Table 4) from each ethnic group, of which only three were in current use. The first a hana<sup>41</sup>, was owned by a Garifuna homemaker, which she claimed was often borrowed by friends and relatives both Garifuna and Creole. The kneading bowl which was "handed down" by a grandmother, was owned by a Creole homemaker. Both implements were not prominently displayed as other modern household gadgets. For example, the kneading bowl was kept hidden from view behind the refrigerator. These have been replaced by modern imports such as plastic bowls and washing machines. Seven households owned "tinnin"<sup>42</sup> or local graters primarily used for grating coconut by both types of households. The shaka (sisira) was still utilized by the Garinagu as accompaniment to traditional drums, by the Creoles as accompaniment to other band instruments. Some implements were shared by both groups, but most were claimed by the

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40

At that NGC meeting, a motion was presented and accepted to have future meetings conducted only in the English language to accommodate and attract the young people who invariably do not understand Garifuna.

41

The mortar for pounding boiled green plantain, a main artifact for hudut.

42

Discarded cans flattened, pierced, decorated with a wooden handle and frame.



Garifuna as the respondents found it difficult to recall Creole implements.

Table 4  
LIST OF IMPLEMENTS

IMPLEMENTS/ ARTIFACTS	CLAIMANTS BY ETHNICITY	# HOUSEHOLDS THAT OWN IMPLEMENTS
<u>Hana</u> (mortar & pestle)	Garifuna	one
Wooden grater	Garifuna	one
Tinnin grater	Creole	seven
Kneading bowl	Both	one
Washing bowl	Both	none
<u>Ruguma</u>	Garifuna	"
<u>Hibise</u>	Garifuna	"
<u>Budari</u>	Garifuna	"
<u>Egi</u>	Garifuna	"
Drums	Garifuna	"
<u>Shaka</u> (Sisira)	Both	"

Participating in Garifuna cultural activities was limited to twice per year in the last two years, for members of four households only. The others have opted not to participate for various reasons, such as: "too busy"; "not interested"; "maybe next year". I had the occasion to participate in three of the more popular cultural activities, a set-up or wake by a Creole family, arisaruni, and nigh-night by a Garifuna family.

The wake is a cultural activity practiced by both groups to celebrate the life of a loved one. The wake I attended took place on the night before the funeral at the family's "yard", with the crowd spilling out into the street. The

cultural activities included singing of hymns ('sankey'), card and domino gambling; some prayers; drinking and music. The arisaruni or risau included one hour of meditation daily, in the Roman Catholic tradition. It was directed by a lay Catholic preacher, who is Garifuna, and conducted in the family home for eight evenings. It was attended by older women.

The nigh-night, an all-night vigil, is similar to the wake mentioned above. It took place on the ninth night of arisaruni. Conducting nigh-night in Belize City is a recent occurrence. The nigh-night I attended in June 1995 included a live band for dancing, together with the usual traditional drumming. This became the talk of the Garifuna community as the "biggest ever". Only older Garifuna women participated in the prayers. The younger persons socialized and partied outside, an indication that the event was more a social one for them.

Although the parents and their offsprings demonstrated knowledge of, and claimed to value the cultural traits of the Garifuna, not one household practiced these traits on any regular basis. For example, the Garinagu have an ethnic religion directed by a Buyei, but none of the respondents experienced this although they have heard of it. Both groups worshiped from time to time in one of the European denominations comprising of, Catholic, Methodist, and Anglican, listed in descending order of frequency.

In all the homes I visited, "padded" sofas filled the already small living rooms, with nineteen to twenty one inch color televisions prominently displayed. In most homes the televisions formed the focal point, and were invariably turned on, no matter the time and day of the visit.

Two distinct Creole culture traits listed by Creole respondents were "consumption ethic" and having a "crab mentality"<sup>43</sup>. Interestingly the trait, "crab mentality" was also listed as a Garifuna trait by other Garinagu. Even when prompted, each group was adamant that these were distinctive only of their ethnicity. Included in the cultural traits were the many dishes (Table 5) which Garifuna and Creole respondents claimed took "too much time" to prepare. Therefore the dishes were prepared on special occasions or when there was "time" to do so. The offsprings generally did not miss it, and one complained that Garifuna food was too bland. I asked parent respondents to identify cultural dishes or food items, and to select the ones they consume<sup>44</sup> on a regular basis at least five times per month (Table 5). The table also demonstrated overlapping in some food items/dishes consumed, particularly those claimed as belonging to the

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43

Literally translates to pulling a fellow person down or back, each time she tries to move up.

44

The main meal of the day called dinner was served at noon.

Creoles. Rice and beans<sup>45</sup> in two versions was the most popular lunch item by all, next were boil up<sup>46</sup>, and tamales<sup>47</sup>. Tamales

Table 5  
LIST OF DISHES AND FOOD ITEMS

FOODS/DISHES	CLAIMANTS BY ETHNICITY	CONSUMERS BY ETHNICITY
Rice & beans	Creole	Both
Home made breads	Both	Both
Flour tortilla etc.	Both	Both
Corn tortilla	None (Mestizo)	Both
Game meat	Creole	None
<u>Hudut</u>	Garifuna	None
<u>Ereba</u>	Garifuna	None
Fish	Both	Both
<u>Sere</u>	Creole	None
Matilda foot ( <u>Darasa</u> )	Both	None
Boil up	Both	Both
Tamales	None (Mestizo)	Both

and corn tortilla however, are Mestizo food items, but now Creolized or Belizeanized by both groups. Hudut, sere, and matilda foot (darasa) were dishes considered time consuming to prepare and created "unnecessary work". Because of the "work" factor, most households prepared yeast breads with imported evaporated milk to replace the traditional coconut

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45

1. Stewed beans and rice is similar to New Orleans style; 2. the rice and beans cooked together.

46

Boiled, ground provisions, served with pigtail and fish on a tomato sauce.

47

Masa with stewed chicken wrapped in foil and boiled.



milk. It was really a family treat when coconut milk is used.

Whose cultural characteristics demonstrated three thoughts that are important to the argument for redefining ethnicity in Belize City. One is that there is borrowing of cultural traits on both sides. Secondly, as with ethnic choice, the Creole culture traits are being upheld, not only by Creoles but also by the Garifuna people; while some Garifuna cultural traits are adopted to suite a Creole style. Lastly, some cultural traits are slated for erosion--with foods, some items are too time consuming to prepare; and some artifacts have been replaced with modern implements. These thoughts are important to the topic in that they indicate changes in peoples' self-ascribed differences.

## Chapter IV

### ANALYSIS, SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

#### ANALYSIS of FINDINGS

##### Format of Presentation

The Analysis of Findings presented in this chapter portrays my discussion and interpretation of the data presented in Chapter III. This includes relevant, supporting, and complementing material from literature reviewed.

I have refrained from being too opinionated. However, my perspectives remain sympathetic to Belize and to the Garifuna People in particular. These viewpoints are in collaboration with the concept of emic definition and feminist standpoint theory--principles, methods, and theories applied in this research. It is an attitude which has not been frequently attempted in the literature on the Garinagu, most of which retains an etic and impersonal perspective.

##### The Who and What of Dominance—A Perspective

Since Belize's independence (1981), the Garinagu, whom I will refer to as urban Garifuna, in an exceptionally short time, sculpted immutable niches for themselves in Belize City.

They brought along cultural as well as rural values. The reason for this phenomenon is two-fold. In the first place, most of the land squatters were rural people. They were accustomed to the day to day tasks and environment of the 'bush'<sup>48</sup>--carting water, outdoor latrines, no electricity, and tall wild vegetation circumventing the homes. The ambience in this squatting community was one of village life, a feeling of being home away from home. Except that the existing realities, both socially and physically, were much worse than the present situation in Garifuna villages. It is the frustration of having less than those around them, and which will now socially redefine who they are.

In the second instance, they placed a value on home ownership, not so much for its monetary value, but for cultural expectations resulting from the new concept of having to pay house rent. They arrived from home communities where house rent was still relatively nonexistent. Homes in the villages were often passed on to relatives, where the extended family under one roof is still prevalent. Hence this worth was transferred to Belize City, fueling their successful endeavors in the heavy competition for government housing, as well as the impetus to "capture" land, even in 'foreign' domain. The above suggestions have great significance, two of which are: a more than tolerant attitude of the host group,

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48

Reference to the village, the rural, indicating the perceived backwardness due to the 'remoteness'.

the Creole, to allow a virtual usurping of scant assets, such as land; a plus for the disposition of Belize's political democracy.

The actions of the urban Garinagu were contrary to that of a "pariah" group (Sanford, 1974), or one in "subordinate" status (Cosminsky, 1984). These actions however, can be attributed to some measure of regard, possibly admiration, but certainly respect by the Creole host group for the Garifuna. I attributed this to dominance. Karen Blu (1981) interpreted dominance as the ascendancy of one group of people over another through the acceptance of values, etc. She also identified three kinds of dominance, namely, political<sup>49</sup>, economic<sup>50</sup>, and symbolic<sup>51</sup>. Contrary to the literature on Belize (Cosminsky, 1984; Kerns, 1984; Stone, 1994) etc., my observations revealed that political and economic 'control', 'power', and 'dominance' are in the hands of a clique of families, and not necessarily the Creole. These cliques have over the years, successfully combined their economic power

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49

One group holding all or majority of the important political offices and wield the most political influence, thereby denying participation (Blu, 1979).

50

One group "controls economic opportunities and financing and has the ability to cut off another group's access to these" (Blu, 1979: 213).

51

Meanings given to circumstances, events and words. One group dominates another symbolically through persuasion (education or religion) to accept definitions, values and interpretations of that group. (Blu, 1979: 213).



immensely, was the elevated value awarded to Garifunaduou<sup>53</sup> or Garifunanness<sup>54</sup> by the community at large, including the Creoles. This can be accredited among other things to the declining value of things Creole or Creoleness<sup>55</sup>. But Garifunaduou had undergone a "negative-to-positive" (Blu, 1981) transmutation. While the Creoles as a group and Creoleness as a quality have experienced what appeared to be just the opposite, that of a "positive-to-negative" (Blu, 1981) mutation.

For example, the punta, a dance of African origin once characterized as a negative aspect of the Garifuna culture, was only performed by Garinagu. Punta's only worth then, to Creoles and upwardly mobile Garinagu, was for amusement and ridicule. However, punta has been adopted by Belizeans as the national dance since 1986/1987, called punta rock. So much so that a punta rock band from Dangriga has been selected by the Belize Arts Council<sup>56</sup> to represent Belize at the 1995

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53

Things belonging to the Garifuna ethnic group, or behavior ascribed as Garifuna, attributes characterized as Garifuna.

54

A more Anglicized version. A state or quality of being Garifuna. Other versions--Garifunaism.

55

Things belonging to the Creole ethnic group, or behavior ascribed as Creole, attributes characterized as Creole. The quality or state of being Creole. Other version--Creolism.

56

Government body responsible for culture, under the

Carifesta<sup>57</sup> in Trinidad and Tobago. Therefore, Punta now serves as one of the economic, social, and cultural contributions of the Garinagu to Belize. The lyrics to the music are primarily in Garifuna. So it was not unusual to hear Creoles and other non-Garifuna artistes sing in Garifuna, and disc jockeys speaking Garifuna on the radio, as in the case of KREM radio station in Belize City. Yet another example was the high profile image of the National Garifuna Council (NGC) which served to reinforce an attitude that is beneficial to Garifunaduou in Belize.

Creolism symbolized primarily the negative social values in the society, such as, crime, broken homes, street gangs, and promiscuity. The "positive-to-negative" (Blu, 1981) symbolic value, a declining process, experienced by the Creole community, was not simply the antipode to that occurring with the Garinagu. The principal reason was that highly valued symbols in Belize, such as, skin color and narrow face are still very much so, as these did not "necessarily become undesirable" (Blu, 1981). However, the negative evaluation of their cultural traits has impacted the psychic well-being of some members of the Creole Community, hence the rush to form a Creole organization. It was the aftermath of such a

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Ministry of Culture.

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A Caribbean community cultural showcase held every two years, and will be hosted by the government and people of Trinidad and Tobago in 1995.

negative impact that elucidated the desirable, hence dominant symbols in Garifunaduou. The most outspoken organ on the "positive-to-negative" issue in the Creole community is the Amandala newspaper.

The Amandala operates out of one of the poorest<sup>58</sup> neighborhoods in Belize City, an area which is heavily populated by Creoles, and the locality for the 'captured' Garifuna community. It is perceived as a Creole newspaper, and I maintain that it is also understood to be pro-Black (not including Garifuna) by some ethnic groups in the City and countrywide. In an effort to conscientize the Creole public on their plight, the paper, probably unconsciously, upheld the Garifuna as an example of good Puritan ethic, a priori model worth emulating and replicating. In the Amandala issue of May 19, 1995, the author of "From The Publisher", by chastising the Creoles below, depicted the atmosphere accurately.

". . . Black (Creole) people in Belize see money only as a way to satisfy their needs and desires. We are total consumers. Every dollar we make, we spend . . . Every weekend we do more dressing, drinking and partying than anybody else, and every week our children fall further behind the rest of the country and the rest of the world where education is concerned . . . As a people, we have a problem. It is that we do not see the larger picture. We do not have things in perspective. But we are in denial. We used to take other ethnic groups "mek<sup>59</sup> pappyshow"<sup>60</sup>. But now the joke is on us. We

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Characteristics are: dilapidated physical environment, high unemployment, large families in low income government housing.

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Creole word for 'make'.

are the most disgraceful and criminal people in Belize. We are the most shiftless, the most drunken and drug addicted, the most immoral, and the most weak and dependent economically." (Amandala, "From the Publisher, May 19, 1995: 7).

To compound matters, in the Editorial of June 2, 1995, the Creoles were described as a "decided, expendable minority" and "leaderless" (Amandala, "The Editorial", 1995: 2). In other words, the Editor who is himself a Belize City born and bred Creole, was predicting doom on his people. Undoubtedly, these bold statements transmitted a most damning message on a people by one of its own, which did not help to improve the negative judgments of Creolism mentioned above. On the one hand, this perception was widespread, and all things being equal, has catapulted Garifunaduou in the form of symbolic dominance.

Another significance of home ownership and land "hijacking" was the silent consensus from the national polity that Garinagu as Belizeans have a right to any piece of Belize, including Belize City. The original sensitivity was that only the Creoles had a right to a piece of Belize City. The Creoles lost this right in the eyes of the wider Belize community, when in the late 1960's and 1970's they opted or voted with their feet in large numbers and migrated to North America.

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A Creole word literally translated as puppet show; and means to make a fool of, to make a clown of, to ridicule.



Also, the urban Garinagu residents were regarded as a voting block by gullible politicians. The dilemma which politicians have not foreseen, is that these villagers were symbolically tied to their home villages and most were registered, and even returned to vote in their home villages (Palacio, 1993). To the Garinagu this did not conflict with the aura of permanence created by owning homes in Belize City, a condition termed lisurnia<sup>61</sup> by Palacio (1981). Most older persons will relate that their hearts are at "home" and would want to return when they cannot do for themselves. The reality however, was that, where once the body was transported to the home village for final internment, funerals taking place in Belize City have increased over the last five years. Also a new trend engendered was the transportation from the mother community, of the elderly in need of care and medical attention. They rejoined care givers who reside in Belize City. This type of mass movement from coastal village settlements to the swamps of Belize City confirmed a tangible permanence. It has propelled beyond lisurnia mentioned above to a post-lisurnia stage, and depicts the latest phase in the evolution of Garifuna society.

On the other hand, the urban Garinagu, as a group, were burying themselves into an enclave of poverty. Poverty is the

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Literally means to leave one's home community in search of a livelihood, with the intention of returning, even if it is for retirement or death.

"noises, the smells, the fears and frustrations" that comes with moving to the city from the village (Sackrey, 1973: 27). In the larger social picture of Belize City, the urban Garinagu have taken up residence in dilapidated areas, with no possibility of their improving the land use around them. A growing number of persons were without jobs for long periods of time, particularly the males and the young. For example, in one household, there was a male offspring nineteen years old, who quit school at fourteen, has never held a job, and is the member of a street gang. Deviant behavior caused by the influence of such environments can be "disruptive, dangerous", and a threat to the public good, some of which had penetrated these communities. However, it is difficult to document as the culprits have passed as Creoles.

Studies on movements from rural to urban (Oscar Lewis, 1965) have demonstrated that social movements from village to urban are often to the bottom of the ladder. In the case of the Garinagu, the educational opportunities embraced by the parents were some of the most revealing indices of high aspiration and upward mobility. However, the experience is not the same for the offspring as education no longer serves as a way up the social ladder, mainly due to the inequality of the educational system (Palacio, 1993). Firstly, by living in the neglected neighborhoods; and secondly, by the continued

attendance to the high schools<sup>62</sup> in these neighborhoods, poverty can only grow and persist, hence the cycle. Already unemployment is a problem particularly among males.

In this post-lisurnia era, the Garinagu in Belize City have merely severed ties with the village, and the "backwardness" which they thought it represented. Therefore they have alienated themselves from the enrichments of their own roots, particularly the sense of belonging. At the same time, their offsprings have not, and will not receive the substitute sought--a "better" future through a wider choice in "better" educational institutions. In other words, they have traded a social and physical ambience of village existence for an impoverished, urban existence. They are caught up in the economic snares that comprise an integral part of their day-to-day existence in Belize City, and exist on the fringes of the Belize City society. The social effect of such a drastic cultural change as experienced by the Garinagu is debility, a feeling of powerlessness. Hence, they have not yet responded fully to the implications of symbolic dominance.

In summary, the implications of symbolic dominance, though complicated, are important to the actors. Therefore, it is significant to comprehend the dynamism between the two groups to appreciate the cultural changes. The effects of

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High schools are funded and managed by government and or religious denominations. The ratio of applicants to spaces available in the 'better' schools is 4 to 1.

cultural changes are reflective of the need to redefine ethnicity. Symbolically the Garinagu dominate Creoles--as permanent residents, they have physically taken over; they are valuable to politicians; and they have characteristics that the Creoles value as good. These valued but dominant symbols have made Garifuna males, particularly the professional and skilled, desirable as partners for upwardly mobile Creole women. But generally, it is a meeting of two poor groups who may be burying themselves in poverty.

#### **New Identity Formations--A Shift In Ethnic Identity**

For purposes of this study, **identity** implies affiliation with and belonging to an ethnic group. **Affiliation** suggests flexibility, and calls "attention to the social dynamics of the action" in identity (Hollinger, 1995). In order for an individual to legitimately claim ethnic identity, Blu (1981) proffered three options. The first is that an individual may claim an ethnic identity if her immediate ancestors possess such an identity. Secondly, if an individual's ancestors have several ethnic identities, she is entitled to select from among the various choices. Lastly, an individual may identify with all her ancestors' ethnic identities.

In the case of the offsprings studied, their choices in ethnic identity are legitimate. Ethnic options were individually determined, and the ethnicity with the highest



frequency was Creole. Even the attitudes portrayed a preference for Creole. For example, the impression of martyrdom to be Garifuna, using the second person "den" and the derogatory "dat" in reference to Garifuna. Not one individual or family opted for both identities, and a small but growing number, the Don't Knows (DK's), opted not to identify with either group. Contrary to Cosminsky's (1984) experience, I did not encounter the terminology "mix" or "half and half" to describe ethnicity. The respondents did not see themselves as 'half breed' as have existed in the literature on mixtures (Kerns, 1984; Spikard, 1989). The marital union pattern revealed that ethnicity emerged as significant in selecting marriage partners. Therefore, the varied ethnic choices will only continue.

Interethnic marriages left two legacies: surnames as ethnic markers are no longer valid; and change in ethnic composition of members of a group. Then what is Creole and subsequently what is Garifuna? Already some traditional Creole surnames are utilized, and legitimately so, by persons who ethnically identify as Garifuna and vice versa. The offsprings who identified as Creole do not comprise of the same ethnic elements as their Creole parents, and vice versa, for those who identified as Garifuna. So that the definitions offered in the introduction, of Creoles comprising of African and European groups, and Garinagu of African and Amerindian peoples, are no longer valid and should remain in the past

tense. The historical legacy of the Creole developed an ethnic group that is always in formation, in that they easily adopt foreign cultural traits as their own. Relative to other ethnic groups in Belize, **acculturation**, comes easily to the Creole. For purpose of this study, acculturation is borrowing from, and adopting another culture. But this is Creolism, always denying perceived 'negative' stereotypes, be it African heritage (Smith, 1965), and always in a state of constant change to the 'ideal'. This has left a trait that "anything foreign" is "better".

There were three groups of offsprings, those who identified as Garifuna, **Garifuna-leaning** (GL's); those who identified as Creole, **Creole-leaning** (CL's); and the Don't Knows (DK's). Among the offsprings, I did not observe behavioral qualities that were distinctly Creole or Garifuna, that is traditional qualities as recalled by the parents. The predominant socio-cultural features presented were some form of Creole for want of a better word, so as to remain with the identities offered by the respondents. The culture traits the offsprings (DK's, GL's, CL's) have embraced was more a "North American, South Central, Los Angeles" type of lifestyle in dress, foods, language, and some values. In other words, they have bought into a "vulgar North American" culture. They have deconstructed Creole culture and constructed a **Kriolism**<sup>63</sup>.

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Kriol is offered by the language group as the local or emic spelling for Creole. Hence, Kriolism and Kriolness.

This is a result of residing in the largest, most developed, most politically<sup>64</sup> powerful, urban community in the country, and by the close proximity<sup>65</sup> of Belize to the United States. But it is also due to the relative ease of adopting the lifestyle of others. Using the prefixes for both emic identities, I have called the actors of this relatively, newly constructed identity, GariKriol<sup>66</sup>. I would like to emphasize that there were households where, for example, siblings of one ethnic group and siblings of both ethnic groups lived under one roof. The influences of this on the direction of identity formation are great. Also with a rise in this type of household, what is forging is the emerging Belizean identity.

The urban Garinagu have demonstrated an ethnic group in transition, as they move or evolve from one state to another. Their culture is a fusion of Garifuna village culture and urban Creole culture traits, but more the latter. There are

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Headquarters of both political parties are in Belize City. Also ten or one-third of the seats for government is located in Belize city.

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1. Belize is bombarded with American culture through the television accessed via satellite dishes. 2. Belize is only a short plane hop away U.S. metropolitan centers such as Miami, New Orleans, and Houston. 3. Large groups of Belizeans live in the U.S., some guesstimates amount to 120,000.

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Offered jokingly by one respondent as an identity for the Creole/Garifuna mix.



no marked cultural differences between the urban Garinagu and the Creoles, no distinct language, and very little boundary maintenance. Culture is learnt through exposure, and the cultural characteristics selected by the urban Garinagu are emblematic of creole identity. The urban Garinagu can be "interpreted and judged" as having "declared allegiance" with the Creoles (Barth, 1969: 16). This is assimilation. There were those who choose to minimize participation in Garifuna ethnic activities, and others who apologized for their Creoleness. On the other hand, there were those who overemphasized Garifunaduou when convenient. Also, the traditional rituals mentioned earlier were altered to suite a Creole style. In deconstructing the traditional, the underlying meanings of the rituals were lost. In the assimilation process, the urban Garinagu have lost tremendously, what may be unsalvageable--their origins, their heritage. As a group they will certainly loose the difference that gave them considerable influence and respect in the society.

Another reason for the identity change of the urban Garinagu is migration. Migration results in population redistribution causing modifications in social relations, and in the economic situation. Therefore the incentive to change was ". . . inherent in [their] new circumstance" (Barth, 1969: 18). As aspiring members of the wider Belize City society, the urban Garinagu (the parents), chose to be assimilated by



the Creoles. This is also due to the valued symbolic characteristics they attach to Creolism, and the status that comes with the above reason, that of belonging to the Belize City community. The parents' choice to minimize traditional Garifuna heritage, facilitated Garifuna-leaning offsprings' shift to Creole identity. Identifying as Creole then made it easier for these offsprings to also buy into the Kriolism explained above. Groups are defined ". . . as much as by who they are not, as who they are" (Glick, 1985: 240). As GariKriols, theirs is a new socio-cultural formation worth researching, for its own form and lifestyle.

### **Revitalization Movements As Indicators of Assimilation**

**Assimilation**, for purpose of this study, occurs when "smaller groups are incorporated into larger ones in the creative process of ethnicity" (Barth, 1969: 9). It refers to the reduction of cultural differences as opposed to increase in cultural differences (Keyes, 1981). Assimilation is similar to Sanford's "completed acculturation", explained as, when "members of both [groups] subscribe to similar basic value systems" (Sanford, 1974: 505); in that both terms connote affiliation and identity. **Revitalization** intimates bringing something back to the state of being alive, to give vigor, to stimulate activity. The prefix 're' meaning

'again', indicates that something was lost or failed and needed to be restored. Sanford postulated that revitalization movements are an indication of the last phase in "completed acculturation" by the dominant group. She said that there was the tendency of some peoples to "retain behaviors which emphasize their differences, rather than likeness to target society, when these differences brand them as members of the supplicant group . . ." (Sanford, 1974: 504). Hence this represents a deliberate step back, a "retrogression", a "return", to celebrate the "differences" between "themselves and the people of the dominant group" (Sanford, 1974: 504).

There are two notable observations on the issue of revitalization movements. One is, that initially the Garifuna ethnic organizations' mission was not one of regaining or recapturing cultural traits, but for economic improvements. Secondly, the distinct cultural traits were those practiced and reinforced as part of the daily life's socialization in the home and community. In other words, the assertion is that Garifuna ethnic organizations were formed for economic development and not necessarily indicative of "revitalization movements marked [by] a coming back to life" as explained by Sanford (1974: 507). If the "ideology of Caribness became a valuable distinction" (Sanford 1974: 507), it cannot be directly credited to "revitalization movements", as there were

no deliberate plans to revitalize Garifuna culture. There was no need to then.

On the contrary, the education programs carried out by Garifuna ethnic organizations during the 1930's to the 1960's era, helped to de-emphasize the culture. Under the leadership of T.V. Ramos, non-Garifuna culture was introduced as worthy of emulation, such as, sing songs in English, piano playing, foreign etiquette, English quadrille and other square dances. All these are elements of a foreign culture, one imposed on Creoles in Belize City in the very early 1800's. Therefore, Garifuna ethnic organizations, contributed to the present assimilation process between Garifuna and Creole. After the 1950's, the emulation of foreign culture was further reinforced by Garifuna teachers. On their short vacations 'home' from teaching posts in other parts of the country, teachers left an indelible impression on what desirable traits and behavior should be.

The leaders' efforts in emphasizing non-Garifuna values, have been so successful that Garinagu left their communities to pursue further education, or vocations elsewhere, when their communities could no longer sustain them. The impact of emigration on Garifuna culture manifested itself in the early 1980's. So much so that since 1989, the National Garifuna Council in collaboration with the University of the West Indies (UWI) saw the need for cultural retrieval. Together, they made three deliberate attempts at cultural retrieval.

This was by way of workshops in language, technologies such as making masks, and other implements, drumming, songs and poetry. The target group was the youth, who were taught by older, experienced craft persons. One objective was to appreciate culture as a tool for economic development.

These last ditch efforts, may be 'too little, too late', because assimilation, "completed acculturation", the choice to be Kriol or Creole, was already in process by large groups of individuals. These efforts however, resembled the revitalization movement purported by Sanford (1974), except that the efforts came after assimilation had set in, and also after Sanford's (1974) publication. Revitalization movements as in the case of the NGC are efforts at cultural maintenance and reclamation. Therefore Garifuna ethnic organizations were economic development movements to the 1980's, and became revitalization movements in the 1990's, partly in response to the effects of assimilation and interethnic marriages. Notwithstanding revitalization efforts, assimilation and interethnic marriages are on the rise. Hence the need for ethnic redefinition is timely for Belize.

### **How Useful Is The Concept of Ethnicity In Belize?**

"Ethnic has a familiar meaning for actors . . . [a] possible motivating factor in behavior, an indubitably shaping factor in cognition, and an apparently deep-seated factor in



effect" (Blu, 1981: 218). This view speaks to the usefulness of the concept of ethnicity in Belize, for two opposing reasons. One is that ethnicity cuts across class lines, but more importantly across genealogical lines. The other is that Belizeans respond to ethnic identity first, rather than nationality first. One respondent mentioned that she claimed nationality as identity only when she travels out of the country.

Because of the diversity in socio-economic status of both ethnic groups in this study, ethnicity crosses class lines. The social stratification is such that it allows for direct access to relatives/friends in various social strata. The respondents capitalized on this for economic and social benefits, ranging from gaining access to information on jobs, scholarships, the status of being in the company of someone, or hiring a househelper whose background is known personally. Ethnicity also crossed genealogical lines in that, as we have seen, siblings with the same parents, were socialized under the one roof, claimed to be of different ethnic identities. Also the increase in Don't Knows was significant of the middle of the road, border straddling momentum. All the above points to the difficulty or futility in the meanings behind ethnic identity in Belize. In essence the commanding reality is that ethnicity in Belize appears to be more confusing than useful.

On the other hand, a rise in "revitalization movements" (Sanford, 1974), in the form of ethnic organizations, since

the early 1980's, have caused a rise in ethnic consciousness. By demonstrating more ethnic consciousness, Belizeans were searching for a sense of identity, that Belize as a nation has not yet provided. So that identity by ethnicity was still important to the actors. Government leaders have sent conflicting messages to Belizeans regarding policies on culture and ethnicity. A culture policy was crafted in 1992, but this has yet to be viewed and approved by the legislators. This delay exhibited little commitment to address the dynamism taking place among Belizeans.

During the PUP<sup>67</sup> regime of 1989 to 1993, a recent immigrant to Belize was given full rein as Ambassador at Large<sup>68</sup>, in the Ministry of Culture. In an interview regarding a \$7 million dollar Belizean museum project for which he was director, he loudly touted that the notion of ethnicity will have no place in the museum exhibits, as in his view it's ". . . counter productive to constantly label people by ethnic

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Acronym for Peoples United Party, one of the two major political parties. This party maintained power for 30 consecutive years, 1954-1984, and was also responsible making political independence a reality.

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He is an artist, native of Catalaluña, Spain, whose museum advisory committee consisted of "international scholars, specialists on the archaeology, anthropology, and history of Belize, to work on content and narrative"; a Cuban interior designer; a Cuban museum designer; with models and blueprints done by a Harvard trained landscape architect (Price and Price, 1995: 102). This represented a total foreign invasion on how Belize's culture would be displayed.

identity." The then Minister of Culture was more subtle saying, "We seek to promote a culture of freedom . . . a culture that stresses national community", and ". . . our cultural diversity should serve as a strength, not a recipe for racial stereotypes . . ." (Price and Price, 1995: 98, 102). While the then chairperson for the Belize Arts Council during that era, cautioned that the ". . . quest for unity can be misleading, can lead to the imposition of uniformity, of conformity . . . let freedom ring, let diversity reign, let creation flourish" (Price and Price, 1995: 102). The political party idealists (PUP) chose to ". . . promote national unity through a strategy that soft-pedals the attribution of meaning to ethnic, linguistic, and phenotypic diacritic" (Price and Price, 1995: 102).

It is in the midst of revitalization movements and this level of bureaucratic, political ambiguity on culture, and cultural dictatorship by 'foreigners', that Belizeans are creating their own ethnic identities through interethnic marriages and assimilation. Therefore the Belizeans have spoken--to them, identity is by ethnicity. However the idea that some of the attachments are only "symbolic" and at times "invoked at will" shows a direction toward a Belizean identity (Waters, 1990: 4).



## SUMMARY

This research is on my own people in my own community. Because of my socialization, I identify as Garifuna. Therefore, my perspectives remain sympathetic to Belize and to the Garifuna people in particular. As far as I am aware, it is an attitude which has not been attempted in the literature on Garinagu, most of which retains an etic and impersonal perspective. This view is in collaboration with feminist standpoint theory, which was applied in this research. The Feminist Theory places importance on the personal knowledge of the researcher as the "situated knower" over the objectifying tendencies of traditional sociological practice. The concept of feminist standpoint theory, whereby research is conducted on your 'own' empowers myself as the researcher, to better able to grasp empirically and formulate conceptually", ethnic phenomena (Standfield II, Rutledge, 1993: 19). The study itself, was in many ways a rebirth of a lived experience and took on a meaning that only the 'situated knower' as researcher can experience.

The topic redefinition of ethnicity, connotes a change in peoples' descriptions. I have suggested that this is timely for post-independent Belize because the present ethnic definitions do not respond to the new dynamic, ethnic circumstance in Belize. Four features that speak to the question of redefinition of ethnicity surfaced in this



research. These are: prevalent interethnic marriages resulting in offsprings; assimilation of the smaller groups by larger groups, as has occurred with the Garifuna by the Creole; mass geographic mobility; and the formation of new groups in deconstructing the traditional cultures, as the GariKriols in this study. Other main findings are: the devaluation of Creolism, and the elevation of Garifunaduou; symbolic dominance exists between the Garinagu and the Creoles, whereby the Garinagu symbolically dominate the Creoles; and surnames are no longer reliable markers for ethnic identification. One significant finding, though not directly related to redefinition, is that most of the respondents live in enclaves of poverty. Augmented by the marriage pattern of urban Garifuna women, this demonstrated 'ethnization' and 'genderization' of poverty in Belize City.

Belize like the rest of the English speaking Caribbean has not experienced serious ethnic conflicts (Glick, 1985). It is a multi-ethnic country much like Guyana, and Trinidad and Tobago with the African heritage more present in the Garinagu than the Creole. However, by the loss of cultural distinctions and borders between the two target ethnic groups, Belize is undergoing the process of assimilation also called "completed acculturation", much like Jamaica and the smaller Caribbean nations.

The urban Garinagu in this study have been assimilated by the Creole in that they have adopted well the Creole culture,

so much so there is very little difference culturally, in life style and in language. Assimilation is still largely on an individual basis. The assimilation process moves slowly mainly because of the need by the host group to perpetuate the status quo (Sanford, 1974). Percentages offered by one ethnic group leader pertaining to what constitutes a Creole and what constitutes a Garifuna, is but one example. It is one that can easily be misconstrued to contain ammunition for 'racism'. In a society where light skin color is still a valued characteristic as a symbol of dominance, and where the Creole and Garifuna both give credence to their non-blackness over their common African heritage, 'racism' can easily continue to develop and grow. However, it is this kind of mind-set that sustains the status quo.

The choice of ethnic identity by the offsprings and their parents, is skewed toward Creole. The offsprings have created new ideological, cultural, and social context within which they define themselves. It is however, a "vulgar North American" copy of large, ghetto, urban centers such as South Central, Los Angeles. I have called this group GariKriol, whose new identity formation needs to be investigated for its own culture, and lifestyle. By their ethnic make-up the GariKriols have defied the presently prevailing ethnic definition of Creole and Garifuna. The GariKriols have also absorbed and adopted a "web of significance" and meanings partly produced and shaped by "meaning making" institutions

such as the mass media (Denzin, 1994). The GariKriols have based their affiliations not so much on the biological given, but on a choice that "diminishes Creole/Garifuna significance" (Hollinger, 1995: 5). One advantage of all this is that the concept of ethnicity in Belize is becoming outdated, and what may be emerging is a Belizean identity.

The late 1970's to present (1995) saw the mass movement from the village to the urban center, from home communities to Belize City by the Garinagu, in search of economic advancement. Its advantages were mainly political, as in exercising their right in Belize's democracy; and in showing symbolic dominance. The permanence of this move, demonstrated a significant phase in the evolution of the Garinagu, a phase that I have termed post-lisurnia (Palacio, 1981). Their self-determination and ambitions as a people led them to "capture" land, and successfully compete for low income government housing in a very short time. The disadvantages of such actions are, residing in slum areas, joblessness, and lack of skills.

The abovementioned are the key features that I have selected as my argument for redefining ethnicity in post-independent Belize. One of these features that of movements (emigration) have lead to urban poverty. Divorced from the social and physical enrichment of their original source (the village), the Garinagu have opted to live in abject, urban poverty that is broadly different from that of village

poverty. This suggests "class antagonism, social problems" never before experienced by this group (Lewis, 1965). Poverty is a factor that hinders participation in the larger national society (Lewis, 1965) and in this case is helping to create an ethnic enclave of poverty. This is ethnizing poverty. The helplessness demonstrated by urban Garifuna women in response to marrying below their socio-economic status, is an accepted mark of difference and deference. It is one example of how gender imposes meanings on culture in Belize. Also, it demonstrated genderization of poverty.

### CONCLUSION

While Jamaica, Barbados, among other West Indian colonies were becoming carbon copies of the hierarchical British society with its strictures on social exclusions, Belize was generating its own society that was more fluid. Being a frontier country, Belize included a wider cross-section of peoples. Such flexible heterogeneity provided ample backdrop for the bursting of the flood gates for immigrants in the early 1980's after the 1981 independence.



Prior to, and after independence, the PUP<sup>69</sup> regime held up properties from traditional culture for public esteem as revindication against former British colonial indoctrination. Ancient Maya architectural motifs became the inspiration for the new capital city of Belmopan. Special national days were introduced to honor the Mestizo and Garifuna. In their own distinct ways the Maya and Mennonite became the primary producers of food. Through the intervention of the embryonic state system each group contributed to the building of the new Belize.

Notwithstanding ethnic revitalization movements, tremendous erosion of ethnic attributes continue even among those who have been most steadfast in upholding them, namely the Garifuna, Kekchi, Mopan, and Mennonite. The process of re-constituting the new Belize in the 1990's contributes to further ethnic erosion. Far more than before ethnic intermarriages take place between groups, particularly in Belize City. Assimilationists claimed that assimilation increases as a result of urbanization, as in the case of the Garinagu, because ties to ethnic groups become less important without political and/or economic reasons for maintaining solidarity (Waters, 1990). The new urban generations are perpetuating a 'Belizeanization' insofar as its well-springs were fed by sources unique to this country. The term

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The PUP was the government responsible for Belize's independence in 1981.

'Belizeanization' also took on a halo almost of a state of religion during the nationalist movement of pre-independent Belize (1970's), an ideology imbued by the PUP regime.

The pattern of interethnic marriages brought together two 'roots' peoples from different social spectrums--an urban grassroots, the Kriol, hardworking but poor by Belize City standards; and the village grassroots, the urban Garinagu, the "nouveau poor" (Bender and Leone, 1994) of Belize City. The fusion of these two has changed the definition of Garifuna and Creole, but it is also a meeting of "chronic inadequacy" and "poverty of opportunity" (Bender and Leone, 1994). In creating new identities, ethnic poverty was also formed. Symptomatic of the latter, are the "noises, the smells, the fears, and frustrations" of living in a metropolitan area with inadequate incomes (Sackrey, 1973: 27). The challenge facing Belizeans is to ascertain that the wealth of the nation is divided equitably to eliminate the sharp edges of such distinctions.

In this light, I am making a recommendation, that Belizeans can undertake to help eliminate the social distress precipitated by ethnization of poverty. According to Charles Darwin, "if the misery of our poor be caused not by laws of nature, but by our institutions, great is our sin" (Bender & Leone, 1994). As this impacts on social policy, my recommendation is community action, designed for total social change through the empowerment of people in this area. The

area is to be declared an Empowerment Zone (EZ) and targeted as the arena for social action. To facilitate this, I have crafted a social plan (appendix ii) entitled "A vision for Change" based on the 1994 Empowerment Zone Plan for New Orleans, Louisiana.

The main thrust of the plan is community empowerment through "partnership", whereby principal players namely, citizens from within and without the EZ, government, and business sector, consolidate endeavors to ameliorate this predicament. It will be accomplished through the "bottoms-up" approach to social change. The key words "partnership" and "empowerment" in this plan denote collaboration, citizenship control, and community power, as opposed to tokenism, an antithesis of social change. The term "bottoms-up" connotes decision making by those directly affected. The mission then is social change utilizing a collaborative approach to social planning. Although the ultimate beneficiaries will be youths, I am targeting households as social institutions for change.

The plan I have outlined is effective for social change because it incorporates opportunities to participate by all actors. Among several potential partners are of course the ethnic organizations, namely, the National Garifuna Council and the National Creole Council. The social plan proposes above all, access to information, opportunity to communicate with decision makers, and authority to make decisions. Also, the plan provides for cross linking with various members of



the community through Neighborhood Association's. This will allow for a strong sense of identification and an assurance that their contributions are meaningful to themselves and the community. According to the literature it is easier to change the behavior of a group than an individual. The informal small group sessions included, will engender such group identification that will lead to group commitment to the program. The main approach is to anticipate problems or challenges, communicate this immediately to indigenous community leaders. The plan will be financed through the voluntary efforts of several resource persons such as leaders of ethnic organizations, and non-government organizations, donations from the business community, and subventions from the government.

### **FUTURE IMPLICATIONS**

The investigation has just tipped the iceberg from the perspective of ethnic identity and ethnic poverty in Belize. To understand the ethnic realities of Belize, similar studies on possibly four more ethnic groups need to be conducted and then combining all for a tripartite comparative evaluation. People's identity is important particularly at this time when community participation is posited as the way to development of poverty-stricken areas. People's identity is also



important to nation-building as it answers the question of their roles or contributions to nation-building. The deference demonstrated by women should be investigated further, particularly looking for its symbolic elements, to find out how embedded this is in the culture.

The geographic areas I frequented are newly created, urban sites. Due to unplanned growth, and lack of resources of the residents, the sites are already exemplary of urban blight. Why would any government sanction a development that is contrary to the public good? What desperation would drive people to subject themselves to such degradation? What level of poverty are they experiencing relative to other areas? How people see themselves is important in identity. Therefore, these and other questions can be responded to by an indepth investigation into the political ethos, and value climate to determine the will of the political directorate, and the actors themselves.

This study leads to several other research questions that need to be answered in a young, small, developing country. Belize is a microcosm of several cities in the United states, for example New Orleans, and would make a good site for pilot studies in the future.

I would like to draw out two outcomes of this study that have great urban policy implications. One is directly related to the topic that of the importance of people's own ethnic definitions; and the other indirectly related, that of

'ethnizing' poverty, in that in accepting a poverty status, this will be included in the defining them. Both are relatively new urban problems for Belize City. The problem of mal-categorization of people surfaced in 1992, and has not been addressed. Ethnic poverty which is still unknown, implies a disequilibrium. Both have social/policy implications--as awareness of identity is intrinsic to human services and community participation; and disequilibrium cannot be ignored for the common good of society.

As with any field, the perspective that one brings reflects the outcome, in terms of policy, plan, and implementation. From my interviews, Belize's political leaders are still geared toward power maintenance first. A world view such as this reflects the social policies or lack of it. For example, facilitating the creation and growth of a ghetto, is encouraging dependency. This has serious implications for the future--poverty "undermines the . . . productive capacity, family life, social integration, and ultimately political stability." (Jencks, Peterson, 1991: 9). Therefore strategies need to be developed in response to social problems, such as direct social intervention through social policies, and social development programs that will reverse the poverty surge brought on by the village to urban movements.

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APPENDIX i**OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS**

Acculturation	The process of borrowing and adopting other cultures
African Belizean/ Afro Belizean	Belizeans of African descent
Assimilation	The reduction of cultural differences as opposed to increase in cultural differences; when smaller groups are incorporated into larger ones in the creative process of ethnicity
Belize	An independent country geographically bounded by Mexico in the north, Guatemala in the west and south, and the Caribbean Sea to the east
Belizean	One born in the country of Belize, or a naturalized citizen of Belize who reside in Belize
Belizean American	Born in Belize, but citizen of the United States and/or residing in the United States
Belizeanist	An expert on Belizean affairs
Belizeanization/ Belizeanized	To make Belizean, to become Belizean
Completed acculturation	When two ethnic groups subscribe to similar values
Creole	1. African Belizeans with English surnames who speak Creole 2. The language spoken by most Belizeans
Creole-leaning	The offsprings who identified as Creole
Creolism	State or quality of being Creole-- Creoleness

Culture	Beliefs, customs, traditions, and patterns of behavior that makes one ethnic group different from the other
Emic	People's own description or definition of themselves, self-ascription--the opposite is 'etic'
Ethnicity	Symbols of self-identification perceived to be associated with differences in groups of people
Ethnic group	A collection of persons who perceive themselves alike due to common culture and historical origin
Ethnic identity	Sense of belonging to and/or affiliation with an ethnic group
Ethnization	To become an ethnic issue--other versions ethnized
Garifuna	1. African Belizeans with Hispanic or French origin surnames--can be used as an adjective or a singular noun 2. The language spoken by most Garifuna People
Garifuna- leaning	Those offsprings who identified as Garifuna
Garifunanness	State or quality of being Garifuna--Garifunatism
GariKriol	The newly constructed identity by the offsprings of the Garifuna and Creole
Garinagu	The Plural form of the noun Garifuna
Genderization	To make or become a gender issue--other versions, genderized
Kriol	Spelling for Creole in the Creole language; also Kriolism
Indigenous anthropology	Conducting research in one's own community
Integration	A blending in through interaction
Interethnic	Between two or more ethnic groups

Plurality/ pluralism	More than one ethnic group or cultural traits in practice
Marriage	Represents legally married and common law unions
Mestization/ Latinization	To become Mestizo/Latin--other versions Mestisized/Latinized
Nuances	Understanding group ethos
Poly-ethnic	A society that is integrated in the market place, under the control of a state system dominated by one of the ethnic groups, but leaving large areas of cultural diversity
Revitalization	To bring ethnic group's culture back to a state of being alive
Urban Garinagu	Garinagu who migrated to Belize City village communities in Belize

APPENDIX ii

**A VISION FOR CHANGE**

*A Social Plan for Belize City*



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## ABSTRACT

The plan is a two-year community action design for social change in Belize City. Delineated beyond Police Street, in St. Martin de Porres, and southwest of the southern end of the Central American Boulevard in Port Loyola of Belize City for this purpose, are distinct boundaries for two Empowerment Zones (EZ). These will be targeted as the arena for social action. It is aimed at altering the condition of powerlessness of the residents within these neighborhoods. Recent demographic findings disclose startling statistics that the entire St. Martins<sup>71</sup> and Port Loyola areas are socially "distressed". Nearly one-quarter (21%) of the Belize City population live below the poverty level; the incidence of poverty is highest among Garifuna-headed households (33%), with Creole-headed households a close third (22.4%); 62% of the population is below 19 years; infant mortality rate is 20; and 20% of all live births are to young adults. Some of these glaring statistics are the revelation of the first study on poverty in Belize (Lewis, 1994), and no doubt it is worse in the two targeted areas. At the same there are no structures in place to address the problem.

The thrust of this plan is community empowerment through "Partnership", whereby principal players namely, government,

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<sup>71</sup> This area has been recognized as "poor" by government, and was included in the poverty study on communities conducted in the country and financed by the Caribbean Development Bank.

citizens, and business sector, consolidate endeavors to ameliorate this predicament. The mission is social change utilizing a collaborative approach to social planning, and targeting households as social institutions for change.

## INTRODUCTION

### Background

Belize City, the target site for this social plan is the largest urban community, and is located on the east coast of the country (Fig. 1), bordering the Caribbean Sea. It is also the site for a fifty million dollar (\$50M) physical infrastructure project, with very little trickling down in terms of jobs to city dwellers. The main source of economic activity is services, through the tourism industry, a major source of income and foreign exchange. Unemployment is high particularly among the youths. Government sources (Central Statistical Office) claimed 13%, but 'street' sources predict 20% plus.

The two specific areas targeted in Port Loyola and St. Martins are newly created underclass suburbia. These lack basic infrastructure, as streets, adequate housing, toilet facilities, and a yard that is devoid of water and 'bush' for children to play. To date, the residents comprise of African Belizeans of the Creole and Garifuna ethnicity. In other

words, it is also home to the GariKriols. Also it is commonly known that the schools, both at the primary and secondary levels, in these neighborhoods fall behind in academic performance relative to the rest of the city.

The devastating social, cultural, and economic effect of emigrating from rural to urban have brought on a sense of hopelessness, which is just now emerging. The next two years (1996-1998) are electioneering years, when the time is ripe for the community to bear pressure on government leaders for their own welfare.

This social plan will borrow some strategies and goals from the New Orleans Empowerment Zone Plan (EPZ). The reason is that New Orleans and Belize share some commonalities: Caribbean flavor, lies below water level by the sea, a multi-ethnic society, a large black population, and the ability of groups to live in 'harmony' with each other. Like New Orleans, Belize City's demographic data (Table 6) discloses some social distress: infant mortality rate is 20; 27.7% of the population is below poverty (Lewis, 1994), including 6.7% at extreme poverty; and 20% of births are to adolescents. This is compounded by rise in crime and North American type 'gang' activity. This action plan is the "vision" for social change, to develop the competence of residents, in order to deal with the problems of their neighborhoods.



Table 6  
SOCIAL STATISTICS ON NEW ORLEANS AND BELIZE

Category	New Orleans	Belize Country	Belize City
Population	500,000	200,000	60,000
% Black pop.	62%	36.4%	71.2%
% pop. under 18	27.5%	55%	62%
% below poverty	30.6%	22.6%	21.0%
% at extreme poverty	--	6.7%	6.7%
Infant mortality rate	14.7	18.9	20
Unemployment	12.4%	13%	17%
Adolescent pregnancy	23.5%	19%	20%

Source: EPZ plan for New Orleans  
Belize Census Report, 1991  
Poverty Report for Belize, 1994

## The Problem

Emerging from the rigid class structure of colonialism, social stratification in Belize is not a phenomenon. However, it was 'THEM'<sup>71</sup> versus 'US'<sup>72</sup>. Then independence (1981) brought about increased social stratification, when housing patterns and location were equated with socio-economic status, and now (1990's) urbanization. So one became familiar with the term 'low status' but not poverty. The 'P' word was introduced via a poverty profile report<sup>73</sup> for Belize funded by

<sup>71</sup> 'THEM' refers to the Colonizers, the British type, and or the near white.

<sup>72</sup> 'US' refers to the Belizeans--Black, Maya, Mestizo, etc.

<sup>73</sup> The method applied in this study is debatable for Belize, and is compounded by limitations cited that may have affected the outcome considerably.

USAID in November 1994. Since then the awareness to poverty has taken many forms, except united action.

The problem in this plan is the feeling of powerlessness in the community due to the high incidence of poverty, though this is still to be defined officially for Belize. The target population is two extreme areas in Port Loyola and St. Martins in Belize, because they demonstrate the beginnings of an 'enclaved' underclass, an ethnic poverty. As the recognition of the dilemma is recent there are no social and infrastructure services to deal with this, so no history of anti-poverty efforts. The government arm responsible for social services holds the smallest budget. However, the Prime Minister in his New Years' address to the nation pledged direct attention to the problem. An on-going 'poverty' assessment is presently being undertaken by consultants from the Caribbean Development Bank, which includes the St. Martin's area.

My assessment of the situation is that poverty is in a state of accretion, and the powerlessness perceived in the community is due to a loss of its 'spirit'. The community wants the opportunity to improve their situation. This can be done through developmental activities to remove the barriers that impede people from taking advantage. Presently there are six active community groups around Belize City, two are ethnic organizations (Garifuna and Creole), another is a woman for development type, two are church action oriented type

organizations, and the last is a perceived 'leftist' education organization.

### **ACTION STRATEGIES**

The governing body for the Empowerment Zone will be a Zone Management Board (ZMB) whose members will comprise the Area Representative, the Mayor, three local business persons, a representative from the non-government organizations, and six indigenous leaders from the zone. The principal strategy is to create and nurture strong local organizations that encourage indigenous leadership, control, and self-sufficiency. The intent is effective community social action to motivate the Neighborhood Associations. This will be done through trained indigenous leaders, who are members of the communities, have rapport with the communities, and can gain legitimacy from the communities, all of which are advantages to the success of the plan. Although the feeling of powerlessness is unusually inconsistent with effective leadership, these communities are different in that: they want to improve their predicament; they are yet to be stigmatized by poverty; the community is young, but educated (high school level, 73%).

The Neighborhood Associations will provide a convenient communication channel through which the community members voice their objections and/or criticisms to public policy and programs. For the plan to be successful, the activities

should be opportunity oriented (Clarke and Hopkins: 1969) instead of service oriented; that is on a self-help, democratic basis, where community members are involved in decision making, policy making, and are placed in a position of influence. This is the opposite of condescending attitudes of 'outsiders' which increase powerlessness and dependency. The success of an organization is its strength and independence through self-help, and that "priorities are constant with the wishes of the poor people who are supposed to be helped" (Clarke and Hopkins, 1969: 27).

There are several potential partners some of whom are: Students and faculty of our tertiary level institutions, such as University of the West Indies, University College of Belize, and St. John's Jr. College, a large group of whom are Creoles and Garinagu who have "made" it; some non-governmental Organizations; and government through the office of the Area Representative. These will provide expertise as trainers and workers. They bring theoretical as well as practical experience in field work, implementation of community self-help projects, etc. Some are members of the community who are only too willing to reciprocate. Funds will be obtained through the Central Government and members of the business community.

The sub-themes are as follows:

1. *To develop within the zone indigenous organizers and strong representatives for each NA*



The purpose is awareness of problems by the community through indigenous leaders. When people know what their problems are, they may cooperate to effect appropriate action. They will be trained in leadership development, negotiation, advocacy, self-esteem, and management skills.

*2. To create strong and independent Neighborhood Associations within the Empowerment Zone*

The intent is to establish Neighborhood Associations (NA) with responsibility to spearhead community education ventures. These will be the forums for activities by the indigenous leaders.

*3. To utilize student interns and work study participants to assist Neighborhood Associations mentioned above*

The ambition is to tap into the inestimable but inexpensive labor of students, with interest in community issues.

*3. Encourage political participation and to organize for action*

The idea is to increase voter turn-out at elections and voter participation, as well as awareness of individual rights and responsibilities to government actions or lack thereof. Through exhortation individuals will be inspired into exercising their inalienable right. This is a form of empowerment.

## **GOALS and OBJECTIVES**

The overall goal of the EZP is to "increase capacity" in "distressed neighborhoods" involving all three Community Players. The specific goal is community empowerment and grassroots participation with neighborhoods as the "building blocks" to maximize the power that exists within the community.

## METHOD

### Fact Finding

Although some baseline data have been collected, I would still conduct an environmental scan and collaborate findings with this and other existing data. The scan will be accomplished through voluntary efforts of students.

The advantage of this mini assessment is three-fold: First to gather information on facets in the environment that may impinge and/or impact on my plan. Secondly, it will generate a ripple effect through the community, and aid in heralding the plan. Thirdly, this exercise will give an insight into the nuances of the culture, the value climate within the community including group ethos and psychic relations, and the communication channels. Overall the advantage is to define as accurately as possible what community power exists.

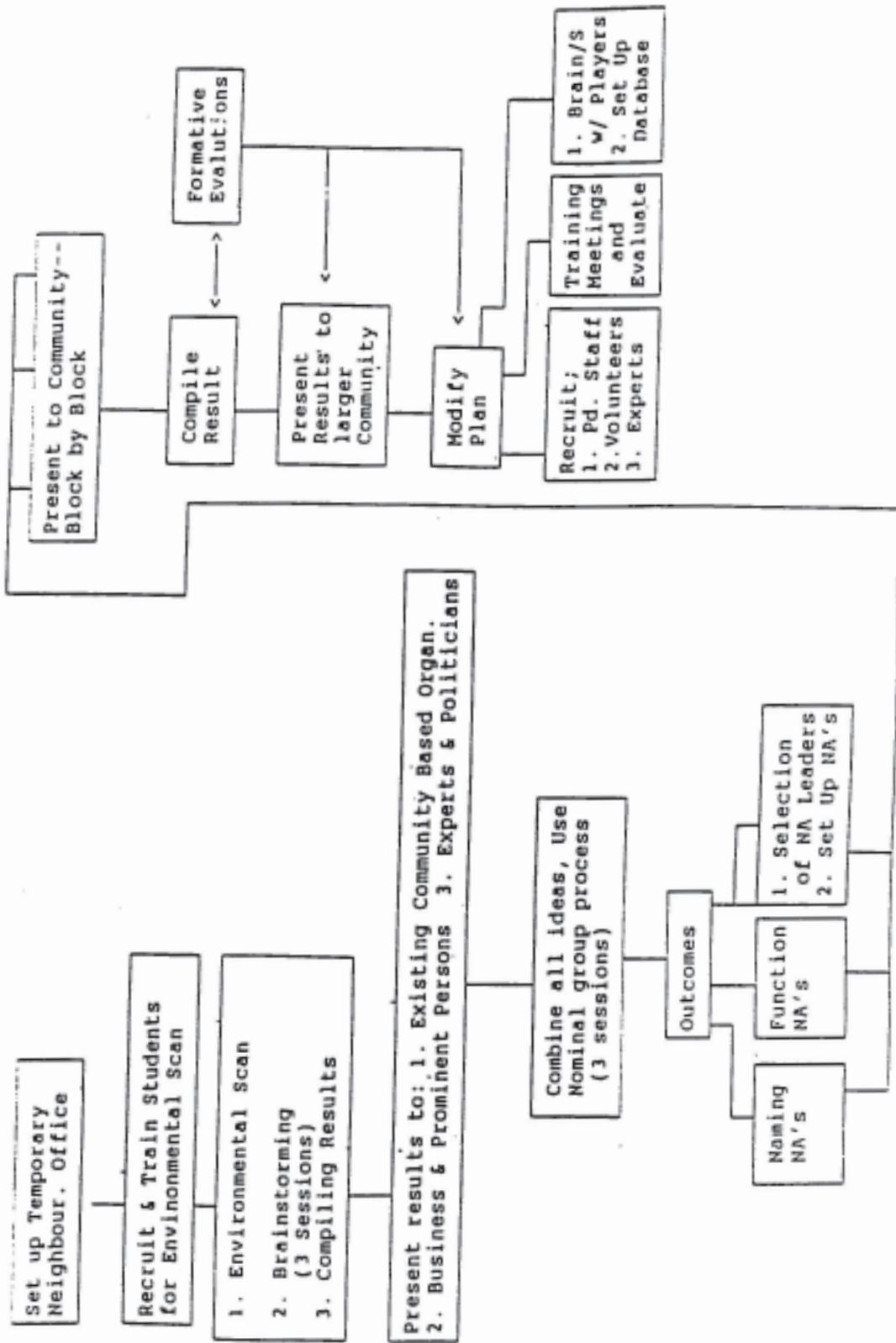
Lastly, a list of existing community based organizations, their leaders, and key informants, will be compiled. Key informants are those who influence the value climate.

### Plan of Action

Armed with the information above, I will prepare a mini impact report to guide the plan of action. This will include a flow chart of the first phase (Fig. 6). The statement will include the following:

Figure 6

FLOW CHART OF INITIAL SET UP



### 1. Lists

a) list of significant persons such as religious leaders, developers, prominent civic personalities, credible experts

b) List of existing community based organizations

c) A profile of the persons/groups listed above, including background in activism, potential interest, statutory powers, their organizational ties, and mission statements of organizations

d) Availability of persons/groups for example, time of day or night, location, and type of authority

### 2. Plan for resolving differences

This will include a list of outside experts and political leaders, all those with influence to intervene as third party neutrals in possible disputes, including committed partners.

### 3. Plan for Communication Stations

Action hot lines will be set up in store fronts and NAs. This will be monitored on a voluntary basis by trained citizens. The community stores will be awarded a stipend for store space. An additional incentive for these stores may be new business generated by the presence of the NAs.



#### 4. Plan for training

a) Environmental Scan--This is a one time workshop style training for participants of the environmental scan. These will be student volunteers from a social science discipline. Simulations will be utilized in eliminating those who are not field work material. Preference will be given to black women over twenty-five. As "insiders" these students know the nuances of the culture to contribute a unique analysis of the situation. They should also have less problems gaining entry into the community, as well as acquiring legitimacy from the community.

b) Training of trainers--To encourage a spread effect, the incentive for participating at the top level, and to maintain a cadre of trainers. Trainers are community members or 'insiders'.

c) Training of volunteers--These are 'outsiders' who do not fully qualify as experts such as students.

d) Training of Experts--Training will be limited to the nuances of the neighborhood culture, and conducted by trained indigenous leaders. By reversing roles, the capacity to nourish robust partnerships is engendered.

e) Community Training--Training to be conducted in various blocks within the EZ to facilitate smaller groups. Emphasis will be on involvement and individual understanding of issues.

## 5. Topics for Training

Topics will encompass the following: management, and negotiation skills, community responsibility, leadership, problem solving methods (cooperation), economic development, how democracy works, functions of government, power of the vote. This will be conducted initially by committed partners. Trained indigenous leaders will assist experts in training the community on a block-by-block basis.

## 6. Method of Training

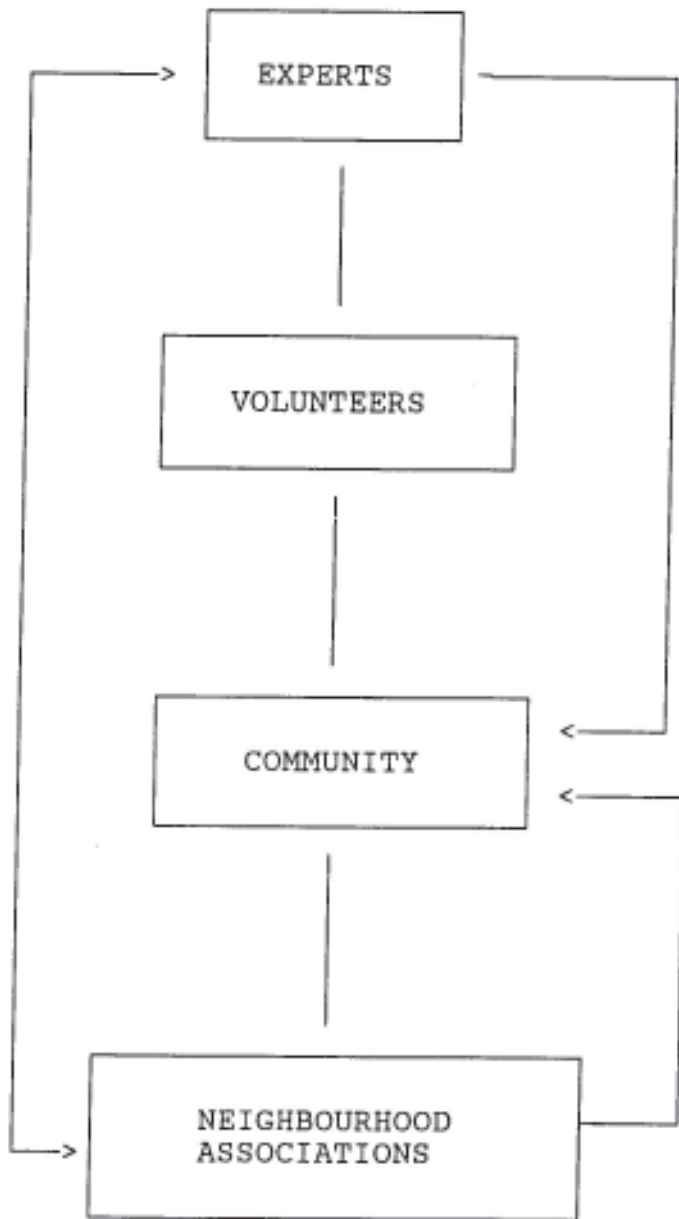
A mix of efforts will be utilized to capture the attention of the neighborhoods, as follows:

1. Formal Presentations--Workshops and panel discussions by experts. The workshops can also be conducted in an informal atmosphere with emphasis on individual participation.
2. Informal Presentations--Small group community seminars to benefit two way communication; for example, in brainstorming on specific projects or issues.

How will this be accomplished? A Speakers Bureau will be set up for faculty, students (university level), and citizens to participate. Training is to be open/entry to accommodate all participants with certificates issued as added incentive. Figure 7 demonstrates lines of communication for training.

Figure 7

Training Flow Chart



## 7. Communicating

### With wider Community

a) Speakers on community issues to students in neighbourhood elementary and high schools

b) Make available to NA's relevant concerns from newspapers, journals, magazines, etc.

c) Ripple Effect--1. Leaders carry special messages to the community. 2. As inspiration, graduates of training programs will address the community on their experiences.

d) Use local newsletters and TV to announce successful projects, and productive individuals, or NA's.

e) Organize annual neighborhood award events to honor contributors. The selection will be executed by NA.

f) Community Meetings--Keeping the community informed to realize a common purpose. This is one way of fostering commitment to new objectives and further cooperation.

g) Calendar of events--community events advertised on blackboards placed at strategic 'street' corners.

### With Neighborhood Associations

a) Combined Association calendars--Readily available information on the activities of each NA.

b) One way communication--To divulge information such as presenting reports or selling success stories.



## 8. Neighborhood Associations

The NA's will be organized along functional lines (Fig. 8) as identified by the environmental scan, rather than geographic. Three brainstorming sessions will be held with all players, particularly members of existing community based organizations. An 'Office' will be established in the vicinity of the EZ to serve as an umbrella organization to all NA's. 'Office' space will be rented from a community member. A meeting place for each NA will be housed in the home of a community member, who will be granted a stipend. This can be rotated on a bi-annual basis. A discretely placed banner in a window of the home will identify the meeting place. The NA's report directly to the umbrella organization. This allows for communication among NAs for resource and information sharing outside of the immediate neighborhood. The 'Office' reports to the Advisory Committee which will comprise of seven persons: one from ZMB, two from the business sector, and four from NA's. The role of NA's as outlined by EZP is as follows:

a) take lead in securing training, technical assistance and staff support

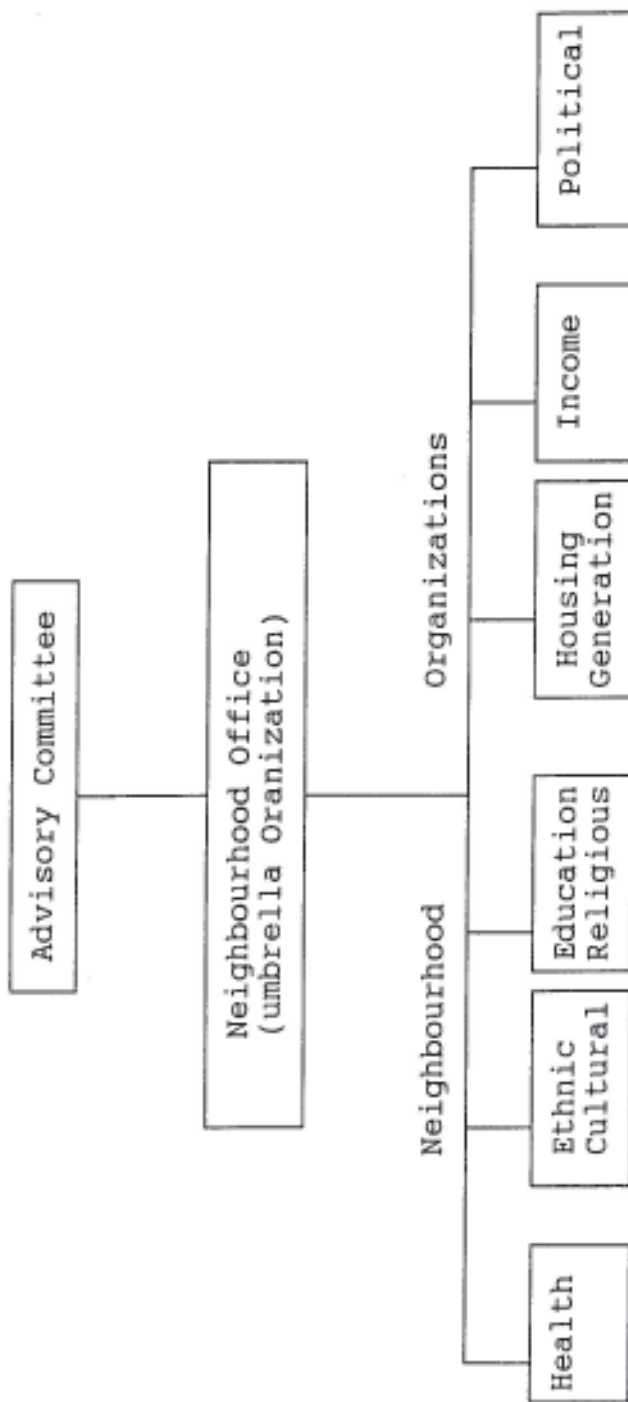
b) to recommend and implement activities at the neighborhood level

c) to set priorities for allocating resources within the neighborhood

d) to encourage sharing of resources and cooperation

Figure 8

Organization Chart



e) to prepare plans and local initiatives

The committed institutions will assist the NA's in organizational development and strengthening.

## 9. Recruitment

Paid support staff will be recruited by advertising the positions. First preference will be given to qualified persons from the EZ, or the surrounding neighborhood. Qualifications will be based on skills, work experience, and education necessary to efficiently perform duties. I perceive three full-time, paid positions for the 'Office' and one for each of the NA's. These are: coordinator, receptionist, secretary/bookkeeper for the office, and coordinator for each of the NA's. Incentives suggested to attract qualified personnel are both tangible and intangible, such as good salaries, benefits, opportunities for further training, and attractive work conditions. One qualification for paid staff is to be reputable enough to attract credible staff volunteers, and to gain legitimacy by the community if an "outsider".

Using a data bank compiled by the 'Office', each NA will recruit volunteers. Some incentives for attracting volunteers are: opportunities to acquire marketable skills, opportunities for prestige and power by associating with persons in the project, and opportunities at data collection for research. All of these are offered in this plan.

## SCHEDULE

Figure 9 represents a twelve-month schedule, but will be duplicated. Training for leaders is bi-weekly for the first three months and then on a weekly basis; community training for the initial six months is bi-monthly, then monthly. Community meetings are scheduled on a monthly basis. Associations are to meet and report to the office on a monthly basis. NA's are also responsible for responding to queries in the suggestion boxes, and may include intervention from experts as in the case of disputes. The flow chart in figure 8 is to serve as a guide only.

## EVALUATION

Formative evaluations will be conducted throughout its five-year life, to monitor: if goals are being met, if resources are being used efficiently, and the extent of change--how effectively or efficiently the methods are being applied. Information will be obtained from a sample of all actors namely, experts, volunteers, community members, NA's leaders. A mix of methods will be employed such as, quarterly questionnaires implemented during community meetings, questionnaires at the end of every training session, by monitoring hotlines, and through home visits. The information will be used by NA's as a guide to future directions.





A needs assessment will be conducted at the end of the first and second years, to identify unmet needs, and to measure the responsiveness of the programme to the previous needs identified. As a result new goals will be set, and old ones prioritized for the coming years. In the middle of the first and the commencement of the second, outside evaluators will be invited, and their findings compared with given benchmarks. This will demonstrate whether the programme is on target and then effect the necessary modifications. The Office and the NA will be audited annually.

## VITA

Myrtle Palacio is a Belizean of Creole/Garifuna descent. She is married to Joseph, and together they have two children, Aniki and Arreini. Her university education was received at UC Berkeley and Armstrong University both in Berkeley, California. She graduated from the latter with a B.Sc. in accounting and business management, with cum laude honors in 1981.

She has participated in social science research projects in Belize and abroad on wide ranging topics including ethnicity. Her involvement in these projects extended from the level of field worker to coordinator, final report preparation, public presentation, and publication.

As an educator and business person she worked with a cross-section of the Belize City community. Her one attempt at direct political involvement in 1984 allowed her to take a critical look at the situation of Belizeans in one of the low socio-economic areas of Belize City. Hence she founded Glessima Research & Services Ltd. in 1984. Glessima pioneered the way for the computer industry in Belize. As a grassroots institution it utilizes the computer for research, and also assists students to gain economic self-sufficiency through the attainment of marketable skills.