Surinamese Immigrants in the United States of America
A Quest for Identity?

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Foreword

During my visit to Miami in 2004, I participated in a park festivity where they commemorated "Keti Koti' (the chain is broken) on July 1st which is the anniversary of the Abolishment of Slavery (in 1863) in Suriname. I became aware of the relatively large concentration of Surinamers in the United States and the uniqueness of Surinamese people. In my dealings with Surinamese people in the Netherlands, in America, and in Suriname, I noticed certain things. Namely, that socio-cultural events such as the Kwakoe Festival in Amsterdam, the Owruyari festivities in Paramaribo, or the 'Sranang Dei' in New York, have the same nature -- different Surinamers of different ethnic background participate in these festivities. People enjoy themselves in an atmosphere filled with music, whilst eating dishes like Roti, Pon and Bami, drinking Parbo bier and chitchatting a lot. This made me wonder; is there more to this apparent 'party and fun' mentality of Surinamese immigrants? Is this a part of Surinamers 'identity'?

These observations made me wonder why so little has been written or said in the public and academic discourse about Surinamese–Americans. Being a migrant myself -- I emigrated from Suriname to the Netherlands in 2003 -- motivated me to do my master's thesis on the topic of identity processes of Surinamese–American immigrants.

The research and writing process makes one aware of the interdependence of others. Therefore, I will use this forum to express my appreciation towards these people. Special thanks are given to pastor Sabar of the Surinamese Moravian congregation in Miami, the family Pengel and family Jerry of New York. Although it was sometimes difficult to get information from respondents, I eventually succeeded with their help and thanks to the Surinamese mentality of warmth and willingness to talk about sensitive matters.

It is unthinkable not to express my love, appreciation, and admiration for one of my family members that was involved in a car accident during my research period. Even during her difficult situation, she empowered me to go on. I also express my gratitude towards Prof. Dr. Annelies Zoomers, my supervisor for her critical comments and guidance. And last, but not least, my friend, Dieuwertje Huig, who called me from the Netherlands and gave me comments on my research experiences.

*For **Alfons**, who kept me sane during my ongoing adaptation process to a new society.*

Chapter One
Introduction to the Research of Identity Processes of Surinamese-Americans

The aim of this chapter is twofold: first, I present an introduction of the thesis and basic concepts, as well as the methodological instruments, which were used to conduct this research. Secondly, I focus on the definition of the Caribbean region because a description of the historical process of the migration of Surinamese people needs to be embedded in what is considered the Caribbean context. In conclusion, the societal and scientific relevance of the study is presented.

1.1. Research

According to the Washington Center for Immigration Studies, Caribbean immigration to the United States (U.S.) reached its peak in the last five years , 6% of the 7.9 million (that is 474,000) immigrants is from the Caribbean. Most of these immigrants are from Cuba (128,000), the Dominican Republic (121,000), Haiti (91, 000), and Jamaica (62,000)[1]. Surinamers are not mentioned in this article. Yet, this seemingly invisible group in the statistics is part of the Caribbean, and in the last decades, droplets of Surinamers have immigrated to the United States. Little research is done on the migration of Surinamers to the United States and these implications on their identity. Therefore, I will attempt to combat this deficiency in the academic field. Thus, the main questions of this study are:

i. **What are the general characteristics of Surinamese–American immigrants?**
ii. **How do Surinamese–American immigrants construct a 'Surinamese' identity in their new homeland?**
iii. **What is the role of socio-cultural organizations in creating and maintaining a 'Surinamese' identity?**

A relatively large numbers of Surinamese–American organizations support the Surinamese–American community by organizing social events for the target group. The perception and interviews of these organizations and key people (considering their past and present experiences) are the basis of this study. It is important to detect how these organizations define/redefine a 'Surinamese' identity through their activities. Just as important is providing background information about this community their socioeconomic and geographic living

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[1] 'Cubanen grootste groep immigranten' in the Surinamese newspaper, De Ware Tijd, 14 December 2005. This article describe the immigration number of Caribbean immigrants to the US from 2000 untill 2005.

conditions. This background information will provide a better understanding about the context of these immigrants. Surinamese–American individuals participate in socio-cultural activities and in the American society, which is dominated by other immigrant groups such as the Cuban-Americans, Haitian-Americans, Jamaican-Americans, Americans, etc. It is therefore equally important to detect how they construct a 'Surinamese' identity in such an environment.

It is not the **goal of this study** to prove that a 'Surinamese' identity exists. I want to depict how Surinamese–American immigrants construct a 'Surinamese' identity in their new 'home' land, the United States. Having stated this, it is evident that the basic concept of my research is 'identity'. This concept can be analyzed through different approaches, such as the primeordialist, the situationalist, and the constructionist perceptions (Vermeulen en Govers, 1994).

The primeordialist approach focuses more on the race/ethnic compound of identity-forming processes. The situationalist approach emphasizes the context in which identity formation processes occur. The constructionist approach focuses on the culture and ethnic aspects that influence the identity-forming process of immigrants. In Chapter Two, the theoretical notions about identity are addressed briefly and a description of the Caribbean identity typology model of Premdas as well as Ghorashi's notions about identity will be dealt with. Chapter Three focuses on the American context; Chapter Four depicts the general characteristics of the Surinamese-American group. Chapter Five describes the Surinamese immigrant's identity-forming processes. Based on the in depth interviews, the identity processes of individuals are the central theme in Chapter Six. In Chapter Seven I describe the role of socio-cultural organizations in creating a 'Surinamese' identity. In the final chapter, the main conclusions focus on the theoretical comments based on the field material. In the end, some recommendations are given about improving the performance of the associations and about future research.

1.1.2. Operational definitions

Identity is an important marker in this research; in the next chapter, an in-depth analysis is given about this concept. For the purpose of this study, I made it operational, based on the:
i. The theoretical notions of Premdas, about what he describes as the markers of identity, were used for the individual interviews. Specifically, these markers include homeland (the manner in which Surinamese immigrants made a (un)conscious choice to ' feel at home' in order to combat feelings of home sickness), cultural background/practices (cooking habits, upbringing of the children, inter-ethnic communication), participation in socio-cultural events and religious practices, the languages frequently used in the household, the most important

rights for illegal immigrants, and perceptions about the 'Surinamese' mentality.   Identity was translated as 'the group's mentality' and other social cohesion aspects for the socio-cultural associations.

ii. Ghorashi's notions about identity as a 'process of becoming' were defined as the pre-migratory cultural knowledge, skills, experiences, and capabilities of these immigrants. Their narratives are an explanation about their migration experiences in relation to their new environment.

1.2. The Caribbean emigration culture

Bron: http://www.caribbeanmag.com/maps/CaribbeanMap.jpg

Different perceptions exist about what is considered the Caribbean. Different interest groups, such as academics, development agencies like the Inter American Development Bank, and others, used different definitions to describe this area. I prefer to use the definition that was first offered by Charles Wagley (1960) and which Premdas follows (Premdas, 1996: 5). According to them, the region Plantation America covers the area from midway the Brazilian coast into Guyana, along the Caribbean coast of Central America into the Southern part of the United Stated (Florida), and taking in all the islands within the Caribbean Sea. Main features of this region are the tropical lowland vegetation and the plantation economic

unit that needed cheap labor and engendered the migration (forced and willingly) of Indigenous people, Europeans, Africans, Asian's, and other groups. Thus, heterogeneous societies based on languages, races, ethnicity, religion, and cultures emerged in the Caribbean, for example, Suriname. Another feature of the Caribbean is that–while being an immigrant region- it also became an emigrant region. In this study, much attention will be paid to the emigration structure of the Caribbean relative to the metropolis countries and new destinations like the United States. Socio-economic, political, and historical processes engendered an emigration culture, the Diaspora of Caribbean people, to industrialized countries such as England, France, the Netherlands, and the United States during the twentieth century, which continues even now. Wherever we find people of Caribbean descent, their organizations and sub-communities are regarded as belonging to the Caribbean region (Premdas, 1996: 7). Thus, the definition of the Caribbean is not confined to a geographical area, but is becoming flexible due to processes such as emigration.

Emigration has been a way of life for many Caribbean people because they are searching for better opportunities which are absent in their home society as Nancy Foner (1998) states. Other reasons for the emigration culture or tradition are given by several academics like Thomas–Hope (1998), Fog Olwig (1998), and Kopijn (1998). Thomas–Hope (1998) explains the changes which occurred from the colonial to the neo-colonial times and which influenced the economic, socio-cultural, and political spheres of the Caribbean societies. Slave owners, slaves, indentured laborers and other groups[2] did not have a bond with their new homeland. The inherited socioeconomic structure lacked an inclusive mechanism for indigenous people, ex-slaves, and indentured laborers. Nevertheless, the consecutive world wars changed the economic production structure, and industrialization, such as the upcoming oil industry in Trinidad &Tobago, and the flourishing bauxite industry in Suriname boomed. Thus, advancing Industrialization influenced government policies and education became more accessible to the rest of the society. These two-fold processes of industrialization and a higher employee skill level amongst people who were searching for better opportunities influenced the emigration wave, the Caribbean Diaspora, in post-colonial times (Thomas-Hope, 1998: 189, 192). According to Karen Fog Olwig (1998), another reason for the emigration culture of Caribbean people has to do with the personal motivation of immigrants. She stresses the micro-level of analysis when looking at migration processes, in particular, the identity-forming issues of immigrants. According to her, we need to pay more attention to

the explanations and perceptions of the migrant's motives, as well as to the construction process of identities, to better understand the complexity of the Caribbean Diaspora and its importance for the Caribbean migrant (Fog Olwig, 1998: 64).

The implications of having an emigration culture are that Caribbean people, Cubans, Haitians, Jamaicans, and Surinamers, have normalized migration and have consequently grown accustomed to defining and redefining their identity in relationship to the changing socio-economic, cultural and political environment of the receiving country. In defining identity, I will take into account the historical processes of redefining identity in different societies. Kopijn describes how Javanese Surinamers in the Netherlands have constructed their identity from the point of their first move in 1890 when they came from Indonesia (Java) to work as contract laborers on Surinamese plantations, continuing on until 1939. This happened in the colonial context of the Surinamese society as well, and subsequently, when they migrated to the Netherlands (before Independence, in 1975) because they feared ethnic conflicts and were looking for better opportunities in the Netherlands. This historical analysis clearly depicts how past experiences and present day experiences, the view of other groups, the dominant group in the receiving society, and societal changes influenced the shaping process of what is considered a 'Javanese identity' (Kopijn, 1998: 115 -119). The Javanese constructed an identity in Suriname, as well as in the Netherlands, to oppose the view of the dominant class and create social cohesion within the group. In the Netherlands, Javanese individuals played with their identity depending on their social context, and based it on the positive image of 'Indische females'[2] -- they claim such an identity.

In conclusion, the (Caribbean) emigration culture has engendered a mentality within Caribbean people (Surinamese people) of defining and redefining their identity depending on their (new) 'home' land. This feature of Caribbean immigrants, more specifically the way in which Surinamese-Americans build their identity, will be the central theme of my paper. Furthermore, I will use the view of these writers as a guideline in this chapter to better understand the migration character of Surinamese–American immigrants. In order to achieve this goal, I will outline the historical character of migration within the Surinamese society. Following this outline, factual data is presented to depict contemporary emigration and its consequences.

1.3. Migration of Surinamers in historical perspective

Suriname is a part of the Caribbean region based on the definition of Plantation America I presented earlier in this paper and on the features I described such as the migration culture

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[3] Indische immigrants are descendents of mixed blood Dutch and Indonesian people, who fled to the Netherlands during and after the Indonesian Independent war between the Netherlands and Indonesia.

and a pluralistic society. Suriname is both an emigration and immigration country, but I will focus primarily on the emigration structure. The traditional emigration route for the Surinamese population has long been the old motherland, the Netherlands, and its subsequent cohorts, Curacao, Aruba, Bonaire, and Saint Martin. Academic literature in both the Netherlands and Suriname has placed more emphasis on the migration from Surinamese people to the Netherlands than on the migration of Surinamers to other Caribbean countries or other areas like the United States. I will try to fill this academic gap up by researching the group of Surinamers who migrated to the United States. The last research about this group was done some 30 years ago[3] (Campbell, 1972).

Three periods of emigration can be identified:

1. Colonial migration, after the First World War, lasting until 1975.
2. Post–colonial migration, from 1975–1987: this period overlaps the military regime that existed in Suriname from 1980–1987, and ended in 1987 when a democratic government was chosen.
3. Post-military migration, a period from 1987 until now (See Table 1 for total numbers of Surinamese emigrants).

Table 1 Total migration from Suriname to the Netherlands and to the United States

Migration period	Numbers of migrants to the Netherlands	Numbers of migrants to the United States
Colonial migration 1900–1975	32750	2-3000*
Post-colonial migration 1975–1987	19371	NA
Post-military migration 1987–2000	5629	373**
Total	57750	3373

Source: Statistics from the Central Bureau of Statistics as presented by Gowricharn and Schuster, 2001.

* Estimates of Surinamese-Americans in New York, according to Kemble's research in 1972.

** Statistics from the American embassy in Paramaribo for the period 1994–2005; 710 original applicants.

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[4] Ortwin Kemble did a study of Surinamese immigrants in New York City (NYC) in the period 1970–1972, and his main focus was on detecting the solidarity relationship between Surinamese (mainly Creole) immigrants and the native Black Americans, as well as to describe the socio-economic position of this group. According to his findings approximately 2-3000 Surinamese-Americans were living in NYC.

1. Colonial migration, following World War I – 1975

During the colonial time, migration was mostly for the colonial white and mulatto elite, and groups such as retirees and students, essentially the higher socio-economic strata. In these students' view, migration was translated as a way to look for better opportunities (Bovenkerk, 2000, Gowricharan & Schuster, 2001). Migration was on a small scale but after World War II it began to change -- economic problems in Suriname, linked with the economic progress of the Netherlands, caused democratization in the emigrant's background. The ethnic and class composition changed; Hindustani and darker skin Creoles from the lower economic classes began to migrate to the Netherlands, although the numbers were not large (Niekerk, 2000: 18). Between 1930 and 1950, other migration destinations developed particularly in the Western Hemisphere, except for the Netherlands, due to the bauxite industry (export of bauxite by means of transportation ships) and to the booming oil industry. Mostly Creole laborers immigrated to Curacao in order to work in the booming oil industry. Others tried to find work in other countries such as Cuba, Panama, and the United States (Gowricharan, Schuster, 2001:158). Mainly during the First and Second World War, boatmen of Surinamese origin got the chance to travel to the United States and decided to stay there, the so called Jump-off-the-ship migrants. A sense of adventure was a strong motive to try their luck and settle in the United States. Surinamese soldiers who fought for the mother country or under the United States Flag also stayed behind in the United States (Bovenkerk, 1975:14).

2. Post-colonial migration, from 1975–1987

Different events in the Surinamese history instigated different waves of immigration to foremost the Netherlands and the United States. The first event was the Independence of Suriname in November 1975. It set into motion different waves of migration until 1980. The process of independence created political tension between the different ethnic parties. Fear of violent ethnic tension between the Asian groups (the Hindustanis and Javanese) and the Creole, together with economic uncertainty about Suriname's future, led to an exodus. A transitional immigration policy (of five years) between the Netherlands' government and the Surinamese government would change the status of Surinamese immigrants after 1980. It meant that a Surinamese immigrant who entered the Netherlands after 1980 would lose their preferential status; they would need a visa. In anticipation on this change, and for other reasons, such as, disillusionment with the new republic that could not combat problems like poverty, unemployment, and corruption, people started to migrate to the Netherlands and other destinations such as the United States.

Suriname experienced a military coup d'etat under the leadership of Bouterse in February 1980. The military took power and promised to have elections within two years, but after two years, it became evident that the military regime was not ready to leave the power scene and return to the barracks. Once again, disillusionment with the authoritarian rule of the military regime and their leftist discourse invoked anti-military sentiments in civil society. This resulted in the 'December killings' of 15 intellectuals in 1982 and cessation of development aid from the Netherlands (which was the backbone of the Surinamese economy). Combined with a decrease in the world market price for bauxite and the consequently lower revenues from bauxite export, this created economically challenging times for the military government and the population (Gowricharan & Schüster, 2001: 161). Factors such as persistent poverty, inflation, and political instability entrenched the migration culture within the Surinamese people. Again, migration was a familiar solution. The fact that most Surinamers have family and friends living abroad, combined with their stories and images (television programs, music) from the Netherlands and the United States, normalized migration, and stimulated emigration. In the case of emigration to the United States, three other factors played a role, namely, the geopolitical context and the tourist industry together with the difficulty one experiences in getting a Dutch visa[4].

3. Post-military migration, ongoing since 1987

Developments that triggered migration to the United States are linked to the above-mentioned factors. The geo-political interest of America increased, due to the 'December killings' of 15 prominent people who were against the military. The Dutch Immediately stopped development aid (after a period of 35 years), which consequently strained relations with the military regime (Sedoc-Dahlberg, 1990:17). This triggered the military regime to focus their lens on the region, instead of outside the region, in search of financial support. Their leftist agenda created a bond with other leftist leaders, such as Fidel Castro of Cuba and Maurice Bishop of Grenada, as well as with leaders in Brazil. The result was the regionalization of trade affairs, the gaining of access to financial loans, cultural affairs, student exchange programs, and tourism with foremost Cuba[5] and Brazil.

In the middle of the Cold War era, the United States' influence in the socio-economic and political affairs of her backyard neighbors who were considered communist, such as Cuba, Nicaragua, and Grenada, increased. The same applies for Suriname, especially after the 'December killing' (Sedoc-Dahlberg, Thorndike, Brana–Shute,1990:30,42,191). Another issue, which complicated relations with the military regime, is that America suspected top

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[5] More research is needed, but I can remember how difficult is was during the late eighties and nineties to get a Dutch visa; people had to sleep in front of the Dutch embassy to get one.

[6] Tourism to Cuba was never fully developed, but the student exchange program, military training and the Influences of the political model were at the core of this relationship (Thorndike, 1990: 44).

military leaders of drugs trafficking (Brana-Shute,1990:197). Thus, the war on drugs together with the communist threat increased the United States' interest in Suriname.

Prior to the December killing in 1982, the United States invaded Grenada. The leader of Grenada, Maurice Bishop, had previously visited Suriname. Thus, this invasion was perceived as a warning to Bouterse. Consequently, a change occurred in the leftist rhetoric of the military regime (Thorndike, 1990: 44). This change in the policy of the military was met with the approval of the United States. Relations with the military were neutralized in the sense that Washington was passively trying to promote democracy. However, in their minds, Suriname was still considered a Dutch problem and not a geo-political threat (Brana-Shute, 1990: 198). The influence of the Americans was again deployed during the Internal War, an insurgency that started in the interior under the leadership of Brunswijk and had as its goal the overthrow of the military government. It was rumored that these insurgencies were sponsored financially and psychologically by the Dutch and French governments (Brana–Shute, 1990:199). This insurgency led to a gulf of refugees, primarily Maroons, to the French border town in French Guyana and accusations (by human rights groups and foreign governments) of genocide on the part of the military. Unclear about the motives of the insurgent group, the Americans bet on the return of democracy and (ironically enough) its champion Bouterse. This view materialized in November 1987 when 90% of the Surinamese electorate participated in the election. (Brana–Shute, 1990: 201). Against this background of developments, the relationship between the U.S. and the Surinamese government normalized. With the return of democracy and normalized relations, Surinamese tourist interests in destinations like Miami and New York began to grow accordingly.

Once financial aid from the Netherlands stopped, the decline of the bauxite industry combined with weak financial government policies to create inflation, a scarcity of foreign currencies, a lack of consumption goods, and the entrenchment of poverty. Oddly enough, during these difficult economic times in the eighties' and nineties', the Surinamese middle class (whose salaries were devalued) became more interested in tourist destinations like Belem (Brazil), Curacao and Miami. Surinamers traveled to Miami to shop for indispensable consumer goods, to enjoy their vacations, and to take a look at the possibilities for emigration. Surinamese people supposedly have a migration habit in which they first travel to a country as a tourist, and then if the destination appeals to them in terms of, for example, finding a job, housing, and family networks; they will decide to stay, or will emigrate eventually. Another factor that stimulated traveling was the fact that the national airline company Surinam Airways flew for relatively low prices to these destinations. This opened up the traveling business to more groups of the society. In the past, only the upper social class or people with political networks had the means to travel. Finally, another factor that stimulated migration to new destinations such as the United Stated was the change in Dutch

immigration policies; visa restrictions led to a change in emigration destination namely within the region.

In the beginning of the nineties, the population's disappointment in the democratic government, increased poverty and inflation, difficulty in controlling the military and the insurgents, the introduction of the somewhat–neo-liberal[6] economic policies and their consequences, as well as the consolidation of the political culture of racial exclusion, corruption, nepotism and clientelism,[7] led once again to emigration.

These developments, such as the increased role and profiling of the United States in Suriname's internal affairs, transmittances of images from the media[8], democratization of the traveling business and the tourist experience in the Miami and New York scenes, combined with the migration tradition that becomes manifest during turbulent economic and political times, create an unnoticeable migration stream to the United States.

Thus, a change occurred in the migration destination of Surinamers from the traditional mother country the Netherlands[9] to the more illusive United States of America.

Now that I have described the developments that led to the migration of Surinamers to the United States, I will outline the methodological notions of this study, in the following paragraphs.

1.4. Methodological points

This study generally looks at the migration of Surinamers to the United States, but more specifically at the identity processes of Surinamese-Americans. The research was done primarily in Miami, Florida and, to a lesser extent, in New York, the two traditional immigrant states where –Surinamese–Americans primarily live.

I came into contact with my research population through the Surinamese Moravian Church situated in Miami. The Moravian church is a religious institute that has a long history of two hundred and seventy years within the Surinamese society. Surinamese immigrants in the United States came into contact with the American Moravian church and succeeded in establishing a congregation for the Surinamese community. More detailed information will be provided about this organization in Chapter Seven.

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[7] Suriname never introduced a neo-liberal program of the IMF model. Instead, under pressure of the Dutch government, it asked Coopers and Lybrand to design a structural adjustment program adapted to Surinamese economic and political conditions. Nonetheless, the effects of this SAP in the nineties were devastating enough.

[8] The political culture of Suriname is characterized by these features according to Gowricharn and Schüster These motives played a role in the sixties for young intellectuals to stay in the Netherlands after they had finished their studies. In the past four decades, most political parties consolidated these features in order to bind ethnic groups to their political interest.

[9] I will elaborate on this aspect in Chapter 5 and 6 according to the personal accounts of the interviewees.

[10] During my interviews some of my interviewees mentioned that they first went to the Netherlands but the cold, rainy and gray weather, and the smallness of the society was not appreciated so they returned to Suriname. When they saw the possibility to migrate to the United States, they used the chance.

I used the church as an entry point for coming into contact with respondents as well as with other socio–cultural organizations and key persons. A bias may have occurred by taking the Surinamese Moravian Church as entry point because more illegal Surinamese immigrants of Javanese and Creole descent are members. By using the snowball method and participating in social events, I was also able to interest people to participate in my research and to include different ethnic groups in my research.

Ethnicity, class, and the length of stay in the United States were the main selection criteria for the individual interviews. I interviewed twenty-four respondents and selected four females, two Javanese and two Creole, for the in-depth interviews.

I used different questionnaires -- a mini–questionnaire consisting of structured questions for the twenty-four respondents and an extensive questionnaire consisting of theme's such as identity, migration motives and socio-economic conditions of the household, for the in depth interviews. The duration of the interviews and mini-questionnaires was between ten and thirty minutes; the duration of the in-depth interviews varied between two hours and three hours and twenty minutes. One in-depth interview was done by telephone because of the great distance between my residence and the respondent's and the lack of a vehicle. This changed the dynamic of the interview setting. I could not interpret the emotional reactions of this respondent contrary to the two other face-to-face interviews. Because one Javanese respondent did not have time I could not finish the in-depth interview, so I omitted it from the analysis. The language used during the interviews was predominantly Dutch sometimes Sranang Tongo and English.

I selected a number of socio–cultural organizations aimed at supporting the Surinamese-American community in Miami, based on the fact that they knew their target group and have a working experience for more than five years. This led me to the eight socio–cultural organizations that participated in this research, totaling nine key figures that I interviewed. The ethnic composition of the research population is foremost Javanese and Creole – Surinamese–Americans, taken into consideration that Suriname is a multi ethnic society consisting of Hindustani, Maroons, Chinese, Caucasians, and other ethnic groups[10].

I did not realize my ambition to diversify the research group. I asked key figures in Miami to provide me with names and geographical data of Hindustani Surinamese–Americans. Yet, I was not successful in reaching them. The other two criteria class and living period in the United States was easier to achieve.

Criteria such as gender[11] and age became more prominent in the research; especially gender played a significant role in the selection process for the in depth interviews. The

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[10] The biggest ethnic groups in Suriname, according to the seventh census of the Surinamese General Bureau for Statistics in 2005 are Hindustani's 135,117, Maroons 72,553, Chinese 8,775, Indigenous people 18,037, Creole 87,202, people of mixed descent 61,524, and Javanese 71,856.

respondents that were interested to talk intensively with me were females because their workload and job (or lack of it) allowed them spare time to participate. Age entered my research accidentally, initially I wanted to interview only first generation Surinamese-Americans but along the way I changed my mind (due to low return of the mini-questionnaire) and included the second generation[12] –Surinamese–Americans.

During the interview period, from June 2005 until August 2005, I experienced some problems in getting people interested in participating in my research. A fraction of the Surinamese immigrants does not have documentation (working permit, social number, or identity card), being illegal immigrants. Fears for an 'outsider' Surinamese Dutch researcher and recent deportations of Surinamese immigrants as well as fear for soliciting information that could be forwarded to the American authorities made them decide not to participate.

Besides interviews I used the method of participatory observations, I participated in church meetings, social events such as ''Sranang Dei'' (Suriname day) in New York, birthday parties, informal meetings and discussions about the problems of illegal Surinamese-Americans, etc. I also had informal conversations with Surinamese–Americans and other nationalities such as Cuban–Americans, Guyanese–Americans, Jamaican–Americans and Americans. I made notes of these informal conversations and my observations so that I could use them when analyzing certain patterns of identity construction.

I extensively studied literature on the identity forming processes of Caribbean immigrants, followed a four month course on migration issues at the International School of Social Science of the University of Amsterdam and tapping into my personal experiences as a migrant were put to use to analyze the research material. In conclusion, a primarily qualitative approach, as well as the narratives and the references of the respondents, are used in this study. Quantitative elements are present to underscore the argumentation. Thus, the study has a more explorative character and is partly analytical. This study was written in the Netherlands and in Suriname[13].

1.5. Social and scientific relevance of the study

In the debate on the integration of migrants in mainstream western culture in Europe as well as in the U.S., migration is seen as a problem for the receiving countries. After the terror attacks of September 11 2001, legal and illegal immigrants are seen as a threat for the national security. Migrants are depicted as aliens who insufficiently try to assimilate, as a

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[11] A gender perspective is absent because I lack the male view thus I cannot compare it to the female view.
[12] Second-generation Surinamese-Americans are children who either followed lower, middle, and high school education in the States, entered the country before turning eighteen, or are born in the United States and are therefore American citizens.
[13] From November 24th, 2005 through January 2nd 2006, I visited Suriname (after two years) to experience 30th year of Independence and to complete follow-up interviews.

burden on the social welfare system, and as responsible for crime (Ontwikkeling en Migratie van Buitenlandse Zaken, Juli 2004 page 44 & 45).

Thus, a negative perception exists about migrants and the multi-ethnic character of these societies. The positive role of migrants is not often the focus in this debate, especially in the political arena. By focusing on the importance of the identity forming process of Surinamese-American migrants in their new homeland, I try to provide a relatively positive view. This can lead to a more nuanced and coherent vision about legal and illegal immigrants in the political and societal debate. It is also important to put forward the perception of the immigrant about their experiences.

The migration of Surinamese people to the United States, Florida, is a phenomenon that has to be studied because of its contribution to Caribbean studies. The general academic literature on migration to the United States focuses on migration from the Hispanic–and Non Hispanic Caribbean region to the United States. Hispanic groups consist of people primarily from Latin America and the Caribbean who speak Spanish like Cubans and Dominicans, as well as non-Hispanic groups belonging to the French and Anglo-Saxon Caribbean.

Suriname is thus absent in most of these studies although it can be seen as a Caribbean country on the basis of its historical and socioeconomic and political development, as well as an Latin America country due to its geographical, ecological characteristics and common economic, political interest.

I will attempt to place the concept of identity within a constructionist and situationalist framework by looking at the interaction between Surinamese immigrants their pre-migratory knowledge and the new context of Florida. Therefore, it becomes clear how Surinamese immigrants make a (sometimes) conscious choice to claim a certain identity depending on the goal or situation for which they are striving. In conclusion, the perspective of these immigrants is put forward in this research.

Chapter Two
Theoretical Framework

The central concept of this study is identity. Many studies from different theoretical backgrounds about identity are available, yet it is not my intention to delve into this theoretical forest. Identity is a complex concept because it can be interpreted by psychological, sociological, and other academic fields. In my research, identity is defined from i. a sociological view (in specific ethnic study) and ii. the anthropological perspective, which emphasizes the perception of the immigrant community.

The theoretical line of this study does not analyze the identity construction process of Surinamese immigrants as a mechanism for incorporation/integration into the American mainstream society[14]. I am more interested in the construction process of identity by – Surinamese–Americans because more knowledge about this process is necessary in order to complement the theoretical academic knowledge. In the following paragraphs, I will elaborate on the theoretical line of this paper based on the model of Premdas, a West Indies scholar. Then I will use the conceptualization on identity of Ghorashi to complement Premdas model. A synthesis of these approaches will function as the backbone of this study.

2.1. Identity-forming processes of Caribbean migrant communities

Migration of Surinamese people is inextricable linked to the historical, cultural, socio-economic, and political developments of the Caribbean region. The Caribbean is a fascinating region consisting of a heterogeneous group of countries, island, natural resources, races, ethnic groups, languages, religions, cultures, political models, customs, and values. In this plural landscape of the Caribbean, a country like Suriname is a typical example. Suriname has a multi cultural, multi ethnic, multi lingual and multi religious character due to historical processes such as Dutch colonialism where slavery and indentured labor necessary for the plantation economy created a mixture of ethnic groups. Suriname consist of groups such as Indigenous people (formerly known as Amerindians), former slaves who stayed behind in the city such as the Creole, and former slaves who ran away and lived in the interior and held on to their African traditions, the Maroons. The Hindustani indentured laborers from India, the Javanese indentured laborers from Java, Indonesia, Lebanese, Chinese, etc.

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[14] My research findings do acknowledge aspects of incorporation into the American society that Surinamese–Americans experienced. Chapter Four deals with these findings.

Earlier I stated that Suriname is a plural society and this is reflected in the nature of the migration structure of Surinamers. A diversity of identities exists in the Surinamese society such as ethnic identities (identify oneself based on a common culture and or descent), for example describing oneself as Javanese or Maroon. This pre migratory characteristic of the Surinamese group was brought along to their new homeland. Preserving pre migratory identities and the creation of new ones in the American society will be analyzed based on R. Premdas (a West Indies scholar) analysis of Caribbean identities. In the following paragraphs, I will present an overview of these different types of identity and their features.

2.2. Premdas typology of Caribbean identities

Premdas designated the typology of Caribbean identities because he wanted to contest the idea that there exists a homogenous Caribbean identity. In his work, he eloquently depicts the heterogeneous character of Caribbean societies and the different claims that exist for identities based on language, ethnicity, and religions in the different countries of the Caribbean or where Caribbean people live. To better understand the model that Premdas developed he starts by explaining concepts like ethnic identity and links it to the constructionist approach. According to the constructionist view, ethnic identities are constructed by individuals/groups according to a common descent or culture; this is a conscious process in which a community is built. Because this is a subjective phenomenon, it creates a sense of belonging within a community and feelings of solidarity with the individual or group. These feelings are essential for human beings; therefore, it is easy to understand why migrants feel homesick, lonely, and unhappy if they are in another social cultural and ecological environment.

Another feature of the concept identity, is that an individual or group can have multiple identities (belongings) based on their membership of various communities; they are bound by one or more social attributes such as ethnicity, language, religion, culture, region, etc. Identities are mostly constructed in opposition to other groups; their claims of uniqueness and identity formation processes are relational and comparative phenomena where the 'we–they' antipathies, which may be latent or manifest, exist. If one belongs to a community it inherently exclude/include others, thus boundaries are established. Though these boundaries can be fluid and situational, they are constructed socially (Barth & Premdas, 1996: 9).

Factors such as homeland, language, religion, race/ethnicity, and culture/customs elements of social existence are used to organize life into identity and solidarity formations that influence the behavior of its community members. These factors are under a great pressure if one conceptualizes them in the Caribbean context due to the heterogeneous character of this region. Premdas designated the Caribbean identity on four levels, the local, national,

regional, and global level. He states that an overlap between the different types of identities is possible. He notes with fervor that boundaries are established, and, consequently, opposing groups make claims for certain identities. Within a sphere of strife and contest, four Caribbean identities are created for functional means. The identities that he designated are the following:

Type 1

The Ethno-national or Ethno-local identity

Ethno-national or ethno-local identities can be found on a national, regional, and local territorial state level. The individual or group defines itself based on its territorial surroundings. In general, the ethno-national or ethno-local identity will be constructed in a context of a large territory, a separate island, or a remote area and among populations that are defined based on their racial, ethnic, geographical, and cultural differences. A wide diversity of this type of identity is present within the Caribbean.

Characteristics of this kind of identity are:

1. It is territorial, in part, and includes a clan-like type of social system that excludes outsiders. The locality is seen as sacred, pure, and a place of freedom and morality. It needs to be protected against the corrupting influence of unwelcome outsiders according to Premdas.

2. Another feature of this type of identity is that the interaction consists of interpersonal networks and face-to-face relations with families and neighbor members of the community. The ethno-national identity embraces and promotes a unified mindset that is not disputed by its members. Examples of this type of identity are the Asian Indian (Hindustani) community of Trinidad, Suriname and Guyana. The Asian Indian community derives their identity primarily from the rural background in which they have lived since coming to Suriname as indentured immigrants. Premdas indicates that even when migrating to urban areas or overseas, individual/groups who have this type of identity will see their movement as a temporary sojourn and live among their kin until they can return home, which may never happen. These communities in Diaspora embellish and romanticize their home locations.

3. Another feature of these communities is that due to their attachment, they can easily be mobilized politically or socially to accommodate particular interests associated with these sites.

Type 2

The Ethno-national Universal Identity

An ethno-national identity can encompass similar communities from different parts of the world, which have ties with each other; this is called an 'ethno-national universal identity'. A distinctive feature of this identity form is that loyalty and affinity are not directed at the State in which members reside and retain their formal citizenship but at a larger extra-State universal community. The identity of these communities is arranged around the primordial myths of descent, shared cultural symbols, rituals, and political programs. If necessary, these groups will challenge the State if one of these identity markers is threatened by the State (Premdas, 1996: 44).

This imagined community between the local and overseas community is bound by frequent and significant contacts embodied in the flows of people, literature, music, cultural, political programs, and development programs. The ties that the different local communities maintain with each other stretch around the globe. Time and space are not obstacles which separate globally-scattered communities which have a common culture, religion, and language. These types of communities are becoming increasingly more important in the cultural and social development segments of Caribbean societies. Premdas observes that the aftermath effects of the Cold War where state boundaries began to erode and stimulated processes such as

i. the growth of large trading blocks, ii. the intensification of digital and visual communications, iii. The uprooting and mass migration of people all over the world; plays a significant role in the quest for identity in the twentieth and twenty first century. He takes time to point out that the ethno-national universal communities are not comparable to functional communities such as international trade unions, business associations, environmental groups, and feminist organizations. These organizations have a broader scope of interest that goes beyond the instrumental needs; it includes the totality of a community's life.

Type 3

A National Identity

A national identity or self is created out of the symmetry between the beliefs of a community and that of the State. Premdas states that this is the supreme national identity. If it exists on a Caribbean island, he calls it an insular identity. This type of identity is mainly fabricated by modern mass communications techniques to create an idea of common descent and community. The national identity is not shaped by individuals or groups who are related personally and have interpersonal contact. The national identity is able to subdue claims issuing from racial, ethnic, cultural, lingual, regional, local and religious divisions.

Premdas makes clear that this claim to a homogenous identity is not substantiated by factual experiences of solidarity but is the result of an ideal program for action and realization. He further explains that the fabricated national identity is a threat for some ethnic communities in the Caribbean such as the Asian Indian or Hindustani community in Trinidad and Suriname who equate national identity with 'Creolization'[15]. The claim for national identity within the pluralistic societies of the Caribbean is constantly contested.

Type 4

The Trans-Caribbean Identity

The Trans–Caribbean Identity is constructed outside the Caribbean in all the places where people of Caribbean origin live, for example, Miami, New York, Amsterdam, Rotterdam, London, etc. Such an identity is constructed upon the common memories of assigned Caribbean values, ecology, and history,. Advocates for this type of identity can easily recite historical facts about slavery, indentured labor, plantation economy, colonialism, and cultural beliefs and customs, which depict the unique character of the Caribbean community (Premdas, 1996: 45). The preservation of these stories and cultural patterns are important, especially since more than half of the Caribbean Diaspora will be born in a non-Caribbean country. Premdas refers to Professor Isajiw's view in which he illuminates this issue, specifically, that the second and third generations of Caribbean immigrants are at risk of losing the imaginary bond with the Caribbean identity. According to his analysis some components will be retained more than others; some may not be retained at all. Over a time, these immigrants may subjectively identify with their ethnic group without having knowledge of the ethnic language or without practicing ethnic traditions or participating in ethnic organizations.   Inversely, they may practice some ethnic traditions without having strong attachment to the group (Isajiw in Premdas, 1996:45). A specific feature of this type of identity is that it is new and created from myths, subjective perceptions, and fragmented information from the Caribbean Diaspora. Thus, it is in the Diaspora that this Trans-Caribbean identity is shaped, an identity that increasingly forgets the original environment and forges into a new collectivity that embraces the total region. This type of identity is also contested by rival claimants because the Caribbean is not a homogenous region. Premdas notes that, due to migration, Caribbean migrants encounter each other in metropolitan cities like Miami, New York, Paris, London, etc. and discover their immense diversity. Certain groups, specifically those from the Commonwealth, may discover commonalities or invent them for purposes of solidarity, but, in general, they go their

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[15] Creolization is the socialization process wherein the customs, values, and practices of the colonial rulers were perceived as the dominant structure. Especially because they are descendents of former slaves, the Creole and Mulattos are leading figures in this process.

separate ways even if they proclaim a Caribbean identity. As further proof for his arguments, he uses the example of the semantics of words such as Haitian–Caribbean and Indo–Caribbean that emphasize the first half of the word, the national, and ethnic identity part, over the other half.

Premdas views this identity as a utopia that is concocted to champion the interests and claims of immigrant communities in a foreign country. It is also used to justify rival claims and to stake out new territory for exploitation, but it is diluted and compromised by the claims of new identities emanating from the new home environment in the industrial countries. It is a schizophrenic identity, which dwells in several locations simultaneously. In a global perspective of mass migration, it is not an unusual identity. It is a quest for community in a fragmented and fractured world of which the Caribbean is a mirror.

Different views exist concerning identity. In the next paragraph, I will present Ghorashi's thoughts about concepts such as identity, and its subsequent elements, e.g., multiple identity, change, consciousness, and agency.

2.3. Ghorashi's view on identity vs. Premdas' Caribbean identity typology

Ghorashi, a Dutch-Iranian female academic focuses more on the 'process' of identity formation.   Hans Siebers (2004) describes identity formation among other things a 'process' which highlights changes over time, actions and events. Ghorashi also use this point of view, her starting point is that identities are multiple and a process of becoming. Multiple identities suggest that one has more than one identity and that they are related and interdependent. These multiple identities can undergo changes because of past and present experiences in the social context of the migrant. Criticism of the concept of multiple identities made her define it in terms of narratives of individuals/groups and or socio-cultural organization. Based on this view, people are constructing coherent life stories with inherent contradictions that are normal and not a methodological weakness because we cannot expect that stories and experiences be told in the same manner. Based on this inclusion of the narrative perspective, analytical insight into the multiple identities that individuals/groups narrate about is achieved. An advantage of this perception of identity is that it highlights the conflicting, as well as the coherent, elements. Thus, a picture emerges of a limited multiple identities. For example, a Creole Surinamese male, who has lived in the United States for 50 years, can have a gender identity, male, an ethno-cultural identity, Creole, and a national identity, Surinamese-American. These identities can be simultaneously present.

The other aspect of identity, the process of becoming, happens at the intersection between past and present experiences, which involves elements of change, and continuity. In my

opinion, past experiences are similar to the pre-migration structures and knowledge that Surinamese-Americans have held on to. Creating a new life in America means that new experiences and knowledge will be integrated into their present knowledge and experiences. Ghorashi further stresses that the agency role of people to make a conscious choice for one or more identities must not be taken for granted.   Practical consciousness, or common sense, plays an important role in people's lives.

Conclusion

With these comments in mind, I suggest that the Caribbean identities processes, the four typologies -- the ethno-local, ethno-national universal identity, the national identity and the Trans-Caribbean identity, can simultaneously be claimed by individuals/groups, namely Surinamese-Americans. To better understand this layered identity-forming process, we need to take into account the past experiences of Surinamese immigrants and the new experiences they undergo in the American context, which is dominated by other Caribbean immigrant's culture and their identity-forming processes. Insight in the defining and redefining processes of Surinamese–Americans has to be placed in a cadre of change and continuity. The agency role and practical consciousness that are used by socio-cultural Surinamese-American organizations to shape and maintain their 'Surinamese' identity, as well as to illustrate the identity-forming process of individuals will be addressed in the next chapters.

Chapter Three
The relationship between US immigration legislation and Caribbean immigrants

The aim of this chapter is to provide background information about the United States' immigration policies, its changes, and its impact on the Surinamese immigrant's life. Besides this, the context of Miami, Florida, as a traditional immigrant state is illustrated to provide a better understanding of the identity construction process of –Surinamese-American immigrants and their socio-cultural organizations.

Two processes helped shape the presence of Caribbean immigrants in the United States and the way they developed their identity. The first factor is post-war immigration legislation in relation to the American foreign policy; the second factor is the perception of the of incorporation of immigrants into the American mainstream. I need to stress that a historical perspective cannot be absent when elaborating on these two events.

3.1. Historical context of U.S. immigration legislation

Immigration has shaped the very essence of the American society. The immigration characteristic of the United States is portrayed in its legislation, political economy, society, and culture. U.S. immigration policies date back to 1783, it initially preferred White, European people but a change in immigration legislation from the Second World War until contemporary date (1940–2005) resulted in a influx of immigrants from Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean. Certain events/developments which led to more fairness and openness of the immigration politics after the Second World War were: labor shortages during the war period led to the Bracero program in 1942 which created temporary employment for Mexicans, Jamaicans, Barbadians, and British Hondurans. This program lasted until 1964. The overt racist's policies of the Germans influence the Americans in evaluating their own policies and distancing themselves from overt racist policies. Criticism on the U.S. immigration quota policies by civil rights leaders in the sixties also led to a change in immigration policies. One also notices that U.S. foreign policy, Cold War politics, and anti-communist politics influence the influx of Caribbean and Latin American immigrants. The Immigration Acts of the fifties created possibilities for future immigrants to emigrate based on the criteria of being a victim of a communist regime. This trend was consolidated by the Act of 1960, which established the Cuban refugee program. The quota system hampered the ability of immigrants of certain communist countries to enter the U.S because the quota for Western Hemisphere countries was higher then for the Eastern Hemisphere countries (Bischoff, 2002:12). The quota preference for the Western Hemisphere created an influx of Cuban political exiles as well as of other groups, e.g., the Nicaraguans.

The Immigration Act of 1965 was the catalyst for the immigration of Asians, Latin Americans, and Caribbean people. This act eliminated the quota system and put a ceiling of 170,000 immigrants for the Eastern Hemisphere with a 20, 000 per country limit, and an annual ceiling of 120.000 for the Western Hemisphere without a per country limit. Preferences were established for family reunion, persons with desirable labor skills, resident aliens, and refugees. Consequences of the 1965 Immigration act included an end to the prejudicial quota system per country and a change in the countries of origins. Asians and Latin Americans were favored and immigrants that are more skilled were welcomed, but simultaneously an increase in undocumented immigrants occurred.

In the period 1965-1990, some changes occurred. For example, the limit for the Western Hemisphere was elevated in 1976. In 1980, the immigration laws lacked the definition of the Western Hemisphere, but a general term was introduced, i.e. annual immigration was set at 270,000 and an amount of 17,400 to 50,000 refugees per year could enter America. In 1990, the target was raised to 700, 000 people per year, for immigrants as well as refugees (Bischoff, 2002: xxv-xxvi).

The period 1990-2005 is characterized by anti-immigrant feelings and strict policies; the following acts exemplify this. California's Proposition 187 of 1996 wanted to deny public services to undocumented immigrants. In the end, a federal judge prohibited it from becoming law. The 1996 Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act is also an example of these anti immigrant feelings; restrictions on undocumented immigrants and asylum seekers, and resources to official institute such as the INS for border control, were increased. The terrorist attack on America of September 11, 2001, inspired the U.S.A Patriot Act whereby additional resources for border control and inspection were allocated and a student monitoring system was developed. Follow up legislation resulted in the 2002 Enhanced Border Security and Visa Entry Reform Act; it emphasized the tracking system of aliens and improved information sharing between relevant government agencies. Due to this consecutive legislation, life for illegal immigrants has become more challenging.   Nowadays, identification such as a drivers license or valid working permit is obligatory and is checked by government institutions and financial institutions -- as my illegal respondents made clear. In the past, it was relatively easy to find work without a working permit, pay taxes, make a driver's license, and even buy a house, as an illegal immigrant.

3.2. Becoming an American – discontinuities of the identity-forming process

How does an immigrant become an 'American'? This is a question that has constantly been asked by American policymakers, scholars, interest groups, and older immigrants as well as newer immigrants. This question has become particularly important during the last wave of predominantly non-white immigrants. It is feared that these new Americans will not be well-

integrated into the American mainstream. Different views exist about including new groups into American mainstream society. The first one is the idea of the melting pot. According to this idea, immigrants from diverse backgrounds will become 'American' through the educational system, the dominant Anglo-Saxon protestant norms and values, the English language, and through political participation (civic culture).

It was thought that gradually the ethnic identity of these groups would be subdued by the 'American' identity. This process is called assimilation and/or the full melting pot process. In the period before the Second World War, this type of all-inclusive assimilation process was the predominant thinking.

In the Post-War period, the second method, cultural pluralism, became dominant; cultural pluralism means that immigrants can become 'American' while retaining their own ethnic and or cultural identity. Thus, ethnic diversity could remain and be integrated into a national unity based on shared ideals. It was emphasized that positive aspects of the ethno-cultural identity were important, not only for the immigrant group but also for diversity, which in turn would enrich the whole nation. Proponents of this view are Randolph Bourne, Horace Kallen, Daniel Moynihan, and Nathan Glazer. This thought system gained acknowledgement through the civil rights movement's contribution of refuting the Eurocentric view concerning cultures of other ethnic groups. Thus, a positive view of ethnicity emerged.

Nowadays, another view is being put forward about incorporating new immigrants. Bischoff, and others like Portes & Stepick, argues that a dialectic process exists between ethnic retentions and Americanization which redefines the national identity 'American' as the melting of cultures, values, and the ways in which the new immigrants blend into an ever-evolving America (Bischoff, 2002: 189). Americanization is the process which describes how one becomes an 'American' through the educational system, the media, and the general culture.

This line of thinking about identity as a dynamic process, whereby ethnicity and past experiences of immigrants in relation to the social context of the receiving society bring forth something new; is an aspect that needs to be explored, especially if I relate it to the main questions of this study. These questions are, namely,

- How do Surinamese-American immigrants construct a 'Surinamese' identity in America ?, and
- What is the role of Surinamese-American socio-cultural organizations in shaping and maintaining a 'Surinamese' identity?

3.3. Miami in the twentieth and twentieth first centuries

The first foreigners who settled in Miami, Florida, were Spanish missionaries, in 1568. For over four hundred years, Miami was inhabited by indigenous peoples, colonizers, Spanish Friars, American soldiers, southern colonialists and Black slaves. Florida was in the hands of the Spanish for three hundred years. In 1821, it became an American state due to the American expansionist drift and slave interests, since runaway slaves fled to this part of the country. In order to maintain control over the investment, Florida had to be integrated into the American political and economic system.

In present day Florida, Miami[16] has a population of approximately 16 million people of which 4.89% are illegal, totaling 782,400 (source: Pew Hispanic Center)[17].

The state is inhabited by different groups such as white Anglo-Saxon Americans, African-Americans, Cuban-Americans, Haitian-Americans, Nicaraguan-Americans, Jamaican-Americans, --Surinamese-Americans, etc. Miami, Florida, is a pluralistic society consisting of different ethnic groups, religions, languages, and cultures. This city and state have a special relationship with Latin America and the Caribbean. Caribbean groups, especially the Cubans and the Haitians (the biggest immigrant groups) are identity markers of Miami, Florida, if one looks at the dominant cultural influences such as the usage of Spanish and Creole in public places and for bus announcements, the Salsa and Meringue music, the ethnic enclaves, and their presence in the political arena. Miami was the easiest emigration choice for certain Caribbean immigrants such as the Cubans, Haitians and Surinamers for the following reasons:

  i. because of its geographic proximity and air and sea route connections to Caribbean and Latin America, it was a logical entry point into the United States.

  ii. other factors that influenced their choices were the social networks, prior knowledge of the receiving country through media images, stories and experiences of friends and family, and alternative strategies for improving one's living conditions which are acceptable in their own society, and were the main reasons to migrate.

  iii. Other elements that influenced some Caribbean groups to migrate to Miami are:The hegemonic military and economic policies of the U.S. penetrated Caribbean and Latin American society. A consequence of this is mass consumption or the Americanization of these societies. The economic and political crisis in Latin American and Caribbean

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[16] During my field research period in Miami, I listed my encounters with residents, people from different national backgrounds, in total 8, Panamanian, Haitian, Nicaraguan, Guyanese, Jamaican, British Virgin Islands, Colombian and Nigerian. This says something about the diversity of the Miami society.

[17] States weigh immigration controls 1/25/2006, Nation, www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2005-01-025-immigration-controls_x.htim?POE=NEWSISVA

countries also triggered the out migration from this region to Miami. Another development, according to Portes and Stepick (1993), is the fact that Miami is the only American state capital that is marketed as the "Capital of the Caribbean" by the tourist industry. By altering the environment, such as traversing the Miami River in the direction of Biscayne Bay, a more in-depth geographic, economic, social, and political relationship with the Caribbean was established. Tourist vacation cruises and ships from the Caribbean enter and leave Miami. Thus, third world trade and culture come into contact with the first world. Freighters also bring goods from Latin America and Caribbean countries into Miami (Portes & Stepick, 1993).

Conclusion

The historical context of social, cultural, economic and political processes in the United States in the past two hundred years instilled a certain notion about the white Anglo-Saxon American identity. In the aftermath of the World Wars, the civil rights movement challenged the white hegemonic view about immigration policies and the American identity. It was recognized that what was perceived as the ' American' identity was not a static entity. Combined with the constant influx of new immigrants and their cultural baggage, an ever-evolving 'American' identity is created and the immigrant groups' ethnic, cultural and/or national identity is constructed and maintained. The interaction between the United States' immigration policies and their foreign affairs agenda influenced the immigration structure, specifically, post-war immigration legislation. The immigration acts of the fifties favored political exiles and refugees from communist countries like Cuba. But the immigration act of 1965 was the most influential; it changed the ethnic makeup of immigrants, introduced criteria for family reunion, and created more possibilities for skilled workers. Consequently, Caribbean groups such as Cubans, Haitians and --Surinamese-Americans migrated to the United States. Other migration motives, such as economic and political instability within the Caribbean region, the American geo-political policies, familiarity with the Miami tourist environment, existing social networks and, lastly, an engrained migration culture, explain why these groups have moved to the United States.

Chapter Four
Features of Surinamese-Americans in Miami, Florida

Before I begin describing the identity construction process of a 'Surinamese' identity by Surinamese immigrants, some general characteristics of this group need to be illustrated. Therefore, the aim of this chapter is to describe the features of Surinamese-Americans and how they built a life in their new homeland, their perspective on migration in general, and their adaptation to their new environment. Interviews with the socio-cultural organizations and the twenty-four respondents are central to this chapter. I am aware of the fact that the accounts of the twenty-four respondents cannot be generalized to the whole --Surinamese-American community -- they need to be viewed as a snapshot of this community. The data is constructed from the mini questionnaire and the narratives from key persons. A qualitative approach will be used together with some tables to underscore the data.

This chapter is structured as follows: first, a description of migration facts such as residence, status, period, and motives; secondly the socio-economic markers will be listed; thirdly some comparative perceptions about living conditions in the United States and Suriname will be outlined, and then the distinction between the illegal and legal segments of the migrant population is described. The last paragraph focuses on the second generation. I will end this chapter with some conclusions.

4.1. Migration facts as narrated by Surinamese-Americans

Residence

Most associations and key persons estimated that approximately 10,000-15,000 Surinamers are living in the United States and that they are scattered all over the country.

A high concentration of Surinamers is living in Florida, in areas like Miami, Orlando, Fort Lauderdale, Fort Mayers, Saragosta, and Tampa. Accounts of the key people place a large group of Surinamese-Americans in New York, mainly in the areas of the Bronx, Brooklyn, Staten Island, and Queens. Other states where Surinamers can be found are Washington, Atlanta, Georgia, California, and San Francisco.

Most respondents (62%) live in Miami; others live in the surrounding areas of Miami in counties like Hollywood, Homestead, Port St. Lucie and areas further north such as Orlando, etc. Most of these neighborhoods are mixed neighborhoods if we consider ethnicity and nationality. Overall, these living areas are similar to those in Suriname with regard to the architecture of the houses and the presentation of the flora, which partially explains why many Surinamers feel at home and choose to habitat in these neighborhoods. The former

Creole pastor of the Surinamese church states that another attractive feature of living in Miami is that it functions as a service area for both immigrants with and without legal status. It is relatively easy to find employment, living space, schools for the children, and other services.

A key person explains why Surinamese immigrants feel at home, "The political conditions are stable, so intelligent people, and others, migrated to the States, even though they stay here illegal due to several reasons. Economic motives, in order to escape poverty, are also a reason to feel at home or survive here.' Another key person said that he feels free -- "Surinamers like freedom" -- in the sense that you can go and visit somebody without formal restrictions.

Table 2 Migration period of respondents

Migration Period	Absolute	Percentage
Colonial Migration1930--1975	1	4%
Post-colonial Migration 1975-1987	4	17%
Post-military Migration 1987--present	19	79%
Total	24	100%

Source: research results of 2005

The majority of the respondents I interviewed, 79%, migrated to the United States between 1987 and now. Post-colonial migration from 1975--1987 accounts for 17%, while colonial migration accounts for only 4%[18]. The Javanese pastor explained to me that a lot of Surinamers were already living in the U.S., especially those of Chinese, Hindustani, (intellectual) Creole, and mixed descent. They migrated based on a permanent business visa, which in the past had provided them the opportunity to acquire American citizenship. Some of these people opted for political asylum because they fled the Bouterse regime. A Javanese male respondent said the following, "The Javanese and Black Creole group did not know about these opportunities to migrate to America, and it was not available...'Pina sma' did not know anything but Bouterse kon opo sma ai (poor people did not have access to these information canals but Bouterse opened up our eyes). " That is why he motivated Javanese people to migrate to the U.S. He explains that Javanese people are afraid to take risks, but he perceived himself differently, more like a Creole. He is also eager to learn; he is a different kind of Javanese'. According to the Javanese pastor and my data, most immigrants who overstayed their visas came in the post-military period to America, while the higher economic class came in the colonial and post-post-colonial period.

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[18] Kemble's research in 1972 concluded that predominantly Creole males, the so called jump off the ship immigrants were the first to enter America in the colonial period.

Reasons to migrate

Table 3 Motives for migrating

Migration Motives	Absolute	Percentage
Economic	5	21%
Reuniting the family	4	16%
Study	1	4%
Adventure	2	8%
Mix of socio-economic and political motives together with adventure, partner in the U.S.A.	8	33%
Unknown	4	16%
Total	24	100%

Source: research results, 2005

The reasons to migrate to the United States are heterogeneous. It seems that a mixture of socio-political and economic conditions together with personal motives stimulated respondents to migrate; these reasons account for 33%. Economic motives account for 21% and reuniting of the family for 16%; these reasons are the most listed. A total of 16% of the interviewees did not list their migration motive. Just 4% of the respondents came to do a study, and 8% migrated for adventurous reasons. These findings correspond with what I described in Chapter One, namely, the events in Suriname which led to the growth of migration, such as worsened social, economic, and political conditions peaking in the period of the late eighties early nineties, combined with social networks. For example, a Creole male respondent living in the U.S. for 16 years told me that his friend asked him to migrate to the United States and promised him that he already had a job for him.

A second factor which stimulated migration was the booming tourist sector in the late eighties and early nineties. Tourist locations such as Miami (U.S.), Belem (Brazil), and Curacao became very attractive to the middle and lower classes of Surinamese people. Contact with Miami, the familiar tropical sphere, and attraction of the place, as well as the presence of friends or families living there, played a part in the motivation of people to remain there. This attitude is not strange for Surinamese people -- Dutch Surinamese migration narratives are full of stories wherein individuals decided to stay in the country after their vacation period. One respondent explained to me that he came on vacation in February 1989 and that he had a well-paid job at the Anton de Kom University as the head of technical personnel. His brother convinced him to stay, and within two weeks, he had a job and an apartment.

4.2. Socio-economic data of the respondents

Who are -Surinamese-Americans and what kind of jobs do they have? These are a couple of questions that will provide the information necessary in order to shed light on the process of incorporation and identity-forming in the Miami, Florida, environment. In the following paragraphs, I will comment on the structure of the research population, basing this on data such as: gender, age structure, cohabitation, work experience, nationality of coworkers and kind of employment.

Of the twenty-four interviewees, 67% of them are female and 33% male. If we look at the ages of the interviewees, most of them, 38%, are between forty-six and fifty-five years old. The largest group is between 25 and 45 years old, namely 50%. A group of 12% is older than 56. It is clear that it concerns the working population.

Cohabitation, intermarriage

Most of the respondents, 92%, are married or living together. Single respondents account for only 8% of the data. The rate of intermarriage is 33% -- Surinamese immigrants are married to African-Americans, white Anglo-Saxon Americans, Haitian-Americans, Guyanese-Americans, Jamaican -Americans, or Cuban-Americans. 46% of the interviewees are married to a Surinamese and/or Dutch-Surinamese partner.   Of the remaining 21%, it is unknown if they date a Surinamese or American partner or someone of another nationality.

Labor, working environment

In my research design, I stated that it was my ambition to diversify the research group based on ethnicity and class. Although I did not entirely succeed in diversifying the research group based on ethnicity, I did succeed in regard to class diversification. If we look at the kind of jobs the respondents perform, a heterogeneous picture originates. There are Surinamese-Americans who perform highly-skilled jobs , which require college/university education; this sector includes employment such as that as an engineer, financial consultant, or dietician. 12% of the respondents are active in this sector. Middle cadre jobs include fields such as nursing (21%), teaching (4%), and entrepreneurial endeavors 8%. The service sector includes jobs such as childcare, cleaning, hairdressing, building maintenance, security; etc.; a total of 48% is employed in this sector.

I asked respondents about their coworkers nationalities because my assumption was that social contact with other immigrant groups and natives of the American society would influence their identity processes. I also wanted more insight into the personal networks of these immigrants. Only two respondents of the twenty-four claim that they have a Surinamese coworker.   In one case, it is a service job where working as a nanny and

cleaning is divided between the two Surinamese ladies. The other case concerns a family business, which provides freight services, where the owner works with his wife and son. Most of the respondents, who work in the service sector are doing cleaning, childcare, hairdressing, or working as an electrician, claim that they work independently or are self-employed. The majority of the respondents, 54%, works in an environment with several nationalities. The nationalities range from Iranians to Nicaraguans, Chinese, Haitians, Cubans, Jamaicans, etc. If one takes into consideration that most respondents spend about 10 to 12 hours at their work, it indicates that the interaction with these coworkers is relatively extensive.

4.3. Working and Living in the United States of America vs. Suriname

Surinamese-Americans experience living and working in the United States differently than they do living and working in Suriname. In the table below, the differences as perceived are listed.

Table 4 Differences in living and working conditions, Suriname vs. U.S.

Living in Suriname	Living in the United States of America
Social life is better; family and friends can be visited more easily.	Social life is worse due to the great distance between living areas.
Suriname is an open society; the educational system is better; and provides a stepping-stone for further education.	The U.S. is a closed society; business attitude, professionalism and competitive drive are bigger
Suriname's working environment is more relaxed	More opportunities to better one's situation
Lack of challenge in your work	Financially it is better, but you need to have a job
'Zeven even'[19] mentality so your pay is based on those standards	Lifestyle is easier and more individualistic
Economic conditions are worse, difficult to survive and to save money	Weekly pay, more opportunities to save, debt expired after seven years.
Living standards are not so high	Higher living standard
Living and thinking pattern is primitive	You work hard, but it is rewarding
Lack of business mentality	Food, housing, and clothes are affordable
People are polite and the upbringing process is positive	Adjusting to the U.S.A attitude is a process
Socio-cultural life is well-liked	Nice weather, although there are hurricanes
No difference	Lives in both societies so one does not experience a difference
Experience home sickness	Experience a lack of contact and knowledge about one's profession
	More choice in consumer goods
	Better healthcare, although it is expensive

Source: Research results, 2005

I asked this question in order to describe the living and working experiences of Surinamese-Americans in America in comparison to their former experiences in Suriname. 38% of the respondents claim that social life in Suriname is better because their personal networks of family and friends are present; they can easily visit them without having to call first, and the geographical distances between the living areas is not that big. Living in Suriname is

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[19] In the next chapter, I will explain the meaning of this word.

experienced as better due to the open character of the society. For example, you know your neighbors, their problems, and their good and bad moments. In Suriname, it is easy to get in contact with certain authorities, according to the former Creole pastor (who lived in the U.S. for 18 years) who is now a teacher. Compared to the U.S., it is more difficult to maintain social relationships with family and friends. According to him, the society is also more closed. For example, the living areas are gated communities un-conducive to social relationships with the neighbors, and the distance from political and official authorities is greater than it is in Suriname.

The Surinamese educational system is perceived as qualitatively good, because it enabled most of the respondents and their children who followed it to have a good head start. Individual vocational performance in the American educational sector can be successful if factors such as the language barrier, financial means, legal documentation, and the social environment are tackled and conquered. The former Creole pastor explained to me what he meant when he stated that Surinamese education is very good, saying, "Surinamese children can easily multiply sums without the help of a calculator and it stimulates the child's mind, while the education system in the United States is very computerized." Other respondents also stated that their children are perceived as gifted students. One respondent told me that all the Surinamese-American children whom she knows have a high school diploma. Another reason why Surinamese-Americans appreciate their educational background is given by a Creole male respondent living for 16 years in America , "In the United States every body is specialized in a certain field, but in Suriname we are schooled in every aspect of our field. Most Surinamers are valued at their workplace because our education system is better than that of the Americans."

According to the respondents working in Suriname, is more relaxed because most jobs have a working period of eight hours. After work, you have more spare time and can do several activities such as sporting, visiting friends or families, lying back and relaxing. Some respondents said that the laidback working attitude infamously know as 'Zeven Even' is also responsible for the financial pay you get. It is thus insufficient to survive and save money. What respondents disliked about the Surinamese society, was: the lack of a business attitude, the fact that people are very inquisitive about personal lives, the fact that people come late to informal and formal meetings, the patronage system which instills corruption, the lax attitude of political leaders who do not deliver on their promises, and the fact that the rule of law is failing.

What is greatly admired and appreciated is the attitude of Surinamers in that they are friendly, polite, and easy going, and that they maintain inter-ethnic relationships. This is ascribed to the Surinamese upbringing process and tradition. Another positive aspect of

Surinamese society is the welfare state regulation which dictates that companies, multinationals, and the government are responsible for paying laborers their medical services and retirements plan -- this is something that most respondents lack in their current job in the U.S.

Thus, a dualistic picture emerges when describing the differences between the Surinamese and American societies. Interviewees said they admired the modern and organizational structures of American society. The materialistic aspects such as consumerism, the lifestyle, and the fact that there are more recreational attractions, are frequently stated by respondents as the positive aspects of living and working in the United States. The fact that they work hard but are relatively well paid, and that they can save money or pay their monthly bills, also plays a role. There is also appreciation for the educational system; especially respondents who have children claim that the educational system provides better opportunities for finding a good job. The business attitude, professionalism, and competitiveness of the American society are also admirable. Most of the respondents pointed out to me that they live and work in the United States, but if they retire, they want to return to Suriname, because they will have saved up money to buy or build a house and live off the interest, and can reunite with their family members. Beside appreciation for family life, financial motives play a role in the eventual return to Suriname. With their American currency and the currency exchange rate for the Surinamese dollar, they can provide for themselves better in Suriname. If they stay in the United States after retirement, life will be harder for them because of the structure of the pension plans -- as an individual you are responsible for paying for your own retirement. The State provides only meager financial assistance, which is insufficient to live on.

The dualistic view of the Surinamese and American societies is described by this respondent, a Creole female living in America for 11 years,

"What I appreciate from Suriname is that my family, mother and sisters were around me. It was my own country, 'ai ik ben Surinamer' (yes I am a Surinamer). I experienced some problems in Suriname because I was appointed a government job -- people became jealous -- I do not have these problems here. I was active in the Surinamese politic, and got my house and position due to my political loyalty. In the States, I am better off because I succeeded in getting my college degree as the first member of my family. Nobody made me; I worked for everything I have achieved. I began from the bottom to get to where I am now. I have a heart condition; I received good medical care, a replacement of my heart claps that gave me a second chance. The federal government paid the medical bill of $150,000. My children also have a future here. In Suriname I lived in District Commewijne, water was a problem -- my son had to ride kilometers on a bicycle to get water or my brother-in-law had to bring water from Paramaribo. Schools were also dysfunctional due to strikes and the interior fight of Brunswijk. Transport was also a problem -- the Wijdenbosh bridge was not there yet, so the last bus leaving for Commewijne was four o'clock in the afternoon. If I compare that

life with what I have now, I have no regrets. A pity is that I do not know my nieces and nephews."

Certain aspects that are disliked by the respondents are the business-like, modern, and individualistic structure of the American society -- which, on the other hand, is admired. Social relations are difficult to maintain due to what I stated earlier, the great distances between living areas. People's attitudes change also; you have to call first to ask to come over and that is not the habit in Suriname. In Suriname, you can just visit somebody without being invited or having an appointment. The modern, industrial society is also responsible for a more individualistic approach and business-like attitude. The rudeness of the society is also a point of irritation. One respondent gives an example, "If people greet you in the morning, that is for the whole day." Another respondent, who has been living in the States for fifty-three years, claims that he still is not accustomed to the American attitude -- he considers Americans rude because they do not greet people in the morning in the way that Surinamese or European people do. The American society is experienced as being hard and closed. Especially dark-skinned Creoles claim that they experience discrimination at work and entertainment places, and harassment by the police, etc. Americans are also seen as hard, egoistic people who are only interested in their own countrymen's affairs. A Creole female respondent, who lives in the States for 11 years, said that if a disaster happens in the world, the first thing they would ask would be how many Americans died?

The working individual's responsibility to provide for one's own healthcare and retirement is also seen as a burden by some of the respondents. The fact that the familiar welfare principles are not integrated into the American laws creates a heterogeneous policy in which companies may provide medical services and pension plans for their employees.

I included the question, would you emigrate to the United States nowadays, because I noticed during my interviews that the first group of respondents was unanimous in their answer of not imagining wanting to currently emigrate to the U.S.. They explained that this was because of the stricter application of immigration rules, the worsened economic conditions compared to the time they entered America, and the disillusions they experienced. Following these sessions, I asked another group of respondents if they would emigrate nowadays. To my surprise, 33% of the respondents said they would emigrate at this time but under certain conditions.

A Creole female, living in the U.S. for 14 years, replied that if she would emigrate these days, she would marry an American partner in order to be legalized. Another Creole female respondent, living in the U.S. for 17 years, stated that if you emigrate, it must be a conscious process, in which case you save your money, and if you cannot find your way, you can return to Suriname. Reasons such as better opportunities for the children's education, the fact that

the United States is a modern and better-organized society then Suriname, the bad economic and political conditions in Suriname, and the chance to expand one's life experience, are explanations as to why they would emigrate again, even though it has become more difficult. A Creole male who has been in the U.S. for 9 years reacted as follows, "I broadened my world view so I do not regret my choice of migrating." Another Creole female, who has been in the States for 11 years, claimed that if she was the same age she would emigrate, but considering barriers like the strict immigration rules and difficulties with mastering the language, she would decline.

During my interviews and informal conversations with Surinamese-Americans, it became apparent that Post-911 legislation and consequent economic and political conditions influenced the lives of both legal and illegal immigrants. Thus, I included this aspect in my questionnaire. I asked the respondents if they noticed any change in their living conditions or a change in attitude towards them; 32% of the interviewees said they experienced a change in their life. Changes that were noticed are: it has become more difficult to find work and to renew your working permit, and some felt pressured in choosing for American citizenship. A more strict and formal approach is exhibited towards people without documentation. Economic life has become more expensive. Safety regulations while traveling have become stricter. Just one respondent said she is scared to fly. A number of people, 25%, said they did not notice any change in their life or their surroundings after 911. A total of 43% did not answer this question.

In this section, I talked about changes that occur in -Surinamese-Americans' attitudes and perceptions. In the next section, I focus on the emergence of a new distinction line within this community, namely, the one drawn between illegal and legal emigrants.

4.4. Interaction between legal and illegal Surinamese-American immigrants

I have collected data from twenty-four interviewees of whom 58 % is legal and 42% is illegal. A wide diversity of legal situations affects the group of illegal Surinamese immigrants. Nearly all of them entered the United States on a tourist and/or student visa, with the exception of two respondents. Thus, these tourists became overstayed immigrants (because they overstayed the duration period of the visa as indicated in the passport). Because -Surinamese-Americans entered America with a visa they had the chance to make a drivers license, put their children in schools, find work, open a bank account, buy houses[20], etc. Illegal immigrants seem to have other options for being legalized.

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[20] My respondents made a distinction between an undocumented and 'overstayed' immigrant; this distinction is artificial because academics perceive both groups as illegal immigrants. In reality, this distinction does not hold up because I heard stories from other illegal immigrants such as Mexicans who also got a driver's license, put their children in schools, bought houses, etc.

The Javanese pastor of the Surinamese Moravian church summed up six possibilities through which Surinamese-Americans were legalized while being in America:

1. Administrative marriage or a marriage for love
2. Political asylum
3. Employer guarantees (employer applies for your working permit and green card)
4. Family sponsoring (family reunion scenario)
5. Agriculture program and the Lula program—these incidental programs of the eighties provided general legalization for illegal immigrants
6. Through the general visa lottery system which allows a certain number of people from qualified countries to apply for American citizenship (the pastor knows 4 families who won legal alien status). Most respondents were hesitant to speak about their status, but from the conversations with the pastor and the interviews with other respondents, an idea was formed about who had a legal status, lacked one, or was in the process of getting one.

Depending on the immigration criteria for which they opted, some of these respondents are in the process of being legalized; their cases are still pending. Some of the respondents applied for political asylum based on human rights abuse during the military years and the internal war in Suriname, in which case they receive a working permit for one year, which then needs to be renewed every year until their case is heard in court. The legalization process can take up to fifteen years according to the accounts of the interviewees.
It is difficult to say how large the group of illegal immigrants is within the Surinamese immigrant community. The distinction between Surinamese-Americans having American citizenship or a green card (access to getting legalized) -- the legal group, and the illegal group of Surinamese-Americans who do not have access to legalization, explains certain behaviors. I noticed that there is a culture of mistrust. For example, if I asked individuals to participate in my research, legal as well as illegal immigrants initially showed reservations in providing information. Thus, mistrust of one another within the community is present when it comes to sharing personal information, even if it is for one's own benefit. According to two key people/organizations, there seems to be a lack of cooperation between legal and illegal Surinamese-Americans. Comments that legal and well established Surinamese-Americans do not want to socialize with the 'illegal groups' were acknowledged by these key people/organizations.
Four contact people confirmed that most illegal Surinamese immigrants live in the area surrounding Miami. The former Creole pastor observed that the group which became legal through marriage or through sponsoring by an employer moved up to Tampa, Orlando,

Hollywood, Miramar, etc. They do participate in yearly events such as ''Sranang Dei'' and other Surinamese activities. But generally the legalized or legal Surinamese-Americans will avoid the group who is illegal because they might bother them, for example, to ask them for money, or to sponsor them, etc.

The current Javanese pastor explains the lack of structural contact between the legal group of Surinamese-Americans and the illegal groups in the context of the Crab mentality,[21] which is still prevalent. Surinamese-American people who or organizations that have more capabilities and assets will not share information and knowledge with others who lack this infrastructure. The so-called elite group within the Surinamese- American society has no contact with the illegal group.

The former Creole pastor describe some features of the two groups in these words, "the legal group consists mostly of middle class Surinamese-Americans -- they are educated, want the best for their children, and have a tendency to keep to themselves. Their surroundings are predominantly American, as are their church, their workplaces, and their social group. Nonetheless, they will participate in ''Sranang Dei'' activities.

He further notes that the illegal group has no success in being legalized, due to their stupidity and negligent behavior, their 'Carpe Diem' (Pluk de Dag) mentality. A section of this illegal group works very hard. Their children attend school, mainly high school. However, higher education, college, is out of their reach, so they have to start working. There is a tendency to try to be legalized through marriages. "But the modern American girls are not that gullible -- they know if you want to marry them for a green card or out of love." According to the former pastor, the Creole group faces more severe problems than the Javanese group.

Needs of the illegal Surinamese-American group

The biggest challenges that the illegal Surinamese immigrants face are:

1. The lack of documentation forms a barrier for Surinamers -- "the Immigration and Naturalization Service is always present like a threat," according to a key person. Thus, feelings of desperation and fear of deportation are alive within these people.

2. Employment is also a problem, because some of them lack a working permit and would not be consider for legal and well-paid jobs. They are also unable to make or renew their drivers' licenses, which function as an identification document in addition to a social security number especially since 911. Within the group of illegal Surinamese immigrants diversity does exist. Some of them have valid documentation such as a driver's license and social security number, while others lack both of these

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[21] I will elaborate on this aspect later on in the study.

documents because their drivers' licenses have become invalid and cannot be renewed it due to Post-911 legislations.

3. The parent's illegal status also influences the children their position when it comes to higher education. Children without legal documentation can follow education until high school. College and university are not within their reach. However, there is a back door, namely, Internet college courses and university studies available with a student visa, but these options are more expensive. Thus, finances become a problem.

4. There is a lack of unity and a difficulty in structuring the needs of this group due to the mistrust they have of each other and because of the idea that their information might be forwarded to the Immigration authorities. Other factors also complicate this issue, e.g., the fact that people are weary of misguided information. A respondent made a comment that "if the president of one of the organizations cannot organize his own affair, attaining a legal status, how can he help others?" This perception explains why socio-cultural organizations are not seen as trustworthy. There is also a fear that if personal information is solicited and given it will end up circulating around the Surinamese-American community. The fact that people have been deported in the past as well as recently does not stimulate an environment of trust On top of this, Post-911 legislation imposes stricter execution of immigration laws and policies, which makes life difficult for illegal Surinamese immigrants.

4.5. Notions of the Second and (upcoming) Third Generations

In Chapter One, I mentioned that second generation -Surinamese-Americans were not the focus of my research, but along the way, I got more interested in this new generation. Based on conversations with key people, my observations, and my talks with some of them, I am obligated to make some general remarks. The second (and a half) Surinamese-American generation is the group who were under age 18 when they migrated to America and followed primary and secondary education (high school), as well as children born in the United States who automatically gained their American citizenship. Most of these children are in their teens, early twenties, and beginning thirties.

According to the respondents and key figures I interviewed, they do very well at school, and most of them finished high school. The legal ones have a better opportunity to pursue a college or university education. The illegal immigrants children who were at college or university before 911 can finish their education if their parents have the financial means. Lack of finances and Post-911 legislation are obstacles that these youngsters deter. For example, a student needs a valid identification, e.g., a driver's license, to be accepted as a resident at a college or university. These youngsters can follow college or university if they

have the financial means because as an out-of-state resident (student) you pay more for your education. Even though some of the illegal immigrants' children were offered scholarships, they cannot accept them because they lack the proper documentation. This situation sometimes frustrates the relationship between parents and children. I heard accounts from some of my respondents that children are blaming their parents for bringing them to America and into an illegal situation where they have less of a chance of finishing school. Whereas, in Suriname, they would be guaranteed a degree, or have fewer problems with following higher education, although the choices for a diversity in educational program are less.

Conclusion

Based on the twenty-four interviews and comments of the key people, the main features of the Surinamese-American community in Miami, Florida are:

- That most respondents entered the United States on a tourist visa during the post-military period, between 1987 and now. A mixture of migration reasons is given, such as worsened economic, political, and social conditions in Suriname, and personal motifs.
- The research population consists of more females (67%) than males (33%).
- Most of the respondents are married, i.e. 92%. 33% of the research population is married to another immigrant group, either native African or white Anglo-Saxon American. 46% of the interviewee group is married (living together) to a Surinamese or a Dutch-Surinamese partner.
- Most respondents live in the area surrounding Miami; several explanations are given for the attractiveness of Miami. These are the familiar sunny climate, the architecture of the houses, jobs in the service arena, the schools, etc.
- A large portion of the interviewees, 88%, is of typical working age in the range of 25-55 years old. These immigrants are active in all kind of jobs and some of them perform highly-skilled jobs as engineers, financial consultants, or dieticians (12% of the twenty-four respondents). Others perform middle cadre jobs such as nurses, teachers, and entrepreneurs, for a total of 33%; while the largest group (48%) is active in the service sector.
- Living and working in the United States is not always seen as a blessing. A critical and dual perspective exists toward the receiving and sending societies. Where appreciation for the Surinamese aspects such as close social contact, a relaxed sphere, and so on is given, a negative view exits towards the political environment of the Surinamese society. Respondents speak positively about the opportunities the

American society provides them but they are also critical about the American attitudes and the hard, materialistic society. Although the respondents displayed a critical view towards the American society, 33% of the research population would emigrate again, because of the opportunities , which America provides, e.g., that one can broaden his/her worldview, the economic and political stability, etc.

- 58% of the interviewees have a legal status, and 42% have an illegal status. The state of illegality differs. Some have prospects of getting legal status through marriage, by opting for political asylum, or through sponsorship by an employer of family member, the legalizations programs or the visa lottery program. Some of the illegal immigrants lack future prospects of getting legal documentation. Predominantly, the illegal Surinamese immigrants experience problems due to the Post-911 legislation and policies. They have difficulties extending their working permits and drivers' licenses, and in finding a job, etc.

In the new homeland, a new division line has come into existence between the legal and the illegal Surinamese immigrants. This distinction becomes more evident if we look at the spatial patterns and socio-economic background of the legal immigrants vs. those of the illegal group. The illegal group faces problems, such as less access to well-paid jobs, living in a state of fear of the immigration authorities, the need for valid documentation, and the institutionalization of a culture of mistrust due to past experiences. The second generation of the illegal group has difficulties in completing higher education because they lack proper documentation or financial means. This situation can sometimes frustrate relations between parents and their children. Structural contact between legal and illegal -Surinamese-Americans seems to be absent, although both groups will participate in socio-cultural activities such as 'Sranang Dei' and church meetings. Thus, the emergence of this new division line within the Surinamese immigrant community poses a threat to social cohesion.

Chapter Five

Identity construction process of Surinamese-Americans in Miami, Florida

What kind of identity did my respondents (Surinamese-Americans) in Miami, Florida, create? In my search for an answer, I spread the analysis across three chapters. Chapter Five focuses on the individual responses of the twenty-four respondents and the socio-cultural associations of their perspective on a 'Surinamese' identity. Chapter Six provides answers about the process of identity construction by three females (based on the in-depth interviews) and Chapter Seven describes the role of socio-cultural organizations in defining/redefining a 'Surinamese' identity.

5.1. Identity processes of Surinamese-Americans

Before I describe the reactions of the respondents about which kind of identity they claim, I will say something about the ethnic structure of the research population.

Table 5 Ethnicity of the respondents

Ethnicity	Absolute	Percentage
Creole	7	29%
Javanese	4	17%
Amerindian	1	4%
Mixed decent	1	4%
Black!	11	46%
Total	24	100%

Source: research results, 2005

Considering the table above, it is noteworthy that 46% of the respondents claim to be Black according to the American race/ethnic typologies, instead of using Surinamese labels for ethnicity. I assume that the influence of the race/ethnic typologies of the American society has become dominant in the mindset of this group. Twenty-nine percent of the interviewees consider themselves Creole; this group still uses the ethnic Surinamese marker for Black people. Seventeen percent of the respondents describe themselves as Javanese, 4% as Amerindian (in Suriname this group is called Indigenous people), and 4% is of mixed descent. I failed to ask my Javanese respondent and the respondent of Amerindian and mixed descent which kind of race/ethnic markers identifies them in the American society because all of them can be classified as Latin/Hispanic or Asian. I assume that the American race/ethnic markers create space for these groups to play with their ethnic identity.

In the previous chapter, I already mentioned that I did not succeed in diversifying the ethnic composition of my research. Mostly Creole, and some Javanese, Amerindian, and people of mixed descent, -Surinamese-Americans participated in my research. I asked several key people why Hindustani -Surinamese-Americans were not that visible in the Miami environment. A key person explained the following: due to the pre migration structure of the different ethnic groups, Hindustani are mostly employed in agricultural businesses/entrepreneurial endeavors and are, thus, living in places like Fort Mayers and Sarasota (agriculture areas of West Florida). The Chinese are mostly integrated in restaurant and other vending activities, for example, selling things at the flea market. Both groups are in the entrepreneurial sectors. This dispersed Surinamese-American pattern of ethnic working and living areas typifies Miami, Florida.

During my visit to New York, I got the impression that the heterogeneous character of the Surinamese population was more visible, at the Dance party and 'Sranang Dei' activities, Hindustani, Javanese, Chinese, Mulatto, Creole, Maroon - Surinamese-Americans participated fully. At the commemoration day of the 115th year of Javanese Immigration in Miami, I met some Hindustani, Chinese white and mulatto -Surinamese-Americans. Key people in Miami, as well as in New York, note that the cultural baggage, which is full of ethnic prejudices and instills distrust in the individuals, causes certain groups not to participate in socio-cultural events. This distrust might also cause them to avoid encountering Surinamese people, because they are afraid that information will be solicited for the Immigration authorities**.**

5.2 Existence of multiple identities within Surinamese-American individuals

Table 6   Type of identity

Identity type	
Surinamese	15
Mix of Surinamese and American	3
Mix of Surinamese, Guyanese and American	2
Claims neither Surinamese nor American identity	1
Unknown	3

Source: research results, 2005

To detect whether Surinamese-Americans still had a 'Surinamese' identity, I asked them if they consider themselves Surinamer, American, or something else. The majority of the respondents claim that they have a 'Surinamese' identity because they were born and raised in the country. Other reasons why they claim to be Surinamer are that they celebrate the Surinamese ethnic culture consisting of the music, the cuisine, and the language, and that they have hold on to the mentality of hospitality. A Creole female respondent claims that she feels more of a Surinamer especially because she is Black and experiences discrimination in America. Two respondents claim that although they have a 'Surinamese' identity, they made a deliberate choice to become an American and to integrate into the American mainstream society to better their social position.

A Creole female who has been in the U.S. for 25 years puts it eloquently: "I am a Surinamer who is a naturalized American; I was born in Suriname and consider myself a Surinamer and it is in my blood."

Two respondents claim to have a triple national identity; they have a Guyanese as well as a Surinamese identity, and have become American citizens. One of them is a Guyanese[22] female who migrated to Suriname and married a Surinamese man. They then migrated to the United States. The other respondent is her son; he spent his youth in Suriname. He claims that he has a Surinamese identity of 60%, and that 40% is Guyanese because his mother and brothers are from Guyana and he is married to a Guyanese women.

Three respondents have a fluxating identity, they claim that they feel either Surinamese or American depending upon the social environment or situation in which they find themselves. An Amerindian female respondent, living in the U.S. for 15 years, reacted with the following statement, "If I am within the Surinamese-American community, I feel like a Surinamer; if I am with Americans, I consider myself American based on the dollar economy. But I am not a Surinamer who calls herself an American." Only one female Creole respondent said that she did not consider herself either Surinamer or American.

Brief comments about second and third generation Surinamese-Americans' identity
The children of Surinamese-Americans who were born in Suriname and migrated to America between the ages of four and sixteen years old speak Dutch, Sranang Tongo, Javanese or another ethnic language depending on their socio-economic class and social environment. While the children born in the United States speak predominantly English, some words are spoken in Sranang Tongo, Dutch, Javanese or another ethnic language. Most of them

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[22] During my field research, several key people, Guyanese–Americans, told me that Guyanese people migrated to Suriname in the late seventies and eighties due to the worsening economic and political conditions. After acquiring the Surinamese nationality, they applied for a U.S. visa and stayed behind in America. The same stories go for the Chinese group.

understand their ethnic language and Dutch but are not fluent in it. These children seem more American in their speech, attitude, clothing behaviors, etc.

An upcoming third generation is already present; these are children from a Surinamese-American parent and a parent with another nationality, such as, African-American, Hispanic, etc. The chance that these children will speak Dutch or the ethnic language is small. What I've noticed is that these children do participate in Surinamese social and cultural activities and get a sense of the 'Surinamese' identity. Some of them regularly visit Suriname for a vacation. Yet, it all depends on the individual style of upbringing and the (active) role of the Surinamese (American) grandparents in the children lives. The future will tell which aspects or influences of the Surinamese background will have been retained or undergone changes.

5.3. Markers of a national 'Surinamese' identity as defined by socio-cultural - Surinamese-American organizations

This paragraph puts the view of community leaders of the -Surinamese-American group forward. The socio-cultural organizations[23] of Miami, Florida, played an active role for a period of more than 15 years or more in the Surinamese-American community. This long experience legitimizes their perception and the observations that they have about this community. That's why I approached them and specifically asked to describe the general Surinamese and American identity aspects which are a part of the common traits of Surinamese-Americans, the so called 'group mentality'.

Common characteristics that are ascribed to the Surinamese-American group are the following:

- They are helpful, friendly and involved; this is particularly apparent when social or cultural events are organized by the Surinamese consulate. It doesn't matter that they (Surinamers) are trying to survive by holding down two jobs and following a busy schedule, or that they are perceived as foreigners, they will nonetheless make time to actively participate in the festivities and try to support them in any way they can, according to the consul general of the Surinamese consulate.
- The 'Surinamese' identity is defined as a culture consisting of fun, food, music, and the languages Dutch and Sranang Tongo and/or Javanese (ethnic language). Surinamese people depict themselves as fun-loving, and as having an appreciation for the food and the entertainment of Suriname. Social contact is very important for the Surinamese community, though a change in attitude did occur in the United

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[23] The eight socio–cultural organizations I interviewed will be described in chapter 7.

States because one doesn't visit somebody unexpectedly as they would in Suriname -- you must call first, according to the key person of Fayalobi. The distance between living areas is also a discouraging factor in choosing not to visit friends or family frequently. There are diverging patterns, though, because some Surinamese-Americans managed to start little clubs consisting of four or five members (the structure is flexible) who meet frequently, maybe once or twice per month. Card games or bingo drives tend to dominate these meetings. In a sphere of cooking food like hot chicken wings or other Surinamese dishes, and drinking beer, they tell jokes and discuss varied topics relating to past and present social, economic and political conditions in both Suriname and America. The key person from OSIM made the comment, "Socializing, getting together, and having fun are very important for Caribbean people. With white Americans, you cannot have the same fun because they do not like noisy parties or loud laughing. Therefore, you have to consider this. With Surinamers you can laugh, make jokes, and have fun with noise; it is not a problem."

- Misperceptions about migrating to America were/are present in the migrants' view of America as a paradise. One respondent puts is very eloquently, "Most Surinamese people have aspirations to emigrate, but once here, they discover that the American society has big teeth." Thus, Surinamese-Americans' attitudes changed in the American environment, "they become more industrious, more studious, hard working and their economic awareness is improved in the United States of America. Surinamese people became more focused and business-like especially when it comes to finding work, study and taking care of their family. The Surinamese work mentality of 'Zeven Even'[24] does not work in the States." This mentality, a well-known Surinamese saying about the governmental bureaucratic attitude where people just come in to sign in as present, and then leave after a while to do some other work or to go home, i.e. this lax attitude, is abandoned. "Because everybody is a number, if you are not on time you will be fired or they won't hire you at all. Illegal migrants have to survive in this society, so they will work harder for less money than the legal workers. Thus, most Surinamese people become more industrious than they were in Suriname," notes the key person of Fayalobi.

- Another Surinamese mentality that has survived is the lack of punctuality. Coming on time is a problem, especially in an informal setting, although a key person claimed that it is a Caribbean mentality. Coming on time during informal activities such as

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[24] This mentality, although it is perceived as a negative trait of the Surinamese society and Surinamese people, provides room for people to develop economic activities to combat poverty; this 'hossel' culture enables Surinamese people to look for alternative working possibilities if the formal economy does not provide for sufficient work. This 'hossel' culture institutionalized the pattern of working 2 jobs.

church meetings, festivities, and birthday parties is still a particular challenge. People think, "Well, I will arrive there eventually." In contrast to this, in the formal sphere, Surinamese-Americans learn that they have to be on time, especially at work.

The Surinamese 'Crab mentality' is still prevalent. There is a lack of unity within the Surinamese community and structural facilities such as information channels about immigration issues, is absent for the group. Most of the contact people I interviewed made a comparison between the Surinamese-American and the Haitian-American-and Cuban-- American communities. The president of OSIM made an observation, "That compared with the Haitians, Cubans, and other immigrants group, the Surinamese community does not have a location (community center) for its own people neither in Florida nor in New York or somewhere else in the United States." He was not the only one who noted this. Thus, the Haitians and Cubans are greatly admired for their perceived unity, organizational strength, facilities, and socio-economic and political networks that they use to look after the interest of their community.

In the Surinamese-American society a lack of unity is noticeable, according to the organizations and the respondents whom I have interviewed extensively. Explanations for this lack of unity originate in the pre-migration situation wherein the nation-building process in Suriname did not produce a common identity between the different ethnic groups. Feelings of mistrust are the consequence. During prior events, Surinamese-Americans were deported with the help of their fellow men and this scenario did not invoke feelings of trust. These events institutionalized an environment of mistrust, including the spreading of rumors and instilling the fear of each other.

Another reason for the lack of unity is the persistent Surinamese/Caribbean 'Crab mentality' that individuals and groups exhibit to each other. If an individual is doing well, another one will get jealous and try to hinder their social mobility process. "Financial means, leadership and capabilities are insufficiently put to use to unite the community. Surinamers are only talk due to a lack of cooperation between the intellectuals and elite group and the church, which has a little group of people, thus things cannot be achieved. The insight is there but capabilities are missing," according to the Javanese pastor of the Surinamese Moravian church. The situation is complex because most of the organizations tried to structure the Surinamese community but their attempts are hampered by

   i.   The geographical scattering of the group
   ii.   Leadership figures that feel disappointed and exhausted thanks to their previous efforts not producing follow-up activity.

iii. On a personal level in the target group, the individuals are trying to survive or have their own life, so not much time is left for active participation in organizations.

iv. A deciding factor complicating the attempts to unite the community is the fear of responsibility.

v. According to U.S. law on non-profit social organizations, financial transparency, achieving goals, and the professional functioning of the association is the main responsibility of the Chairman (the board). If something goes wrong, he or she has to answer for it. Compared to the Surinamese situation where a vibrant civil society is active but the execution of association law is not that strict, a more flexible environment for social organizations exists there. All of these factors explain the perceived lack of unity within the Surinamese-American group.

5.4. Trans-Caribbean Identity Influences

Four of the nine key people placed the problems facing the Surinamese-American society, such as preserving the 'Surinamese' identity of the second and upcoming third generations and combating the illegal issues of Surinamese immigrants, within the broader framework of the Caribbean Diaspora. Miami, Florida, is an immigrant city within an immigrant state; thus, different immigrant groups from the Caribbean, South America, and Middle America are present, such as the Cubans, Haitians, Jamaicans, Nicaraguans, Colombians, etc. One of the key people, a businessman active in the Chamber of Commerce, noticed that Cubans and Haitians come together to look after the interest of their own people. In his opinion, the national identity of these groups is very strong, in contrast to that of Surinamese-Americans. All key people confirmed that these two immigrant groups have their community centers where their members can come and receive information and other services, such as legal advice, social or economic services, etc. Another admirable aspect is the preservation of the Cuban and Haitian identity, defined by the respondents as the languages which the children and grandchildren, who are bilingual, speak, namely Spanish or Creole as well as English. They celebrate and keep up their traditions, including the ones related to food, and music. These immigrant groups have their own television and radio stations, which inform and provide other services to their community. The influence of both groups in the social environment and public space is obvious; for example, notices in the bus are written in English, Spanish, and Creole. In addition, a newspaper like the Miami Herald is bilingual -- there is an English and Spanish edition.

The established infrastructure and perceived unity of the Cuban-Americans and the Haitian-Americans function as an example for the key people in the Surinamese community who try to structure and organize their own group (including dealing with the illegal issues). Although visible institutions are not present yet, the awareness process has been set into motion. For example, the two key people acknowledge the need for a community center for the Surinamese-American society. Another example is the need for more institutionalized networks where the well to do Surinamese-Americans who have their own business or infrastructure can assist other Surinamese-Americans by hiring them into an ethnic economy. "Surinamese-American organizations need to pay more attention to and put more effort into the reality of the Surinamese-American society; a certain group still deals with specific problems, especially the illegal Surinamese immigrants. Based on the immigration laws, you have to survive within that bounded reality," as the Javanese pastor said. The Surinamese-Americans who have businesses and contacts could hire their own people. The ones that are in real estate could provide information to Surinamers, tips, that even if you're undocumented you can buy a house; whenever you are threatened with deportation you can always sell your house or rent it to pay the mortgage. Promotion of young Surinamese-Americans to study and specialize in immigration laws is a necessity but leading figures and organizations tend to focus on other aspects."

Conclusion

Most respondents claim to have a 'Surinamese' identity, which they define based on the following markers: being born in Suriname (essentialist notion); usage of the ethnic language, the cuisine, the music; the mentality of hospitality; and socialization through schooling and upbringing in Suriname. Aside from the existence of a 'Surinamese' identity, some people claim 'American' and 'Caribbean' identities. Respondents' comments depict how they rationalize their identity based on their goals, for example, achieving social mobility to oppose discrimination, etc.

Second generation Surinamese-Americans born in Suriname claim a 'Surinamese' identity, while the ones born in America are more American in their speech, clothing, etc. These children are socialized in the American society; in the private environment, they eat Surinamese dishes, participate in socio-cultural activities, and listen to Dutch, Javanese, or Sranang Tongo conversations, but most of them are not fluent in these languages. These observations and conclusions agree with Isajiw's view that latter generations of Caribbean immigrants will lose their native languages and linkages with the ethnic culture.

How did Surinamese-Americans create a national 'Surinamese' identity and did Americanization influence their lives? Based on the socio-cultural organizations and their long working history with the Surinamese immigrant community, the following answer is

provided. They defined the 'group mentality' as an identity marker. What is meant with 'group mentality' are the imported cultural behavioral patterns and the changes that occur thanks to the American context. Surinamese-Americans are credited for their willingness and friendliness when it comes to participating in activities, even though they have busy schedules. They are fun-loving people who like social contact even though this attitude underwent changes in the United States. Still, certain people will set up social clubs of four to five people to enjoy themselves. The working mentality also changed. Surinamese-Americans have become more aware economically and more enterprising; this is in line with the findings of several studies done by the immigration center (see study of the Washington Center for Immigration Studies). Yet, imported cultural patterns, such as arriving on time in an informal setting, are still a problem. This also applies to the lack of social cohesion within the Surinamese community. Several explanations are given, such as, a lack of a national identity which instilled a culture of mistrust, an entrenched 'crab mentality,' and leadership problems. Socio-cultural organizations use the mirror effect meaning to reflect on the methods and instruments that other Caribbean immigrant group such as the Cubans and the Haitians have used to define their identity and to enhance social cohesion within the American context.

Chapter Six

Construction of a 'Surinamese' identity by Surinamese-American females

I describe the construction process of a 'Surinamese' identity from a female perspective in this chapter. I selected three of the twenty-four respondents for in-depth interviews. The selection criteria for the in-depth interview were: living in the United States for more than five years, ethnicity, class and gender[25]. I interviewed three female respondents, one Javanese and two Creole; all of them are illegal. This chapter is structured as follows: first of all, I'll say something about the profile of the respondents, and secondly, I'll describe the markers of a 'Surinamese' identity, such as, feeling of at-home, cuisine, attendance at social activities, commemoration of special days, culture, and individual rights.

6.1. Profiles of the respondents

Ms G. is a Javanese woman, 39 years old, who migrated with her husband to the States in 1999; her children (two daughters) came later with a relative. Ms G. entered the states with a start capital and was received by her sister-in-law who was already living in Florida. Within a couple of weeks, she found work through her family network. In Suriname, she had worked in a flower shop. Her current job is taking care of a baby and, in the weekend, she does cleaning work (if available).

Adaptation to the modern western society was relatively easy according to her. She experienced the process of learning English as easy because it is taught at Surinamese schools. Television programs and music is mainly in English; thus, she had a basic knowledge of English. She received information from her in-laws and friends about practical thing's such as, making a driver's license, paying taxes, acquiring a social security number, health care, insurance, etc. She said that she did not really expect much. In her mind, she would immigrate to Florida, work and save her money and eventually return to Suriname. The task of saving money is slowly being realized now. Other big expectations are absent. Up until now, she is satisfied with her life.

Mrs. X. is a 54-year-old Creole woman. She immigrated to the States in 1990 with her two sons. Her husband entered the States in 1989. Mrs. X. was unemployed (she worked as a

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[25] During my research period, I noticed that females' social life coincided more with my interview time. For example, females were more willing and had more spare time to participate in the follow-up interviews. The work setting of these females also played a role, because they were active as a nanny and/or cleaning lady, and were free in the afternoons or on the weekends. One Javanese female (she has a legal status) who worked as a hostess in a restaurant and is doing a part time study lacked the time and did not finish the remaining interviews. The jobs of the males were demanding, so they had less spare time to participate in the in-depth interviews.

nanny) at the time of the study due to health problems. This was a very depressing time for her so she enjoyed talking with me about her experiences. She was a teacher at the secondary school level in Suriname, and her husband was employed by the military -- now he is a cabdriver. She lived in the Netherlands for six years but never thought about staying there due to the gray and cold weather.

Making the transition from the Surinamese society to the American society was not a problem, although she had difficulty with the language at first, until a girl friend told her to think in English and then her fluency progressed.

Mrs. C. is a 54-year-old Creole woman who migrated to the United States some 15 years ago. She lived in New York for thirteen years and then she migrated to Florida two years ago. She was a teacher at a primary school in Suriname. In America, she followed a nine-month nursing training in taking care of elderly people because she heard from her social network in New York that it provided the best chance to find a job. She is single and does not have any children. During the time of my research, she had trouble finding a well-paid job because her working permit and identity card had expired. Due to the Post-911 strict execution of laws, her working permit and identity card could not be renewed, so she could not work through an employment agency. Because of the fact that Mrs. C. lacked a social network in Florida, and the fact that she did not integrate into the social community of Miami, her chance of finding work through references was complicated. Mrs. C. disliked the Surinamese community in Miami because they spread personal gossip about her even before they met her. During the time of the interview, she worked as a nanny for a Surinamese lady.

6.2. Markers of a 'Surinamese' identity as perceived by Surinamese-American females
In chapter two, I elaborated on the theoretical perception of Premdas. He notes that factors/markers such as homeland, language, religion, culture, race/ethnicity, culture/customs; and the elements of social life are used by people to organize their lives, construct identities and form solidarity networks which guide the behavior of its community members. During my in-depth interviews with my female respondents, I used these markers as a guiding tool to detect how these females construct a 'Surinamese' identity. I've noticed that the respondents defined some of these markers differently than the theory would suggest. In chapter eight, I will explicate these findings. In the next paragraphs, I describe the respondent's reactions about a 'homeland' -- I made it operational as a. feeling at home in order to combat feelings of home sickness, b. commemoration of a special day (either Surinamese or American), c. the role of socio- cultural organizations in their life d. definition of culture and e. the rights which are important to them as illegal immigrants.

A. Homeland, Feeling 'at home'

To better grasp the concept of homeland, I translated it from the respondents as 'feeling at home in a country or place'. I asked my respondents to talk about places/countries where they feel most at home and why they feel that way. Based on their reactions, one can easily understand the motivation behind why they perceive America and/or Suriname as their homeland. Also, the interaction between the socio-economic reality of the respondents and their past experiences in Suriname decides how they experience these feelings.

Mrs. G., the Javanese lady who lived in the United States for 6 years, says that she experiences feeling at home in the United States in the same way as she did in Suriname. "I have to make the best of it to feel at home; it takes time to orientate and start over again in a strange country. I will try to feel at home." According to her, the difference with Suriname is that she experiences incidental feelings of homesickness, especially when there are family festivities in Suriname. "But my mother, sisters and in-laws have visited me several times so these feelings are combated,". I asked her to name five places where she feels at home. The primary place where she feels at home is her own house. The second is her work environment because her employers trust her and do not follow her through the house. The third place is her sister-in-law's house because she lived with her for five years and she trusts them. The fourth place is her girlfriends house in Suriname because she is like a sister to her. Finally, she feels at home at the church because the rest of the Surinamese community gives her a familiar and trustworthy feeling and contact with them is important.

Mrs. X, the Creole lady who has lived in the States for 15 years, does not consider herself a patriot, saying, "I am happy where my husband and children are." She defines feeling at home as feeling comfortable, as educational opportunities for the children, as quality medical provisions in America, as well as a place where she wants to be. She feels comfortable in the United States mainly because of the opportunities for her children. She did experience feelings of homesickness because her family members are in Suriname (two brothers and a sister). In addition, her daughter is in the Netherlands, as was her favorite sister, who died two years ago. What she especially missed in the beginning years was her teaching job, particularly when she was doing homework with her children or the children she was taking care of. Five places where she feels at home are the interior of Suriname, its serenity -- it is a paradise, its clean air, its primitive character, its lack of excessive machines and modernity (although a dishwasher is a necessity nowadays for her nowadays). She lived there during her childhood, so she inherited the love for this place. Landscapes where streaming water is present like the sea, beaches, creeks and rivers can be found, for

example, in Key West and Key Largo. She likes it there. She has an urge to see the sea bottom -- it is like heaven. Mountains have snowy tops like the ones in Switzerland; if the snow melts, she does not like that. She does not like places that are too populated.

Mrs. X feels most at home in America and in Suriname. She does not like the Netherlands (even though she lived there for 6 years) because the weather is too gray. "I have grown roots in the United States. If I return to Suriname, I want to live on the plantation of my husband, Berseba (in district Para)." In her mind, it is the best place to be. Then she would be able to visit her boys when necessary." Her dream for the future is to return to Suriname in a healthy condition.

Mrs. C, who is Creole and has lived in America for 15 years, does not feel at home in America, because she misses financial and social security. In Suriname, you could easily buy things on credit because of your personal relationship with the storekeeper. Little things like the credit card system or the data information system are a challenge; she tried to adjust but do not they make you feel at home. In Suriname, she felt more at home, maybe because she is born and raised there. What she credits living in the United States with is that she has become more business-like, not too emotional. For example, in the past she would have gotten angry if certain people did not attend the funeral of a family member or friend. She understands now that some people have to work and the great distance between living areas makes it sometimes impossible to attend the funeral.

Other aspects, such as the Creole Surinamese traditions of wearing certain colors of clothing during the mourning process -- which is sometimes seen as obligatory -- have been abandoned by her now. Places where Mrs. C feels at home are in her own home, at her workplace if everything is all right, with her family, and in the church. She feels more at home in Suriname because "I was born, raised there, went to school -- that country made me to what I am." In addition, she acknowledges the fact that she has a social network that she could put to use during difficult financial times. She wants to make an effort to feel at home in the United States by following educational courses; she already followed a nine-month nursing course, but if she wants to attend college, she needs valid documentation and money.

B. Link between identity and the days the women commemorate

Diverse patterns emerge if we look at the way these females commemorate special days in their lives. I wanted to detect if there was a relationship between the festivities days, Surinamese and/or American, which are celebrated and identity-forming processes, so I asked these women which days they commemorate. All of them celebrate Christmas; Thanksgiving is celebrated by the two Creole females, because they celebrate it with family

members and friends. The Javanese female is the only one who commemorates Surinamese days, such as birthdays of family members, Owry yari (old year celebration lasting into the New Year -- a special occasion in Suriname) and Srefidensi (celebration of Surinamese independence), she will barbecue with her family. She will not celebrate American festivities like the Fourth of July because she has to work and she is not an American. Incidentally, she will celebrate it inactively but that's it. On Memorial Day, she will celebrate 'Sranang Dei' in Tampa.

On the contrary, Mrs. X does not celebrate any Surinamese festivity day because she has to work; she is not likely to visit 'Sranang Dei' activities because in her words she has, "to pay for dance parties and I do not like to dance."

Mrs. C. attended 'Sranang Dei' activities in the past, when she was in New York, but due to a lack of transport, she doesn't visit the scene any more. In her church, which was attended by prominent Caribbean nationalities, they organized a cultural day whereby the different nationalities could display their folklore, their cuisine, and other artifacts of their country. Together with her Surinamese Christian brothers and sisters, she used these occasions to depict the diversity of Surinamese culture and showed the flag and sung the national anthem. Mrs. C. likes Thanksgiving because you can sit with your family and give thanks to the Lord; the same applies for Christmas. The other American holidays she does not commemorate because she has to work; frequently, these days will be positioned on a Monday. Mrs. C. celebrates her birthday based on the Creole Surinamese tradition of cooking an egg for herself, eating some cake, and drinking a red cherry soft drink.

C. Role of socio-cultural organizations in their lives

Is there a relationship between the activities and social events which socio-cultural -- Surinamese-American organizations organize in Miami, Florida, and the maintenance of a 'Surinamese' identity on the individual level? I asked my respondents the question, for example, in which social event do they participate? All of them have a strong link with the church, either the Surinamese church or another Caribbean church. The church and Christian religion seem to be support systems for these women. Mrs. G. makes clear that the Surinamese church is a support system for her, "in the church when people are praying for others, myself and friends, it gives support. The church plays a big role in my life -- it is the place where you get your blessing, and it gives me a nice feeling to be with my fellow men in prayer. If my schedule permits it, I will attend the church meeting; going to the church is something to look forward."

She goes on telling me about how the church allows you to get information about other Surinamese people if there is a sickness or need for help, and which activities will take place there. Another organization in which she is active is Surjawa (of which the Javanese Pastor

is the president). This organization is responsible for the December festivity; there you see and meet different Surinamers whom you did not meet for a long time. She always wonders, "Are so many Surinamers living here? Where are these people coming from? Are there really so many Surinamers present in the United States?" According to her, the December festivity is the event that brings together many Surinamers, not only Javanese but also other ethnic groups such as Hindustani.

The Surinamese church also plays an important role in the life of Mrs. X. since she was active from the beginning of the church. "I experienced the start, child diseases, and the change in religious leaders. I see myself as a 'Ston Futu' (corner stone). The church is thrust worthy and still standing and the board functions until now according to her."

Other organizations that are responsible for keeping the Surinamese identity alive are Fayalobi, SANI and the Suriname Heritage Foundation. Ms. X. acknowledges the role of these organizations but also has critique for the kind of activities they organize. "In my opinion SANI has the character of the Lions club in Suriname; they organize social and cultural events in order to donate materials, ambulances and provide training to Surinamese medical personnel. Lions club is an organization in which rich people participate, and it does social cultural work in order to gain recognition and status. In my opinion SANI and the other --Surinamese-American organizations need to focus on the problems of the illegal group of Surinamers, what are their struggles, housing conditions and possibilities to find employment. SANI and the others are government-acknowledged associations, so they can focus on the fundamentals here.

Everything is focused on Suriname. For example the Haitians, their educated people, their lawyers advised them what to do." Solutions that Mrs. X. suggests these organizations can apply are the following: the Surinamese community has rich people who could hire Surinamers or give tips to help Surinamers find a job. Another example would be to open a hotel for Surinamese or Dutch-Surinamese tourists, where Surinamese-Americans could work. Fundamental aspects such as making -Surinamese-Americans feel at home, networking, and providing financial advice and information must be the focus of these organizations and the Surinamese-American community. "But nobody knows something; mistrust is present against each other, instead of going over our head work with the community here. In my mind, credit cooperation is important. People can save their money; when they are jobless they can get their money back."

Ms. C. says she never came into contact with a Surinamese-American organization that was focused on the problem of Surinamese immigrants. The organization she does know only organizes social and cultural events like 'Sranang Dei'. In New York, where she lived for 13 years, a Surinamese church is absent.   There was only a Caribbean church present , which is attended by Guyanese and Trinidadians. The assistant pastor of this church was a

Surinamer, and there were other Surinamese people active in this church. I felt at home in this church because "den sma sabi sa yu e go thru" (people know what you are experiencing). By participating in 'Sranang Dei' activities, she met Surinamese people; otherwise, she did not meet them.

D. Definition of culture
I asked my respondents how they define the Surinamese culture. All of them defined culture from an ethnic perspective, which is not surprising considering the Surinamese tradition of predominant socialization by the ethnic group. Nonetheless, this socialization does not preclude common norms and values or traditions. The narratives of the respondents will clarify these multiple identity aspects.

According to Mrs. G., the Surinamese culture is based on some Javanese aspects, "I was born there in Suriname, so it is important to know something even if it is a bit about certain cultural aspects like the burial and birth rituals, which is knowledge from the forefathers and their tradition". For example, the newborn baby's head is shaven after eight days; this tradition is based on the Islamic traditional Javanese culture. The respondent narrates stories about her mother, who was Roman Catholic. When she married her husband, she got to know the Javanese culture. She was married in the traditional Javanese manner. Her husband's uncle and nephew explained the rituals to her. It never interested her, though, so she did not preserve it. She hastily goes on to explain that she converted to Christianity so she does not uphold these traditions, but she is familiar with them and tries to maintain some of them and keeps herself informed about them. "I try to hold on to my own culture because I am not an American."
The ethnic language Surinamese Javanese is also important to her. She speaks Javanese predominantly with the elderly of the family. Another aspect of the culture she keeps alive is the cuisine. At Budho, an Islamic celebration following a fasting period, she prepares a special meal and visits other family members. The daily cuisine is also a marker; she has a mixed style that includes Surinamese Javanese dishes, such as Bami, Nasi and Souto, and American dishes, but the Surinamese style still dominates. The languages that are used in her household are Dutch (70% of the time) and Sranang Tongo (30%). Her oldest child, who is married to an American, speak a lot of English, as do the other children with their peers. However, with their parents, they speak Dutch.

Mrs. G. likes to participate in Surinamese social events. She explains that she will do her outmost to participate in order to support these activities. She describes Surinamese people

as follows, "First Surinamers like socializing; social life and social feeling -- especially to meet each other is important for us. Secondly, we are helpful if someone is in trouble; we will try to help that person. Thirdly, we are peaceful, in the sense of friendly, we are not people who are racial or discriminating." Her Surinamese Javanese identity is further maintained by video and music cassette/CD/DVDs, food products such as dried fish, etc. She gets these items from her friends and family from Suriname, as well as through frequent contact with family members in the Netherlands.

When I asked Mrs. X. to define the Surinamese culture, she countered with, what is culture? She wonders, does it mean that we dance on the Banja (a Creole spiritual dance which is performed based on African drums)? She explains that her father was a preacher, so the Christian principles dominated her upbringing. Culture she defines, as her father before her, 'as working with nature.' Depending upon the circumstances, Creole people brought their culture from Africa.   Some things were lost and others preserved, especially when it comes to medical knowledge based on plants and spiritual needs. It's a pity that the acquired knowledge of the older generation was not written down; they died with it.
For example, her grandmother was a midwife who knew a lot about medical plants such as Kwasi Bita; she got her knowledge from her mother. The respondent's mother always asked her mother to teach her these skills, but the transfer of knowledge was postponed and she died with it. Her grandmother refused to teach her other daughter because she did not like her son-in-law. Writing down this knowledge and trusting the younger generation with it is important for the preservation of traditions and knowledge. A lot of poisonous western medicine is imported in Suriname even though nature has a lot to offer. It is important that a country respects and preserves its culture. Culture is meant in the sense of using medical plants for feminine hygiene, drinking 'Bita' (bitter drinks made from herbs used to clear your intestines) and using other herbs, etc. Mrs. X. upholds that idea. Another aspect of tradition she upholds is the preparation of typical Surinamese cuisine consisting of vegetables, such as kouseband, aubergine, and amsoi, which she goes to the Chinese to buy twice a month. She combines the Surinamese kitchen with the American cuisine. Once a year she makes Pon, a Creole dish in the form of a pie filled with fried chicken, for her son's birthday. She also takes a 'Switi Watra,' a sweet water bath (a traditional herbal bath mostly taken at the end of the year to cleanse the spirit), when she feels like it.   Sometimes she wears a Pangi (traditional female dress of the Maroons) during the hot season. She does not like to wear the traditional Creole dresses Koto[26] and Anyisa. In Suriname, she liked to attend Ingi prei's

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[26] Former slaves traditional dress and head scarf, it was developed to hide the bodies of the slave girls but it began to lead a life of its own because the female slave revolutionized the dress and head scarf and linked it with socio-cultural meaning.

(an Amerindian dance act, considered a spiritual dance of the Winti culture), but these are absent here so she cannot uphold this tradition. According to her, another aspect of the Surinamese culture is the upbringing process, i.e. how do you instill norms and values such as respecting the elders, keeping the children in line, participating in the household and choirs, preparing the boys to be self–sufficient, etc.?. If the men do not want to marry or go out on their own, they must know how to cook, clean the house etc. In her opinion, the children have internalized the Christian morality and the Surinamese culture, for example, in terms of social feelings, respect for elders, etc.. What all Surinamers have in common is their fun mentality; besides that, they are very hospitable and promote social traffic to meet friends and keep contacts.

"Parents at home influence the language that is spoken at home; I speak English and Dutch with my children" as Mrs. X. told me. I noticed that the second child speaks Dutch fluently compared to his older brother. She also has more Surinamese friends, a social network, and a card club where they converse more often in Dutch and Sranang Tongo and only sometimes in English.

Mrs. C was brief in her comments about what she perceives as the Surinamese culture. She sees a strong link with the Winti tradition, the spiritual culture of the Creole. In the past, she participated in these activities. Her father's family participates actively in this tradition. The moment she converted to Christianity, she distanced herself from these practices because they do not co-exist with each other, according to her. Her cooking style is not particularly dominated by the Surinamese influences. If she desires to eat Surinamese dishes such as Brown Beans with Rice, Boyo[27] or Pon, etc, she will cook it -- if she can find the ingredients. She is not a type of person who likes to cook and bake. Her Surinamese girl friend in New York liked cooking, so she baked dishes like Pon for her, which she then stored for months. Ms. C. describes Surinamers as hardworking. They try to make the best of their situation, e.g., they raise a family, buy a house and a car, etc. They want the best for their children, and eventually want to return to Suriname. But "de e taki sma tori" (they like to gossip about people) that is the reason why she retreated from the Surinamese community of Miami.

E. Identity rights

I asked these women to discuss which rights, in their own views, mean the most to them, because they are living in a society which is dominated by an individualistic rights point of view. I thought it relevant to ask this question in order to detect the link with their identity.

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[27] A pie made of manioc and coconuts together with sugar.

Mrs. G. explained that the most important right for her as a foreigner, a Surinamer, is that you get opportunities and chances to achieve a better life and that you are not treated as a criminal.

For Mrs. X. there are certain rights, such as the right to choose the religion that suits you and carry a bible, which are important to her. The right to religious freedom is the most important one for her because a person can choose the kind of denomination or religion she wants to follow. Mrs. X. did bible study with the Church of the Latter Day Saints, or Mormons. She reached the 15th lesson before she discovered the ideology of being baptized for the sins of your forefathers. She disagreed with this ideology because her father, who was a pastor himself, taught her that everybody is responsible for his or her own deeds, i.e. the idea of self responsibility. Being aware of this right made her stop the bible study classes with them. Free speech is also important to her, although until now she was not accustomed to the fact that everybody can be so critical about the president, saying, for example, the president 'is a dick.' The right to an education is also important. You are obliged to get an education, if you are under eighteen, even if you do not have a social security number, and whether you are legal or not. Getting a high school diploma is a right. The contradiction is that after high school, if you are illegal, you do not have the opportunity to get a college education or a driver's license due to the Post-911 legislation.

Mrs. C. has a more fatalistic perspective about rights, according to her " foreigners like me do not have rights. If there were an organization that was active for the rights of illegal immigrants, she would join it. "Self responsibility is important to me. You have to look for a job; see to that your papers get arranged.   Otherwise you do not have any rights. I have an acquiescent attitude."

Conclusion

Individual immigrant's narratives show how they experience and define identity factors in their daily lives, such as, the feeling of 'at home', the celebration of American or Surinamese holidays, the role --of Surinamese-American socio-cultural organizations, and the definition of Surinamese culture and identity rights. One notices that these females made a conscious choice to make themselves feel at home by focusing on their family, the opportunities that America provides for their children and the educational possibilities. This choice is embedded in their social context and their past experiences. All of these females experience feelings of homesickness, especially in regard to the social contact with family members.

These females explain why they celebrate American and/or Surinamese holidays and which of these they celebrate. American holidays such as Thanksgiving are celebrated by the two Creole respondents, because these are festivities with family and friends. One respondent, the Javanese interviewee who lives in America for the shortest period, celebrates all the Suriname holidays and participates fully in the social events of --Surinamese-American organizations. However, American holidays are not celebrated unless she does it in a Surinamese way. Even though the Creole females who live in the States for 15 years choose to participate in certain Surinamese activities such as church activities and 'Sranang Dei', they also celebrate certain American holidays.

All of the interviewees acknowledge the role of the Surinamese-American association, and the church (Surinamese or Caribbean) is credited for the support and information function. These functions are particularly important to immigrants with an illegal status. Other socio-cultural organizations are sometimes credited with trying to increase social cohesion but a critical perspective exists is held concerning their functioning. Criticism is expressed about the fact that they do not go to their outermost to combat the problems of illegal Surinamese immigrants, and that they do not adopt economic cooperation (creating an ethnic economy), as a principle. Thus, a gap exists between these organizations and the group they service, as perceived by the two Creole females.
Even though the Surinamese culture is defined by an ethno-cultural view, common traits of the Surinamese mentality are acknowledged, such as, being very social and hospitable, having an ability for inter-ethnic communication, being family-oriented (upbringing process), being hardworking and ambitious.

What all the respondents share is their view of a tension between their ethno-cultural traditions and their Christian fate. These females have remarkable insight into their rights in the American society; the Javanese respondent appreciates the right to better one's life -- a fundamental principle of the American society. One of the Creole respondents thinks highly of the right to choose her religion, the right to free speech, and the right to education, even as an illegal immigrant. One of the other Creole respondents acknowledges the importance of self-responsibility. The new homeland has a clear influence on the perception of identity rights. The notion of identity rights is not vividly experienced by Surinamese people in Suriname. In conclusion, the interactions between the respondents' daily lives, their experiences in their home country, and the new context found in the receiving society, influence how they define theoretical markers of identity.

Chapter Seven
Surinamese-American organizations' role in constructing a 'Surinamese' identity

At the beginning of 2005, U.S. Immigration authorities raided several communities such as the Haitians, the Jamaicans, and Surinamese, in search of illegal immigrants who supposedly had gotten a deportation letter. Rumors were spread about these raids on the Internet, and within the respective communities, and people were consequently afraid to attend community centers, churches, and social gatherings. Confronted by this environment of mistrust, and the fact that the family member with whom I planned to stay was involved in an accident, I began to have doubts about my research plan.

To overcome these challenges, I started my research by interviewing people at official institutes like the Surinamese consulate, and social organizations such as the Surinamese Moravian Fellowship of Miami, Surjawa, the Organization of Surinamese people in Miami (OSIM), the Surinamese American Network Incorporation (SANI), Fayalobi, the Surinam Heritage Foundation and Heri Heri; all of them are active within Florida. The main question I asked these organizations concerned the kinds of activities they organized to maintain/define the 'Surinamese' identity. In the coming paragraphs, I will briefly list the structure and activities of these organizations, as well as the network relations they have with organizations in the U.S.A, Suriname, and the Netherlands. Then I will zoom in on the Surinamese Moravian church to explicate the role that this institute plays in the construction of a 'Surinamese' identity.

7.1. Background information about the organizations

In the state of Florida, a vibrant civil society of Surinamese-American organizations is present. I detected the main organizations that target socio-cultural, ethno–cultural, and religious activities to Surinamers. Sports organizations such as soccer teams are also present, but for this study, I did not focus on them, even though they are a part of the Surinamese-American community. For the purposes of this study, the socio-cultural and ethno-cultural aspects of the Javanese and the Creole group, as well as the Christian religious activities, are the focus. In the next paragraphs, I will briefly say something about the structure of the organizations, their goals, their activities, and their network relationships.

Box 1 --Surinamese-American socio- cultural organizations

Name of the Organization	Type	Goal	Activities
Fayalobi	Professional organization with a legal structure and a website	Maintain the ' Surinamese' identity	Information, entertainment and social activities on a local and international level
Sani	Professional organization with a legal structure and a website	Maintain the ' Surinamese' identity	Information, entertainment and social activities on a local and international level
Surinamese Moravian Church	Religious organization	Maintain the ' Surinamese' identity and promote social cohesion	Information, spiritual and social cohesion binding activities more on a local level
Surinam Heritage Foundation	Semi-professional organization with a legal structure	Maintain the ' Surinamese' identity	Entertainment activities on a local level
Organization of Surinamese people in Miami	Semi-professional organization without a legal structure	Maintain the ' Surinamese' identity and promote social cohesion	More entertainment activities on a local level
Heri Heri	Ethno-cultural organization	Promote the specific' ethno-cultural' identity of the Creole group	Ethnic entertainment on a local level
SurJawa	Ethno-cultural organization	Promote the specific ' ethno-cultural identity of the Javanese group	Ethnic entertainment on a local level
Surinamese Consulate	Governmental institution of Suriname	Promote the ' Surinamese' identity as well as the ' Trans-Caribbean' identity	Broad spectrum of formal and informal activities towards Surinamese immigrants

Structure of the socio-cultural organizations

Most of the associations' names are a reference to the country name, Suriname, or to another symbol of the Surinamese heterogeneous culture/society. Most organizations started spontaneously with their activities, for example, the former president of Fayalobi (a Surinamese flower named Heated Love) narrates the following story. At a birthday party eleven years ago, some people suggested starting an organization for specific socio-and cultural activities for Surinamese people. This idea was put into practice, and 'Fayalobi' came into existence. Of the eight organizations I encountered, four with a formal/legal structure are, SANI, the Surinamese Moravian church, the Surinam Heritage Foundation and Fayalobi. What is striking about these organizations is that they have both legal and illegal Surinamese immigrants on the board. The board is also heterogeneous in character when it comes to gender, ethnicity, and class.

The more typically ethno-cultural (focused on ethnic background) organizations such as OSIM, Heri Heri, and SurJawa, lack a legal background. The board members are predominantly members of their own ethnic group, for example, people of Creole or Javanese descent.

Due to the small size of the Surinamese community, one sees that some key people are active in several organizations; this applies to the Javanese pastor as well as to the Creole

president of OSIM. The Javanese pastor is a special member of organizations like SANI and SurJawa (he is the initiator of this organization) thanks to his religious leadership in the community. The Creole president of OSIM is a member of SANI, the Surinam Heritage Foundation, and the Church board, as well as an advisor of the Heri Heri cultural music group.

Activities

The goal of most organizations is to maintain the ' Surinamese' identity, in general, (SANI, Surinam Heritage Foundation, Fayalobi) as well as the specific ethnic identity of the Creole and Javanese group. The church tries to promote social cohesion based on the Christian religion and its social events.

Seven of the eight organizations host the majority of their activities in the Miami area. Fayalobi is the only organization located outside Miami; it is situated in Tampa. They try to accommodate --Surinamese-Americans who are living in the northern part of Florida, e.g., in Orlando, etc. This organization is responsible for organizing "Sranang Dei" for their community; it was held on Memorial Day weekend in May 2005. Activities such as dance, folklore, Surinamese cooking, soccer matches between Surinamese and Caribbean teams, and an exposition of the diverse ethnic dresses, were some of the main events on the day. Besides this, charity fairs are held to collect money for Surinamese organizations such as Stichting Thuisloze Kind, O.S., Lelydorp, The Salvation Army, the Red Cross and the Kidney Foundation. They also give a scholarship award of $750 to an excellent --Surinamese-American student. Other organizations, such as SANI and the Surinam Heritage Foundation, participate with other associations to organize "Sranang Dei" in Miami. They also have separate activities -- SANI has a medical program within the Surinamese General Hospital where medical and other personnel are trained, and sent medical supplies, e.g., four ambulances to Suriname. The Surinam Heritage Foundation, in collaboration with others, organized a social event for 'Srefidensi,' Independence Day, in 2003. Two years ago, the Surinamese music band South South West was flown over for the festivities. They planned to organize an event for the 30th Srefidensi of Suriname, in November 2005. The Surinamese consulate coordinates the participation of the Surinamese associations in the yearly Caribbean festivities.

Most of these organizations are familiar with the problems that the illegal group experience. They made several attempts to provide information and legal services by specialized immigration lawyers, but frequently to no avail. When it comes to providing information about their illegal status, Surinamese immigrants pose a problem for themselves. Due to such negative experiences as legalization scams and deportations, a culture of mistrust is institutionalized.

Networks

The Surinamese-American socio-cultural organizations are familiar with each other's activities. There seems to be a lack of structural collaboration, but, incidentally, these organizations actually work together. For example, by participating in each other's activities, providing information, and so forth, at the memorial of the 115th year of Javanese immigration, in North East Miami, members of SANI, OSIM, Surinam Heritage Foundation and the Consul were present. Fayalobi and other Miami organizations tried to form a structural network with the help of Surinamese officials like the consulate and the ambassador, but without success.

A key person puts it as follows, "They talk the talk, but they do not walk the walk."' Another problem, according to another key person, is the lack of communication and peoples' big egos , which hamper structural networks. There are also network relationships with other immigrant groups. For example, SANI collaborates with the Polish American group. They use their community center for their activities. They also have relationships with the Trinidadian and Guyanese organizations. SANI also has a sister organization in Suriname. Associations like Fayalobi also have working relationships with several organizations in Suriname. This is also true for the Surinam Heritage Foundation and the Moravian Church. The church receives guest such as Dutch Surinamese and Surinamese religious leaders, as well. In conclusion, structural as well as incidental relationships exist with local or regional Surinamese-American organizations, with other immigrant groups, as well as internationally with Surinamese and Dutch-Surinamese associations.

The role of the Surinamese consulate

The Surinamese consulate is a formal governmental institution of the Surinamese government, yet they play an important role in the life of legal and illegal Surinamese immigrants. Aside from the regular activities, such as providing birth certificates, renewing passports, etc. for the Surinamese-American community, the Surinamese consulate aims at increasing the ties between the different associations and the relationships with other Caribbean immigrant groups by participating in Caribbean festivals. Most of the -- Surinamese-American organizations have a good working relationship with the consulate, but there is also criticism. According to some, the Surinamese consulate does not take her role of facilitator seriously. They promised that they would set up a host website for general information about the associations, but this was not carried out. Interaction between high-ranking Surinamese governmental dignitaries and the --Surinamese-American community is not being promoted, according to some of the associations. Other associations do give

credit to the consulate for their intentions to stimulate collaboration between the organizations.

7.2. The Surinamese Moravian Church's difficult path to a 'Surinamese' identity

Genesis of the Surinamese Moravian Fellowship Church
OSIM, the Organization of Surinamers in Miami, was the precursor of the present-day church. Three Creole Surinamese women were the pioneers of this Church (and later functioned as godmothers). They made contact with the Head Moravian Church in North Carolina. It was Mrs. Ritfeld's idea to unite Surinamers based on religion. It was a turbulent period. Surinamers were targeted by the immigration authorities, and people sold each other out in the spy culture of that period. At a meeting in 1990, it was thus agreed that OSIM should function as the church board for the time being. After a while, a permanent board would be elected. According to the former Creole pastor, this was a mistake because the focus of OSIM was opposite to this, namely, in organizing cultural events and festivities, while the church's focus was on spiritual well being. A conflict of interest was present. One of the objectives of OSIM was to give spiritual support by the method of teaching by doing. A church board would be initiated. The structure of the church would be based on the Moravian church's principles, but the different denominations of potential church members would not be an obstacle, as long as they were interested in attending church meetings. Within a year of the installation of the church board in 1992, the former pastor was officially installed as the head pastor, with the current Javanese pastor as his assistant. They got a start capital from the main headquarters in North Carolina.

Initial problems of the Surinamese-American church
In the pioneer phase of the church, it was characterized by problems such as absenteeism of the former pastor, because he followed a theological master's study. The acting Javanese assistant pastor had a troubling relationship with the head of the Moravian Church in Suriname for several reasons. A conflict arose concerning the assistant pastor's son who studied at the theological school in Suriname, and then migrated to the United States, because he was unsatisfied with his career possibilities within the church. The Javanese assistant pastor started his own church, named 'Duta Wacana,' Javanese for 'God does not forget.'.
The original --Surinamese-American church, acknowledge by the head church of North Carolina and the Surinamese head church, faced leadership difficulties due to the personal problems of the substitute female pastor. Consequently, church members began to abandon the church. After finishing his study, the former Creole pastor returned and led the church for

one year. Eventually, he engaged in a conflict with the church board and subsequently left the church.

A leadership vacuum within the church prompted the contact person in Florida of the Head Moravian church in North Carolina to call a meeting of the official board members, and asked if the 'Duta Wacana' (Javanese) church might be interested in merging with the Moravian fellowship church (the Creole segment). The church board and the leader of the Javanese church agreed upon a merger. Because the Surinamese community is not that big in numbers, it would be inefficient to allow two ethnic churches in the same area. In Suriname the Moravian church is structured according to ethnic identity, e.g., the Javanese have their own congregation and the Creole do as well, but they are united within the same Moravian church body.

At the dawn of a new era, in January 2000, the church started its new beginning with the official inauguration of the Javanese acolyte pastor and the organizational structure of a Surinamese church. The church structure consists of several church bodies in which Javanese and Creole are active.

The church had a vibrant life, but active membership has decreased in the last years. The church has 60 listed active members. Due to Post-911 legislation on immigration, members started to move to other states in order to avoid the execution of these laws. Thus, fear for deportation affected membership. Approximately 70 % of the church members are illegal immigrants, i.e. they do not have legal papers, though their illegal status differs. Church members told me that it was rumored that churchgoers were targeted by the immigration officials in the church, so people are afraid to attend services. Some of the church members migrated to the Netherlands. Another reason for low attendance in the church is that people have a seven-day workload. The main problem the church faces is in trying to interest youngsters in the religious work. Most of them are working or studying, so they do not attend the church meetings regularly.

Services of the church for illegal immigrants
The church undertook several attempts to combat the problems of the illegal immigrants. According to the pastor, the Surinamese embassy cannot do anything for this group because immigration is a State affair; thus, United States national law is the reference point. The head of the Moravian church has a sister organization, Church World Service, which looks after the affairs of illegal immigrants and asylum-seekers. They have a financial budget of $35,000. They provide information about legislation, as well as judicial and financial help, e.g., a lawyer can work on your case for a lower fee. They can also assist clients with their paperwork. If you file to become an American citizen, you will have to pay for it yourself, but with paperwork, assistance can be given. Three church members followed an intake course

to gather information about the problems of the illegal Surinamese migrants. To the disappointment of the church leader, most church members did not solicit information. From 1997- 1999, ten Surinamese families made use of these services. Other nationalities did ask for assistance from this organization; a total of twenty Nicaraguans asked for help even though the immigration rules for this group differs from the ones for Surinamers. Due to the special legal provision for this group, more can be achieved for Nicaraguans then for Surinamers. Before 911, big conferences were held to inform the church departments but Post-911 immigration rules, which are stricter, have diminished the chances for illegal immigrants. For nearly two years now, there are no meetings, because legislation to combat these problems is absent. Thus, the lawyers' hands are tied.

Before this time, four meetings were held for the church members wherein a specialist, an immigration lawyer, would provide information. Sadly, enough only a handful of Surinamers attended these meetings, while the attendance of other groups, such as Haitians and Jamaicans, is far greater, according to the pastor and the intake personnel.

Character of the sermons

The sermons of the --Surinamese-American church clearly show how it creates an environment in which the 'Surinamese' identity can flourish. The sermon starts with hymn singing, i.e. Christian songs in Sranang Tongo, Dutch, English, and Javanese that are sung by the church members (Javanese and Creole). After the pastor greets the congregation and shares concerns (messages about the deaths or births in the community, or church members problems or other issues), the Creole vice-president of the church board starts praying about certain issues. During the three months I visited these church meetings, I noticed that the favorite prayer topics were: concern for the political formation of the Surinamese government (this was going on during June, July, and August 2005), the socio-economic problems of Suriname, in addition to the war in Iraq and economic prosperity. After the prayer session, the pastor starts his sermon with a bible phrase. During the sermon, he uses Dutch, Sranang Tongo, Javanese and English. Depending upon the make up of the congregation, e.g., if second generation children or non-Surinamese partners of church members are present, he will use English more often than the Surinamese languages. The sermon ends with a blessing and an offertory. After the sermon people will stay behind and brief each other on certain issues, including, for example, questions about the death of a Surinamer or their work or how the children are doing in school, etc. These moments function as building blocks to information sharing networks where people stay in touch with the Surinamese community in the U.S., as well as with the Surinamese community in Suriname. The pastor and other members provide information about news events and developments in Suriname.

Another function of these church visits is for the children to hear the different Surinamese languages, namely, Dutch, Sranang Tongo and Javanese, to instill a seed of what it means to be Surinamer, even though most people not speak these languages fluently. In the case of a birthday or other celebration activity, people will bring along typical Surinamese dishes like red beans with cooked rice, Bami, cake, and drinks. In this environment of eating, drinking, making jokes, and discussing topics, the sense of fun in socializing with each other is appreciated. These church meetings bring the Javanese and the Creole community together based on religion.

Conclusion

The structure, activities, and networking relationships of the socio-cultural organizations are aimed at the creation/maintenance of a national 'Surinamese' identity in the Surinamese immigrant community in the United States. The structure of the socio-cultural organizations and their names reflect the symbols of the Surinamese society or culture. Five of the eight organizations have a formal structure. Legal as well as illegal Surinamese- Americans participate in these organizations. The more typically ethno-cultural organizations lack a formal structure and their board members come out of predominantly one ethnic group. Two of the eight organizations have a very professional approach. The activities of these organizations are primarily directed at maintaining the national 'Surinamese' identity, and, more specifically, the ethno-cultural identity of the Creole and Javanese group. Social events, such as, 'Sranang Dei', the commemoration of 'Srefidensi,' and donations to Surinamese organizations are intended to promote social cohesion within the Surinamese community. Organizations also participate in Caribbean activities, though. Because a relatively large group of people in the --Surinamese-American community has an illegal status, several attempts were taken to facilitate the living situations of this group, but to no avail.

Casual networking relationships seem to function well, but more structural contacts are problematic. Miscommunication and people's attitudes are perceived as the wrongdoers. On the other hand, contacts are well established with other immigrant groups such as the Polish-American and Caribbean groups. The same applies for the working relationships with Surinamese and Dutch Surinamese contacts.

The role of the Surinamese Moravian Church was primarily developed to establish social cohesion. After an initial period of overcoming the startup problems, it could take on the role of bringing the different ethnic groups together through a shared belief system. One has to consider the role that the coordinator of the head church played. Members visiting the church are mainly illegal. That's why they tried to provide services for this group -- but even the church was unsuccessful. Other church activities, like the preaching of sermons, are aimed at creating and strengthening the national 'Surinamese' identity, which includes cultural aspects of the Javanese and the Creole societies. For the individual members, support and information are also provided about the Surinamese- American community, their home country, and their family in the Netherlands.

Conclusions

The aim of this chapter is to provide answers to the main questions of this study. The first part deals with describing the main characteristics of Surinamese – Americans, next I depict how individual --Surinamese-American immigrants created an identity, which sort of identity they created, their explanations of this process, and the influences of the American society on this process. The second part of this chapter deals with the role of socio-cultural organizations in defining/maintaining a 'Surinamese' identity. The third part focuses on the critical remarks about Premdas and Ghorashi's approaches. In concluding, I present recommendations on the strategies of the socio-cultural organizations and for future research.

8.1. What are the main characteristics of Surinamese - American immigrants in Miami, Florida?

In chapter four I already stated that the responses of the twenty –four respondents must not be seen as a generalization for the whole Surinamese – American community. The overall number of Surinamese – Americans is placed between 10,000 and 15,000. The Surinamese – American group consist of legal and illegal immigrants. Key people mentioned that legal immigrants seem to avoid the illegal Surinamese – American immigrants. Based on my observations and research material I noticed that the division line between legal and illegal immigrants is not static. Structural contact between the two groups is absent but if you look at the attendance pattern of socio cultural events and the board members (their status) of socio cultural organizations, legal as well as illegal Surinamese immigrants participate. There are contacts, relationships between the two groups, thus on a more personal and incidental base. Most interviewees migrated to the United States during the post – military period, between 1987 until now. A combination of migration motives such as worsened economic, political and social conditions in relation with personal reasons motivated these immigrants to move. More females then males were interviewed; probably a bias is present due to the fact that I selected my interviewees through the church which is visited more by females. I also

suspect that the male their working schedules prohibited them to follow church meetings frequently. Most respondents are married and a third of the twenty – four respondents are married to a partner of another immigrant group or native African or White American. Residential pattern of these interviewees is diverse; most of them live in the surrounding area of Miami. A real ethnic neighborhood like 'Little Havana' or 'Little Haiti' is not present in the Surinamese community. I suspect that due to the raids of the INS in the beginning years and feelings of mistrust, people made a conscious choice not to live in the same residential area. Another explanation is that the group of Surinamese immigrants in Miami is smaller than the Cuban and Haitian community. Yet one notice that Miami Beach and its surrounding areas is listed by several key people as the living place of foremost illegal Surinamese immigrants. Miami Beach is very popular under illegal immigrants due to the fact that it functions as a service area; it is relatively easy to find work, schools for the children, housing, etc. Beside this the weather and the architecture of the houses also plays a role.

Most of the people I interviewed are in their labor active years. The kind of jobs they perform differs; some have professional and well paid jobs. Others have middle cadre jobs like medical health personnel, teaching, entrepreneurs. The largest group is active in the service sector. Overall a diverse group of Surinamese – Americans is living in the United States.

8.2. How do Surinamese-American immigrants construct a 'Surinamese' identity in their new homeland?

Surinamese-Americans use their knowledge, skills, and old networks (their personal infrastructure from Suriname and their past experiences) to find employment, get an education, and build new networks such as socio-cultural organizations in the United States. As Ghorashi has stated, past experiences, imported cultural baggage, as well as practical knowledge, interact with the new context of the receiving society. It can be argued that Surinamese-Americans have translated the theoretical notions of identity aspects/factors such as homeland, language, religion, race/ethnicity, and culture within this framework Surinamese-American females included the possession of rights into the theoretical notion of identity. The American society, in which individual rights are perceived as a prerogative, influences the view of these females (illegal immigrants). The right to pursue a better life

(even as a foreigner), the right to choose your religion, the right to free speech and to get an education (even though one is an illegal immigrant) – these rights are listed as important. The aspect of homeland is translated into feeling 'at home.' This emotion is influenced by the architecture of the houses, the familiar flora, the sub-tropical climate of Florida (which is similar to that of Suriname), as well as by the working environment. Based on the narratives of the in-depth interviews, one notices that people make a conscious effort to make themselves feel at home by following educational courses or by focusing on their family life. Others translate feeling 'at home' by considering future prospects for their children and the quality of the health sector.

The aspect of language is more difficult to explain; the associations' socio-cultural activities, the church, and the home environment are determinants for retaining the Dutch and Surinamese languages, such as Sranang Tongo and Surinamese Javanese.

This is especially important for the next generation of -Surinamese-Americans (especially the children born in America) who are fluent in the English language but no other. They understand Dutch, Sranang Tongo, or Surinamese Javanese, but their conversational skills are insufficient. The loss of these ethnic languages is visible. Interestingly enough, - Surinamese-Americans from the first generation master more then one language.

Religion, specifically Christianity as it is promoted by the Surinamese Moravian church, transformed its significance as a marker of identity -- it took on the function of increasing social cohesion within the Surinamese community. The Surinamese community is plagued by problems, such as lack of unity, mistrust, and so forth. This agrees with Premdas' theory that the claim for a homogenous (Caribbean) identity is complicated by a lack of social cohesion.

The church seems to be an institute which was credited for increasing social cohesion within the --Surinamese-American community, but the fact that a large group does not attend this church, says something about the lack of widespread influence. The church functions as an information canal, stimulates socializing with the own group, provides support, and stimulates the maintenance either of the ethno-cultural identity or of the national identity.

I have also noticed that within the context of the American society, religion has become an entity all on its own, a religious identity, thus. This is particularly true for the churchgoers. Two out of the three respondents made it explicitly clear that they do not participate in the traditional ethno-cultural activities, which are antagonistic to the Christian principles. Their religious identity seems to be more prominent than their ethno-cultural identity.

The components of race/ethnicity and culture are interlinked according to the research findings. The in-depth interviews show that ethnicity is related to the perception of what the Surinamese culture is. The Surinamese culture is defined through the ethnic background, where the language, music, dance, cuisine, medical knowledge, and spiritual traditions are

the important markers. This definition of the Surinamese culture is not a homogenous one, but is rather based on the socio-political principle of unity within diversity , which has become tradition in the Surinamese society. The American society also upholds the maintenance of the ethnic/cultural identity; in fact, the American identity favors this process. Thus, identities can sometimes be conflicting, but they can also be harmonious. This underscores the theoretical notions of layered multiple identities as Premdas and Ghorashi (more explicitly) have talked about.

The cultural aspect of identity is defined by individuals and socio-cultural organizations as 'the group mentality' of -Surinamese-Americans. This 'group mentality' encompasses certain elements such as being friendly, helpful, fun-loving people who like food, music, and socializing. Other elements of this 'group mentality' pose a constant challenge to the social cohesion of the Surinamese-American community, particularly the lax attitude concerning time (especially when attending informal meetings/occasions), the existence of an entrenched 'crab mentality,' and a culture of mistrust. This 'group mentality' was brought along to America, but in the new context another division line was created, namely, a line between illegal and legal --Surinamese-Americans. Although socio-cultural organizations, e.g., the church, made an effort to combat this challenge, one notices that individuals are not likely to change their attitude because illegal Surinamese immigrants are afraid of deportation and the legal group has trouble taking the leadership role upon its shoulder because it consumes time, energy and finances which may not be available. A new element in the 'group mentality' is the change in the Surinamese immigrants' work mentality; they have become industrious, hardworking, studious and increasingly more aware of economics in America.

All of the above-mentioned identity factors are used to construct a multiple identity. Listening to the narratives and analyzing the research material confirmed Oostindie (1998) and other scholars' conclusion. They acknowledge that Surinamese people predominantly claim an ethno-cultural identity, but are able to switch between different ethnic spheres. Moreover, perhaps secondly, would they perhaps claim a national identity? Emigrating to the United States meant that the ethno-cultural identity and a notion of a national identity were brought along with the individual and may or may not be maintained. The social environment in America, and contact with family in Suriname or the Netherlands, promotes the maintenance of the ethno-cultural identity. Besides an ethno-cultural identity, one notices a national identity as Surinamer. Both Javanese and Creole immigrants told me that they are Surinamers because they were born, raised, and socialized in Suriname.   In Sranang Tongo, they say, "Mi kumbatitei beri ini Sranang' (my umbilical cord is buried in Suriname)." An essentialist argument is used to claim their national identity. A key person of SANI explains why the national identity has become more significant in the new homeland.

Surinamers are from different ethnic backgrounds; in America, they can easily pass as African-American, Asian-American, white American or Latin American. The problem begins when they try to do this and notice that they belong neither to one of these groups nor to the American society. Then, they realize that they are Surinamers, so they have to go back to their Surinamese roots -- although it may take some time. Premdas also notes this process when he talks about the Trans-Caribbean identity. At the individual, level a Trans-Caribbean identity is not really portrayed. One does notice the high intermarriage rate of 33% with other Caribbean immigrant groups, and that the working environment (esp., co-workers) of most respondents is rooted in a Caribbean background. Considering the time spent at work, it suggests that some kind of influence must occur. In my interviews and talks, I did not notice that Surinamese people describe themselves as Caribbean. They describe themselves as South Americans, especially if someone asks them where there country of origin is located. They explain that Suriname is a country in South America bordering on the northern part of Brazil. What I did notice is that Surinamese-Americans compare themselves with the Haitian, Jamaican, and Cuban groups when it comes to these groups' social mobility processes and certain cultural traits.

In conclusion --Surinamese-Americans predominantly claim ethno-cultural and national identities. A Trans-Caribbean identity is not obvious, although they compare themselves with other Caribbean groups in terms of socio-economic progress.

8.2.1. Influences of the American context on the identity construction process of Surinamese immigrants

Living in the American society will eventually influence people's behavior, thinking patterns, and identity. That's why I asked my respondents if they have an American identity; most of them denied it, except for a few who clearly stated that they choose to behave like an American to promote their own social mobility or if they find themselves in a dominant American environment. --Surinamese-Americans are aware of the positive and the negative aspects of the American society, their new homeland; the same applies to their former homeland. The social networks and the openness of the Surinamese society are appreciated, as well as the educational system, which ultimately gave them a head start in the receiving society. At the same time, Surinamese immigrants dislike the corruption, lax attitude, etc. of their country of origin. The American society is credited for its competitiveness, its business-like attitude, the opportunities that it offers, and its modern and well-organized system. Yet, the egoistic, materialistic, and hard, mentality of Americans is criticized. Thus, a duality of perceptions exists concerning both societies.

A clear trait, or influence, which is ascribed to the American society, is the fact that the Surinamese immigrants' (both legal and illegal) working mentality has changed and they have become more enterprising. The element of ascribed rights, in the American context meaning individual rights, has become increasingly relevant to the individual Surinamese immigrant. As was shown in chapter 6, specific rights, such as those pertaining to an individual's socio-economic development, or the right to choose a religion, or the right to get an education (even as an illegal immigrant), or the right to free speech, are greatly appreciated by the respondents, even though they are aware of the limited space they have to claim these rights. Only one respondent claimed that as an illegal immigrant you do not have any rights.

I used the aspect of celebrating American festivities to provide insight into the Surinamese-American's process of constructing identity-. The in-depth interviews with individuals, and the interviews with the socio-cultural organizations, made it clear that American celebration days such as Memorial Day weekend are frequently used to organize 'Sranang Dei' activities. This is also true for the Fourth of July, Independence Day in America, which is used to celebrate Surinamese festivities like Keti Koti (July 1st, the Abolishment of Slavery in Suriname). At the same time, at the individual level -Surinamese-Americans will celebrate Thanksgiving. This suggests that --Surinamese-Americans make a choice to celebrate certain American festivities traditionally or to celebrate them in a Surinamese fashion. This attitude underscores Ghorashi's (2002: 164) statement that "identifying with some activities and distancing oneself from other activities are the ways people define their own identity." The research results show a heterogeneous pattern. Only some of the respondents claim to have an 'American' identity. The respondents deliberately make a choice as to which aspects of the American values and norms they want to claim and exhibit.

8. 3. What is the role of socio-cultural organizations in creating and maintaining a

'Surinamese' identity?

The diversity in socio cultural activities of --Surinamese-American organizations in America determines the construction process of a 'Surinamese' identity. The eight associations and cultural groups that I've interviewed or in whose activities I've participated offer events and social and/or cultural happenings which interact with the ethno-cultural or national identity of the --Surinamese-American community. Ethno-cultural events such as the commemoration of the 115th year of Javanese immigration, the introduction activity of the cultural music group Heri Heri, and other activities, seem to focus on the maintenance of the ethno-cultural identities of the Javanese and the Creole groups. Other activities like 'Srefidensi,' 'Sranang Dei' (which are celebrated on American holidays), and church meetings seem to focus more on the national identity aspects of Surinamese-Americans of different ethnic backgrounds. On these days, one will see symbols like the national Surinamese flag and the national anthem will be sung.   An exposition of the different ethnic folklores, the cuisine of the different ethnic groups, and the music, will be in the foreground. Sport activities are also a part of the program; soccer matches are held in which different teams participate, such as the Surinamese and other Caribbean groups like the Haitian, etc..

The national identity is also maintained by the networks that these organizations have, whether they are connected to local or regional --Surinamese-American associations and/or to sister organizations in Suriname and/or the Netherlands. The working relationships with other immigrant groups such as the Polish-American and Caribbean groups strengthen the organizations because they have to position themselves as Surinamese- American, whereby the national identity is brought to the foreground. This suggests that the ethnic identity is subdued. At the same time, the ideas of working together with Caribbean immigrant groups, and participating in activities like Cari Fest, and the strong role of Cuban and Haitian associations play in public life in Miami, instill an awareness of a Trans-Caribbean identity. This is especially noticeable when these organizations use a mirror effect with regard to the social cohesion issue in the --Surinamese-American community. Most of these organizations acknowledge the lack of unity within their own community. Differing arguments are used to explain this.   Lack of communication between the organizations, a culture of mistrust (especially within the illegal groups), lack of capabilities and finances, fear of taking on a leadership role, as well as disappointment with the target group, are all possible explanations. Finally, socio-cultural organizations contribute to maintaining an ethno-cultural, national, as well as an emerging, awareness of Trans-Caribbean identity. By celebrating

Surinamese festivities and important events during American holidays, a link is established with the American society.

8.4. Critical notions about the theories of Premdas and Ghorashi

Premdas does a good job by explaining the different types of identity he detected in Caribbean people. His typology provides a good tool for explaining the different type's of identity that Surinamese – Americans claim. Yet while reading and applying Premdas' approach I became aware of the focus he puts on the conflict/strife experienced by Caribbean people of different backgrounds claiming a so-called homogenous Caribbean identity. Based on my research material, I noted some flaws in the approach , which uses the four typologies of Caribbean identity.

The first typology, the ethno-national/local identity, is sometimes confusing because it suggests that it concerns an ethnic identity within a national context. In which way is it similar to an ethnic identity within a local context? A local ethnic identity can contest or co-exist with (a third type of identity) an ethnic national identity, for example a *Javanese male identifies himself in the United States as a Surinamese, contrary to how he would define himself in Suriname, i.e. mainly as a Javanese from the local district Commewijne.* In this study, I used the term 'ethno-cultural' identity because respondents made a link between ethnicity and their perception of the culture. Premdas talks about the prevalence of the ethno-local identity even though Caribbean people migrate to urban areas or foreign countries. He does not look at the new dynamism which occurs in the new environmental and societal context. How does the dominant group or other groups perceive these newcomers? Based on these perceptions, a redefinition of the ethno-local identity may take place. The interactions between the new environment and past experiences, as well as the perceptions of the immigrant group (Surinamers) and of Caribbean people, are not considered in his analysis.

The second typology, the ethno-national universal identity, was not noticeable in the Surinamese-American community. The main argument of Premdas' analysis is that Caribbean identities are constantly contested by different groups/individuals due to the plural character of these societies. It is, thus, difficult to maintain a view of a homogenous Caribbean identity in a broader context. In his description, he frequently points out the contra-claims, the contenders of the ethno-local/national--and the Trans- Caribbean identity claims. It is therefore striking to note that he does not present the differences that exist in the different communities when talking about an ethno-national universal identity. Premdas

contradicts himself by not focusing on the conflicting identities of individuals in different communities or even within certain communities. While presenting the other type of identities, he does name the contradictions.

Premdas clearly states that these communities have no attachment to the state in which they reside or to their co citizens, but to a larger, extra-state, universal community. This argument does not hold water because we are talking about communities where second and third generations are born in the host land and integrated through education, work, intermarriages with other immigrant groups/natives, etc. These processes influence the definition/redefinition of the identity of these generations.

To make another point, the generations born in the new homeland might have a lack of knowledge and commitment towards the practices of their parents; thus, one would see an erosion of cultural practices. For example, one could consider the fact that --Surinamese-American children who are born in America seem to lose Dutch and other Surinamese languages. In conclusion, the dynamics in the immigrant's new environment are not evaluated in this typology.

The third typology, the national identity, evokes questions about the necessity of having one homogenous identity as mentioned in Premdas' work. Even though Premdas argues that the Caribbean community is heterogeneous, and cannot possible uphold the myth of a homogenous identity, one gets the feeling that he pushes groups and individuals to claim one homogenous identity. He briefly points out that the typologies he developed can overlap each other. Nevertheless, he does not acknowledge the fact that as individuals, groups, and specifically, Caribbean people, Surinamers might have multiple identities. Premdas does not elaborate the topic of multiple identities. -Surinamese-Americans move fluidly between the numerous identities they construct. To illustrate this; Surinamese-Americans use their ethno-cultural identity and national 'Surinamese' identity, as well as the notion of being American, interchangeably depending upon the situation and goal they wish to pursue. For example, the Javanese -Surinamese-Americans participate in the church activities together with Creole -Surinamese-Americans, based on their religious identity, but both groups have their separate ethno-cultural identities and activities in which to participate. At the commemoration of the Javanese 115th year of immigration, in Florida, only a few Creole were present. The same situation applies to Creole festivities where just a few Javanese are present.

I acknowledge that Premdas focuses predominantly on the challenges of the Caribbean identity characterization. How the functional constructions of identities by individuals/groups are harmonized to achieve a certain goal is not analyzed.

The fourth typology, the Trans-Caribbean identity, underscores the link between the Caribbean Diaspora and the original community and is noticeably absent in Premdas' analysis. For example, reggae music was developed in Jamaica. Jamaican-American influences such as hip hop and rap created dance hall music , which is now also prevalent on the Jamaican island. For example, the songs and cultural clothes of the Creole and Javanese groups are influenced/exported by Suriname or the Netherlands and shared with the cultural groups in America. Cultural and other kinds of influences go back and fourth between the different communities.

Premdas has an instrumentalist and negative view about the goals and usefulness of the Trans-Caribbean identity. In his view Trans-Caribbean communities made a conscious choice to maintain or define a certain identity. I agree with him partially because my research material underlines the Surinamese-American socio-cultural organizations' participation in Caribbean activities and their use of other Caribbean immigrant group identity processes to guide the construction of their own identities. I see it more so as an emerging awareness about this group's Caribbean link. The same applies to individuals.

Another point of critique is that the relationship with the immigration policies of the new homeland and the perception of other groups, specifically, the dominant group(s), is not well-integrated into the analytical model. For example, the American immigration laws only stimulated a certain type of skill base for immigration; thus, a relatively large group of Surinamers became illegal immigrants. New elements of identity construction are overlooked, e.g., the fact that the American context stimulated a change in working attitude in the Surinamese group.

My research material is compatible with the notions of Ghorashi in that the construction of identity is a process of becoming, in which case individuals and socio-cultural organizations make a choice based on their past experiences, practical knowledge, and the new context. They decide which facet of identity, ethno-cultural, national, Trans-Caribbean or American, will be pushed into the foreground. In certain situations, we see that immigrants made a conscious choice to adapt to their new situation. They also decide in which social activities they want to participate and that can strengthen their ethno-cultural or national or any other identity. In conclusion, Surinamese- Americans have a multi-layered identity.

Recommendations

I will describe two kinds of recommendations in this paragraph. First, I'll talk about the role that the socio-cultural organizations can take upon themselves to have a greater impact on the --Surinamese-American community. Secondly, I'll state the need for more research on this group.

In my opinion, socio-cultural organizations can increase their influence/accessibility in the -- Surinamese-American community by providing information about immigrants (legal/illegal) rights, their opportunities for economic mobilization, and possible survival strategies for the (illegal) immigrants. For example, information about how and when to use a credit card without ending up in debt would be helpful. These associations can also provide language courses in Dutch and Sranang Tongo or one of the other ethno-cultural languages, and other activities , which are aimed at the preservation of the language and culture, especially for the second and third generations so that the languages will not be lost. During my talks with the key people, and throughout my investigation of the kind of activities that are offered, I noticed that neither seminars, nor workshops, nor lectures about --Surinamese-Americans' history and their economic role in the United States or elsewhere, were presented. This is a serious omission, because these kinds of activities help define a group's identity and say something about their future. Thus, a more pro-active and relevant role is necessary, whereby the focus should be on strengthening the identity of -Surinamese-Americans and making them more visible within the American immigrant society.

In the last four decades, Surinamese people have migrated to Europe and America.
In the academic field of Caribbean Migration Studies, a lack of data exists on the Diaspora of Surinamese immigrants, with specific respect to America and the Caribbean region. Thus, more research is needed on several topics, for example:

- An update of the study on the Surinamese immigrant community in New York is necessary, 30 years later, because the group essentially reflects the diversity of the Surinamese society. Aspects such as the social mobility of both legal and illegal immigrants, the survival of a 'Surinamese' identity and other relevant aspects need to be explored.
- Contemporary emigration of Surinamese people to other destinations within the Dutch Caribbean, specifically countries such as Sint Marten, Sint Eustatius, Curacao, Aruba, and Bonaire, needs to be studied. Frequently, my respondents mentioned that they have family members or friends working and living in these parts. The Surinamese Diaspora needs to be mapped out. It would be interesting to look into the identity-forming processes of these immigrants, especially the second and third generation.
- More research is also needed on the perspective of immigrants (legal/illegal) concerning the theoretical conceptualities of identity. For example, how do the female interviewees explain the process by which certain rights became a part of

their identity? Thus, a synthesis between theory and empiricism can lead to a better understanding of the reality of immigrants.

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