

ABSTRACT

Title of dissertation: GENDER, KINSCRIPTS AND THE WORK OF
TRANSNATIONAL KINSHIP AMONG AFRO-
CARIBBEAN IMMIGRANT FAMILIES: AN
EXPLORATORY ANALYSIS

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Using an integrated, quantitative and qualitative, research design this study explores the type, frequency, duration and circumstances of transnational kinship ties among Afro-Caribbean immigrants in the U.S. Focus is on how immigrants maintain kinship connections across international boundaries, the delegation of kin work tasks among family members, and the impact of gender and/or kin designated roles on these activities. Qualitative data is from in-depth semi-structured interviews with multiple members of four English-speaking Afro-Caribbean families, key informants and two group interviews among immigrants with transnational kinship ties (n=41). Quantitative data from a sub-set of the National Survey of American Life (NSAL) re-interview, an integrated, hierarchical national probability sample, is utilized to examine the statistical

significance of factors that impact transnational kinship contact (n=101). The notion of kinscripts posited by Stack and Burton (1993) is with combined theoretical perspectives on doing and performing gender, the household division of labor, and literature on Caribbean families and migration to create a lens through which the activities and behaviors of study participants are analyzed. Findings indicate that gender, social class, family size and gender composition, parents residing in the Caribbean, and length of stay in the host nation impact the frequency, extent, and direction of kin contact among NSAL respondents and study participants with transnational kinship ties. Men were found to engage in kin work in the absence of available women in the family to perform kin work tasks. Additionally, the study finds that who executes the majority of kin work in immigrant families tends to be voluntary and closely linked to individual skill and personality.

**AN EXPLORATORY ANALYSIS OF GENDER, KINSCRIPTS AND THE
WORK OF TRANSNATIONAL KINSHIP
AMONG AFRO-CARIBBEAN IMMIGRANT FAMILIES**

by

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Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Maryland at College Park in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
2007

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DEDICATION

To my father, Earnest
who courageously left his life in the Caribbean
to make a new life in the United States.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are few things that one accomplishes in life which are products generated solely from our own efforts, independent of others. This research project is the culmination of so many individuals that it is difficult to determine where to begin the acknowledgements and my gratitude runs extraordinarily deep for all those involved. Therefore, I would like to thank my many mentors at the University of Maryland, College Park and at the Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan for their generous and continuous support in all facets of this research project. In particular, I am forever indebted and deeply grateful to my dissertation advisor, mentor, and dear friend Bonnie Thornton Dill. Her wisdom, thoughtful guidance, keen insight, and encouragement were invaluable throughout this research from the study's initial conception to its completion. I must thank A. Lynn Bolles for sharing her vast knowledge and insight on scholarly literature on Caribbean people and their diaspora. In addition, a very special thank you must be extended to James S. Jackson for enabling access to data from the National Survey of American Life which added dramatically to this study. Many thanks also to the staff of the Program for Research on Black Americans at the Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan for their immense assistance and support, in particular Jane Rafferty. I must also extend a special thank you to Reeve Vanneman, William Falk, Lory Dance, Sharon Harley, Val Skeeter and Dae Young Kim at the University of Maryland for their contributions,

encouragement and support for this project.

I am deeply grateful to my family and friends for all of their encouragement, assistance and support throughout this research project, especially my husband, Chris, and daughter Marlena, for their love and patience. I will be forever grateful to my mother, Dorothy, who has been a source of unending support and encouragement. I must extend my enormous gratitude to my father, Earnest [Ted], a Jamaican immigrant, who was the catalyst for my interest in Caribbean migration and the maintenance of family ties to the home country. I also acknowledge my aunties, uncle and the rest of my extended family from Jamaica, who have persisted in maintaining close family relations across distance, time and at least three nation states. In addition, thank you to my good friends Janice Johnson Dias, Bridget Goosby, Susan Frazier Kouassi, Michelle McGarrity, Shannon Byard, and Nadine Hall. Finally, I must acknowledge and thank the many participants and respondents referenced in this research for the generous contribution of their personal and family experiences which will hopefully lead to a better understanding of the importance of family – near and far.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Dedication		ii
Acknowledgements		iii
Table of Contents		v
List of Tables		viii
List of Figures		ix
Chapter One	Gender, Kinscripts and the Work of Transnational Kinship	1
	Introduction	1
	Research Significance	2
	Theoretical Perspectives: Kinscripts and Gender	7
	Research Questions	12
	Summary	15
Chapter Two	Afro-Caribbean Migration, Social Mobility, Gender and Kinship	19
	A Brief history of Afro-Caribbean Migration to the U.S.	19
	Migration and Social Mobility	22
	Transnational Family and Kinship	29
	The Afro-Caribbean Family and Intergenerational Relations	36
	Gender, the Division of Household Labor, and Kinship	37
	Intergenerational Relations	42
	Sibling Relations and Elder Care	45
	Conclusions	47
Chapter Three	Methodology	50
	Introduction	50
	Qualitative Data Collection	54
	Qualitative Data Analysis	69
	Quantitative Data Description	73
	Quantitative Data Analysis	81

Chapter Four	Contact with Transnational Kin	85
	The Frequency of Contact, Family Closeness and Gender	87
	Parental Expectations and the Frequency of Contact	92
	Other Factors the impact Transnational Kin Contact	95
	Logistic Regression	104
	Conclusions	112
Chapter Five	Immigrant Family contact and Transnational Kin	115
	Four Immigrant Families	116
	The Frequency of Contact with Transnational Kin	130
	Conclusions	160
Chapter Six	Kin-keeping: Gender and Kinscription	163
	Gender, Kinwork, and Kin-time	166
	Gender, Sibling Networks and Family Size	171
	Parents, Reciprocity and Care-giving	177
	Kin-keepers and Kin-keeping Responsibilities	189
	Conclusions	197
Chapter Seven	Summary and Conclusions	199
	Summary of Quantitative Data	200
	Summary of Qualitative Data	202
	Limitations	208
	Conclusions	210
	Directions for Future Research	220
Appendices		
	Appendix A: Caribbean Family Study Announcement & Call for Participants	
	Appendix B: Consent Form Study: West Indian Immigrants and Kinship Ties	222
	Appendix C: Interview Guide	223

Appendix D: Example of Electronic Mail Letter - Request for Group Interview [Focus Group] Participation	224
Appendix E: Caribbean Family Study Call for Focus Group Participants	228
Appendix F: Focus Group Survey	230
Appendix G: Photographs of Afro-Caribbean Immigrant Communities [Supplemental]	
References	233

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Afro-Caribbean Population and Samples	53
Table 2: Logistic regression models for predicting contact frequency	83
Table 3: Frequency of contact with family for first generation English-speaking Afro-Caribbean immigrants by gender [NSAL]	88
Table 4: Frequency of contact with family for first generation English-speaking Afro-Caribbean immigrants with most family residing outside of the US by gender	89
Table 5: Frequency of contact with transnational family by feelings of closeness to family members	91
Table 6: Family closeness for respondents with most family residing outside of the US by gender	91
Table 7: Frequency of contact with transnational family by perceived parental expectations of reciprocity	93
Table 8: Frequency of contact with transnational family by gendered expectations for daughters in the care of older parents	94
Table 9: Frequency of contact with transnational kin by educational attainment	96
Table 10: Frequency of contact with transnational kin by income	97
Table 11: Frequency of contact with transnational kin by length of stay in the US	99
Table 12: Frequency of contact with transnational kin by frequency of “Giving Help” to family members	100
Table 13: Frequency of contact with transnational kin by frequency of by “Getting Help” from family	102
Table 14: Frequency of contact with transnational kin by frequency of helping to family members financially	103
Table 15: Helping family members financially by gender	103
Table 16: Logistic regression models for predicting contact frequency, everyday vs. others, presenting odds ratios. NSAL	107
Table 17: Logistic regression models for predicting contact frequency, everyday & weekly vs. others, presenting odds ratios. NSAL	109

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: The Curey Family – U.S. Virgin Islands	117
Figure 2: The Dutton Family - Jamaica	120
Figure 3: The Gibson Family – Trinidad and Tobago	125
Figure 4: The James Family – Trinidad and Tobago	128

CHAPTER ONE

GENDER, KINSCRIPTS AND THE WORK OF TRANSNATIONAL KINSHIP

Introduction

International migration flows arising from the movement of labor within the system of global capitalism have created transnational¹ families and kin networks that necessitate the maintenance of international kinship connections. Increasingly, immigrants to the U.S. have immediate or extended family members residing not only in different households, but also in several different nations, as well as their country of origin. The work involved in maintaining international family relations occurs to a greater or lesser extent in all immigrant families, regardless of their national origin or their settlement location. Yet, within international migration literature, the means by which immigrants maintain transnational family and kinship ties has been largely overlooked.

The concept of transnationalism² is utilized across a variety of social science disciplines to describe sustained social, cultural, and economic activities and relations among individuals and organizations that extend beyond national boundaries (Portes et al.

¹ “[T]he processes by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement (Basch et al. 1994:7).”

² For a summary of the development of transnationalism see Smith and Guarnizo 1998.

1999). These transmigrants³ maintain family, social, economic, political, organizational and religious affiliations that span national boundaries and may include close relatives and associates in several nation-states (Levitt 2001, Basch et al. 1994, Glick Schiller et al. 1995). The growing numbers of Latin American and Caribbean immigrants coming to the U.S. have focused research attention on the development of transnational immigrant social fields⁴. For these transmigrants the close proximity of both the United States and Canada facilitates frequent transnational contact with family, friends, and other associates in the home country, as well as those residing in other parts of North America. Afro-Caribbean immigrants have consistently maintained the kind of cross-national connections that are typical of contemporary transnational activities, perhaps predating the scholarly conceptualization of transnationalism⁵ (Chamberlain 2004). The recent transnational activities of growing Mexican and Latin American immigrant groups have received the bulk of scholarly attention within the last twenty years or so, and this study seeks to extend this attention to other immigrant groups by exploring transnational kin relationships among English-speaking Afro-Caribbean immigrants.

Research Significance

This dissertation research seeks to make contributions in four areas. First, this

³ A transnational immigrant who “engages regularly in cross-border activities” (Levitt 2001:6; Glick Schiller et al.1995; Guarnizo 1997).

⁴ Combinations of ties, positions in networks and organizations, and networks of organizations that reach across the borders of multiple states. (Faist 2000).

⁵ A foundational transnationalism work by Basch et al. (1994) documented the cross-national activities of Afro-Caribbean immigrants. See also Basch 2001; Basch et al. 1994; Chamberlain 2004, 1997; Guarnizo 1997; Ho 1999, 1993, 1991; Olwig 2002, 2001; Pessar 1995; Plaza 2000; Schiller and Fouron 1998, Thompson and Bauer 2000.

research focuses on transnational family and kinship relations over time concentrating on the internal processes of familial communication, prioritization in contact, and the distribution of kin work among family and/or kinship networks. Special attention is directed toward investigation of gender differentiation and kin-designed responsibility of kin work activities. Second, this research defines transnational family and kin broadly to encompass participant conceptualizations of family in contrast to imposing a nuclear family classification. Third, it explores English-speaking Afro-Caribbean immigrants, or West Indians, in understudied settlement locations, those outside of the New York City metropolitan area which has been the primary location for studies of West Indian immigrants.

Finally, this dissertation is mixed-method utilizing both qualitative and quantitative data. The qualitative data, based on in-depth interviews, provides a unique perspective on the conceptualization, participation, and distribution of kin work in the family by interviewing multiple family members identified as significant within the kin network. This approach allows for substantial triangulation increasing the depth of information about family decision making and the distribution of kin work and permitting the role of gender and/ or kin-designated responsibilities to emerge from participant responses. The quantitative data is from the National Survey of American Life (NSAL), an integrated, hierarchical national probability sample which contains the only nationally representative sample of first, second, and third generation Afro-Caribbean immigrants in the United States (n=1,625). This dissertation research was originally planned as a solely qualitative study. After learning about the NSAL dataset, I decided to take the

opportunity to extend the understanding of Afro-Caribbean immigrant families addressed in the study by examining national survey data. The incorporation of a sub-set of the NSAL data (n=101) allows for significance testing of factors, identified in the qualitative data, that may impact the frequency of contact between family members.

This dissertation will add to the scholarly understanding of family and kin network organization, circumstances of contact, and transnational practices among Afro-Caribbean immigrants. It is not uncommon for a West Indian immigrant residing in the U.S. to have immediate or extended family members in their home country, several other Caribbean nations, Canada and possibly Britain as well. Therefore, this population is ideal for studying transnational family and kin networks. The exploratory nature of this research, using case studies of English-speaking Afro-Caribbean immigrants, will serve as a catalyst for further investigation. Additionally, the current research on Afro-Caribbean transnational immigrants will add balance to international migration theory building literature which has heretofore focused primarily on the transnational experiences of Latin American and Asian immigrants.

As mentioned above, transnational kinship has been an underexplored area of transnational social spaces (Schmalzbauer 2004a, 2004b, Foner 2001, Lima 2001, Plaza 2000, Thompson & Bauer 2000, Ho 1999). Foundational works on transnationalism often commented on the transnational nature of immigrant families as a byproduct of their intended focus on a variety of topics from cultural/ ethnic identity, dual citizenship, assimilation, and political involvement in their nation of origin, to the evolution of gender

roles and relations (Fouron and Schiller 2001, Stepick 1998, Pessar 1995, Basch et al. 1994, Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994, Kibria 1993, Ho 1993, 1991). Largely, the interrelationships and micro-processes of immigrant families and kin networks within the transnational context were not given primacy in these investigations.

In general, there is a growing recognition of the need to address the roles and functioning of transnational families, particularly as the number of these families increases as a result of continued international migration. However, recent studies of transnational families have focused primarily on household strategies and gender role negotiations between married couples, or spatially separated parent-child relationships (Landolt and Da 2005, Chan and Seet 2003, Orellana et al. 2001, Mahler 2001, Sorensen 2005, Zontini 2004, Schmalbauer 2004). In these cases, transnational families tend to be defined by the presence of one household head, either husband or wife, residing abroad with dependent children in the country of origin or in transition to the host nation. In each of these instances, family is usually constructed as “nuclear” existing under divided conditions - geographic distance. The objective of this dissertation is to continue the exploratory inquiry on the internal processes of immigrant families and kin networks operating within a transnational context. However, in this case transnational family is defined broadly to include all members of a kinship network that have significance to the study participants. In other words, I depart from the nuclear family definition and allow participants to identify and define family. I believe that this research approach will contribute to the literature on international migration and family by providing a more constructive understanding of the lived experience of family and kinship roles,

mechanisms, and decisions for transnational immigrants.

Research emerging from Britain on English-speaking Afro-Caribbeans reevaluates the transnational nature of these families. Previously, the dominant perspective among scholars in Great Britain considered the geographic separation of West Indian transnational families as a hindrance to the proper functioning, development, and socialization of their members. Many scholars researching other immigrant groups in Europe continue to consider transnational families - nuclear families - as problematic (Sorensen 2005, Zontini 2004). The new focus in Britain highlights the apparent flexibility and resiliency of these families and the interconnectedness which West Indians maintain with their home nations and the relatives remaining there. Thompson and Bauer (2000) indicate that transnational families are a modern economic adaptation that may be an emerging international trend. In particular, they suggest that Jamaican transnational families are “harbingers of the future which faces all of us in the Americas and Europe: pioneering the skills...of living globally, maintaining kin contact and help over vast distances” (pp. 1-2). Mary Chamberlain’s research on West Indian families migrating to Britain (1999a, 1999b, 1997, 1994) indicates that the definition of family extends beyond the boundaries of vertical lineal descent to include horizontal or lateral relations and affines (brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, cousins and in-laws). West Indian families can engage even distant relatives to participate in family plans such as migration or the education of children in accordance with the collective understanding of familial reciprocity (Thompson and Bauer 2000, Chamberlain 1999a, Basch et al. 1994). For Afro-Caribbean immigrants the impact of gender and kin roles and the conditions

involved in engaging the assistance of family members has not been fully addressed in the research conducted by Thompson and Bauer (2000) or Chamberlain (1999a, 1999b, 1997, 1994) and is the focal point of this current dissertation research.

This study addresses two issues for future research identified by Nancy Foner (2001) in her review of West Indian migration to New York: the micro-processes involved in the cultivation of transnational kinship relations, and the existence of Afro-Caribbean immigrant communities located outside of metropolitan New York. Foner states that studies of transnational practices should be sensitive to the type, frequency, and impact of ties with relatives in Britain and Canada - not just with the home societies (Foner 2001:18). This dissertation research is designed to directly address these issues by investigating transnational contact within immigrant families in multiple locations with particular attention to gender differentiation and kinship responsibility of kin work activities. To date, little attention has been given to the delegation of kin work activities within transnational families. In addition, qualitative data collection for this study occurred in several immigrant communities outside New York, an issue which is discussed in greater detail in the methods section.

Theoretical Perspectives: Kinscripts and Gender

The assumption that women perform kin work activities may obscure not only the work which men may do, but also the identification of which women within a family actually engage in kin work and alternatively which do not and why. The exploratory

approach of this dissertation research suspends any assumptions of who performs what kin work tasks and why. Both gender and kin-designated roles, or a combination of the two, are investigated and compared across the five sample families. Possible factors leading to variations in the prioritizing and distribution of kin work activities over time are considered.

Of particular concern for this dissertation is how the work of international kinship is executed within transnational Afro-Caribbean families. Two interrelated theoretical perspectives guide this inquiry and the formulation of the major research questions. First, the framework of kinscripts presented by Carol Stack and Linda Burton (1993) is instructive in understanding the various roles in which individuals engage among transnational immigrant families. Kinscripts involve “three culturally defined family domains; kin-work, which is the labor and the tasks that families need to accomplish to survive from generation to generation; kin-time, which is the temporal and sequential ordering of family transitions; and kinscription, which is the process of assigning kin-work to family members (Stack and Burton 1993:157).” Who is primarily responsible for kin-work among transnational families has not been directly addressed in the literature. It is unwise to make any assumptions regarding who performs kin-work activities. It may vary from family to family, or be assigned to family members based on gender, kinscription, a combination of the two, or some other factor(s). The ambiguity of how kin-work is assigned is a major reason for the pursuit of this dissertation research.

The second theoretical perspective presented by Micaela DiLeonardo (1987) is

closely related to the work of Stack and Burton (1993). Di Leonardo's study⁶ suggests that gender may determine who executes kin work activities within the household, but it also suggests a form of kinscription, the assigning of kin-work to various family members. Her findings among Italian American families in Northern California indicate that family members had the expectation that older adult women would take responsibility for maintaining kinship contact. Clearly, the DiLeonado study raises the possibility of the combination of gender expectations and kinscription. A. Lynn Bolles (1996) suggests that some type of family member and gender role expectations are evident in West Indian families similar to the notion of kinscription. Her study of working class Jamaican women and families revealed that children and young people are ranked within households or families based on a variety of criteria such as age, gender, presumed intelligence, and kinship association to the household head. Additionally, within these families, girls are favored with higher status than boys though the rationale for this is somewhat unclear (Bolles 1996). Bolles suggests that this pattern of hierarchy within the family results in a differential distribution of household labor and expectations for academic success among children and teenagers. Clearly, this is an important issue that deserves further exploration to better understand the roles of various family members in the process of selection for migration.

The work of Christine Ho incorporates the role of gender into transnational kinship and identifies women as "the protagonists in the drama of globalizing Caribbean kinship, which requires the active maintenance of circuits of exchange of goods, services,

⁶ See: Di Leonardo, Micaela, 1984. *The Varieties of Ethnic Experience: Kinship, Class, and Gender among California Italian-Americans*. Ithaca N.Y.: Cornell University Press

communication, travel, and personnel” (Ho 1999:52). Ho also finds in her study of Trinidadians living in Los Angeles that women are central in initiating family migration streams and in the “careful cultivation of kinship ties” (Ho 1999, 1993). Thompson and Bauer (2000) suggest that “in some West Indian transnational families particular women become dynamic activating figures around whom the kin system revolves.” (p. 24). While the work of these scholars (Thompson and Bauer 2000, Ho 1999, Sutton 1992) illustrates the vital role that women play in the construction and maintenance of kinship connections and networks, their work does not shed light on how and why certain women are selected to perform these tasks.

Gender role differentiation among West Indians also gives rise to the possible development of gender specific social networks. The general assertion of a lack of participation by Caribbean males in domestic activities leads Christine Ho to conclude that there is a “disproportionate burdening of Caribbean women with double workloads and the lack of male support” resulting in their reliance on female relatives and friends (Ho 1991; 1993). Jacqueline Hagan’s (1998) study of migration and naturalization among Mayan immigrants to Houston, Texas also found the existence of gendered networks which produced different outcomes for men and women. Women’s employment opportunities and naturalization rates were negatively affected by their reliance on gendered networks. Hondagneu-Sotelo (1994) identified that, among Mexican migrant families and households, members often utilized independent social networks based on gender. The implication of this research for the current dissertation project is that Afro-Caribbean men and women may sustain different kinship relations

based on gender. For women, child shifting or child minding⁷ may impact the frequency of contact with kin in the home country, which may obscure the connections that men cultivate with other male relatives.

The literature on Caribbean families suggests that Afro-Caribbean men and women may engage in behaviors that express culturally prescribed roles of masculinity (virility) and femininity (motherhood and domestic responsibilities) (Smith 1996, 1988; Roberts and Sinclair, 1978). Two closely related theoretical perspectives on gender roles arise from sociological and feminist literature on gender and the division of household labor, which are applicable to the understanding of Afro-Caribbean men's and women's roles in the current study. First, the notion of "doing gender" can be applied to explain patterns of behavior observed by Smith (1996, 1988) and Roberts and Sinclair (1978). Doing gender emerges from a gendered perspective of symbolic interactionism where distinctions between males and females are based on interaction with others (Fenstermaker, West & Zimmerman 1991, West & Zimmerman 1987). Accordingly, gender is not based on biological differences, but is constructed through performing idealized socially scripted masculine and feminine roles (West & Zimmerman 1987). The household division of labor delineates what is considered to be male from female. Second is the related notion of "gender performance" which states that gender identity is the result of the repetitive performance of socially proscribed behaviors delineated as either masculine or feminine (Butler 1993, 1990). Barrow (1996), in her review of literature on West Indian families, cautions that respondents concerned with presenting

⁷ Also referred to as child fostering - the temporary care of children by other family members in the absence of the parents [see Gordon 1987, Soto 1987]. Child shifting has historically been an adaptive household economic strategy throughout the Caribbean.

themselves in a socially acceptable manner may inflate or exaggerate time spent on certain activities to reflect culturally expected behaviors or accentuate male and female roles, in essence enhancing both “doing gender” and “performing gender”. The question of how the construction and performance of gender may impact family migration plans and transnational kin work has not been sufficiently addressed within the literature.

Clearly, gender role performance is an important aspect of family life and organization. What is unclear is the role of gender or kinscription in mediating family transitions such as migration (kin-time) or in cultivation of kinship ties to be undertaken by family members. Investigating the impact of gender, or some other kin designated role, on family decision making related to migration will deepen the understanding of the complexity of migration and the maintenance of transnational families. The most direct theoretical contribution of this research is the further investigation of the notion of kinscripts which has largely been under-explored. How gender might effect or trump kinscription in the delegation of kin work among transnational families is a primary inquiry of this dissertation.

Research Questions

Within the literature on Afro-Caribbeans it appears that few family or kinship roles, other than mothers and fathers/ husband and wives, have been explored [exceptions: Bolles 1996 and Plaza 2000]. By and large, there is no clear discussion within the literature of the roles that various members play in kin work within this

immigrant group or other transnational families. Afro-Caribbean women are considered central in the development and maintenance of kinship networks and often in the initiation of migration streams. The distribution of the work involved with maintaining kin ties may come under the purview of women as an extension of the household division of labor and the notion of women's time as a collective family commodity. However, the attention given to women's involvement in kinship networks, due to their socially expected domestic role within the family, may obscure men's participation in kin work and the circumstances under which they do engage in kin work. Within the Afro-Caribbean cultural experience, either gender, kinscripts, a combination of the two, or some other factor may have primacy in determining how transnational immigrant families and kin networks maintain contact with members and the timing and extent of that contact. This dissertation is concerned with the delegation of kin work within transnational families/ kin networks as it impacts ways in which family ties are constructed, sustained or dissolved, and the role of gender or kinscription within that process. Therefore, this research will contribute to the current body of literature on international migration by exploring these issues and furthering the overall understanding of the effects of transnational migration on families.

Two primary sets of interrelated questions are addressed in this research:

1. Under what conditions or circumstances do West Indian immigrants initiate, maintain or conversely suspend connections with family members residing abroad (i.e., transnational kin)? What particular goals or projects of immigrant families increase or decrease the frequency of contact with kinfolk?

2. How are the kin work activities associated with transnational kinship relations distributed among members of Afro-Caribbean immigrant families. Specifically, does gender, kinscription, a combination of the two, or some other factor(s) best explain the assigning and execution of kin work activities for families/ kin networks operating in the transnational context?

Potential Explanations for the delegation of kin-work [Hypotheses]:

Because this is an exploratory study the statements below suggest some of the most important anticipated findings. However, the study is designed so that other insights and explanations for the delegation of kin work among transnational families/ kin networks may emerge. Possible findings are that:

1. In each family, one family member will be identified as primarily responsible for organizing migration, organizing or guiding family projects toward particular goals, and sustaining contact with transnational family/ kin.
2. Kin work and kinship relations are organized by gender and executed through some form of gendered networks.
3. The type, frequency, and impact of ties with relatives will be mediated by family goals.

Summary

The objective of this dissertation is to add to the current body of research on international migration and transnationalism in four ways. First, as mentioned previously this dissertation focuses on the transnational family which has been an overlooked area within international migration literature. Generally, migration has been viewed as an individual experience with family consequences or implications when migration is part of a larger family plan or project of collective social mobility. As migration research has neglected studying the family, the result has been a somewhat skewed perspective of the migration experience and its consequences. By interviewing several members of a given family rather than separate individuals, this research provides perspective on how families are maintained within the context of international migration. The importance of studying immigrant families stems directly from the over-emphasis on immigrants as independent actors. The understanding of migrants is enhanced when their experiences are contextualized within a social institution that many scholars consider foundational in social life, the family. Considering the role of families as a potential motivating factor in initiating social mobility projects to be achieved through migration will expand the understanding of the experiences of individual migrants. Also, as mentioned previously, Caribbean immigrant families may represent an emerging social adaptation for many families (Thompson and Bauer 2000). In essence, as the global economy expands and international migration continues both will increasingly affect the lives of individuals and families in an international way, creating more transnational families. Clearly, the transnational family deserves the scholarly attention set forth in this dissertation research

project.

Second, this dissertation will enhance the understanding of a rapidly growing segment of U.S. population that maintains cross-national ties. According to U.S. Census, in 2002 over 33 million people residing in the country were foreign-born with over 15.6 million of them having entered the U.S. since 1990. Obviously, understanding the impact of immigration on American institutions and the effects of the migration experience on individuals and families will become increasingly important. A major factor in academic interest in transnationalism is the perception that contemporary migrants are less interested in melting pot notions of assimilation than their European predecessors. If this is the case, one would expect that these immigrants would retain stronger ethnic and cultural distinctiveness well into the third generation and beyond, reinforced through transnational ties. Thus transnationalism and its effects on the family may have a significant impact on the future social, cultural, and ethnic composition of the American landscape. The family is a major agent for intergenerational cultural transmission and for transnational social networks. Investigating family organization, gender roles, and kinscription within the context of transnational migration may aid in establishing the conditions under which cultural transmission will be maintained or diminished over subsequent generations. Plaza's (2000) study of the role of grandmothers among West Indian immigrants in Britain indicates that grandmothers are a major factor in the transmission of West Indian culture to their grandchildren. His work also suggests that the frequency of transnational contact with grandmothers, particularly through visits, has a significant effect on the retention of West Indian identity among second generation

immigrants.

Third, Nancy Foner (2001) identifies several future research issues, two of which are addressed in this study; (1) studies of transnational practices should explore the type, frequency, and impact of ties with relatives in other nations - not just with the home societies, and (2) the need to examine Afro-Caribbean immigrants residing outside of the metropolitan New York area. In particular, the current study investigates transnational practices with attention to gender differentiation and kinship responsibility in terms of kin work in an immigrant population, contributing to the foundational work of Di Leonardo (1987) on gender and kin work. Interestingly, given the economic impetus often motivating migration, little attention has been given to the family as a unit promoting both intragenerational and intergenerational social mobility among its members. Several works have observed the social mobility projects of West Indians in the course of their investigation, but these observations were not the main focus of their discussion or analysis (Ho 1999, Basch et al 1994). This dissertation supplements this literature by observing patterns of intragenerational and intergenerational relations and reciprocal exchanges among transnational immigrant families and the role of gender in the delegation of the work associated with these activities.

Finally, the focus of this research on English-speaking immigrants of African descent will augment the existing body of transnational literature which often focuses on Latino immigrant groups to the U.S. (Lima 2001, Guarnizo and Diaz 1999, Guarnizo

1997, Pessar 1995, Hondagneu-Sotelo 1992 1994).⁸ The invisibility of West Indians posited by Bryce LaPorte (1972) has diminished considerably in recent years with the growing numbers and increasing prominence of Caribbean immigrants in New York City enclaves (Kasinitz 2001). However, within international migration literature Latino groups tend to receive the majority of scholarly attention as they are the fastest growing segment of the U.S. population. Although black immigrants have been of considerable concern to those in New York City given the influx of West Indians and Dominicans, in general they have not been the focus of study outside that area. This dissertation will contribute to the understanding of black immigrant families and West Indians residing outside of ethnic enclaves.

⁸ Latino groups have received much attention in many works by leading scholars such as Alejandro Portes, Douglas Massey, George Borjas, Maria Patricia Fernandez-Kelly, Nestor Rodriguez, Roger Rouse, and Marta Tienda.

CHAPTER TWO

WEST INDIAN MIGRATION, SOCIAL MOBILITY, GENDER AND KINSHIP

The literature that informs the approach to and understanding of the study population of this dissertation is primarily drawn from four areas of research on Afro-Caribbean immigration: the history of migration, the relationship between migration and social mobility, the emergence of transnational families, and the study of families and gender roles. Additionally, the current research is informed by literature on gender, household division of labor, intergenerational and kinship relations, and family organization. The combinations of these bodies of literature provide the analytical and theoretical framework or lens for data collection, analysis and interpretation of both the qualitative and quantitative data in this study.

A Brief History of West Indian Migration to the U.S.

According to the U.S. Census, over 2.1 million persons of Afro-Caribbean ancestry resided in the United States in 2003. Between 1900 and 1960 approximately a half million persons of Caribbean origin entered the United States and settled predominately along the northeast corridor. There have been three distinct waves of West Indian migration to the United States. The first wave began in the mid-1800's with approximately 200,000 people migrating between 1820-1910 (Palmer1995). Prior to the 1832 end of slavery in British held territories, a number of plantation owners relocated their operations, slaves and all, to the southern United States. After British emancipation,

many former slaves opted to exercise their newly found freedom by migrating to the industrial northern states of the U.S. (Thomas-Hope 1992). World War I brought about the recruitment of over 100,000 West Indians for temporary work in the agricultural and industrial sectors. Many of these guest workers managed to stay in the U.S. after completing their work tenure.

Immigration restrictions⁹ in 1924 dramatically reduced the numbers of immigrants entering the U.S. These restrictions were designed to suppress the large-scale migration of Italian immigrants and other racial/ ethnic minorities, similar to other restrictive immigration regulations of the period such as the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act.

According to the 1920 Census, about 143,000 persons from the Caribbean resided in the U.S. while in 1880 there had only been about 26,000 Caribbean immigrants. The National Origins Law stipulated that only 520 persons from the Caribbean would be allowed under the new quota. Due to colonial ties with Great Britain, West Indians were able to continue to migrate under the British or “home country” quota that allowed for 65,000 persons annually given that this quota was not met by British immigrants. The second, and smallest, wave of West Indian immigration began around 1930 and continued to 1965. Although Afro-Caribbeans were again recruited from their homelands during World War II to temporarily fill positions in agriculture and industry, during this period, return migration to the Caribbean outpaced the numbers of West Indian immigrants entering the U.S. (Kasinitz 1992). After the war, rising West Indian

⁹ The 1924 Johnson-reed Act, also known as the National Origins Law, established temporary annual quotas at 2 percent of each nation’s U.S. population according to the 1890 Census, which gave preference to the continued migration of Northern and Western European nations and dramatically suppressed migration from Southern and Eastern European, the Caribbean, Latin America, Africa and Asia.

immigration was halted by the passage of the 1952 McCarran-Walter Act that eliminated the loophole of “home country” entry quotas for colonial subjects. West Indian immigration was reduced to 800 persons annually (Palmer 2000, Kasinitz 1992). The closure of U.S. immigration precipitated an increase in migration to Britain during the 1950s, but that was followed by Anti-Caribbean sentiments in Britain in 1962 which led to severe immigration restrictions for Commonwealth nations. Many West Indians residing in Britain then relocated to Canada, primarily to Toronto and Montreal, making Canada a new migration destination for West Indians (Palmer 2000, Kasinitz 1992).

The final wave of West Indian immigration to the United States began after the passage of the Hart-Cellar Immigration and Reform Act in 1965 which eliminated the country-specific quotas established in 1924. The result of the new immigration policy was a dramatic increase in the numbers of immigrants from the Caribbean, Latin America, Asia and Africa. The flow of immigration for persons from the Caribbean has remained high since 1965. Jamaica, the largest English-speaking nation in the Caribbean, leads the region in sending immigrants to the U.S. with over 600,000 having legally entered the U.S. since 1960. Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago, and Barbados are the other primary sending countries.

What is significant about West Indian migration is that unlike other Latin American and Caribbean groups, the linguistic and educational transition from homeland to the U.S. is more fluid. West Indians are already fluent and literate in English upon their arrival. Furthermore, they tend to have achieved higher levels of education than

other Latin American groups. Afro-Caribbeans, which include those from English, Spanish and French speaking nations, comprise approximately 6% of all African Americans with the majority coming from the English-speaking group.

Migration and Social Mobility

It has become generally accepted by scholars of the Caribbean that a migration culture¹⁰ is prevalent among populations of English-speaking Caribbean nations (e.g. Basch 2001, Vickerman 1999, Palmer 1995). As mentioned previously, the primary reason for West Indian migration both within and outside the Caribbean has been economic, “as migration has provided a major means for sustaining and advancing the class and status position of individuals and families” (Basch et al. 1994:86). During the early Twentieth Century, inter-island migration was common as immigrants sought better employment opportunities and higher wages in the developing areas of the Caribbean Basin, for example, the Panama Canal, sugar cane plantations in Cuba, oil and industry in Trinidad, as well as agricultural and domestic work in the U.S., and later industrial labor in England. Primarily, this early migration was a necessity due to the extremely limited employment opportunities and very low wages on many islands.

Migration to the capital and industrial centers of North America and Europe has been spurred by the fact that the majority of nations in the Caribbean region have few natural resources and their industrial base has been slow to develop. High levels of

¹⁰ The term migration culture refers to the common acceptance and long history in the Caribbean of migration for social and economic mobility, from rural to urban areas and from underdeveloped to more developed areas.

literacy and education combined with few employment opportunities have led Afro-Caribbeans to seek their fortunes abroad. The generally stagnant nature of Caribbean economies, like Jamaica in the 1970s, has resulted in extensive borrowing combined with economic reforms from the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. For Jamaica, the result has been the devaluing of their currency and the continuation of limited job growth (Bolles 1981). Migration, then, is a viable alternative for those with skills who are facing limited opportunities at home. The Jamaican government, recognizing the inadequate employment prospects on the island, has promoted migration as a safety valve for excess population by negotiating labor agreements with the U.S. to provide workers (Palmer 1995). Over the years, the shift from unskilled and semi-skilled immigrant labor has rapidly progressed to skilled and professional labor as reports from early migrants of ample employment and good pay stimulated increased migration from the islands. West Indian nations now must contend with the current problem of a “brain drain” as the most educated tend to migrate in search of better opportunities (Palmer 1995).

Afro-Caribbean immigrants to the U.S. have received substantial scholarly attention in reference to their economic assimilation, most often in comparison to the economic success of native-born African Americans (Kalmijn 1996, Model 1995, Butcher 1994, Palmer 1974, Glazer and Moynihan 1963). The majority of these studies found that West Indian immigrants achieve greater economic success than their native black counterparts. The explanations for the economic disparity between the groups ranges from cultural differentiation, with West Indians considered more goal and success oriented, to white favoritism and preference for West Indians over native-born African

Americans (Waters 2001). Palmer (1995) suggests that West Indian socioeconomic “success” in the United States is linked to higher numbers of professional and technical workers within the immigrant population compared to the native-born black population. Additionally, those likely to migrate act on the cultural orientation toward upward social mobility that is found throughout Anglo-Caribbean. As a group, West Indian immigrants tend to be highly motivated to achieve economic success and middle class status due to their heightened class consciousness and orientation to the British based social class system. For the majority of West Indians, migration is perceived as a means of improving one’s class position and assisting family members remaining at home. The typical view of migration success, particularly for those residing in the U.S., Canada, and Britain, is middle-class status defined by homeownership, a well-paying white-collar occupation, and the ability to purchase consumer goods not available in the homeland (Vickerman 1999, Kalmijn 1996, Foner 1979).

Closely associated with migrant success is the potential of class differentiation within transnational families or the unequal access to migration opportunities for some family members (Ho 1999, Basch et al. 1994). Social status or class differentiation may occur when migrants rely on family members to remain at home to care for newly acquired housing or property. The purchase of such property or the construction of a middle class quality house in the home country - a type of class project - improves the status position of migrants in their home nation, but often constricts the migration of other family member who are expected to tend to the property. Basch et al. (1994) note several cases in which migrants with property at home strongly discouraged those family

members who remained at home from migrating by sending significant remittances to supplement their incomes. The result is that migration may not equally benefit all family members. In some cases, for those remaining at home social status improvement among family members with the opportunity to live in the “middle class” house and receive remittances diminishes desires to migrate but, in other cases, it may not (Ho 1999, Basch et al. 1994). The phenomena of class differentiation within transnational families impacts this dissertation research as it may influence expectations of remittance behavior and kin-work responsibilities for migrants. This issue is addressed within the first research question: Under what conditions or circumstances do West Indian immigrants initiate, maintain, or conversely, suspend, connections with family members residing abroad (i.e., transnational kin)? What particular goals or projects of immigrant families increase or decrease the frequency of contact with kinfolk?

Concepts of Social Class and the Role of Education

Throughout the literature, West Indians are shown to perceive education as the primary means to obtaining increased social status and economic mobility (e.g., Bashi Bobb and Clarke 2001, Vickerman 1999, Palmer 1995, Basch et al. 1994, Olwig 2001, Foner 1979). The focus on education is influenced by the British based educational system in the islands that limits educational attainment to those who score highest on national tests or to those who can afford private education alternatives. In the West Indies, education is considered a “privilege” as opposed to an individual right (Bashi Bobb and Clarke 2001). Moreover, educational attainment is associated with coveted

white collar occupations that bestow increased social status. Vickerman (1999) refers to the West Indian orientation toward educational attainment and occupational advancement as “mobility-through-occupation.” In his study of Jamaican immigrants in New York, Vickerman found that “achievement - notably higher education and having a prestigious occupation - has long been as - if not more- important in determining the individual West Indian’s place in the social hierarchy. (1999:167).”

Nancy Foner’s study of rural Jamaican life found that education was central to villagers. She found that for rural Jamaicans, “education was a powerful symbol of prestige and of aspiration for their children” (Foner 1979: 193). In essence, educational attainment served as a vehicle for social mobility for children and their parents as the educational success of children could enhance parental prestige. Rural Jamaican respondents, particularly women, referred to the importance of working, often through migration abroad, to finance the education of children. This focus on education is contrasted with Jamaican immigrants living in London where Foner found migrants’ perceptions of increased educational opportunities in Britain were offset by ample, well paying employment opportunities. The result among Jamaican respondents living in Britain was a decreased focus on educational attainment as a means of bettering one’s social position.

For women in Dominica and St. Lucia, limited educational opportunities led them to consider temporary migration to obtain skills and pursue a career, often leaving their children with relatives in the home country (Mohammed and Perkins 1999). Migration is repeatedly mentioned in the literature as a way to finance the education of children back

home or to provide better educational opportunities in the host country. The importance of education is evident as many migrants seek to further their education and acquire new skills in the host country often taking evening classes while working full-time (Olwig 2001, Bashi Bobb 2001, Basch et al. 1994, Foner 1979). One study of West Indians in New York City found that immigrants' first jobs may be low paying service sector positions, but their persistence in educational attainment often enabled them to move into supervisory and managerial positions by their second job (Basch et al. 1994:74). Generally, it can be concluded from the literature that among West Indians there is a common cultural emphasis placed on educational attainment as a gateway to improved occupational opportunities and increased compensation associated with those positions.

Remittances and Reciprocity

Immigrant cash flows home as remittances are central in the maintenance of transnational social fields and contribute dramatically to the economic sustainability of many home nations (Basch 2001, Levitt 2001, Palmer 1995). For Caribbean nations, the historical significance of migration and the remittances associated with the financial support of families "back home" has led to the descriptive term "remittance societies" for these countries (Rubenstein 1983, Wood and McCoy 1985). In the early Twentieth Century remittances and savings were required in some labor recruitment programs and encouraged by both the U.S. and Caribbean governments (Palmer 1995). Today, "migrant remittances and savings enable the production and reproduction of middle social strata that would not be possible through internal forces alone, given the fragile

economic conditions of these countries” (Basch 2001:127). The role of gender in remittance behavior has received limited attention as the assumption of the “male migrant” directs research toward the remittance behaviors of men. For West Indians, there appears to be a gender differential in remittance expectations, with women feeling obligated to send money to their mothers often as reciprocation for the financing of the daughter’s migration (Gussler 1980). Gender differences in remittance behaviors may indicate variations in kin contact and intergenerational relations as well.

It can be concluded from the literature that West Indians have a long history of migration as a coping strategy for inadequate economic opportunities at home. Migration to areas with greater employment potential offers a means for this group to provide for their families. Also, educational attainment is a means of increasing occupational mobility and improving the social status of individuals and their families. The major implication for this dissertation is that education is one of the major goals of West Indian migration in that families participate in enhancing the educational opportunities of their members. Literature on international migration and West Indian migration has not fully addressed how transnational family migration projects are developed, prioritized and pursued over time or the impact of gender on these projects. While the primary focus of this dissertation is to examine gender and kin designated roles in the maintenance of transnational family connections the relationship between remittances or reciprocity, intergenerational relations, and family migration projects is also observed.

Transnational Family and Kinship

As mentioned in Chapter one, transnational families have not received much scholarly attention as most researchers perceive the migrant as an independent actor. Of the few studies which have begun to address this topic, three interrelated issues regarding the organization and practices of transnational families pertain to this dissertation research: the importance of transnational family and kinship networks, the centrality of kin in the migration process, and the vital role of women in the maintenance of kinship ties and networks.

Chapter One also pointed out that transnational families and kinship networks are considered to be one type of transnational social field (Faist 2000). Linda Basch (2001) clarifies this designation of the family by identifying kin as a central element in maintaining transnational social fields and an integral part of the migration and settlement process. Kin play significant roles in the migration of individuals from assisting in the financing of initial migration, to caring for children of absent parents, to assisting in settlement and obtaining employment (Basch 2001, Chamberlain 1997). In order for this to be accomplished, “careful nurturing is needed to build the social relationships that enable such transnational assistance. Visits, telephone calls, gifts, and cash remittances are some of the forms of reciprocity developed by migrants to cultivate and strengthen transnational family ties” (Basch 2001:126). In essence, the cultivation of kinship relations across transnational borders is a type of “family strategy” which bridges several households enabling families to maximize their resources, minimize the risks of

migration, and reduce their reliance on the economy of any one nation (Ho 1999, Basch et al. 1994).

Several studies have investigated transnational families either directly or indirectly as they were addressing other issues in the transnational process. The cornerstone of transnational migration literature is Linda Basch's (1994) collaborative work with Nina Glick Schiller and Cristina Szanton Blanc, *Nations Unbound*, which lays the groundwork for understanding transnational processes and practices, in which migrants are engaging both in their home and host countries, and the emergence of what they refer to as "deterritorialized" national identities. A primary contribution of this work is the identification of immigrants' agency in developing transnational social fields (i.e., family, business, and political organizations) which maintain their ethnic identity and buffer them from the racial prejudice they may experience in the United States. The notions of transnationalism, social class reproduction or mobility through migration, and transnational family networks presented in their work have heavily influenced the conceptualization of the current dissertation research. While Basch, Glick Schiller and Blanc address in some detail the strategies utilized by migrants and families in maintaining transnational social fields, their primary focus is not the role of gender in the development and maintenance of those fields. This dissertation research attempts to extend or continue their work by exploring how gender and kin roles impact the various parts of migration, settlement, and social class mobility activities undertaken by West Indian transnational families.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, recent research has begun to focus on the roles and functioning of transnational families. The primary issue addressed in many of these works has been the long-term maintenance and sustainability of parent-child relations or marital/conjugal relations across international borders (Landolt and Da 2005, Chan and Seet 2003, Orellana et al. 2001, Mahler 2001, Sorensen 2005, Zontini 2004, Schmalbauer 2004a). Guarnizo (1997) describes these families as being multilocal and binational. This description is representative of many studies on transnational families which presuppose a “nuclear family” composition. Although in many cases this family form may be the case, the conceptualization of the family as “nuclear” operating under divided conditions constrains the possibility of positive outcomes from the migration of any family member, as perceptions of absence and loss tend to supersede the value of any material or financial gain. Furthermore, the nuclear family construction may also limit the possibility of fully understanding the family dynamics and arrangements made with extended family members, fictive kin, and the community.

Fernando Herrera Lima’s (2001) in-depth study of a Mexican transnational family is relatively unique in the literature as it does focus directly on development and maintenance of transnational families. Lima reviews the interconnectedness of the Mexican Dona Rosa family and argues that families can be a definable transnational social space. He documents the transnational nature of the family using a network map that presents the various birth and residence locations (e.g., U.S., Mexico, or Canada) of members in the family through the fourth generation. However, very little information is presented on the actual maintenance of transnational families ties such as the frequency

of contact, reasons for contact, and persons responsible for maintaining family continuity and migration arrangements. In addition, the Dona Rosa family undertook what could be referred to as several large social mobility projects, and they have become rather successful in the U.S. and Mexico owning several businesses and a hotel. Specifics on how the family negotiated the development and pursuit of these projects and the role of gender and/or kin roles in the decision making are not discussed.

The study of Jamaican transnational families by Thompson and Bauer (2000) identified three typical forms of kin help: “child-rearing which allows the young mother to work or migrate, sending financial assistances, usually to kin in Jamaica, and practical assistance in migrating” (Thompson and Bauer 2000: 23). This work is part of a new wave of research emerging from Britain on West Indians that reevaluates the transnational nature of these families. Previously, British scholars viewed West Indian families that were separated from each other as problematic for the development and socialization of their members. The new focus appears to highlight the flexibility and resiliency of these families and the interconnectedness which West Indians maintain with their home nations and the relatives remaining there. Mary Chamberlain has extensively studied West Indian families migrating to Britain (1999a, 1999b, 1997, 1994). Her research indicates that the definition of family extends beyond the boundaries of vertical lineal descent to include horizontal or lateral relations and affines (brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles and in-laws) (Chamberlain 1999a, 1999b). West Indian families can engage even distant relatives to participate in family plans such as migration or the education of children in accordance with the collective understanding of familial reciprocity

(Thompson and Bauer 2000, Chamberlain 1999a, Basch et al. 1994).

Olwig's study (2002) explores Caribbean transnational family networks through special family rituals and events, such as weddings and funerals. The study focuses primarily on the wedding event and the attitudes and meanings of "home" and family for scattered family members as they return to their nation of origin and reconnect with relatives. There is much discussion of the distribution of work involved in the preparation of the wedding feast; however, examining the role of gender in the planning and execution of the event is not central to the study. In this respect, Olwig's study is similar to the research conducted by Thompson and Bauer (2001) or Chamberlain (1999a, 1999b, 1997, 1994) in that they do not fully address the impact of gender and kin roles and the conditions involved in engaging the assistance of family members which is the focus of the current dissertation research.

The work of Christine Ho, discussed to some extent in the previous chapter, augments the investigation of transnational family processes by incorporating the role of gender into her analysis (Ho 1999). She identifies women as "the protagonists in the drama of globalizing Caribbean kinship, which requires the active maintenance of circuits of exchange of goods, services, communication, travel, and personnel. This is not a new challenge for Caribbean women, who for centuries have been embedded in large kin-based support networks. Today's transnational structures are merely the post modern versions of this tradition on a global scale (Ho 1999:52). Ho also finds, in her study of Trinidadians living in Los Angeles, that women are central in initiating family migration

streams and in the “careful cultivation of kinship ties” (Ho 1999, 1993). Ho’s conclusions combined with the work of other scholars (Thompson and Bauer 2000, Sutton 1992) illustrate the vital role that women play in construction and maintenance of kinship connections and networks. Transnational migration research that focuses on the public sphere, like trade or home country associations, invariably suggests male dominance where private sphere activities, such as the management of transnational households, indicate heavy female participation or control (Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila 1997, Mahler 1999, Ho 1993).

Another way in which women are central to transnational family networks is through what Dwaine Plaza (2000) refers to as “international frequent flyer grannies.” These retired women spend part of their time traveling internationally between family, kin and fictive kin in New York, Toronto, Miami, and the Caribbean. The visits made by these women tend to be social, though “some do, however, act as the messenger who maintains the flow of communications between family members” (Plaza 2000:97). In these cases, traditional forms of transnational kin contact, such as telephone calls or letters, are significantly enhanced by the face-to-face contact of the women and the sense of family they may generate.

Gussler’s study (1980) of adaptive household strategies and social networks among West Indian women in St. Kitts suggests that social class influences the breadth and depth of social networks. He found that middle class women formed narrower but more reliable networks. Poorer women tended to create broader networks which were

less reliable but offered varied support. The notion that social class may impact the extent of kinship networks is important to the current dissertation project. For example, working class respondents may engage more distant relatives in kinship networks in order to pursue migration and family class project goals as compared to middle class respondents.

While these studies indicate that women have primary roles in kinship networks, they do not present at the micro-level the gender processes which influence the prioritization of kinship relations and the pursuit of various social mobility projects. Women appear to be central figures in the maintenance of transnational kinship networks, but by focusing exclusively on women the literature does not make apparent whether men participate at all or if they participate in other ways. As discussed in Chapter One, DiLeonardo (1987) found that Italian immigrant men make contact with kin under certain conditions, such as business or trade. Is there a similar or alternate pattern of male participation in kin relations among Afro-Caribbean immigrants regarding social mobility projects? This question will be addressed in the current dissertation project under the first research question: Under what conditions or circumstances do West Indian immigrants initiate, maintain, or conversely suspend, connections with family members residing abroad (i.e., transnational kin)? What particular goals or projects of immigrant families increase or decrease the frequency of contact with kinfolk?

The Afro-Caribbean Family and Intergenerational Relations

Over the years, the study of West Indian families, particularly among the lower working classes, has been based on their presumed non-normative organization in comparison to European nuclear families.¹¹ Three interrelated concepts emerge from this literature which are relevant to the current dissertation research: matrifocality, the centrality of the mother-child bond, and gender roles associated with family organization.

The matrifocality that Raymond T. Smith (1996) identifies in his study of Afro-Caribbean kinship relations and family organization in Guyana, is evidenced by mother-focused family organization in which “child-rearing is the central activity of the domestic domain” (1996:54). He states that the mother-child bond is given primacy over the conjugal relationship and is the focus of kinship ties. Other scholars have also identified the mother-child bond as the closest kin relationship among Caribbean families (Abraham-Van der Mark 2003 Miner 2003, Plaza 2000). While Plaza’s (2000) study of elderly Afro-Caribbeans in Britain does identify the strength of the mother-child bond, he suggests that “the mother-son relationship constitutes the pivot of Caribbean family structure around which the other family relationships revolve” (2000:79). This finding appears to contradict the findings of other studies which argue that women dominate kin networks (Ho 1999). Karen Olwig’s (1993) study of migration experiences among women on Nevis found that kinship networks were organized around the mother-child relationship with particular emphasis on the mother-daughter bond. In either case, the

¹¹ See Christine Barrow (1996) for a comprehensive summary of the research on West Indian families including various themes and approaches.

importance of the mother-child relationship is significant.

Child shifting or child minding¹² has historically been an adaptive household economic strategy throughout the Caribbean. Again, women are the primary organizers of child care arrangements with female kin or other close relatives as they migrate to better their educational or employment opportunities (Ho 1993, Basch et al. 1994, Gordon 1987, Soto 1987). The importance of child shifting to the current dissertation research is its gendered nature: women participate in child shifting while men do not. Leaving children behind as the mother migrates is bound to significantly impact the frequency of kinship contact and remittances to the household containing the children. Additionally, the gendered nature of child-care would likely result in gendered lines of communication. The role of grandparents in child-shifting arrangements is addressed in the following section on intergenerational relations. How Afro-Caribbean immigrants define kin-time (the temporal and sequential ordering of family transitions) and its influence on kin contact is addressed in this dissertation.

Gender, the Household Division of Labor, and Kinship

Gender roles in the Caribbean have been generally be characterized as traditional and patriarchal (Smith 1986). Ideally, gender roles are divided into separate spheres, with women of all social classes expected to be mothers and take on the responsibility of

¹² Also referred to in the literature as child fostering - the temporary care of children by other family members in the absence of the parents. See Soto, Isa Maria. 1987. "West Indian Child Fostering: Its Role in Migration Exchanges." in Constance R. Sutton and Elsa Chaney (eds.) *Caribbean Life in New York: Sociocultural Dimensions*. New York: The Center for Migration Studies of New York, Inc.

child-care and other domestic activities (Smith 1988). Men and women tend to have segregated lives, with males taking on the “breadwinner” or provider role, in spite of high rates of women’s labor force participation (Foner 1979). In a study of families in Jamaica and Guyana, R.T. Smith found that men believe “domestic chores diminish masculinity, but there is no corresponding feeling that women’s employment is a threat to either’s sexual identity (1988:148).” Among Jamaican migrants to Britain, Foner (1979) found changes in the household division of labor and the improvement of women’s status when they enter the labor force. Economic necessity and the greater availability of employment enable working women to make greater demands for male participation in household tasks and child care than was possible in the Caribbean. This is similar to Patricia Pessar’s findings among Dominican migrants to New York (1995).

Furthermore, increased status among women migrants, through employment and renegotiated gender roles within the household, has been shown to increase their desire to settle permanently in order to preserve their new positions (Pessar 1995, Hondagneu-Sotelo 1992, 1994). Chamberlain (1997) found a related pattern of permanent settlement among West Indians in Britain where women pushed for the purchase of a house in Britain while men saw migration as temporary and preferred to keep cash available for return to their home country. Often men’s status is enhanced most upon their return home as a successful migrant, while women are likely to retain more status by settling in the host nation (Pessar 1995). Situations like these may suggest considerable gender differences in the pursuit of social class mobility projects to be accomplished through migration.

Gender role differentiation among West Indians also gives rise to the development of gender specific social networks. Because of a general lack of participation by West Indian males in domestic activities, Christine Ho states that there is a “disproportionate burdening of Caribbean women with double workloads and the lack of male support” which leads them to rely on female relatives and friends (Ho 1991; 1993). Jacqueline Hagan (1998) in her study of migration and naturalization among Mayan immigrants to Houston, Texas found that gendered networks produce different outcomes for men and women. Women’s employment opportunities and naturalization rates were negatively affected by their reliance on gendered networks. Hondagneu-Sotelo (1994) identified that, among Mexican migrant families and households, members often utilized independent social networks based on gender. The implication of this research for the current dissertation project is that West Indian men and women may sustain different kinship relations based on gender. For women, child shifting may impact the frequency of contact with kin in the home country, which may obscure the connections that men cultivate with other male relatives.

The gendered division of household labor is an important basis for the conceptualization of this dissertation. As mentioned above, there is a similar separation in gender roles and responsibilities apparent in West Indian ideals of family life. The majority of research conducted in this area has been primarily concerned with the division of household tasks among married couples. Findings suggest that men’s household labor does not increase significantly with women’s employment which results

in women experiencing a dual or double burden -- housework and market work (Blau et al. 1998, Brines 1994, Marini and Shelton 1993, Ferree 1990, Hochschild 1989).

Time-diary studies appear to be the most popular method used to assess differences in male and female time allocation and household labor (Robinson 1996, Marini and Shelton 1993, Shelton 1992, Gershuny and Robinson 1988). Generally, these studies have shown that the time allocated for domestic work for men and women has changed over time, moving toward convergence (Robinson and Godfrey 1999, Shelton 1992). However, other studies report that within married couple families, women continue to do the majority of household tasks (Greenstein 1996, 2000, Coltrane and Ishii-Kuntz 1992, Ishii-Kuntz and Coltrane 1992, Spitze 1986). Within the literature on gender differences in time use is the notion that women's time allocated for household tasks is not their own, but is a collective household commodity benefiting husbands and children (Hochschild 1989). While an in-depth time diary study is beyond the scope of this dissertation, an important aspect of time use investigation that is at the center of this study is the definition of leisure time.

Within time allocation research, leisure time has been classified as a nonmarket activity other than housework, such as recreation, communication activities, socializing and other forms of entertainment. Included in communication activities like telephone calls, letter writing and socializing is contact with family and friends meant to enhance interpersonal bonds (Freyinger 1995). DiLeonardo's work (1987), discussed in detail in Chapter One, is located within the literature on the gender division of household labor

and the definition of leisure activities, as she argues that maintaining connections with family is not solely a leisure activity but an extension of housework. The concern of this dissertation is whether kin-keeping and family migration projects might be designated as women's work due to the household conceptualization of women's time as collective, belonging to the entire family, rather than individual.

The literature on Caribbean families discussed above suggests that West Indian men and women engage in behaviors that express culturally proscribed roles of masculinity (virility) and femininity (motherhood and domestic responsibilities) (Smith 1988). Within the literature on the gender division of household labor, the theory of "doing gender" can be applied to explain this pattern of behavior (West and Zimmerman 1991, Fenstermaker and Zimmerman 1991). Doing gender emerges from a gendered perspective of symbolic interactionism where distinctions between males and females are based on interactions with others (West and Zimmerman 1987). Accordingly, gender is not based on biological differences, but is constructed through performing a "socially scripted dramatization of the culture's idealization of feminine and masculine" roles (West and Zimmerman 1987). The notion of doing gender was further elaborated on by Butler (1993, 1990), who suggests that repeated performance of gendered behavior is necessary to produce gender identity. The household division of labor delineates what is considered to be male or female. Barrow (1996), in her review of literature on West Indian families, cautions that respondents concerned with presenting themselves in a socially acceptable manner may inflate or exaggerate time spent on certain activities to reflect culturally expected behaviors or accentuate male and female roles, in essence

enhancing doing gender. The question of how doing gender may impact transnational kinship relations and the distribution of kin work is a key focus of this dissertation.

Intergenerational Relations

Research on intergenerational relations has tended to focus on native-born white or African-American families. The findings from studies on intergenerational relations among African-American families could be relevant to the study of Afro-Caribbean populations. Research on intergenerational relations among native-born blacks have shown that African-Americans have higher levels of family support than native-born whites and tend to emphasize collateral kinship ties versus vertical generational ties (Johnson and Barer 1995, Taylor, Chatters and Jackson 1993, Taylor, Chatters and Mays 1988). These findings are similar to those by Chamberlain (1999b) which suggested that West Indians also have a tendency to emphasize lateral and extended kinship ties. While there may be some similarities between attitudes and behaviors in intergenerational relations between native-born blacks and Afro-Caribbeans, it is likely that differences in socialization and migration experience will produce noticeable variations.

Recent studies have begun to address intergenerational relations among ethnic/ minority families with immigrant origins. Several studies have shown that immigrant families tend to have increased intergenerational family cohesion (Nauck and Niephaus 2006, Noivo 1993). However, these studies tend to treat the multi-generational family as mostly nationally bound in the host country. Additionally these studies often fail to fully

incorporate the concept of international migration and the existence of close or extended family members who may still reside in the nation of origin.

The comprehensive and comparative study of ethnic families conducted by Becker, Beyene, Newsom and Mayen (2003) provides a departure point for the understanding of generational expectations and patterns of exchange for these families. They examined patterns of intergenerational reciprocity using in-depth interviews with elders from four U.S. ethnic groups: African Americans, Latinos, Filipino Americans, and Cambodian Americans. Findings for Latino immigrant families indicate that they place a significant value on family; however, levels of financial support between family members and levels of satisfaction with intergenerational relations were the lowest of the four ethnic groups. Cambodian immigrants in the study were more likely to reside in multigenerational households than those in other ethnic groups. Intergenerational exchanges and support were therefore primarily domestic tasks and financial contributions to the maintenance of the household.

Among Filipino American immigrant families study findings suggested that both immigration status and length of stay in the U.S. were important to the location of family members. More recent Filipino immigrants were increasingly likely to have the majority of their members remaining in the Philippines. The study found that transnational economic support and exchanges were the highest for Filipinos compared to the other ethnic groups due to a cultural tradition of individual deprivation in order to send financial support and material goods home to relatives. Kibria's study (1993) of

Vietnamese immigrant families found a similar orientation, placing collective or family well-being over the individual. Of the four immigrant groups investigated in the Becker et al. (2003) study, the Filipino pattern of transnational exchange most closely approximates the behavior of some Afro-Caribbean immigrants, particularly those from working class origins, as discussed above. However, Afro-Caribbeans as a group have not been shown to possess similar collectivist tendencies.

Finally, the findings of Becker et al. (2003) for African Americans were consistent with earlier studies. There was a high frequency of contact between African American family members and a wide range of exchanges from financial assistance to emotional support and child care. Afro-Caribbeans, an immigrant group with a long history of migration to the United States, might exhibit patterns of reciprocity and exchange similar to other ethnic/ immigrant groups or they might display family exchanges similar to those of native-born Blacks.

Few articles have actively centered on intergenerational relations among Caribbean families. Studies on family and matrifocality in the Caribbean have a tendency to inadvertently address intergenerational relationships when addressing the role of grandparents in providing child care or in child shifting. Plaza's (2000) study of transnational families and the roles of Afro-Caribbean grandmothers found that child shifting and "(a) grandmother's readiness to assume responsibility for her grandchildren is a central aspect of this pattern of childbearing in Caribbean society" (Plaza 2000:79). Throughout the West Indian family literature, female relatives, in particular

grandmothers, regularly take on the responsibility to raise grandchildren on behalf of migrating parents (Chamberlain 2003). Migration has tended to weaken kinship ties and the traditional role of grandmothers - especially among second and third generation immigrants. For some transnational families, female relatives and grandmothers fulfill their traditional role of child minding through temporary migration, moving to live with adult children in order to take care of young grandchildren (Plaza 2000, Thompson and Bauer 2000).

In sum, research on intergenerational relations has not fully investigated immigrant families and the transnational kinship relations they often sustain. Apart from research into the roles of grandmothers in childrearing, the study of intergenerational relations among Afro-Caribbean families has also been extremely limited. In terms of intergenerational relations, Caribbean families may organize and operate themselves like native-born African-American families, other immigrant groups, or a combination of the two. The broad definition of family employed by the current dissertation research will allow for intergenerational relations among Afro-Caribbeans to be further explored.

Sibling Relations and Elder Care

The focus of research on sibling relations, particularly among adult siblings, has been similar to that of intergenerational relations since studies of native-born families predominate in the literature. Direct focus on sibling relationships over time has not been addressed in the research on Caribbean families or to a great extent within immigrant

families. Dalton Conley's mix-method study (2004) focuses on the association between family and sibling relations and social mobility using in-depth interviews and detailed analysis of Census data. The study is informative to the current dissertation research in that Conley stresses the importance of family composition, particularly family size, in shaping sibling relations and creating differential family experiences for children. Family composition refers to not only the parental structure but also to the gender combination and birth order of the children, whereas family size refers to the number of individuals in the family. In terms of the current study of Afro-Caribbean families and the distribution of transnational kin work, these concepts suggest that the gender composition and the size of the families will likely influence designation of family members for certain kin work responsibilities.

Aging research has begun to focus on the association between elder care and sibling relations. Gender has been found to significantly impact the distribution of the work and coordination of elder care among sibling sets, with women being the primary caregivers (Hequembourg and Brallier 2003). Spitzer et al.'s study (2003) of caregiving focused on Canadian immigrant women from China and South Asia who were the primary caregivers of relatives with chronic health problems. However, although they claimed to investigate caregiving in a transnational context, only a small percentage of their qualitative sample did not reside with the care recipient. Also problematic was the researchers' singular focus on women as caregivers which automatically eliminates the discovery of contributions in care given by men. More informative to the issue of transnational caregiving of elderly parents among immigrants is Baldcock's (2000)

personal reflections and study of immigrants in Australia. Her findings indicate that constant telephone contact, arrangements with other relatives and neighbors, as well as frequent return trips home were necessary for immigrants to manage the care of elderly parents from afar. Immigrants also encouraged aging parents, particularly mothers, to migrate to Australia to live with them or to visit for extended periods of time. The current dissertation research is conceptualized to continue the investigation of gender, sibling relations and care giving among transnational immigrant families.

Conclusions

The literature reviewed in this chapter highlights the areas of scholarship that inform the research this study seeks to address. Afro-Caribbeans have a culture of migration and social mobility that encourages them to improve their social status and the status of their family through international migration. Education is perceived as a primary vehicle for occupational mobility and social status advancement that often is a major contributing factor in West Indians' decisions to migrate. West Indian women are central in the development and maintenance of kinship networks and the initiation of migration streams. The distribution of the work involved with maintaining kin ties may come under the purview of women as an extension of the household division of labor and the notion of women's time as a collective family commodity. However, the attention given to women's involvement in kinship networks, due to their socially expected domestic role within the family, may obscure men's participation in kinwork under certain circumstances, such as the operation family businesses or the purchase of a house

or property. This dissertation is concerned with the delegation of kinwork within transnational families as it impacts ways in which family ties are sustained, constructed and maintained, and the role of gender and kin-designated roles within this process.

As discussed above, migration mediates traditional gender roles within the household division of labor, as women's employment tends to increase men's participation in household tasks (Pessar 1995, Hondagneu-Sotelo 1992 1994, Foner 1979). Within the literature on Afro-Caribbeans it appears that few family or kinship roles, other than mothers and fathers/ husband and wives, have been explored with the exception of Bolles' (1996) observation of some kin role expectations or forms of kinscription related to gender among working class Jamaicans, discussed in Chapter One, and Plaza's (2000) and Chamberlain's (2003) studies of the roles of grandmothers discussed above. Thompson and Bauer (2000) suggest that "in some West Indian transnational families, particular women become dynamic activating figures around whom the kin system revolves" (p. 24). Generally, there is no clear discussion within the literature on Afro-Caribbean or transnational families of sibling relations or the roles that various members play in the distribution of kinwork activities and elder caregiving. This dissertation will contribute to this area of the literature as it focuses specifically on the impact of gender and kinscription on the delegation of kinwork and the maintenance of transnational kinship relations among immigrant families.

Clearly, gender is an important aspect of family life, organization, and caregiving. What is unclear is the how gender impacts the distribution of kinship responsibilities

among Afro-Caribbean families operating in a transnational context. Investigating the impact of gender, or some other kin designated role, and sibling relations on family decision making related to migration, family contact and connectedness and kin care will deepen the understanding of the complexity of migration and the maintenance of transnational families.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This dissertation research focuses on the transnational family, their kinship connections across international boundaries, their construction, pursuit and delegation of kin work tasks and the impact of gender and/or kinscripts on these activities. To understand how and who maintains kinship networks I utilize both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. Concepts and issues that emerge from the qualitative data inform the quantitative inquiry. Quantitative data complements the interpretation of the qualitative data by providing a broader picture of the family connections among a larger group of Afro-Caribbean immigrants in the United States.

The qualitative data includes in-depth semi-structured interviews and two group interviews with forty-two (42) individual members of Afro-Caribbean transnational families from the United States Virgin Islands, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago, conducted between June 2004 and March 2006. The majority of the research was conducted in two locations, South Florida and Washington, DC. The primary qualitative component consists of twenty-one (21) interviews with multiple members of four middle class¹³ families. In addition to interviews with these family members, I conducted

¹³ Middle class is defined as families where the primary participant has at least some college education, is employed in a white collar occupation and the majority of

interviews with twelve (12) key informants (e.g., community leaders, scholars, business owners) within the two primary study communities (Washington, D.C. and South Florida). Two follow up group interviews of seven people (total) were conducted with transnational Afro-Caribbean immigrants from Barbados and Jamaica in the metropolitan Detroit area. The group interview participants were recruited from two country specific Caribbean community organizations. One of the group interviews consisted of only Jamaican men. This group facilitated further inquiry into men's participation in maintaining kin contact.

The quantitative data is from the National Survey of American Life (NSAL) collected by the Program for Research on Black Americans in the Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan. The NSAL is an integrated, hierarchical national probability sample which contains the only nationally representative sample of first, second, and third generation Afro-Caribbean immigrants in the United States (n=1,625). The breadth of topics covered in this data set make it ideal for addressing my research questions and exploring the nature of Afro-Caribbean immigrant family connections and levels of reciprocity. Data for the NSAL were collected between February 2001 and June 2003 with a 72 percent response rate. A sub-set of first generation Afro-Caribbean respondents with transnational family ties was selected for analysis to examine the statistical significance of factors that may impact the frequency of contact with family members (n=101).

subsequent family members interviewed have similar types of occupations and levels of education.

A summary of demographic characteristics for both the qualitative sample and NSAL are presented in Table 1. For comparison purposes, demographic information on the national Afro-Caribbean population is also presented. In general, NSAL respondents appear to be older in age, have slightly higher family incomes, and are more likely to be employed than the Afro-Caribbean population enumerated in the 2000 Census. Additionally, NSAL respondents with West Indian ancestry, which includes those of the first, second, and third generation, have a lower percentage of married individuals than does the larger population or those in the first generation.

The qualitative sample, or study sample, consists of only first generation Afro-Caribbean immigrants from both the four study families and the two group interviews. The demographic characteristics of the study sample indicate that the sample is older, more educated, and more employed than both the NSAL respondents and the general population of Afro-Caribbean ancestry. The sample group also has a higher percentage of home ownership and percent married than the other two groups. As will be discussed below, the study sample is comprised of immigrants of middle class socioeconomic status.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Afro-Caribbean Population and Samples

Demographic Characteristics	Census* West Indian Ancestry N = 1,852,874	NSAL West Indian Ancestry N = 1164	NSAL 1 st Generation N = 770	Study Sample 1 st Generation N = 36
Median age	32.8 years	40.2 years	41 years	49.7 years
Education	N/A	12.9 years	12.3 years	14.9 years
Family Income	\$42,058	\$47,099	N/A	N/A
Employed	62.6%	74.7%	77.3%	99.0%
Home Owner	45.4%	45.1%	50.0%	80.6%
Female	54.0%	49.0%	56.0%	53.0%
Married	48.6%	37.3%	55.0%	75.0%

*Source: U.S. Census 2000 – data from 1999

This dissertation research was designed to employ two methods of triangulation, data and methodological, to assess patterns and attitudes associated with transnational contact behavior within immigrant families among the study population (Denzin 1989). Triangulation was accomplished through the use of a multi-method study design that used participant interviews with four sample families, group interviews with participants from two Caribbean islands, and a nationally representative survey of first generation Caribbean immigrants in the U.S. In addition, to enhance the authenticity and consistency within the four study families, multiple members of each family were interviewed.

The integrated research design of this study allows me to identify substantive

factors influencing communication between Afro-Caribbean immigrants in the U.S. and their transnational family members. Ultimately, the study increases our understanding of the internal family processes involved in sustaining transnational kin contact and relations over time by moving beyond theoretical assumptions to provide evidence of how gender and kin designated roles operate within Afro-Caribbean immigrant families. The chapter is divided into two sections. The first section contains details on the qualitative data collection and fieldwork procedures, summaries of the sample families, format of group interviews, and analysis of the interview data. The second section provides details on the quantitative data, a discussion of the selected variables and statistical analysis procedures.

Qualitative Data Collection

My approach to studying transnational families is influenced by Karen Hansen's (2005) study of the impact of social class and gender on patterns of child care¹⁴. Hansen utilized in-depth interviews with multiple members of four families of varying socio-economic positions to explore how families make and sustain child care arrangements over time. This approach centralizes the family as the unit of analysis. Additionally, Hansen's study design allowed the investigator to uncover the meanings and motives of individuals' actions while maximizing the potential for triangulation. The major aspect of Hansen's study that I incorporated into this research project was to focus on families rather than individuals. Therefore, following Hansen's design I interviewed multiple

¹⁴ See Hansen, Karen. 2005. *Not-So-Nuclear Families: Class, Gender, and Networks of Care*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

members of four Afro-Caribbean families in order to investigate how they create and sustain transnational kin contact over time.

I employed a convenience sampling strategy to collect data for this research project. Using my social networks and position as a second-generation Jamaican, I gained access to immigrant communities of interest. To facilitate this process, I used key informants who were able to provide insightful information on the community and leads to potential principal [first] participants for each family. A total of eight such informants, including scholars, community organizers, long-term residents, officials, and local business owners, who resided in the study sites were interviewed. During data collection I interviewed six additional individuals. However, I was unable to acquire the participation of additional members of those individuals' families. I therefore use these interviews to supplement the analysis of the four study families in a manner similar to the way I use the data gathered from the two group interviews. These additional six interviews are used as to confirm or raise questions about specific patterns of contact and relations identified within the four study families.

Entry

This study focuses on transnational immigrant families in three different settlement locations in the U.S. All of the principal participants, the first interviewed in the family, and focus group participants were drawn from immigrants residing in Afro-Caribbean immigrant communities that have received little scholarly attention:

Washington, D.C., South Florida (Miami-Dade and Broward counties), and Detroit, Michigan. I chose these locations for two reasons: First, they each have rapidly growing Afro-Caribbean populations. In 1990, the population of persons with West Indian ancestry residing in Florida was approximately 237,000 persons. By 2003 the population for that group had grown to about 590,000 persons, with the majority (62%) living in southern counties of Miami-Dade and Broward. Similarly, the Caribbean population in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area has increased from slightly under 40,000 persons in 1990 to over 70,000 persons in 2003. According to the 2005 American Community Survey conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau there are approximately 11,000 persons of West Indian ancestry residing in the state of Michigan. The majority of Afro-Caribbeans living in Michigan are located in metropolitan Detroit. This location was selected for convenience to conduct two follow-up group interviews. Second, the selected study locations extend the understanding of West Indian immigrant families by focusing on communities that have been less frequently studied. The majority of studies on Afro-Caribbean immigrants have been conducted in metropolitan New York City, the location of the largest concentration of West Indians immigrants (about 755,000). As mentioned in the previous chapter, Foner (2001) has pointed out the need to balance the research on West Indians by examining populations that reside outside of the New York area.

Both Washington, D.C. and South Florida represent the starting point for the family interviews due to the transnational distribution of family members. For two of the sample families, multiple family members resided in the study locations. Family

members residing outside of the research location, in other parts of the United States or in Canada and Britain, were interviewed via telephone. However, transnational family members residing abroad in the Caribbean were not interviewed as the study was conceptualized as centering on the effects of immigrant status on the maintenance of kinship ties with family members residing outside of the U.S

To become familiar with the Afro-Caribbean communities in Washington, D.C. and South Florida, I used a combination of observation and preliminary interviewing in both communities, spending time with members of the local Caribbean communities, including businesses owners. During this period of fieldwork I also photographed businesses that catered to the Caribbean community. This process afforded me the opportunity to observe the visible resources available to Afro-Caribbean immigrants in each of the settlement locations. Interacting with the owners and customers of these establishments (e.g., Caribbean restaurants and grocery stores) was important as these individuals were engaging in the maintenance of ethnic culture and business owners were providing the means to sustain ethnic immigrant identity. For example, in South Florida I interviewed a clerk working in an export/ shipping shop that shipped barrels and packages by sea to the Caribbean islands.

The Caribbean community in the New York City area is close to an example of an ethnic enclave, with several boroughs containing a heavy concentration of the Afro-Caribbean population. In contrast, in the emerging migration destinations the Afro-

Caribbean immigrant community is more similar to a middleman minority group¹⁵, with small businesses that serve their community dispersed across a relatively large geographic area (Portes and Manning 1986). At this stage of field work I had two goals. First, for each location I wanted to identify the resources that would sustain Caribbean culture and facilitate connections with the Caribbean. Second, I wanted to get a feel for the visible presence of the Caribbean community in each area.

The first step in this process was to use the Internet and the telephone book to locate establishments and organizations that served the Caribbean community. I conducted Internet searches to identify Caribbean organizations in each of the study locations. Some of the organizations maintained updated websites with community resource pages that provided lists of Caribbean restaurants, grocery stores, bakeries, nightclubs, and other businesses. If the business listed on these pages had a link to their website, I would follow the link and glean information about the business, its location and its history. This process was replicated in each of the study locations. The Internet searches also provided a means of contacting Caribbean community organizations through electronic mail to recruit participants in the study.

The next step was to visit many of the Caribbean establishments, take photographs of the visible Caribbean presence (front of the shop), and speak briefly with the staff [See Appendix G (supplemental) for photographs]. In the Washington, D.C.

¹⁵ Middleman minority groups – Immigrant groups that rely on small businesses (services and retail), dispersed across a city or metropolitan area. Portes, Alejandro and Robert Manning. 1986. “The immigrant enclave: Theory and empirical examples” in Susan Olzak and Joanne Nagel (eds.), *Competitive Ethnic Relations*. New York: Academic Press.

metropolitan area, I was aware of several locations with a small clustering of Caribbean eateries and grocery stores due to my familiarity with the area. One such location in the city of Washington D.C. with a concentration of Caribbean businesses is along Georgia Avenue, north of Howard University. It was through these establishments that I became aware of the interconnectedness of the Afro-Caribbean community. For the most part, each establishment had an area devoted to newspapers, announcements, and business and event flyers that promoted activities and provided information of interest to members of the Caribbean community. In some cases, a small bulletin board was available to post the business cards of Caribbean real estate agents, accounts, computer experts, etc. My first wave of visits would generate additional trips to other establishments that I became aware of through the flyers and announcements in the initial shops and eateries. In some cases I would speak with store owners if they were available. Generally, I was interested in how long they had been in business and if they perceived the size of the Caribbean population to be increasing. Additionally, I was interested in who the owners were. In many cases, the owners of the establishments were Indo-Trinidadian or Indo-Guyanese rather than persons of Afro-Caribbean descent.

This process of location familiarization was repeated in South Florida although the Caribbean presence there is more readily visible. A particularly densely concentrated Caribbean area of the region was in Lauderhill and Lauderdale Lakes, located west of Fort Lauderdale in Broward County. Within the past ten years there has been a substantial change in the Caribbean population in all three study locations: Washington DC, South Florida and Detroit areas. The result of the increase in Afro-Caribbean

immigrants in these areas has been the emergence and increased visibility of establishments servicing this population.

My familial connection to the Caribbean facilitated my access to the study population. As a second generation Jamaican, I am both an insider and an outsider. Some participants were more cooperative and receptive to the study after learning of my Caribbean heritage. However, my position as both an insider and outsider did present certain challenges. In almost every discussion with potential principal participants and focus group participants I was questioned about my interest in Afro-Caribbean families and the goals of the study. Generally, my response was that, given their long history of migration, the experiences of Caribbean people could help inform other immigrant groups and the literature on international migration about family coping strategies that West Indians have developed in response to migration. Additionally, I stated that I hoped to add balance to international migration literature that has been dominated by studies of Mexican and Asian migration to the U.S. For the most part, this response appeased skeptical potential participants by playing upon pre-existing sentiments I have encountered among many Afro-Caribbean immigrants who are quite proud of the migration history in the Caribbean, viewing it as a means of upward social mobility and overall positive migration strategy.

Much of my access to both potential principal participants, who would lead to family participation in the study, and focus group participants was facilitated by electronic mail listserves and contacts made with leaders of Caribbean national

associations in Washington, D.C., South Florida, and Detroit. My call for study participants (See Appendix A) was disseminated through several electronic mail lists, a professional list in Washington, D.C. and organizational member lists in Detroit. Those interested in acquiring more information about the study were able to contact me directly by electronic mail.

Interviews

Concurrent with my participant observations I conducted interviews with key informants within each Caribbean community and with Afro-Caribbean family members. The majority of the study data comes from semi-structured interviews¹⁶ with 21 members of four Afro-Caribbean transnational immigrant families. I attempted to include families with equal numbers of men and women for the purpose of gender comparisons. However, the current research ultimately relied on convenience sampling, specifically those Afro-Caribbean immigrants who expressed an interest in a "Caribbean Family Study" and those who were also able to encourage other members of their family to participate. Principal participants, the first persons interviewed in a given family, were all long-term immigrants, having lived in the United States for a minimum of 10 years. They provided contact information for family members identified as "close" who resided anywhere in the U.S., Canada, or Britain.

Interviews with the first participants for each family were held at a time and place

¹⁶ The semi-structured interviews allowed participants to both respond to my questions on their migration history and family relations and express their feelings and attitudes about migration, family, and home country.

convenient for the participant, most often in the respondent's home; preferably in a place that allowed for an undisturbed interview and offered few distractions. One interview that did not lead to family participation was conducted in a book store coffee shop in greater Washington, DC. Another interview which resulted in full family participation was conducted in the principal participant's office. Interviews ranged from approximately sixty minutes to two hours in length. All interviews were recorded with permission from the participants and transcribed for later analysis. At the beginning of each interview, participants were given a consent form to discuss and sign (See Appendix C). At the beginning or end of each interview, participants were asked to complete a short form consisting of demographic information. For confidentiality, this information is linked to the transcribed interview data only by a study identification number. Telephone interviews were also recorded and later transcribed. Consent forms for the majority of these interviews were first sent to prospective participants via electronic mail. During this correspondence the date and time of the interview was also scheduled. An electronic copy of the consent form was sent to the respondent via electronic mail and verbal consent was also obtained at the beginning of each telephone interview.

In addition to the taped interviews, detailed handwritten notes were taken during and immediately following the interview regarding the researcher's personal thoughts, impressions, and specific comments that might need elaboration or follow-up during that particular interview or in interviews with subsequent respondents. Finally, these notes allowed for recording phrases or comments that were important for data analysis, such as potential coding markers, as well as serving as a reminder of the context in which the

interview took place. All taped interviews and notes are kept confidential in accordance with the procedures approved by the IRB.

Interview questions focused on areas of the transnational experience: migration history, conditions and frequency of contact with transnational family members, social class mobility, and family goals including educational training, employment history, and remittances (See interview schedule in Appendix D). Within these broad areas I probed for information on family reciprocity, patterns and directions of contact, and the distribution of kinwork activities within the family. I asked participants to identify members with whom they had the most frequent contact and probed rationales for exchanges between family members. The prioritization of contact (who participants contacted first and most often) was observed best through direction of contact between family members. Therefore, I probed at length about the direction of kinship contact and relations to understand the role gender plays in decision-making and the maintenance of family contact. Additionally, to obtain information on the operation of kinscription within each family I asked each participant about the “role” or position each member plays within the family. A list of roles or positions within the study families was generated by participants’ responses and descriptions of family members (e.g., leader, organizer, nurturer, financier, helper, conflict negotiator).

The Families

The core of the sample consists of individuals who are members of four Afro-

Caribbean immigrant families. These families are presently engaging in kinship contact with at least one or more “close” family members residing outside of the U.S. All individuals in the sample families migrated to the U.S. after age 16 years. The majority of sample family members are middle class, having some college education and employed in white-collar occupations (see family charts for educational and occupational attainment in Chapter Five). The middle-class nature of the sample was not intended. The composition of the sample was the result of both the convenience sampling strategy and the means of recruiting potential participants. As mentioned above, I contacted Caribbean community organizations in order to generate prospective participants. These organizations tended to focus on a single nation -- such as Jamaica or Trinidad and Tobago -- and appeared to be predominately comprised of middle and upper working class Caribbeans. Therefore, participant recruitment from the membership of these organizations would most likely result in a more middle class or upwardly mobile sample. Potential participants suggested by key informants were also biased toward middle class recruitment, as the key informants were scholars, business owners, or leaders in the Caribbean community. Finally, use of the Internet during recruitment brought the study to the attention of a networking listserv for Caribbean professionals, another pool of potential participants who were middle class.

Although a middle class sample composition was not the original intention of this study, the sample offers an opportunity to examine the gap in the current academic literature on middle class immigrant families, particularly for Afro-Caribbeans. Scholarship on Afro-Caribbean immigrant family organization has disproportionately

been conducted among the working classes in the Caribbean. Immigration research on Afro-Caribbean immigrants to the U.S. has tended to focus on economic adaptation and racial/ethnic identification and has rarely explored the family. Both NSAL and Census data indicate that a substantial portion of Afro-Caribbean immigrant families occupy the middle socio-economic strata. Census 2000 reports that 31% of families with West Indian ancestry have a family income of \$60,000 or higher. The median family income for West Indians (including Haitians) was \$42,058 in 1999.¹⁷ Twenty-five percent of first generation Afro-Caribbean NSAL respondents reported that their family income was above \$55,000. The median family income for persons of Afro-Caribbean ancestry in the NSAL was \$47,099.¹⁸ By examining family connectedness and relations among a group of middle class Afro-Caribbean families, this current study seeks to add balance to the literature on families for this population.

Sample families came from Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Immigrants from the sending countries of Barbados, Belize, and Guyana were also interviewed although additional family members were unavailable or declined study participation. The summaries for each of the four sample families are presented below. Siblings for each family are presented in birth order. All names of participants have been changed.

¹⁷ For comparison, Census 2000 reports that the median family income of \$33,323 for families that self-identified their race as Black alone or in combination with other racial groups.

¹⁸ Median family income for Black NSAL respondents was \$37,597.

1. Curey Family

The Curey family, from St. Croix, US Virgin Islands [USVI], migrated to the U.S. predominately for educational purposes over a period of ten years or so beginning in 1984. There are seven siblings in this family, six sisters and one brother, all of the siblings currently live on the US mainland. Their parents Richard [66] and Vivian [63], as well as a considerable number of extended family members, still live in USVI. An uncle and his family reside in the Boston area and have limited contact with the majority of the siblings. The eldest sibling, Katherine (Kathy) resides in the Washington, D.C. area and was the principal participant for the study. She contacted me about participating in the study after seeing my call for participants distributed via a Caribbean professionals' listserv. I interviewed Kathy in her office in downtown Washington, D.C. I also interviewed in-person, Vivian Marie, who lives in the Washington, D.C. area, and Noel, who lives in Miami. In the case of Vivian Marie, her husband was eager to be interviewed. His perspective on the Curey family "culture" and attitudes was insightful. I interviewed the remaining siblings via telephone over the course of ten months.

2. James Family

The James family, consisting of three persons, is the smallest family included in the study. The inclusion of the family is based on the transnational nature of this Trinidadian family that has persisted over the past 45 years or so. I gained access to Leon, the principal participant, through a key informant. Both Leon and his wife Carla

were interviewed in-person. Leon's brother Fredrick, who resides in a London suburb, was interviewed via telephone. In 1967, at 24 years of age, Leon migrated to the U.S. to attend college in Washington, D.C. Carla migrated a year later, at age 26, to join Leon. She attended college part-time until she obtained a B.A. in nursing. Leon and Fredrick's parents remained in Trinidad after their children's migration. Both parents are now deceased.

3. Dutton Family

The Dutton family is among a minority of Jamaican immigrants who label themselves "political" immigrants. I gained access to the family through Georgette, the sixth sibling, through my personal network. She became my principal participant, and I interviewed her in her Miami home. Marie Claire, her sister, was interviewed in Georgette's home while the majority of the interviews with other family members took place in the parents' home during a summer vacation "mini family reunion." Paul, a brother who lives in Orlando, was interviewed via telephone. Constance, another sister who resides in metropolitan New York, was unable to participate in the study. Both parents, George and Sarah, who live in Miami, were interviewed as well. Marie Claire and Georgette live near each other and their parents and have daily contact with their parents through telephone or visits. Other siblings, Mabel and Violet, lived within driving distance and made frequent visits to the parents' house, particularly on weekends. Presently, all but one of the immediate family members resides in the U.S.; Richard and his family live in Canada. I was able to interview him in-person as he was in Miami for

his annual visit during the study period.

4. Gibson Family

The four brothers of the Gibson family maintain transnational family connections. Margaret, their mother, resides half of the year in Trinidad and the other half in the family home in New Jersey. Approximately 30 years ago the brothers migrated as adolescents to the U.S. about a year after their parents. All of the siblings completed high school in the U.S. I gained access to Karl, the principal participant, through my personal network. I interviewed him in-person in at his home in South Florida. Siblings Margaret and Vonnrick were interviewed by telephone. Derek, another brother, was unable to participate in the study due to incarceration. He is currently serving a five year sentence for drug possession and was due to be released shortly after the end of the study period.

Group Interviews

Two group interviews were conducted in a focus group format toward the conclusion of the study period to further explore issues that emerged during data collection with the four study families. The group interviews helped me assess whether or not there were issues or concerns pertinent to the study of transnational families missing in the interview data. My inquiries in the group interviews were directed toward the frequency and direction or initiation of contact made between the participants and their family members. The issue of direction of contact, who initiated contact, was

revealed in the four family interviews as often unequal and gendered. The group interviews were very open with participants having the opportunity to inform me of anything that they thought was important regarding Caribbean families and kinship relations. Ultimately, the group interviews provided verification that the majority of issues that participants considered important in their maintenance of transnational family contact had been revealed in during the interviews.

The group interviews were conducted with two separate national groups, one of Jamaican immigrants and the other immigrants from Barbados. Access to the participants was obtained after contacting leaders of several Caribbean national associations in the Detroit area [See Appendices E, F, and G for group interview (focus group) materials]. I was invited to attend the association meetings and was able to make a direct appeal for study participation to the group members. The Jamaican group consisted of three Afro-Caribbean men, aged 35-45 years. The male-only group was unintended, although I did make extra efforts to secure male participation as the sample families contained fewer men than anticipated. This group was interviewed at the association's meeting location. The Barbados group interview consisted of two men and two women and was held in a local hotel conference room.

Qualitative Data Analysis

The goals of the current dissertation study were for participants to clearly describe their family's relations and contact apart from gender issues, to define family and to

identify members who are significant within their kinship networks. Gender relations within the family were assessed through an analysis of what participants stated and omitted in their discussions, particularly in terms of the direction and prioritization of contact and the designation of kin-keepers in the family. The role of gender and kinscripts within each family was also observed and explored further through follow-up and probing questions, although the participants were not directly made aware that these topics were a primary focus of the study. The deliberate lack of disclosure to interviewees of the significance of gender and kin role designation was to minimize possible stereotypical or socially expected gendered responses by participants that have been alluded to by Barrow (1996). Additionally, research suggests that respondents' self-reporting on behavior can be significantly influenced by the wording and context of the question (Schwartz and Oyserman 2001, Schwartz 1999). Given the relatively free-flow question and answer format of in-depth interviewing and focus groups, consistent wording of questions was not possible. Therefore, direct questions on the role of gender in immigrant families were not asked in order to reduce misunderstandings about the issue of gender on the part of the interviewer and misunderstandings or misrepresentations on the part of the interviewees.

The interview data was analyzed using a modified ground theory analytic approach (Glaser and Strauss 1967). Data from individual and group interviews was indexed or coded using the data immersion technique. Transcripts of interviews, focus group sessions and notes were read and re-read for themes and connections. Index headings or labels were assigned to sections of the interview transcripts in accordance

with the major themes and recurring words or phrases used by participants. To address the primary focus of the study, special attention was given to participants' discussions of their specific means and circumstances of contact with family members, the gender and kinship relation of the family members contacted (e.g. mother, father, sister, brother, cousin), the general duration of contact, frequency of contact, and the direction of contact or who initiated the contact. Additional themes that emerged from the data centered on conditions of contact and changes in the frequency of contact over time.

Several themes quickly emerged from early interviews. First was the role of parents as anchors of family connections by telephone, visits, or electronic mail. Concerns about the medical care of aging parents, and the elderly in general, was voiced by key informants, sample family members, and focus group participants. The second theme was that the direction of contact with families was unequal and often guided by gender and sibling relationships. This was assessed by asking the question; "Who do you contact most frequently?" This question was added in the late stages of data collection and was a key question during the focus groups. The third theme was the perception of individuals' roles within the family. All interviewed members of the sample families were asked about the role they played within the family and about the roles of other family members. The families clearly identified patterns of leadership or direction from some of the members, although in the larger families several siblings claimed to have the most influential role.

Another theme that emerged was the association between weekly contact with

family members and family get-togethers that would occur in the Caribbean on a similar schedule. Participant substantiated the importance of weekly immediate and extended family contact, mostly on Sundays. The migratory adaptation of this pattern of contact is a weekly telephone call to family members. This theme appears frequently within Caribbean family studies and was expected. Discussion in greater detail of participants' conceptualization and involvement in this pattern of contact is presented in Chapters Five and Six. Notions of "home" and nostalgia for the Caribbean experienced during childhood occasionally were mentioned by participants. Most often these comments were associated with comments about family life in general and the difficulties in maintaining a similar Caribbean family experience in the United States.

The frequency of contact among participants was recorded and derived from interview data. For the sample families and focus groups, self-selection for participation in the study almost by default ensured that all family members maintained some level of contact with other members of their family. However, this self-selection did not mean that the direction or prioritization of the contact was equally distributed among all family members. The direction of contact was also observed as it pertains to both kin-time, the prioritization of contact with family members, and kinscription, who is most often initiating contact with other members of the family. The perception of family closeness is measured by participants' responses to the interview question; "How close is your family?" Invariably, the response was very close.

Quantitative Data Description

The NSAL sample contains native-born African Americans (3,570), native-born non-Hispanic whites (891), and Caribbeans of African descent (1,621). The sample includes 6,082 individuals aged 18 or older, 55 percent women and 45 percent men. Face-to-face structured interviews were conducted using a computer-assisted instrument, although a small number of respondents was interviewed via telephone (5 percent). Twenty-seven percent (1,621) of the respondents are of Afro-Caribbean ancestry residing primarily in the northern and southern regions of the eastern United States. The average family income for all NSAL respondents ranged from \$28,000 in the Midwest to \$37,500 in the Northeast. The majority of the Caribbean sample is individuals with origins from English-speaking countries; about 30 percent were of Haitian (French speaking) or Spanish-speaking Caribbean ancestry. The NSAL is comprised of questions covering a wide variety of issues and topics such as racial identity and discrimination, socioeconomic status, mental health, neighborhood composition, family relations, religious affiliation and political participation.

In order for the survey data to compare with the qualitative data it was necessary to create a sub-set of NSAL respondents with similar characteristics: first generation, English-speaking Afro-Caribbeans who migrated after 18 years of age and were age 25 or older at the time of the interview (n=514). Data from the NSAL main adult interview was combined with data from the Caribbean adult re-interview, a self-administered, mail-

back survey. The re-interview questionnaire contains items that probe deeper into the respondents' relationships with family and friends and questions about contact with family members that reside outside of the United States. Respondents who indicated that the majority of their relatives resided outside of the United States were defined as members of a transnational family. The selection of respondents with the majority of family members living outside of the U.S. was necessary in order to clearly identify potential transnational kin relations. Although the qualitative sample contains individuals who are not currently residing outside of the U.S., the life-history interview approach utilized allows for the clear identification of previous or current transnational kin contact. Because the NSAL does not otherwise distinguish which relatives respondents were contacting or specifically where those relatives were located, there is no way to distinguish transnational contact from contact with relatives living locally or in another state. Therefore, for the purposes of this study on transnational kin contact and relations a decision was made to limit the NSAL sample to only those respondents who were most likely involved in a transnational family (n = 101).

Variables from the NSAL survey that were selected for analysis were those that address the basic questions of the study and the recurring themes that emerged during interviews with the sample families, key informants, group interview participants, and literature on international migration. The strength of the relationship between gender, the selected variables, and the frequency of contact with transnational relatives was assessed using bivariate chi-square analysis and multinomial logistic regression. Cross-tabulations with Rao-Scott chi square analyses and multinomial logistic regression are appropriate tests of significance due to the small size of the NSAL sub-sample and because the

majority of variables used in the study are measured at the ordinal level. The findings of these analyses are presented in following chapter.

Dependent Variable

Contact with kin

Contact with family is the dependent variable for this investigation. For the purposes of this study, contact with transnational relatives or kin is defined as communication between the participants and their family members by telephone, electronic mail, letters, visits, and sent items (such as gifts, packages, and barrels). The NSAL contained seven categories for the frequency of contact with kin: [Everyday, Once a week, Few times a month, Once a month, Few times a year, Hardly ever, and Never].

1. Nearly everyday (4 or more times a week)
2. At least once a week (1 to 3 times)
3. Few times a month (2 to 3 times)
4. At least once a month
5. Few times a year
6. Hardly ever
7. Never

In order to observe differences in frequency of contact within the NSAL sample, the seven response categories were collapsed into three based on estimates of contact over the course of a given year. It was difficult to group the frequency of contact into these categories given that some may consider there to be little difference in contact

between almost daily and once a week. However, when the potential incidents of contact are enumerated there is a considerable difference between once a week contact (approx. 52 times/year), and contact several times a month/ once a month/ and a few times a year (approx. 4 – 26 times/year) when compared to contact nearly everyday (approx. 300+ times/yr). Because the study focuses on the maintenance of transnational family, cases that fell into hardly ever and never categories were dropped.

Independent Variables

Family Closeness

In the NSAL, family closeness is measured in the question: How close does your family feel to one another? Possible responses were very close, fairly close, not too close, and not at all close. Family closeness was collapsed into two categories; very close and fairly close through not at all close. The rationale for collapsing the variable in this manner was in keeping with the conceptualization and interpretation of the variable by the survey's developers. The key distinction in responses is between individuals who indicate that they perceive their family feels very close to each other and those who perceive less than very close relations.

1. Very close
2. Fairly close
3. Not too close
4. Not at all close

Familial Assistance and Reciprocity Variables

Reciprocity among family members was assessed using three survey questions and questions regarding respondents' perceptions and attitudes about family exchanges and responsibility. Below are the NSAL survey questions used.

Respondent helps family – Give help

The inclusion of this question stems from both information from participants in the qualitative portion of the study and from literature on international migration and Caribbean families. In both interviews with members of the four study families and focus group participants, individuals stated that they had sent some money and/or material goods to family members in the Caribbean since their migration. As discussed previously, Caribbean immigrants have a history of sending material goods in barrels to relatives residing in the islands. This question approximates that type of activity, particularly for the sub-sample respondents who have the majority of their family members residing outside of the U.S.

How often do you help out people in your family – including children, grandparents, aunts, uncles, in-laws and so on – help you out? Would you say very often, fairly often, not too often, or never?

1. Very often
2. Fairly often
3. Not too often
4. Never

6. Never needed help
7. I have no family

Respondent gets help from family – Get help

The rationale for this question emerged from the qualitative data in which participants repeatedly stated that they received assistance, primarily financial, from relatives during and immediately after their migration to the U.S.

Furthermore, receiving assistance across international borders, either material or financial, would likely entail some form of contact between the parties involved to ensure the safe receipt of the sent item(s).

How often do people in your family – including children, grandparents, aunts, uncles, in-laws and so on – help you out? Would you say very often, fairly often, not too often, or never?

1. Very often
2. Fairly often
3. Not too often
4. Never
5. Never needed help

Respondent aids family financially

In the case of first generation immigrants, providing financial assistance to family members residing in the country of origin is defined in the literature as

remittances. For the sub-sample used in the quantitative analysis of this study, this question does approximate evidence of remittance behavior. The inclusion of this question was not only to use it as a proxy for remittances but also to distinguish monetary assistance from any other forms of assistance that were possibly captured in the “give help” question. This question is from the Caribbean re-interview survey and is nested in a series of questions on family support and relationship quality.

How about the things you do for your immediate and extended family members, other than your spouse or partner? How often do you help them financially?

Very often, fairly often, not too often, never?

1. Very often
2. Fairly often
3. Not too often
4. Never

Perceived parental expectations for assistance from adult children – Reciprocity

A reciprocity variable was constructed using two questions from a three question module on respondents’ perceived parental expectations of assistance from adult children. Statistical tests were conducted to determine if the two related statements could be combined into a single measure of attitudes of reciprocity.

This variable was seen as an important indicator of kin contact given the focus of the study on the maintenance of transnational families among adult immigrants.

Additionally, it allowed for significance testing of the impact of socio-cultural attitudes discussed in Caribbean literature on family and kinship.

Please answer the following questions in terms of your own beliefs and not in terms of the actual circumstances of your family. For each one, please indicate how much you agree with each statement.

A) Older people should be able to depend on their adult children to help them do things they need to do.

B) Parents are entitled to some return for the sacrifices they have made for their children.

1. Strongly agree
2. Somewhat agree
3. Somewhat disagree
4. Strongly disagree

Perceived gendered expectations of daughters to assist older parents – Gendered Responsibility

This is the third question in the reciprocity module. Due to the gendered nature of this statement and the focus of this study it was determined that separating the question from the other two questions would provide a better understanding of respondents attitudes regarding assistance to aging parents and the influence of gender on those attitudes. Response options for this statement are the same as those listed above.

Adult daughters are more responsible for older parents than are adult sons.

1. Strongly agree
2. Somewhat agree
3. Somewhat disagree
4. Strongly disagree

Length of Residency or Stay

The immigrant respondent's residency in the U.S is captured in the variable "length of stay." Categories were used; less than ten years in the U.S., between ten and nineteen years, and over 20 years in the U.S.

Quantitative Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis has been a concurrent process during data collection such that information like key terms or concepts provided in previous interviews may guide the understanding of subsequent interview data. In Chapters Five and Six these data are analyzed by viewing the data through the theoretical lens, discussed in the previous chapter, to assist in understanding the particular behaviors or motivations that emerge from the participants' experiences.

NSAL data is analyzed to produce cross-tabulations of the differences in the frequency of contact with relatives residing abroad by gender, family closeness,

reciprocity, income, education, and length of stay in the U.S. The Rao-Scott chi-square represents a complex design-corrected measure of the association between the selected variables (SAS institute, Inc. 2005). Logistic regression is used to examine the significance of gender over other independent variables in influencing the frequency of transnational contact. The .05 level of significance represented the cutoff for assessing statistical significance. Due to the complex-design of the NSAL and the delicate nature of the data, all quantitative data analyses were conducted by a PRBA analyst specializing in hierarchical data using SAS Version 9.0.

Given the exploratory nature of this study, no hypotheses were formulated regarding the relationship between the dependent variable, frequency of contact and the independent variables. Expected outcomes, however, were in keeping with the theoretical perspectives guiding the study that the frequency of kin contact is most influenced by gender, kinscription, a combination of the two or some other factor(s). Therefore, I had three expected outcomes for the logistic regression: (1) If gender is the primary factor influencing the frequency of contact between immigrants and their kin, then the gender variable would maintain significance across all logistic models; (2) Although kinscription is not a measurable variable in the NSAL, it could possibly be associated with patterns of reciprocity contained within the “give help” variable. If kinscription was primarily responsible for the frequency of contact with kin, then the “give help” variable might remain significant across the models; and (3) Other factors which emerged from the qualitative data and the chi-square analysis as impacting contact behavior, such as income or “getting help” from family members, would remain

significant even with the inclusion of gender. To explore which variables would most influence the frequency of kin contact among respondents, eight logistic models were used [See Table 2].

Table 2: Logistic regression models for predicting contact frequency

Variable	Model 1 & 5	Model 2 & 6	Model 3 & 7	Model 4 & 8
Sex	X	X	X	X
Income	X	X	X	X
Give Help				
Very vs. fairly often		X		X
Fairly vs. not to often/ never		X		X
Get Help	X			X
Daughters Responsible ¹⁹				
Strongly Agree			X	X
Somewhat Agree			X	X
Somewhat Disagree			X	X

The small sample size (n = 101) for the variables used in the logistic regression required that the total number of variables in each model not exceed five. Eight logistic regression models were run with varying combinations of variables. All of the variables selected for the logistic regression were found to have a significant bivariate relationship with the dependent variable, frequency of contact, by the Chi-square analysis. Gender (or sex) was included in all eight models given that it is the central focus of this study. The

¹⁹ “Daughters Responsible” refers to survey question regarding respondents’ perceptions that adult daughters are more responsible for the care of older parents than adult sons. The item’s responses are compared to strongly disagree response.

purpose of maintaining gender in the analysis was also to distinguish when other factors such as reciprocal behaviors may suppress the effect of gender on the contact behavior. Income was also kept in all eight models. In the first four models the dependent variable frequency of contact is collapsed into nearly everyday contact versus all other frequencies of contact (at least once a week, a few times a month, at least once a month, a few times a year, etc.). In models five through eight, the dependent variable frequency of contact is collapsed into nearly everyday and at least once a week versus all other frequencies. The independent variables are the same and are entered in the same order as models one through four.

Although the primary conceptualization of this research is as a qualitative study, the findings of the quantitative analysis are presented first, in the next chapter. These findings provide the basis for understanding the associations between factors that influence the frequency of contact among the study population. The qualitative findings, presented in Chapters Five and Six, provide the context for how the significant factors indicated by the quantitative analysis operate within the lives of individuals and families. It is through the qualitative analysis that the role of gender and kin-designation in the work of transnational kin relations are explored. While the quantitative analysis can determine that gender is a significant variable impacting immigrant contacting behavior, such analyses cannot distinguish how gender actually operates within families or the variation in behavior within gender groups. Finally, the qualitative findings provide a more complete picture of meanings and attitudes associated with kinship relations, gender, communication, family closeness, and migration.

CHAPTER 4

CONTACT WITH TRANSNATIONAL KIN

This chapter addresses my first research question by exploring the type, frequency, and extent of contact with transnational kin. NSAL data, collected from English-speaking Afro-Caribbean immigrants, was used to explore the relationship between gender and other factors with the frequency of contact among respondents with transnational relatives. Literature on international migration, transnational and Caribbean families, and evidence from the qualitative component of this study suggest that several factors, such as gender, family closeness and demographic characteristics like income and education should impact the frequency of contact among the study population. Bivariate analysis is utilized to explore the relationship and significance of these factors on the frequency of contact. The chapter concludes with eight logistic regression models. Variables for these models were selected from the factors that emerged as significant from the bivariate analysis. The logistic regression models are utilized to determine which factors may have the greatest impact on determining the frequency of contact with transnational relatives among the Afro-Caribbean survey respondents.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, child shifting arrangements²⁰ were not a primary concern for qualitative study participants. However, the NSAL data does not

²⁰ Child shifting arrangements refer to necessary child care for children remaining in the country of origin at the time of their parents' migration. All four brothers in the Gibson family were left in Trinidad for a short period and the overwhelming nature of the family's transnational contact took place well after this period. Also, in the Curey family, Lydia has sent her eldest child to live with his father in St. Croix.

allow for any distinctions in the location of respondent's children or for the identification of child shifting arrangements. Additionally, while the purpose of this study was not directed toward the investigation of cross-national marital relations, it is likely that some of the family relations of NSAL respondents may fit this category. Again, the NSAL data does not identify the country of residence for spouses living apart.

Finally, there are two other NSAL data clarifications that must be addressed in order to understand the comparability between this study's qualitative and quantitative data. First, in the NSAL "contact" is defined as the frequency with which respondents "see, write, or talk on the telephone with family or relatives who do not live with you." As mentioned previously, the NSAL data used in this dissertation come from English-speaking, Afro-Caribbean first-generation immigrants to the United States (n = 514). A sub-set of that group (n=101), those respondents with the majority of their family residing outside of the United States, is used as a proxy and identified as members of a transnational family. Second, the definition of contact in the NSAL does not distinguish the method of contact [e.g. visits or telephone calls] and does not indicate the direction or duration of contact. These latter issues are directly explored, in detail, using the family interviews and focus group data presented in the next two chapters. The ultimate purpose of using NSAL was to further examine the role of gender and other demographic factors impacting family contact behaviors among a broader cross-section of the study population.

The Frequency of Contact, Family Closeness and Gender

A primary objective of this dissertation research was to investigate the role of gender in transnational family contact. Table 3 shows the frequency of contact with family for all NSAL first generation, English-speaking, Afro-Caribbean respondents by gender (n=505). The responses to this question begin to indicate that there may be a gender difference in family/ kinship connections, at least in regard to the frequency of contact. Women appear to be more likely to contact family members once a week [40%] or every day [36%]. Men are more evenly distributed among every day, once a week and a few times a month responses. About eight percent of Afro-Caribbean women respondents are in the last three categories of very limited contact with family, while nearly 12% of men are in these categories. In the two categories of most frequent contact, every day and once a week, there is a large gender differential, with approximately 77% of women and only 54% of men indicating the highest frequency of contact. Men appear to be overrepresented in the remaining categories of contact frequency, a few times a month or less, compared to women. Almost 46% of male respondents indicated that they contacted relatives less than a few times a year while only 21% of women responded similarly.

The frequency of contact with family where the majority of family members reside outside of the US is presented in Table 4. In this case, these respondents are considered as members of transnational families. Responses indicate that when most

family members live outside of the United States, Afro-Caribbean women appear to contact other family members more often than men. Nearly 46% of the women state that they contact some family member every day and 48% were contacting a family member at least once a week. Men, on the other hand, appear to be predominately contacting family a few times a month or less (about 62%) or contacting family every day, twenty-one percent. Again, as in previous table, men are represented more in the categories of substantially less contact with family members. The gender difference in the frequency of contact among NSAL respondents is statistically significant (See Table 4, $X^2 = 37.61$, $F = 18.80$, $p = <.0001$). The Rao-Scott chi-square test of statistical significance was used in each of the bivariate analyses with a significance level of $p = 0.05$ or less.

Table 3: Frequency of contact with family for first generation English-speaking Afro-Caribbean immigrants by gender [NSAL]

<u>Freq of Contact w/ family</u>	<u>Men</u>	<u>Women</u>
Every day	31.31	36.57
Once a week	22.84	40.27
Few times a month	29.24	12.88
Once a month	4.93	2.73
Few times a year	3.89	1.06
Hardly ever	5.28	6.09
Never	2.50	0.41
TOTAL	100.0	100.0
n = 505		

Table 4: Frequency of contact with family for first generation English-speaking Afro-Caribbean immigrants with most family residing outside of the US by gender

<u>Frequency of Contact</u>	<u>Men</u>	<u>Women</u>
Every day	21.09	46.07
Once a week	16.80	48.06
Few times a month/ once a month/ a few times a year	62.11	5.87
Total	100.00	100.00
F = 18.80 p = <.0001 n = 96		

There is a substantive difference in the categories of contact frequency. Almost daily contact with family members would result in a rough estimate of 300 to 365 contacts incidents annually. Weekly contact significantly reduces the frequency of contact to about 52 times per year. Contact of several times a month to once a month further reduces total number of annual contacts to between 12 and 26 times. Taking these estimates of contact into account, there are stark gender differences in the frequency of contact. In Table 3, it would mean that 77% of women are contacting family 52 times a year or more while only 54% of men contact family that frequently. Among those with transnational family members, 46% of women contact family members 300 or more times per year. The majority of men with transnational relatives, 62%, contact family members less than 26 times per year compared to only 6% of women in that category.

It could be presumed that for individuals the frequency of contact with relatives is associated with their feelings of closeness with family members. Therefore, I examined the issue of family closeness using data from the NSAL. Survey respondents were asked:

How close does your family feel towards each other? Available responses were very close, somewhat close, and so on. The following table shows responses for respondents with transnational families – the majority of family members residing outside the United States. Respondents that perceived their family as being very close to each other tended to actually contact their families with less frequency than those who felt their family was fairly close to not at all close. Only twenty-seven percent of those who contacted family everyday claimed their families as being very close while almost 48% of those who felt their family as fairly close to not at all close contacted their transnational kin nearly everyday. Additionally, of the respondents who contacted their family the least, fewer than 26 days a year, approximately thirty-eight percent claimed that their family was very close. The rationale for this gap in the perception of family closeness and contact behavior is uncertain. Perhaps those that feel greater closeness within the family also perceive that they do not need to contact their family so often. Or those who contact their families frequently are attempting to foster an increase in the family's level of closeness by maintaining nearly daily contact with transnational family. In either case, the relationship between perceptions of family closeness and frequency of contact is not statistically significant ($p = 0.3782$). Although it could be assumed that family closeness and contact were closely related, the NSAL data suggest that perhaps the relationship between them is contextualized by other factors and decidedly more complex.

Table 5: Frequency of contact with transnational family by feelings of closeness to family members

<u>Contact family</u>	<u>Closeness to Family</u>	
	<u>Very close</u>	<u>Fairly close to not at all close</u>
Nearly everyday	27.26	47.94
At least once a week	35.14	39.26
A few times a month/ once a month/ a few times a year	37.60	12.80
Total	100.00	100.00
F = 0.9784 p = .3782 n = 96		

The perception of family closeness becomes a bit more understandable when observed by gender as presented in Table 6. Here, men appear to perceive greater closeness within their families than do women ($X^2 = 8.55$, $df = 1$, $n = 97$, $p = .0045$). The gender difference in the perception of family closeness is considerable. Nearly seventy-three percent of men assess their family closeness as being very close compared to about forty percent of women. The significant gender difference occurs in spite of the fact that men in the sample appear to contact family members less frequently than women (see Table 4).

Table 6: Family closeness for respondents with most family residing outside of the US by gender

<u>Feelings of Closeness</u>	<u>Men</u>	<u>Women</u>
Very close	72.93	39.32
Fairly close, not too close, not at all close	27.07	60.68
Total	100.0	100.0
F = 8.5459 p = .0045 n = 97		

Parental Expectations and the Frequency of Contact

It was strongly anticipated that the internalized socio-cultural expectations of Afro-Caribbean adult children would dramatically affect the frequency of contact they maintained with their family residing abroad. This expectation was derived from literature on Caribbean families, as well as through interviews with participants, in which parental expectations for behavior appeared to be a recurring theme though the articulation of those expectations may be quite subtle. Perceived parent expectations of adult children were addressed in the NSAL in terms of beliefs regarding expected returns to parents for the care and sacrifices they made for their children. Two statements in an existing three question module²¹ were combined to form a reciprocity measure; (1) older people should be able to depend on their adult children and (2) parents are entitled to some return from their adult children. Both statements refer to respondent perceptions of parental expectations of reciprocity for adult children and are therefore subjective responses closely bound to the respondents' socialization experiences and cultural attitudes. The reciprocity scale combines the strongly agree responses to both statements into the category strong parental expectations of reciprocity. All other response combinations were collapsed into the category moderate to low parental expectations of reciprocity.

Contrary to expectations, findings indicate that respondents' perceived parental

²¹ Survey questions: A) Older people should be able to depend on their adult children to help them do the things they need to do. B) Parents are entitled to some return for the sacrifices they have made for their children. C) Adult daughters are more responsible for older parents than are adult sons.

expectations of their behavior did not significantly influence the frequency of contact with transnational relatives (See Table 7: $X^2 = 1.2350$, $F = .6175$, $p = .5406$, $df = 2$, $n = 94$). Strong agreement with parental expectations of reciprocity does appear to be related to almost daily contact with family (41.32%). Respondents with moderate to low perceptions of parental expectations of reciprocity appear to be represented in the weekly contact category (51.90%) compared to those with strong perceptions (29.66%). However, these associations are not statistically significant. There were no significant gender differences in the perception of parental expectations for adult children. It seems counterintuitive for such a strong socio-cultural influence as perceived parental expectations to not substantially influence the behavior of children, even adult children.

Table 7: Frequency of contact with transnational family by perceived parental expectations of reciprocity

<u>Contact family</u>	<u>Strong Parental Expectations</u>	<u>Moderate to Low Parental Expectations</u>
Nearly everyday	41.32	30.04
At least once a week	29.66	51.90
A few times a month/ once a month/ a few times a year	29.02	18.06
Total	100.00	100.00
$F = .6175$ $p = .5406$ $n = 94$		

**Table 8: Frequency of contact with transnational family
by gendered expectations for daughters in the care of older parents**

<u>Contact family</u>	<u>Strongly Agree</u>	<u>Somewhat Agree</u>	<u>Somewhat Disagree</u>	<u>Strongly Disagree</u>
Nearly everyday	83.87	16.38	32.65	12.09
At least once a week	10.07	42.71	34.66	62.11
A few times a month/ once a month/ a few times a year	6.06	40.91	32.69	25.80
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

F = 8.5001 p = < 0.0001 n = 94

The third question in the module specifically addressed the role of adult daughters rather than the responsibility of adult children for elders, in general. The question read, “adult daughters are more responsible for older parents than adult sons.” Due to the gendered nature of the third question it is addressed separately in the bivariate analysis with the frequency of contact [See Table 8]. Unlike the reciprocity measure discussed above, gendered parental expectations, that daughters were responsible for parents, was significantly associated with respondents’ frequency of contact with relatives ($X^2 = 51.0035$, $F = 8.5006$, $p = < .0001$, $df = 6$, $n = 94$). The overwhelming majority of respondents who agreed with the gendered expectation statement were represented in the daily contact category, almost 84%. Respondents who contacted family with less frequency were more likely to have moderate to no agreement with the gendered statement that adult daughters were more responsible than adult sons in caring for older parents. There was no significant gender differences in the respondents’ attitudes that daughters are more responsible for older parents than sons ($X^2 = 3.5176$, $F = 1.1725$, $p = 0.3208$, $df = 3$, $n = 99$). Additionally, for parental expectations of reciprocity there were

no significant variations in responses by gender ($X^2 = 1.1447$, $F = 1.1447$, $p = 0.2879$, $df = 1$ $n = 99$).

Interestingly, even among those who strongly disagreed with the statement 62% still maintained weekly contact with family members. This finding suggests that among survey respondents there is likely a deep cultural orientation or expectation of weekly contact with family. Such a socio-cultural orientation toward a weekly gathering of immediate and extended family members is referred to throughout Caribbean literature and has been found to be continued in a modified form post-migration (e.g. Chamberlain 1997, Foner 1987). A similar focus on weekly contact was found among the current study's sample families and focus group participants.

Other Factors that Impact Transnational Kin Contact

During fieldwork it became apparent that multiple issues were likely to influence the frequency, extent and direction of contact with transnational family members. The goal of this research project was to investigate how and under what conditions do immigrants residing abroad contact transnational kin. Therefore, the primary direction of contact observed was from the immigrant in the United States to family members living in other countries. Human capital (income and education), the length of stay in the host country and cultural attitudes of reciprocity emerged as key issues impacting kin contact from early interviews with participants and key informants in conjunction with the literature on Caribbean families, social mobility and history of migration. How these

issues impact contact are presented in the following section.

Human Capital and Contact

According to the NSAL, Afro-Caribbean respondents' educational attainment appears to have a bimodal impact on the frequency of contact, with those at the extreme ends of educational attainment having more frequent contact than those in the middle range (See Table 9; $X^2 = 24.10$, $df = 6$, $n = 96$, $p = .0024$). Respondents with less than a high school education contacted their family members most frequently, nearly everyday (57%). Those respondents with more than sixteen years of education were next in most frequent kin contact with thirty-five percent contacting family members nearly every day. Overall, the majority of persons at each education level responded that they contacted family once a week with the exception of those without a high school diploma.

Table 9: Frequency of contact with transnational kin by educational attainment

<u>Frequency of Contact</u>	<u>Level Education</u>			
	<u>< HS</u>	<u>HS</u>	<u>Some College</u>	<u>BA or More</u>
Nearly every day	56.69	22.27	20.67	34.94
Once a week	9.69	50.66	66.22	43.09
Few times a month or less	33.62	27.07	13.11	21.97
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
$F = 27.8671$	$p = .0008$	$n = 96$		

Table 10: Frequency of contact with transnational kin by income

<u>Frequency of Contact</u>	<u>Annual Family Income</u>			
	<u>< \$18,000</u>	<u>\$18–39,999</u>	<u>\$32-54,999</u>	<u>\$55,000 +</u>
Nearly every day	14.38	27.80	28.17	58.47
Once a week	28.57	38.98	66.58	23.00
Few times a month or less	57.05	33.22	5.25	18.53
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

F = 27.8671 p = .0008 n = 96

Because the NSAL sample for this study is comprised of adult first generation Afro-Caribbean immigrants age 25 years or older at the time of the interview, it is possible that the relationship between education and contact is mediated by income or some other factor that accounts for the reduced levels of contact among respondents with high school diplomas through some college. As expected, income was significantly related to the frequency of contact among the survey respondents (See Table 10; $X^2 = 27.8671$, $df = 6$, $n = 96$, $p = .0008$). The percentage of respondents with the majority of their family residing abroad who stated that they contacted family members every day increases steadily with income. Those Afro-Caribbeans who had a family income of over \$55,000 also had the largest percentage of persons contacting family nearly every day (58%). Those persons with a family income of less than \$18,000 had the most respondents who contacted their family a few times a month or less. Contacting family members about once a week appears to be the primary option for those with family incomes between \$32,000 and \$54,999. The bimodal distribution for educational attainment and contact was not evident in the relationship between respondents' income

and frequency of contact. This may indicate that among NSAL Caribbean immigrants there may not be a direct relationship between educational attainment and income.

For NSAL respondents the relationship between the immigrants' frequency of contact and length of stay in the U.S. is presented below [Table 11]. There was a significant relationship between the length of stay and contact with kin, although the pattern of contact behavior was difficult to interpret ($X^2 = 18.633$, $df = 4$, $p = .0012$, $n = 96$). Among respondents, everyday contact with transnational kin appears to peak between ten and twenty years after migration (52%) and declines slightly for those who migrated more than twenty years ago (41%). Sixty-seven percent of those who migrated less than ten years ago stated they contact family once a week. So, it would appear that recent migrants contact family less frequently than do long-term migrants. A generational effect may explain the difference in contact behavior among immigrants. Long-term immigrants who contact relatives everyday are more likely to be older with higher incomes, as well, and may possibly be following a socially expected pattern of communication among family members that was developed during their formative years in the Caribbean. It is possible that the social norms of family contact have shifted somewhat for more recent migrants. However, if everyday and weekly contact are combined, a distinctly different image of contact behavior emerges. Eighty-five percent of respondents who migrated less than ten years ago indicated that they contacted transnational relatives at least once a week compared to 70% of those who migrated between 10 and 20 years ago and about 61% who migrated over 20 years ago.

Table 11: Frequency of contact with transnational kin by length of stay in the US

<u>Frequency of Contact</u>	<u>Length of Stay</u>		
	<u>< 10 Years</u>	<u>10-19 Years</u>	<u>Over 20 Years</u>
Every day	17.71	52.28	41.10
Once a week	67.50	17.86	19.87
Few times a month/ once a month/ a few times a year	14.79	29.86	17.24
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00
F = 4.6583 p = .0012 n = 96			

Family Reciprocity: Giving and Getting Help

Family reciprocity was examined in an attempt to better understand the discrepancies in immigrant respondents' contact behavior based on education, income and length of stay discussed above. Given the importance of remittances to many immigrant families, the variable "giving help to family" was considered as an influencing factor in the frequency of contact with transnational kin. Alternatively, the variable "getting help from family" was also considered. Data from interviews with members of the four study families and focus group participants suggested that some immigrants, particularly those from middle class backgrounds, are receiving aid from their families rather than providing assistance in the form of remittances. The following two tables (Tables 12 and 13) present the bivariate analysis of the relationship between contact frequency and giving help to and getting help from family members.

Among survey respondents the frequency of contact with family members was significantly influenced by the frequency of assistance given to family members (See Table 12; $X^2 = 22.51$, $df = 4$, $n = 96$). As mentioned previously, the respondents are first-generation Afro-Caribbean immigrants who state that the majority of their immediate family members live outside of the United States. For these respondents giving help to relatives located abroad, most likely in the country of origin, would be classified as a transnational activity. Over ninety-five percent of those respondents who contacted kin either every day or at least once a week indicated they provide help “very often” to other family members. Respondents who stated they infrequently or never gave help to family members (60%) had significantly less contact with family members, a few times a month or less.

Table 12: Frequency of contact with transnational kin by frequency of “Giving Help” to family members

Frequency of Contact	Give Help		
	Very often	Fairly often	Not often/ Never
Every day	50.56	14.97	25.61
Once a week	45.66	40.57	13.67
Few times a month/ once a month/ a few times a year	3.78	44.46	60.72
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00
F = 5.6279 p = <.0002 n = 96			

Receiving assistance or “getting help” from family members was significantly correlated with the frequency of contact with relatives for respondents with transnational families ($r = .52683$, $p = <.0001$), and there was no substantial gender difference (See

Table 13). The Chi Square bivariate analysis showed that of the 52% of respondents that had contact with transnational relatives nearly everyday also received help from family very often or fairly often ($X^2 = 19.91$, $df = 4$, $n = 96$). In contrast, approximately 78% of respondents who received assistance from family infrequently made contact with family abroad about once a week or less.

The data presented in Table 13 clearly indicates that there is an association between exchanges of assistance with family members and the degree of contact with those kin even in a transnational context. However, within this context how respondents are actually defining “help” is rather ambiguous. Help could be monetary, such as remittances, or other forms of assistance, such as sending needed material goods. As discussed in Chapter Two, sending barrels packed with clothes, household items, and other material goods to relatives remaining in the home country is a common practice among Afro-Caribbean immigrants. For example, during field research for this study I interviewed a woman in her home who had in her living room a large, blue, plastic barrel that she was filling in preparation to ship to her sister living in Guyana. On another occasion, I came across a shipping service in a storefront located in a predominately Caribbean section of South Florida. Barrels were shipped by freighter from Miami to all the islands in the Caribbean. Generally, shipping took about one week. Giving financial assistance to family members residing abroad is classified as a rendering a remittance. Providing financial assistance was addressed separately in the NSAL, although it is possible that respondents did not distinguish between giving help in general and giving financial help.

Table 13: Frequency of contact with transnational kin by frequency of by “Getting Help” from family

<u>Frequency of Contact</u>	<u>Getting Help</u>	
	<u>Very often</u> <u>Fairly often</u>	<u>Not too often</u> <u>Never</u>
Every day	52.07	22.22
Once a week	23.03	59.91
Few times a month/ once a month/ a few times a year	24.90	17.87
Total	100.00	100.00

F = 4.9775 p = .0007 n = 96

For NSAL respondents with the majority of their family members residing abroad, providing financial assistance to kin was not statistically significant in impacting the frequency of contact. In Table 14 below, forty-seven percent of the respondents, male and female, reported that they often gave financial help to family members and contacted family nearly everyday compared to 53% who frequently provided financial assistance but, contacted family once a week, or less. Among those who did not give financial assistance often to immediate and extended family members, twenty-three percent contacted family nearly everyday and 76% made contact with kin once a week, or less. It is difficult to ascertain from the data if the family members who are being contacted are the ones receiving assistance from the respondents. Additionally for these data, it is unclear what type of help immigrants are giving their transnational kin that does influence the frequency of contact if it is not financial assistance.

Table 14: Frequency of contact with transnational kin by frequency of helping to family members financially

<u>Frequency of Contact</u>	<u>Help Financially</u>	
	<u>Very often</u> <u>Fairly often</u>	<u>Not too often</u> <u>Never</u>
Every day	47.36	23.24
Once a week	35.64	38.53
Few times a month/ once a month/ a few times a year	17.00	38.23
Total	100.00	100.00

F = 1.0101 p = 0.3666 n = 95

Table 15: Helping family members financially by gender

<u>Help Financially</u>	<u>Men</u>	<u>Women</u>
Very often, Fairly often	35.10	68.77
Not too often, Never	64.90	31.23
Total	100.00	100.00

F = 6.5213 p = .0125 n = 100

Table 15 shows a rather striking and statistically significant difference in providing financial assistance to relatives by gender with 68% of women giving more frequent financial assistance than men (35%) ($X^2 = 6.521$, $df = 1$, $n = 100$). So, although financially assisting family members did not appear to impact the frequency of contact with transnational kin (Table 14), there seems to be a significant difference in who is giving financial assistance (Table 15). For Afro-Caribbeans in the NSAL sub-sample, the socio-cultural expectations of men to contribute to the family may be consistent with the

imbalance in men's perceptions of family closeness and their kin contact behavior. As discussed above, the NSAL male respondents generally feel greater closeness to their families even though they contact family members with less frequency than women. Additionally, according to the findings presented in Table 15 above, NSAL male respondents contribute less financial assistance to their relatives than do women.

These findings are interesting as they may suggest that for men the gender role expectations of the "good provider," clearly the ideal in the Caribbean literature on gender, may not extend to providing for family members other than their spouse and children. Given that the transnational family used here is defined by immediate family members residing outside of the U.S., it is probable, although not definite, that the "immediate" family members referred to by respondents are parents, not spouses and children. The socio-cultural expectation that daughters rather than sons assist aging parents is suggested in the qualitative data and is discussed in greater detail in Chapter Six. To foreshadow those findings here, the interviews among the four study families, focus group participants and key informants suggests that the size and gender composition of the family influences patterns of kin contact and family reciprocity.

Logistic Regression

In order to gain further insight into the factors that appear to influence the frequency of contact, eight logistic regression models were conducted. Due to the small sample size, the number of variables in the logistic regression models was limited to

those identified by the bivariate analysis as having a significant impact on the dependent variable, frequency of contact. The variables presented in the tables above had a statistically significant relationship with respondents' contact behavior: gender, perceived gendered expectations of reciprocity with parents, educational attainment, income, length of residency in the U.S., and giving to and getting help from family members. Of these variables, all except education and length of residency were selected for logistic regression analysis. Because of the close relationship between educational attainment and income it was thought to be slightly redundant to include both variables, particularly given the statistical restrictions on the use of logistical regression on small sample (models are limited to five variables).

The rationale for conducting logistical regression analysis was to distinguish factors that had the greatest influence on the frequency of contact with transnational relatives among the survey respondents. The respondents' gender was considered to have the greatest potential in impacting contact behavior and therefore was included in each model, as was income. Furthermore, the dependent variable, frequency of contact, was collapsed in two ways; (1) everyday contact compared to all other frequencies of contact, and (2) everyday and weekly contact versus all other contact. According to the principal investigator²² on the NSAL, the first interpretation of contact, everyday versus others, is consistent with the original conceptualization and expectation of the distribution of responses to the survey item. The second interpretation of the contact, everyday and

²² James S. Jackson, Ph.D., Director of the Institute for Social Research (ISR), University of Michigan and former Director of the Program for Research on Black Americans located within the Research Center on Group Dynamics in ISR, the group that developed and executed the NSAL.

weekly versus all others, takes into consideration the substantive and socio-cultural significance of contact as potentially conceived by survey respondents. Gender or sex was coded male = 1 and female = 0. Income is the imputed family income reported for each respondent. The Wald Chi-Square statistic was used to determine the overall goodness-of-fit for each model. According to that fitness test, all models were statistically significant at the 0.05 level or better, except for Model 2. The odds ratios and significance for the logistic regression models are presented in the following two tables (Tables 16 and 17).

Table 16: Logistic regression models for predicting contact frequency, EVERYDAY vs. OTHERS, presenting odds ratios. NSAL

<u>Variable</u>	<u>Model 1</u>	<u>Model 2</u>	<u>Model 3</u>	<u>Model 4</u>
Sex	0.429	0.370	0.392	0.528
Income	1.000*	1.000*	1.000	1.000
Give Help				
Very vs. fairly often		0.807		0.900
Fairly vs. not to often/ never		0.209		0.303
Get Help	3.504			2.948
Daughters Responsible ²³				
Strongly Agree			23.484**	10.809**
Somewhat Agree			1.795	0.624
Somewhat Disagree			4.753	3.809

Significance is indicated by p-values: * p< 0.01; ** p<0.001

Table 16 presents the first four logistic regression models in which the dependent variable is divided into everyday/daily contact versus other categories. In Models 1 and 2, only income was a significant factor in determining the frequency of contact between respondents and their relatives²³. In each model, respondents with higher incomes were more likely to contact family members frequently. The reciprocity variables of giving help to or receiving help from relatives did not produce a significant effect on the contact behavior when income was considered. The rationale for the logistical regression analysis was to observe the effect of gender on contact behavior in comparison with other factors. In both Models 1 and 2, gender is not a significant factor influencing contact behavior among the NSAL Caribbean respondents. The bi-variate analysis indicated that

²³ “Daughters Responsible” refers to survey question regarding respondent’s perceptions that adult daughters are more responsible for the care of older parents than adult sons. Items responses are compared to strongly disagree responses.

there were no significant gender differences in income within the sample ($X^2 = 3.7123$, $F = 1.2374$, $p = 0.2967$, $df = 3$, $n = 101$).

In Model 3, the variable “daughters’ responsible,” which measures perceived parental expectations of adult daughters’ responsibilities to care for aging parents, was added to the model and the reciprocity variables were removed. While the model itself was highly significant (Wald $X^2 = 21.05$, $p = 0.0008$) only those respondents who strongly agreed with daughters’ being responsible for older parents were statistically more likely to contact family members. Those that did agree strongly were 24 times more likely to contact kin everyday than those who strongly disagreed with the statement. The relationship between the perception of a gendered responsibility in caring for aging parents was continued in Model 4. This model includes all of the variables used in the logistic regression analysis. In this full model the impact of strongly agreeing with daughters’ being responsible for older parents was somewhat reduced from its impact in the previous model. In Model 4, respondents’ who strongly agreed with the gender statement of responsibility were 10 times more likely to contact family daily than those who strongly disagreed with that statement. Interestingly, in both Models 3 and 4 income was no longer a statistically significant factor impacting respondents’ frequency of contact. It appears that the influence of gendered responsibility has greater explanatory power on contact behavior than does the respondents’ income.

Table 17: Logistic regression models for predicting contact frequency, EVERYDAY & WEEKLY vs. others, presenting odds ratios. NSAL

<u>Variable</u>	<u>Model 5</u>	<u>Model 6</u>	<u>Model 7</u>	<u>Model 8</u>
Sex	0.025**	0.067**	0.034	0.046**
Income	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
Give Help				
Very vs. fairly often		10.745		24.282**
Fairly vs. not to often/ never		0.786*		1.041
Get Help	0.378			1.279
Daughters Responsible ²⁴				
Strongly Agree			3.801**	5.073
Somewhat Agree			0.719	3.116
Somewhat Disagree			1.838	2.713

Significance is indicated by p-values: * p< 0.01; ** p<0.001

Table 17 displays the logistic regression models in which the dependent variable is everyday/daily and weekly contact versus all other frequencies of contact [Models 5 through 8]. Income was not significant in any of these models. The gender differences in contact behavior are more apparent and statistically significant in Models 5, 6 and 8, as compared to the previous models presented in Table 16. Model 5 indicates that men are nearly 97% less likely than women to contact family members everyday or weekly. The inclusion of the reciprocity variables produced mixed results. Whether or not the respondents received help from their relatives did not have a significant impact on their frequency of contact with family. In contrast, giving help to family members did appear

²⁴ “Daughters Responsible” refers to survey question regarding respondent’s perceptions that adult daughters are more responsible for the care of older parents than adult sons. The item’s responses are compared to a strongly disagree response.

to influence the frequency at which NSAL respondents contacted kin. Those respondents who stated that they rarely or never gave help to relatives were about 20% less likely to contact relatives daily or weekly. The inclusion of the give help variable only slightly reduced the gender differential in contact, making men 93% less likely than women to contact kin daily or weekly.

The gendered responsibility variable “daughters’ responsible” was added in Model 7 and the reciprocity variables were removed. The result was that the statistically significant impact of overall gender difference in contact behavior was eliminated. Respondents who strongly agreed with daughters’ being more responsible than sons in caring for aging parents were nearly four times more likely to contact relatives everyday or weekly than those who strongly disagreed with that statement. In Table 16, the odds ratio for the strongly agree response to the “daughters’ responsible” variable, 24 times more likely to contact every day, is significantly greater than the odds ratio for the same variable in Table 17, four times more likely to contact daily or weekly. The inclusion of weekly contact reduced the difference in contact variation between those that strongly agreed and strongly disagreed with the gendered responsibility statement. This finding may indicate that among the survey respondents daily contact with family members is a more distinguishing behavior, particularly given that the majority of relatives reside outside of the U.S.

Model 7 seems to also suggest that the gender differences in contact behavior observed in the bivariate analysis [Table 4] appear to be due to gendered attitudes about

the responsibility for parents. However, the final model (Model 8) appears to complicate the gendered attitude assessment. Model 8 is the full model containing all of the variables for the logistic regression on the frequency of contact, everyday and weekly versus other contact. In this last model the gender differential in contact reemerges. Men are nearly 95% less likely than women to contact relatives daily or weekly. Interestingly, giving help very often to family members surfaces as a significant factor in impacting contact behavior. Respondents who gave assistance to family members very often were 24 times more likely to contact kin daily or weekly compared to those who gave assistance fairly often. Oddly, in this model the gendered responsibility variable loses its significance. In the full model for everyday versus all other contact presented in Model 4 in Table 16, agreement with gendered responsibility did not lose significance. Again, this suggests that the collapsing of the dependent variable is important in identifying variations in respondents' contact behavior and that the everyday contact response is a distinguishing factor.

The logistic regression models indicate that gender is an important factor in impacting the frequency of contact among NSAL Afro-Caribbean immigrant respondents. All of the models indicated that women tended to contact family members with greater frequency than men, although the gender differential was not significant in all eight models. Income, which would seem to be a likely factor in influencing the frequency of contact within transnational immigrant families, was statistically significant only in smaller models where contact was defined as everyday versus all other frequencies of contact. In this case, considering income does assist in distinguishing

immigrant respondents who are making daily contact with family members. However, gender does remain as the most important factor.

Conclusions

Based on the findings discussed above from NSAL survey responses, the frequency of immigrant contact with transnational relatives is significantly impacted by gender, education, income, length of stay in the U.S., degree of family reciprocity or exchange, and the perception of a gendered responsibility for aging parents. The NSAL survey question for contact with family does not distinguish the means of contact [visits, telephone, email, and letters] though given the high frequency of contact in the everyday category it could be assumed that this contact was by telephone or electronic mail.

Feelings of closeness among family members were not significant in influencing the respondents' frequency of contact with family abroad (see Table 5). Additionally, the perception of expected reciprocity or obligations of adult children toward parents did not significantly impact the frequency of contact (see Table 7). Therefore, it would appear that internalized expectations of behaviors toward family relations do not necessarily directly influence contact behavior, the maintenance of kinship ties. The realities of everyday life in the host nation may overshadow immigrants' abilities to contact family abroad as frequently as they might desire. However, the quantitative data of the NSAL does not make it possible to further explore this issue.

There is a clear gender difference in the perception of family closeness that is inconsistent with the gender differences in contact behavior. Perhaps women evaluate closeness on different criteria than men, perhaps they evaluate feelings of closeness within their families more realistically, or they are simply more pessimistic about the closeness of their family relations. It is quite possible that the gender gap in respondents' perceptions of family closeness helps explain why women frequently contact transnational family members, to increase feelings of closeness, and men contact family less frequently because they perceive the family as already very close without the contact. Ultimately, the NSAL survey data cannot clearly provide a definitive answer to the incongruent relationship between perceptions of family closeness, frequency of contact and gender.

Results from the logistic regression analysis indicate that there are significant differences in contact behavior based on gender, attitudes of gendered responsibility for parents, income and familial reciprocity among the NSAL Afro-Caribbean respondents. How the frequency of contact is categorized is important in identifying differences in contact behaviors. When contact is grouped as everyday and weekly, gender differences are less significant than when contact is grouped as everyday versus all other frequencies of contact. Basically, the logistic regression analysis verifies the findings of gender differences in contact presented in the bivariate analysis [See Table 3].

It is clear from the NSAL data that there are gender differences in contact frequency among Afro-Caribbean immigrants in which women are contacting family

members with greater frequency than men. However, these findings do not indicate whether all women within a family or just certain women are contacting relatives frequently. Nor do these data shed light on understanding the men who contact frequently, countering the gendered pattern for the larger group. While the frequency of contact was addressed in the NSAL, the direction and the prioritization of contact cannot be determined. Even if women are in more frequent contact with relatives than men, are the women the initiators or receivers of contact (telephone calls, visits, electronic mail, etc.)? To address how and under what conditions families and individuals are contacting each other it is necessary to turn to qualitative data. Presented in the following two chapters are discussions of the type, frequency, and extent of contact employed by study participants from four Afro-Caribbean immigrant families and two focus groups. This data allows for examination of how the kin work involved in maintaining family relations and contact is distributed within families and the impact of gender, sibling relations, and/or kin-designation on these activities. Also discussed are kin-keepers, or the kin designated role of maintaining family connections and organizing family events.

CHAPTER 5

IMMIGRANT FAMILY CONTACT AND TRANSNATIONAL KIN

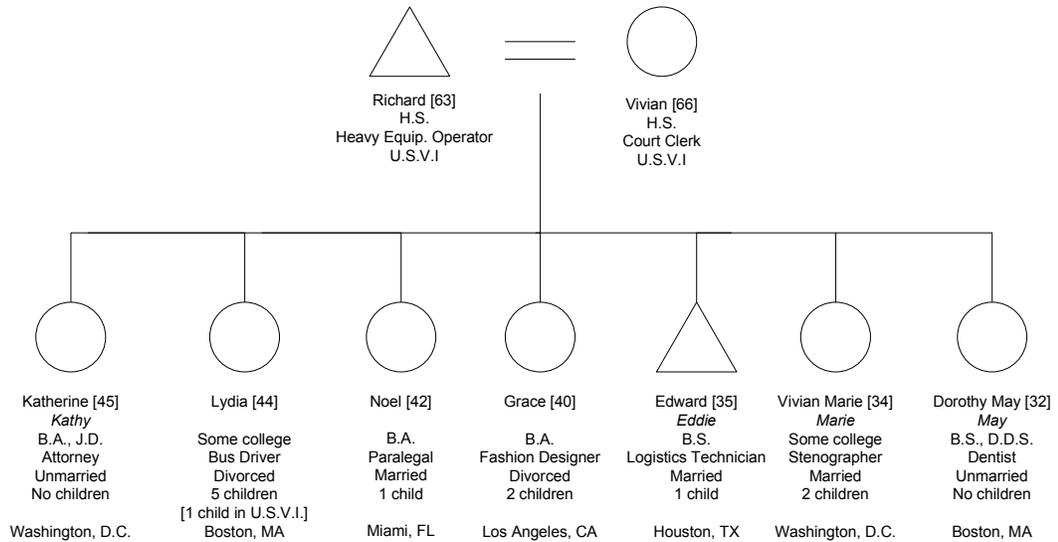
This chapter addresses the primary focus of this dissertation by examining the type, frequency, extent and circumstances of transnational kin contact among English-speaking Caribbean immigrants articulated in the first research questions: Under what conditions or circumstances do West Indian immigrants initiate, maintain, or conversely suspend, connections with family members residing abroad (i.e., transnational kin)? What particular goals or projects of immigrant families increase or decrease the frequency of contact with kinfolk? The chapter is divided into two sections. The first section presents summaries of the four study families, their migration experiences and kinship contact. The second section focuses on the type, frequency and extent of contact and feelings of family closeness among the four study families, group interview participants, and key informants. Data from the group interviews and key informants is used to augment, support or contextualize the patterns of kin contact and family relations observed in the four study families. As mentioned in the methods chapter, no study participants left children in the country of origin at the time of their migration to the U.S., though in one case a child was sent to live with his father in St. Croix. Therefore, contact based on child shifting or the care, well-being and educational needs of children remaining in the home nation was not a major issue for the sample families or the focus group participants.

Four Immigrant Families

1. Curey Family – U.S. Virgin Islands (U.S.V.I)

I gained entry into the family through the eldest sibling Katherine. I met Kathy through a key informant and interviewed her at her office in an affluent business district. Two of the siblings residing in the study locations, metropolitan Washington, DC and South Florida, were interviewed in their homes. The other family members were interviewed via telephone. Communication and coordination with the family took place primarily through electronic mail correspondence. The fact that I gained entry through Kathy foreshadowed the role that Kathy played within the family. All family members migrated to obtain higher education, except one, and are employed primarily in white-collar positions. The father, Richard, migrated from Nevis to the Virgin Islands as a young man prior to his marriage to the mother, Vivian. Richard worked as a heavy equipment operator while the mother was employed as a court clerk.

Curey Family



The parents, particularly the mother Vivian, placed a considerable emphasis on education attainment. The migration of the seven siblings to the U.S. mainland began in 1979 when Katherine, the eldest, left to attend college in Florida. All but one of the other siblings also migrated to attend college. However, several of the siblings returned home to the U.S. Virgin Islands after their initial migration. Noel, Grace, and Vivian Marie each returned for an extended period of time, up to several years, in an attempt to try to find or make employment for themselves and settle on the island after receiving their educations. In all three cases, they were unable to sustain an economically viable return migration and eventually they returned to the U.S. mainland.

Although Lydia is the second eldest sibling, her early marriage and child bearing precluded her attending college. Lydia is currently taking evening classes. Her

migration to the mainland, unlike that of her siblings, was facilitated by a close friend with whom she lived briefly after coming to the U.S. Lydia was on public assistance for the first three years after her arrival with her children following the separation from her husband who remained in U.S.V.I. For Lydia, leaving her children was not an option even though child fostering, the care of children by close relatives or extended family members, is a common family strategy for migrating parents.

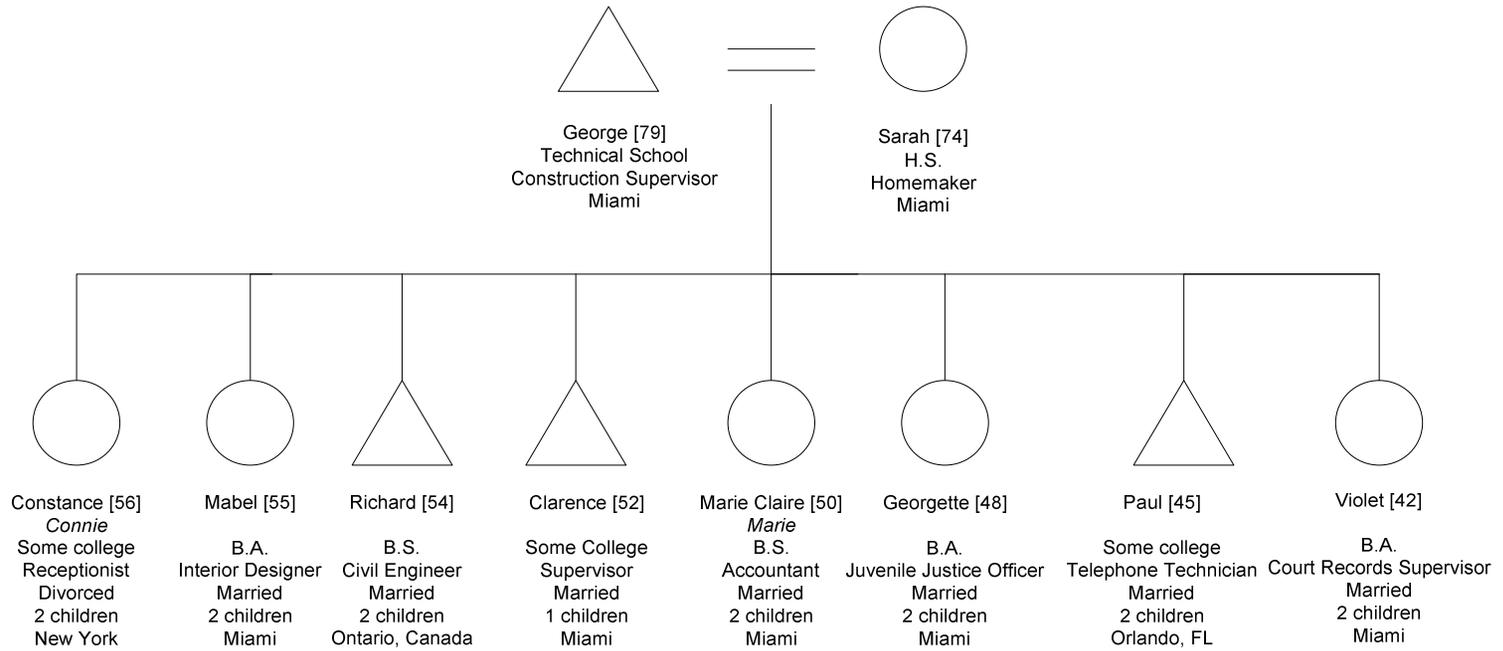
The Curey Family is in fairly frequent contact with each other despite the distance between the siblings and the parents. They use weekly telephone calls that are really conference calls to maintain contact. All the siblings have access to electronic mail through work or home Internet connections and use email to keep in almost daily contact. Kathy, the eldest, stated that her goal is to set up email with her parents in order for them to have frequent contact with all of the children. Grace, the fourth sister, later informed me that her son was in the process of building a computer for her parents that would be completed by Christmas 2005. In addition to the conference calls, the siblings regularly make trips to the Virgin Islands to visit their parents. There appears to be less frequent contact with the few extended family members who live in on the U.S. mainland. Two uncles and their families live in the Northeast. However, only three of the seven siblings mentioned them during the interviews, and they said that contact was infrequent. Contact and interactions with extended family members remaining in St. Croix occurs when the siblings return to the island mainly during the “annual” visit at Christmastime. None of the siblings interviewed reported having regular or sustained contact with island-bound extended kin throughout the rest of the year.

In the many years that the siblings have been living in the U.S. there had only been one other family get-together during the Thanksgiving holiday. On that occasion, in 2000, the parents Richard and Vivian came to the mainland to see Kathy's brand new seven-bedroom house in a posh Washington, DC suburb. Since then the parents have not returned to the U.S. According to the siblings, their parents don't like the cold weather.

2. Dutton Family - Jamaica

The Dutton family is of Jamaican origins now residing in the U.S. and Canada with eight siblings. I gained access to the family through Georgette, the sixth sibling, interviewing her in her home in Miami. The majority of the interviews with other family members took place in the parents' home during a summer vacation "mini family reunion." Several interviews were conducted via telephone. I would classify the family as lower middle class. The three-bedroom home was small, but comfortable and well-appointed, located in a somewhat working class minority neighborhood in Miami. Several of the siblings live nearby, Marie Claire and Georgette, and have daily contact via telephone or visits with the parents. Other siblings, Mabel and Violet, live within driving distance which allows them to make frequent visits to the parents' house, particularly on weekends. Presently, all of the immediate family members reside in the U.S or Canada.

Dutton Family



The family's migration began with the marriage of the eldest sibling, Constance, when she was 19, and her migration with her husband to Montreal, Canada in 1966. The position of Constance and her husband Stephen in Canada facilitated the migration of the second sibling Mabel in 1968 to assist Constance with childcare and later to attend college majoring in interior design. In 1970, the third sibling, Richard, at 20 years old migrated from the family's home in Kingston, Jamaica to New York City, where he stayed briefly with an aunt before later migrating to Canada to attend college where he obtained a degree in civil engineering. In 1976, the youngest child, Violet, migrated to Canada at age 15 under a student visa to reside with older sisters Constance and Mabel.

At this point the trajectory of the family's migration was significantly altered and began to differ from the other study families. The migration of family members might have continued in a one-at-a-time process had it not been for the political and subsequent economic upheaval that occurred in Jamaica during the late 1970s. The family's migration story is different from the majority of immigrants from the English-speaking Caribbean. The story itself was somewhat difficult to obtain, and it was only through interviewing the majority of the immediate family members that I was able to gain a relatively complete picture of the family's migration. The Dutton family is among the minority of Jamaican immigrants who label themselves "political" immigrants.

Three of the eight children had already left the country prior to the instability that gripped the island nation. The unrest was the result of the Jamaican government's shift toward more socialist policies following the Prime Minister's return from a visit to Cuba.

The change in the nation's political and economic orientation led to increased civil unrest and criminal activity across the island. According to the family members interviewed, as the civil unrest on the island continued violence and threats began to hit close to the family. I do not have all the information about the economic and political climate in Jamaica at that time and can only present the views and perspectives of the situation provided by the Dutton family.

At the time, George Dutton, the father, who worked as a construction foreman, began to receive threats every Friday, payday. A Roman Catholic priest and close friend of the family suggested to the Dutton's that they leave the island. The priest was later killed after voting for the opposition in an election. George Dutton says that the middle children did not migrate but remained in Jamaica to help "protect" him during those troubled times. In 1978, the rest of the family, George, his wife and the children who remained on the island, migrated to the United States settling in Florida. Violet, who had migrated earlier for high school, had to leave Canada and return to Jamaica to collect her immigration documents because she was under age 18. After she obtained her documents, Violet was then able migrate with her parents in accordance with U.S immigration policy. Actually, only Violet, the second youngest Paul, and the parents came at that time. Approximately three months later the middle children, Clarence, Marie Claire, and Georgette migrated. Each of the three middle children had completed their primary and secondary educations and were employed while residing with their parents in Jamaica. Therefore, they were able to finance their own migration to join the rest of the family. Clarence, the fourth sibling, was married and migrated with his wife

about six months after the parents and younger siblings. The family's migration did not include any extended family members, although one aunt in particular, the father's sister, was quite close to the family.

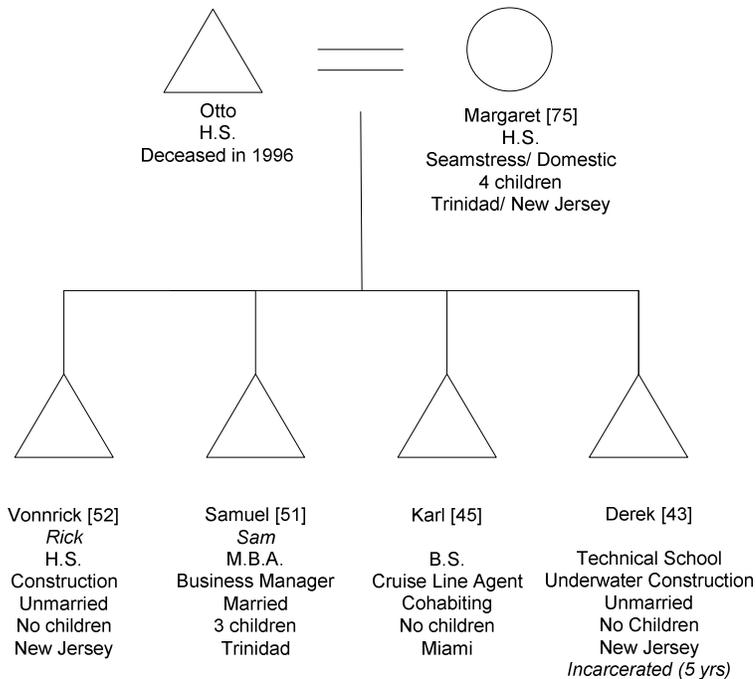
Due to the nature of their migration and self-classification as political immigrants, the Dutton family has had limited to no contact with their nation of origin. After the family left Jamaica in 1978, most of their ties to the island were strained or severed. In general, the family has not made return trips to the island to visit friends and relatives similar to those made by the other sample families in the study. Marie Claire mentioned that she had recently returned to Jamaica with her daughters for a vacation. The transnational nature of this family occurred early as the family began to migrate to Canada and continues only with Richard, the eldest son, who resides with his family in Canada. George, the father, spoke quite critically about the possibility of returning or visiting his homeland. In fact, when a relatively close family member died several years after the family's migration, George elected not to return for the funeral.

3. Gibson Family – Trinidad and Tobago

In 1966, Margaret Gibson left her husband Otto and children to migrate to the United States. She was sponsored by what the Gibson family refers to as a "white Jewish family" in New Jersey for whom Margaret worked as a domestic. Margaret worked for approximately one year and then applied for her husband to join her. Otto arrived in 1967 and gained employment in construction. After about six months Margaret and Otto

had saved enough money to send for their four sons, Vonrick, Samuel, Karl, and Derek (ages 16, 15, 12, and 7 years old respectively). Many Caribbean families leave children with grandparents or other relatives upon migration. In the case of the Gibson family, both sets of grandparents were deceased at the time of the parents' migration. Therefore, other childcare arrangements had to be made in order to accommodate the parental departure. The resulting arrangement left the children not only separated from their parents, but also from each other. After Otto left Trinidad, the two older boys, Vonrick and Samuel, moved in with friends while the two younger boys, Karl and Derek, lived with a different set of friends. None of the children liked the situation of being apart, nor did they particularly like the families they were staying with. On Mother's Day, 1968 the family was reunited. The four boys traveled together without adult supervision on British West Indian Airways from Trinidad to New York City where they were met by their parents.

Gibson Family



In 1996, Otto died while visiting Karl who lives in south Florida. At the time, Margaret and Otto were building a house in the Trinidadian countryside for their retirement. With her sons' assistance, Margaret was able to complete construction on the house and now lives there during the winter months. During May through November, Margaret lives in the family house in New Jersey. The eldest son Vonrick resides in the New Jersey home full-time. Samuel, the second son, returned to Trinidad after completing a masters' degree in the U.S. His reason for returning was his perception of better job opportunities in Trinidad. Currently, he is employed as a property manager for a U.S. owned company and lives with his wife and their three children in the capital, Port-of-Spain, which is about one and a half hours drive from the mother's home in the

countryside.

The brothers interviewed indicated that their parents decided to migrate to obtain a better life and better educational opportunities for their children. While all four boys did graduate from high school, only Samuel, the second son, and Karl, the third son, obtained a college degree. Vonnrick landed a job in construction soon after high school. Derek went to technical school after completing high school. Eventually, he specialized in underwater construction, specifically welding, and traveled from job to job across the country. In California, Derek got into drugs, which led to involvement with the drug culture and burglary to maintain his addiction. He was arrested and sentenced to seven to ten years in prison. At the time of the study, Derek had approximately a year left to serve on his sentence. It was unclear how Derek ended up in a New Jersey prison, but it is likely that he began using drugs in California and continued using for sometime as he traveled with his job. In any case, Derek is serving his time in a New Jersey penitentiary and is able to receive visits from his older brother Vonnrick who lives in New Jersey and his mother. Karl is relatively estranged from Derek as he is still angry about Derek's drug use. However, Derek is said to be a model inmate and a natural leader who is assisting other inmates in obtaining their high school equivalency diplomas. Although he has lived the majority of his life in the U.S., Derek is not a naturalized citizen. Under current immigration law, his prison status places him at risk for deportation to Trinidad after his release.

Although they migrated as children, the older three brothers maintained strong

transnational ties and Trinidadian identity. For instance, Vonnrick travels to Trinidad three to four times a year and leases about 10-12 acres of rural land from the government on which he grows fruit and fishes. Close friends assist him in planting and harvesting, though most of the crops need little attention. Vonnrick's property is located not far from the mother's house in rural Trinidad. Vonnrick's frequent trips to Trinidad serve multiple purposes: visiting his mother, visiting friends, and checking up on his property and crops. Additionally, Vonnrick is fixing up a small house on his land that he hopes to live in for longer periods of time, perhaps even retire to in the future. As mentioned above, Samuel currently resides in Trinidad with his family. Karl returns at least once a year, usually around Carnival.²⁵

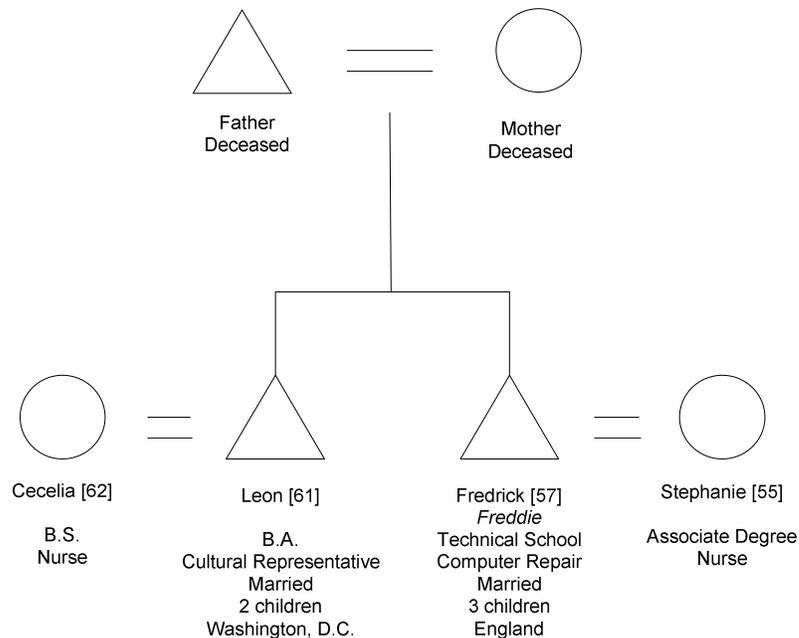
Vonnrick, Samuel and Karl are in continual contact with each other, although the pattern of contact is less structured and more spontaneous than that of the Curey or Dutton families. The three Gibson brothers maintain most of their contact via cellular telephone, which allows for immediate contact at any time. The majority of their contact seems to involve managing the care, houses, travel, and finances of their mother, Margaret. Samuel is the primary person overseeing their mother's welfare when she is residing in Trinidad. Although Vonnrick is the eldest and lives with her when Margaret is in the U.S., it is Karl who manages their mother's finances and is listed on the deeds of both houses.

²⁵ Carnival is an annual celebration held on many of the Caribbean islands, as well as in Brazil and New Orleans. In the Caribbean, dates for the festival vary from island to island and are linked either to Catholic traditions of pre-Lenten celebrations or to Christmas. Celebrations include song, dance, music, masquerades and costumes, and parades. Caribbean immigrants are beginning to establish annual Carnival-like festivals in host nation cities including Toronto, Miami, Washington, DC, Atlanta and Detroit. In metropolitan New York City and Brooklyn a Caribbean festival is held on Labor Day.

4. James Family – Trinidad and Tobago

The James family is the smallest family included in the study, consisting of only three persons. The inclusion of the family is based on the transnational nature of this Trinidadian family that has persisted over the past 40 years or so. I gained access to the family through a key informant. Leon, 59, was my first interview. In 1967, he migrated to the U.S. as a young man to attend college in Washington, DC. Currently, Leon works for a large non-governmental organization in Washington, DC in cultural affairs.

James Family



Leon's transnational activities are particularly noteworthy, as he has kept connected with the political and cultural affairs of Trinidad and Tobago over the years. Leon returns home frequently, almost always attends Carnival, and maintains contact with longtime friends and extended family. His younger brother, Fredrick, age 51, lives with his wife and children in a suburb of London, England. The brothers keep in frequent transnational contact over electronic mail and occasionally by telephone. Visits are rare, given the distance and their respective busy schedules. When asked about other "close" family members, Leon mentioned a cousin, Quentin, and his wife who live in another suburb of Washington, DC. Leon had urged Quentin to come to the U.S. to study after the cousin was blocked from migrating to London. Leon and Quentin were closer in the earlier years but the business of everyday life makes it difficult for them to get together.

Leon's wife, Cecelia, migrated from Trinidad in 1968 at the age of 26 years. She and Leon have two adult children, Roger and Ashley. In 1971, when Roger was a toddler, he was taken back to Trinidad to be cared for by his maternal grandmother. He attended private school in Trinidad and returned to the U.S. in 1977 with his grandmother, Enid, after Cecelia sponsored Enid's migration. The migration of Enid coincided with the accidental death of Cecelia's father. Initially, Enid had intended to assist Cecelia with the care of Roger and new baby Ashley. However, shortly after her migration, Enid obtained a job and her own apartment in the same building as Leon and Cecelia. Later, Enid spent six months in the U.S. and six months back in Trinidad. This arrangement did not work out well and eventually she moved permanently back to Trinidad. While Leon returns to Trinidad annually for Carnival, Cecelia visits only

periodically. She returned for an extended period in 1993 with her sister, Laura, who was terminally ill with breast cancer and only had about six months to live at the time.

Cecelia maintains bi-weekly contact with her aging mother in Trinidad and has less contact with her brothers who also remain at home on the island. It appeared that Leon and Cecelia mainly interact and maintain contact with members of their family of origin separately rather than together as a couple.

The Frequency of Contact with Transnational Kin

The frequency of transnational kin contact among the four study families was relatively high, with most family members reporting that they were in contact with another person from the family one or more times per week. Few of the study participants stated that they contacted a transnational family member everyday, though both the Curey and Dutton families were in contact with some member their family of origin nearly everyday, mostly through telephone or electronic mail. One study participant, Michael, the husband of Vivian Curey, stated that he called his mother in St. Croix at least once a day and sometimes twice. All participants in the sample families claimed close family ties, particularly the two larger families, Curey and Dutton. According to Conley (2004), larger families tend to have very close sibling relations and identify as a member of a clan; therefore, it is not surprising that these two families also had the highest frequency of contact among the sample families. The Curey family used almost daily electronic mail messages and weekly telephone calls which resulted in steady communication between the seven siblings and parents.

Two of the three Gibson brothers residing in the U.S. sustain very close transnational contact with their mother and brother in Trinidad. Karl, the third of the four brothers, stated that he contacts his mother several times a week. The brothers contact each other mainly by cellular telephone frequently and spontaneously. Occasionally, the family employs conference calling when a significant issue needs to be addressed. The Gibson and Curey families are the only study participants to mention their use of conference calling among family members. Another transnational relative in the Gibson family, an uncle living in Canada, is rarely contacted. It had been almost ten years since the brothers had spoken with their uncle. Other relatives, extended family, still living in Trinidad are often visited during the brothers' frequent trips to the island.

The eight siblings in the Dutton family, for instance, keep in contact mainly by telephone calls and visits at Thanksgiving and other special occasions. The majority of the family lives in Florida, in or near Miami where the parents reside, and one brother lives in Orlando. Two of the siblings live far away, the eldest sister in metropolitan New York and a brother in Canada. When asked how their family stays together, Georgette responded:

Georgette: We talk to each other on the telephone. What will happen, one will call and we connect with everyone.

I: How often does that happen?

Georgette: It happens often enough. Okay, like my brother, he will call my parents almost every day... He calls almost every day. My brother in Canada, he calls at least once a month. And like Natalie, she calls a lot too. And for the others we keep in touch. Like everybody calls our parents, check on them make sure they are all right. [Or a family] function, for example Marie's twenty-fifth wedding anniversary, everybody is coming. You know. When my niece got married, Natalie's daughter in Canada. We all went. I have to say not too often that the eight of us are together at one time but like at the wedding, which was wonderful and we were there. With my brother's anniversary, all of us will be there. And my parents anniversary, too. For their 40th anniversary we surprised them (August 2004, Miami).

The Dutton family is an example of a transnational family that has localized over time. When the three older siblings and youngest sibling migrated to Canada in the late 1980s, there was considerable transnational contact, mostly weekly telephone calls, and limited visits back home to Jamaica. In time, the remaining family members migrated to Florida as a group. Two of the Canadian siblings migrated to Florida to be closer to the parents and enjoy the warmer climate. Currently, the family's transnational nature predominately pertains only to Richard who still lives in Canada with his family. Infrequent contact has been maintained with extended family members that remained in Jamaica, as well as with extended family living elsewhere in the U.S. Richard, the third

sibling, mentioned in his interview that he stayed with an aunt in New York before moving to Canada to live with Connie in Ontario. No other family member mentioned this aunt, although each was asked specifically about other extended family members with whom they were in contact.

Type and Extent of Contact

The NSAL survey question used to identify contact with family does not distinguish between the type of contact [visits, telephone calls, email, letters, etc.] nor does it indicate the direction of contact between the respondent and the family members residing abroad. However, the qualitative data provide some insight into this question among study participants. The primary means of contact was mainly by telephone, email, frequent visits and sending of barrels. No one interviewed stated that writing letters was the primary means of contacting family. During the Barbados focus group, a discussion arose about sending letters and packages to family members in Barbados. One woman, Louise, who had immigrated to the United States in 1967 as an 18 year-old, stated that she often wrote letters then as the cost of international telephone calls was prohibitive. Others in the focus group chimed in to complain about the delay in sending letters to family on the island, which leads them to make calls regardless of the cost.

Telephone Contact

Throughout the interviews and focus groups the issue of an inexpensive means of

contacting family was discussed as in this example from the Curey family. Noel discusses the length of the conversations she has with her stateside siblings and St. Croix parents:

I: How long do you talk - a long time?

Noel: Yeah. I just switched my long distance plan to unlimited minutes because it was getting really, really expensive. I'd call my mom and then my mom would say let's call Kathy, and we'd conference Kathy in, and we conference Lydia in and before you know it, we're all on this phone for 4 hours. We don't remember who called who and who is getting the bill. We all get together and chit chat for hours on end, especially if there is some sort of family crisis, you know, going on. (August 2004, Miami).

The Curey family uses conference calls that usually take place on the weekends, either Saturday or Sunday, and the times vary. The conference calls are made by utilizing three-way calling features on the telephone. The quote above highlights not so much the frequency of family contact as the quality of contact. Chatting for several hours with family members across substantial distances allows the Curey family to remain in touch with the daily occurrences in each other's lives. As I interviewed each sibling I found that although Kathy, my first interview in the family, had presented the conference calls as being very orderly, with set days and times, the process was a bit less structured but not exactly haphazard. Family members expected to have some contact on the

weekends, particularly on Sunday. My third interview with Vivian, the sixth sibling in the family, who lives in Virginia, clearly describes the conference call process though the direction of contact, unlike, who initiates contact, is different from that given by Noel.

When asked about the frequency of family contact she described the calls this way:

Vivan: Every weekend we talk. We have a 3 way, well 6 way. I missed out on the one last weekend because I was tired. But we try to talk every weekend.

I: How did you miss out? I mean, were there set times?

Vivan: No set time, but usually either Saturday or Sunday we try to call. It would just be spontaneous. It's not like a set time or set day. I guess we're home bodies anyway. All of us are. I would call May [Dorothy] and we would be like "hey, have you talked to Mom or da da da." "No, okay, let's patch her in." So we would patch her in and we'd be talking about something, you know, an issue and we're like let's get another opinion and call Kathy or Noel. When we have a family emergency definitely we get everybody on the line to get everybody's opinion on the emergency (November 2004, Virginia).

Most participants agreed that calling, however convenient, can and does become expensive – yet they call anyway. Among participants in the Barbados focus group, there was a lively discussion about the cost of maintaining communication with kin in the Caribbean. One participant Robert, age 45, stated that a sixteen minute call to Barbados

cost him \$34 using an international calling plan, which led him to begin utilizing calling cards. Stanley, a 53 year-old engineer, chimed in that Robert needed to consider changing his long distance calling plan to reduce the expense. Stanley stated that he used a discounted calling plan offered by AT&T. Mabel, Stanley's wife, stated that her mother recently acquired an 800 telephone number for a home business she operates. Mabel was thrilled at the anticipated long distance savings. The use of international calling cards was not commonly mentioned by participants. In fact, Robert was the only person in the study to remark that he used them.

Visits

Visiting is an important aspect of maintaining family relations. The frequency of visits among the sample families varied mostly over time, with limited visits immediately following migration and settlement in the U.S., which and increased in frequency after the immigrants were established in the host nation. Across the study families and group interview participants there seemed to be relationship between the immigrant's level of commitment to maintaining transnational relations with family and friends and their actual contact behavior with relatives in the islands. An important indicator of this relationship was the frequency of return trips to the Caribbean made by the study participants. The commitment to return appeared to be separate from the length of stay in the host nation. For example, Leon James, who migrated to the U.S. over 30 years ago, is fully committed to returning to Trinidad annually for Carnival although he was unable to return frequently when he first arrived. His work does encourage this travel and contact

as he needs to remain current on the latest music and cultural trends from Trinidad and Tobago. Several other Trinidadians interviewed, key informants and family participants like the Gibson family, were also very committed to regularly returning to Trinidad for Carnival. The cultural significance and uniqueness of this event have made it very enticing for immigrants to return to visit at that time to see family and friends. Overall, the Curey, James, and Gibson families make a concerted effort to return to their home nations on a regular basis, while the Dutton family has had a more distant relationship with their home country of Jamaica. Because all of the immediate family has migrated to the U.S. or Canada and because of the conditions surrounding their migration, the Dutton family appears to have a limited connection with the remaining extended family in Jamaica. Georgette, the principal participant for the Gibson family, said the following about her trips back to Jamaica:

Georgette: Yes, I went but not very often. I have been back since I have been here about maybe three times. When Catherine was a baby we took her to Jamaica. When I had to go back to Jamaica when I came up here. That is one, two and then yeah when Alton's cousin got married. Yeah. Those are the only three times.

I: You didn't go back for the uncle's funeral?

Georgette: Huh hm (no). Actually nobody from up here went because my father said he was not going, if he doesn't have to go back. Okay if ... we

would all go but, like I say, I really don't like traveling now. So we send money there for the funeral you know (August 2004, Miami).

Georgette's statements above indicate that she was not entirely opposed to returning to Jamaica for a visit and had done so several times in the past. However, on the one occasion that would most likely elicit a return trip by the family, the death of her paternal uncle, Georgette and the family looked to the father, Richard, to lead the trip. In her study of global kin networks among Afro-Caribbean families, scholar Karen Fog Olwig (2002) documents that two life course rituals, weddings and funerals, are occasions that will generate the large scale congregation of immediate and extended transnational family members. These occasions "validate shared kinship and common origins" for the family members and solidify the notion of "home" as being in the country of origin (Olwig 2002: 205). For the Dutton family, Richard's open reluctance to return to Jamaica at the time of his brother's funeral appears to have deterred the rest of the family from returning as well and likely dampened kinship relations with extended family remaining on the island.

The Dutton's family's disconnect with their nation of origin is further evidenced by the fact that only two of the siblings, Marie Claire, the fifth sibling, and Georgette, the sixth sibling, even mentioned that they had visited Jamaica since their migration. Marie Claire stated she had recently traveled to Jamaica with her college aged daughter and Georgette's eldest daughter of a similar age. The purpose of the trip was for a week-long

vacation. They made no effort to visit any extended family members during their stay. They vacationed in Montego Bay and their relatives, an aunt and a cousin, reside on the other end of the island in the capital city of Kingston.

Two siblings in the Trinidadian Gibson family make annual trips home to visit their aging mother, brother, and other extended family and friends. Karl resides in Florida and is the third of the four brothers. When making his annual visit to Trinidad during Carnival time, he tends to split his time between Samuel's house in the capital, Port of Spain, and his mother's home in rural Rio Claro. Vonnrick, the eldest brother, returns more often to check on land near the mother's house that he leases from the government on which he grows crops that need little cultivation. He usually stays in the old wooden house that is on the property. The Gibson's try to coordinate their visits, though often it's difficult due employment commitments. Their mother, Margaret, splits her time between her home in Trinidad and the family's house in New Jersey spending about six months in each place.

The difference in the frequency of visits between the Gibson brothers still residing in the United States [Vonnrick, Karl and Derek] appears to be directly related to their length of stay, residency status, and age at migration. Karl is the only brother to have obtained naturalized citizenship. It is unclear why Derek did not naturalize even though he migrated at the young age of seven years old. Vonnrick, the eldest, migrated at age 16 and Samuel, the second brother, migrated at age 15. Prior to migration both had forged significant ties with both family and friends who remained in Trinidad. It appears that

these relationships were well maintained over the years and possibly influenced Samuel's decision to return permanently to the island. Karl describes his brother's visits this way:

He [Vonnrick] goes sometimes, twice, 2 or 3 times a year he goes to back to see about his place where he has his land that he has in Trinidad. He would go back and you... he's a socializer he likes to go visit all of his old friends and his relatives and some of our cousins that we have there and all his friends and check on his land and go all over so he's one of those...[August 2003, Hollywood, FL]

For the Curey family there was an emphasis placed on everyone visiting once a year, though for some the reality was once every several years. It seemed as if Kathy, the eldest, and Noel, the third sibling, visited most frequently. Eddie, Marie, and Lydia did not visit the parents in the Virgin Islands with the same regularity as the others. For all of the siblings, Christmas was the most important time of the year to visit. The length of stays varied substantially from one week to as much as three weeks annually, in the case of Kathy. Four planned family "reunions" occurred during the study period: (1) Christmas 2004 which was given priority when Richard, the father had stated that he wanted ALL of the children home for the holidays; (2) July- August 2005 Summer Vacation, when all of the siblings and grandchildren returned home except Eddie and his family; (3) A unique Thanksgiving gathering was being planned for Boston in November 2005, although Thanksgiving was not normally a time when the family planned get-togethers; (4) As of August 2005 when I had my last contact with the family, there were plans for Christmas 2005 in USVI. When I spoke with Grace in Los Angeles, she

informed me that she had already purchased her tickets for December. She also mentioned that some of her siblings, particularly the younger ones, were planning to extend their stay in the Caribbean in order to take a side trip to their father's ancestral home in Nevis.

About visiting at Christmas, Noel responded:

Noel: It's sort of an unwritten rule that we all go home at Christmas time.

I: Has anybody broken that?

Noel: Yes. Sometimes someone just can't make it. They may have started a new job or it's too expensive to fly the whole family down. Like my sister Lydia, the one who didn't go to university, she has 5 kids and lives in Boston. It's difficult for her to fly everyone down there. She hasn't been coming every year. She's been coming every 2nd or 3rd year. I wouldn't say that there's any one person that's responsible. I think we all have this sense of okay I'll see you in December (August 2004, Miami).

About visiting at Christmas, Grace responded:

I: Does everybody go back?

Grace: Not Marie and not Eddie as much. Second to that, Lydia., Kathy, me,

Noel, and May pretty much been going back every single year.

I: Why not Marie or Eddie?

Grace: Marie had to work. She was in between jobs. Eddie was in between jobs and then he didn't have the funds a couple of times. Lydia because of work.

Yeah. Noel, a couple of times, took the trip and came back to no job. She just went anyway (August 2005, Telephone).

This statement shows the importance Noel places on the visits to the Virgin Islands. Kathy, who is quite financially well off, unmarried, and has no children, is able to visit for three weeks at Christmas and often flies down for long holiday weekends. This freedom for extended visitation in the Caribbean is something that is basically unattainable for the majority of participants in the study as immediate family, employment, and other commitments in the U.S. limit their ability to travel. Others in the Curey family, Grace and Dorothy, are also committed to the yearly Christmas visits; however, the others have more intermittent visits.

Return migration may be a key to understanding the frequency of visits and the priority given to going home. All of the siblings except Eddie, had returned home at some point after their initial migration for an extended period of time, from several months to several years. Grace, the fashion designer, even returned to start a small business, though she abandoned the project after struggling with supplies, logistics, and

island bureaucracy for several years. Vivian, the sixth sibling, had returned home for several years after her initial migration for college. She stated she had a difficult time adjusting to life on the U.S. mainland. Recently, Vivian purchased computer equipment that will allow her to continue her work as a stenographer/transcriptionist while on extended visits home. It seems that in the case of most of the Curey siblings, returning home for a significant period of time after initial migration may have helped to solidify their connection to their homeland by allowing them to draw direct comparisons between experiences, relationships, and lifestyles in the home and host countries.

Alternatively, it could also be concluded that negative experiences in the home country might deter or negate the possibility of return migration and visits, as in the case of the Dutton family, which would produce further distance in the immigrant's ties to their home nation. Only Marie Claire, the fifth sibling, and Paulette, the sixth sibling, claimed to have returned to Jamaica since their migration. Constance, the eldest sibling, returned several times prior to the rest of the family's 1978 migration to Miami. Another key indicator of the likelihood of return migration and transnational ties to the home nation may be the presence of immediate family members, parents or children, in the country of origin. Although George Dutton's siblings, a brother and sister, both remained in Jamaica, he had no desire to return even to attend his brother's funeral. The fact that George's immediate family, wife and children, are residing in the U.S. and Canada appeared to combine with his negative experiences in Jamaica to suppress any desire to return. Similarly, for the eight Dutton siblings the fact that their parents reside in Florida rather than Jamaica seemed to restrain notions of return to Jamaica, other than for

vacation. Unlike the Curey siblings, who had to return to the Caribbean to see their parents, the Dutton siblings only have to travel to Miami. This is difficult for the two siblings who live the furthest away from the rest of the family, Constance, the eldest who resides in New York and Richard, the third sibling, who lives in Canada.

Members of three of the study families make frequent or at least annual trips to the Caribbean. The Curey and Gibson families appeared to have the most frequent visitation to the islands. In both cases, a living parent seemingly impacts the frequency of visitation and degree of transnational connectedness, in terms of kin and friendship networks or business relations, to their homelands. The Dutton family has limited contact with their home country due to their abrupt departure from Jamaica, few remaining relatives, and the parents' migration to the United States. Obviously, visits are the most ideal means of sustaining intimate relations with family members.

Electronic Mail

The immediacy of electronic mail provides a viable alternative for maintaining frequent contact with kin. Because of the middle class nature of the study sample, electronic mail was available and frequently utilized by various members in the family. Across the Caribbean Basin electronic mail usage is increasing as an inexpensive alternative to telephone calls. The medium is still often bound to computer access ranging from white-collar employment to knowledge of basic computing skills, which may not be readily available across the Caribbean, particularly in rural areas. As a result,

there is unequal distribution and utilization of electronic mail. According to participants in the Barbados focus group, cellular telephones containing the latest technology are being rapidly adopted by people in their home nation. The increasing expansion of cellular services and equipment which contains Internet capability may ultimately allow greater access to electronic mail in the region circumventing traditional computer access. After telephone contact, frequent visits are cited by participants as important for the maintenance of family contact and closeness. Nevertheless, email was used frequently by several of the sample families: Curey, Church, and James.

In the Curey family, Kathy, the eldest, stated that her goal was to set up email with her parents in order for them to have frequent contact with all of the children. In the interview with Grace, the fourth sister, she informed me that her son was in the process of building a computer for her parents that would be completed by Christmas 2005. Because all of the siblings correspond regularly, at times daily, via electronic mail, it is likely the parents will begin to utilize it as well over time. Additionally, the entire family was planning to be together at the parents' home in St. Croix for Christmas 2005, so it is likely that the parents would be well trained on using the computer and email by the end of that visit. Kathy, the eldest, uses email to contact the siblings, particularly when coordinating events and visits, etc., as well as just to touch base. The use of electronic mail also aids in communication given the time differences between the five siblings on the East coast and the two in the western United States. However, the weekly telephone conference calls appeared to be the main way in which the Curey family remained in contact with each of the siblings and with the parents during the study period based on

the amount of time spent on the telephone, the regularity of contact, and the inclusion of the majority of family members during the calls.

The James family also used email to keep in contact. Because they are such a small family, two brothers living on two different continents, email allowed them to communicate regularly. Similarly, Oliver Church,²⁶ an informant residing in south Florida who is a radio technician, employs email to contact his brother in Britain about every two weeks. The rationale for using email in both cases is that it is significantly less expensive than telephone calls. In the two group interviews, electronic mail was discussed as an important means to contact transnational family members only among the Barbadian group. All of the participants in that group stated they used electronic mail regularly to contact family in Barbados and Britain. Stanley stated he began regularly emailing his sister in Britain in the late 1990s. He dramatically increased his use of email to contact transnational family in Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago, and Britain after a recent family reunion that he organized in 2005. The differences in electronic mail usage among the two group interviews likely stems from the uneven economic and technological development in Jamaica compared to Barbados. Participants in the Barbadian group mentioned that the economy on the island had improved substantially since their migration. In fact, they stated that in many cases relatives, friends and acquaintances in Barbados had up-to-date or the most recent technology [i.e., video games, cell phones]. In contrast, several of the participants in the Jamaican group came from rural areas of the island. Additionally, as mentioned above, electronic mail use is

²⁶ Only husband and wife were interviewed; other family members did not agree to participate in the study.

predicated on access to the Internet, which most often is associated with either white-collar employment or the ability to purchase a home computer. Electronic mail was not used as frequently in the Dutton and Gibson families.

In general, the type and extent of transnational kin contact was fairly constant all across the study participants. Telephone contact was preferred due to the immediacy and intimacy of conversation. Electronic mail was utilized as a means to reduce the expense of international contact. Visits were high priority for all participants as well, although the cost of travel mediated their ability to act on their desire to visit. Members of the Curey, Gibson, and James families all made efforts to return home to the Caribbean annually. Of all the families, only the Curey family was able to gather all of the family members in the home country on a regular basis. Visits among the other families were not as coordinated, often only one family member living abroad was able to return [i.e., Gibson and James families]. Based on the discussion above, it appears that other factors, such as, closeness within the family, income, reciprocity among kin, and family organization are likely to influence the frequency of contact between transnational families. These issues and others are examined in the following section.

Family Closeness

The notion of closeness is different in the Caribbean, as the islands themselves produce a sense of togetherness and familiarity among the inhabitants due to the small size of the islands and interconnected family relations. Similar to the NSAL survey

question on closeness, the qualitative study participants were asked, “How close is your family to each other?” Participants in the study families tended to respond that their families were “very close.” As mentioned previously in the methods section, closeness is measured by responses of “very close” versus all other responses [e.g., pretty close, fairly close, kind of close, not very close].

The conceptualization of family closeness and communal closeness in the Caribbean at times converged for many of the study participants and may indicate that family closeness is linked with notions of home and community. Often when participants were asked about family relations and family closeness, the response was combined with comments that referred not only emotional closeness but also to physical closeness or proximity of family members to each other and the community in the home country. What emerges is a sense of interconnectedness that is clearly identified with notions of the home that participants missed and were unable to recreate in their settlement communities, post-migration. When asked about the difference between life in the Caribbean and life in the United States Noel Curey, who grew up in the U.S. Virgin Islands, responded:

There is a stark difference. Even though it's U.S., it's, how should we say it... Growing up in the Islands, even though it's the U.S., there is a certain closeness that you feel in the community that you just don't get here. And on an island, you especially can't go anywhere without someone knowing that you were there. You could go to the store, and before you get home someone calls your Mama “Oh I

saw Miss Carol with so and so, and she was at this store.” You know, news just travels on an island, whether you want it to or not, you know, news travels. Everyone knows each other. You meet people in the street, and your parents say “Oh that’s your cousin so and so from…” And holidays are just incredible, I mean just family, food and just a lot of fun. And here in the United States, where I don’t have that extended support group, there is something that’s lost there, for sure.

Apart from the sense of communal closeness on the islands there is a substantial emphasis on family relations among study participants and within the literature on the Caribbean. It could be assumed that the degree of closeness among family members will likely impact the frequency of contact between members. Although, even within families that are quite close, factors such as distance and the expense associated with contact, telephone calls or travel home, will negatively impact the frequency of contact. Each of the study families stated that their family was “very close or pretty close” despite the distance between them. As presented above, the study families have a considerable amount of contact by telephone, electronic mail and regular visits home to the Caribbean. To a certain extent, this could be expected given that the middle class nature of the sample families allows them the income to cover the expense associated with frequent visits and long-distance telephone communication. But another factor that may impact the level of family closeness observed in the study could be the positive selection bias associated with participation in the study. The convenience sampling approach employed may have pre-selected families who were “close” enough to encourage the participation of multiple family members in the study.

The two larger families, Curey and Dutton, both displayed a significant level of closeness as observed in both their desire to be together as a family and their commitment to contact each other frequently. The smaller families, James and Pitman, also claimed close kin ties, though the extremely small James family did not have as many visits or frequent contact as the Pitman family, who tended to contact at least one family member several times a week. The James family, with one brother in the U.S. and one in Britain, did contact each other consistently using electronic mail and telephone, although the frequency of contact was once a week or less. Based on interviews with the study families and group interview participants, the relationship between the level of closeness within the family and actual contact behavior appears to be highly dependent upon whether or not the participant's parents are living. As mentioned above and discussed later in this section, within the sample families group interview participants and key informants parents tended to be the anchors of kinship relations. It appears that parents are the central relationship around which sibling relations orbit. Additionally, participants implied that parents tended to maintain links to extended family members, aunts, uncles, cousins and the like, that their children may or may not maintain later in life.

An example of differences in family closeness due to proximity and sibling relationships was provided by Malcolm, a participant in the Jamaican focus group. Over the years, his family of origin migrated to the United States and settled in southeastern Michigan near Detroit. Remaining in Jamaica are two older half-sisters and a niece

whom he still contacts regularly. With his mother deceased, Malcolm is in closet contact with his siblings in Michigan. He contacts his half-sisters about four times a year, mostly on holidays and birthdays. Malcolm's limited contact with his family in Jamaica is typical of the more distant relations sustained by participants with their extended family members in the Caribbean. It is unclear if the conceptualization of family and kinship among the study participants, who were predominately middle class, is consistent with notions of family among working class Caribbeans. As mentioned above, previous studies indicate that West Indians often maintain lateral and extended transnational kinship ties, although no class distinctions are considered (Thompson and Bauer 2000, Chamberlain 1999b).

It was during both of the group interviews that the significance of Sunday as a day of rest and family was most clearly articulated. Participants in both groups mentioned that everything on Jamaica and Barbados slowed down or pretty much came to a halt on Sundays; even music on the radio was slower and more relaxed. The result was a cultural focus on Sunday as a time for family and friends and a day for religious observance, as there is little else to do on the islands. Chamberlain's study (1997) of Caribbeans in Britain found that many immigrants made considerable efforts to maintain the Sunday tradition by getting together with family members or friends. Group interview participants in the current study stated that migration to the U.S. not only creates distance in family contact, but they also found it difficult to adapt to the faster pace of life. The following quote from Noel Curey, referring to her family's weekly conference calls, expresses family closeness and the desire to continue the tradition of Sunday as family

day.

Noel: I think it was pretty good growing up. Now our relationship is . . . we're pretty close. We call each other every weekend. I don't get to speak to Eddie that often but we usually do a family conference every weekend with my parents and all my siblings. We get to catch up on what we're doing, if we need help, advice, or a pat on the back or whatever. We just support each other. I would say, you know, our relationship now is good. It was good growing up too.

Migration and Contact

One interesting study finding, which likely only emerged due to the exploratory design, was the role of education in migration decisions among the sample families and focus group participants. Throughout the literature, English-speaking Afro-Caribbeans are shown to perceive education as the primary means to obtain increased social status and economic mobility (e.g., Bashi Bobb and Clarke 2001, Vickerman 1999, Palmer 1995, Basch et al. 1994, Olwig 2001, Foner 1979). The current study adds to this literature by showing that educational attainment can be a significant motivating factor for migration among English-speaking Afro-Caribbeans. The pursuit of further education and training in their decision to migrate was a recurring theme among all study participants. About two-thirds of the study participants mentioned that they were currently pursuing or had pursued additional education or technical training after their

arrival in the United States. Many mentioned that limited educational opportunities in the Caribbean lead to decisions to migrate to Canada, Britain and the United States.

In several cases, family members, including extended family, who already resided in the targeted host nation were engaged to assist with the migration of the participants, most often by providing an initial place to stay upon arrival. Several participants took classes at night, most often in technical and health care fields, in order to transition from their initial jobs into more reliable and higher paying positions. For instance, Gloria Church, from Barbados, stated that she migrated to Ottawa, Canada in 1975 at age 20 to attend school. Upon arrival she stayed with an aunt. When the relationship soured in 1978, interrupting her education, Gloria migrated to the U.S., to New Jersey, to take a live in domestic position. When asked why she took that particular job she responded that it allowed her to attend school during the day. Gloria stated that she obtained a GED even though she had completed high school in Barbados because it was easier than trying to get her school records from the island. The purpose of the domestic work was to obtain sponsorship for permanent residency from her employer and to take college courses. Gloria pursued a nursing program and later left domestic work for a job as a nursing technician at a rehabilitation center. Gloria's husband, Oliver, also came from Barbados. He had been a policeman in Barbados for over three years prior to migrating, having enlisted at age 18 right after high school. While he said that his initial motivation for migrating to the US was to "chase after a girlfriend at the time" (not Gloria), Oliver also took classes at night at a technical school. After several low-wage jobs that included working in a kitchen and stock work at a grocery store, Oliver completed his training and

took a job working with radio and television editing and electronics.

As mentioned previously, six of the seven siblings in the Curey family migrated from the Caribbean to the US mainland to attend college. High parental expectations for college attendance and limited college choices on the islands, along with easy migration due to their U.S. citizenship, facilitated the siblings' migration to the U.S. Their present occupations range from a very accomplished lawyer to dentist to fashion designer. The parents had modest educational attainment but were able to achieve solid middle class status for the family, which allowed the four eldest children to attend private primary and secondary schools. Within the family, education was stressed and pursued by all of the children to varying degrees. Two of the girls had children early which interrupted their pursuit of higher education. In spite of this setback, both have continued to take courses at community colleges to continue their education and enhance their occupational prospects.

During the interviews, study participants reflected on their migration experiences and motivations. Those that were in college or university immediately after migration mentioned that they often relied heavily on family members both on the mainland and in the Caribbean to provide support or assistance. For these participants, contact with family in the Caribbean and elsewhere was limited due to the expense, and return trips home were infrequent. Participants indicated that they were able to increase their contact with transnational family members after graduation or the secession of coursework and the acquisition of full-time employment.

The length of stay in the U.S. appeared to have an uneven impact on participants' connectedness over time, with both immediate and extended family members residing abroad. Discussions among several members of the sample families, older immigrants, and group interview participants suggest that recent immigrants struggle to remain in close contact with family in the home country, particularly in the first several years after their migration. The socioeconomic position of immigrants at the time of entry tends to impact their ability to maintain contact with relatives abroad. Those with less human capital prior to migration are likely to have less access to the financial resources necessary to place international telephone calls or return trips to the country of origin. Instability in employment and lower wages tended to reduce or suppress the ability of these immigrants to contact family. For example, Nigel, an unmarried, 45 year old immigrant from a rural village in Jamaica, is employed as a cook while attending college. In the group interview with other Jamaican men, he stated that he could only afford to call his family once a month. As the sole migrant from his family, he said that it was very hard for him to be so far away from his six siblings and aging mother. Nigel stated that he has not been able to return home since his migration in 1986 due to his modest income and tuition expenses, which leave him with little disposable income.

Family Reciprocity: Giving and Getting Help

A primary link between international migration and social mobility within immigrant families has been the importance of remittances. Therefore, money transfers

should exert substantial influence on the frequency of contact between immigrants and their family abroad. In the absence of child-shifting within the study participants, these remittances or reciprocity would be from adult children to family members, presumably their parents, residing in the home nation or other economic exchanges between adult siblings and other relatives.

In discussions with sample families and focus group participants, financial exchanges and support between family members was relatively common. However, the exchanges described in these data appear to be in the opposite direction from those discussed most often in the literature. Remittances typically are presented from the standpoint of financial assistance given by the immigrant to support his/her family of origin in the home country. Evidence from these sample families and group interview participants suggest an alternate pattern of exchange that may be specific to the middle class nature of the qualitative family sample. For several of the sample families, receiving assistance after migration, as opposed to providing financial assistance, from parents in the Caribbean was a recurring theme. Many of the study participants in the Curey, Dutton and James families received some financial assistance from their parents to support their college educations after migrating to the United States and Canada. All of the Curey siblings except for Lydia, the first three Dutton children, and the eldest son in the James family migrated essentially to obtain a higher education degree. In these cases, the Afro-Caribbean sample families are like most American families which tend to provide whatever financial support they can afford to children attending college and university.

For the most part, help or assistance is rather ambiguously defined in international migration literature and has been assumed to be financial or economic assistance or support of some kind. Giving and receiving help or assistance from relatives, as discussed in the NSAL data in the preceding chapter, was not defined in the NSAL, which allowed for a broad interpretation among respondents. Therefore, help could entail other forms of assistance, particularly in times of need, and in this way be more of a measure of social capital. Among the qualitative sample, participants were able to distinguish between economic and other forms of assistance given to or received from family members. Additionally, they were able to indicate to which family members they most frequently received or gave assistance, and the degree of that assistance. For example, Lydia, the second sibling in the Curey family, is the least financially secure of the seven children in the Curey family. She was the only sibling who did not migrate for higher education. Instead, Lydia came to the U.S. looking for better employment opportunities after her divorce. Presently, she resides with four of her five children and her sister Dorothy May in suburban Boston. In her interview, Lydia mentioned that she relied on family members and friends when she migrated with her children after separating from her husband. When asked about how her parents assisted her during this time, her response is an example not only of the economic support but also the emotional support that family contact can offer:

Lydia: Financially. Oh, yes. Financially, even many times they would just call and taking the time to just talking to the

kids for hours. Oh, yes. I could have never gotten through that down, dark period without my family. It was a very dark period for me.

Lydia only recently began taking college courses and is the only Curey sibling in a blue collar occupation, bus driver. Model's study (1995) of West Indian immigrants found that socioeconomic status and length of stay are closely related. The following quote from Lydia suggests the importance of income in the ability to maintain contact with transnational family and the difficulty in making trips home shortly after the immigrant's initial migration. When asked about returning to the U.S. Virgin Islands in the first three years after her migration to the mainland Lydia responded:

I went home once.

I: How long did you stay? Did you take all the children?

Lydia: Yes. I wouldn't go without my kids. That trip was sponsored by Kathy. We stayed about two weeks because the kids have to always get back to school. We did about two weeks that time. I've never stayed more than two weeks. I went again in 2001 for two weeks again. I always have to plan it between the kid's school breaks.

I: Are you talking at Christmas time?

Lydia: Christmas time, yes. That's the only time you can travel and be guaranteed to see everyone. That's the only time that Kathy will go, you know?

The trip home for Lydia and her five children was sponsored by Kathy, the eldest sister, who is the most financially secure of all the Curey siblings. Kathy's migration success, obtaining a law degree and acquiring a prominent position in a law firm in Washington, D.C., enables her to assist the other siblings and in a way subsidize their migration success as well. As mentioned previously, Kathy has purchased a large house in Virginia, essentially for investment purposes but also as a place that will accommodate the large family when her parents and other siblings visit. Kathy also owns the suburban Boston house in which Lydia, her children and Dorothy May currently reside.

In interviews with the sample families and focus group participants, reciprocity among family members was not generally expected, except in the case of parents. In the Curey family, the members with greater resources, economic and educational, tended to provide more assistance to the others with no apparent expectation of financial return or repayment. In particular, Kathy and Noel, the most financially secure members of the Curey family, had assisted several of the other siblings in times of need. Kathy purchased the house in suburban Boston occupied by Lydia, her five children and Dorothy May. As Dorothy May contemplates opening her own dentistry practice, she

anticipates that Kathy would assist her in financing this venture, and in fact Kathy had already offered. Noel has provided more emotional and physical support to her sisters, including taking in Faith's daughter for several months after the child had a disagreement with her mother. In each of these instances, increased family telephone contact was necessary to coordinate, discuss and arrange the various logistical aspects of the assistance provided.

On the other hand, a decline in family contact can occur if certain relatives consistently ask for assistance. For example, Malcolm, a participant in the Jamaican group interview, mentioned that he limited his contact with some family members by not answering the telephone when relatives that usually asked for money called. Others in that all male group concurred with Malcolm's statements adding that they had more frequent contact with kin who did not regularly ask for monies.

Conclusions

The overwhelming majority of transnational contact is conducted via telephone, although usage of land versus cellular telephones varies based on the location of family members: U.S, Canada, Britain, Caribbean, and rural or urban areas. Few participants claimed everyday contact with transnational kin. Study participants were most likely to contact international relatives about once a week. However, if the relatives were parents then the frequency of contact was likely to increase to at least once a week or several times a week. Findings for NSAL, presented in the previous chapter, indicate that those

respondents were considerably more likely than members of the study families or focus group participants to claim contact nearly everyday (31% for men, 37% for women). The difference between study participants and survey respondents in the frequency of contact may suggest that querying more participants might lead to a higher percentage of daily contact. Alternatively, this difference could also be attributed to an overestimation on the part of respondents, either inadvertently or purposely, of contact behavior with transnational kin, or it might reflect a substantially greater level of income among survey respondents than study participants. The NSAL survey question for contact with family does not distinguish the means of contact [visits, telephone, email, and letters], though given the high frequency of contact in the everyday category it might be assumed that this contact was by telephone or electronic mail.

Generally, the level of international or transnational contact between immigrant family members is high. There is a purposeful attempt by the majority of study participants to maintain their transnational connections with family, and friends, over time. Part of this connectedness and desire to sustain family relations may be a result of either deep affection for relatives or the execution of socially expected kinship behaviors. For NSAL respondents, perceptions of feelings of closeness among family members were not a significant factor influencing their frequency of contact to family abroad (see Table 3). However, for the four study families, feelings of family closeness were the impetus for sustaining consistent transnational contact and arranging frequent visits. In the case of the Curey and Gibson families, visits to parents meant return trips to the Caribbean, which maintained the sense of home as being in the islands. Closeness also appears to

impact the extent of exchanges and reciprocity among immigrant family members.

While the NSAL data did not support a relationship between the perception of expected reciprocity or obligations of adult children toward parents and the frequency of contact (see Table 4) among the study participants there appeared to be a shared sense of obligation of not only assistance to parents, but also to siblings.

The construction of the NSAL survey questions required that the most frequent contact be made daily compared to all other contact. However, among study participants weekly contact was normative and daily contact was most often via electronic mail rather than telephone. Because the NSAL did not distinguish how contact was made, it is impossible to determine if NSAL respondents were telephoning or emailing transnational relatives everyday, once a week or at other times. From the qualitative data it is clear that the realities of everyday life in the host nation are likely to overshadow immigrants' abilities to contact family abroad as frequently as they might desire. The persistence of transnational contact among participants and survey respondents may be due to a yearning to maintain their cultural ties. Throughout the interviews there was discussion of the cultural conflict experienced by immigrants produced by their migration and settlement in the U.S. Contacting family members, particularly those still living in the Caribbean, is a means of keeping immigrants culturally connected or grounded.

CHAPTER 6

KIN-KEEPING: GENDER AND KINSCRIPTION

This chapter addresses the second research question: How are the kin work activities associated with transnational kinship relations distributed among members of Afro-Caribbean immigrant families? Specifically, does gender, kinscription, a combination of the two, or some other factor(s) best explain the assigning and execution of kin work activities for families/ kin networks operating in the transnational context? Consequently, this chapter explores how the labor involved with maintaining transnational kinship relations is distributed within immigrant families. The allocation of kin-keeping responsibilities to particular family members indicates a form of kinscription with the expectation that certain duties will be performed by a given individual. How family members are selected to perform kin-keeping duties through assignment or self-selection and the influence of gender in designating kin-keepers in a family are also addressed.

As discussed previously, kinscription “is the process of assigning kin work to family members (Stack and Burton 1993:157).” In other words, kinscription is a kin designated role within a given family that carries certain kin work responsibilities. These roles may be, for instance, caregiving, emotional or financial/ economic support, or kin-keeping, among many others. Financial support or assistance was best displayed within the four study families by Kathy Curey’s financial assistance to her siblings discussed in the previous chapter. The intersection of gender roles and kinscription occurs when

socially proscribed gender roles or expected behaviors overlap with kinship roles and expected behaviors. For example, expectations of sons and daughters are gender roles embedded within kinship relations and the socially accepted behaviors associated with those relationships. For the purposes of this dissertation research, I attempted to separate or untangle gendered roles within families from those associated with kinship and then focus on their intersection in kinship positions. The most clearly identifiable kinscription activities among the study participants were caregiving of elderly relatives, specifically parents, and kin-keeping. Kin-keeping is the organization and execution of kin work tasks associated with maintaining regular or consistent kinship contact between family members and sustaining a sense of family connectedness. Kin-keepers, or kin organizers, are individuals within a family who take on primary kin-keeping duties and are managers of kin-time, “the temporal and sequential ordering of family transitions (Stack and Burton 1993; 157).” I have used the notion of kin-time to assess the prioritization of contact between family members; in other words, who is contacted first, second, last, etc. Kin-keepers tend to be leaders within the family who are in the position to assign kin work to other family members and establish kin-time.

To assess the role or operation of gender in kin work within the families, I interviewed multiple members of four different families probing their family connections, interfamily relations, and frequency of contact between family members. As discussed in the methods section, the topic of gender or gender roles was not directly addressed in my interviews. As participants responded to questions regarding their contact behaviors and interactions with other family members, I noted the gender of the individuals involved. Gendered family relations were most evident in the two larger families, Curey and

Dutton, which had mixed gender siblings. The inclusion of the two smaller families, James and Gibson, both of which contain male only siblings, allowed for the investigation of kinwork and kin-keeping among men.

Factors associated with the frequency of contact were discussed in the previous chapter which concluded that gender, income, educational attainment, and length of stay in host nation all impacted contact behaviors for Afro-Caribbeans with transnational kinship ties. Generally, gender, parents, sibling relations, and family size emerged from the qualitative data as central factors that appear to impact patterns of contact, the delegation of kinship activities, and the designation of kin-keeping roles. Of these factors, gender and living parents(s) seemed to most affect the frequency, duration, and direction of contact (who initiates contact) between immigrants in the United States and their family members residing in the Caribbean, Canada, Britain or elsewhere in the U.S. The association of these factors with transnational family relations, proximity to kin and human capital is discussed below. Presented first are findings regarding gender and the distribution of kinwork as they relate to issues of kin-time or the prioritization of contact. These findings emerged from analysis of the direction of contact primarily through telephone, electronic mail, and visitation between family members. Following is a discussion of the impact of aging parents on family contact; the role of gender, kin-ship, and family size; and, finally, the designation of kin-keepers within the study families.

Gender, Kin-work, and Kin-time

Among the observed families and focus group participants the role of gender appears to influence both the frequency of contact (how often), the direction of contact (who initiates contact), and the prioritization of contact (who is first contacted) among family members. The direction of contact between family members is essentially the prioritization of contact and kinship relations or kin-time. Interviews with the four sample families and group interview participants revealed that individual family members tend to be unequally engaged in contact with their relatives. An example of the gender differential in kin-time was provided by Mabel, a nurse who participated in the Barbados group interview. Although Mabel did not have frequent contact with her members of her family, she does telephone her mother every other month and contacts her brothers less often, about three to four times a year. A gender differential in contact occurred repeatedly among the study participants, with both women and men, indicating they were in most frequent contact with a female relative.

Initial inquiries of participants about contact with close family members led to discussions about the means and frequency of contact. Over the course of the study, interview questioning was refined to uncover with whom participants were initiating contact and in turn who contacted them most often. It was during the mid-point in data collection that the gendered nature of family contact became more apparent. Women appeared to be the primary initiators of contact, via telephone, electronic mail or visitation, with other family members. Additionally, contact behaviors described by male

family members within each of the sample families and the focus group participants had then on the receiving end of contact initiated by their female relatives. Among the families and participants observed in this study, women operate as the primary connectors between family members.

An example of the importance of women in kin contact arose among participants in the all-male Jamaican focus group. The participants were asked which family member they were in contact most and each man responded that they were in frequent contact with a female relative (one sister, one cousin, and one mother). They called and emailed each other frequently, and the direction of contact seemed to be bi-lateral. Unidirectional contact in this group occurred between Nigel and his mother in Jamaica. As the only person in his family to have migrated, Nigel felt obliged to contact his mother weekly to inquire about her health and welfare and to let her know how he was faring in the U.S. Another participant, Malcolm, reported receiving telephone calls from his sister on a regular basis. She calls “just to check up” on him. Because his sister lives nearby in Detroit, she stops by his house for a visit several times a month. Malcolm also stated that he initiated contact, calling by telephone, with an older half-sister in Jamaica about four times a year, usually on special occasion such as holidays and birthdays. He continued by stating that when his mother was alive he would call her once a week. It is noteworthy that several of these participants had close male relatives, brothers and uncles, who they did not contact with the same frequency as the female relatives discussed above.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, participants engaged in kinwork activities that ranged from regularly placing telephone calls to aging parents to inquire about their health and well-being, to organizing family get-togethers for holidays and other special occasions. For example, in the Dutton family, a reunion was arranged to celebrate the 50th wedding anniversary of the parents, George and Sarah. A gendered division of kinwork was evident in the Dutton family participants' recollection of the planning, organization and preparation of the anniversary party which was held in the parental home. The women in the family performed the majority of these kinwork activities. In fact, for the 40th anniversary celebration, Sarah, the mother, made the cake for the party under the pretense that she was making it for someone else. The Curey family arranged family reunion-like vacations around the holidays. Similarly, while Richard Curey, the father, would put out the "call" for everyone in the family to gather in the U.S. Virgin Islands for a particular holiday, for example Christmas, the work of coordinating travel fell mostly to the women in the family. The work of coordinating family members' participation in family events was directed by women in both the Dutton and Curey families.

DiLeonardo (1987) attributed kinwork as women's work. Similarly, Ho (1999) ascribed transnational connections among Trinidadian immigrant families as work performed by women in order to maximize their economic positions. Ho concludes that Caribbean women have a tendency to rely on female kin for both emotional and financial support. For transnational Caribbean families, Sutton posited that the majority of kin connections are created and maintained by women (Sutton 1992). The gender differential

in kin contact observed during this research appears to affirm these earlier findings that transnational kinwork is women's work. In the two large families, Curey and Dutton, women were the primary purveyors of kin contact and executed the majority of kinwork within each family. However, this research sought to explore the delegation of kinwork within families beyond superficial gender roles. Specifically, kinscription, the assigning of particular roles or duties within a family, was investigated in order to uncover which women engage in what kinds of kinwork activities. Also, which men, in the case of the mostly male families, will take on the bulk of kinwork duties? I identify individuals who direct the majority of kinwork activities within the Afro-Caribbean sample families as kin-keepers – leaders within the family that delegate kinwork to other family members and establish kin-time. A discussion of kin-keepers is presented later in this chapter.

A key question for this research is under what conditions do men engage in kinwork activities?. Interviews with male family members and focus group participants indicate that men will initiate telephone contact with parents, initiate and receive telephone calls from other relatives, manage finances and arrange for care of elderly parents. An important aspect of male kinwork participation seemed to be feelings of family obligations to parents and the absence of female relatives who might otherwise take greater responsibility for kinwork tasks. For example, the two smaller families, Gibson and James, consisted primarily of male siblings. As mentioned previously, the James brothers were in contact with each other and occasionally with extended family members in the U.S. and Trinidad. Due to the age of the James brothers, Leon and Fredrick, there are few living extended family members. Contact is maintained between

the two brothers and their families, a cousin and his family living near Leon in Maryland, and several other cousins in Trinidad. For Leon, regular trips home to Trinidad served to both maintain his cultural connection and his social contacts with his cousins. Although the brothers are in regular contact with each other, there was no mention of upcoming visits or plans to meet in Trinidad during Leon's annual trip. Additionally, during the interviews there was no discussion of these types of family visits in the recent past. In comparison to the Curey and Dutton families, the James family did not exhibit a kin-keeper orientation, and kin work activities are intermittent. Contrary to DiLeonardo's findings (1987), in the absence of immediate female relatives, the wives of Leon and Fredrick have not taken up the kinwork tasks of their husbands such as coordinating visits and holiday celebrations. According to the brothers, the bi-continental distance between them significantly suppresses their ability to see each other face-to-face. The immediacy of electronic mail and transnational telephone communication has effectively supplanted regular visitation.

For the four Gibson brothers, the only women in the family of origin is their mother, Margaret, who lives in Trinidad during the winter months and spends the summer in New Jersey with the eldest brother Vonnrick [Rick]. Margaret regularly telephones her sons, although they tend to initiate calls to her before she can call them. Because of the composition of this family, discussion of the nature of contact among the family members will be presented below in the section on parents, reciprocity and caregiving. However, in the absence of other female relatives, the Gibson family does represent circumstances under which men instigate kinwork and kin-keeping activities.

Gender, Sibling Networks and Family Size

Among the sample families, gender, sibling relations and family size were found to be particularly important factors that seem to influence the patterns of contact within the families and the distribution of kin work activities. In the two smaller families, James and Gibson, gender was not a major factor as the family consisted primarily of men and birth order among sibling appears to have less influence in patterns of contact between family members. Therefore, to discuss the operation of gender and gendered family relations I will focus on the larger families, Currey and Dutton. These two families showed patterns of behavior that differed considerably from the smaller families (Gibson and James). Within the larger families, sibling networks were observed that appeared to impact the patterns of communication among family members from the initiation of contact to inclusion in family communications. Additionally, there appears to be a gendered effect within the family networks. Initially, the two large families, Currey and Dutton, seem to have equitable sibling connections across gender lines. Relations between brothers and sisters were consistently described as close. The NSAL data seemingly suggests that Caribbean men and women interpret closeness among family members differently, as feelings of family closeness and contact behaviors are incongruent. Closer observation and analysis of the interview transcripts reveal that the frequency of contact between family members tends to operate along gendered lines, with women in closer contact with other women in the family than with the men.

Although a direct discussion of gender roles or differences never occurred during the interviews and focus groups, participants were aware of and mentioned differences in contact or associations within the family. Noel Curey, the third sibling, provided an overview of her family that initially drew my attention to the impact of sibling networks on contact within the family. Noel described her family as follows:

Noel: Our family is actually broken up between two groups, with the first four kids, just four girls, and then there's a gap of maybe four or five years, and then we had the second group of three kids. Altogether seven kids, six girls and one boy. And very middle class values.

In the Curey family, the sisters effectively create two separate networks according to age with Eddie, the only one son somewhat outside of both sibling groups. The older group consists of Kathy, Noel, Lydia, and to a lesser extent Grace. The younger sibling group is composed of Vivian Marie, Dorothy May and Eddie. The consensus among the sisters is that their brother, Eddie, is part of the younger sibling group based on age and birth order. However, in practice Eddie is generally on the outside of both sibling groups. Through electronic mail he is able to remain aware of the communication with his sisters, although he tends to be engaged only during major decisions. The following quote from Vivan, the sixth sibling, was presented previously to illustrate family conference calls. It is used again here because it is also representative of the notion and operation of kin-time, the prioritization of contact within families.

Vivian: I would call May [Dorothy] and we would be like “hey, have you talked to Mom or da da da.” “No, okay, let’s patch her in.” So we would patch her in and we’d be talking about something, you know, an issue and we’re like let’s get another opinion and call Kathy or Noel. When we have a family emergency definitely we get everybody on the line to get everybody’s opinion on the emergency.

In the interview with Noel, the third sibling, the direction and prioritization of contact is different from Vivian’s. Noel mentioned that she initiates a call to her mother and then brings in Kathy in Washington, DC, next Lydia in Boston, and so on. Two somewhat overlapping groups were revealed within the family. Vivian and Dorothy comprise the core of the younger sibling group, while Noel clearly initiates contact with the elder siblings and mother first then expands the “family” conversation to the younger siblings. According to Vivian’s comment, Kathy and Noel are engaged or included in the conversation when an issue requires additional opinions or advice. Interestingly, Eddie was not directly named in either Noel’s or Vivian’s list of family members they contact nor, was Eddie listed in conversations with the other sisters. In fact, during the interview I had to ask specifically about each sister’s contact with Eddie and his inclusion in “family” conversations.

In the Dutton family, with eight siblings, the kin contact was again observed as gendered and aged. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the family was in frequent contact with both parents and other siblings. Similar to the Currey family, the Dutton

siblings also displayed a pattern of contact that was highly gendered and sibling networks that were divided along birth order. However, in the Dutton family residential proximity to each other and to the parental home appeared to also influence kin-time and kinwork activities. The older sibling group consists of Constance, Mabel, and Richard who were the first to immigrate. They resided either together or in close proximity to each other in Canada for many years before the rest of the family migrated to Florida. Technically, the remaining siblings (Clarence, Marie Claire, Georgette, Paul and Violet) comprise the “younger” sibling group. But this group appeared to be divided along gender lines with the male siblings, Clarence and Paul, in contact with each other and the female siblings, Marie Claire, Georgette, and Violet, in very close contact with each other and the parents. Residential proximity seemed to influence the actual division of the sibling groups. Because Constance and Richard live further away, New York and Canada respectively, they were not physically part of the daily kinwork in which Marie Claire, Georgette, and Juliet were engaged. And, due to Mabel’s proximity, she was in frequent contact with the women in the younger sibling group. In general, while all of the siblings were in frequent contact with their parents, often daily contact via telephone, kinwork activities²⁷ tended to fall to the three female siblings with closest residential proximity to the parents, Marie Claire, Georgette, and Violet.

As mentioned previously, Dalton Conley (2004) suggests that family or sibling size, gender composition, and birth position effectively create distinct family conditions and parental expectations for each child, and the conditions impact social mobility and

²⁷ Kinwork in the Dutton family mainly consisted of activities associated with the parents, from doctor’s visits, grocery shopping and other errands, to planning family get-togethers to celebrate parental birthdays and wedding anniversaries.

sense of self. Additionally, Conley finds that family size above other variables is a powerful factor in determining much about the development and socialization of individuals. According to Conley, larger families, those with more than four children, tend to generate a corporate or clan-like family identity that tends to promote certain family characteristics. Applying this concept to the current study provides insight into the sense of communal or equal participation in kin work among the members of these families, in spite of the reality that all members may not be equally engaged.

The impact of family composition and size would also explain the development of sibling networks and differential kin-time among members. The smaller families in this study [Gibson and James] simply did not have enough members to divide into separate sibling groups. Due to the smaller number of members in the family, communication choices were either to remain in contact with the others or not. In contrast, the sibling networks revealed in the larger Curey and Dutton families, seven and eight siblings respectively, seem to be based on sibling position within the family and the interpersonal bonds forged in early childhood and adolescence. Similar to Conley's findings, the elder children, who spent a period of their childhood in a smaller family prior to the birth of many of their siblings, had a different family experience than their younger siblings. In both the Curey and Dutton families, the eldest children had a bond with each other that appeared to be different from the bond they had with their younger siblings.

Alternatively, the younger siblings maintained bonds with each other that were closer than those with their older siblings. In both cases, the elder siblings left the family home, immigrating to the U.S. and Canada, when the younger siblings were young children.

Ultimately, sibling networks within larger families, like the Curey and Dutton families, may be inevitable given the often significant span of years between the birth of the first and last child. Shared childhood experiences are also likely to influence the development of sibling networks even within families of a few as three children. In the case of immigrant families, the migration of the elder children is likely to further distance their relations with younger siblings remaining in the household. Because of the size of the Curey and Dutton families, the sibling networks were fairly easy to observe. However, even in the Gibson family of four sons, the two elder children, Rick in New Jersey and Samuel in Trinidad, appeared to have a slightly closer relationship evidenced by more frequent contact. Rick's frequent return visits to Trinidad to look after his property also allowed him to visit with Samuel. Moreover, for the Gibson family, the shared experience of being separated from their parents prior to migration, in addition to age, may also have aided in forging closer bonds between the brothers who were housed together; Rick and Samuel; Karl and Derek. In relation to the distribution of kinwork and kin-keeping, factors other than family size and gender appear to influence who in the family is chiefly responsible for these activities. These factors are addressed below in the section on kin-keeping.

It is difficult to untangle the association of kin-time, the prioritization and sequential ordering of kin contact, contact with parents, particularly mothers, and gendered networks within the family. Among the study participants gender, or women involved in contact, and a living parent involved in contact intersect in the person of the

“mother”. The direction of contact within the qualitative sample clearly had a gendered component, contact between participants and their mothers increased the gendered nature of that contact. Both daughters and sons indicated that the most frequent contact with other family members, most often by telephone, was contact made with their mothers. The impact of parents on the frequency and direction of kin contact is addressed in the next section. What can be concluded about kin-time and the direction of contact among the qualitative sample is that women tend to initiate contact with other family members. Men tend to be receivers of contact of other family members and initiators of contact with their mothers and, to a lesser extent, with other matriarchs in the family.

Parents, Reciprocity and Care-giving

Research on Caribbean kinship suggests that the mother-child bond is highly valued and idealized as the most important lifelong relationship, which commonly translates into a form of social security for the aging mother (Smith 1996). This section examines the association between transnational kinship relations, reciprocity within the family, and mother-child or parent-child connections and care-giving. Throughout international migration literature there is a considerable emphasis on remittances such that the issue of migration often becomes inextricably linked to economic or material assistance to family members remaining in the country of origin.

Reciprocity toward the parents was clearly evident in the Dutton family, as the adult children living near the elderly parents in Florida provided various kinds of

assistance to the elderly parents. Several of the siblings live in the same neighborhood and can stop by the parents' home almost everyday. The direction of assistance was clear: from the adult children to the parents. Georgette, the sixth sibling, explained that she saw her parents everyday or a least spoke on the phone with them. Often she calls to ask her mother if there's anything she needs from the store and Georgette will then pick up the items and drop them off on the way home from work. In earlier days when the family lived in Jamaica, the direction of assistance was from the parents to the children, as first Constance, then Mabel, then Richard migrated to Canada. Constance was newly married and had migrated with her husband, while both Mabel and Richard migrated to attend college. Their parents, George and Sarah, sent funds to assist in the support of each child. Later, once they established themselves abroad, Constance, Mabel and Richard each claimed they began sending money home. Currently, Richard is the only sibling who still resides in Canada with his family.

In the Gibson family, the brothers work in concert to make sure that the mother is "looked after," though the level of financial assistance that they provide is unclear. Mrs. Gibson receives social security from her employment in the U.S.; in addition, both Rick and Karl send her money during the six months of the year she's in Trinidad. Derek, the youngest brother, was incarcerated during the study period and was therefore unable to contribute to the mother's well-being or contact her as frequently as the other siblings. After the death of their father in 1996, the Gibson brothers assisted their mother in finishing and furnishing the two story concrete block home that was near completion in rural Trinidad. At the time, Vonrick, the eldest brother, who works in construction,

would send a shipping barrel full of tools and other items necessary for the upkeep of the house. Samuel, the second brother, who resides in Trinidad is generally responsible for checking up on their mother frequently and taking her items that she needs. Because she splits her time between the U.S. and the Caribbean, Samuel opens her house and prepares it for her before she arrives each year. Karl, the third brother, purchased a refrigerator, washer and other electronics and appliances for her over several years, although at times these items were not initially welcome as the following quote suggests:

Karl: She didn't want the washer cause she thinks she can still go ahead and do the old hand thing. I'm like 'No way mom you can't do that, no' (Laughter) 'okay? No. Let me buy a washer for you' and you know and it took nothing for me to do that so, I did. Some of it I kind of forced it, forced it on her but she eventually accepted and she's like you know, okay. So, I would look for all these little things that will make it easier for her.

When asked about contact with close family members, study participants most often referred to consistent contact with parents, mothers in particular. Plaza (2000) identifies the mother-son bond as being the strongest kin relationship in Caribbean families. Evidence for the sample families indicates that the strength of the relationship between mothers and sons in some cases is very close. The presumed closeness of this relationship may help to explain findings from the qualitative data which suggest that men will initiate kinwork that involves their mothers. Michael, the husband of Vivian Currey, best illustrated the closeness of a mother-son relationship, stating that he made

daily calls to his mother in the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Michael: Every day, twice a day, sometimes... Yeah, nights and weekends long distance are free so, I can talk to her until either my face turns blue or the phone shuts off. But I definitely call to check on her. Like I said, I always feel.... First place, if I call and she is not there, I want to know why.... She knows I am a worry wart and I am a worry wart....

I: What are you worried about?

Michael: I am just very, very, very protective of my mother. I mean like I said, I don't think you will ever find a sweeter person than my mother. I don't think it is possible... When I was older I mean younger, I used to tell girls that I meet that I was a momma's boy. I am like, yeah. I'm like momma's boy, you know... I love and respect my mother. I am not going to lie. I am going to tell you, I love and respect my mother and you know she is the best person I know.

Michael's daily contact with his mother was not typical among the male participants in the study. Generally, the men made regular weekly contact with their mothers. This pattern of contact is analogous to that found among Caribbean men in the NSAL data who mainly made contact with family members about once a week or several times a month. In the all male Jamaican focus group, Malcolm indicated that when his mother was living he would telephone her in Jamaica at least once a week.

The actions of adult children are most likely influenced by the expectations of their behavior held by parents and other family members. It would appear counterintuitive for such a strong socio-cultural influence as perceived parental expectations to not substantially influence the behavior of children, even adult children. Alternatively, among the sample families parental expectations for behavior appeared to be a recurring theme though the articulation of those expectations may be quite subtle. As in the Dutton family, the children were raised to “give back something,” according to their financial and geographic ability, to the parents.

An alternative motivation for immigrants in both contacting transnational family members, particularly parents who remained in the country of origin, and providing some form of assistance to these family members may simply be guilt. Throughout the study participants expressed feelings of conflict about their migration to fulfill personal aspirations, economic, educational or other, and their familial responsibility to physically assist aging parents and elderly relatives in the Caribbean. There was a clear desire among participants to be present for the daily minutiae in the lives of their parents and other relatives remaining in the home country. The greater majority of these longings were laced with deep feelings of lost opportunities to share in the lives of loved ones. The Curey and Gibson families seemed to have the closest and most frequent transnational contact with transnational family members, predominately sustained through regular visits and telephone calls.

For those immigrants with parents in the islands, the primary concern was for their parents' health and well-being. The frequency of contact within the family generally revolved around weekly contact with parents and/or discussions with siblings regarding the welfare of aging parents. In the sample families and the focus groups, the issue of dealing with the care of aging relatives, specifically parents, during illness was mentioned repeatedly. Participants stated that they increased the frequency of calls and even visits during a parent's illness. Additionally, such a situation also increased their contact with other relatives as participants tried to manage care for their parents from afar.

Several key informants mentioned as a major concern for the immigrant community the issue of inadequate health care and elder care options in the Caribbean. Family members also discussed the need across the Caribbean for elder care facilities similar to those in the United States that provide both independent living and nursing home care. These facilities would not only allow for better medical care of relatives but would also provide peace of mind to family members residing abroad. The desire for these facilities seems to indicate a more middle class, progressive, and undoubtedly American sensibility toward the idea of caring for aging parents and family members. The preference for a family member to take on the responsibility of care was discussed with participants. In the absence of quality elder care facilities in the region, immigrant families are forced to make other arrangements, preferably engaging another relative on the island to care for the elder parents. In some instances, participants entertained the possibility of employing someone to come into the home and care for the parents.

However, given the problems in hiring a qualified, reliable, and trustworthy individual, as well as the hassle of overseeing their employment from afar, this option was not the most desirable among participants. In fact, the issue of trust and reliability was so strong that it led families to prefer a family member to relocate near the parents or reside with them rather than hire an outsider. Although, it must be noted that the families still said they would select an elder care facility or visiting nurse agency as a primary option, if available.

Discussion in the Barbados group interview was primarily on contact with parents. Robert mentioned that his father in Barbados was dealing with a long-term illness. Prior to the development of his father's illness, Robert's level of contact was relatively typical of many of Caribbean male immigrants in the study. He would telephone home once or twice a month and on birthdays and holidays, and plan a return visit once every three years. Now, due to his father's poor health, Robert is calling more often, sometimes several times a week, and is considering changing long-distance telephone calling plans to reduce the expense of his increased international calls. Robert states that he is concerned about the condition of his father and the medical care that he is receiving in Barbados.

In lieu of adequate medical facilities and with a general distrust of outsiders, immigrant families tend to determine who will uproot their lives to return to the island and care for the aging parents. As mentioned previously, in the Gibson family, Margaret, the mother, who had lived in the U.S. for many years, now spends about half the year in

the States which allows her to not only visit friends and family, but to schedule appointments with doctors, the dentist and other medical specialists. During the other half of the year, generally the winter months, she returns to Trinidad. However, at some point this type of frequent travel becomes highly inconvenient as the parents continue to age or have more serious health issues that affect their mobility. For Margaret Gibson, returning permanently to the U.S. for health care reasons, if necessary, will not be a dramatic change given that she a naturalized U.S. citizen who resided in New Jersey for many years where she still owns a house. For other immigrants, an important family task is identifying which member of the family would return to the Caribbean to care for aging parents.

Family members were asked directly about family plans to take care of elderly parents. Relocating to care for the parents was not an issue in the Dutton family, as three of the children, Marie Claire, Georgette, and Violet, live nearby in Miami. The other study participant's responses suggest that a combination of volunteering and kinscription is employed to determine which person in the family is best suited to return home to care for the parent(s). Several of the expected "care givers" were keenly aware of their familial role and had begun planning for the eventual return to the islands. In the Curey family, Dorothy May, the seventh and youngest sibling, described a recent conversation she had had with Vivian Marie, the sixth sibling, about anticipating the future care of their parents.

Dorothy May: Well, me and Marie just spoke of this last weekend. We

were saying that somehow we have to convince them to move up to the States. We didn't have a family conference on this yet, but this was just between me and Vivian. We said we have to have a family conference between the siblings to have them all agree and then we'll gang up on my parents because they are so resistant to leaving. Well, now they've gotten better but before we had to basically wring their arms for them to leave the Island. We would like for them to live in the States so that we could take care of them. They would have better health care up here. We would be here to help them with whatever they need.

When asked where she would relocate her parents, Richard and Vivian, if she could get them to agree to move to the U.S., Dorothy indicated that, too, had been a topic in her conversation with her sister Vivian. They concluded that Texas, Boston or Washington D.C. would be the most ideal locations for the parents "only because those are where the siblings have their own houses. Everyone else is renting an apartment." Eddie, the fifth sibling, and his family are reside in Texas. Dorothy, Lydia, the second sibling, and Lydia's four children reside together in Boston. Kathy, the eldest, lives in Washington, D.C. When asked about Noel, who lives in Miami with her husband and daughter and also owns her home, Dorothy stated that she and Vivian had forgotten that option. However, she concluded that their first choice was for the parents to move in with Kathy who is unmarried, has no children and owns a very large house. Kathy is a strong supporter of the idea, having mentioned in her interview that she purchased her house with the hope that eventually the parents would move in. Richard and Vivian have

been informed that they already have a private room and bath awaiting them in Kathy's house, if they desire.

Dorothy May was the last person interviewed in the Curey family. Given that the interviews took place over several months, it is possible that conversations with other family members heightened an awareness of family issues even though each participant was asked not to discuss their interview responses with the other family members. During the interviews, each sibling was asked who in the family would return home, if necessary, to care for the parents. Noel, Grace, and Vivian Marie each stated that, if necessary, they would relocate to the U.S. Virgin Islands in order to care for their parents. Each perceived that they were the best suited for that extremely demanding kinwork task. Additionally, each perceived that their other siblings would agree that they were the ideal choice to take care of the parents. The fact that Kathy really is in the best financial and family position, unmarried with no children, to have the parents reside with her is an accepted truth within the family. While Noel, Grace, and Vivian Marie may imagine an altruistic return to the island for the sake of the parents, the likelihood is that most of the siblings will rally around Kathy's plan of having the parents live with her.

The self-selection of Noel, Grace, and Vivian Marie as the best candidates to care for the parents might indicate a form of kinscription, although others in the family did not really agree that these three siblings would be the ones chosen to return to the U.S. Virgin Islands. What is more likely is that each of these women was "doing gender," in a way, by projecting that they would fulfill the Caribbean gender expectations of the role of the

“good daughter.” The socio-cultural expectation that daughters, rather than sons, assist elderly parents was expressed in the NSAL data (see Table 6 in Chapter 4). This expectation was also suggested by one key informant. Nora, a college professor who migrated to the U.S. over forty years ago, stated that in her village in Trinidad, daughters who had immigrated sent home money to rebuild or improve almost all the parental houses on her street where she grew up. She had also followed this expectation, having providing the financial assistance to improve and expand her mother’s house. To Nora’s knowledge, no immigrant son had sent large amounts of money to the parents. When asked about the societal expectations of adult immigrant children aiding parents, she responded that there was no expectation for sons to send large amounts of money because it is assumed that sons are supporting their own families. Therefore, daughters are further assumed to have the obligation to the parents at home in the Caribbean.

The association between migration success and remittances can lead to family situations where relations among siblings and parents are quite complicated, often counterintuitive, and quite possibly culturally specific. For example, key informant Nora discussed the recent death of her mother in Trinidad and the conflict with her siblings over the mother’s house. Nora is the most educated and economically successful daughter, and she had contributed significant sums of money over the years for the modernization and upkeep of the mother’s house. In Nora’s assessment, the siblings still residing in the house had failed to adequately take care of their ailing mother or contribute to the household. Ownership of the house after the mother’s death went to another daughter, who had also migrated to the U.S. but had been less financially

successful and had not aided the up-keep of the house. Nora struggled to come to terms with her mother's decision to award the house to her sister. However, she did not vocalize her feelings to her siblings. In a way, she rationalized the situation as a migration penalty, payment for her absence as part of the cost of migration. In the Barbados focus group, when the issue of remittances to parents was discussed the participants flatly rejected the concept of a quid pro quo in relation to the financial contributions given to parents for household modernization or up-keep and a share or ownership of the parental home. For these immigrants, financial assistance is given at best as a gift or at worse as an obligation, or simply as a means to compensate for not being physically present to assist aging parents. They did not expect anything in return for their contributions.

Among the study participants it appeared that managing distant and transnational kinship relations was not overtly emotional and stressful. Most participants spoke longingly about missing the everyday interactions with family members, particularly parents, and life in the islands. Cecilia James, Leon's wife, was the only participant to become very emotional during her interview. She was relating the deaths of her father and sister. In 1978, about ten years after her migration, her father was killed in an accident. Cecilia had been unable to attend the funeral due to work and family commitments. Later, in 1993, Cecilia took her sister with inoperable cancer back home to Trinidad to die. Most often participants expressed controlled wistfulness about the distance in their kinship relations. Participants seemed resolved that distance was a part of their life experience, and they tried to minimize the void between family members by

keeping in contact and visiting as often as possible.

Kin-keepers and Kin-keeping Responsibilities

According to DiLeonardo (1987), among Italian immigrants in the San Francisco area the eldest female within a given family tended to take on the kin-keeping responsibilities for that family. Additionally, DiLeonardo found that wives tended to execute kinwork activities on their husband's behalf for his family. The data collected in this dissertation on Afro-Caribbean immigrant families partially supports these findings. Among the sample families, women were indeed the pivot for family communications and took on kin-keeping roles, specifically in the Curey and Dutton families. However, men did indeed take up kin-keeping roles under certain conditions in both the male majority sample families, Gibson and James, and among several of the focus group participants.

As mentioned above, focus group participant, Malcolm, contacted his mother daily. Since her death, he contacts his maternal aunt about four times a year. The change in his frequency of contact between his mother and aunt suggests that the maternal position in kin relations is not transferable in this case. Contrary to DiLeonardo's findings, among the Caribbean immigrants interviewed for this study the eldest female in the family was not routinely designated to be the kin-keeper. Among the members of the sample families or focus group participants, none stated that they contacted or were in contact with another senior female family member, such as an aunt or older sister, with

the same regularity as contact with their mothers. Inversely, they also did not indicate that they received telephone, electronic mail, or other forms of communication from female extended family members with the same frequency as contact with their mothers. What this suggests is that the mother-child bond among the Caribbean community is a strong tie that may not be generally replicated in relationships with other female relatives.

The primary objective of this study was to determine if gender or kin designated roles influenced the distribution of kinwork within immigrant transnational families. But additionally, if women were central to kinwork activities within these families, what factors would indicate which women within a family were voluntarily or involuntarily selected to take on the majority of kinwork responsibilities. In other words, how are kin-keepers selected? It appears that the factors which lead to the emergence of kin-keepers within a given family are much more nuanced than a simple gender division of labor. Among the study families, characteristics that tended to lead to the designation of a kin-keeper or family/ kin organizer were a combination of family relational position (e.g., mother, father, sister, brother), family size and birth order, individual personality or preference for “volunteering” to do certain kinwork activities, and the individual’s skill set [human capital and cultural capital]. The latter often seemed to dovetail with the kin-keeper’s occupational attainment, as one’s occupation has a tendency to reflect the individual’s skill set and personality. Geographical positioning of the identified kin-keeper also seemed to impact the selection of that individual. For example, some kin-keepers are in close proximity to other members of the family or resources/services necessary to facilitate kinwork.

The development of kin-keepers within a given family appears to result from a combination of Stack and Burton's (1993) notions of kinscripts and Conley's (2004) concepts of the influence of family size, gender composition and birth order. In both theoretical perspectives, gender is seen as an important factor in the trajectory of children's roles within a family and in their public sphere lives. Kin-keepers seem to emerge as the result of childhood socialization, inter-familial dynamics, and personal characteristics. The kin-keeper position tends to be advantaged by the individual's "natural ability" to perform kin-keeper tasks. The indications of "natural ability" seem to derive from the recognition of the kin-keeper's talents by other members in the family. A type of deference is then allocated to the kin-keeper such that their prodding and coaxing to get family members together serves the overall good of the entire family. Often the kin-keeper's occupation is identified by other family members as proof of the kin-keeper's attributes for the role.

Occupational connections to the kin-keeper role were found in each of the study families. In the James family, Leon's position as a cultural representative for a non-profit in Washington, D.C., provided a cultural maintenance component to his desire to keep in contact with extended family and friends in Trinidad and his brother in England. Leon's position also facilitated his travel to Trinidad. Samuel and Karl Gibson both operated as kin-keepers for their family. Each had obtained a college degree and both were employed in positions²⁸ that required communication and attention to detail. Marie

²⁸ Samuel is a business manager for an import/export company in Trinidad. Karl works for a cruise line in Florida and is responsible for passenger check-in.

Claire and Georgette, and to a lesser extent Violet, were kin-keepers, although they didn't identify themselves as such. Each of them is a college graduate whose occupation²⁹ requires organizational skills and knowledge of government forms and bureaucracy. These positions and knowledge make them the designated "go-to" persons to assist their parents in dealing with the health care system or financial institutions. In the Curey family, both Kathy and Noel³⁰ have occupations that require attention to detail and a certain amount of authority and diplomacy. In the Curey family, the siblings identified Kathy's position as the eldest, most financially secure, and her close affiliation with her parents as effectively making her a "pseudo-parent" and leader. However, after interviewing the siblings, the common sentiment was that Kathy was the task-oriented or instrumental leader, but Noel was primarily the socio-emotional or expressive leader.

If the Curey siblings identify a somewhat hierarchical organization of kin-keeping within the family, the eight siblings of the Dutton family had no such vision for their family. In fact, the perception of communal responsibility was very strong among all family members interviewed. This perhaps is due to the nature of their migration as political immigrants. The sociopolitical conflict and resulting economic disruption on the island of Jamaica prior to their migration had lead to threats on the life of the father, George. This grim situation is likely to have forged a special type of solidarity among the siblings that otherwise may not have developed. When asked if one of the siblings seemingly takes more of an organizational role in keeping the family together or planning get-togethers, Georgette, the sixth Dutton sibling, responded:

²⁹ Marie Claire is an accountant. Georgette is employed as juvenile justice officer with the Department of Corrections, and Violet works for the County Courts.

³⁰ Kathy is an attorney and Noel is a paralegal.

But we are together. That is the reason why. Everybody normally is on the same page. You know, you don't want any tug-of-war or fighting. We all come together as one... We just know that it is our duty. Like with my parents, to do certain things or make sure that you know need to get done.

Georgette expressed this sentiment of common goals and equity in kinwork although she, Marie Claire, the fifth sibling, and Violet, the eighth and youngest sibling, performed the majority of planning for both celebrations of the parent's anniversaries. All of the siblings pitched in financially to cover the expense of the two celebrations. Proximity to the parental home is likely the prime reason Marie Claire, Georgette, and Violet are seemingly most responsible for a major portion of the kinwork done in the family. They planned a surprise 40th anniversary party for the parents to be held the week prior to the actual anniversary date. Much of the food was prepared by the three sisters. The party was held in the parents' home with all eight siblings and their families attending. For the parent's 50th wedding anniversary, the same three sisters appeared to take the leadership roles in organizing the event. Violet was in charge of securing the hotel space and ordering the food. Since the siblings were planning far in advance of the actual event, they were able to contribute in installments to the cost of the event. What is most interesting among the Dutton siblings was the perception of equitable kinwork and contributions in spite of the reality that the vast majority of the family's kinwork tasks were performed by only three of the eight siblings.

Throughout the interviews with the sample families it became apparent that participants seemed to accept communication with the organizers of family events as equivalent to the actual kinwork involved in executing the event. In other words, those who kept in frequent contact with the main organizers were perceived to be “part” of the planning process and thus were not required or expected to do more. Again and again participants claimed that they were organizing family events together, even though certain members of the family did more labor than others. Keeping in touch and letting the organizers know that they were emotionally available was enough to secure the perception of full participation in the work required to plan the event. For Marie Claire, Georgette and Violet in the Dutton family, they feel as if the family operates as a cohesive unit that comes together when necessary. Within the unit, everyone is relatively equal and the kinwork obligations are equally distributed. For this family, it appears that frequent contact with the other family members ensures that one is meeting their kinwork obligations. Absence from contact with other family members is an indication that one is not “part” of the family in the same manner as the others, and that family obligations are not being met.

For the Curey family, Grace, the fourth sibling who lives in California, is both geographically and ideologically distant from the family. The combination of Grace’s confrontations with her daughter and her zealous religious participation and practice place her outside of the core group within the family. However, her inability to be in regular contact with the other members of the family appears to heighten her already distant position within the family. Other family members mentioned that Grace was not

available and therefore was not able to participate in family decision making processes. In fact, Grace herself and the problems she was having with her daughter ultimately became the subject of family discussion. Grace's failure to remain accessible to the family through the weekly family conference call or through email made her the subject of family conversation rather than a participant in it. The result was that other members within the Curey family felt that Grace was not upholding her kinwork obligations. It is noteworthy that although Grace was identified as not keeping up her kinwork obligations, Eddie, who frequently missed the weekly conference calls and visits to the parental home in the Virgin Islands, was not identified as failing to meet his kinwork obligations. It is possible that gender may impact the differences in the family's perception of kinwork responsibilities.

Looking across the interviews, it appears that certain individuals within a family may be excused of their kinwork responsibilities if the reason for their inability to execute kinwork is perceived as justified. For instance, Derek Gibson's incarceration reduces his ability to make contact via telephone or electronic mail and most certainly he cannot visit. Constance Dutton, the eldest sibling, is expected to contact her parents daily as she has done for years. However, due to difficulties with air travel³¹ Constance is not expected to attend many of the family get-togethers although she did attend the parents' anniversary parties. As discussed above, Eddie Curey is able to be considered an active family participant even though he doesn't often participate in the weekly family telephone conferences. Conley (2004) suggests that roles and expectations within

³¹ This difficulty in air travel was alluded to by several family members although specifics were not given. Apparently it is physical and seems to be an inner ear issue that makes it painful for her to fly.

families can be forged early in childhood and continue throughout the individual's life. Interviews with several of the Curey sisters revealed that while growing up in the U.S. Virgin Islands, Eddie was quite independent and often out of the house. As the only boy in the family, he was given substantial freedom to come and go as he pleased. It is this independence combined both gender and age that may presently reduce the expectation of his involvement in kinwork within the family.

Men can and do become kin-keepers in certain situations. Samuel Gibson, who resides in Trinidad with his family, plays a vital role in looking after the house and checking on his mother Margaret when she's in Trinidad. He keeps in contact with his brothers about their mother's situation, when she will be coming down to Trinidad, health concerns, items she needs, work that needs to be done on the house or property, her plans for returning to the U.S., etc. Karl and Rick coordinate on the U.S. end to send down items or plan visits to Trinidad to assist with household repairs. It is difficult to assess which brother is the kin-keeper for the Gibson family. This ambiguity stems from the different roles that each brother plays in the care of their mother and in contacting the other siblings. While Samuel is the key person looking after Margaret's well-being while she is in Trinidad, it is Vonnrick, the eldest brother, who takes on the primary role when she is residing in New Jersey. However, Karl, the third sibling, is the only brother listed on the deed of each of the houses; New Jersey and Trinidad. Karl appears to be the brother who arranges Margaret's travel and oversees her finances. In the absence of a sister or other female relative to assume the duties of caring for Margaret, the brothers clearly divided up the responsibility.

Another case where a man took on kin-keeping came from Barbadian group interview participant, Stan. He explained that he was one of the major organizers of his entire extended family. Several years ago, a couple of cousins in England asked him to help organize a family reunion to be held in Britain. After being involved in that project, Stan remained in closer communication with many of his relatives via email and telephone. At the time of the group interview, Stan was initiating contact with relatives and planning the next family reunion to be held in two years in Barbados. As an engineer, it is likely that the detailed planning of a large family reunion appeals to Stan and plays into his natural abilities. Plus, there is the benefit and enjoyment of interacting with family face-to-face.

Conclusions

In summary, in families with male and female siblings, gender appears to influence both kin-time and the distribution of kinwork. Socially normative gender roles within families tend to lead female members toward care-giving roles and male members toward provider roles. Among this study's sample families, similar results in the gendered division of kinwork were found. Within families in which female members were available, the majority of kinwork activities were performed by women. In these families, male members were considered to be "part of the family" and "fully engaged" if they contributed financially to the kin work event, were available to discuss the event during the planning stage, or were willing to do minor tasks associated with the event

including simply attending. On the other hand, for families where few women, if any, were present, men did indeed take on the primary responsibilities of kinwork, particularly keeping in regular communication with other family members and caring for aging relatives. Therefore, in these cases gender, more specifically the availability of female relatives, does appear to influence the distribution of kinwork activities within the study families.

Findings from the Afro-Caribbean study participants, in comparison to DiLeonardo's (1987) Italian immigrants, suggest that cultural orientations establish variations in familial expectations for members. It appears that several factors, such as gender composition and family sibling size, should be taken into consideration when evaluating kin relations and kinship obligations within families. Additionally, childhood socialization and sibling relations appear to combine with occupational abilities and interests to generate individuals within families who self-select the kin-keeper role. Moreover, it is self-selection that may require further investigation as direct kinscription, the assigning of kin work activities to family members, was not evident.

CHAPTER 7

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The mixed-method approach employed in this exploratory study of Afro-Caribbean immigrant families with transnational kinship ties contributes to better understanding of the questions under investigation. The study explored social behaviors among transnational immigrant families under the guidance of two research questions: (1) Under what conditions or circumstances do Afro-Caribbean immigrants initiate, maintain, or conversely suspend, connections with family members residing abroad (i.e., transnational kin)? What particular goals or projects of immigrant families increase or decrease the frequency of contact with kinfolk? (2) How are the kin work activities associated with transnational kinship relations distributed among members of Afro-Caribbean immigrant families? Specifically, does gender, kin-scription, a combination of the two, or some other factor(s) best explain the assigning and execution of kin work activities for families/ kin networks operating in the transnational context?

The study reveals several issues that are important to the understanding of the micro-processes operating within these families. First, that gender appears to be a prominent factor in determining kinship relations and the kin work involved with maintaining kinship ties. However, gender alone does not appear to be the only factor that influences the degree of connectedness nor, does it entirely account for the delegation and distribution of kin work within these families. Second, that the size and

gender composition of the immigrant family, as well as the proximity of members to each other, appears to impact patterns of kin contact, family connectedness and how family members sustain a sense of family over distance and time. Finally, that other factors, such as income, gendered attitudes about kinship responsibilities, and parents remaining in the Caribbean, also seem to influence the degree of transnational family connections for Afro-Caribbean immigrant families.

Summary of Quantitative Data

The analysis of NSAL data produced some confirmation of DiLeonardo's (1987) and Ho's (1990) assertions that gender is a significant factor in kinship contact within immigrant families. Afro-Caribbean NSAL respondents showed significant gender differences in their frequency of contact and feelings of closeness with family. Women appear to be in more frequent contact than are men. Interestingly, men seem to feel that their families are closer than women, even though men contact family with less frequency. This discrepancy between closeness and contact frequency among men is likely to have suppressed the overall impact of perceived family closeness and contact behavior for NSAL respondents in the sub-sample.

The purpose of the logistic regression analysis was to tease out the significance of gender in contact frequency among the NSAL respondents when other factors, such as income, attitudes, and patterns of familial exchange were considered. In the logistic regression analysis, the way in which the response categories of the dependent variable,

frequency of contact, were collapsed impacted the results. Gender was significant in three of the four models when the dependent variable was collapsed into everyday and weekly contact versus all other frequencies of contact. Income, which was significant in the first two models, failed to remain a significant factor influencing the frequency of contact as other variables were included. Giving and getting assistance from family also produced mixed results in the quantitative analysis. Giving help to family members was most significant in the full logistic regression model, containing all the variables, where the frequency of contact was divided into everyday and weekly versus all other contact. When the dependent variable was collapsed into everyday contact versus other frequencies of contact the variable perceived gendered responsibility was significant in three of the four models.

The NSAL finding that how frequency of contact is grouped is important is consistent with findings from the qualitative data which indicate that Afro-Caribbean immigrants have a tradition of making contact and interacting with family and relatives at least once a week, primarily on Sundays. Among the study participants everyday contact was common mostly for those family members that were in close proximity to one another. For the NSAL analysis then, collapsing the dependent variable, frequency of contact, into everyday and once a week corresponds to the Caribbean tradition of weekly family contact. What emerges from the quantitative analysis is that gender, giving help from family members and perceptions of daughters being responsible for the care for elderly parents appear to have the most influence on the NSAL respondents' contact with kin. However, the NSAL analysis is incapable of revealing the type, extent, direction or

circumstances of contact among Afro-Caribbean immigrants and their families nor, any within group gender differentiation in contact behavior. The qualitative data collected from the study families, group interview participants and key informants is necessary to gain further insight on these issues.

Summary of Qualitative Data

The qualitative portion of this dissertation research was able to examine the type, extent, direction or circumstances of kin contact among Afro-Caribbean immigrants. Study participants indicated that they most often employed telephone calls and electronic mail to remain in contact with their family members. The preference, of course, was for face-to-face visits with family. For the Dutton family, in which five of the eight adult children reside in the greater Miami area, face-to-face informal gatherings of family members is a frequent occurrence. However, for the remaining three siblings, Constance, Richard, and Paul, residing in New York, Canada, and Orlando, visiting family is less frequent. Constance hasn't visited the family in several years and Richard it committed to making an annual trip from Canada with his wife and children. For the Curey family, the seven siblings are scattered across the U.S. making regular family get-togethers difficult. In lieu of face-to-face interaction, the family relies on weekly conference calls that last several hours. These calls seemingly always involve the parents in the U.S. Virgin Islands, but often do not include all of the siblings. Members of the Curey family, make considerable efforts to both participate in the family conference calls and to make regular trips to the Caribbean to visit the parents and extended family. Similarly, the

brothers in the Gibson family make efforts to get-together at least once a year.

Untangling the roles of gender and kinscription within the work of kinship among transnational families is problematic. Direct observation over an extended period of time is not feasible as many of the tasks involved in the maintenance of transnational families a part of everyday minutia of life. Indirect observation and semi-structured interviews were a reasonable alternative for this research. Participants could not really know the nature of the inquiry as they were likely to alter their accounts to accommodate societal expectations of behavior (Schwartz and Oyerman 2001, Schwartz 1999). The nature of gender and kin-designated roles needed to emerge from the participants responses and oral histories. Therefore, the interview schedule was modified over the course of the early investigation in order to guide the participants to revelations of gender and kin roles that they themselves may not have recognized.

The qualitative portion of the study also makes several significant contributions to the literatures on Caribbean families, gender and kin work, and transnational immigrant families. First, the distribution of kin work within the study families was unequal. Gender composition within the immigrant families seems to be a significant factor in determining who will take on the majority of the kin work tasks. In families with male and female siblings, like in the Curey and Dutton families, often women take the leading roles in kin work activities. Of primary interest to this study was which of the women took up kin work responsibilities. In the Curey family, the majority of kin work tends to be distributed among Kathy, the eldest, Noel, the third sibling, and Vivian, the sixth

sibling. Although, Kathy Curey is primarily the kin-keeper in the family, who organizes and encourages other siblings to coordinate vacation visits to the Caribbean. However, Noel and Vivian are often the instigators of the family's weekly conference calls. In the Dutton family, the eldest daughter, Constance, is in daily contact with her parents but, appears to be less engaged with the other siblings. Kin work in the Dutton family is most often executed by Marie Claire, the fifth sibling, Paulette, the sixth sibling, and Violet, the eight and youngest sibling. For these three Dutton siblings their lead positions in kin work is likely to be a result of their close residential proximity to their parents' house in Miami and the continuation of their protective roles associated with the circumstances of their migration to the U.S. Additionally, as discussed in the previous chapter, skills acquired through one's occupation also seem to influence which family members will voluntarily take on certain kin work tasks.

Findings from this study indicate that gender is an important aspect in understanding who executes kin work tasks within families. However, gender it is only part of the determining factors in the distribution of kin work. The most apparent social expectation of kin behavior among the study families is that daughters do seem responsible for the care of aging parents, for example in the Curey and Dutton families. Yet, in Gibson family, where there are no other adult female siblings, three of the four brothers shared the responsibility of looking after their mother. I believe this finding suggests that assumptions of women roles within families do obscure the actual roles of men. Studies that only examine women roles in kin work and care-giving limit our understanding of family processes and eclipse men from families.

Second, kinscription, the assigning of specific kinwork tasks, as discussed by Stack and Burton (1993), did not manifest itself as a primary factor in the distribution of kin work within the study families. The designation of kinship responsibilities appeared to be more of a combination of self-selection, skill or human capital attributes, and kinship position than the assigning of kin work duties by a particular individual. On the other hand, kin-keeping does seem to be the work of certain individuals. Although, taking on the kin-keeper role also seems to be primarily dependent of self-selection, occupational skills and personality. This tends to be particularly evident when multiple individuals within a given family are available to do kin work, as in the Curey and Dutton families. Moreover, in the absence of women, men do take on kin work and kin-keeping roles. Occupational skills play an important role among men in determining who takes on the kin-keeper role. In the Gibson family, Samuel and Karl jointly have kin-keeper roles, with Karl, the third brother taking on a bit more responsibility in their mother's finances and travel arrangements, as well as often initiating contact with his brothers. Karl's position as a kin-keeper appears to be the result of his college education and organizational skills, developed from managing passenger manifests for a cruise line. Across all of the study participants it seems that a combination of gender, ability, personality and willingness to take on specific kin roles, in particular the care of elderly parents, have greater influence than does kinscription or the assigning of kin work tasks.

Third, the socio-economic position of immigrant families is important in understanding migration decisions, patterns of settlement and transnational family contact

over time. The middle class nature of the study participants allowed for comparisons between the experiences of the four sample families and those presented in the majority of literature based on the study of working class Afro-Caribbeans. Contrary to much of the literature on Caribbean families, the middle class families in the study most clearly identified members of their family of origin as being “close” relatives. The study families did not identify extended kin as being “close” family members and they maintained significantly less frequent, often inconsistent, contact with extended kin. Even among those extended family members that did migrate to the U.S. or Canada, study participants did not indicate that they were in regular contact with these family members, such as in the Curey and Gibson families.

So what then is the importance of extended family to Afro-Caribbean immigrants? Literature on these families suggests that they maintain both horizontal and vertical kinship ties that would indicate significant extended family relations (Thomas and Bauer 2000, Chamberlain 1999b). The findings from the current research among middle class Afro-Caribbean families would indicate that extended kinship relations are contextualized by family size, sibling size, living parents and parental location, social class and circumstances of migration. In the case of several of the key informants, extended family, aunts and uncles, were engaged to facilitate their initial migration. As mentioned above, none of the participants in the four study families identified close kinship relations with extended family members. Contact with extended family among the study participants is less frequent than contact with immediate family. As mentioned in chapter 4, study participants that have immediate family members, in particular

parents, residing in the nation of origin are linked to increased frequency of transnational kinship contact [e.g., Curey and Gibson families]. Those study participants that only have extended family members in the Caribbean did not appear to precipitate frequent and sustained transnational contact [e.g. Dutton and James families].

Middle class Afro-Caribbean immigrant families may also have different patterns of migration and family reciprocity than may be experienced in working class families. Based on the evidence from the study participants, it could be concluded that age of migration may impact the direction of assistance between family members. The majority of the study participants indicated that in the several years immediately after their migration they received some financial assistance from relatives, most often from parents. It could therefore be concluded that reciprocity among transnational families is contingent upon the age of migration. However, within international migration literature there is little evidence of immigrants from other ethnic immigrant groups receiving assistance from family after migration. In fact, the overwhelming majority of the literature indicates the opposite, that immigrants migrate to host nations in order to obtain better paying jobs which enable them to send financial support to their families in the country of origin. What this dissertation research adds to this literature is evidence of a variation in patterns of immigrant exchanges based on social class positioning. The middle-class nature of the sample, rather than the age of immigrant migration, best explains the parental support given to young migrants. Similar to native-born middle class families, parents contribute economic support to college-age children until they have completed their educations and have established themselves in an occupation.

Finally, income tends to facilitate or inhibit the ability of immigrants to sustain transnational contact with their kin which is consistent with the NSAL analysis. Among the study participants those that were more affluent, such as Kathy Curey, were able to return to the Caribbean for long visits and even assist in the financing of visits for other family members. Alternatively, the lack of funds can significantly impact immigrant's frequency of contact with family back home and the number of return visits. For example, Nigel, one of the Jamaican group interview participants, could only afford to contact his mother once a month and had been unable to return home to visit since his migration.

Limitations

This mixed-method exploratory study is limited in several ways. First, the quantitative data analysis is dependent upon the NSAL which did not contain the most appropriate survey questions to address the issues examined in this study. The unique nature of the NSAL data, the only nationally representative sample of Afro-Caribbean immigrants in the U.S., presented an opportunity to explore the contact behavior of Afro-Caribbean immigrants. Unfortunately, the survey construction into the main interview and the re-interview schedules meant that some of the questions best suited for addressing the concerns of this study were in the re-interview which significantly impacted the sample size. The smaller sample size also limited the number of variables that could be included in the logistic regression analysis.

Second, in the qualitative portion of the study, the convenience sampling strategy impacted the social class of the sample. A longer time in the field and potentially greater emphasis on recruiting participants from working class backgrounds would have added considerably to the understanding of how Afro-Caribbean immigrant families of various backgrounds maintain transnational kinship relations. Additionally, the convenience sampling approach may have possibly skewed the families toward those that already had close kinship relations and contact. However, the drawback of not having working class families in the study ultimately is one of the study's strengths. Findings from the middle class study participants, challenges much of the existing literature on Afro-Caribbean and immigrant families and sheds light on the importance of social class in understanding family structure, kinship relations, patterns of reciprocity and exchanges, as well as the type, frequency and extent of kin contact within immigrant families. It is difficult to foresee how these sampling issues could have been completely avoided given that multiple members of families needed to consent to participation in the study. Random selection of study participants was not an option. In several cases, interviews were conducted with initial participants, who came from families that qualified to participate in the study, did not lead to full family participation as the additional family members could not be encouraged to participate. In the end, the convenience sampling strategy is likely the best method for this type of study.

Another limitation that also emerged from one of the studies strengths, is the influence of previously interviewed family members on the responses of other family

members. This was particularly evident in the Curey family. Because the siblings are distributed across the U.S. there were long gaps between interviews with each sibling. Given that the siblings hold weekly conference calls it is likely that they discussed some of the interview topics during that time. The result was both positive and negative. On the positive side, the siblings helped to encourage each other to participate in the study. On the negative side, their likely discussion of the study's focus heightened their awareness of the issues of kinship relations and kin work within the family. Moreover, the study's focus on family connectedness and my interaction with the Curey family over the course of the study period may have had some impact the family's contact behavior. For example, as I interviewed the siblings I asked about their contact and relationship with the extended family members that did reside in the U.S. At the end of the study period the family was planning a Thanksgiving get-together to be held at Lydia's and Dorothy May's home in the Boston area, that was to include the uncle and his family that lived in the northeast. I suspect that participation in a family study and my questioning about family relations and kin contact may have assisted in the family's decision to plan the Thanksgiving get-together. The Thanksgiving event was in addition to the annual family reunion-type Christmas visit home to St. Croix. According to my last contact with the family, the parents, Richard and Vivian, were not planning to attend the Thanksgiving get-together.

Conclusions

In conclusion, this study reveals that gender and family composition appear to

have the most impact on the maintenance of kinship relations and the distribution of kinwork within immigrant families. As mentioned above, gender emerged as a prominent aspect in the distribution of kinwork tasks with women most often engaged in such work among both study participants and the NSAL respondents. This result was strongly suggested in previous literature on Afro-Caribbean families (Ho 1999, 1993, Gussler (1980). Theoretical explanations, such as the gender division of household labor (Blau et al. 1998, Brines 1994, Marini and Shelton 1993, Feree 1991 and Hochschild 1989), doing gender (West and Zimmerman 1987) and performing gender (Butler 1993, 1990), provide a basis for assessing roles that tend to be allocated by gender. Under these perspectives, the maintenance of kinship ties falls under the purview of women's work (DiLeonardo 1987). The tenets of these theories were upheld in the current research. Women were indeed more involved in kinwork than men. However, further investigation entailed in qualitative component of this study indicates the gender differential in kinwork among Afro-Caribbean families is contextualized and men's roles were revealed. The findings from the current research suggest that simply assuming women's primacy in kinwork does not shed light on the actual distribution of kinwork activities within families. Additionally, variations in family composition and size, and number of adult men and women available in a given family dramatically effect the distribution and execution of kinwork tasks. It is necessary for sociological research to move beyond an analysis that divides gender roles into male and female and to place greater focus on variations within gender groups.

Evidence of doing and performing gender was not directly revealed among the

study participants. Afro-Caribbean men and women did seem to have a concept of preferred gender roles. However, study participants appeared to be more interested in executing necessary kinwork tasks than maintaining socially prescribed gender roles. If anything, kinship roles appeared to be more important than gender roles, although the two are highly correlated. In this respect, the composition of each immigrant family became more important in determining the distribution of kinwork tasks. In families with multiple adult women available to perform kinwork men appeared to be less involved in such tasks. Yet, men took up kinwork activities when necessary and, in the case of the Gibson family, executed all kinwork activities. These findings suggest that theories of gender divisions and gender performance are best suited for mixed-gender conditions and have less applicability in single gender social interactions. Concentration on gender roles among heterosexual married couples or within mix-gender family settings does not shed light on how gender operates among families like the nearly all-male Gibson family or the nearly all-female Curey family. The composition of the American family includes single parent households with children to extended families that may contain single gender compositions [e.g., grandmother, mother, and daughter], in addition to increasing numbers of homosexual couples with children. In these families, the division of male and female roles within the family is likely to be transforming which requires that sociological research look beyond time-diary studies of married heterosexual couples and assumptions of male and female roles in developing theories of gender behavior.

An important contribution of this study to research on international migration is recognition that families play a significant role in the migration transitions. Interviewing

multiple members of a given family enriches and contextualizes the understanding of the immigrant experience. International migration scholarship has relied all too heavily on study designs that survey or interview individual migrants. This study shows that focusing on immigrant families as unit of analysis can add substantial value to the understanding of the role of family in migration transition, settlement and adaptation of immigrants in the host country, as well as provide internal verification of immigrant stories and experiences.

The impetus for this exploratory research was the question of how immigrants may overcome the distance that could potentially be created in kinship relations given the physical and geographic distance created by their migration. Families have to be proactive in fostering kinship ties to combat their separation from the daily activities of relatives. Activities such as preparing and eating meals together, playing pick-up games of cricket, or assisting in the care of aging relatives were all mentioned as family life events that participants deeply missed. However, the cost of migration may be the narrowing of kinship ties due to constraints on time available to execute the kin work tasks necessary to sustain kinship relations with extended family members.

Loss of everyday connections with immediate family members is clearly a concern of many of the study participants. This sense of loss was most acute among study participants that had elderly parents remaining in the nation of origin. Concern over parental well-being, particularly health care, was a recurring topic throughout the study. Key informants in the very early stages of the study voiced their concerns about

inadequate medical facilities, health care practitioners and elder care facilities in the Caribbean. For immigrants, their migration experience exposes them to the possibilities of health care and elder care in the U.S., Canada and Britain which provides them with a direct comparison with the facilities and care available in the Caribbean. This knowledge of potentially better care during one's elder years may heighten their concerns about the care that their parents may receive in the home country. Many of the study participants discussed the possibility of relocating parents to the U.S. in order for them to have access to improved health care. Unfortunately, in most cases participants reported that their aging parents were reluctant to leave the Caribbean for the colder climates of the U.S. and Canada.

The qualitative component of the study also revealed the potential significance of parents in the maintenance of kinship relations and transnational contact. For the Curey, Gibson, and Dutton families, transnational contact between family members centers on contact with and discussions about the parents. In the Dutton family, Richard, the third sibling who resides in Canada, frequently contacted his parents, about once a week, but contacted several of his siblings only about once a month or so. Weekly conference calls among the sisters of the Curey family ultimately result in contacting their parents in the U.S. Virgin Islands. On the other hand, the two brothers in the James family, the smallest family in the study, are in relatively frequent contact with each other, at least once a week. However, this contact is primarily conducted by electronic mail which hardly has the same level of interpersonal exchange as a face-to-face visit or telephone conversation. With both parents deceased the James family keeps in regular contact across continents in

order to maintain a family connection. In this case, aside from family sentiments, the small size of the family may impact their desire to remain in contact.

The notion of parents being the anchors of transnational kinship relations has substantial implications for understanding overall transnational processes. It implies that transnational projects may derive from the maintenance of interpersonal relations apart from ideological notions of national identity. For example, members of the Dutton family have virtually severed their ties with their home country of Jamaica due to the negative circumstances of their migration. Yet, the family clearly identifies itself as a Jamaican family and has not embraced assimilation toward an African American identity. The transnational nature of this family existed early on during the migration of the three older siblings [Constance, Mabel, and Richard] to Canada while the rest of the family lived in Jamaica. Presently, transnational relations for the Dutton family are associated only with Richard's continued residence in Canada with his family. In the Curey and Gibson families, transnational connections with their nations of origin are linked to sustaining relations with their parents remaining in the Caribbean. Of all study participants only Leon James maintained a transnational connection with his home country of Trinidad and Tobago after the deaths of his parents. In his case, continued transnational relations are tied to his employment as a cultural representative.

This study highlighted that personal relations, such as parents living in the country of origin, play a significant role in transnational contact. It should naturally follow that generational distance would weaken personal ties with the home country

resulting in less transnational connections in subsequent generations. Much of the focus on transnational projects and processes has not distinguished between maintaining affinity with and interest in the home country, as in participation in political and charitable organizations, and practical everyday transnational contact and exchanges, as in family relations and business transactions. While affiliation or participation in each of these activities is conducted in a cross-national context there are substantial differences in the relevancy of these activities to the continuation of transnational connections among second generation immigrants. First-hand experience in the form of family and personal ties to individuals in the home nation is likely to be more influential in encouraging transnational activities among second generation immigrants than any other type of transnational connections that may be pursued by their parents.

Transnational family connections in the second generation were not the focus of this study. However, participants with children did indicate that their children had substantially fewer connections to the nation of origin. Although the second generation in the Curey family made annual trips to the U.S. Virgin Islands with their parents, children in the Dutton and James family did not return frequently to the Caribbean. For the Gibson family, only Samuel who lives in Trinidad had children. The differences in transnational connections to the home country among the second generation in the study families appear to be directly linked to the level of parental connectedness to the island of origin. In the James family, Cecilia's mother migrated to the U.S. thus eliminating the family's need to visit her in the Caribbean. For the Dutton family, the eventual migration of the entire family of origin generally ended all immediate family ties to Jamaica. Each

of these families suggests that there is a strong link between the pattern of family migration and personal ties to the nation of origin, and the level of transnational activities pursued by immigrants.

Personal ties, in the way of close family members and friends that may be considered family, appear to be at the heart of to be transnational relations. This suggests that researchers should consider not only the existence of transnational relations within immigrant groups but also, the nature and context of such transnational connections. In particular, greater distinction in the context of contact is necessary. Tracking the frequency, type, extent, duration, and direction of transnational connections for immigrant groups is important to the development of sound theories regarding the patterns and processes related the transnational projects. Further investigation of personal relations and connections that first-generation immigrants maintain cross-nationally will enable the better understanding of the dynamics of transnational activities and processes and project the likelihood of second generation transnational activity.

Socioeconomic status of immigrants prior to migration is a significant factor in the trajectory of migratory transitions, post-migration social mobility, and the ability to sustain transnational connections over time. Therefore, entire migration experience is colored by the amount of resources available to each immigrant and immigrant family. The ability to forge and sustain personal ties to the home country among the second generation is also linked to socioeconomic status given the expense associated with international travel. All but one of the Curey siblings migrated for higher education. The

socioeconomic position of the family in the U.S. Virgin Islands made migration for education possible and expected for all of the siblings. The family is able to sustain transnational ties due to their solid middle class status and the largesse of Kathy Curey the family's most financially secure member. The family's middle class status, and generally white collar employment, also allows them access to technology that facilitates communication. The same is true, to a greater or lesser extent, for all of the study families. Middle class social positions enable these immigrants to sustain transnational ties that immigrants from lower socioeconomic positions may not (Waters 2001). Additionally, for successful migrants the migration process involves a transfer of economic and material resources, such as computers and cellular telephones, to relatives remaining in the home country that transform and facilitate the transnational process.

The settlement locations explored in this study suggest that Afro-Caribbean immigrants are increasing their visibility and asserting their Caribbean identity in each location. The Caribbean presence in the Detroit area is minimal with few retail establishments focused on serving the Caribbean community. However, the Detroit West Indian community does have a highly visible pan-Caribbean festival each year similar to those held in South Florida and Washington, D.C. Participants in the metropolitan areas of Miami-Dade and Broward counties in Florida have access to many retail establishments that enable them to sustain a Caribbean ethnic lifestyle through food, music, and other items. In the Washington, D.C area there is evidence of an expansion of the Caribbean population reflected in an increase in the number establishments servicing that community. The difference in the two regions is not only in the different sizes of the

Caribbean population but also, in the distribution of Caribbean restaurants, groceries and other retail outlets. In South Florida these establishments are often clustered together creating a significant Caribbean presence. In Washington, D.C., the Caribbean focused establishments were widely distributed across the northeastern portion of the city into the adjoining two Maryland counties of Montgomery and Prince George. Additionally, due to the smaller Caribbean population in the Washington, D.C. area, retail shops that service the community often must target African immigrants, as well as Caribbeans, in order form an economically sustainable customer base for their goods and services.

On the ground in each of the study locations, Caribbean national flags can be seen hanging in windows and on walls of retail establishments. However, only South Florida appeared to have a transnational feel with the flags of many nations often flying outside of these establishments. The diverse racial, ethnic and immigrant population in South Florida and Washington, D.C. enables Afro-Caribbeans to express their national identity and sustain a cultural distinctiveness that may result in the continuation of a transnational identity into the second and third generation. On the other hand in the Detroit area, the limited size of the Caribbean population and in the number of Caribbean establishments decreases the likelihood that second and third generation Afro-Caribbean immigrants will be able to maintain a Caribbean transnational identity. National origin community associations play an important role in planning events such as cricket leagues, national holiday celebrations and other cultural events that help Caribbean immigrants maintain a cultural connection and identity with their homeland. These associations also attempt to socialize the second generation toward a Caribbean identity. In that regard, the family

plays a significant role in encouraging the participation of the second generation in these events from a young age to assist in the development of an affinity for a Caribbean national identity and as an inoculation against complete American assimilation. However, among the study participants only those residing in the Detroit area and key informants who migrated to the U.S. decades ago mentioned being involved with any Caribbean national associations. Instead, the majority of study participants maintain a level of Caribbean cultural orientation through family connectedness and communication with relatives that appears to be separate from the communities in which they live. This implies that greater emphasis on the patterns and processes of socialization and communication among immigrant families is necessary to better understand not only transnational projects but also, the development and sustainability of an ethnic immigrant or transnational identity in the second and subsequent generations.

Directions for Future Research

This study reveals several issues that deserve further investigation. First, research should be conducted that focuses on of familial exchanges and reciprocity among middle and working class Afro-Caribbean immigrants, as well as among other immigrant groups. More evidence is needed to either support or contradict the findings from this study which suggest that middle class families financially contribute to college-age children in the years following their migration for better employment and/or higher education. Middle class family support of migrating young- adult children dovetails with findings from this study which indicate that educational aspirations play a significant role in

influencing migration decisions for some immigrants. Colleges and universities across the U.S. and Canada have considerable numbers of international students in attendance. International migration research may need to connect the educational aspirations of international students with migration decisions and economic or financial support from their families in the nation of origin. I suspect that the field of international migration may be overlooking a substantial pool of immigrants who are making a significant impact of the U.S. economy. Other groups, aside from the more visible Asian Americans, may also be first entering the U.S. under student visa status and then staying in the country. What are their stories and what patterns of exchange, reciprocity and transnational kin contact do they maintain?

The second area that should receive further study is the role of men within transnational families from other immigrant groups. The findings from this dissertation research suggest that Afro-Caribbean men will engage in various kin work activities under certain conditions. Further study is needed to investigate the familial roles of adult male immigrants apart from husband and father. Roles within the immigrant's family of origin as brother, son, uncle or cousin are also important kinship positions that are likely to have varying degrees of kinship expectations and kin work responsibilities. Continuing the common assumption that women are the sole purveyors of kinship relations, kin work tasks, and care-giving will only result in a failure to fully incorporate men into families. Overlooking men's roles in families, both immigrant and native, seriously limits our understanding of family processes and the development of relevant sociological theory.

APPENDIX A

Caribbean Family Study Announcement & Call for Participants

Dear _____,

My name is Ivy Forsythe-Brown and I am a doctoral candidate in Sociology. I write to ask for your assistance in finding potential participants for my research.

My dissertation focuses on the role of family in West Indian migration and settlement decisions and how and under what conditions do these families initiate and sustain contact with family members living in other countries. I need to interview 5 or more members of two West Indian immigrant families residing in the greater DC area. The initial participants for each family need to live in the DC area though other family members in the U.S., Canada, and Britain can be interviewed by phone.

I would greatly appreciate any suggestions and leads for acquiring participants in the Jamaican community. Ultimately, I would like to have one family from at least three different nations (e.g., Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, and Grenada). I will also be collecting data in Miami during August.

Presently, am living in Michigan but I will be in Maryland for data collection July 6-19. I would greatly appreciate the opportunity to briefly meet with you during my stay. Please you may contact me by email [iforsythe@socy.umd.edu] or phone [989-832-3455].

Thank you for any assistance you might provide.

Ivy Forsythe-Brown
Doctoral Candidate
Department of Sociology
University of Maryland
College Park, MD
989-832-3455
iforsythe@socy.umd.edu

APPENDIX B

Consent Form*

Study: West Indian Immigrants and Kinship Ties

I state that I am over 18 years of age and agree to participate in the program of research being conducted by Ivy Forsythe-Brown at the Graduate School of the University of Maryland, College Park, Department of Sociology.

The purpose of this research is to learn more about how West Indian immigrants manage contact with family members living in other countries. Specifically, this study seeks to understand the particular circumstances in which West Indian immigrant families initiate and maintain kinship ties.

My interview will be audio-taped and conducted face-to-face with Ivy Forsythe-Brown. It will take place in my home or at another location of my choosing, and should last about 90 minutes.

I understand that the study is designed to learn about West Indians in general and not to benefit me personally. I may refuse to answer any questions, or withdraw from participation at any time.

All information collected in the study is confidential and my name will not be identified at any time. The information I will provide will be securely stored.

Investigators: Bonnie Thornton Dill/ Ivy Forsythe-Brown

Department of Sociology
Consortium of Race, Gender and Ethnicity

Tawes Building
University of Maryland
College Park, MD 20742
(301) 405-2931
iforsythe@socy.umd.edu

Signature of Participant

Date

*Adapted from form used by Amy MacLaughlin

APPENDIX C

Interview Guide

1. State date, time, and specific location of interview for the tape recorder.
2. Review and explain consent form and get signature. Give participant a copy of the consent form to keep with my contact information.

Introduction:

As you may know, West Indians are quickly becoming a major immigrant group in the United States, particularly on the East Coast. Many projects have focused on other immigrant groups like Mexicans, different Asian groups, and recently Dominicans, but few have looked at the experiences of West Indians. I am interested in the West Indian migration experience and contact with family members in other countries so I am talking to a wide range of West Indians from several different islands to tell me about themselves and their families in regards to migration, settlement and the contact they maintain with family members living in other countries. I really appreciate your willingness to speak with me about your experiences.

I have a list of some general questions that cover migration, family ties, education and settlement. But this interview is meant to be informal and flexible. Please feel free to ask for me to clarify or reword any question that seems unclear or confusing to you. Also please feel free to return to any previous questions if you think of something new, or add thoughts and comments as they occur to you. Please remember that you have the right to refuse to answer any question. For your privacy all of the information you provide will be kept confidential and your name will not be used or directly linked to our conversation.

I would like to use the tape recorder. It is a way for me to remember accurately. If you would like me to turn it off at any point in the interview

Do you have any questions before we begin?
Okay, shall we begin?

MIGRATION HISTORY

1. Where were you born?
2. What year were you born?
3. When did you leave the West Indies? (year or age)
4. What made you decide to migrate?
5. Did you live anywhere else between leaving the West Indies and coming to the States? How long did you live there?
6. Where was the first place you settled in the U.S. and why did you settle there?

7. How long have you been living in the U.S.?
8. How long have you been living in your current location?
9. Have you lived elsewhere in the U.S.? Another city or state?

MIGRATION GOALS / Social Mobility

1. Were you the first in your family to leave home?
If not, who left home before you?
Did this person help you to migrate later?
2. Did anyone help you in migrating? If so, who and how are they related to you?
3. What were you hoping to gain by migrating?
4. What was your families attitude toward migrating?
5. Did your family have a plan that guided your migration or the migration of your relatives? Could you tell me more about it?
6. Did your family in the West Indies have any long term goals for migration?
If so - what are those goals?
Has the family accomplished these goals?
If so, when and how did you accomplish those goals?
If not, what do you believe were some of the obstacles to achieving those goals?

KINSHIP TIES

1. Other than you spouse and children – who are your closest family members that you keep in regular contact with?
2. Where do each of these relatives live?
3. How often so you keep in touch with them?
4. How do you keep in touch? By telephone? By letters? By visits? Holidays? Special occasions?
5. Do you ever send money ?
If so, to whom? How often?
Has this changed over the years that you have been living in the States?
What are the reasons for that change?
6. Do you ever send other items to these relatives? Gifts? Other goods?
If so, to whom? How often?
Has this changed since you have been in the States?
7. Have your return to the Caribbean to visit? How often to you go home to the Caribbean?
8. Who do you stay with? For how long??
9. Why do you stay with those relatives as opposed to other family or friends?
10. Who or whom in your family that is responsible for keeping the family connected? In other words, they keep the family together?
How do they maintain contact with the rest of the family?
11. In your own household who makes the majority of contact with family members?
12. Do you own any property in common with any of these relatives?
If so, with whom and what kind or property?

What are the family plans for that property?

How often do you contact with this person/ these people in regards to that property?

13. Do you own any (other) property in the West Indies?

If so, does someone perhaps a relative take care of it for you? If so, how are you related? How often do you contact this person in regards to this property?

14. Does anyone else in your family take a greater responsibility in managing family properties than yourself?

15. Are you business partners with any of your relatives?

If so, which relative(s) and what kind of business?

CHILDREN - KINSHIP TIES

1. How many children do you have? What are their ages?

2. Could you tell me about your children?

3. Do you have any children not living here with you? How old are they?

[Did your children ever live apart from you? How old were they?]

4. Where do [did] they live? With whom?

5. How long have [did] they lived there?

6. Why are [did] they living apart from you?

What were your reasons for keeping them there?

7. Do [did] you contribute to the support of these children?

8. How often do [did] you contact your children?

9. How do [did] you contact them? Telephone? Letters? Email? Visits?

EDUCATION/ Occupation

1. How far did you go in school back home?

2. Have you continued your schooling or training since coming to the States? Please explain.

3. Did anyone (friends or family) assist you in continuing your education or training?

If so, how did they help you?

4. What is the educational background of others members in your family (including those still in the West Indies)?

5. Did your family (your parents and siblings) have an order or plan to follow in terms of who in the family was get an education when and where? Could you tell me more about it?

6. What kind of work did you do back home?

7. What kind of work do you do now?

8. What kind of work did you do after you arrived in the States?

9. Why did you take that job? Did it have any special advantages? Any disadvantages?

10. At the time do you remember anyone (family members or friends) helping you to get that job?

11. Did anyone (family members or friends) help you to get your current job?

Is there any thing else you would like to share with me that I haven't asked you about?

As I mentioned earlier, this study is about West Indian families. Is there another family member that can suggest who would be a good person for me to interview. A spouse, sister, or brother? I can contact them by telephone if they live in a different city or state.

Name: _____

Contact info:

Do you know of another family that might be interested in participating in this study?

Thank you very much for your time and openness. I greatly appreciate your participation.

APPENDIX D

Example of Electronic Mail Letter Request for Group Interview [Focus Group] Participation

Dear

My name is Ivy Forsythe-Brown. I am a Ph.D. candidate in Sociology working at the Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. I write to ask for your assistance in acquiring participants for my dissertation research project. I am seeking 10-15 first-generation Caribbean immigrants, over age 25, to participate in several focus groups on Caribbean transnational families.

My research focuses on how immigrant families with close family members residing outside of the United States, in the Caribbean, Canada, Britain or elsewhere, maintain family closeness and sustain kinship relations over time. Discussion in the focus groups would center on the frequency of contact with family members, visits, and family relations. The focus groups would last approximately 60-90 minutes and will be conducted in the Detroit area. A small token of my appreciation will be given to each participant [approximately \$10].

I would greatly appreciate it if you would please pass my request for focus groups participants along to members of your association. Persons interested in participating in this study may contact me by email [ivyfb@umich.edu] or cell phone [989-859-9331].

Thank you for any assistance you might provide.

Sincerely,
Ivy Forsythe-Brown
Doctoral Candidate, Sociology
University of Maryland

Research Assistant
Program for Research on Black Americans
Institute for Social Research
University of Michigan, Ann Arbor
ivyfb@umich.edu

Personal Statement and Introduction

Hello,

First I would like to thank you and Malcolm for allowing me this opportunity sit in on your meeting and to speak with you. I will be as brief as possible.

My name is Ivy Forsythe-Brown and I am a 2nd generation Jamaican. My father migrated in 1943 from St. Mary's parish and presently I have extended family members in Jamaica, Florida, and Canada.

I am a doctoral candidate in Sociology at the University of Maryland. Currently, I am completing my dissertation research and working for the Program for Research on Black Americans at the Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan.

As you may know, West Indians or Afro-Caribbeans have a long history of migration to the United States and elsewhere. Currently, Caribbeans are quickly becoming a major immigrant group in the United States, particularly on the East Coast.

Because of the history of migration among Caribbean people, I believe that they have much to teach others [researchers, policy makers, and other immigrants groups] about the migration experience and the maintenance of family relations across borders. However, most research projects have focused on other immigrant groups like Mexicans, different Asian groups, and recently Dominicans, but few have looked at the experiences of West Indians [particularly those residing outside of New York City]..

I am interested in the West Indian migration experience and contact with family members in other countries, so I am talking to a wide range of West Indians from several different islands to tell me about themselves and their families in regards to migration, settlement, and the contact they maintain with family members living in other countries.

I would greatly appreciate your willingness to speak with me about your experiences. I am seeking participants for two focus groups. [See Handout].

APPENDIX E

Caribbean Family Study

Call for Focus Group Participants

Introduction:

As you may know, West Indians or Afro-Caribbeans have a long history of migration to the United States and elsewhere. Currently, Caribbeans are quickly becoming a major immigrant group in the United States, particularly on the East Coast.

Because of the history of migration among Caribbean people, I believe that they have much to teach others [researchers, policy makers, and other immigrants groups] about the migration experience and the maintenance of family relations across borders. However, most research projects have focused on other immigrant groups like Mexicans, different Asian groups, and recently Dominicans, but few have looked at the experiences of West Indians [particularly those residing outside of New York City].

I am interested in the West Indian migration experience and contact with family members in other countries, so I am talking to a wide range of West Indians from several different islands to tell me about themselves and their families in regards to migration, settlement, and the contact they maintain with family members living in other countries.

I would greatly appreciate your willingness to speak with me about your experiences. I am seeking participants for two focus groups.

Focus of Study:

- My research focuses on how immigrant families with close family members residing outside of the United States maintain family closeness and sustain kinship relations over time.

Participant Qualifications:

- Caribbean immigrants over age 25 [who migrated after age 18] with close family members residing outside of the United States [in the Caribbean, Canada, Britain, or elsewhere].

Focus Group Discussion:

- The frequency of contact with family members residing outside of the U.S.
- Preferred means of contact with those family members – telephone, letters, email, visits or some other means.
- Visits “home” to participants’ nations of origin.
- Feelings of closeness with family and general family relations.
- The organization of family get-togethers.

About Focus Group Participation:

- The focus groups would last approximately 90 minutes.
- Light refreshments will be available.
- A small token of my appreciation will be given to each participant [\$10 gift card or phone card].
- The time and date of the focus groups will be based upon participant availability.
- The focus groups will be conducted in the Detroit Area. Proposed locations for the focus groups are:
 - The new UM – Detroit Center, 3663 Woodward Ave, located downtown.
 - Southfield Public Library – subject to library hours.
 - Oak Park Community Center – Monday- Thursday

Persons interested in participating in this study may contact me by email [ivyfb@umich.edu] or cell phone [989-859-9331].

About the Researcher:

I am a 2nd generation Jamaican. My father migrated in 1943 from St. Mary's parish and presently I have extended family members in Jamaica, Florida, and Canada.

I am a doctoral candidate in Sociology at the University of Maryland. Currently, I am completing my dissertation research and working for the Program for Research on Black Americans at the Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan.

Ivy Forsythe-Brown
Doctoral Candidate, Sociology
University of Maryland, College Park

Research Assistant
Program for Research on Black Americans
Institute for Social Research
University of Michigan, Ann Arbor
ivyfb@umich.edu

APPENDIX F

Focus Group Survey

Name [first name only]: _____ Age: _____ Age at migration: _____

Nation of Origin: _____ Year you came to the US: _____

Did you live in another country before coming to the US? YES NO

If yes, what country and for how long? _____

Occupation: _____

Education: < HS Tech. Some College BA/ BS MA Professional

Income: Less than \$30,000 \$31-40,000 \$41-50,000 over \$50,000 over \$75,000

Please list ALL family members you consider “close” with whom you keep in contact.

Name [first name]	Relationship	Where do they live?	Freq. of contact?
Example: Jayne	Sister	Kingston, Jamaica	Once a week

Who in your family contacts you the most? _____

Who do you contact the most? _____

What mode of contact do you use most often to contact family? [Circle two most used]

Telephone Email Letters Visits Gifts or Barrels Other

Who in your family that plans or organizes most of the family contact and get-togethers?

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