# Labour Migration
# A Study of Trinidad and Tobago
# Women and Migration

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# Abstract

Migration has been a significant part of the cultural fabric of the Caribbean islands for centuries. The process began with the discovery and conquest of the islands by European colonials, followed by the forced migration of African slaves and the importation of indentured labourers from the East. Since the mid twentieth century, however, Caribbeans have been leaving the islands. Recent census data from Trinidad and Tobago show that the out-migration of women to the global North has exceeded that of men. This research examines the migration of women from the twin-island state of Trinidad and Tobago. Drawing upon interviews with 25 female Trinidadian migrants, the study explores migration to Britain and the United States. I initially seek to answer the *why* question, by analysing the decision-making process in international migration, and then *how* women migrate and adapt to a new country and culture. Moreover, I compare migration from Trinidad and Tobago to Britain and the United States, highlighting major similarities and differences in terms of education, race, and employment, which led skilled professional women to migrate to Britain legally while domestic workers settled in the United States illegally. Additionally, I challenge the idea of the *forgotten child* by presenting a more holistic view of the implications of migration for the left-behind family. I propose that we need to think in terms of a reordering of the Caribbean family unit rather than seeing it, as is common, as a disordered, chaotic institution. I found that the main motivation for women to emigrate is 'self-sacrifice' and altruism. Migrant women are disadvantaged and susceptible to various forms of discrimination. Despite this, I argue, women are determined to 'make it' through migration in the interest of their families, and they demonstrate their resilience in enduring difficulties in order to create a better future for themselves and their children.

# Table of Contents

# List of Tables

| No. | Title | Page Number |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Comparisons Between Early Post-Indenture Period of the Indian Family and Contemporary Indian Family in Trinidad | 32 |
| 2 | Interview Guide: Themes and Sub-themes | 80 |
| 3 | Characteristics of Participants (Country of Residence, Years Migrated, Age, Occupation, Race) | 87 |
| 4 | Characteristics of Participants Before Migration (Marital Status, Number of Children, Educational Level) | 88 |
| 5 | Oakley's Feminist Approach to Research Interviews | 95 |
| 6 | Racial Composition of Women who Emigrated to the USA and Britain | 184 |
| 7 | Education Level of Women Emigrating to the USA and Britain | 184 |
| 8 | Types of Work Women Undertook after Migrating to The USA and Britain | 189 |

# List of Figures

# Acknowledgements

I have observed that writing acknowledgements to recognize those who have contributed to work done is a more daunting task than writing an actual thesis. How can I express appreciation to the many people who have assisted in the successful completion of a long-held dream? This thesis would not have come to fruition without the input of so many people, and I will try to express my thanks here.

Without God, I would not have had the ability to start and finish this project; it would not have been remotely possible. Therefore, I thank God for continued blessings, grace and favour.

During the course of my studies, I became severely ill and was hospitalized. I was kept in hospital for three days and was released without a diagnosis or knowing what was wrong with me. As the months passed, my health deteriorated, and both my kidneys were failing. I was close to giving up my lifelong dream and though I wanted to continue I was not healthy enough to resume work. Despite this rough journey, I tried to persevere, keeping the finish line always in mind. Eventually, after many tests, hospital visits and specialist opinions, I was diagnosed with an autoimmune disease. Through it all, with the support, love and understanding of my family and my supervisor I managed to complete my fieldwork, and work on my thesis.

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# This Thesis Is Dedicated To


My Deceased Grandmother
Migrating for the Betterment of Her Children

# Author's Declaration

The work in this thesis was carried out in accordance with the Regulations of the University of York. The work is original except where indicated by special reference in the text and no part of the thesis has been submitted for any other degree, at this or any other institution.

# Introduction

I first realized that I wanted to study migration whilst reading for my undergraduate degree at the University of the West Indies in Trinidad and Tobago. I found that my passion resided in the study of human geography, population studies and demography. I quickly arranged my courses so that I could gain a deeper understanding of population studies and policy planning. I immediately became fascinated by the movement and settlement of individuals across borders. During my undergraduate studies, I thought about the topic of migration; it was my attempt at merging my personal and academic life. Both my parents[1] were born in British Guyana and moved to Trinidad in the early 1980s. My paternal grandmother migrated to Trinidad in the hope of a better life for her family. She left my father, who was the eldest of her children, to care for his siblings while she worked and later sent for them to live in Trinidad with her. This family history is what first gave me the idea of studying migration from the point of view of women. The experiences women have and the decisions they make during the process of migration are more complicated than they appear; I wanted to explore this topic in more depth.

I first came across the term *migration* as a primary school pupil, while studying Social Studies at the age of ten; at that time I was oblivious to the fact that my entire family was permanently residing outside their country of birth. Migration piqued my interest when, as a child, I observed relatives leaving to take up residence in other countries. Additionally, as a child at school, I recall many friends and other classmates with absent parents who were living with aunts, uncles, grandparents and even older siblings because of migration. This did not mean that the children were in any way neglected, ill treated or forgotten by their parents. I remember they usually received material necessities, which they could not have afforded otherwise. In my opinion, they bore no resemblance to emotionally unstable children and were no different from any other children. Later, I also noted that these children (by that time adults) had migrated to join their parents.

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[1] My father's family moved to Trinidad and my mother accompanied them. My mother's family did not move with her and I do not know most of them.

One of the first West Indian novelists I read was Samuel Selvon. His work also contributed to my interest in Caribbean migration. The story of West Indian emigrants in London, 'the centre of the world,' is told in Selvon's 1956 novel *The Lonely Londoners*. The plot follows the protagonist Moses, a Trinidadian-born ex-veteran who finds himself living in London. It provides social commentary on the *Windrush*[2] era and the reverse movement from the colonies to the motherland.[3] The feeling of alienation and isolation persists in London when it fails to deliver; Moses, like most Caribbean migrants, was in search of a better life. He says 'I just lay there on the bed thinking about my life, how after all these years I ain't get no place at all, I still same way, neither forward nor backward' (Selvon, 1956: 113).

Migration, or rather international migration, is not a new phenomenon in the Caribbean. It has persisted through many decades and has left profound traces greatly influencing the cultural arrangements of Caribbean society. Many Caribbean natives leave in search of a better life with greater opportunities, a place where success knows no race, colour, class or language. At times these hopes may fail to materialize and many migrants find that the reality is a world of difficulty, hard work and disconnection from the new society. Selvon's depiction of Moses in *The Lonely Londoners* illustrates the fantasy of emigrating to Britain and the failure of the motherland to embrace him with either familiarity or instant success. He describes London as a city that 'divide up in little worlds, and you stay in the world where you belong to and you don't know anything about what happening in the other ones except what you read in the papers' (Selvon, 1956: 60). Isolation and alienation persist when immigrants struggle to find their place in receiving countries. Despite such problems, international migration rates are soaring, especially the rates of out-migration from developing countries. Migration has become a pivotal area of research in Sociology, Economics and Political Science. The effects of migration are very visible in the Caribbean region today, like many countries, but the Caribbean has a particular history of immigration. Birthed out of the plantation system, immigration became woven into the cultural fabric of the Caribbean.

Growing up in the islands, I have been able to interact with individuals from many varying cultures; this has made me think deeply about the integration of the world's population and

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[2] *Windrush* was the first ship carrying West Indian immigrants to Great Britain, in 1948.
[3] This refers to the relationship between Britain and the West Indian colonies.

the movement of people. Within the islands, as a result of tourism, the movement of people is very visible and I grew accustomed to seeing individuals of all races and backgrounds come together. The migration of Caribbean peoples is associated with *push factors* located within the sending country (economy, living conditions, unemployment, lack of education, crime) and the *pull factors* exerted by the receiving country (employment, education, standard of living). This was indeed the case for my family's movement from Guyana to Trinidad. Whilst personal reasons acted as my motivation for researching the phenomenon, the migration of women is and always has been an area of concern within the Caribbean context.

The journey to the completion of this thesis has been a long and daunting one. When I completed my undergraduate studies I shelved the idea of studying migration because I believed it would not be able to provide me with a stable future in terms of a career. The practical side of me thought about career options and financial stability. I also thought I was not ready for doctoral studies and I assumed that it was more helpful to pursue a master's degree in order to develop my skills as a researcher. I was accepted to study at the University of York, where I undertook postgraduate studies in Comparative and International Social Policy. I slowly recognized that something was missing and, although I was happy to be in the programme, I soon realized that I did not want to pursue it further. As my degree was nearing its conclusion, I became certain that the next step was to undertake doctoral research. I was convinced that in order to survive a doctoral degree I had to conduct research in an area I enjoyed and loved. I took out my old notebooks and flash drives and resumed work on this topic. This final body of work reflects to a certain extent what I have observed having grown up in an immigrant family. More importantly, it provides an account of the experiences of Caribbean women who migrated to more developed nations and the great sacrifices they have always made for a better future.

## Aims of the Study and Research Questions

My study investigates the international migration of women. I chose to use qualitative methods so that I could gain a deep understanding of migratory patterns from Trinidad and Tobago. Migration has always been influential in the history of the Caribbean. Therefore, my study takes into consideration the process of migration within the historical, social,

economic, and political context of Trinidad and Tobago. I specifically look at women's accounts of their choices to emigrate and the impact this decision has had on their families and loved ones left behind. The research addresses questions developed around understanding migration. My aim is to develop an understanding of migration in a 'gendered' way by investigating the different stages of the migration process of women. These include: their decision to migrate, their 'settling in' period, the impact of migration on their lives and the lives of their families, and their future plans.

In cases where female migrants are married or have children, I intended to assess how their families, and especially children, are affected by migration. During my time in the field, I noted differences between women who had migrated to Britain and those who went to the USA, leading me to compare the migration of women to the USA and to Britain and identify key similarities and differences. My study focuses on understanding *why* women emigrate and *how* this has impacted on their lives as well as the lives of their families. Research questions define the borders of a study and assist the investigator in discovering precisely what she needs to know (Anfara, Brown, & Mangione, 2002). Therefore, my research will explore the following questions:

- o Why are women motivated to emigrate?
- o How has migration impacted on the life of the immigrant woman and her family?

## Profiling Trinidad and Tobago

The twin-island state of Trinidad and Tobago is approximately two thousand square miles and is situated at the very south of the Caribbean islands. Trinidad is one of the most economically developed islands; it has made great infrastructural strides and is commonly referred to as the most industrialized island within the Caribbean region (Artana et al., 2007). A leading exporter of oil and gas to the United States, the country is very dependent on trade within this sector in order to support its localized economy. The energy sector makes up the largest part of the country's GDP. A large amount of the revenue derived from the energy sector goes into government expenditure and public investment. Trinidad and Tobago's economy is extremely vulnerable to price shocks in the oil and gas sector because of the lack of diversity in local industry. A home to Carnival, blue skies, and

sandy beaches, this twin island state sees its fair share of tourists. However, there have been escalating crime rates because of its prime geographical position for drug trafficking.

With the decline in oil prices during the early 1980s, the government turned to international financial institutions and a period of structural adjustments began. The progressive deterioration of Trinidad's oil markets prompted the country to seek assistance internationally, through the IMF. The sharp decline in oil prices in 1986 meant that the economy of Trinidad and Tobago was in great trouble. This decline led to huge deficits, a decrease in foreign direct reserves and reduced per capita income. During the late 1980s and early 1990s, the government sold off economic assets, laid off staff in the public sector, removed tariffs and subsidies on goods and services, froze wages and devalued the local currency. The social implications of this were an increase in unemployment and the cost of living, decreased access to health, education and welfare services for the poor, an increase in social inequality, and subsequent increases in crime and social unrest. These cut-backs, in turn, led to the beginning of mass migration of both skilled and unskilled workers. Citizens migrated in the hope of finding employment opportunities and better working conditions.

Trinidad and Tobago's economy has seen its share of high and low points due to its dependence on the energy sector. Within the context of further liberalization, globalization and the diversifying of the productive sector, this small twin-island state has become one of the world's leading producers and exporters of methanol and natural gas. Many multinational corporations come to the island to assist in production and manufacturing. This has led to a complete transformation of its economy. It is now known as the financial capital of the Caribbean and has progressed to greater economic stability. In November 2011, Trinidad and Tobago ceased to be listed as a developing nation according to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. It was now considered a high-income country, found in the top 66 high-income countries in the world (WB, 2012). The country also boasts free education for all citizens; degrees are subsidized and fully financed by the government. The country has experienced recent cycles of growth, triggered by investments in liquefied natural gas, steel and petrochemicals. Additionally, manufactured goods, such as cement, food and beverages, and to a lesser extent tourism, support the energy sector.

## Structure of the Thesis

**Chapter One** introduces Caribbean women and the migration of different types of women in the Caribbean at various times. This historical review lays the foundations for later chapters. I describe women's 'place' in society at different points in history. I wanted to show the diversity of women and culture in the Caribbean. In doing so, I highlight the uniqueness of my study and the ways in which Caribbean women may differ from women in other regions in the world. At the end of the chapter, I also critically review family types in the Caribbean as an expression of this history.

**Chapter Two** begins with a critical examination of popular migration theories. I then build a case for a feminist view of migration and look at various studies that have been conducted on migration in the Caribbean and its impact on the family.

**Chapter Three** details the methodology of the study and the various methodological issues I faced. I discuss the adoption of feminist epistemology in understanding migration and provide details of how I went about choosing an appropriate methodology, obtaining a sample, going into the field and conducting interviews, as well as the many problems I faced. The way in which I documented and analysed the data is also discussed.

**Chapter Four** marks the beginning of the discussion and analysis of my findings. It contributes to answering the first of my research questions, which is why women migrate. I explain the reasons why women migrate, the factors that motivate them to leave their country of birth and their experiences in the receiving country.

**Chapter Five** addresses the question of the impact of migration on the lives of emigrant women. I discuss the many problems and deprivations women face in adapting to life in a new country and how they cope with them. Thus, I describe how migrants settle and make a place for themselves in the receiving countries.

**Chapter Six** examines the implications of international migration for the families left behind. I will discuss the idea of family reordering rather than portraying the family as a chaotic unit. Since one of the most important motivations for migration is to provide an improved standard of living for the family, remittances are central to the understanding of such provision. I will discuss and analyse remittances, in both cash and kind, and how they have assisted in the upkeep of the family.

**Chapter Seven** compares migration from Trinidad and Tobago to Britain and the United States. I identify differences between women immigrating to Britain and those immigrating

to the USA in terms of educational background, race and work, as well as differing perceptions of successful migration for these two groups of women.

The **conclusion** summarizes the key findings of my research and draws together the central arguments addressed in previous chapters while highlighting areas for future research.

# Chapter One
# Women and Family in Trinidad and Tobago:
# Why History Matters

## Introduction

The movement of Caribbean women began long before the recent exodus to North American and European countries. In this chapter I examine the history of the Caribbean and reflect on its consequences for the lives of women and their families. Beginning with the European conquest from 1498 taking in forced migration from the seventeenth century and nineteenth century colonialism, I discuss the various groups of women who came to the Caribbean, some forcibly, others in search of a better life or following their husbands. This chapter tells the story of how these women adapted to life in the Caribbean and how this lends to the understanding of Caribbean culture, particularly family practices. Furthermore, as a result of the mixing and merging of races and culture in the Caribbean we have our own particular way of life. This chapter serves as a foundation for my thesis as this history helps to explain contemporary life in the Caribbean and the factors that underpin patterns of migration among Caribbean women.

The first settlers found in Trinidad and Tobago were the indigenous people.[4] This group was divided into warlike Caribs more peaceful farmers, Arawaks. The arrival of Christopher Columbus in 1498[5] presaged the erasure of the native population (Forte 2005). Brereton (2010) discusses the mass genocide of the indigenous peoples, which began from the moment of first contact with the Spaniards. The Spanish settlers captured their lands, raided their settlements and enslaved those who survived. However, despite the massacre of Native Caribbeans some of their cultural practices and traditions are still observed on the islands.

Indigenous women were known for their agricultural activities, especially in the case of the Taino tribes. Taino women engaged in the cultivation of crops, mostly maize, in order to

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[4] These were the Taino and Kalina, more commonly referred to as the Caribs and Arawaks.
[5] Columbus sailed to the West in an attempt to find a faster route to the East. Upon arrival in the West, he thought he had sailed to India and found the Indians. Thus, the Caribbean is referred to as the '*West Indies*' and the indigenous inhabitants as '*Indians*'.

feed their families.[6]  After Europeans arrived it became common to enslave indigenous women. As a result, they lived under circumstances similar to enslaved African women. They worked on plantations of Spanish haciendas[7] alongside African women. There existed no distinction in terms of the labour performed by men and women. Everyone was forced to work under harsh conditions and to undertake similar, strenuous work. In English and French colonies, however, it was not uncommon to find some of them treated more like 'free' women than 'slaves'. Indigenous women were also recruited on the mainland and indentured in the islands as domestics and artisans (Beckles, 1998: 36). During enslavement, the Amerindians were forced to work on plantations cultivating tobacco, maize, cassava, cocoa and many other provisions and vegetables. However, these crops generated little for the Spanish crown. When the demand for labour became greater and the need for a more durable labour force grew, planters looked towards the forced migration of African slaves.

## Women and Slavery (1700–1807)

Slaves from Africa were first brought to the island by the Spanish in 1517. Initially, the number of slaves was small because the plantations were not well developed. In 1776 the Spanish created new immigration laws allowing Roman Catholic planters to come into Trinidad. Thus, French planters were attracted to this because it meant that land ownership was linked to slave ownership, therefore the greater number of slaves a planter owned the more land they were given. Many changes followed the British conquest of the islands in 1797 and the racial composition in Trinidad altered significantly between 1780s-1800s. The cultivation of the sugar crop and the size of the plantations meant that a large labour force was needed. The introduction of sugar and slave labour to the colonies brought great wealth to the planters. After 1783, with growing dependency on slave labour, Trinidad became a slave colony.

The plantation system led to the mass influx of people, who had an impact on culture, demographics and particularly development. This import process included not only the introduction of crops and culture to the Caribbean, but also the entry of people from

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[6] This would later prove a significant asset to the European settlers in the production of cash crops.
[7] The Spanish term given to the owners of land or Spanish planters.

various parts of the world including Asia, Africa, and Europe. Higman (2001) points out that the foundations of modern Caribbean populations were established not by natural increase, but by migration, with the arrival of colonial settlers and the mass, forced migration from Africa and later India. Thus migration is not a new phenomenon within this region; it is an occurrence that is embedded historically in all the islands of the Caribbean, largely due to slavery.

According to Brereton (1996), the mixture of races living in Trinidad changed between 1783 and 1797. By 1797 over half the people living on the island were African slaves, with the rest consisting of free people (white and coloured) and a small group of indigenous people. Before the abolition of the slave trade, slaves were the personal property of the planter. They were captured and sold at auction and it was more desirable for planters to obtain male slaves. Men were more lucrative than women or children; hence, male slaves outnumbered female slaves. Slaves were stripped of their names and given Christian names by their masters and were sometimes branded with the mark of the planters who owned them. African religions and cultural practices were forbidden and if they were caught practising them slaves were whipped and in some instances killed. Slaves were prohibited from marrying or owning land. Gomez (2005: 101) points out:

> Unlike Spain with its Siete Partidas and Saint Dominique with its Code Noir, neither the British Caribbean nor North America developed a single system of laws governing slavery. What emerged instead was a hodgepodge of rules and regulations developed in each of the slaveholding states and colonies, in North America collectively known as Slave Codes, which were in many ways complementary. As opposed to the French and Spanish notions of providing protections for the enslaved, the Slave Codes were more concerned with protecting the rights of the slaveholder.

> The enslaved were considered to be chattels, property to be bought and sold like cows and horses. As property, the enslaved could not participate in legal proceedings (unless those deliberations involved other blacks), make a contract, defend themselves against whites, buy or sell, and so on. Punishments included the infamous whip. But of course, all of this assumes an application of the law, such as it was, to cases involving slaves, when in fact whites often were a law unto themselves, treating black folk as they saw fit.

M.G. Smith (1962), in a study of Caribbean slave families, wrote that under the plantation system of slavery stable families were not given a chance to develop. Relationships were

broken up and there was never any opportunity for a family unit with father, mother and children to stay together. Smith explained that males were not given the privilege of owning property or family rights; the planters enforced these rules to avoid revolt. Thus, children were the property of the planters and female centredness, single parenting and male marginality existed within the family. The family types found in the Caribbean at the time of slavery were seen as units of production and a secure supply of labour. Enslaved women were encouraged to have children in order to reproduce cheap labour. In Marxist terms, the family was solely geared towards the planters' need for labour and performed only sexual and reproductive functions to promote the economic security of the planter class. Most families were predominantly made up of mother and children with seemingly no input from the father. During the time of slavery men were forced to be marginal. Herskovits (1990) believed that, despite attempts to strip African slaves of their cultural heritage, the practice of polygyny was retained from African culture. This resulted in fathers being marginal. Women's role in their families was more significant than that of men and this promoted the persistence of matrifocality.

Based on African cultural retention of polygyny and the effects of slavery, there exist obvious disparities in terms of family arrangements in the Caribbean and those of the rest of the world. These disparities include: the persistence of matrifocality, gender differences, role differences, and constituents of the family. Matrifocality, according to R.T. Smith (1956), refers to a woman in her role as mother who comes to be the focus of the relationship; a woman-centred unit. He paid particular attention to women becoming central to the family and the role they played in their families. Many Caribbean academics describe 'matrifocality' as female-headed households where power and authority tend to reside in the female head. Researchers such as Phillips (1994) argue that, because of their status as chattels, slaves were not allowed to marry, and they ran the risk of being punished if they were caught marrying. She described the plantation as a total institution that controlled the lives of slaves and also impacted on the nature of the family structures and relationships formed. The plantation system of slavery had indeed left its stamp on family relations within Caribbean communities. However, the persistence of matrifocality in both historical and contemporary Caribbean society was as a direct result of African cultural retention, the plantation system of slavery and socioeconomic factors such as the persistence of poverty.

# Women and Indentureship (1838–1917)

After the slave trade was discontinued in 1807, and particularly when slavery was abolished in the Caribbean in 1838, the British planters needed a labour system to replace slavery and introduced indentureship.[8] Samaroo (2001) explained that European planters thought it convenient to employ cheap labour or to develop an alternative form of slavery rather than switching to another form of business. The period of indentureship started post-1838, when British planters brought in Chinese labourers, followed by farmers from Madeira. Those Chinese labourers who came to the Caribbean ran away or committed large-scale suicide. The Portuguese farmers, on account of their white skin, demanded better wages and living conditions and preferential treatment. A few years after their arrival, Portuguese coolies[9] left the plantations and became grocers or merchants in the retail and wholesale business (Pillai, 2004).

The British planters turned to another colony for cheap labour and later brought East Indian indentured labourers to the island of Trinidad. The first shipment of Indians came on the *Fatel Razack* in 1845. The immigration of Indians as indentured labourers lasted from 1845 to 1917. For some Caribbean historians, indentureship was little different from slavery. Williams (1944) pointed out that indentured labourers were treated no better than slaves in the fields. Indentureship was similar to slavery and the conditions under which they were brought bore a striking resemblance. Indians were duped into making the journey and were deceived about their work in Trinidad. Dookhan (1975: 51–53) explains that migration to the Caribbean seemed very attractive to Indians for the following reasons:

> The establishment of the British factory system in India had destroyed Indian domestic industries, such as the home spinning of cloth, and created a mobile population subject to migration. There was a promise of higher wages in Trinidad and Guyana. In India, labourers were paid between $1^{1}/_{2}$ to $2^{1}/_{2}$ pence a day. In Trinidad, they could earn 2 shillings a day and in Guyana, 1 shilling and 8 pence a day. Criminals escaping from the police were afraid of returning to their villages and they, as well as loafers, went to the colonies.

East Indian labourers were gullible because they were running from poor conditions in

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[8] Indentureship refers to a period of servitude as contractual labourers. Indentured labourers were bound to service for a specified period of time in return for wages or any other reward in their contract.
[9] The term coolie usually refers to someone from India who is accustomed to manual labour.

India. They were also susceptible to the false promises made by planters, which later became evident in the conditions under which they lived. Some of them were enticed by the appeal of obtaining money and the promise of free passage to return to their homeland. Dookhan (1975: 51–53) explains:

> Displaced workers in cottage industries and agriculture and labourers experiencing seasonal unemployment were forced to search for work; when they did not have jobs, they were ready to listen to the recruiters' propaganda. Some Indians were led to believe that they could find non-agricultural work as policemen, teachers, clerks, etc. in the Caribbean colonies. Contacts with returning relatives and friends who came back home with money encouraged Indians to want to emigrate.

Kannabiran (1998) points out that there were many reasons why the Indians journeyed; some originating from the many push factors in India such as poverty, famine and unemployment; others were duped by *Arkatias*.[10] During indentureship, planters did not prohibit the retention of Indian culture and cultural practices and the workers were allowed to practice their religion and retain their modes of dress, culture etc. This resulted in many other problems for Indians and further segregated this group from mainstream society during colonial times. Religion, alien dress, language, unfamiliar food habits and the poorly understood ceremonies of the Hindu religion were largely responsible for the marginalization of the Indians in Trinidad (Narayansingh, 1995).

One of the major problems of indentureship was the ratio of men to women who journeyed from India. On 30 May 1845, the *Fatel Razack* arrived in Trinidad, bringing 227 Indian immigrant labourers, of whom 206 were men and 21 were women (Kirpalani et al., 1945). This shortage of female Indians was later characterized in Trinidad history as the 'Indian Women Problem' (Reddock, 1985). The disproportionate ratio between the sexes sparked the beginning of violence among the Indians around family and kinship, which led to a culture of domestic violence. According to Phillips (1994), the initial effects on the family of the barrack system of housing and the largely male imported labour resulted in a spate of murders of Indian women and heightened family conflicts. This was because women

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[10] *Arkatias or recruiters* were from India and helped to kidnap and dupe the Indians into journeying to the West Indies. See Kannabiran (1998), '*Mapping Migration, Gender, Culture and Politics in the Indian Diaspora: Commemorating Indian Arrival in Trinidad.*'

were scarce and usually had more than one sexual partner and in many cases were unfaithful to their partners.

Reddock (1998) stated that many East Indian women came to the Caribbean region not as dependent wives but as already independent women who made a conscious decision to leave their difficult social and economic situations in India. These included women who had been deserted by their husbands, already practising prostitutes and Brahmin[11] widows who were not permitted to re-marry in India. Reddock explained that soon after their arrival they became constrained by an acceptance of docility, passivity and dependence – the glorification of motherhood and an acceptance of androcentric ideals of 'Indianness' being coterminous with subordination. This meant a tacit acceptance of Indian men's violence towards Indian women, largely characterized by the use of the cutlass.[12] The threat or actual use of violence by men was a direct response to attempts by women to retain a degree of autonomy over their lives (Kannabiran, 1998). Reddock (1985: 84–85) accurately summarizes the lives of East Indian women at the time of indenturship, saying:

> […] The majority of women who did migrate were already independent women who were seeking a new life. These were hardly the type of women who would fall back into the oppressive life patterns from which they had fled. This conflicted greatly with the ideology of the Indian male. To them, migration was an attempt at improving their economic and if possible their caste status. The practice known as 'sanskritisation' common in other areas of high Hindu migration was not absent here.

Sanskirisation involved adopting practices of higher castes. Of note here is that the higher the caste in India, the greater the restrictions imposed on women (Mies 1980). During the early stages of indentureship, Indian women fought against being docile and dependent. However, with the pressure brought to bear by the planters, missionaries, Indian culture/tradition and the law, this soon changed. Indian men petitioned the government for the right to prosecute wives who were unfaithful so that a woman would face imprisonment if she did not return to her husband. These petitions were granted and resulted in the Indian Immigrant Marriage and Divorce Ordinance, No. 6 of 1861, which was later incorporated into the Immigration Ordinance of 1889 (Weller 1968). According to Reddock (1985), these laws were seen as a way for Indian men to possess and control

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[11] 'Brahmins' are the highest, priestly, caste in the Indian caste hierarchy.
[12] A 'cutlass' is a shorter version of a sword, with a thick, curved, single-edged blade.

women rather than to punish them. The result of these measures was the continued dominance of the Indian male, the subjugation of the female in the household and the idea of women as 'housewives' and men as 'breadwinners'. Hence patriarchy, male dominance and ultimately the male-headed household were maintained.

## Women in Trinidad and Tobago (1888–1956)

During the colonial period there were many races on the island. Some were descendants of Indigenous Caribbeans, others of former African slaves, Indians, Chinese and whites. Following the indentureship period, some Indians journeyed back to India with the meagre wages they had earned. However, the majority stayed to build a new life in the 'New World'. The island at this point became a melting pot of all types of people with diverse backgrounds. From the time of conquest, through to colonialism, colour was the most important feature within the stratification system in the Caribbean. Doumerc (2003: 66) points out that:

> In most Caribbean territories the class structure long reflected racial differentiations, and a colour-class hierarchy, that is a close correlation between skin colour and social status, became an entrenched feature of life in these territories. Indeed the Caribbean class structure was long based on a set of correspondences between one's racial origin and one's position in society. Such a social hierarchy is a direct legacy of slavery: in the days of slavery, dark skin colour was associated with hard physical labour and light skin colour with a higher status.

According to Doumerc (2003), colonies such as Trinidad, Guyana and Suriname are characterized as 'plural segmented societies'. [13] While colour is an important factor in stratification, the presence of the East Indian labourers made these societies more segmented. Therefore, race and culture became the most prominent factors in layering society. In colonies like Trinidad and Guyana, which experienced the highest numbers of imported indentured labourers, Indians and Africans competed for jobs, power and status.

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[13] Plural Segmented Societies are those societies that have experienced the importation of large numbers of East Indian immigrant labourers i.e. Trinidad, Guyana and Belize. Within these areas, a greater range of skin tones, races and cultures challenged the existing classification of social hierarchy found in other colonies (White-Brown-Black). See: Doumerc (2003) *Caribbean Civilization: The English Speaking Caribbean since Independence*.

Independence threw them into open conflict with one another (Doumerc, 2003: 67). The pyramid shows the hierarchical structure of all races during the colonial time. The ex-planters were at the top and considered upper class while other races were considered lower. The introduction of Indian indentured labourers resulted in a new way of ordering society; a system not founded on colour but on the basis of culture. Thus, the alien culture of Indians segregated them and they were forced to remain at the bottom of the social hierarchy.

**Figure One: An Uncomplicated View of the Social Status of Various Groups of People in Trinidad and Tobago**
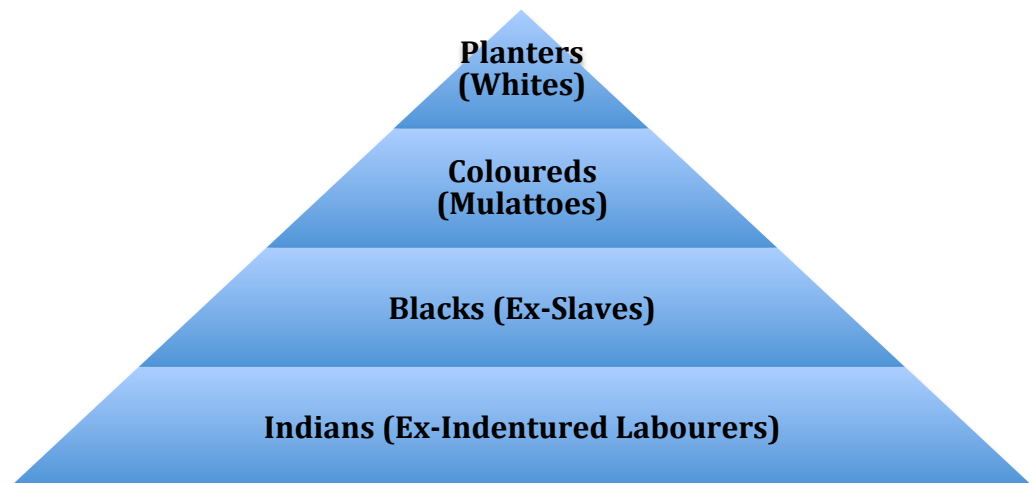


In the West Indies, especially islands possessed by the British, education was considered a mechanism of social control. Initially, the connection between education and religion was very prominent, whereby education was thought to be 'educating by the Gospel' or 'word of God' by missionaries. According to Green (1976: 329), 'the missionaries, though generally disliked by planters were deemed prospective allies of convenience capable of stabilizing the labouring people and inculcating in them a sense of social responsibility, thrift and industry.' One of the major problems that challenged the authorities after emancipation in Trinidad was the issue of control over schools, whether they were church controlled, non-denominational or secular.  There were also fierce religious contentions

between the Roman Catholics and the Church of England (Protestants) in Trinidad during the nineteenth century (Campbell, 1996). Due to a lack of clear decisions by the governing body in the education system post emancipation, the religious groups decided to establish their own schools. During the period 1834–1838 the Roman Catholics established ten primary schools, the Church Missionary Society erected four schools while the Methodists had one (Campbell, 1996).

For women particularly, education was important. A distinguishing feature of women in the Caribbean is that they were always a part of the labour force. While women were not generally the preferred choice of the planters, they still undertook some sort of work. After the prohibition of slavery and indentureship, Indian women resumed the position of housewife, while others sought to improve their position through education. It is noted, however, that education at this point in the Caribbean was very gender-specific in that girls were offered different schooling from boys. The Canadian Presbyterians sought to pioneer the Indian Education System, while the Catholic Church established the Education System for the Africans. The system started in 1862 and by 1890 it was noted that there were 49 East Indian schools with 1,958 boys and 926 girls (Comins, 1893). Indian women were taught needlework and how to cut out under-clothing while industrial training and land cultivation made up the education for boys (Comins, 1893). At the time, post-primary education for girls included housewife-oriented training (Reddock, 1985).

> The imposition of Western European middle-class housewife ideology taught in all 'Indian schools' when combined with a strengthened Indian patriarchal family system re-established partly through violence, served to create the prototype of the submissive, subordinate, docile Indian housewife which many would have us believe followed her husband from India. For a fact, the women of the agricultural castes were not then or now housewives. The prerogative of a zeana or secluded housewife was not that of the majority of Indian men who migrated during the indentureship period. But it was their aspiration and in this they were supported by the Colonial Church and State. (Reddock 1985: 86)

The education system for Indians promoted the docility of women and the dominance of men, thus reinforcing patriarchy. While the colour of a person's skin determined their status or position, during colonialism there seemed to be a newly emerging distinguishing feature, which was education. In order to gain a better social status, those who were non-

white sought to improve their standing through education. Education became a means of social mobility and a way by which individuals could gain a greater sense of self-worth. The blacks and coloureds sought to improve their position through educating themselves, thus promoting meritocracy and achievement. In other words, status was slowly becoming achieved by means of schooling instead of being ascribed by birth through race.

After the island gained independence in 1962 it was thought necessary for the masses to have some form of schooling. The Draft Plan for Educational Development in Trinidad and Tobago 1968–1983 stated that education assisted in human resource development, and in the disciplining of the populace as well as the economic growth of the nation. Education was also seen as an avenue to inculcate nationalist sentiments. In 1961, the common entrance examination was introduced, along with the physical expansions of schools. A total of 19,000 primary school places and 7,900 secondary school places were created. With the growing importance of education and more available schools, girls were better represented in classrooms. However, what emerged was the gender stereotyping of certain subject areas, associated with the idea of certain jobs being masculine or feminine. Some jobs in the Caribbean became highly feminized such as teaching, domestic work, tailoring and care work. Leo-Rhynie and Pencle (2002: 201) write:

> Gender is constantly being shaped through social and cultural experiences, which are expressed through the attitudes, values and behaviours characteristic of interpersonal interaction. The gendering process begins at birth and is reinforced throughout life. The process determines to a large extent the careers and lifestyles which both adolescents select, and the roles they see themselves and others performing in the future, in public as well as in private spheres.

The process of stereotyping subjects steered males and females into particular careers where they had typical male and female skills. Usually, 'female' jobs held by working women outside the household were poorly paid and they usually worked under poor conditions. By the 1970s there were increasing numbers of young men and women who had educated themselves but were still unemployed. This led to mounting frustration and erupted in the Black Power Movement in 1970. During the 1970s, with rising unemployment rates and lack of opportunities, there was an increase in international migration. By 1973 there was an improvement in the country's economic position due to the rise in petroleum prices on the international market. This new revenue enabled the

construction of more schools. It was during the 1970s that the government of Trinidad and Tobago, under the leadership of the late Dr Eric Williams, made the decision to expand the education system. The idea was to ensure that more students, mostly lower-class children, were able to have access to schools since at that time many religious schools were facilitating the education of children from middle-class backgrounds. The government of Trinidad and Tobago now provides free education for all citizens until tertiary level. They believe that access to education is a key pillar in the development of the island.

## Family Types as an Expression of History

Family formations on the islands were a direct result of the historical legacy created by the plantation systems of slavery, indentureship and colonialism. The roles of women in Indian households are different from those of women in African households because of cultural retention. Indian families in the postcolonial period were usually nuclear or extended with men being sole breadwinners of the home. However, more recently this has slowly changed. Women are now actively pursuing careers outside of the home because of education, the influence of mass media and increased job opportunities for women in manufacturing, care and domestic work. There are various expressions of family including the nuclear family, extended family, common-law unions, visiting unions and matrifocal families. In some ways, class in contemporary Caribbean society also influences family type. Doumerc (2003: 67), in discussing Smith's cultural pluralism theory writes:

> Each section of society lives according to their values and practices. Apart from religious expressions, another example is marriage, in which the working class opts for common-law marriage while the elite always have a "proper" Christian wedding.

Matrifocal families, visiting-type families and common-law unions were influenced by the retention of African practices under slavery. Herskovits writes:

> It goes without saying that the plantation system rendered the survival of African family types impossible, as it did their underlying moral and supernatural sanctions, except in dilute forms. Only where negroes escaped soon after the

beginning of their enslavement, and retained their freedom for sufficiently long periods, could institutions of larger scope such as the extended family or the clan persist at all; and even in these situations the mere break-up in personnel made it unlikely that some manifestation of European influence should not be felt…Yet, on the other hand, slavery by no means completely suppressed rough approximations of certain forms of African family life. Even in the United States, where Africanisms persisted with greatest difficulty, such family organization as existed during slave times in terms of the relationship between parents and children, and between parents themselves, did not lack African sanctions…. Certain obligations of parents to children operative in Africa no less than the European scene, were carried over with all the drives of their emotional content intact. (Herskovits, 1990: 139)

These influences from the slaves' African origins had a significant impact on the organization of their families. According to M.G. Smith (1974, slaves came from various tribes and groups, which helped them to maintain a healthy distance from each other because of the inability to establish common cultural procedures. This, in addition to the living conditions imposed by slavery, resulted in visiting-type relationships and the practice of polygyny. Additionally, M.G. Smith (1974: 108) explains:

In the areas of their origin, permanent mating relationships were established for spouses by their kinship or lineage groups, which vary in type and constitution from one tribe to another, as do the ceremonial procedures and exchange of property by virtue of which marriage is completed. It is obvious that such a heterogeneous collection of individuals, shipped to slavery in the West Indies, would be unable to develop common procedures for establishing marriage since they would lack the lineage and kinship groupings by which the union was sanctioned and given permanence, the spouses controlled, and into which the off-spring was incorporated in fixed descent lines.

Conditions imposed by the planters and tribal differences among slave groups may have discouraged or prevented marriage and the incorporation of a father into families, but it did not affect the sexual relations formed between men and women, thus promoting visiting relationships and polygyny. Polygyny was a direct result of their origins and ancestry (Herskovits, 1990) and can be seen as continuing in the Caribbean in the form of visiting-type relations. Contemporary socioeconomic factors have influenced and intensified matrifocality.

Many contributory factors have led to fathers in the Caribbean becoming marginalized and insignificant in households right up until the present day. Furthermore, the urban environment encourages unstable family unions due to a number of socioeconomic factors, particularly unemployment and poverty. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (1994) found that, in 1992, between four and ten per cent of all households in a state of poverty or 'indigence' had a female head, without a spouse but with three or more children. These households were described as forming the hard-core of poverty with the children in them forming between seven and seventeen per cent of the total.[14] Female-headed households are tied to the persistence of poverty, migration, and the imprisonment of males due to acts of violent crime in some Caribbean countries. In some ways, matrifocality is as a result of the lack of equal opportunities available to women in the Caribbean. According to Dunn (2004) women who are workers are also constrained by the limited changes in the gendered division of labour in the household so that many Caribbean women are fulfilling multiple roles. Women are single heads of households, primary breadwinners for their families and primary caregivers for children and relatives who are elderly and sick. Dunn (2004) also notes that, as a result of these multiple roles, women have to balance their role as workers outside the home with their domestic responsibilities.

Barrow (2001) argues that poverty and lack of economic advancement result in large numbers of common-law and visiting-union families.

> In the circumstances of job insecurity, high unemployment and migration among men and low social and racial status, black, lower-class men were unable to fulfil their functions as husbands and fathers. (Barrow 2001: 424)

Common-law unions are based on the same foundational principles as the nuclear family but there exist no legal bonds. Visiting relationships, which Simey (1946) referred to as 'faithful concubinage', results in women-headed households, made up of a woman and her child (or children) living apart from the father. The father's role is marginal; he acts as an absent spouse, giving financial assistance and seeking sexual gratification. R.T. Smith

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[14] The highly criticized 'culture of poverty' thesis describes a situation where poverty is learnt and transferred from one generation to the next. However, this is not the case in this example. Instead there is a persistence of poverty because of the lack of opportunities for single parent mothers who have little or no help from their partners.

(1973) explains that in visiting relationships, although the man and woman engage in sexual intercourse and may have children together, this does not mean that the man is expected to marry the woman. However, in relationships like these he will be expected to support any children born of such a relationship if he is able (R.T. Smith, 1973). Smith also noted that a long-standing visiting-type relationship might then grow into a common-law relationship.

Unlike Africans, East Indian families tended to be patriarchal in nature and kinship ties remained important. Indian families were often extended in nature and even with the mixing and merging of cultures ethnic endogamy persisted. Economically the oil boom had significant effects on the East Indian family in the 1970s and 1980s. Education and religious conversion to Presbyterianism played an important role in the creolization of the East Indian family. These two institutions forced Indians out of their isolation and resulted in them becoming assimilated. Table 1 depict the changes in the Indian family, from post-indenture to contemporary Trinidad.

**Table One: Comparisons Between Early Post-Indenture Period of the Indian Family and the Contemporary Indian Family in Trinidad.**

| Early Post-Indenture Trinidad | Contemporary Trinidad |
|---|---|
| Joint family ideal but seldom realized in practice | Nuclear family is both ideal & statistical norm |
| Patriline important. Interaction with fictive, matrilateral and affinal kin | Kinship traced bilaterally for the most part |
| Conjugal bond subordinate to parental bond | Parental bond subordinate to conjugal bond |
| Daughter-in-law expected to play role of domestic servant in husband's household | Daughter-in-law in conflict with husband's family in many cases. Where daughter-in-law is educated or employed, she is treated with respect and deference |
| Emphasis on having sons | Sons and daughters both valued; slight preference for sons |
| Scarcity of women during indenture made | Divorce easy; maintenance payment |

| | |
|---|---|
| divorce easy. The only real sanction was the husband's cutlass. Despite a more equal sex ratio after indenture period, divorce still relatively less frequent. | available for women and her children |

*Adapted from Nevadomsky (2001: 461) In Barrow and Reddock (2001: 449–470)*
*Caribbean Sociology: Introductory Readings.*

Presently, there are growing numbers of sibling-headed and grandparent-headed households among all races, which are a direct result of the migration of parents. This occurs when parents make the difficult decision to emigrate in search of a better income and improved life, leaving children in the care of grandparents or older siblings. Jokhan (2008: 102) points out:

> Children are usually left behind when their parents migrate either due to parental choice or when the terms and conditions of travel prohibit parents from migrating with their children. In terms of the Afro-Caribbean family, it is common for a parent or both parents to first leave and later send for their children. Indo-Trinidadians tend to opt for family migrations, whereby the entire family leaves together.

Migration may impact on the family left behind in that parents may leave children with uncles, aunts, grandparents or older siblings. There are new types of families emerging as well as adaptations of existing ones. This can be seen as a result of the changing nature of Caribbean society and the impact of political, social and economic factors. Family is indeed culturally oriented; the expressions of family may differ throughout varying cultures around the world. This institution is tailored to match every society and culture. There are many differences among familial units globally. A definition of family cannot be universal because it is culturally constructed. In my study of family, a clear understanding of the historical, cultural and social facets of the country/region under examination is needed in order to understand the specific features of this unit.

## Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to critically highlight some of the major stages in Trinidad's history and examine women during these periods in order to explain the consequences of this history for women's lives today and contribute to understanding why they might choose to migrate.

Matrifocality was highlighted as one of the most prominent results of Caribbean history. I reviewed various cultural differences of women to show how culture has affected the placement of women in Caribbean society and in so doing I build the case for the importance of women in households. Here I have discussed why women were of greater importance in African families while Indians were more patriarchal; in later chapters it will show how these features have affected how Africans and Indians migrate. I also highlighted education and socioeconomic factors as sources of change for East Indian and African women. As a result of cultural assimilation, education, and increasing opportunities, women are taking up greater roles and responsibilities both inside and outside households. Since women were always a part of the labour force in Trinidad and Tobago in one way or the other, it is not surprising that they are still on the move in search of more improved opportunities.

The most significant factors emphasised in this chapter are the strength of women, their perseverance and resilience through the toughest circumstances. Despite mistreatment, cultural erasure, and forced and imposed roles, women have demonstrated great fortitude, finding new ways to improve themselves and remaining the focal point in the family. In Chapter two, I build on the history discussed in this chapter and describe how it might have affected Caribbean women's decisions to migrate.

## Chapter Two
## Conceptualizing Migration
## The Case of Trinidad & Tobago

## Introduction

Thomas-Hope (2003) points out that the 'culture of migration' has been central to understanding human movement in search of better economic and educational opportunities. In the light of the demographic history of the Caribbean islands, migration is not an unfamiliar occurrence. The history of Caribbean migration started with forced movement during colonial times in the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The region also experienced migration in post-colonial times, with great waves moving to the United Kingdom and United States during the 1950s and 1960s (James, 2003).

Goldsheider (1992) defines migration as detachment from the organization of activities in one place and the movement of the total round of activities to another. Migration can take the form of urbanization, international, or return migration. St Bernard (2009) sees migration as involving individuals, families and communities moving from one space to another and involving any permanent change in residence. Thomas-Hope (1985) identifies different types of migrants: long-term migrants who establish their household overseas and transients whose return is implied, if only due to visa restrictions, which are usually characterized by short periods spent overseas followed by return. Hence, international migration is based on the movement of individuals from one country to another with the aim of establishing a permanent residence. Migration is without a doubt the most difficult phenomenon to measure because, unlike mortality or fertility, it is not related to a tangible biological occurrence (Zlotnick, 1987).

In order to examine migration within the context of Trinidad and Tobago I will discuss various theories of migration, including the neoclassical economic approach. This is one of the oldest theories used to explain migration and uses a cost-benefit analysis approach to examine the movement of people. I will discuss what the theory says about push and pull factors and will also consider some of the drawbacks to this approach. Additionally, two other major theories contributing to international migration will be examined, namely: the dual labour market theory and the world systems theory.

Furthermore, in order to centre the study, an account will be given of the works of Saskia Sassen and of studies that were done in the Caribbean concerning migration. I will discuss what is known thus far through highlighted studies about migration. Moreover, I critically examine literature on Caribbean women and their migration experiences in order to give a brief description of what has been written about the topic thus far and to list the limitations and gaps in existing research. Finally, I will give an overview of migration and the institution of the family. I will use information from current studies to discuss the impact of migration on the family. At the end of this chapter, the importance of researching migration from a woman's perspective will also be discussed.

## Migration Theory

The movement of people has long attracted the interest of scholars. Mass migration has taken various forms over the years and has grown into what it is today, a common occurrence. Moreover, what is most apparent in studies conducted over decades concerning the phenomenon of migration is their inability to address the migration of women. For several years, scholars within numerous disciplines have been putting forward theories highlighting the various aspects of migration deemed essential to understanding its processes. For Massey et al. (1993: 432):

> A full understanding of contemporary migratory processes will not be achieved by relying on the tools of one discipline alone, or by focusing on a single level of analysis. Rather, their complex, multifaceted nature requires a sophisticated theory that incorporates a variety of perspectives, levels, and assumptions.

The underlying point here is simple; in order to fully capture what migration is, studies must be done across disciplines considering all areas such as Economics, Sociology, and Women's Studies. It is necessary to merge cross-disciplinary explanations in order to give an account of the various aspects of migration. Early research often borrowed from other fields to explain the movement of people. As Arango (2000: 283) notes:

> A number of these explanations were not originally conceived to explain migration, but rather born to explain other facets of human behaviours and then imported and adapted for the explanation of migration.

One such 'imported' theory is the neoclassical approach, which considers individual reasons why people may see the need to migrate based on how beneficial it may be for them. Other theories under examination are: the dual labour market theory and the world systems theory. Both of these give a macro perspective on migration. These theories fall short of specifically addressing the issue of women and their choice to migrate but they do provide a general understanding of the social conditions that might underlie the decision to migrate.

## Neoclassical Theory

One of the oldest theories of international migration is the neoclassical economic theory of migration first proposed by Smith (1776) and Revenstein (1889). Predominantly economically based, this theory attempts to examine international migration by applying economic principles such as demand and supply at an individual level to discuss why individuals see the need to migrate. Ludlow (2010: 3) explains:

> The neoclassical economic approach to migration argues that migration is a process in which individual actors measure the opportunities offered to them in their current state, against opportunities offered at a different location.

The neoclassical approach regards migration as a means by which an agricultural economy exports its excess labour to a more industrial, developed economy, which in turn may benefit from economic growth in the process (Ranis and Fei, 1961; Lewis, 1954). This theory particularly stresses the decision to migrate internationally as being solely an individual choice of whether or not one should or should not. It supposes that the individual weighs the opportunities available in the sending and receiving countries against each other to make a decision. The idea thus created is one derived solely on the basis of economics with key areas being demand, supply, and individual wants and preferences. Theorists advocating this approach state the importance of push and pull factors and a cost-benefit analysis of migration. Therefore, the act of migration is undertaken only when the benefits that are derived from the country of destination outweigh those of the sending country. This only happens if employment is better, living conditions are improved and wages offered are higher in destination countries (Massey et al., 1993).

**Figure Two: Neoclassical View of the Relationship between Wages and Labour in Migration Leading to Equilibrium**

Low-Wage Region *(Sending Country)*          High-Wage Region *(Receiving Country)*
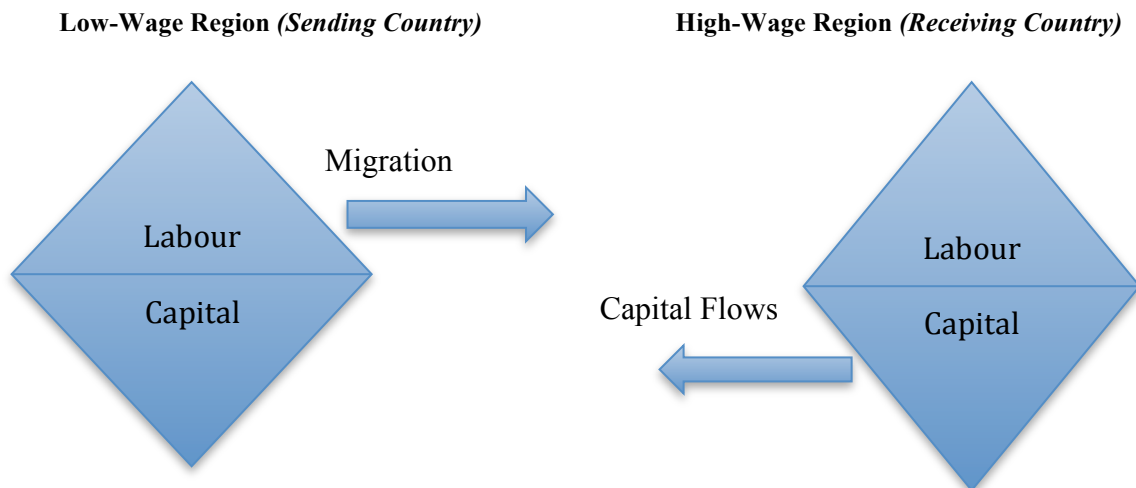


*My Version of a Figure adapted from Öberg (1997: 24)*

Figure 2 shows the relationship between the low-wage region (sending country) and the high-wage region (receiving country) as described by neoclassical theory. According to the diagram, labour migration occurs when there is a consistent movement of people from the low-wage region to the high-wage region. Based on this diagram, there is a one-way movement of both labour and capital, in that capital flows from the receiving country to the sending country and the labour force moves from low-wage to high-wage nations, ultimately leading to equilibrium. Neo-classicists believe that there is an even trade-off between low-wage and high-wage nations, in which the low-wage nation exports surplus labour and in turn receives healthy capital injections through remittances. Some of the most important factors propelling international migration according to neoclassical theorists are wages and distance. This view is based on the argument that the market economy is driven by the maximization of utility for all individuals. Consequently, the wages offered by the sending and receiving countries, as well as the distance between the two, are critical when thinking about migrating. Neo-classicists stress the importance of wages in the process and see it as a prominent factor in promoting migration. As Bauer and Zimmerman (1994: 96) put it:

Regions with a shortage of labour relative to capital have a high equilibrium wage, whereas regions with a large supply of labour relative to the endowment of capital are faced with low equilibrium of wages. This wage differential causes a migration flow from low wage to high wage regions.

Therefore, the perceived benefits of higher wages and more opportunities in terms of employment in the country of destination stimulate people to migrate internationally. This theory is useful in understanding why individuals may choose to migrate but fails to answer key questions. It supposes that the wages of the sending country are lower than those of the receiving country and that migrants are assured equality of opportunity in terms of work and wages. Harris and Tadaro (1970) deviated from the neoclassical assumption of full employment and looked rather at the probability of employment in the country of destination. In their analysis of rural to urban migration they explain that:

> […] The prospect of finding a high-paid job in the urban regions causes labour migration out of the rural areas, even though this migration could lead to unemployment. Contrary to the pure neoclassical theory, migration is determined by expected rather than actual earning differentials. The key variable for migration is earnings weighted by the probability of finding employment in the destination region. (Harris & Tadaro, 1970: 96)

Neoclassical theory fails to take into account the governing policies and legislation of countries of destination and does not consider possible 'illegal' migrants. In addition, it does not address individual situations relating to race, class, ethnicity or gender. What it can do is to give an overview of some of the 'why' factors for migration by examining and relating it to a homogeneous group.

## Dual Labour Market Theory

The underlying premise of the dual labour market theory (DLM) is that there are two contrasting sectors in the economy, namely the primary and secondary sectors. One of the most influential theorists advocating this view is Piore (1979), who asserts that the nature and economic structure of developed countries is such that it demands the inflow of increased immigrant labour and thus causes high rates of international migration. Dual labour market theory asserts that there exists a high-wage-paying, capital-intensive primary

sector and a low-wage-paying, labour-intensive secondary sector. It presumes that jobs are most desirable within the primary sector. Massey et al. (1993) describe the primary sector as needing skilled workers and so employers invest in the training and education of workers. They are usually unionized and their worth in the job makes them irreplaceable. These highly skilled and trained workers possess knowledge and 'know how' that is critical to the successful and profitable execution of work. Bulow and Summers (1986: 379) explain:

> The primary sector is characterized by high wages and responsible career jobs, while the secondary sector has menial jobs, low wages, and no job ladders. Although workers in the secondary sector envy those in the primary sector and are equally productive, there is no equilibrating market force that can erode wage differentials.

**Figure Three: An Explanatory Model for Dual Labour Market Theory**
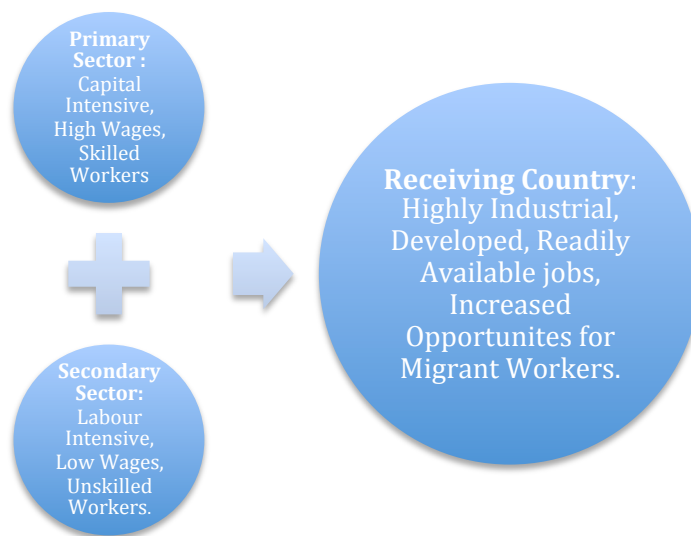


International migration arises from the need created in the secondary sector in destination countries. The demand for immigrant workers in more developed countries may be due to a shortage of labour, the need to fill lower-order positions in the job hierarchy, or a lack of workers in the secondary sector of a dual labour market (Piore, 1979). Figure 3 depicts the relationship between the primary and secondary sectors in receiving countries.

Similarly, Marx's (1947) idea of the reserve army of labour is applicable when considering dual labour markets. According to Marx, it is the aim of the bourgeois class in industrial capitalist societies to have a readily available source of cheap labour. Cheap labour is only possible when there is no shortage in supply. He argues that wages are determined by the supply of labour, in that if there is a growing number of available jobs and the rate of unemployment is low, wages will increase because workers can leave a job and find another. Additionally, he states that the greater the number of unemployed the lower the wages. Immigrant labour is therefore a pool of potential labour when there are shortages, which keeps wages low and can be easily dispensed with when there is an over-supply. Massey et al. (1993) examine the labour-intensive secondary sector where the repatriation of workers is prominent in order to save money during cycles of decline. This sector is usually characterized by employment that is unstable and utilizes predominantly unskilled workers. Migrants fulfil the needs of the secondary sector, according to Massey et al. (1993: 443), because:

> Low wages, unstable conditions, and the lack of reasonable prospects for mobility in the secondary sector make it difficult to attract native workers, who are instead drawn into the primary, capital-intensive sector, where wages are higher, jobs are more secure, and there is a possibility of occupational improvement. To fill the shortfall in demand within the secondary sector, employers turn to immigrants.

Another feature of the dual labour market theory is the wages being offered. Wages are seen as an important factor when considering international migration. Also attached to wages is a sense of prestige, which gives an indirect idea of the worth of the job. In many circumstances, especially in the secondary sector, individuals who are native to the receiving country are usually not interested in low-paying work because it seems unattractive or decreases social status. The problem facing employers is attracting workers for unskilled jobs at the bottom of an occupational hierarchy where they cannot simply raise wages (Massey et al., 1993). It is noted by Massey et al. that if wages are raised at the bottom level then this will have the likely domino effect of increasing wages throughout, resulting in rising costs for the employer. They further explain:

> […] Attracting native workers by raising entry wages during times of labour scarcity is expensive and disruptive, providing employers with a strong incentive to seek easier and cheaper solutions, such as the importation of migrant workers who will accept low wages. (Massey et al., 1993: 441)

This theory emphasizes the pull of migrants to receiving countries. It places the migrant in an economic position where they are drawn by the pull of the need for labour in the developed world. This depicts the migrant as someone leaving his or her own country because of the pull of the country of destination, thereby ignoring the push of the sending nation. Similar to the neoclassical account of migration, it ignores the significance of race and gender and provides a homogeneous explanation for why individuals migrate. The new economics of labour migration claims that the decision made by an individual to become a labour migrant cannot be explained only at an individual level but must be examined on a societal level as well (Stark and Bloom, 1985). In this regard, a new approach to international migration is needed that includes other social entities, such as the household. Moreover, the structure of labour markets in receiving countries has become more complex and is no longer just dual in nature (Sassen, 1988; Piore, 1979). This is seen in Sassen's (1991) *Global Cities* where the consumption needs created by the highly skilled are creating a demand for new unskilled service labour in areas such as childcare, domestic work and manufacturing. The dual labour market theory, like the neoclassical theory, is based on economic considerations and therefore leaves little or no room for the social discussion of other factors relating to migration beyond employment, unemployment and wages.

## World Systems Theory

In the 1970s, Immanuel Wallerstein advocated a new approach in Sociology and Economics, world systems theory. This arose out of the need to understand a more complicated industrial world that modernization theory was failing to address. A direct outgrowth of the dependency theory as proposed by Andre Gunder Frank (1966), world systems theory sought to understand migration through the relationship between the core and the periphery. Seemingly complex in nature, the world systems theory put forward the argument that international migration is based on relationships created in the world arena. This is where the capitalist-based countries (Western Europe, North America), or the core countries, and the countries that are rich in natural resources (Africa, Latin America,

Caribbean), or the peripheral countries, form relations, thus leading to migration.[15] Some authors recognize the existence of a semi-periphery, which is seen as a mixture between core and periphery. Many theorists regard the economic relationship established between the core and periphery as exploitative in nature (Shannon 1989).

The connection formed through globalization is maintained through trade industry. Therefore, with the deepening integration of the world's economy it is difficult for small markets to compete effectively on the world stage and survive. Some of these peripheral countries need help in extracting and developing their resources. Therefore, the capitalist or market-driven economies step in and endow them with the wherewithal to produce and manufacture, thereby creating a link between core and periphery. Shannon (1989: 29) points out that:

> The underlying reason most of the surplus value generated in the periphery ends up in the hands of the core capitalists has been a matter of some theoretical uncertainty among both world system and dependency theorists.

One can only postulate that this is because of the economic vulnerability of the periphery, which can be traced back to the time of colonization when there was the extraction of native resources by the capitalist colonizers and in the interests of the colonizers. Figure 4 shows the relationships among various sectors of the world, with the core establishing supremacy over peripheral countries.

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[15] Core is a term used in world systems theory to represent those countries that are benefitting most in the arena of world relations. At a time of the growing prominence of globalization, these countries find themselves at the top of the food chain, having the least volatile economies and the best living standards. Peripheries are those countries identified in the theory as lagging behind. Countries that are dependent on the core countries for trade, exporting excess population, aid etc. Usually these countries are rich in natural resources such as land, oil, or minerals, but lack the technology or the money to produce or manufacture on their own.

**Figure Four: Relationships in the Capitalist World Economy**
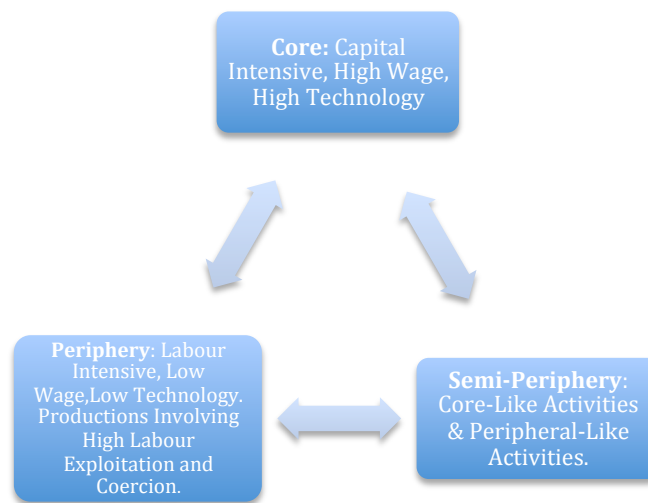


Adapted from Shannon (1989: 29) *An Introduction to the World System Perspective*

World systems theory proposes that, with the integration of the world's economy and the natural flow of goods and services, the impact on the flow of labour is quite different from that on the flow of goods. The demand for unskilled labour is high in global cities (Sassen, 1988). The argument here is very similar to dual labour market theory, whereby world systems argue that the demand for unskilled labour is high in core countries. Another similarity is migrants' willingness to undertake any job because of their status as illegal immigrants and because they are not unionized or politicized. Migrant workers often enter a country as illegal immigrants, and the core countries use this to their advantage to generate a cheap and available supply of labour to undertake the jobs found at the bottom of the industrial sector.

> The cheapness of migrant labour is not a built in feature of the migration process and does not inhere in the personality of migrants, but is dependent on deliberate political manipulation. (Portes & Walton, 1981: 50)

Furthermore, Sassen (1991) discussed the dynamics of global cities as a product of globalization. These global cities find themselves at the centre of all economic activity; high-powered firms are based here and control major decisions based on finance and

administration. Skilled workers who are native to the core countries usually fill the positions offered by these firms. However, there is a strong pull for migrant workers to move to these highly developed countries of the world to fill the low-skilled, low-status jobs.

As a structural theory, world systems theory begins to explain the international movement of people across borders in terms of the developmental processes involved in the relationship between the capitalist countries and those belonging to the developing world. This relationship is understood to impact on the economy, politics and culture. Within these confines, world systems theory offers an explanation for the movement of labour. A step away from neoclassical theory, world systems theory offers a better understanding of migration from less developed nations to countries of the North. It also takes into consideration factors relating to colonization and the history of these regions. It convincingly adds to the understanding of networks created and relationships formed through the integration of the world's economy. It also acknowledges the vulnerability of immigrant workers and takes into consideration their status upon entering a new country and seeking employment.

An important drawback to the world systems view of migration is that it does not allow for the understanding of why some people choose to migrate and others do not. It does not take into consideration individual choices and assumes that people from the periphery migrate solely for work. A predominantly economically deterministic theory, it tends to base its understanding of migration only through the lens of economics and does not take into consideration other important factors. In its explanation of the relations of reproduction, world systems theory does not highlight women as being important. Currently, one of the key features of international migration is the predominance of immigrant female labour. This labour is usually geared towards filling gaps in specific jobs in developed countries such as domestic and care work. These jobs are seen as growing in significance in studies of care workers from developing countries who form 'global care chains' and are notably vital in understanding international migration (Yeates, 2005; Hochschild, 2009). World systems theory does not pay much attention to this and instead focuses on the economic side of work created by production and manufacturing.

## The Work of Saskia Sassen

Sassen is one of the leading researchers examining globalization and its impact on the different countries of the world. Her work provides detailed accounts of modern day capitalism in a globalized world and is significant in that it conceptualizes feminized labour migration as a feature of globalization. In terms of my study, her research has been very influential in providing an understanding of how women migrate and the circumstances that promote the migration of women in a globalized world. She discusses the implications of increased integration in the world's communications, production and manufacturing for core and peripheral regions of the world. Sassen (2003: 254) points out that when there is a discussion of globalization the areas highlighted are usually, 'hypermobility, international communication, and the neutralization of distance and place.' From this, we understand that globalization has emphasized connectivity among countries and has bridged the gaps created by distance Sassen has published widely on the prominence of what she terms 'global cities'. A global city, according to Sassen (1991: 3), functions in four new ways, which are:

> […] As highly concentrated command points in the organization of the world economy; second, as key locations for finance and for specialized service firms, which have replaced manufacturing as the leading economic sectors; third, as sites of production, including the production of innovations, in these leading industries; and fourth, as markets for the products and innovations produced.

She highlighted three major cities that carry out these functions: London, New York, and Tokyo. In discussing the impact of globalization on the migration process, Sassen (2003: 254) argued that the process only concerns itself with the 'upper circuits of global capital, and not the lower ones, and with hypermobility of capital rather than with capital that is bound to place.' She does not dispute that globalization has assisted in migration processes and the transference of information across borders. However, she argues that:

> Within globalization narratives there is an increased importance given to perceived opportunities for global transmission over physical infrastructure; information over the workers who produce it; and transnationalism and corporate professional culture over any other job carried out by lower-wage workers, including those jobs that are undertaken by immigrants (2003: 254).

Within such narratives, as Sassen says, globalization has little to do with the migration of maids, nannies and sex workers because they are seen as representing just another form of migration from peripheral poor to rich core, which long predates economic globalization. Yet, as she points out:

> […] It seems reasonable to assume that there are significant links between globalization and women's migration, whether voluntary or forced, for jobs that used to be part of the First World woman's domestic role. (Sassen, 2003: 255)

In an attempt to link globalization with the movement of people across international borders, she describes the relationship forged between 'global cities'[16] and 'survival circuits'.[17] Similar to the core-peripheral relationship of world systems theory, Sassen believes that a significant role has been created for women by globalization. She explains: 'global cities have become places where large numbers of low-paid women and immigrants get incorporated into strategic economic sectors' (Sassen, 2003: 255). Globalization has meant the need for immigrant, low-wage workers in global cities. Women see the opportunities offered to them in these cities and are motivated to leave their home countries. These women, according to Sassen (2003), tend to undertake feminized work as domestics, care workers, secretaries and sex workers.
According to Sassen (2003), feminized migration is very prominent, especially as a result of globalization, even though women are usually seen as insignificant in the globalization process. The importance of women in creating networks and links between global cities and survival circuits is downplayed. She points out:

> Through their work in both global cities and survival circuits, women, so often discounted as valueless economic actors, are crucial to building new economies and expanding existing ones. Globalization serves a double purpose here, helping to forge links between sending and receiving countries, and enabling local and regional practices to assume global scale. (Sassen, 2003: 256)

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[16] 'Global cities concentrate some of the global economy's key functions and resources. These activities include the management and coordination of the global economy which has expanded, and has produced sharp growth in the demand for highly paid professional workers; which in turn generate a demand for low paid service workers.' (Sassen, 2003: 255)
[17] Survival circuits are created when less developed countries depend on global cities for financial/economic support.

Immigrant women play an important role in maintaining a connection between the developed and developing nations of the world. Although there has been an increase in female migrants and a growing demand for immigrant workers, Sassen notes that these jobs are usually low-wage and have few possibilities for promotion. She highlights the re-emergence of the 'serving class'. She explains that with the increasing numbers of women taking up jobs outside the home in more developed countries; the result is a growing need for care workers and domestics to undertake duties within the home. The increased demand for corporate professionals in global cities has meant that more women in the developed world are being incorporated into the fast-paced world of work, leaving little or no time to care for their families; however, this does not mean that professional women do not want it all. They do have homes, husbands and children, which creates an increased need for someone to perform caretaking duties in their absence while they work. The 'serving classes', according to Sassen (2003: 259), '[…] are largely made up of immigrant and migrant women.' These women tend to fill the gaps in the household created by women who work. Additionally, she explains:

> The image of the immigrant woman serving the white middle-class professional woman has replaced that of the black female servant working for the white master in centuries past. (Sassen, 2003: 262)

Whereas the growing importance of migrant women in these survival circuits has often gone unmentioned in previous studies, Sassen stresses the importance of women in both receiving and sending countries. She writes:

> Not only are households, indeed whole communities, increasingly dependent on women for their survival, but so too are governments, along with enterprises that function on the margins of the legal economy. (Sassen, 2003: 265)

Migrant women are seen as beneficial to both sending and receiving countries; not only for the remittances they send but also for the networks they create. They play a major role on a global scale in helping to transmit cultural expression to receiving countries and they also help in the expansion of local business and enterprise. She explains:

> Positioned differently from men in relation to the economy and state, women tend to be more involved in community building and community activism. They are also the ones who will likely handle their families' legal vulnerabilities as they seek public and social services. (Sassen, 2003: 260)

Migrant women, though invisible and voiceless, are major contributors in global cities and survival circuits. The roles they undertake may be considered highly feminized but they see themselves as independent global actors. The countries where women emigrate from are inherently patriarchal; therefore, the roles they undertake in receiving countries are seen as a means towards independence.

## Overview of Migration in the Caribbean

Marshall (1982) points out that Commonwealth Caribbean people have been moving out of their islands almost continuously for more than 150 years. Migration in the Caribbean has shifted from a history of the mass importation of various peoples to a vast export of population. Currently, with the process of globalization, the ease of travelling, and the close proximity of the islands to countries of the North, there are even greater numbers of individuals taking up the option of securing a permanent residence in another country. In this section, the push and pull factors will be examined as they pertain to the Caribbean. In doing this, my aim is to shed greater light on the issue, and to highlight what is already known from existing studies examining the key points about migration in Trinidad and Tobago. I also intend to uncover the importance of studying migration of women from this country.

Migration has had both positive and negative implications for Caribbean society and its economy. In the case of Jamaica, external migration during the 1990s strengthened local households and the country as a whole by the use of remittance money, the creation of foreign savings aid, exporting the local culture to the international arena and the adoption of foreign skills and ideas locally. However, the attempt to strengthen local households through external migration has in some cases inadvertently resulted in the disruption of family life, the loss of skilled professional workers, underdevelopment and a slump in the agricultural sector, and the creation of a dependency syndrome produced by the excessive reliance on remittances (Chevannes and Ricketts, 1997).

In many instances, mass outward migration has had a negative impact on the sending country. In Montserrat, migration has helped to continuously age the population profile and has played a decisive role in determining the size and rate of growth of the tiny nation (Ebanks, 2001). Ebanks (2001) observes that the percentage of those above the age of 20 and less than 60 is relatively small due to increased rates of out-migration. Furthermore, he argues that the ageing of the population is being influenced by relatively low and declining fertility rates because of the constant migration of young adults who are in the age group of high fertility.

Additionally, Thomas-Hope (1997) stated that the migration of nurses from Jamaica had resulted in a significant loss of the skilled and educated members of communities. Data gathered showed that, in 1990, out of 189 nurses resigning from the public sector, 186 of them were admitted to the USA in 1990–1991, out of the 2,637 nursing posts in the government service, only 1,210 or 46 per cent were filled (Thomas-Hope, 2007). It can be noted that the nurses left faster than they could be replaced, which had serious repercussions for the Jamaican Health Sector where at one time the nurse/patient ratio was 1:50 in the public sector. This out-migration is also said to have created a dependency syndrome whereby local households rely solely on remittances for their livelihood. The increase in 'materialist consumerism' is occurring as remittance money is used for purposes of consumption rather than production (Chevannes and Ricketts, 1997). Migration has deeply affected the social, economic, and political institutions of the Caribbean, especially through remittances and return migration. Duany (1994) believed that the money sent to relatives and friends constituted the lion's share of national income, often equalling or surpassing the value of the main export crop for some Caribbean countries. Puri and Ritzema (1998) reported that remittances turned agricultural producers into consumers, thus causing a decline in domestic food production and a reduced surplus for export.

Migration can also have positive impacts on the country of origin. Duany (1994) points out that migration during differing periods of time had varying implications. He argues that migration became a way to export surplus labour from a developing economy, a safety valve to relieve the pressure of overcrowding. Brown (1997) notes that the conventional notion of migration as the one-way movement of migrants to their country of destination is

now questioned; scholars today see the process as more complex, whereby the return to the country of origin is just as important as the move away from it. Additionally he argues that migrants not only maintain links with their country and their family but also eventually return with resources that will benefit their family and the wider society.

Chevannes and Ricketts (1997) note that, although individuals may leave the Caribbean, they remain tied to their home country in that they will usually send money to their family and will eventually return when they are satisfied that they have 'made it'. Businesses in Jamaica are predominantly owned or managed by people who have never migrated but are supported by remittances (ibid). In the Windward Islands, Leeward Islands, and the Grenadines, remittances have been used to establish small shops and bars[18] (Chevannes and Ricketts, 1997). In addition to familial benefits, the government of the country of origin also stands to gain as foreign reserves increase when remittance money is converted at local banks.

Thomas-Hope (2003) notes that the amount of foreign currency received by the Bank of Jamaica through personal transfers between 1991 and 1997 exceeded the foreign currency earned in some of the traditional economic sectors. In the USA, many Puerto Rican migrants have developed major skills and the USA has acted as a training ground for immigrants so that when they do decide to return home they can find suitable employment in the cities that have developed (Levine, 1987). Additionally, return migrants have contributed to the expansion of the construction, finance, and tourist sectors of the Dominican Republic (Del Castillo and Mitchell, 1987).

It should be noted that much has been written about migration in the Caribbean in general, but little work has been done examining specific individual nation states. I also noted that, when studies are undertaken by organizations, academics and professionals, Latin America and the Caribbean are commonly studied together as one group or the Caribbean as a region is examined in general terms. While there are some theses and pieces of research dedicated to various issues pertaining to migration and the Caribbean, these are all kept at the Library of the University of the West Indies and cannot be removed or accessed by the public. During my stay in Trinidad I made a point of seeking out research theses and found

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[18] Bar is a local term that is used to refer to a pub or drinking gallery.

that they were very beneficial; reading them helped me to acknowledge what is already known and add to my understanding of this topic. A pertinent area to discuss is the drive to migrate from the Caribbean and the draw of the receiving countries.

## Push and Pull Factors

Push and pull factors have long been discussed within the study of migration. Push factors usually refer to the country of origin, the reasons why people may find it necessary to leave a particular country. Conversely, pull factors may refer to the country of destination (receiving country) and the benefits of migrating. Datta (2003) explains that:

> Pull factors are those which encourage migration to an area such as employment and other economic opportunities, facilities, amenities etc. – opportunities for better employment, higher wages, facilities and amenities of modern life etc., attract people to certain areas. (Datta, 2003: 24)

Push factors are related to characteristics such as crime, poverty, unemployment, poor working conditions and low living standards, whereas pull factors are the opposite, entailing a low rate of crime, the availability of work, good working and living conditions and less poverty. Datta's (2003) analysis of rural-urban migration in terms of push and pull factors was used to explain what causes or motivates people to migrate:

> Migration usually happens when the positive pull attributes at the place of destination are outnumbered by the negative push attributes at the place of origin. Indeed, push factors in reality refer to poor economic conditions and lack of opportunity for advancement. Ultimately, the resultant economic misery pushes people out of the region in search of a better livelihood and opportunities. (Datta, 2003: 22–23)

In the Caribbean, international migration patterns can also be explained in terms of push and pull factors. Some of the problems facing the Caribbean region that drive outward movement are: a history of economic instability, under or unemployment, poverty, crime, natural disasters and a lack of basic amenities. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC, 1998) stated that the most important stimulus for international migration is the political, social, and economic environment of receiving and

sending countries. While Caribbean nations are facing a series of issues influencing migratory patterns, there are also many pull factors in the more developed countries that appeal to Caribbean people. These pull factors usually include: access to a better standard of living, the availability of employment and opportunities to lead a better life.

The Caribbean economy has always been unstable. Its volatility is rooted in historical factors. Instability in contemporary Caribbean society, however, is based on various islands' continued dependence on a single crop, service or product. Some islands, such as Barbados, depend heavily on tourism; others, such as Guyana, rely on mono-crop production such as sugar. Meanwhile, Trinidad depends heavily on production in the energy sector. Some islands are wealthier than others; therefore, they may experience more stability than others. Economic instability within the Caribbean region may vary from island to island. In some instances, Structural Adjustment Programmes created some instability during the 1980s, in others, natural disasters, or the incidence of crime and violence are the underlying causes.

 In Jamaica there has been a great exodus of individuals of all ages and both sexes, including the many nurses who left in the 1970s. Brown (1997) points out that some of the push factors related to the socioeconomic context of Jamaica, which were imposed by the international lending agencies in the form of Structural Adjustment Programmes. These programmes imposed tight fiscal policies and reduced government spending, which led to a ceiling being imposed on wages in the civil service and a reduction in capital expenditure. Brown believed that these policies translated into inadequate salaries, a shortage of medical equipment, and deterioration in the medical infrastructure.

For countries such as Trinidad and Jamaica, crime is a very influential factor in international migration. According to the United Nations Development Programme (Thomas-Hope et al., 2010), the migration rate in Jamaica is the twelfth highest in the world and, it is ranked amongst the twenty least attractive countries in the world for immigrants. Parkins, in her study of push and pull factors in Jamaica, found that:

> Crime and violence were the most discussed issues as they were a major concern […] most respondents recognized if crime and violence were not contained, Jamaica would find itself in a seriously bad situation, being unable to create or provide opportunities for the general population. (Parkins, 2010: 16)

In many Caribbean nations, particularly Guyana, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago, the high levels of crime and the lack of proper national security have been very problematic to the development of the nation and have acted as a critical push factor in the study of international migratory patterns. Parkins (2010**)** says of Jamaica:

> Over the last 30 years, the migration rates have increased substantially, with alarming rates in particular, of highly skilled individuals. This study suggests that both the direct and indirect effects of crime in general and violent crimes in particular, combined with suitable employment for the migrants' skill set, have forced some members of Jamaica's professional class to gravitate towards First World countries, taking their skill set which their home country has financed. (Parkins, 2010: 6)

Jamaica continues to have the highest rates of crime in the Caribbean, which has affected its GDP. Crime and national security continues to be a major deterrent to development; the consequences of this show in the decreasing rates of tourism and increasing rates of international migration. The government of Great Britain has issued numerous warnings cautioning British travellers about crime. These warnings include stating where criminal activity is most prevalent, what tourists should do to protect themselves, how they should secure their belongings as well as themselves, and useful numbers they should call in case of emergency (GOVUK, 2014).

Furthermore, poverty, unemployment, and living standards have been instrumental factors leading to international migratory patterns. For some Caribbean academics, economic factors are mainly responsible for stimulating peoples' willingness to migrate (De Vanzo, 1976). For others, migration is a way of satisfying lifetime goals, as in the case of obtaining an education, ideal jobs, nice houses, and a pleasant environment (Stone, 1973). In his analysis of the state of development of the Caribbean region, Best writes:

> Everywhere there is disorder, what is more, it is mounting disorder; growing populations; lagging incomes; increasing unemployment; widening inequality; lengthening dependencies and rising discontent. (Best, 1967: 7)

Migration in this instance is seen as a result of underdevelopment in the economy; rising inequality and inequity is another reason forcing people to move out of the region. Simmons and Guengant (1987) cite politics as a push factor. They posit that major political upheavals, such as those in Cuba in the late 1950s and early 1960s and Guyana in the 1970s, are associated with high rates of migration. The increasingly high rates of unemployment and lack of available jobs pose a threat to Caribbean society and add to the continued existence of poverty. Kairi (2007) found that in Antigua and Barbuda many people were willing to work but there was a lack of available jobs. Qualitative studies carried out by Kairi (2007) reveal that many people claim they are willing to work but cannot obtain suitable employment to earn money to support their families.

In Grenada, Kairi (1999) found that, although unemployment is not confined to the poor, there is a strong association between unemployment and poverty. The study found that as one moved up the socio-economic scale the proportion of people who were unemployed decreased from 24% to a low of 16%, which showed that those belonging to a higher economic class were less likely to be unemployed. According to Frank (2004), surveys conducted in various Caribbean islands showed that the main concern of most people was finding a job; 48 mentions in 65 documents conveyed the importance of obtaining a job. She also found that the state of poverty was generally attributed to unemployment, lack of skills and education, a large family and single parenthood. There is a close link between poverty, living standards, unemployment and international migration patterns in the Caribbean. Migration is seen as beneficial to peoples of the Caribbean when the options are weighed against each other. However, in order for individuals to migrate, the pull of receiving countries needs to be considerable. Pienkos (2006), in his report on Caribbean labour migration, mentions that:

> The push and pull factors that affect migration do so by predictably impinging on the decisions of individuals, families and households. A first approximation to the rational choice of labour migrants posits that when the expected net return (benefits, economic and otherwise) to migration is greater than zero (a positive number), the rational choice will be to migrate. But the decision to migrate may also express more of a household and/or family decision to seek upward social mobility and higher income. (Peinkos, 2006: 9)

While poverty, lack of opportunity, and economics play a considerable role in the decision to migrate, the occurrence of natural disasters also encourages people to move out of the Caribbean region. These islands are prone to natural disasters such as hurricanes, volcanic activity, and earthquakes. Such disasters in Haiti, St Vincent and Montserrat triggered an increase in international migration from these islands. The mass destruction and damage to the infrastructure caused by natural disasters affected the standard of living and overall development of these islands. Migration as a result of natural disaster can assist in reducing the risks to lives, livelihoods and ecosystems, and contribute to income diversification as well as enhancing the overall capacity of households and communities to cope with the adverse effects of environmental degradation and change (Walsham, 2010).

It can be noted that the pull factors associated with receiving countries are also very important in the decision-making processes around international migration. The allure of employment, higher wages, and the ability to provide a better life for family members have always been reasons why people in the Caribbean think about international migration as a viable option. The appeal of a more developed nation in terms of opportunities, living standards and service provision are other reasons that are applicable, as in the case of the skilled nurses who left Jamaica in the 1970s. Peach (1967) points out that, although factors of population pressure and unemployment in the British West Indies must be taken into account as factors allowing migration to the UK to take place, it was the demand for labour in Britain, which directly stimulated it.

With respect to Jamaica in particular, Peach (1967) shows that migration occurred against a background of economic improvement. During the 1930s, when unemployment was at its worst, there was a lower rate of net migration even though entry to the United States was not yet restricted; between 1953 and 1962 Jamaica had one of the world's highest rates of economic growth and it was during this period that migration was at its highest (T.E, Smith, 1981). Additionally, Smith argues that the external factor determining the rise and fall in migration rates was the fluctuating demand for labour in Britain. This shows that attention must also be given to the pull factors that are associated with migratory patterns in the Caribbean region. Reasons for migration should not be centred around the existence of push factors alone but explained through a global view of the factors associated with both push and pull to give a clearer understanding of the factors stimulating the movement of Caribbean peoples across international boundaries.

## Migration Patterns in Trinidad

It can be said that there is a tradition of migration within the Caribbean islands. The period from the 1880s to 1921 was characterized by massive migration. The construction of the Panama Canal resulted in the need for manual workers. Additionally, the establishment of the banana industry in Costa Rica followed the construction of railways and infrastructural development. Henry-Lee et al. (2000) noted that migration during the period 1880–1921 served as an escape route for many people who felt trapped and disillusioned by a lack of opportunity, unemployment, low salaries, inflation and the high cost of living. As a result, international migration from Trinidad increased during the period before the Second World War. The most favoured country of destination at that time was the USA. This was because of its close proximity to the islands, which made it accessible and comparatively easy to reach. Another reason for the increase in movement of people was that there were few restrictions placed on migration by the American government.

The colonial ties between Trinidad and Tobago and Great Britain have resulted in a constant outflow of Caribbean people since the 1930s. In the period after World War Two the USA enforced greater restrictions and stronger immigration laws. [19] This resulted in a shift of international migration patterns from the USA to Britain. At this time, too, war veterans who had been called up from the islands became familiarized with life in Great Britain. Thus some stayed to work and sent for their families because they felt a degree of connection between themselves and what they considered the 'mother land'. This has led to a long history of labour migration of mostly skilled Caribbean professionals such as nurses and teachers. The Caribbean islands and more developed countries (MDCs) were now experiencing a type of reverse migration.[20] This pattern developed because of the ease of travel and governing immigration policies of receiving countries. Reverse migratory patterns between Britain and the Caribbean began after World War Two in the 1940s because of the slackening of immigration policies and the availability of transport to the colonial world.

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[19] In June of 1952, the American government initiated the McCarran-Walter Act. This Act limited the number of Caribbean immigrants who were able to enter the country.

[20] I use the term reverse migration to refer to the incidence of Caribbean people *(colonies)* migrating to Britain *(motherland)*. This contrasts with earlier migratory patterns of European discovery, conquest, and colonization of the West Indies.

The growing need for unskilled and semi-skilled labour during the post-war period and the affordability of travel resulted in an increase in migration to Britain during the 1940s. The relationship between Britain and Trinidad and Tobago is complex since the latter is a former colony. Trinidadians, as well as the citizens of other former British colonies in the Caribbean, view Britain as being the 'motherland'.[21] Local calypsonian[22] Lord Kitchener is quoted in Phillips (1998) as saying, 'I always wanted to know the mother country' in referring to Britain. This view of Britain as the 'mother country' has led to an image or fantasy that most migrants have prior to migration. It has distorted the reality of how accepting and familiar the 'motherland' actually is, concealing the reality of the alienation that migrants face and the disconnection they feel from the country they believe gave them life.

Furthermore, the colonial ties to Britain, forced slavery, and the period of indentureship ensured ethnocentric views in the Caribbean. The British form of culture was seen as superior to the prevailing cultural traditions of Africa and India (See Chapter One).[23] Therefore, the British way of life was viewed as the acceptable way dictated by planters in Caribbean society. Thus, Caribbean settlers perceived being British as a desirable identity to aspire to. The history of the plantation has impacted greatly on the lives of Caribbean nationals. In her work on Caribbean migrants in the United States, Foner explains:

> To be sure, the legacy of West Indian plantation slavery and colonial social arrangements has left in its wake the assumption that African ancestry is inferior; dark skin, moreover, continues to be correlated with poverty. (Foner, 2001: 12)

Colonialism and its impacts have thus led to the continued perception of Britain as the 'motherland' and as a place of cultural superiority. This new wave of international migration to Britain was made possible due to many factors. After World War Two, there were labour shortages and the government in Britain was exploring the idea of recruiting workers, particularly women to work in the National Health Service. Another reason for

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[21] Trinidad and Tobago was once a colony of the British Empire. Most Trinidadians refer to Britain as the motherland, identifying Britain as the country giving life to them.

[22] Calypso is local Trinidadian music, used as a platform for social, political and economic commentary. Therefore a calypsonian is one who sings and performs calypso, of which Lord Kitchener was the best known.

[23] This is seen in the forced acculturation of slaves and the consideration of both African slaves and Indian immigrants as inferior, in terms of religion, dress, and language.

the increase in international migration to Britain was the ease of travel. In 1948 the first ships carrying immigrants arrived in Britain. The first vessel was the *Empire Windrush*. This vessel carried 492 Jamaicans to Britain seeking work. London Transport recruited thousands of workers from Barbados, Trinidad and Jamaica and in some cases paid travel expenses, permitting its new workers to get to Britain. The British Hotels and Restaurants' Association and private companies also ran a recruitment campaign in the West Indies. This need for workers in Great Britain triggered the mass out-migration of many ex-veterans and their families in search of a better life. Many, though by no means all, immigrants were recruited to perform relatively low-paid and unskilled jobs when employers could not fill the vacancies with white British workers. According to Cohen (1998), in his analysis of early Caribbean migrants, on arrival in Britain, the majority of migrant women ended up in unskilled or semi-skilled employment with limited opportunities for social mobility.

To say, however, that there were predominantly unskilled workers boarding these vessels would not be an accurate statement. It was also noted that nurses from the West Indies were being recruited by the Ministry of Health in Britain (Henry, 1985). Migration from Trinidad followed a pattern in which men migrated first to secure employment and housing before their partners. The latter would arrive later with one or more children (Arnold, 1997). In some cases, children were left behind with relatives. Estimates show that during the peak migration period of West Indians to Britain, 1953 to 1956, 162,000 individuals came to Britain of whom 52% were men, 40% women and only 8% children (Arnold, 1997).

Observing the migration patterns of various races in Trinidad and Tobago is also significant in order to understand extra-regional movement. People of African descent usually migrated and then brought their families after a place of residence had been found and a stable income was achieved. East Indian migratory patterns were somewhat different. East Indians migrated predominantly to the USA and Canada in 1965 (Gosine, 1990). Gosine also explained that most East Indians usually left with their families with the intention of staying abroad (Gosine, 1986). Therefore, no children were left behind to support. Migration to North America offered increased opportunities to nationals in the context of easy employment (mostly manual or semi-skilled).

International migration rates from Trinidad and Tobago to more developed countries have persistently increased since the 1930s. Migration is not a new phenomenon and has been used by Caribbean people as a means of economic survival (Bakker et al, 2009). It has been a means of social mobility for both unskilled and skilled workers, who left the country in search of greater opportunity. McCabe (2011: 1) states:

> In 2009, the United States was home to 3.5 million immigrants from the Caribbean, who accounted for 9 percent of the total foreign-born population. More than 90 percent of these immigrants came from Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Haiti, and Trinidad and Tobago, and Cuban immigrants in particular have been among the top ten foreign-born groups in the United States each decade since 1970.

Additionally, whilst these West-Indian-born nationals migrate to North America in increasing numbers, many of them do so illegally. McCabe (2011) found that Caribbean immigrants added to the illegal and undocumented population in the United States. She states:

> The Pew Hispanic Centre estimates that there were 350,000 unauthorized immigrants from the Caribbean in the United States in March 2009. Caribbean immigrants accounted for about 3.2 percent of the 11.1 million estimated unauthorized immigrants residing in the United States, and approximately one in ten (10.1 percent) of the 3.5 million Caribbean immigrants were unauthorized. (McCabe, 2011: 1)

Although many West Indian migrants leave their country to settle illegally in the United States, McCabe claims that these migrants have greater chances than other immigrant populations to be granted asylum and become lawful permanent residents. What is special about the case of Trinidad and Tobago is that, while the country boasts free education up to tertiary level, ease of accessibility to various welfare services and a continuous decline in unemployment rates, there is still a mounting rate of international migration, especially among women. One reason for this might be the increasing crime rate in the country. Crime is one of the major issues plaguing Caribbean islands, especially Jamaica, Trinidad and Guyana. According to OSAC (2013), in Trinidad and Tobago,

Violent crime is a concern for the local security services and the general population. The 2012 murder rate as was 37.9 per 100,000 people. There were 379 murders in 2012, 354 murders in 2011, 480 murders in 2012, 508 murders in 2009, 550 (record high) murders in 2008, 391 in 2007 out of a population of approximately 1.3 million people resident on both islands. (OSAC, 2013: 1)

The incidence of crime in Trinidad is not as high or as worrisome as that of their other CSME counterparts such as Jamaica. However, the island has experienced a continuous outflow of citizens during the early to mid-2000s due to increased crime rates. Boxill (2010) explains that countries in the Caribbean experience high rates of crime, and low levels of security; therefore he believes that these two variables have had a devastating impact on the development of these islands, particularly Guyana and Jamaica. Parkins (2010: 6), in her analysis of Jamaican migration and crime explains:

Over the last 30 years, the migration rates have increased substantially, with alarming rates in particular, of highly skilled individuals. My study suggests that both the direct and indirect effects of crime in general and violent crimes in particular, combined with suitable employment for the migrants' skill set, have forced some members of Jamaica's professional class to gravitate towards First World countries, taking their skill set which their home country has financed.

Citizens have now become accustomed to living in fear. Some who can afford it have opted to migrate internationally with their entire families; others have migrated with the intention of supporting their families back home and having family members join them when they can afford it. Presently, amidst the current crisis and social degradation created by an alarming crime rate in the Caribbean islands, there have been marked increases in international migratory patterns, especially among women.

Three of the main destinations for Caribbean migrants are the USA, Canada and Great Britain. Although examining migration patterns to Canada is beyond the scope of my study, it is noteworthy to mention that the North American continent has seen a greater number of Caribbean migrants than Great Britain in recent years. Pienkos (2006: 11) notes, 'Canada is a major destination for migrants from the Caribbean.' Migrants from Guyana and Jamaica account for the majority travelling to Canada, while these countries plus Trinidad and Tobago make up the majority of migrants who internationally migrate to the USA (ibid). Foner (2001), in her analysis of Caribbean migration, suggests that New York is one of the most sought-after destinations for Caribbean migrants. She writes:

Since 1965 more than half a million West Indians have moved to New York City – about twice the size of the population of the island of Barbados and five times the size of Grenada. If one puts together all the migrants from the Anglophone Caribbean, West Indians are the largest immigrant group in New York City. (Foner, 2001: 1)

Although Caribbean immigrants have prior expectations of what life will be like in the USA, they are realistic in their assumptions when compared to those travelling to Britain. Because of its close geographical proximity to the islands it is perceived as more attainable and realistic. Watkins-Owens (2001: 27) points out:

In spite of racial barriers the United States represented an opportunity to realize a future of otherwise impossible dreams. Many immigrants could be detached from and defiant about America – viewing it as someone else's country – while at the same time recognizing it as a place that offered a chance to overcome the severe economic constraints at home.

Migrants view America as attainable and believe that with hard work they can achieve more than they could in the Caribbean. Migration to Britain is viewed differently and is seen as superior to migration to the USA because it is geographically further. In terms of migration to the USA and Britain, Waters and Zukerman (2008) point out:

While the US has been a magnet for immigrants from many different countries, Britain drew most of its immigrants in the latter half of the 20$^{th}$ century from former colonies. The colonial legacy was quite important in shaping expectations among immigrants of full inclusion in the society and in shaping the immigration laws and bureaucratic directives that allowed people into the country. (Waters and Zukerman, 2008: 7–8)

Although there are many individuals leaving the islands to establish residence in North America and Europe, there are also those who are returning. Thus, there is a need to understand these different types of movement. The greatest and most significant type of movement, however, is outward international migration. According to Castilles and Miller (2003: 1), international migration is one of the defining features of the post-Cold War era, and constitutes a 'key dynamic within globalization'. It is important to note, from the views of Sassan (2005) and Castilles and Miller (2003), that international migration is of

global importance, impacting upon the cultural, political and economic landscape in every area of the globe.

> Immigration is one major process through which a new transnational political economy and trans-local household strategies are being constituted. It is one largely embedded in major cities insofar as these concentrate most immigrants, certainly in the developed world, whether in the United States, Japan, or Western Europe. It is, in my reading, one of the constitutive processes of globalization today, even though not recognized or represented as such in mainstream accounts of the global economy. (Sassen, 2005: 35)

As migration becomes ever more significant in a globalized world, types of movement also develop into an important issue. These types can be defined as extra-regional, intra-regional, rural, and urban migration. Trinidad and Tobago is an industrial island because of its profitable energy sector; therefore, those within the region see it as a destination for immigrant labour. In the island however, because of the ease with which passports and international visas are granted to citizens, many take up the option of emigrating, and nearly half of those who emigrate are women. Therefore, while there are increasing numbers of people from other islands living in Trinidad (intra-regional migration), citizens are opting to migrate internationally. Trinidad, like Jamaica, has seen the exodus of many professionals such as skilled nurses and teachers. This departure of skilled professionals was captured in journals and diasporic literature such as Levy's (2004) *Small Island*, Selvon's (1956) *The Lonely Londoners*, and Lamming's (1954) *The Emigrants*. International migration has resulted in the loss of both professional and unskilled labour. Although international migration has meant economic gain, the culture of migration and growing dependence has especially affected the sending country through the continuance of a brain drain of professionals and a care drain of those who care for the sick, elderly and children.

## Caribbean Women and Migration

During the post-emancipation period, men were more likely to migrate than women. Philpott (1973) explained that men voluntarily moved away in greater numbers from the plantations to start a new, independent life because they did not want to be viewed as owned property or a traded commodity; Philpott (1973) referred to this as 'migrant

ideology'. Duany (1994) highlighted the construction of the Panama Canal as a great attraction for many workers. Roberts (1981) mentioned the call for immigrant labour in the early twentieth century to work in the Cuban sugar industry. These jobs were mainly for men, thus there was little or no room for the migration of women. As early as the 1930s, the migration of Caribbean men was more common than that of Caribbean women because of the availability of opportunities for male-centred employment. Reid (1969: 81), in her analysis of Caribbean migration during the early 1930s, addressed the outnumbering of females by males in migration, saying:

> The ease with which males can cross borders, leave their occupations as seamen, and arrive surreptitiously by various devices, is much greater than among females. While statistical verification is not possible, there is every reason to believe that this factor accounts, in part at least, for the relatively unequal sex proportions indicated by the statistics of arrival.

In the past, family migration usually fell into a pattern of husband-pioneered movement to the host countries, with the rest of the family following later (Martin, 2007; Guyot, 1978). However, Kofman (2007) and Mirza (1997) noted that, historically, Caribbean women did indeed participate in migration but their economic and social contributions were rendered invisible. Migration during the latter part of the nineteenth century was seen as a way to improve one's position by gaining a better income through improved job opportunities. Unfortunately for women, these opportunities abroad focused centrally on men. Hence, the women were left behind to take care of their families. It was customary for Caribbean men in the 1900s to migrate first, finding suitable employment and obtaining sufficient finances to assist in bringing their wives and families for settlement later. Watkins-Owens (2001: 27) points out that migration was mostly for survival:

> Migration was necessary for family survival and was structured in favour of males, though women were always participants in the various movements. Many migrating women, even among 'the better labouring' and middle classes, came from backgrounds where women were socialized to support themselves and their children, often within a network of kin. Particularly in seafaring families women became accustomed to running household economic affairs and relying on each other for social life.

Migrating meant that, although women did participate in the movement, their roles were highly feminized. They usually took up roles that were seen as the 'woman's job', such as

caring for children and running the house. Women who migrated with their entire families did not have opportunities for employment outside of the home. More recently and in a different context, a study of Chinese women who migrated to the UK as 'trailing wives', Wei (2011) found that the husbands of participants migrated first and then wives followed. She explained that, before the arrival of their wives, the husbands would put everything in place for their families. The women, however, then found that their employment opportunities were limited to low-skilled, low paid work – even though most of them had professional careers in China.

During the latter part of the twentieth century, there was a change in the order of migration. Women were migrating in larger numbers in search of employment, especially women of African descent.[24] The movement was no longer sex selective; women as well as men were migrating. This was as a result of available work, such as nursing, teaching, domestic and care work. Labadie-Jackson (2008) highlights that women in the Caribbean have outnumbered men in terms of migration to North America since the 1950s. She suggests that this has been due to the participation of women in the tourism sector. Davison (1962) explains that women actively chose to migrate to seek employment opportunities, and were not simply wives following in their husbands' footsteps. Women were no longer viewed as trailing wives or daughters, but independent women seeking work to support their family, whom they left behind. The United Nations (2013) stated that, in 2012, at least 54 per cent of those emigrating from Trinidad and Tobago were female. Furthermore, Trinidad and Tobago, along with other nations of the Caribbean, has experienced an increase in international migration, especially among women (Pessar, 2005). Hence, the feminization of migration has emerged as a salient regional and global issue.

Bryan et al. (1985) pointed to the fact that many Caribbean women who migrated were unmarried and were migrating solely because the opportunities for a better job and financial security were greater. Brown (1997), Foner (2006) and Sives et al. (2006), observe that many women who migrate from Jamaica are employed as nurses or teachers.

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[24] In Trinidad, there was a notable difference between the migration patterns of Indo-Trinidadian women and Afro-Trinidadian women. Those of African descent travelled independently and alone in search of improved opportunity, while Indian women, because of the patriarchal roots of their family arrangements, tended to migrate permanently with their entire families (Gosine, 1986).

Heavily dependent on remittances, the Jamaican economy has experienced a great economic push from the finances received from the out-migration of nurses and other professional women and this has aided in the development of small businesses within the country (Chevannes and Ricketts, 1997). While this has helped Jamaican development in terms of unemployment rates and remittances, problems have also surfaced over the years in terms of a brain drain and losing skilled labour for the delivery of health and educational services. As Sives et al. (2006: 2) explain:

> Specific concerns about the migration of teachers and health workers have been partly driven by the development of organized mass campaigns to recruit teachers and nurses, particularly by developed countries, most notably the United States and England.

There has been relatively little change in the factors motivating women to leave the island from the early twentieth century to the present day. One such factor is employment; Watkins-Owens (2001) in her analysis of Caribbean women in the 1900s explains: 'Unemployment was behind the movement of many skilled and semiskilled female workers from some countries' (Watkins-Owens, 2001: 28). Phizacklea (2003: 34) points out, 'relieving poverty at home, building a better future for their children and escaping from unsatisfactory marriages are just some of the motivational factors for migrating.' Based on several push factors, greater numbers of women are taking up the option of extra-regional migration. They are also undertaking jobs that are stereotypically 'female'.

The loss of professionals has raised questions in many Caribbean islands, and especially in Jamaica, about the delivery of local services and the impact of development in these sectors. The push of lower wages, poorer working conditions, lack of employability and a degree of inequality of opportunity has been motivational in the migration of female professionals. For some women in the Caribbean, migration is not one of many options but the only option available to them for self-advancement. While it has been pointed out by Brown (2006) and Chevannes and Ricketts (1997) that many women undertake skilled work such as teaching and nursing, unskilled workers also choose to emigrate. Lambadie-Jackson (2008: 75) argues:

> Domestic labour opportunities often present an attractive option because they do not require high skills, wages are higher than the salaries earned in the home

countries, and sometimes a large share can be remitted to family members. Thus, in the international labour market many poor women choose to immigrate to a foreign country to become domestic workers, even though some of them have better qualifications than the work requires.

It is observed that women from the Caribbean, Latin America and the Philippines have been associated primarily with undertaking domestic work in the USA (Lambadie-Jackson, 2008). Because of the illegal status of many of these domestic workers it is difficult to obtain accurate statistics on their numbers within more developed countries. Not all Caribbean women, however, migrate illegally, especially not more skilled women. Whether skilled or unskilled, women have found various ways over the years of utilizing labour migration, not only to advance themselves but also to enrich the lives of their families.

## Family and Migration

Pottinger and Brown (2006), identify four forms of Caribbean migration that may impact on the family

> 1) Commonly, parents will migrate for up to 6 months at a time to work in the host/receiving country (seasonal migration); 2) Parents will migrate either singly or together with the intention of sending for the rest of their family at a later date (serial migration); 3) Parents will migrate for a defined time or indefinitely but have no intention of having their children live in the overseas country (parental migration); 4) Parents will migrate with their family (family migration). (Pottinger and Brown, 2006: 1)

Usually, Caribbean and Latin American studies of migration show that parents leave their children in the care of other family members with the promise of supporting and sending for them or returning to support them at a later date (Crawford-Brown and Rattray, 1994; Suarez-Orozco et al., 2002). Migration and family in the Caribbean have taken on a unique character. Because of the Caribbean's already distinctive familial arrangements, migration has acted as a means to promote further changes to family types and arrangements. For people outside the Caribbean, it is difficult to understand the reasons compelling a parent, and especially a mother, to leave her infant child and migrate. According to Pottinger and Brown (2006: 1):

> Caribbean people have always been a migrant population and historically have used migration as an economic tool for progressing in life. Their decision to migrate is based on the belief that a mother will do anything to let her children have a better life. A parent who migrates and leaves her children behind therefore could be lauded by society.

The migration of parents has a great impact on familial arrangements within the Caribbean. Studies suggest that the practice of child shifting is prominent, whereby a network is created between relatives in order to take care of the child(ren). Child shifting may result in the temporary or permanent movement of the child between various relatives (Evans and Davies, 1997; Senior, 1991). Child shifting has been said to be more common among lower-class families and especially among Afro-Trinidadians (Rodman 1971; Senior 1991) It is also not a common practice for the entire family to migrate internationally. Crawford-Brown and Rattray (2002) suggest that migrating together as a family is more common among 'middle-class' families. The parent will first make a decision to migrate and then the family will either follow after or they will be supported until the parent returns. The practice of children being cared for by absent parents is termed 'barrel children'.[25] Bakker et al. (2009: 14) claim that:

> Children who have been left behind as well as migrant children are placed in a particularly vulnerable situation affecting their psychosocial well-being and educational performance. They are at a higher risk and more vulnerable to abuse, neglect and exploitation including sexual abuse, child labour and trafficking. Many children left behind suffer from depression, abandonment and low self-esteem that can result in behaviour problems, such as engaging in violence and crime or running away from home.

It is a general notion that the children who are left behind belong to the most vulnerable group in society. The international migration of parents is often seen as having an impact on the behavioural patterns of the child (Suarez-Orozco, 2002). Moreover, not only in the Caribbean region but also in South and East Asia and Latin America, the impact of feminized migration on the family and children left behind has been a much-debated

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[25] Crawford-Brown and Rattray (2002) refer to barrel children as those who would normally receive a barrel of goods filled with care products from their migrant parents.

area.[26] It is suggested that the impact of parental migration on children can have an overwhelming effect on their personal development. Bakker et al. (2009) claim in their study that children left behind are sometimes neglected or abandoned by their parents and may have a greater propensity to fall into the most vulnerable groups within society. They assert:

> While remittances are significant for the majority of households in Caribbean countries, increasing evidence is showing that migration has profound negative impacts on the family, and even more on the child in particular. (Bakker et al., 2009: 14)

Conversely, other studies have shown that possible remittances help with the budget of a household and increase the educational opportunities of the child, improve health care and in some countries lead to a decrease in child labour (Alcaraz et al., 2012; Yang, 2008). It has been found that parental migration has a mixed impact on the child, with both positive and negative effects. It has been observed that 'barrel children' experience a better standard of living in terms of material gifts from their parents but may lack the love and care of their parents that is important in to their psychosocial development. Pottinger (2005) suggests that the schoolwork of such children in transnational families can be affected because they may assume the attitude that they are waiting to migrate with their parents.

It may not, however, be separation from parents that affects children. If they are relatively content with living with relatives in their home country, it may be reunification with their mothers in a new country that causes them problems. This possibility is considered by Phoenix and Seu (2013). They undertook research using a psychosocial approach to understanding narratives of Caribbean women negotiating daughterhood and strangerhood in a new country to which daughters move to be reunited with their mothers. They might then find themselves in a conflictual relationship because of the loss of known others and places they have left behind. If the separation is relatively short and the child understands the reasons for their mother leaving, this may not be a problem, as in the case of one of Phoenix and Seu's participants, Cheryl, who describes a joyful reunion with her mother despite the potential stress of travelling alone to join her and there being no one to meet her

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[26] It is also the case (though less often recognized) that changing gender roles in the families of migrants affect not only women but also men (See Lin, 2010).

at the airport on arrival. In this case the separation had lasted only a year, Cheryl had a close relationship with her mother and was old enough at 8 or 9 to understand why her mother had to leave to find a new life. Cheryl's story is contrasted with that of another participant, Nanny. Whereas Cheryl, glosses over being alone at the airport to focus on her happy reunion with her mother, Nanny describes a similar situation as much more traumatic. She was much younger, could not even remember what her mother looked like and did not recognise her when she finally arrived to collect her. For Nanny the people she loved had been left behind and she found herself with a stranger. One key point Phoenix and Seu make is the importance of context in how people reconstruct memories of such transitions in their childhood and possible psychological consequences for them. This suggests we should be wary of making generalisations about the effects of parental migration on children.

Studies on migration[27] have been documented around the region with the main focus being on the feminization of migrant skilled workers from the Caribbean.[28] While there is a growing literature in the study of the 'brain drain', very little research has been done on the care drain in a Trinidadian context. The ideas of a care drain and global care chains in developing countries have been issues that are viewed as problematic for families in the sending country (Hochschild, 2005; Yeates, 2008). Migrant mothers are usually depicted as having abandoned their children. There is a growing body of literature contributing to the numerous accounts of the psychosocial and other resultant impacts that the migration of parents has had on children. Studies done by Bakker et al. (2009), Antman (2012), Adhikar et al. (2013), Pottinger and Brown (2006), Jokhan (2007) and Rossi (2008) have all discussed the impact of parental migration on children.

Batista et al. (2007) found in Cape Verde that greater migration prospects at the individual level increase the probability of completing intermediate secondary school; this shows a positive relationship between the education of children and the international migration of parents. While studies on the impact of parental migration on children have recorded

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[27] Migration has always been a prominent feature in population studies in the region encompassing research done on Jamaican nurses (see Brown, 1997) and many other studies focusing on migration by: Frucht (1968), Maingot (1999), Wyss (2004), Chevannes and Ricketts (1997), Pessar (1997) and Jokhan (2008).

[28] These studies focused on specific countries, e.g. Jamaica. Jokhan's study examined parental migration in Trinidad, but looked at the effects of this on the development of the child. Also some studies examine migration in a wider context investigating the entire Caribbean. There is also a gap in the literature explaining migration of women in the Caribbean and how it affects them.

diverse outcomes ranging from negative to positive, it is safe to say that the outcomes strongly depend on the country of analysis (Beine et al., 2011). Separation does not only affect the child alone. Parents will usually feel a sense of loss, or depression because they have left their child (Pottinger and Brown, 2006; Suarez-Orozco, Todorova and Louie, 2002). When critically examining the literature presented, it can be seen that the decision to migrate is a huge one, most of the time solely weighing on the shoulders of the parent(s). The decision to take up residence internationally affects the entire family, not only in terms of living and working arrangements but it also has a great impact on the mental and emotional well being of the individuals involved as well. The process of migration has reordered the family, as we know it. As highlighted earlier in terms of child shifting, the phenomenon of grandparents, uncles and aunts raising children, and in some cases even the presence of sibling households, have all been a major result of parental migration. Families have felt the pressures of migration by losing loved ones but have gained a stronger sense of material stability.

## Researching Migration: A Feminist Standpoint

According to the United Nations (2013), 232 million people, or 3.2 per cent of the world's population, were international migrants in 2012. In 1990 154 million people were international migrants, but by 2000 the figure was 175 million. Thus a growing number of people are now residing outside their country of birth. The UN (2013) also pointed out that women account for 48 per cent of all international migrants; this means that approximately half of those migrating internationally are women. The number of women living outside their country of birth renders this study very timely. In conducting this research, I have attempted to employ a gendered approach to understanding migration. Often, women are taken for granted in the migration process and studies tend to be male-stream.

Staab (2004: 8) points out that: 'Migration of women has its own unique features and consequences that distinguish it from the migration of men.' In previous studies, the gender of migrants is often overlooked, and is not given any significance or importance in the study, except possibly as a variable. According to Boyd and Grieco (2003), there is a great tendency in the study of migration to 'add women, mix and stir' to the mainstream theoretical frameworks. However, with the growth of female migration, as pointed out by

the UN, it is becoming clear that women and men travel for various reasons and the conditions under which they travel are different.

Within the Asian continent, research and literature discussing the migration of women has emerged over the past few years (see Oishi, 2005; Constable, 1997; Lan, 2006; Wei, 2011). Additionally, within the Latin American region, some studies devoted to women's migration include Keefe (2002), Aravena (2002), Liao (2012), and Del Cid (2011). These two regions contribute the highest rates of migration in the world; therefore, there is an increasing amount of literature dedicated to the study of migration from these regions. However, little has been done specifically targeting the Caribbean and particularly Trinidad and Tobago. Werbner (1995) points out that research, especially sociological research, on migration has often overlooked women and has assumed that they were dependent on their husbands for economic and social support. Researching migration from a feminist standpoint bridges many gaps, it conveys and solidifies the many differences that exist between women and men, where the woman is not depicted as a dependent daughter or trailing wife, but is viewed as an independent agent. Hondagneu-Sotelo (1994: 3) explains:

> Gender is not simply a variable to be measured, but a set of social relations that organize immigration patterns. The task, then, is not simply to document or highlight the presence of undocumented women who have settled in the U.S., or to ask the same questions of immigrant women that are asked of immigrant men, but to begin with an examination of how gender relations facilitate or constrain both women's and men's immigration and settlement.

In order to develop a gender-oriented approach to the study of migration, we need to be aware that there are undoubtedly fundamental differences in investigating the experiences of women and men. These differences should be explained in the context of understanding, firstly, that the contemporary study of migration should do more than adding gender as a variable to explain current trends within international migration. The importance of a gendered approach to migration is also seen as pivotal to the understanding of current international migration trends and development, according to research conducted by the UN (2006). This document explains:

> It is important to understand the causes and consequences of international migration from a gender perspective. A gender perspective avoids the dangers of

treating women's migration as a special case and/or as deviant from men's migration, and highlights women as agents of change throughout the migration process. At the same time, the concept of gender also directs attention beyond noting similarities and differences to emphasizing how the experiences of women and men in the migration process are often based on and perpetuate gender inequality. Increased understanding of the situation of migrant women should lead to concrete policies, programmes and actions to mitigate such inequalities and promote gender equality for migrant women. (United Nations, 2006: 14)

The very nature of international migration can be disadvantageous to women and this should not be overlooked. Morokvasic (1984) and Pedraza (1991) note that migrant women tend to be segregated into traditional 'female' occupations, such as domestic/care work, service work or garment manufacturing. Morokvasic (1984) explains that, because of the undocumented or illegal status of women, they find themselves in industries occupying the lowest stratum in receiving countries. Most importantly, jobs undertaken by women tend to be stigmatized as 'female, unskilled, semi skilled, low paid.' Therefore, there is a tendency for them to be underpaid and to be further exploited within the workplace. These underlying factors make the gendered approach to migration studies extremely significant because it shows that the experiences of work, travel, earnings, and settlement are all-important differences and should be highlighted through further research. As further emphasized by the United Nations Report (2006):[29]

> The migration of women has always been an important component of international migration. As of 2000, 49 percent of all international migrants were women or girls, and the proportion of females among international migrants had reached fifty one percent in more developed regions. A gender perspective is essential to understand both the causes and consequences of international migration. Gender inequality can be a powerful factor in precipitating migration when women have economic, political and social expectations that opportunities at home do not meet. Migration can be an empowering experience for women. In the process of international migration, women may move away from situations where they live under traditional, patriarchal authority to situations where they are empowered to exercise greater autonomy over their own lives. Women who remain behind when their husbands or children migrate often have to take on new roles and assume responsibility for decisions affecting the social and economic well being of their households. (United Nations, 2006: iii)[30]

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[29] A later report shared by the United Nations as referenced earlier shows that there was a slight decrease in migration among women from 49 percent in 20xx to 48 percent in 2013.

[30] For a more in-depth understanding of the growing importance of women in international migration see, '2004 World Survey on the Role of Women in Development: Women and International Migration,' United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2006).

It can be seen that a gendered perspective on international migration is required in order to understand the nature of female migration because of the varying effects migration has on the women themselves, their families, the economy and society they have left and the one in which they currently reside. It is no secret that women and children have been amongst the most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups in society; therefore, it is safe to assume that the migration experiences of women will be dissimilar from those of men. There are so many facets of international migration that, when explored, reveal opposing outcomes for men and women. In many cases, including this research, it is noted that the majority of migrant women tend to gravitate towards certain types of work, and that the sexual division of labour is very much alive among immigrant women in the workplace.

The calls for a gendered approach to international migration also seek to address the various issues surfacing from the experiences of these female immigrants. It should not be taken for granted that, within an era of technology and globalization, the process of female immigration is being examined. The vulnerability of women has not changed whether we are examining women's incorporation into society in the receiving country or their incorporation into the workplace. Little is being done by governments through policy or programmes to help women because of the lack of attention given to this area. Therefore, investigating migration as it relates to women not only contributes to the academic theorizing of the migration of women but also addresses the various areas of concern relating to government intervention and aid.

## Conclusion

My aim is to look critically at why and how women emigrate from Trinidad and Tobago and the consequences of this migration. In surveying various theories of migration I have found many of them insufficient to explain this multi-dimensional occurrence. I have also emphasized the need for a gendered approach to migration because of the obvious differences between men and women's experiences.

International migration has become increasingly feminized and a call for a gender centred approach is needed to articulate the differences and particularities of women's migration. Furthermore, women have become major agents of change in their countries especially in developing countries. Globalization has made it increasingly possible for women to access greater opportunities outside their countries of birth. What has emerged is a need to understand what motivates the migration of women and why migration has become increasingly feminized. Culturally, in the West Indies it was once typically men who migrated first and then sent for their wives or daughters after settlement or provided care for them in the home country. However, presently there has been a major shift to this movement, which underlines the importance of understanding why women migrate and how they negotiate their family ties and responsibilities before, during and after settling in a new country. The way in which I went about developing this research, the sampling method utilized and the methods of data collection that were employed will be discussed in the next chapter.

# Chapter Three
# Researching Trinidadian Women Migrants

One of the key features of qualitative research is the exploration of everyday realities within their context and finding meaning in what is said and observed. As a feminist I wanted this study to focus on women's own experiences and views of migration and the consequences it had for them. A feminist approach differs from other methodological approaches in three ways:

> It actively seeks to remove the power imbalance between researcher and subject; it is politically motivated and has a major role in changing social inequality; and it begins with the standpoints and experiences of women. (Brayton et al., 1997: 1)

My primary reason for undertaking this study was to give Trinidadian migrant women a platform to share their stories of migration. My feminist approach helped me to relate and understand the lives of participants. Additionally, this approach embraces a perspective from which: 'women's experiences, ideas and needs (different and differing as they may be) are valid in their own right, and androcentricity, man-as-the-norm stops being the only recognised frame of reference for human beings' (Jayaratne, 1983: 89). Mies (1993) argues that quantitative research subdues the voices of women either by overlooking them or by plunging them into a torrent of facts and statistics. Therefore, my study adopted a qualitative approach. Since it focused on examining 'how' and 'why', interviews were conducted in order to gain a clear understanding of women's accounts of migration within their socio-cultural context.

Qualitative research data yields descriptive information that places emphasis on the experiences of those being studied. The purpose of qualitative research is to gain insight into peoples' attitudes, behaviours, value systems, concerns, motivations, aspirations, cultures and lifestyles, in my study those of women migrants. According to Gorman and Clayton (1997: 23), 'the ultimate goal of qualitative research is to understand those being studied from their perspective.' This was my desire from the beginning. My aim was to add to the understanding of women's migration from the Caribbean and in the context of Caribbean cultural practices. As Blumer (1969) argues, undertaking studies using qualitative methods allows the researcher to stay close to the empirical world. This is in

keeping with a feminist approach. For feminists, research is best undertaken through qualitative means as it reveals the social reality of individuals. Stanley and Wise (1990) outlined what they termed five sites in the research process of feminism. These are: the recognition of emotion as a research experience; the intellectual autobiography of researchers, who bring their own values and particular dispositions to the research experience; the management of the differing realities and understandings of the researcher and the researched; the complex question of power in research and writing, including questions of who owns the data; and the extent to which respondent validation should influence publication and dissemination. My aim in undertaking this type of research was to adhere (to the best of my ability) to these stipulations. As a feminist researcher, my purpose was not to exploit those participating as lab rats, as simply a means to an end, but to listen and document their stories about their lives while working to remain as impartial as possible. I understood that participants were the key to unlocking the area of concern in this research; therefore, I attempted to document what they were saying as closely as possible.

In choosing a methodology to guide this research, I did not work haphazardly. Careful consideration went into the process of choosing the best fit for studying this area. For Ramazanoglu (2004), there are many guiding questions that the researcher must ask themselves when undertaking feminist research. During the early stages of my PhD studies, I asked myself some of these questions and this acted as the starting point to actually understanding the direction of my study. Some of the questions were: How unique is this study? Is the research population entirely women? Is this significant? Is the gendered nature of social life accounted for in the framing of the 'problem'? Are my methods appropriate and sensitive to the gendered nature of the context? (Ramazanoglu, 2004). Having asked myself these questions, I was a little more assured of my decision to use qualitative methodology in order to access the subjective understanding of women as social actors. Since my aim was to understand why women emigrate from the island, the interviews I conducted were centred solely on women. More specifically I was interested in why women migrate to more developed countries of the North (specifically, Great Britain and the United States). Hence, I decided to gather a sample for my study focusing on women who had migrated to these countries.

It was my intention to build a relationship with these women, not just gather random information as a means to an end for research purposes only. Therefore, I wanted to understand the implications of migration for their lives as individuals. My main goal was to discover why they had made the decision to leave their country of birth and the implications of this decision for their lives and the lives of their families. After developing an understanding of what my aim was in this research, I started to slowly develop my plans for fieldwork. I wanted to look separately at women's migration from the island to Europe and North America; hence, I began looking for women from both countries to interview. In this chapter I will give an outline of my research strategy, fieldwork and analysis. This will entail describing how I went about gaining my sample, how I conducted interviews. I will discuss the process of designing my questions, building rapport and how I gathered data and most importantly some of the problems I faced while conducting research. Finally I will discuss the process of transcribing and analysing my data.

## Research Design

The aim of this investigation was not to yield large amounts of statistical data, but to convey the various experiences and capture the -individual stories of women who emigrate from Trinidad and Tobago. Therefore, the sample that was needed to complete the research would not be a big one. I did, however, plan to try to recruit a diverse sample: women who had migrated to the USA and UK with a range of different family circumstances and migration experiences. I hoped that I would find women who were able and willing to share their stories with me about their experiences as immigrants. My interest in this particular topic influenced the way in which intended to collect data; I was concerned with depicting the issue of migration from a first-hand perspective in order to contribute to an understanding of this phenomenon from women's particular perspectives. When I considered the kind of questions I would need to ask women, the general idea was to collect as much data as possible about the lives of women leaving Trinidad to settle in the United States and Great Britain. Patton (2002) enumerated some of the options in designing questions for conducting interviews, which might include: experience and behaviour, opinions and values, feelings, timeframe and knowledge, all of which I attempted to incorporate when designing my interview guide.

To enable my study to yield the most reliable data, while capturing the experiences of the women, I planned to ask open-ended questions in the interviewing process. Patton (2002: 4) explains that: 'Open-ended questions and probes yield in depth responses about people's experiences, perceptions, opinions, feelings, and knowledge. Data consist of verbatim quotations with sufficient context to be interpretable.' This was what I hoped to achieve. It was my intention to elicit a detailed account of their lives, or as much as they were willing to offer. I understood that some women would be more open than others in sharing their stories. I was aware that questions might have to be asked differently to various participants, in terms of their responses to me and that this might affect way in which I structured the interview. I therefore needed an interview guide that would be flexible enough to cover the issues I wanted to explore but not limit the conversation to a set number or order of questions. This subject of migration has always been one that has affected me personally, since it had been part of my own life. I considered that this vested interest and the passion I have for this topic might prove to be a problem, especially during the fieldwork process. One of the major rules of collecting valid data for research is that the researcher should maintain rapport with participants but at the same time remain unbiased and not driven by emotions. Emotions tend to cloud the judgement of the researcher and usually distort the data analysis. I did not want to be guided by emotions or to put ideas in the minds of participants about what they should say and how they should say it. Rather, I wanted to hear about their experiences in their own words and help them find their voices and share their opinions.

The interview guide I developed was broken up into examining three major themes: First, it was designed to cover the decision-making process, which examines the 'why' factor concerning migration, and 'how' factor of the settling and adjustment stages. The second theme was intended to address the 'how' factor concerning the effects of migration on the women themselves and their families. The final theme focused on the present life of migrants, comparing the experiences of Caribbean women in Britain and the USA. These themes served as guides to the questions that I would ask in the interviews. The table shows the three major themes of the study and some of the sub-themes generated from these.

**Table Two: Interview Guide: Themes and Sub-themes**

| Themes | Sub-Topics |
|---|---|
| International Migration Decision Making *(Why women emigrate)* | Interviewee's decision to migrate and her background and lifestyle in Trinidad. Time since migration. Whether migrated alone? Educational and Career background. Family attachments and their consequences for decision-making. Main reasons for migration, choice to leave and choice of destination country |
| Settling in Stage/ Fitting into a New Environment *(How has this impacted on their lives and families?)* | Implications of migration on their lives, Emotional consideration, Impact of migration on families. Influence on career/aspirations/achievements/lifestyle. Difficulties/Challenges settling in. Benefits and drawbacks of migration. |
| Present Life (Comparing Immigration to the UK and the USA) | Present life in Britain and the USA. Description of new life. Consideration of success. Regrets. Future plans. Intention of returning |

I planned to begin the interviews by focusing on questions about why women migrated to foreign countries in order to understand why they felt the need or desire to move from their country of birth to reside in another. Another important question I wanted answered was whether or not they had children or a husband whom they left behind This was important to know as it would help in structuring the questions that I would subsequently ask about the impact of international migration on their individual lives and on its consequences for their families. Asking about their current lives, which I expected to be towards the end of the interview would, I hoped, give them an opportunity to reflect on what they had gained and lost in the process of migration.

Having designed my interview guide and obtained ethical clearance for my research, I was ready to enter the field. My initial fieldwork began in November 2013, which was when I

began to learn of some of the problems facing a novice researcher. My first challenge was to recruit participants.

## Obtaining Participants

In conducting research, a researcher always faces difficulties. No research is perfect or free from its share of pitfalls and shortcomings. Careful planning of the research process may limit some of the problems that may occur, but unforeseen complications are likely to arise in the field itself. When dealing with people and social situations, the researcher may find that she is in uncontrollable situations; this was undeniably the case with my research. In this section, I will give a more detailed account of how I went about identifying my sample, the way in which I located women to participate in my study, the channels I used to recruit these women and the problems I faced in finding women willing to participate. It is obvious that when conducting research it is impractical to study an entire population; hence, a sample is necessary. The method I employed was purposive sampling. [31] Problems arose when pondering the size of my sample: when should I start and stop? Patton (2002: 244) points out that:

> There are no rules for sample size in qualitative inquiry. Sample size depends on what you want to know, the purpose of the inquiry, what's at stake, what will be useful, what will have credibility, and what can be done with available time and resources.

Understanding this, I realized that my sample size was influenced by time, money and the availability of participants. Additionally, another factor influencing my sample size was that I had to know when to stop interviewing. Usually in qualitative interviewing this is when 'data saturation' is achieved, which is impossible to anticipate.[32] Furthermore, in order to correctly represent and relate the stories and experiences of women, I could not humanly take on more than I could handle. The parameters of the sample were determined

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[31] For Yin (2011: 88): 'The goal or purpose for selecting the specific study units is to have those that will yield the most relevant and plentiful data, given your topic of study.' Furthermore, Patton writes: 'the logic and power of purposeful sampling lie in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry, thus the term purposeful sampling' (Patton, 2002: 230).

[32] I did, once in the field, know when to stop. This was because, when I did find interviewees, I received an overwhelming amount of information and the interviews were particularly lengthy.

by two main considerations: I had to obtain a sample that was all women, and these women had to be migrants who had left Trinidad and Tobago to reside in the United States or Great Britain. Since this topic had always interested me and I had studied it as an undergraduate, I had an idea of what I needed to do in terms of obtaining a sample, or so I believed. In retrospect, I see now that I was rather over-confident in my abilities as a researcher. Undoubtedly I learnt that passion (by itself) for a particular area of research does not by any means result in a study without difficulties; the actual undertaking of fieldwork is an entirely different matter.

It was my intention to obtain a sizeable sample and to conduct in-depth interviews to gain an understanding of the lives of migrant women leaving Trinidad and Tobago.[33] Easy enough on paper, difficult in execution. I started the process of gaining a sample early on in my PhD studies; however, upon further advice from my supervisor and the ethics committee I began to look for participants outside of my immediate family to gain a more descriptive sample.[34] Intermediaries are important when collecting data and obtaining an appropriate sample in qualitative research. At the beginning, when I sent out correspondence to potential participants,[35] my aim was to recruit as many women as I could in the shortest period of time. However, corresponding through email was an entirely different situation from actually meeting the women and undertaking interviews. The intermediaries I initially used to recruit women were friends of my family who were migrants themselves residing (now legally) in the United States. I attempted to first identify and obtain a sample of immigrant women from the United States before I could even attempt to look at women in Great Britain. This was because my contacts were stronger in the United States, and I wanted to start my study at a point where I felt most confident, which I expected to be easier.

I choose to conduct interviews in Trinidad rather than in the USA because it was more cost effective. I could not afford to travel from the UK to the USA so I decided that I would

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[33] Data collection took roughly five months to complete.
[34] Immediate family members were not used in this study. However, friends of family members were used. The experiences of family members were also taken into consideration when theorizing about the topic so that I could get a clearer understanding of the phenomenon.
[35] I was in correspondence with a gatekeeper (Harris Green) and organizations (some of which were not used in this study) months in advance of officially collecting the data that was used for this investigation. Data was not officially collected at that time. This was because I hadn't yet sought ethical clearance to carry out research. However, a rapport was created, links were made, and relationships were formed and maintained in order for it to be easier for me to gain entry when the time was right to undertake fieldwork.

undertake interviews in Trinidad. Additionally, I had few contacts with individuals or organizations that could help me in the UK or the USA and I was convinced that forming relationships with new contacts would be time consuming. I anticipated that if I experienced problems in my home country I could easily resolve them through my personal connections. The original intention was to conduct interviews only with women from the USA returning to Trinidad on holiday, but ultimately my contacts also put me in touch with UK residents too.[36] By the end of my fieldwork I gained sufficient information from those who had migrated to both the UK and the USA, but the process of finding these women was far more difficult than I had expected.

I initially contacted a number of interested women through personal networks, since those agreed to be interviewed and lend assistance saw it as a favour to family members and friends. Letters were emailed prior to interviews, and a relationship was formed. I provided information and individuals promised to give consent and take part in the interview process. Initially, while I was in contact via email with potential participants, organizing travelling dates and potential interviews there were about nine interested women; however, upon my arrival in Trinidad, I was only able to interview four women. The times chosen to undertake interviews were during the Christmas holidays and the carnival season.[37] These two periods experience the greatest influx of tourists and many individuals living overseas return to the islands to visit with family. It was because I knew there would be many women returning home to visit families during Christmas and Carnival that I decided to conduct my fieldwork in Trinidad at those times. However, in planning ahead of my trip, I did not anticipate the difficulty I would have in arranging to meet these women, agreeing on mutual times and places, or the time they would need to fully consent to being interviewed. The fact that it was a holiday period made things difficult. At Christmas participants were busy with family and during Carnival they were high on the euphoria of the party atmosphere created in the islands. This meant that many interviews were cancelled and rescheduling was difficult. People who had been initially interested in sharing their stories were now uninterested and no longer wished to participate in the

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[36] I did not anticipate gaining participants from the UK in Trinidad. However, on hearing that I needed participants, I received information of one or two women willing to participate. Then, the numbers of participants increased and I decided to work on a sample of women from the UK and undertake follow-up work with them in the UK. However, follow-up work was not required.

[37] The carnival season in Trinidad and Tobago is the most celebrated holiday in the islands and experiences the highest rates of tourism for the year. It lasts for two days (Monday and Tuesday) and is usually observed in the month of February. However, in 2014 it was celebrated on the 3rd and 4th of March.

process. Time proved to be a great problem for both parties; participants who offered their time and assistance prior to my visit to Trinidad were not able to participate and, as I would soon learn, lack of time was also a major drawback for me in gathering data, which took far longer than I had anticipated.

In theory, obtaining a sample should be easy; in actuality, networking to find willing participants was difficult and the procedure left me a bit despondent at first. Recognizing that I was in a great deal of trouble, upon the advice of my supervisor I decided to look elsewhere. I initially used a family friend as my main source for gaining participants and thought I could snowball from there. But this was wishful thinking on my part and I had to use all the contacts I had to gain access to women who had the characteristics I was looking for and was willing to participate. The most difficult part of this research was the fact that, in my planning, I did not actually plot my schedule properly and haphazardly went out into the field like a headless chicken. Luckily for me I was in my home country so it was easy to network and contact other groups who might be able to assist me. After experiencing disappointment in my first attempt to recruit women who were willing to participate, I recognized the need to broaden my scope and not put all my eggs in one basket.

Fortunately, I have always been part of many religious and non-governmental organizations in my country. These organizations have a history of assisting women with various issues ranging from domestic violence, homelessness and illness to skills training. Consequently, I used these contacts to find women who would be able to participate in my study. I systematically chose organizations that I knew would be willing not only to assist me but those which could yield a sample that would be relevant to my area of research. I made a list of all the possible people and institutions I could approach and then began a process of shortlisting, in which I chose the most feasible avenues in terms of time, money, distance, availability, helpfulness and dependability. The process of shortlisting was followed by a period of phone calling and pleading and, to my surprise; I received promising feedback from five of the organizations that I contacted. However, I chose three to use for this study because they worked at a much faster rate to offer me their assistance and support. I used a high school, a religious organization (church), and a non-governmental organization. Teaming up with organizations gave me access to a large

number of women, to most of whom I sent out correspondence via email. However, as in any research, most emails went unanswered, and I felt like a rejected telemarketer.

Ultimately, however, the response rate from this source was much more encouraging. Communication flowed because I had a more secure and familiar relationship with some of the individuals within these organizations. When I eventually began to obtain a sample, a snowball effect occurred where one person led me to another. Some of the women I interviewed mentioned my study to other women and I gradually gained more participants. Although I had been despondent and almost ready to give up on the research when it seemed as if women were unwilling to participate, when the times were brighter and I met with women who were interested enough to contribute, it reminded me of the warmth of the Caribbean and how welcoming islanders could be, making my research worthwhile and giving me the confidence to plough ahead.

Also, in gaining access to some organizations and institutions, the importance of a gatekeeper was acknowledged. In order to increase my trustworthiness in some circles and to be accepted as a credible researcher, I needed someone to vouch for me so that I could undertake social research. As a citizen of Trinidad and Tobago, I am familiar with the customs and culture, therefore it was easier for me to bounce back from and find alternative means of obtaining a sample. However, utilizing these means (organizations/institutions) proved to be more tedious a task than I first anticipated. Having been a part of these organizations and institutions prior to undertaking my studies in England, I did not find it difficult to go to these institutions, create a rapport and use networks in order to recruit help. Figure 5 shows the routes that were used to obtain participants.

**Figure 5: Links Between Research and Participants**

*(Gatekeeper: Harriet)*
o    Non-Governmental Organization ⟶ Pearl (62)
Sally (33)
Callie (39)
Bella (30)
Leah (29)
Farah (45)
Deena (36)
Hayley (43)

*(Gatekeeper: Irene)*
o    Educational Institution ⟶ Iris (42)
Pauline (40)
Joy (31)
Rose (44)
Celia (48)

⟶ Lily (38)
Cece (38)
Hilda (43)

*(Gatekeeper: Gerri)*
o    Religious Organization ⟶ Jamie (32)
Roselyn (45)
Cindy (39)
Lisa (54)

⟶ Renee (49)

*(Family Friend)*
o    Intermediary Harris ⟶ Kathleen (35)
Kay (29)
Reese (29)
Cayla (27)

The women I was eventually able to interview came from a variety of backgrounds. Shown in table 3 is information pertaining to the age, race, occupation and education of participants. For the sake of this study, and in keeping with the code of ethics, I will not be using the real names of participants in order to maintain their anonymity.  The ages of these women ranged from late twenties to early sixties with the median age being thirty-nine. I was able to obtain fifteen participants from the United States of America and ten

from Great Britain. Thirteen women were of Indo- Trinidadian descent while twelve were of Afro-Trinidadian descent. I realized during these interviews that women who migrated to Great Britain undertook skilled or professional jobs while those who left for the United States were mostly care and domestic workers. Some women had migrated for as little as two years while others had lived in destination countries for as long as thirty-eight years, the median years spent abroad was eleven.

**Table Three: Characteristics of Participants (Country of Residence, Years Migrated, Age, Occupation, Race)**

| Pseudonym | Country | Years Abroad | Age | Occupation | Race |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Jamie | USA | 3 | 32 | Domestic Worker | Indo-Trinidad |
| Roselyn | USA | 9 | 45 | Special Education Teacher | Indo-Trinidad |
| Lisa | USA | 23 | 54 | Live-in Maid | Indo-Trinidad |
| Cindy | UK | 11 | 39 | Care Worker/Nurse | Afro-Trinidad |
| Kathleen | USA | 14 | 35 | Domestic Worker | Indo-Trinidad |
| Kay | USA | 6 | 29 | Domestic Worker | Indo-Trinidad |
| Reese | USA | 4 | 29 | Domestic Worker | Indo-Trinidad |
| Cayla | USA | 4 | 27 | Baby Sitter | Indo-Trinidad |
| Celia | UK | 23 | 48 | Nurse | Afro-Trinidad |
| Iris | UK | 16 | 42 | Secondary School Teacher | Afro-Trinidad |
| Pauline | USA | 4 | 40 | Domestic Worker | Afro-Trinidad |
| Joy | USA | 3 | 31 | Domestic Worker | Indo-Trinidad |
| Rose | UK | 15 | 44 | Teacher | Indo-Trinidad |
| Lily | UK | 11 | 38 | Nurse | Afro-Trinidad |
| Cece | UK | 15 | 38 | Nurse | Afro-Trinidad |

| Hilda | UK | 6 | 43 | Nurse | Afro-Trinidad |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Renee | USA | 20 | 49 | Housewife | Indo-Trinidad |
| Pearl | UK | 38 | 62 | Retired Secondary School Teacher | Afro-Trinidad |
| Sally | UK | 5 | 33 | Medical Doctor | Afro-Trinidad |
| Callie | UK | 19 | 39 | Secretary | Afro-Trinidad |
| Bella | USA | 10 | 30 | Baby Sitter | Indo-Trinidad |
| Leah | USA | 2 | 29 | Secretary | Indo-Trinidad |
| Farah | USA | 8 | 45 | Domestic Worker | Afro-Trinidad |
| Deena | USA | 5 | 36 | Nurse | Afro- Trinidad |
| Hayley | USA | 24 | 43 | Housewife | Indo- Trinidad |

Additionally, table 4 gives greater detail into the lives of these women prior to migration. Before women left the island, five said they were married, eleven were single, four were in a common-law union, four were involved in a visiting-type relationship and one was divorced. Out of a sample of twenty-five, eighteen women had children prior to migrating. Ten women achieved some sort of tertiary qualification, while thirteen acquired a secondary school education and two completed primary schooling.

**Table Four: Characteristics of Participants Before Migration (Marital Status, Number of Children, Educational Level)**

| Name | Marital Status | No. Of Children | Educational Level |
|---|---|---|---|
| Jamie | Single | 0 | Secondary (A-level Certificate) |
| Roselyn | Married | 2 | Bachelor's Degree |
| Lisa | Single | 2 | Secondary (CXC Certificate) |
| Cindy | Visiting-Type Relations | 1 | Tertiary Qualification in Nursing |
| Kathleen | Single | 0 | Secondary (CXC Certificate) |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Kay | Single | 0 | Secondary (A Level Certificate) |
| Reese | Single | 0 | Secondary School Drop out |
| Cayla | Single | 0 | Secondary (CXC Certificate) |
| Celia | Common-Law Union | 3 | Tertiary Certificate in Nursing |
| Iris | Visiting-Type Relations | 2 | Tertiary Certificate in Teaching (Teacher Training College) |
| Pauline | Common-Law Union | 2 | Primary |
| Joy | Common-Law Union | 1 | Secondary School Drop-Out |
| Rose | Married | 2 | Bachelor of Arts |
| Lily | Single | 1 | Tertiary Certificate |
| Cece | Single | 1 | Tertiary Nursing Certificate |
| Hilda | Divorced | 3 | Post-Graduate Diploma |
| Renee | Married | 2 | Secondary (A-Level Certificate) |
| Pearl | Visiting-Type Relations | 2 | Post-Graduate Diploma |
| Sally | Single | 0 | Bachelor of Medicine/Surgery |
| Callie | Single | 1 | Secondary (CXC Certificate) |
| Bella | Single | 1 | Secondary School Drop out |
| Leah | Common-Law Union | 0 | Secondary (CXC Certificate) |
| Farah | Visiting-Type Relations | 2 | Primary |
| Deena | Married | 1 | Secondary (CXC Certificate) |
| Hayley | Married | 2 | Secondary (CXC Certificate) |

## Ethical Issues and Informed Consent

Informed consent is one of the most important areas in research. Research is invalid and information can be misused if participants do not give consent on the basis of information about the research and how data will be used. Corti, Day and Backhouse (2001: 1) explain:

> Research should, as far as possible, be based on participants' freely volunteered informed consent; this implies a responsibility to explain fully and meaningfully what the research is about and how it will be disseminated. Participants should be aware of their right to refuse to participate; understand the extent to which confidentiality will be maintained; be aware of the potential uses to which the

data might be put; and in some cases be reminded of their right to re-negotiate consent.

In this research, emails and (where possible) phone calls was used to contact participants once they had been located through various means. In the initial correspondence or after the telephone conversation, information sheets were sent, which included every aspect of my research and what it entailed. I saw the importance of this procedure because I wanted to give the potential participants some time to familiarize themselves with the research and what I was looking for, and to ask any questions that they thought necessary. As an individual, I felt terrible interrupting women's vacation for the purpose of my study, but as a research student, I did what needed to be done to gain participants because of my desperation.

After names, email addresses, and numbers were given to me by organizations, I contacted women via email. I telephoned those who did not have emails or were already in the country on vacation. During my first conversation with them I gave them basic information about my study and what I was asking of them. Prior to me speaking to the women directly, the intermediary or gatekeeper had already talked to them and they knew why I was contacting them. Some sought more information at this point; to my amazement others agreed at once but some declined and many never bothered to respond. I found out afterwards that, in the circumstances where women agreed to be participants in my study, they did so as a favour to their friend (the intermediary).

Many women were concerned about the direction of the study and the nature of the questions that would be asked; this had to be discussed fully before they gave their full consent to participate. The greatest concerns women had prior to giving their consent was maintaining their privacy, the nature of the interview and whether they had to discuss their personal life in groups.[38] They were especially concerned about the use of their real names, tape recording, the length of interviews and how many interviews they would have to participate in. After all these concerns had been addressed, they agreed (some of them partially) and a time and place was scheduled to further discuss the interview. At this point,

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[38] Most women were opposed to discussing their personal life in groups and outright refused to be a part of the study if they had to do this. I assured them that all interviews would be conducted on an individual basis with only the interviewer and interviewee present. Only then did some of them become interested.

consent could be officially given in person if they were truly interested.[39] There was no assumption on my part that agreeing to meet meant that they were giving their consent to be interviewed. The fact that they agreed to meet was a good sign, however, because it showed that their interest was piqued. In my experience, when they agreed to meet, they rarely failed to give their consent to be interviewed. Information sheets along with consent forms were given and discussed in great detail; any questions pertaining to these forms were addressed in the first face-to-face interaction.

Dates and times for meetings and interviews were arrived at mutually; I was very flexible with timing because of the need to gain participants. I usually met with them at a time and place that was convenient to their schedule. Scheduling was one of the most difficult and challenging parts of this study. On many occasions, women could not make their appointments and were prone to reschedule. This habitual rescheduling threw me off my own plans, having made a timetable of all the meetings; it was difficult to be in different places on the same day. There were several instances where women rescheduled very frequently. This was an indicator that they were not really interested in participating in the study and they eventually stopped calling.

Women frequently dictated the locations for meetings. These meetings usually took place at their houses, the houses of their relatives,[40] or a church organization. In very rare cases, I was told to meet in public places such as food outlets. Usually such a meeting would be a short one when they would give consent to be interviewed and later invite me to their houses. Having a timetable is important in conducting research, but being inflexible was problematic my case. I experienced many difficulties with scheduling and had great difficulty in trying to cope. When conducting interviews I always informed a few people of my whereabouts and I also took someone along with me to do the driving. In the end, with the help of many invaluable people advancing my cause, the process of interviewing was successfully undertaken and I learnt valuable lessons for the future.

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[39] Partial consent was sought through email and phone conversations. It was not my intention to seek full consent through these means. My intention was to contact as many women as possible and create a rapport with them by giving them the information they needed so that they would become interested in my research. Consent was sought and in most situations it was given once I met them face-to-face.

[40] Caribbean people *(especially Trinidadian people)* tend to be very forthcoming when inviting others into their homes. It is a national trait of the island where people are usually very welcoming. See: https://www.plu.edu/studyaway/studyabroad/accepted-students/Gateway/Trinidad-Tobago/CultureGram-TT2013.pdf.

## Building Relationships and Creating Rapport

In any functional relationship, there is a period of mistrust and guardedness and my study was no exception. After reading many theses and research papers by many other academics and students from all around the world, I feel as though my experience in the field was quite unusual, especially in building relationships with participants. I am persuaded that the particular nature of this research was a result of the context in which it was carried out and the seasons when it was conducted.[41] I believe that, as a result of the environment of the islands, coupled with the euphoric nature created by the holiday seasons, individuals were more forthcoming.

In my examination of the work of others, it seems that their youth tended to hinder the process of interviews and the relationship they created with participants. Oddly enough, this was not the case in my experience. Being younger, and actually looking younger than I am, proved to be very helpful to me in creating a bond with the women. Usually the older women saw me as 'cute' or 'sweet', and those who were mistrustful of me over the telephone became helpful and interested upon face-to-face interaction. I believe that the physical appearance of youth gave me an edge in creating a line of meaningful communication with my participants. Additionally, because of the island's history of slavery and indentureship, education was viewed as the only way to improve one's life during the colonial period and women were usually pushed into traditional roles. The pursuance of a higher degree in the Caribbean is seen as something to be admired, especially at a young age. I am a young woman pursuing doctoral studies in a foreign country, and these women, especially the older ones, saw this as a great accomplishment. This achievement in their eyes added credibility to my character, and I believe they somewhat admired my drive and motivation for work as a young woman. Some even commented on the visible passion I had for my research, and all together these factors assisted in making my relationships with them more relaxed.

In contrast to what many other researchers have shared with me, my experience in the field was very different. In most instances I remained in contact with participants via email and phone calls and maintained a relationship with them through these means. For most researchers, dealing with strangers is very difficult, especially making them comfortable

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[41] The context was Trinidad and Tobago and the seasons were Christmas and Carnival.

enough to share personal information. In my experience I enjoyed talking with the women, and being a 'familiar stranger'[42] proved to be an advantage, adding to my status as a research student. The fact that they did not know me prior to the interviewing process assisted them in speaking freely without fear of being judged or humiliated. As a stranger, I was able to create a level of comfort. Many women did not want to discuss their personal lives in the company of anyone who was familiar to them and they were very guarded about the use of their 'real information'. I assured them to the best of my ability that everything they said would be confidential and used for research purposes only. I realized that, as a result of my youth, they saw the interview as an opportunity to educate me about something that I knew about only academically.

## Conducting Interviews

The interviewing process provided me with first-hand accounts of the process and effects of women's migration journeys. I tried to live vicariously through the experiences of the interviewees, attempting to see their lives as they saw them. In all honesty, conducting interviews and interacting with these women gave me the most joy I have experienced as a feminist research student. It was at this point that I saw my research come together. The experiences of the women touched me and I felt proud as a young woman belonging to the Caribbean having heard their stories and their struggle for improvement. Oakely (1981: 41) writes that: 'interviewing is rather like a marriage: everybody knows what it is, an awful lot of people do it, and yet behind each closed door there is a world of secrets.' Oakley stresses the importance of gaining the subjective perspective of the interviewee; my intention in conducting interviews was to be a conduit for the voices for these women and to share their stories to the best of my ability, while shedding light on an understudied yet important topic affecting the islands of the Caribbean, and Trinidad in particular. According to Patton (2002: 341):

> The purpose of interviewing is to allow us to enter into the other person's perspective. Qualitative interviewing begins with the assumption that the perspective of others is meaningful, knowable, and able to be made explicit. We interview to find out what is in and on someone else's mind, to gather their stories.

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[42] Although I did not know these women, I share the same cultural background. Therefore, I was a stranger to them but shared similarities in terms of culture.

Clearly, this investigation would not have been possible if the women had not chosen to share their stories with me.

One major issue I encountered when conducting interviews was their duration. Some were over two hours and turned into somewhat of a 'gathering of' and 'getting to know' family and friends.[43] Another issue arising out of the interviewing process was the struggle I had at times to maintain my composure and to contain my emotions. I found it somewhat difficult in some interviews to conclude because of the relationship I had formed and the forthcoming attitude of some interviewees. I enjoyed myself while conducting the interviews and believe it went smoothly, as opposed to beforehand, while seeking and scheduling interviews, where things had often fallen apart. I had little problem with -audio recording the interviews, since participants were well aware prior to the interview of their right to decline. They felt at ease during interviews because of the way we conversed. However, due to unforeseen circumstances, during various chats with the participants, I sometimes had to turn off the recorder upon their request because of the nature of some issues.[44]

During the interviews, when difficult questions needed to be asked, I had some problems in eliciting clear and direct answers from some participants, and this hindered the process. Some were very open and willing to divulge any information needed and immensely enjoyed being a part of a study geared towards understanding their lives. Others were more guarded and willing to answer only surface questions, not wanting to go deeper. In these situations I tried to spend more time with them and restructure the questions to gain further insight into their experiences. However, this proved to be time consuming. Some respondents requested at different points during the interview to share information without having their voice recorded. They explained that they did not feel comfortable speaking about certain personal things relating to family and lifestyle on tape, but they did not mind divulging the information. They were usually overcome with emotion when discussing

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[43] Caribbean people are usually happy, welcoming and warm. We have a local term we use to denote an informal gathering of people who come together for the sake of talking, laughing and having fun. This term is 'lime'. Usually in Trinidad, especially around holiday seasons, the islands operate on what is called 'island time'. At those times business places do not open, friends, family, neighbours, communities, and even strangers gather by houses, at street corners, to casually 'lime' with each other.

[44] At times, some of the questions asked and the nature of our dialogue left respondents overwhelmed with emotion. Therefore in order to carry on with the interview, they sometimes requested I turn off the recorder while they composed themselves.

certain things and did not want their voices to be taped. They still allowed me to use the information but just did not feel comfortable recording their voices saying certain things. When situations like these arose, I switched off the recorder, stored it away, assured them that I understood and as much as I could, took detailed notes of what they were saying, which I later transcribed. Usually these interviews took longer to transcribe than those that were fully recorded.

I used a semi-structured, conversational interviewing style. Having read about undertaking feminist research prior to entering the field, my study (especially in data collection) was guided by the principles put forward by Oakley (1981), as outlined in table 5.

**Table Five: Oakley's Feminist Approach to Research Interviews**

| Oakley's (1981) Feminist Approach to Research Interviews |
| --- |
| o The interviewer presents her own identity in the process, not only asking questions, but also sharing knowledge; <br><br> o Reciprocity invites an intimacy that encourages revelations from the researched relating to her material reality; <br><br> o Develops a participatory model of research that challenges power relationships between researcher and researched; <br><br> o Produces work that challenges prevailing stereotypes of the researcher and the researched. |

At various points, I went back to the tenets presented above. I aligned my own work with the principles listed by Oakley (1981) to help me reconsider my direction when I thought I was straying. I used open-ended questions to deliberately prompt a detailed response from the interviewee and to obtain as much information from them as possible. I had an interview guide but I also left room for flexibility so that I could capture the unique views of every woman. I made sure that I wrote down the important questions that I needed to cover in the interview in order to maintain coherence in my mind as to what I had to ask next. Having a suitable guide to follow was extremely beneficial as it helped me to be coherent and remain on track. However, in nearly every interview I strayed from the questions and in keeping with a conversational approach, especially when the interviewee

was comfortable in disclosing information that I had not anticipated receiving. All interviews were done individually; there was usually no one present except the interviewee and myself while the interview was in progress. However, sometimes upon the request of the interviewee, a relative or two joined in to help corroborate their stories and time lines.

Interviews usually took the form of a conversation once participants had grown accustomed to me. However, structure was maintained in terms of the questions being asked, and the areas that were discussed. There were frequently a lot of informal exchanges in order to put the women at ease and make them feel more comfortable. I did my best not to make them feel like lab rats or as a means to an end. My intention was to relate to them my genuine care and concern for this area of migratory studies, and once this was accomplished women felt more comfortable in discussing their lives with me. There were no language barriers because the women spoke English like myself, so conversations were flowing, relatable and comprehensible. In the Caribbean we speak what is called creole English,[45] a dialect, so it was easy to converse. Speaking dialect made participants more at ease and created a less formal environment.[46] I usually mirrored the interviewee in how they behaved and spoke. I wanted to make sure that they felt at ease so I injected some personality into interviews by telling jokes and sharing a little about myself. Oakley (1981: 41) argues that:

> The goal of finding out about people through interviewing is best achieved when the relationship of the interviewer and interviewee is non-hierarchical and when the interviewer is prepared to invest his or her own personal identity in the relationship.

The process of using semi-structured interviewing helped advance this cause. Since I was younger than all the women I interviewed, they usually seemed enthusiastic about giving me information. In some instances they even helped me improve my understanding of events pertaining to Trinidadian history and life before I was born. I used a chronological

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[45] Caribbean Creole English is the predominantly spoken derivative of the Queen's English. It is the outcome of contact among Europeans and West Africans during the course of European expansionism, the slave trade, and the colonization of the New World (McArthur, 1998). For more information on the creole language spoken in the Caribbean see; McArthur (1998), http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1O29-CARIBBEANENGLISHCREOLE.html

[46] The use of the creole dialect is usually preferred in an informal setting. Standard English is seen as pertinent in formal settings, for example when delivering speeches, in government, or when transacting business. Standard English is usually frowned upon in the Caribbean when conversing with friends or family.

and biographical approach to conducting interviews where the questions asked usually examined two phases; what prompted migration (pre-migration period), and the effects of migration on their present life (post-migration period). By adopting this method, I gained an improved understanding of their life stories in a sequential order. The perceptions I had before the fieldwork began were completely shaken as the interviews progressed. One of my most significant experiences while undertaking fieldwork is that the process itself not only challenged prevailing stereotypes, as Oakley (1981) stated, but it shattered any preconceptions I went in with, especially about mothers who left their children, and as a result added more depth to my research.

In most cases, the interviewee gave consent for the interview to be recorded. If consent was not agreed upon, or the participant herself for some reason during the interview requested me to stop taping, the recorder was not used. In instances where I could not use a digital voice recorder, I had to take detailed notes. As a novice in the field, I found this a tedious task. In addition to my notes and the recorder, I kept a journal while I was in Trinidad, making little jottings of my experiences and constantly rewriting and organizing themes in my mind relating to the information already collected. At this point I began to think critically about the topic at hand whilst tying it to the existing literature. Sanjek (1990) and Lofland and Lofland (1995) note that there are different types of field notes, mainly mental notes, jotted notes and full field notes. While in the field, I took jotted notes. Lofland and Lofland (1995) refer to jotted notes as comprising mainly of little phrases, quotes, and keywords.

These jotted notes helped in jogging my memory about certain things that I forgot during interviews. By having written reminders, I recalled information or activities I had forgotten whilst in the field conducting interviews. Bryman (2012: 450) refers to jotted notes as, 'very brief notes written down on pieces of paper or in small notebooks to jog one's memory about events that should be written up later.' After making these jotted notes in the field, I would then go home and look them over and tie them into other notes I made during the interviews. This helped me in looking at trends and in conducting future interviews. These notes were also very helpful to refer to when undertaking analysis and creating themes.

## Transcription and Analysis

The interviews were very lengthy and took a long time to transcribe. I adhered to a very strict schedule in transcribing the interviews because I knew I had limited time in Trinidad. I wanted to make sure I had collected enough information to enable me to start analysing. After each interview I gave myself time to transcribe. I chose to transcribe after each interview because it was the best way for me to observe themes and it also informed some of the questions I asked other participants in later interviews. I saw the transcription phase as a step towards gaining a greater understanding of participants and more insight into what I was researching. At times when I became forgetful I went back to previously conducted interviews and read the transcripts. Since the interviews were lengthy I tried to transcribe only data pertaining to the topic at hand, all other unrelated conversations[47] were cut out because I wanted my transcripts to be as concise as possible. I used pseudonyms in referring to my participants in the transcription process so as to preserve their anonymity and adhere to the strict confidentiality regulations that I had set out in the consent forms.

I treated the transcripts as a work in progress in that only after all interviews were transcribed did I start to carefully analyse and extract major themes that related to my research questions. I realized while transcribing the interviews that there was a need to convey what the interviewees were saying as closely as possible. Although some participants had been away from Trinidad for a number of years they often reverted to local slang,[48] which I tried (to the best of my ability) to edit without changing the meaning behind what they said. Coles, as cited in Devault (1990), utilizes his power as researcher to edit data; he translates slang and vernacular into Standard English so that the richness of the content is highlighted and the focus is not taken away from the individual's articulacy of speech. Discussing this approach used by Coles, Devault (1990: 107) points out that:

> […] Emphasizing the importance of respondents' own words, gives the researcher much authority as translator and mouthpiece […] Typically, this means interpreting, condensing, excerpting, and polishing respondents' talk.

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[47] These conversations usually related to personal questions such as plans for the Christmas/Carnival season, the weather, and other idle chat which acted as icebreakers before the 'real' interviews began.

[48] Some local slang used would make it impossible for readers outside of the Caribbean to understand. Even though at some points in the interview some women reverted to Caribbean slang, I informed them that it would be easier for me to represent their stories as accurately as possible if they spoke clearly without too much slang. I did this because I did not want to over-edit or misrepresent their individual stories with my words.

As I tried to practise this during the transcription phase, the power I had as a researcher became manifest and I knew I had to represent the stories of these women to the best of my ability. I knew that, as a researcher, I had the final input on how their stories would be told and my aim was to be as accurate as possible and to avoid misinterpretation. Devault (1990: 107) explains that one way of staying true to individual stories as a researcher is by a seemingly compassionate intent: 'the researcher's purpose, often, is to secure a hearing for respondents who would not otherwise be heard.' This was my intent from the beginning as a feminist researcher; as a vulnerable and disadvantaged group in both receiving and sending countries, women's stories had to be compassionately understood and reported. Devault (1990: 107) writes:

> One of the purposes of feminist research is to recover and examine unnoticed experience, and that standard language and forms are likely to be inadequate for describing those experiences. Standard practice that smooths out respondents' talk is one way that women's words are distorted; it is often a way of discounting and ignoring those parts of women's experience that are not easily expressed.

This was of great concern to me, and while I did correct some of the language used by participants to make it comprehensible to readers, I tried not to stray from my original purpose, which was to document the lives of women without losing the essence of their own words.[49] I tried not to erase the individuality behind each participant by wholly transcribing into formal Standard English; therefore, instead of changing words altogether I deleted some of them, such as some over-used colloquial slang and pauses such as ohs, amms, ers, and meaningless pauses.

After transcription, I examined my research questions and themes (see Chapter 1) and went through every interview transcript to find information related to these selected themes. In so doing, I took one theme at a time, selecting quotes from participants, which helped me in my analysis. Also, when this was done I went through all the transcripts again to examine the remaining information; having somewhat butchered the interview transcripts, I looked for other evolving themes as I read, and reread. Re-examining transcripts made me reconnect with participants and their stories for a second time; it was also a process of reengaging my abilities as a researcher to find something I might have previously

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[49] I edited only where it was absolutely necessary so that readers who were not familiar with Caribbean slang and creole language could better understand what was being said.

overlooked or missed. From this revisiting of the transcripts, some sub-topics emerged; the main themes were concerned with why women migrate and how. However, themes about how they lived in the receiving country and what their current lives were like also emerged. There was a great deal of information about how immigration to Britain is different to the USA, based on lifestyles, employment, and culture (see Chapter 7). This information emerged from reviewing the transcripts.

In analysing data, I tried to utilize what Geertz (1973) calls thick description, which means that I have provided the reader with detailed accounts and descriptions of the lives and cultures that are being investigated. Additionally, reflexivity was also very important in the analysis stage; this entailed being reflective about, 'the implications of methods, values, biases, and decisions for the knowledge of the social world they generate. Relatedly, reflexivity entails a sensitivity to the researcher's cultural, political, and social context' (Bryman, 2012: 392). By utilizing this method, I was able to critically examine the data I had collected and look at the meaning behind certain scenarios described, such as the reason behind mothers leaving their children and migrating to another country.

Cotterill and Letherby (1993) discuss the difficulty of avoiding interpreting data in accordance with the researcher's own understanding. I tried to remove my own feelings and bias so that I would not misinterpret or misrepresent what was being said. I must confess that, as a researcher, I did go into the field with preconceived notions, especially concerning mothers who migrate and leave their children behind. In my opinion at that time, these mothers were to be blamed for a number of issues that I perceived as being a result of parental migration. However, during the interviews, transcription and analysis periods, I realized that I was wrong and tried to represent the data collected as honestly as I could, radically challenging what I had initially thought to be true.

As a result of my analysis, I separated my findings into four chapters, examining: the decisions of women to migrate, their settling period, the implications of international migration for them and their families, and a comparative view of immigration to Britain and the USA. Dividing my analysis into these four chapters helped me in communicating a story from the time of departure to their present life. I wanted my discussion to be structured in such a way that readers would understand the women's journey. It was my intention in the analysis chapters to focus on the lives of migrant women, ideally showing

what migration meant to them and how they were affected by their choices. I also shed new light on the issue of parental migration. The study is intended as a feminist understanding of international migration in the Caribbean. Bryman (2012: 410) writes that: 'feminist standpoint epistemology […] places a particular emphasis on experience from the standpoint of women, this prioritization is especially pronounced.' As Bryman (2012) argues, the goal of feminist research is to conduct research that is geared towards the understanding of women and specifically constructed for women. Thus, in the analysis my main aims were to describe the lives of women, the choices they made and the implications these choices have had on their families, and to discuss factors that unexpectedly emerged because of immigration.

## Conclusion

The importance of researching international migration from a feminist standpoint is that it enables us to understand the specific experiences of women. When looking for a sample, I wanted to find women from differing backgrounds; rather than those of a particular race, class, age, and educational or socioeconomic background. My fieldwork lasted longer than I had anticipated and major unforeseen problems occurred in obtaining participants for my study. When I did in fact obtain participants, other problems arose in terms of scheduling appropriate dates and times to meet. I overcame these obstacles by trying to become more flexible and focused on the end result, which kept me motivated.

I was deeply touched by the accounts of various participants' lives and was quickly revived from my despondent state because of the forthcoming attitudes of my participants. Although the initial stages of fieldwork were difficult, I maintained optimism and by the time the interviews were conducted I felt a great deal more positive. Although I came into the research field with one major aim (to investigate the lives of migrant women), I found afterwards that I had gained a few friends from the process. These women who offered to share their lives with me became my friends and I found myself determined to share their stories as accurately as possible.

The process proved to be a difficult one from beginning to end. Ultimately, the experience of fieldwork left me with a clearer understanding of my topic and area of research. Amidst

all the unforeseen issues, the fieldwork gave my study direction. Even though not all of the interviews (or rather conversations) with women were used in this study,[50] it gave me a clearer understanding of the lives these women lead.  In the following chapters, I will attempt to discuss my findings and create a picture of the lives of emigrant Trinidadian women, beginning from the time they decided to migrate, and continuing through their settling period and its implications and on into their current lives in destination countries. I begin, in the next chapter, by discussing how and why they chose to migrate.

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[50] I conducted more than 25 interviews. However, not all the interviews were used because during the fieldwork process some women opted to drop out of the research because of travelling arrangements and difficulty in scheduling mutual meeting times. Therefore, because they had to leave and the interviews either did not take place or were incomplete, I decided not to use information from these women. Ultimately 25 women's accounts of migration were used in this study.

# Chapter 4

## Caribbean Women on the Move

### *'My Tomorrow Should be Better than my Today'*

In the Caribbean, when someone chooses to migrate internationally we as locals view it as a positive movement, a chance for upward social mobility. To go *'overseas'*[51] is regarded locally as an achievement even if it involves illegal migration. Usually Caribbean people move from one country to another when the perceived benefits are substantial. It is a common goal of Caribbean nationals to live what they perceive as the *'American Dream'* by migrating. The women in my study, whether married or unmarried, with children or without, regarded migrating to a more developed country as a means of improving their status in life and their standard of living. These women were both carers and breadwinners and migrated in order to improve the prospects of their families. Social, cultural and economic factors were significant in explaining their decisions to migrate

Although Trinidad is a relatively economically rich country with much opportunity for advancement in terms of education, employment and social services, there is still an increase in international migration, especially among women and the skilled labour force. There has also been an increase in female migration over the last decade. A gendered approach to migration is important in order to understand why women migrate. Omelaniuk (2006) explains:

> A gender analysis of migration looks beyond simple differences in migration behaviours between men and women – such as the likelihood and type of migration – and examines the inequalities underlying those differences. It looks at how these are shaped by the social and cultural contexts of the individual, and the influence that membership of social groups and economic and political conditions can have on decisions about migration. (Omelaniuk, 2006: 1)

Often the struggles that women face in the process of migration and settlement go unmentioned so that those planning to are not fully aware of the challenges they might face. The transition from one country to another is perceived by individuals who yearn to

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[51] When referring to migrating or visiting foreign countries Caribbean nationals commonly use the term 'overseas' or 'away'.

migrate as smooth or without turbulence. Cindy (39)[52] said, 'my friend living away for many years explained how it would be like to work and live, she painted a pretty picture. But I don't think I was prepared for the reality of settling.' The process of migration described by returning migrants is similar to an image taken from a fairy-tale. There is little or no discussion surrounding the difficulties of the decision-making process or the settling in stage. The cultural shock experienced and the difficulties women face in obtaining employment are also not discussed. Kathleen (35) explains: 'my cousin described a place that sounded like a dream. I didn't hear the bad parts.'

 Two of the most difficult times for women are the decision-making process, especially for women with children, and the period of settlement, which I will consider in this chapter and the next.  My participants all had different perceptions of a better life. Most of them explained that their main concern was *sacrificing* themselves for the ones they loved. They expressed certainty that their future and that of their family would be better because of migration. Iris (42) said: 'I wanted my family and my children to have a better life than what I could give them if I stayed. I knew migrating would make a difference.' Out of a total of 25 women interviewed, 22 left their families and migrated individually, whereas three participants migrated with their entire families or spouses. The role of the family in the decision-making process is critical in understanding why women migrate. Similarly, I have found that the role of the woman in the family is an important factor when conceptualizing why women leave.

The existing literature describes a situation in which mothers abandon their children and place them in the care of relatives, resulting in the neglect of children left behind. Doctoral studies and academic papers that investigate the children of migrants paint a very dismal picture. These studies suggest that the academic performance of children is negatively affected. They also claim that there is an increase in delinquency, experiences of depression, abuse, and general neglect (see Antman, 2012; Afriyie, 2009; Cortes, 2011; Rossi, 2008). The mothers I interviewed, however, told me that they ensured their children were not neglected, abandoned or abused; they left them in the capable care of grandparents, uncles and aunts, which is a norm in the Caribbean.  Mothers migrated to give their children a better life with more opportunities Celia (48) said, 'If anything,

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[52] As mentioned in the methodology chapter, these are not the real names of participants. Pseudonyms were used to preserve the privacy of those who participated in this study.

migrating helped my children become better. They knew it was a sacrifice, but I had their support.'[53]

There is a gap in the existing literature that addresses and accounts for the feelings of the migrant mother. She is portrayed as someone who abandons her children for a big-city life, caring for other people's children in a foreign country. Rarely do studies show how difficult the decision is to leave or how the time of settlement in another country affects her emotionally. I heard from mothers about the stresses they faced in deciding to emigrate and the period of guilt and heartbreak that followed after they arrived in the destination country. The wellbeing of their children and concern for their future play a significant role in the decision-making process and the settling period of the mother. In this chapter I will discuss the reasons why women migrate, highlighting the fact that children are pivotal in the migration process of mothers. I argue that children are not considered to be insignificant or abandoned. I will discuss the fact that one of the driving forces behind migrant mothers is their children, rendering them one of the most important factors in the decision to migrate.

The factors stimulating international migration are usually understood in economic terms. Push and pull factors such as employment and wages are given great significance and little is said about the emotional and mental development of the individual. Research discussing the push and pull factors that drive international migration focuses on determining which of the two play a more important role in international migration; for example, studies by Zaiceva and Zimmermann (2008), Pedersen et al. (2004) and Naudé (2008) highlight this area and present mixed views. Lewer (2009) argues that, in terms of international migration, economic factors have undoubtedly received the most attention. Michalos (1997) claims that, seemingly, the most important factors influencing an individual's decision to migrate are economic. However, I found that when women choose to take up residence in another country they are usually motivated to do so because of something more than economic gain and advancement. Although economic stability is highly valued and plays a significant role in the decision-making process, there are other underlying motivations, and economics acts as a derivative of those motivations.

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[53] In some cases, I was privileged to meet some of these children, and from what I observed they seemed to be happy, well adjusted and very accomplished young people. Additionally, some women are now mothers of adult children. These women migrated when their children were younger. In such cases, mothers told me that their children were successful adults with a sound educational background and high-income jobs.

In this first analysis chapter, my aim is to discuss the period prior to migrating (decision-making period), in order to explore in greater detail why women choose international migration. I also build upon ideas found within the existing literature and show that women have a tough time making the decision to leave their family. Women's stories of migration explain why they chose to leave a relatively economically rich country to take up residence in another, despite much uncertainty.

## Decision Making

Here, a scene is set. Celia (48: UK) finds herself feeling stifled on a small island as she watches her children and wishes that she could give them a better life. She explains that she feels burdened, encumbered by many things. She is in a common-law relationship and her partner seldom retains stable employment, therefore she must find work to support her family. She works long hours for poor pay, and comes home to take care of her children while her partner is usually unemployed. He takes all her earnings, abuses alcohol and occasionally she finds herself as well as her children a victim of his physical and verbal abuse. She told me that she made a decision one day as she stared intently into the eyes of her children. She convinced herself that she must do better, if only for them, and was determined to provide a better life for them. She made the decision that something had to be done. She consulted with relatives and eventually she left the shores of the island in the hope that she could help her children obtain a better future.

Celia's story is typical of most of the participants in my study who are mothers. Leaving their children in the care of relatives is the only choice they have; they describe it as the best option. Celia left the island to pursue a nursing career in England over 23 years ago but still remembers how she felt having to leave her three children behind. She recalls her struggles with her then common-law husband and the difficulties she faced while trying to support her children financially. For all the mothers planning to migrate abroad, the decision-making process was an extremely difficult time. They knew that whether they decided to stay or go, it would impact heavily on their future and also the future of their family. In most cases, mothers claimed that making the decision to migrate was one of the most difficult choices they had to make as a parent.

By choosing to move to England I knew I was making a big decision. It was hard … I was scared [*sigh*] but I knew if I did not do it, the future of my daughter would have been worse than mine. I had no way to offer her the slightest bit of anything if I had stayed. Still to leave her in that young state, I was worried and frightened. My main concern was whether or not she would understand why her mother had to leave. And that made it difficult. (Cindy, 39: UK)

Imagine this if you can. Kathleen (35: USA) awoke on the morning of her departure; she described a situation in which her heart was filled with emotions she could not explain. Her ticket is bought and she waits for the time to pass so she can board an aeroplane to take her to a country claimed locally to be the centre of civilization. Her family gathers by her house and a big farewell celebration ensues because they all see it is an achievement just to be able to have an opportunity to experience the cold.[54] She describes the scenery as she drives in silence, looking at the wooden shops, the lush span of land planted with sugar cane and coconut. Perspiration lining her forehead, she says she felt anxious thinking about the new land that would soon be her home. Finally, she boards the aircraft and feels a sense of longing and uncertainty; she is unable to contain her feelings as her mind races with thoughts of whether she will ever see her children or family again.

When I boarded the plane my mind was troubled because I was questioning my decision. I literally started to hyperventilate and I looked out the window and saw the trees, people, vehicles, casually moving and it calmed me somewhat. As I sat back in the plane I tried to concentrate on how good life would be and how better it was to migrate to the US and all the benefits to my family. And just like that I was better. (Kathleen, 35)

Flying over Trinidad for the first time, her reverie comes to a standstill as she quietly considers the land beneath her. She describes the patterns of the houses, roads, rivers, the rustle of the trees, and the sun as it recedes behind the mountains. She recalls that she considered her decision as the images of Trinidad fade; the cars, roads and people all melt into a big blur. She reminisces about how her troubles, like the images below, seem small and diminishing. She is on her way to a new world, where all the answers to her problems await.

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[54] Caribbean people usually use this phrase to refer to the weather in a country that has a season of winter. Since the Caribbean islands have a tropical climate, some nationals desire the coldness of other countries.

The image created here is one that is very common for those leaving the shores of Trinidad, and it was shared by all the women in my study. They explained the uncertainty they felt, the constant reassurances they made, and the way in which they continually tried to convince themselves that by leaving they would find what they were looking for. Jamie (32: USA) told me that she felt torn between so many emotions that she did not know how to feel. She was optimistic that she was going to a country she considered a better place in search of advancement. However, she felt a sense of loss and was overwhelmed with sadness because she was leaving the island where she grew up. Jamie also told me that she was afraid to face unfamiliar places alone.

> I have to say I was dying of fear inside. I did not want to admit it but I was deeply afraid of being alone in a foreign country. I started to think about so many things, it was like my brain was overloaded and heavy. I felt ambushed with so many emotions. Sometimes I felt happy, sometimes sad, and sometimes afraid. They all crept up on me all at once. (Jamie, 32)

Kay (29: USA) explained that she felt confused but happy at the same time. She said she felt that she was going to a place where she knew she would have to struggle but it would all be worthwhile in the end. Kay said that boarding the flight and travelling from Trinidad to the United States was difficult but she understood why it was necessary because she was making a sacrifice to improve herself. She described how anxious she felt sitting on the aeroplane for the five-and-a-half-hour flight, her mind racing from one thought to the next. She remembers how unsettled she felt because she was overcome with nervousness and anxiety.

Pauline (40), a domestic worker in the USA, reminisced about the time she made the decision to leave behind her children and partner of twelve years. Her story was noteworthy in that the struggle she faced with poverty and abuse made the decision to leave an easy one. What seemed difficult to her at the time was finding the necessary funds to leave. Having been in an abusive relationship for several years, Pauline decided that the only way she would physically and emotionally free herself from the life she said she loathed was to migrate and see for herself what another country had to offer.

> I hated my life. I was daily affected with thoughts of ending my life because I saw no end to my problems. This man I was in a relationship with abused me in so many ways I felt as if I was defeated. I wanted freedom; I wanted to take back

control of my life for my children. I knew if I did not get out of that I would die. (Pauline, 40)

It is in special cases like Pauline's that a gendered perspective on migration is seen as necessary. As highlighted in Chapter Three, many studies emphasize the economic advantages derived from migration as being the sole reason driving increasing migration rates. However, what drives women to emigrate is much more complex, and to understand it we need to take more factors into account.

In Lammings' *The Emigrants*, the story of migration to Britain is told. The novel captures the essence of Caribbean migration and settlement in a new land. In the opening remarks, an unknown voice says:

> '…we all know it…every man want a better break, and you know what ah mean by that. 'Tis why every goddam one o' we here on this boat tonight. You says to yuhself 'tis no point goin' on as you goin' on back home. You can't live yuh life over two or three times, chum, an' you want to do something' for yuhself with the life you got here an' now.' (Lamming, 1954: 37)

Lamming's depiction of migration to Britain is one that captures the feelings of most Caribbean migrants. They believe, hope and feel that a more developed country holds all the answers to their problems and is a golden opportunity to do better with their life. 'Migration takes place when a comparison of the outcomes of either staying at the place of origin or at the place of destination reveals the latter alternative to be more attractive' (Haug, 2008: 587). In making the decision, many of my participants were swayed by family. The love for their family and the need to see their children have a better life than their own was one of the major reasons propelling women to emigrate. As Farah and Sánchez (2002), in their examination of feminized labour migration in Bolivia, found:

> The decision to emigrate obeys a multitude of circumstances, […] a lack of satisfactory labour options. For almost all of them, the decisions are made by the family, since migration is assumed to be a family project, which follows specific family strategies, whether these are referred to survival, prestige, or alternatives for improving family maintenance. (Farah and Sánchez, 2002: 20)

All participants said in these exact words or words that were very similar: 'I loved my family and that is why I did it.' Those women in my study who are mothers (18 out of 25 participants) explained that they mostly thought about their children when deciding to emigrate. Most mothers said that they would not have been willing to leave their children behind unless they were satisfied that they would be cared for properly.[55] Pauline (40) said: 'I could not leave my children and go without knowing they were safe and being cared for. No money in the world is worth the neglect of your child.' Their main priority was their children. They worried about how this life-changing step would impact on the lives of their children rather than their partners.

> I wanted to know and see for myself that my child would be well taken care of in my absence. I had already organized the little money that I had, bought my ticket and got a place to stay. But the most pressing thing on my mind was making sure my child would not feel neglected. (Cindy, 39: UK)

These women maintained that certain areas concerning their children needed to be addressed first before they chose to migrate. Pauline (40) explained: 'I had to know they had a stable life, and a good environment where they were not being ill-treated.' Similarly, Pearl (62: UK) said: 'My children were my main priority, I was migrating because of them, of course if they were not being properly cared for I would not have left them.' Another mother, Cece (38: UK), said: 'I had one child and I had to do right by her, but I also had to be assured she was not neglected and was safe before I left. I also wanted her to be loved.' The motivations to migrate for the women who were mothers were different from those of the women who were not. Children were the most crucial deciding factor for the migration of mothers.

> I did not see migration as possible for me if my children were not well taken care of. I could not leave them knowing that they were not being cared for properly. My daughter was younger at the time and we didn't have much money, in fact we were barely surviving. She told me to do what I had to do and they would be all right and I still remember her holding my hands and assuring me that she would help looking after her sister. Knowing they were okay made me feel better to leave [sic]. (Pearl, 62)

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[55] Wu et al. (2004), in their analysis of rural to urban migration, point out that in the first wave of migration to a city, new migrants may leave their children in the countryside to be cared for by others.

Women who were not mothers were usually motivated by other factors, including the feeling of stagnation. Jamie (32), a non-mother, explained:

> I felt stifled in this island, I felt as if my life was not going anywhere, I saw the same people every day, we had the same conversations every day, nothing out of the ordinary ever happened to me and I needed a change, I needed to feel as if I had purpose that I wasn't going to get up in the morning and predict my whole day.

The feeling of stagnation was not only reserved for non-mothers. Some women who were also mothers and had stable jobs outside of the home explained that they chose migration because of the feeling of stagnation. Such feelings are different for mothers and non-mothers; for example, Kay (29) is a single woman without children, and her feelings of stagnation stemmed from her belief that her life was not going anywhere. Her peers and close relatives were getting married and having children, spouses and careers and she did not have any of those things. Cindy (39), however, a single parent of one, said that her feelings of stagnation stemmed from knowing that every job she undertook always led to a dead end and she was unable to retain a stable job to provide financial security for her child. The responses given by participants gave a clear picture that one of the main factors pushing them to leave Trinidad and Tobago was the fact that they thought their life was stagnant. They believed their future to be dismal and had little possibility of becoming better.

The feeling of stagnation is fairly well documented in Caribbean diasporic literature and it illustrates a growing theme of being unproductive and stifled. An example of such feelings is fictionalized in Levy's *Small Island*, in which the Jamaican-born Gilbert reflects on his post-war life in conversation with his cousin Elwood:

> I was a giant living on land no bigger than the soles of my shoes. Everywhere I turn I gazed on sea. The palm trees that tourists thought rested beautiful on every shore were my prison bars. Horizons my tormenting borders. (Levy, 2004: 209)

Like Gilbert, many of my participants experienced similar feelings of stagnation; whether they were skilled or unskilled, mothers or non-mothers, they all felt as though their lives and careers were monotonous. They explained that they felt as though they were not progressing in life, whether financially or emotionally. The satisfaction derived from the

work they were engaging in was not sufficient and as a result they felt detached. Women undertaking unskilled work were experiencing a sense of dissatisfaction with their lives in general. They worried about money and a secure future for their children. Most of my participants who migrated to perform skilled work (13 participants) explained that they felt as though they were not progressing in their careers. They explained that they had self-esteem issues because they were not receiving the recognition and support they needed from their jobs.

> I was feeling as if my training was a waste. I went to school, I did what was necessary and I was not convinced that everything I had learned was being utilized. I felt unproductive and as if I was constantly wasting time. The conditions at that time were not good and the relationships between doctor and nurses were very bad in those days. I had to will myself every morning to get up because it literally pained me to go to work. My self-confidence suffered and I didn't want to get another job because this is what I loved doing, and it was what I had trained for. The pay wasn't good either because of the adjustment programmes so I did what I had to do; I made the decision to migrate. (Celia, 48: UK)

I read in Caribbean novels, mostly by V.S. Naipaul, that the size of the islands normally contributes to the feeling of stagnation. When I asked my participants whether they thought it was the size of the islands that influenced their feelings, 22 participants said they were sure it was the island itself. Women mentioned they were feeling stifled in their relationships with their partners, families, communities and jobs and needed a release valve. They looked at the island as lacking in terms of opportunity for expression and referred to it as an island in which 'small-mindedness' was prevalent.

Additionally, for many of these women, the appeal of big-city life was also a factor when considering whether they should leave their country of birth. To these women, big cities meant overflowing opportunity for themselves, their children and their families. Furthermore, a big city meant not only more opportunities but also a new start, which many of my participants craved. 'I wanted to move to a big city, where no one knew me so that I could feel free' (Reese, 29: USA). Similarly, Cayla (27: USA) said: 'the allure of a big city, that is what I was drawn to, the fast cars, the high buildings, everything, I wanted to be part of that.'

Prior to migrating, Kathleen (35) lived in the countryside in Trinidad. She said she was drawn to big-city life because it was different from what she was accustomed to. She wanted to be a part of a city where she was unknown, and where her neighbours did not care about what she did. She explained that everything in her community was taboo and everything she did was closely inspected because it was such a small town. Her every move was under scrutiny and she usually felt judged and misunderstood and believed that by migrating she would be rid of such pressures. She was constantly thinking about what was acceptable and unacceptable behaviour in the eyes of her community. Kathleen explained that because of this sense of judgment she was happy to experience big-city life. Iris gave a similar account:

> I wanted to get away from this small island thinking. You must understand, at that time it wasn't like now. It was far worse, where everybody was finding their way to have a say in everyone else's business. Some people say they move from the island for jobs, for money, for things. I say yes all of these things….but also the claustrophobia of the island. I felt as if there was no upward movement for me. I was stuck. And that too I felt as like as Trinidad was small in size, so too was the smallness of the minds of the people. (Iris, 42: UK)

This feeling of immobility, the lack of productivity, and a lacklustre life were described as reasons why women decided to emigrate. The allure of the big city and its opportunities made them consider migrating a viable option. The draw of cosmopolitan countries is a well-documented area in East Asian migration. For example studies of migrant domestic workers from the Philippines and Indonesia in Hong Kong and Taiwan describe scenarios in which women are drawn to 'big city' life in order to escape poverty and have greater opportunities, but also in search of a freer more 'modern' lifestyle (Constable 1997; Lan 2006).

I noted when discussing their reasons for migration with the women that there was a great deal of emotion involved in decision making, rather than a bottom-line approach. Migration in my observation was not only a financially driven decision. It was seen as a means of improvement not only economically but also emotionally. Women saw it not only as a financially viable decision, but also as a means by which they could develop their careers and their emotional selves. The migration theories examined in Chapter Two highlight the significance of economic benefits for individuals who migrate, i.e. the neoclassical approach, the world systems approach and the dual labour market theory. I

found that while economics did play a significant role in propelling women to leave, there were other aspects that were also very important.

> I wanted to leave, I kept delaying for months before I finally made the decision to buy the ticket and go. I knew the money was better, the conditions would have been better for me to live and stay. The work sounded less stressful and I would be in a better position to help out the situation back home. But I couldn't make up my mind, it wasn't enough. You know there has to be something more that makes you get up and leave your family, your homeland, you friends, and your life. Money was not the only reason why I had to leave. If it was for money, I might have been here still. It was a lot of reasons that pushed me to leave. Some of which I can't mention. (Bella, 30: USA)

Furthermore, decision-making was also different for those who were migrating illegally and those who were doing it legally. Those who were lucky and went through legal channels were given work permits and had jobs to go to. Their main concern was finding the right guardians with whom to leave their children. Those who were planning to stay illegally in destination countries had different priorities. They relied heavily on family, and migration was a more family-oriented decision.

> I was afraid, this was a huge step I was going to take and I leaned a lot on my family. I remember in those days I didn't even have money to buy clothes, even the clothes I wore on my back were borrowed. Without my family stepping in to give me support emotionally and financially I don't think I would ever have migrated. Plus when I first went I was planning to go there without papers[56] and just stay on so it was a very frightening time for me. My mind really raced about getting caught and being sent back but I had to take the risk for my children and if I didn't have supportive family overseas and back home I would not have gone. (Kathleen, 35: Domestic Worker)

Those who emigrated and stayed illegally took up work as either domestic workers or baby sitters, whereas those who undertook more skilled work, such as teaching or nursing, migrated legally. I noted that when their stories were compared, the decision to emigrate was explained differently. The role of the family was undoubtedly significant for both groups of women, but the level of significance differed. Women undertaking skilled work were more independent; they placed emphasis on the advancement of their careers and economic stabilization. Nurses and teachers were less dependent on their family to find or

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[56] Locally, 'without papers' is a phrase used to indicate that a person intends to stay illegally in a country.

pay for a place to stay, plane tickets or a job. In the stories of women who undertook domestic work their families were much more prominent.

> I was frustrated with the position I was in. Every day doing the same thing, life was kind of stagnant….it wasn't going anywhere. You know how it is [*laughs*]. I mentioned it to my sister and mother. Then they started to make things happen. Contacted my uncle in America, so I had a place to stay. I didn't need to think about nothing. Just to go. My mother helped me with my ticket and some money and my sister with my two children. When I reached I stayed with my uncle and he fixed me up with some work. (Lisa, 53: Maid)

What is significant is that the women who undertook unskilled work depended heavily on their families. Studies have shown that social networks have played a major role in enabling migration (Massey et al., 1993; Curran et al., 2005). Massey et al. (1993: 448) explain that migrant networks are known to be: 'sets of interpersonal ties that connect migrants, former migrants, and non-migrants in origin and destination areas through ties of kinship, friendship, and shared community origin.' Zhang (2006: 106) highlights the fact that: 'the use of social networks can be regarded as one way in which migrants can reduce the high costs and risks of migration and increase the expected returns.' The role played by women's relatives in their migration stories is very significant in terms of supporting them emotionally and, most importantly, financially. Lisa, a live-in maid, gave an account; she credits her cousin for her move from Trinidad and learning about opportunities abroad.

> I would not have moved to America if not for my cousin, she told me about everything. Every time she would visit from America she would try to persuade me to go for a holiday. After a few years things got worse at home, dad fell ill, and the children's father wasn't paying any child support. So I went and lived across with my cousin for some time, she got me a work, cleaning houses and I never really bothered coming back. (Lisa, 54)

According to Martin (2004: 19): 'Many would-be labour migrants learn of employment prospects through their family members in other countries and then seek authorized or, in some cases, unauthorized entry to take the jobs.' However, professional women play a more active role in their migration experience. Instead of the migrant woman depending financially on friends or relatives, the roles are reversed, and their families have always depended on them. Skilled nurses, teachers and doctors in my study found their own

money to migrate, as well as a job and a place to live while actively supporting their families back home.

Nonetheless these skilled women did sometimes depend on the networks they created with their relatives and friends who were already abroad. They used these links to collect information about job opportunities that were offered. They were not financially dependent, as in the case of unskilled migrant women, but relied on networks consisting of family and friends to pass on information of suitable employment opportunities.

> I first learned about a job opportunity for a teaching post through my aunt who migrated some years before with her family. She gave me the information I needed, sent over the requirements for the job, found out about wages and everything. Then she offered to help me, with a place to stay when I came until I could afford it myself. (Roselyn, 45: Teacher)

Similar to Roselyn's experience, there were many other participants who learnt of opportunities in other countries through family members or friends. Relatives and friends who have migrated previously form a community within which information is shared, and this creates a network. Women described a scenario in which they became more informed about the mechanics of migration such as employment, wages, and housing through such networks. It is because of these networks that most women made the decision to migrate. The opportunities presented through these relationships with previous migrants and the assistance offered to help in their transition made the decision making much easier for them. The networks my participants formed guided them in their decision-making. I also found that these links in destination countries were usually with other women. Additionally, most of the work undertaken by Caribbean immigrant women in receiving countries is seen as typical gendered employment. Fan (2004) suggests that female migrants play an essential role in the gendered networks and are guided into gendered jobs. I have noted that most of the work that migrant women undertake is typically 'female' jobs consisting of care work, teaching, and domestic work.

Many of these women, some 16 out of the sample of 25, spoke about their partners. These women said that their partners were a major factor when contemplating leaving. Partners were not seen as helping them but in fact were usually a hindrance. They migrated to get away from abusive or neglectful partners. They explained that alcohol abuse was a major

problem and had led to many other family problems, such as physical/verbal abuse, money shortages, financial problems and health issues. The subject of alcohol abuse is a very private matter, as is domestic violence, which in Trinidad is culturally constructed as a shameful occurrence that must be hidden from the public. I felt very privileged as a researcher and also as an outsider whom these women knew nothing about to listen to their personal struggle with abuse. Their willingness to speak openly about their experiences of abuse and domestic violence touched me and I was overwhelmed by their courage and resilience.

Joy (31: USA) described a situation in which she felt trapped by her own fear. Living with a man who abused her, she felt emotionally and physically fatigued. She had no way of getting out of that relationship because she was ashamed and afraid. Pauline (40) mentioned that her husband would usually come home very drunk and she would pretend to be asleep in the hope that he would not hit her. The decision to migrate was especially hard for these women who were abused because they were afraid to leave the abusive relationships they were in. Paralyzed by fear, they knew that if they did decide to leave they would have to make a conscious effort not to fail. They understood that if they did fail they would have to go back to the same situation they had tried to run away from. In Joy's case, she made a firm decision to get out of the abusive relationship she was in and went to live with her family. She was subjected to many harsh remarks from members of her community, and depended heavily on the support of her family before she finally migrated.

I have noted, however, that family, and especially parents, are not always helpful or supportive. Despite the fact that family was a major source of assistance and support for some participants, in other cases family proved to be a negative factor in their lives. Some women explained that they had experienced severe criticism from their parents to do better with their lives and that nothing they did was seen as adequate or acceptable. I noted that the women who explained that they were constantly pressured by their parents belonged to the youngest group contributing to this study. I also noted that their parents' negativity was a major influence on these women's decision to move away. They saw migration as means by which they could 'run away' from the control of their parents and an environment full of criticism and judgment.

Cayla (27) spoke about the frustration she felt at having to deal with her parents, who would continuously criticize her about her appearance, her lack of a job, and the fact that she was still at home without a husband. She explained that, at her age, belonging to a strict traditional family she felt inadequate when compared to her other relatives. Cayla explained that she lived in an environment, which affected her confidence. She was working as an assistant with the OJT programme[57] in Trinidad prior to her migration. Currently married and residing in the United States, Cayla says she feels more satisfied with her life. She said that she needed to move away from the environment she was in to improve her life.

I found that family could be either a negative force triggering migration or a channel that assists and supports migration. Either way, my participants still tried to assist their families financially after they moved away. The decisions women make are strongly linked to their emotional state rather than just their financial state. What I have observed is that emotional needs and financial needs are interconnected, thus suggesting that the motivations for migration of women may be quite dissimilar to those of men.

## Push More Than Pull?

There has always been a debate concerning the importance of push and pull factors in migration. My aim here is to describe the particular push and pull factors contributing to the migration of women Push and pull factors are not independent of each other; rather, they are intrinsically interconnected. Studies have highlighted lack of employment, greater opportunities for skilled workers abroad, rates of crime and natural disasters as prime factors influencing the increased rates of international migration (see Peinkos, 2006; Parkins, 2005; Foner, 2006), but my study revealed a range of other issues.

 My findings came as a shock to me because, like every other researcher, I had preconceived beliefs based on my readings prior to going into the field. Altogether, 19 out of 25 respondents talked about the push of the sending country more than the pull of the receiving. Although they said it was the push of the Caribbean that resulted in their

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[57] The On-the-Job (OJT) training programme provides Trinidadian nationals with opportunities to gain work experience and job training. It also helps in easing unemployment by placing individuals in temporary jobs.

moving, many of them implicitly described the pull of the receiving country. Iris (42: UK) explained: 'I had to move away because there were no good opportunities for work and I felt as though I deserved to earn more.' Similarly, Rose (44: UK) said: 'At the time it was the best decision I could make because I needed the exposure and I wasn't getting it back home in a small island where I felt stifled among other things.' The allure of a new life filled with opportunities in a big, unknown city was seen as a major advantage. However, for many women it seemed that they were looking for something, an immaterial, intangible benefit that they could not explain. Most of them explained it as a 'woman thing'. Hilda (43: UK) said she felt as though she was boxed in on the island: 'It was like living in a country where I was suffocating, I was gasping for breath, I was grappling with a reality I did not like. It's a woman thing [sic].' Push and pull factors in migration are interconnected in that, in order to have a push factor motivating individuals to leave one country, there must be a corresponding pull factor drawing them to settle in another, thereby stimulating international migration.

I noted that my participants often contradicted themselves or expressed ambivalence in their reasons for leaving. On one hand, they lauded the island as being a haven, a paradise, and a rich country with many opportunities. On the other, they condemned it for not having enough opportunities, for being unproductive and stifling. I found an important grey area in this study when going through data pertaining to the pull of the destination country and the push of the sending country. Trinidad and Tobago is seen as a relatively economically rich and financially stable Caribbean country. It is perceived locally as a destination country for people from many of the poorer islands who seek better employment, working and living conditions. Additionally, consumerism is also a very important aspect of the daily life of the island. While other Caribbean islands have a laid-back way of life because of an economic environment created solely by tourism, Trinidad has developed its economy from oil, gas and manufacturing. Thus, when compared to its Caribbean counterparts, there are more cities and towns. Development hubs are dispersed throughout the island; visibly there are many franchises, shopping malls and many more multinational corporations active on the island. This has led to increased numbers of intra-regional migrants, individuals from other countries like Guyana, Jamaica and Grenada, who come to Trinidad with the intention of settling.

Kathleen (35), Celia (48), and Hilda (43) explained somewhat similarly that Caribbean women are always on the move, difficult to please, and always wanting more from life. These women outlined clearly their belief that there is a greater factor beyond the economic that pushed them to leave a relatively economically rich country like Trinidad and Tobago. They explained that the attraction of living in a new city, seeing new people every day, and the unfamiliarity of places and people initially seemed like an advantage to them. 'I was drawn by the unfamiliar lifestyle… a place where I was unknown and the possibility that anything could happen there,' said Kathleen (35). Similarly, Hilda (43) explained: 'Women in the Caribbean are always on the move. I knew it was time for me because I just found myself wanting more than what Trinidad had to offer.' I was taken aback because surely the rising crime rate in Trinidad and the problems of accessing welfare services were more important reasons for migrating. However, I noted that while these factors did play a role in pushing women to migrate, the appeal of receiving countries acted as a magnet pulling them to leave.

> Trinidad is a paradise. Yes the crime is bad and the opportunity slim but we have things good compared to the rest of the world where it really gets bad bad… [*laughs*]. In my case though, for me it was a decision that was made because I was sure I wanted a big-city life. Small island life wasn't for me. (Renee, 49: USA)

All participants spoke about the immaterial gains they anticipated in travelling to countries such as Great Britain and the USA. Twenty-five participants said that they were sucked into the dream of living in a big city; the appeal of the receiving country was too great a temptation for most women. 'I wanted more from life…I demanded it! My motto is life is just too short and I had to seize my moment or live with regret' (Hilda, 43). Celia (48) also expressed similar sentiments, saying: 'Life is about taking a risk and I took one and it paid off. There is nothing wrong with wanting more and I wanted a great deal more than an island life.' The less skilled migrant women undertaking domestic work were willing to take up jobs in foreign countries that were considered demeaning, but would not consider taking similar jobs in their home country.

> Before I went away I was a secretary, the pay was good but not as good as what I get now. I work longer hours but the work is more flexible. I would not have dreamed that one day I would be cleaning people's houses but the money is good. And plus in America it's not like here. I wouldn't dream of doing what I do now

home here. People here would talk, plus you wouldn't get good pay. A job is a job; you do a work and get paid. People don't gossip, they are busy people, it is a fast life there. People overseas have no time for that kind of nonsense. (Farah, 45: Domestic Worker)

They were willing to take on jobs they would not have done at home because they were unknown in a big city with thousands. 'I wouldn't do domestic work in Trinidad, the pay is poor and the work is seen as demeaning. Who wants to do demeaning work for low pay?' (Pauline, 40: Domestic Worker). Jamie (32) also shared similar feelings, saying: 'Domestic work is seen as one of the worst jobs locally. Nobody wants to do it, people laugh at the cleaning lady and there is poor pay. I would not dream of doing cleaning work in Trinidad.'

Participants, especially those who are unskilled, go to big cities with the understanding that they are willing to undertake any job that is legal. In most of their accounts, migration is the only option for them to have a better life. 'Frankly, […] I was prepared to undertake anything legal to get money so I could provide for my family' (Pauline, 40: Domestic Worker). The push from the life they were leading and the pull of the perceived advantages created by a fresh start in a big city were major factors motivating the move of unskilled women. In terms of skilled labour migration, nurses and teachers said that they felt as though their work had more prestige in foreign countries than in Trinidad and Tobago and felt that their skills could be better utilized somewhere else.

> I wasn't satisfied with the conditions under which I had to work. Not only the work environment but also the people that was there. I felt as if there was more merit in being a nurse abroad. Some of the procedures [we] had to do [we] had to do it without proper instruments, it was unsanitary and sometimes there were no rooms or places available. Yes the pay was good but I also felt more satisfaction in what I was doing there [UK] than here [Trinidad]. (Cece, 38: Nurse)

The pull factors for skilled and unskilled women are found to be somewhat different. Skilled, professional women take into consideration their career advancement and self-actualization when emigrating, while for unskilled women migration may have been the only option that was available to them to experience a better life economically and in terms of opportunity. 'I wanted the best opportunity for me. The UK provided me with an opportunity to self-actualize. In my opinion that is worth more than wages' (Sally, 33:

Medical Doctor). The push factors triggering women's migration are much more complex than those of mainstream migration concerning men because factors beyond the simply economic should be considered. These factors are specific to women, who are a disadvantaged group within society and may experience abuse, neglect, abandonment, and lack of social mobility. Omelaniuk (2006: 5) explains:

> As gender attributes are usually assigned by cultures, the migration choices and constraints for females can vary vastly depending on their socio-cultural origins. One could argue that in the case of the Philippines, Sri Lanka and Thailand, the high migration of women has been possible inter alia because of the greater flexibility in gender roles in those societies.

She further argues that, 'the more restrictive the role assigned to women in their origin countries, by culture or religion, the less actual female migration' (Omelaniuk, 2006: 5). Women in the Caribbean have had a history of taking up roles outside of the house. The history of slavery, indentureship and colonialism in the Caribbean has left the family unit without the security of a man; it has meant that men have often been marginal in the family, thus promoting the persistence of matrifocality (see Chapters 1 and 2). Women were always incorporated into the workforce in the Caribbean; thus, women had to assume the roles of both carer and breadwinner in the family. Their independence and responsibility for others gives them the capacity and motivation to migrate and the ability to take control of their lives and imagine and pursue a better future,The factors that motivate women thus go beyond economic and political considerations. I do not perceive migrant women as being solely economic animals in pursuit of financial advancement. I also consider the emotional needs of the woman to act as a push factor motivating both skilled and unskilled professional women to migrate. A good example is Rose, who felt emotionally distressed in her job. She said:

> My career as a teacher was going nowhere. The students were disrespectful, the school was poorly constructed, there was no benefit in teaching. There was little or no room for promotion. The school was set up in such a way that only persons belonging to a certain religion could have gotten promotions. I felt alienated from the job I was doing. I needed some sort of motivation. (Rose, 44: Teacher)

The problem of skilled labour migration is not new to Trinidad or for that matter the Caribbean. Ratha and Xu (2008) point out that the Caribbean was ranked in the top ten of

regions experiencing high rates of migration in 2005, for both skilled and unskilled individuals. With the rise of recruiting agencies and information technology, the migration of skilled labour has increased. Thomas-Hope (2002: 12), in her study of the Caribbean, writes: 'The propensity for migration of skilled personnel is highest at times when there is a lack of confidence in the economic or social stability of their country.' Therefore, a loss of confidence in the economy pushes skilled individuals to leave. The state of the sending country is an important push factor, as highlighted by Thomas-Hope (2002). Additionally, I also found that the jobs skilled professionals were undertaking did not meet their emotional or mental needs. Hence, they felt unfulfilled and disillusioned.

For both skilled and unskilled women, mothers and non-mothers, the push and pull factors were interconnected; for skilled women the major push factors were stagnation and lack of opportunities for self-actualization and personal fulfilment. The corresponding pull factors were the opportunities to develop their skills and improve their careers, which would benefit both themselves and their families. Unskilled women were motivated to leave because migration proved to be the most viable option economically and emotionally and they were attracted by the idea of being in a big city. Undertaking menial work without being judged appealed to them because they earned better wages and they were independent. The decision-making process thus encompasses both push and pull factors for migration and these were interconnected.

## Conclusion

In this chapter, my aim was to answer my first research question, which was *why* women emigrate. Therefore, I focused on the decision-making process in migration. The actual decision to emigrate was one of the most difficult times for my participants because they had to leave their families and children behind to settle in a country with which they were not familiar. Some of the motivating factors for migration were: economic and financial advancement of the family, escaping from abuse, self-actualization, and the allure of a 'big-city' lifestyle.  In the existing literature, economic motivation in international migration is emphasized, and other factors are treated as secondary.  I found, however, that during the period of decision-making, there were more emotional factors than financial ones influencing migration. Their motives were complex and could change over time, but

what remained a constant was the fact that they left because their families needed them. In this respect I noted that economic and emotional aspects were interconnected.

I argue from a feminist perspective that there is something greater than the 'bottom line' motivating the migration of Caribbean women. The advantages of financial gain are interconnected with love for family: the driving force behind international migration in this study is the love for family, in particular children. Women are sole breadwinners in most cases and, while financial and economic reasons were a part of the decision-making process, providing sufficiently for their family and children was their central concern. Therefore the economic and financial issues were driven by familial ties and should be understood within that context.

The push of the sending country and the pull of the receiving one were intertwined. Many participants felt as though their lives were stagnant on the island, they felt confined by a small island life and this pushed them into the decision to migrate, attracted by the pull of a cosmopolitan city life. Additionally, the pull of receiving countries in terms of a perceived 'new', 'fresh' start and the push of a difficult life of abuse and ridicule helped make decisions easier. Having discussed the decision to leave, I have begun to look at why women migrate internationally. In the next chapter, I will explore the implications of international migration and show how this has impacted upon the lives of migrant women. I also look deeper into their new lives in destination countries.

# Chapter 5

## A Better Life. Really?

### *'Life is a Struggle but I Rather Struggle There'*

There is a growing literature on gendered approaches to migration. Research has been dedicated to exploring issues relating to why women's and men's experiences of migration are different and how this has influenced family life, work and policy (see Pessar, 1999; Kim, 2013; Dreby, 2012; Williams, 2011; Boehm, 2008). In my study, most women were the sole breadwinners in their homes and were migrating independently. Migrating meant a chance at a better life filled with opportunity. My main aim in this chapter is to explore the lives of migrant women after migrating and settling in another country. The accounts of these immigrant women will give a deeper understanding of how women migrate and what the settlement process meant for them. The period of settlement is critical to the understanding of cultural and social isolation, exploitation, exclusion and mental health problems.

The period of settlement is a very challenging time for women, as Lily (38) explained: 'Two of the most difficult times in this whole process were actually making the decision to migrate and then settling in another country.' One of the most bewildering tasks was finding a place to live. Immigrant housing will be discussed in this chapter because it emerged as a significant theme during interviews. I found that many participants were living or had once lived in an illegal space. Housing for immigrants, especially in cities such as London and New York,[58] is very difficult to find. These are noted as two of the most cosmopolitan cities in the world, experiencing a high inflow of migrants from every continent.[59] Migrants can feel isolated living in a big city in a foreign country. I use the term 'social and cultural isolation' to discuss how the women felt. I will highlight issues of adaptation and assimilation into an unknown culture. My participants initially felt as though they did not have a place within the receiving country and it seemed as though they

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[58] IHC (2008) says that New York is an immigrant city. In 2006 it was found that 30% of New Yorkers were foreign born. For more information see:
http://prattcenter.net/sites/default/files/confronting_the_housing_squeeze.pdf

[59] Leo Benedictus (The Guardian: 2005) *(Every Race, Colour, Nation and Religion on Earth: part one)* describes London as one of the most cosmopolitan cities of the world along with New York and Toronto. He cites census statistics from 2001, which show that 30% of London residents were born outside the UK. Article available at: http://www.theguardian.com/uk/2005/jan/21/britishidentity.race also visit Office for National Statistics website at: www.ons.gov.uk for a breakdown of census data 2001.

did not belong. In most cases they felt disconnected from the host society. Also, in many instances, they explained that they were usually mistaken for another race based on their physical appearance, which made it difficult for them to 'fit into' certain groups.

I will discuss some of the views relating to employment and wages that were shared during the interviews, thereby exploring the impact of migration on their lives and the pressures they experienced with respect to employment. Their status as immigrants made it difficult for some of the women to find work and to receive suitable wages. The relationship between work and wages was dependent on their educational status and whether they were undertaking skilled or unskilled work. Their status as legal or illegal immigrants also determined the work they undertook and the wages they received. Since most women in this study are in a common-law union, or were at the point of migration, I wanted to look at the gendered division of roles in the family. I noted that some women were more active in providing for their families. These women were less financially dependent than those who did not solely provide for their families and, although some of them come from a background of abuse, they have managed to secure a better future. Ultimately, my aim in this chapter is to provide a full account of the challenges facing women as they began to settle into a new country and how they adapted and coped with problems they encountered.

## Getting Started

Joy (31) describes a plane easing its way down onto the runway; she looks out of the window at the new land that awaits her. Invited to disembark from her Caribbean Airlines[60] flight, she lingers, trying to suck in her last breath of the hot Caribbean air trapped inside the plane. The doors open, she walks through the airport, goes through security and out of the door, where she sees the familiar faces of her relatives. As she walks out of the airport, she says that the heat of the sun transforms from roasting to caressing; she is barely aware of its presence. She explains that the air feels thick, the place strange, a cold wind whips over her face; this she says is not the place she was expecting. She tries to keep up with her relatives as they walk and are feverishly chattering about something in a tongue she cannot understand. Everything seems as though it were on fast-

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[60] Caribbean Airlines is the national airline of Trinidad and Tobago. It provides flights to all major travel destinations from the island.

forward, the cars pass speedily by, the people walk as though being chased; it is definitely different from her home country. She feels disoriented, and again wonders whether she made the right decision.

This first impression lingers for some time. She told me that she felt alien and self-conscious since it seemed as though she was always under scrutiny because she stood out. The way she dressed and spoke, and her mannerisms were all tell-tale signs that she did not belong. Lily (38), Lisa (54), Joy (31), Roselyn (45), Iris (42), and many others in this study spoke about the difficulty they experienced with simple activities such as walking and shopping. They told me they felt self-conscious because everything moved so quickly and they could not keep up. They were not accustomed to the street signs and were not familiar with the laws. In Trinidad, as in every other country in the Caribbean, we carry on our daily activities at a slower pace, which we refer to as 'island time'.

It did not surprise me when I heard that my participants had experiences such as these. Unlike countries in North America and Europe, the Caribbean is seen as a relaxed place for tourism and holidays. Although Trinidad is different in terms of its industrial sector, it does share similar traits with other islands. Lisa told me that when she first migrated she was extremely surprised by the fast pace at which everyone moved. Sometimes she would fall behind and usually trip over herself because she could not keep up with the street crossing signs. She also explained that she was terrified of using public transportation such as buses and trains.

Joy, like most of the women, explained how difficult it was for her travelling to another country and settling. She too felt afraid to go out, and was most afraid of getting lost. Cayla (27) described the feeling of alienation after she first set foot on American soil. She explained that everything felt strange and she was overcome by a feeling of alienation and discomfort: 'I was shocked, I felt alienated, like I didn't belong.' She reminisced about the first time she walked out of the airport; a memory she explained she will never forget. She recalled the cold gust of wind that greeted her and the array of many different races of people speaking various languages. She said she felt strange and disconnected from her relatives, who had lived there for a number of years. Cayla said it took some time to adapt to the new place she now called home. However, eventually she became accustomed to her new environment. She explained that it was difficult to make new friends, especially

women of her own age because they were much more mature than her and she did not feel that she had anything in common with them.

Similarly, Cindy (39) remembered her first time travelling to London, looking out of the aeroplane windows and feeling how cold it was through the glass. She said it was all very strange to her and she could not understand what language was being spoken to her even though she knew it was English. Several women recalled that they felt scared; they felt strange for a while having come off the plane and into a place that some of them had never even seen before. 'It was a weird feeling at first; it was definitely strange and horrifying all at the same time' (Lily, 38). The culture shock they experienced was the most difficult thing for them to deal with. The experience of culture shock, according to many authors, is very difficult for some individuals and may adversely affect them emotionally and mentally when they are placed in an environment of total unfamiliarity (Oberg, 1960; Bennett, 1998).

For these women, their main tasks were to obtain stable employment and income, secure a place to stay and become familiar with finding their way around. Since the women who participated in this study were predominantly travelling independently without their partners,[61] they had to navigate around an unknown country alone. This, in addition to their feelings of guilt and isolation, made the period of settlement a difficult time. At this stage, both skilled and unskilled women experienced similar feelings such as fear, loss, guilt,[62] depression and anxiety. These feelings intensified over time, especially for those who were mothers.

I found that adapting to a new place was more difficult for unskilled women. They face the uncertainty of unemployment, run the risk of exploitation and may experience greater risks to health because of the tensions of finding employment, housing, and stability. Additionally, both groups of women were susceptible to feeling isolated, experiencing culture shock and exclusion due to their lack of familiarity with places, and the change in the weather. The Migrant and Refugee Community Forum (MRCF 2012: 9) explains in the case of London:

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[61] Three out of 25 women migrated with their families/partners. The women in this study were single, or in common-law relationships. Most of them were not legally married. See Chapter 3, which gives the demographic information of all participants.
[62] Participants who were mothers experienced guilt due to leaving their children behind.

> Many people arriving in London report experiencing wider social isolation, a lack of opportunities to meet local people, a lack of confidence and the expectation that they will encounter hostility from their local community. […] These difficulties are coupled with a lack of access to mainstream public support, including public services and the welfare state.

The women said they felt excluded from society because they could not relate to their new environment. They also explained that they were afraid to speak to locals in their community because of their status as immigrants. Because settlement was exceptionally difficult, the thought of succumbing to the pressures and returning home always worried them.

> During the period after I arrived I felt lonely and I always questioned my decision. I thought about the reality of the situation because I found myself feeling homesick. One of my greatest fears was not being able to tough it out and fail even before I had started. (Iris, 42)

In the past, Caribbean men typically migrated first to find employment and a place to live.[63] In contemporary Caribbean society, migration has taken on a more feminized character. Roles are reversed in that women are now actively involved in the decision-making process and settling. Women also provide money and care goods for their families and support them in their country of origin.[64] Two noteworthy cases were Hayley (43: USA) and Renee (49: USA). These two women were the only participants who were lucky enough to migrate with their entire family.[65] They shared similar feelings to others in this study but were happy that they had their husbands as a support. They explained that the presence of their husbands made things easier for them. Leah (29: USA) also migrated with her husband but, unlike Hayley and Renee, had great difficulty during settlement. Her husband was an American and she was not, which, she explained, made her feel alienated and lonely.

Iris (42), Hilda (43), Sally (33), and Leah (29) explained that the most difficult time for them was trying to find their way around and this was worsened by the detachment they

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[63] This was noted in the migration of male workers to Panama and Costa Rica, and the recruiting of men into the British Army during World War Two (see Chapter 2).
[64] Remittances will be discussed in Chapter 6.
[65] Their stories will be further discussed in Chapters 6 and 7.

felt from the place itself. All participants admitted that their initial impression of the new place was one of shock. It was not what they were expecting when they envisaged moving to a developed country. I found that they had all in some way imagined something different and in actuality life was more difficult than they had envisaged. It proved to be a life marked by hard work and not the dream they expected.

> I wasn't expecting a bed of roses but what I got in return was so far from what I was expecting. The hours were difficult, the life was fast. It was difficult to get accustom with. Everything is fast over there; we do things very slow here. It's a fast-paced life in New York. Everything proved to be a problem at first. The transportation, the weather, it was difficult but it was worth it. (Deena, 36: USA)

Participants spoke of the difficulties they faced in adjusting to the weather in their host countries, which could increase feelings of isolation and Hayley (43), Roselyn (45), Cindy (39), Kathleen (35), Celia (48), Iris (42), Rose (44), Lily (38), Cece (38), Hilda (43), Pearl (62), Sally (33) and Callie (39) all described in detail the impact of the weather on their settlement. Their experiences and the vocabulary they used to describe the way they felt were similar. Words such as 'isolated', 'depressive', 'fatigued', 'detached', 'overbearing', 'alienated', 'gloom', were used in describing their experiences. The drastic change from Trinidadian weather to European and North American weather thus added to the difficulty of their settlement.

> I literally missed the sun! And the funny thing about it is that I hate the sun. I realized that the weather affected my moods severely. When it was sunny outside I felt happy. When it rained, which was so very often, I felt very depressed because it felt burdensome and depressive. (Sally, 33: UK)

> I felt sometimes as if I was going out of my mind. It was overbearing, there were some days I didn't even feel able to leave the house because it was very cold and I usually got very sick. The weather made me feel alienated because I was always confined to the four walls of a room. (Kathleen, 35: USA)

There were great similarities when it came to the settling period for all of these women. Having made the difficult decision to migrate to another country for their own sakes and for their families, they were now faced with the stress of adjustment. Despite what they described as the most dismal time of their lives, they persevered because of the thoughts they carried with them about their families and children. 'It did not matter how difficult it

130

got and how lonely I felt, I thought only about my family and the good it would do in the longer term' (Roselyn, 45). They all told stories about times when they felt as though they were lost. Many times they wanted to give up and go home because they were feeling socially and culturally excluded. The unfamiliarity they had longed for and the existence they had wished for upon leaving the Caribbean proved to be overwhelming in reality. 'I remember wishing to be unknown, to have neighbours that did not care. When I got what I wished for I felt hurt and truly alone' (Kathleen, 35). Diakanwa (2011) explains:

> Americans are perhaps the most hospitable and generous people in the world. Their ethnically segregated communities make it difficult to fully integrate new immigrants in their society. Many Hispanic, Chinese and new immigrants arrive and work in their segregated ethnic communities, as a result; they fail to learn English and the American culture. I have met hundreds of Hispanic clients, during my seven years as a social service worker, who could not make a sentence in English after residing in the US for more than 20 years. The USA seems to be the only nation where people identify themselves as Mexican-American, Italian-American, African-American and so forth. (Diakanwa, 2011: 3)

Although Trinidad is an English-speaking island, the English used is commonly referred to as 'creole' or a 'broken' form of English, which is dissimilar to the English spoken in North America and the United Kingdom. I found that women had a difficult time being understood and understanding the natives in their host country because of the clashes in accents.  The segregation of immigrant Caribbean women from mainstream culture left them no choice but to gravitate towards what was familiar to them. Many found themselves in groups and clubs, and living in areas that were predominantly occupied by immigrants, which made them feel more at home.

Finding individuals similar to themselves in a place so far from home made their settling period less difficult. 'The ironic thing is this […] Imagine I wanted to get away from Trinidad and the people and I found myself yearning to be a part of it again. So I rushed at the opportunity to live among my countrymen' (Kathleen, 35). The issue of isolation and segregation from mainstream culture and society was prominent in all my interviews. It always begged the question of why did they stay and why, if they felt this strongly, did they not go back to the country they missed?

I heard a beautiful account given by Leah (29). She is a secretary who had been residing in the United States for two years at the time of the interview. Leah's story is one of perseverance and sacrifice and is a noteworthy account. She grew up in Trinidad where she was the only daughter. Born to an ailing mother and an elderly father, it was Leah who had to take control of the household duties at a tender age; hence, she had to discontinue her schooling. Her mother, being mentally ill, needed constant attention and Leah had difficulty balancing a job and taking care of her parents. She eventually found herself in a common-law relationship with a man who abused and took advantage of her. Her mother eventually committed suicide and her father was committed to a home for the aged.

Despite all this, she managed to secure employment with the OJT programme in an oil company, where she met her now husband. She migrated to the United States, where she currently lives with her husband who is a citizen of the USA. Leah explained that she had nightmares about her previous common-law relationship and she frequently felt guilty about leaving her elderly father. Although she was excluded from American society, her husband's family and was experiencing chronic depression, she decided to make herself into a more successful woman. While she longed to go back to Trinidad during her early days of settlement, she channelled all of her energies into making her life worthwhile. She explained that her motivation was the memory of her mother and to make a better life for her elderly father. After two years, Leah is now a successful secretary in an accountancy firm, she is still married and is pregnant with her first child. Her father died but Leah said it was his memory and encouragement that made her feel worthwhile. She was glad that her decision to migrate made the last days of her father's life more comfortable.

Like most of the women I interviewed, Leah vowed that, despite the difficulty she faced due to being separated from her family, her future would be better than her past and this is why she persevered. However, unlike most of the women in this study, Leah migrated with her husband and gained support from him. The assistance from her husband made her period of settlement easier. Foner (1976), in discussing the differences between settlement for Jamaican men and women in England, wrote:

> Female migrants […] maintain closer emotional ties with their relatives back home. Jamaican women continue to have strong feelings for their mothers, even when separated by thousands of miles. Women's ties to relatives seem to contribute to pulling their loyalties homeward, particularly when no other siblings remain behind in Jamaica to care for their mothers. (Foner 1976: 32)

Foner (1976) found that family was very important for women and this was seen in the fact that they wanted to eventually return home to Jamaica to care for their families. Loyalty and dedication to family acted as a catalyst for them to stay and settle in these foreign countries. The women in Foner's (1976) study were trailing wives whose sole aim was to support their husbands and maintain their role as a housewife in the home, unlike my participants.

Most of the immigrant women in my study initially stayed with relatives who had taken up residence in immigrant communities[66]. They then had some help in finding employment and learning their way around. However, I noted that there were mixed feelings when it came to the involvement of foreign relatives in their settlement. From some of the stories shared, I observed that the novelty of them being in a foreign country quickly wore out for foreign relatives and they began to be less helpful.

> I think it is important to sort everything out on your own before you make a decision to go anywhere. I have learnt that you cannot depend on relatives. They will promise to be a help to you but at the end of the day they will do nothing. Family could only tolerate you for some time and then it is up to you the individual to do things for yourself. But can you blame them? My relatives took me in, I had to take it upon myself and learn the place and how to travel, use trains, buses, cars. I had to find employment, build rapport and get contacts. And after six months the ironic thing is, they asked me to pay rent because I couldn't stay in their house for free, pay bills and buy groceries, which I didn't mind. This said house that they were boasting on was a three-bedroom apartment in a bad area. You must understand this is six months after I left Trinidad, and they already monitored my money. I moved out and found a nice comfortable place of my own. (Joy, 31: USA)

It became increasingly evident that relatives who were initially helpful in the receiving country subsequently were of little or no help to my participants, which made their time of adjusting even more difficult. The involvement of family during the decision-making stage was seen as helpful but during the settling stage relatives were seen as a hindrance. Bella (30: USA) said:

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[66] This refers to the settlement patterns of immigrants in receiving countries. Caribbean immigrants are prone to taking up residence in communities such as Brampton in Canada, Queens in New York and Croydon in London. These areas are commonly referred to as immigrant communities. For more information on immigrant communities and settlement patterns consult, *'New Faces, In New Places: The Changing Geography of American Immigration'* by Douglas Massey (2008).

> I had to make sure I helped in every way possible, if anything went wrong in the house they (her family) did not accuse me of anything but I knew by their mannerisms that they blamed me for a lot of things. It was just so very uncomfortable. I felt unwelcomed and it was very tense as if walking on eggshells.

Lisa (54) said her first priority was getting a stable job. She took the initiative and followed up on contacts that her family provided. Experiences during settling were similar for most women. Unskilled women's priorities were to obtain a steady job or any sort of income to be more independent. They started to save and realized that they were in a position to venture out by themselves. Then their priority became to search for cheap living arrangements. The goal of all participants was to live as cheaply as possible while saving their incomes to send home to support the family that they had left behind.

In Wei's (2011) study of trailing wives moving from China to Great Britain, husbands took the lead in making suitable living arrangements, but living on a tight budget was a major problem for these Chinese wives in adapting to life in Britain. My participants also found it necessary to budget, managing their finances and housing, in the receiving country. They also had to provide financially for their families back in the home country. Iris (42) describes her time of settling as the early days of struggle. She explains:

> I had to do everything by myself. I was offered a job by a recruiting agency and came to England. I remember trying to live as cheaply as possible. I stopped eating meat… [*laughs*] I didn't buy unnecessarily and I was not fazed by living beyond my means. I tried not to use much gas or electricity to save on bills. I budgeted and that is why I had enough. I placed money aside every week and tried not to overspend or over-indulge in anything. A certain amount for food, bills, rent, and of course some to send back home, which was my greatest priority.

Although she found this time difficult, she maintained that she was realistic in her thinking. She did not believe England to be a place of magic where everything was provided on a golden platter. Instead, she saw it as a place where hard work was better rewarded. Iris explains that in her experience the most worrisome areas during the adjusting period were familiarizing herself with the weather, finding places without getting lost, learning to communicate effectively with the British and educating herself quickly on

matters of finance and how to save as much as she could. Bella (30) shared a hilarious story of saving money in New York. She explained:

> I would pass by Macy's on my way to work and go into cosmetic counters to pretend I needed assistance. I would spray fragrances and use cosmetics for free so that I did not have to pay. I would use all testers available so that I did not have to pay for cosmetics. The funny thing was that I could not go to counters frequently and had to change the times I would go. I feared that I would be recognized.

Callie (39) shared similar experiences of living in the UK. She said she would go to Boots and pass by banks on her way to work to get free tea.

> I remember trying to save as much as possible. I would go by Boots to get free samples of perfumes and face creams. Whenever I saw a free sample I would grab it up. For food I would pass by HSBC to get free coffee and tea. And visit tea shops and bakeries for free samples of food. I remember digging in bins for underwear in Primark. I didn't think anything was wrong with that because I saved a great deal of money.

My participants' main aim in working was to save. Saving meant that they had to decrease their expenses. In order do so they had to make decisions during the settling stage that would enable them to have enough money to survive and to send back to their family.. In order to improve their quality of life, it was important to work. Saving and budgeting was a major priority. Due to their dedication to supporting their families and making their lives better, they felt worried and strained. This commitment to achieving a better life came with the drawback of isolation.

## Social and Cultural Isolation (*A Case of Mistaken Identities*)

Initially, participants found it very difficult to assimilate into the new culture of the receiving country. I heard of many instances in which women felt cut off from mainstream society. Bhugra (2004) notes that:

> Migration involves not only leaving social networks behind (which may or may not be well established) but also includes experiencing at first a sense of loss, dislocation, alienation and isolation, which will lead to processes of acculturation.

> A series of factors in the environment combined with levels of stress, the ability to deal with stress, and the ability to root oneself according to one's personality traits, will produce either a sense of settling down or a sense of feeling isolated and alienated. (Bhugra 2004: 129)

Participants explained how difficult it was for them to adapt to a new way of living and said that the feeling of isolation and alienation persisted. Even many of those who had relatives or friends in receiving countries also explained that they initially felt very alone alone. Staab (2004) explains:

> Female migrants move between two cultures, that of their home country and that of their destination country. Different values, norms and customs, and even languages, usually cause women migrants' psychosocial stress, and often contribute to marginalization and discrimination against migrants in the host country. (Staab 2004: 14)

Many immigrant women from the Caribbean experienced marginalization in relation both to other immigrant groups and to natives of the destination countries. The Caribbean is seen as a very welcoming, friendly place; the small size of the islands promotes a culture of strong community and familial bonds. These strong kinship ties[67] were said to be lacking in the countries to which my participants migrated. The lack of kinship, warmth and friendliness added to feelings of isolation and depression. 'Though I was running from that sense of community, I missed it tremendously because I felt so alone' (Kay, 29: USA). Participants explained that relatives who migrated were different and had changed because of assimilation into a new way of living. 'I couldn't relate to my relatives, they were different and nothing like the people I knew before. I truly felt like an outsider' (Kay, 29).

Ponizovsky and Ritsner (2004) note that feeling lonely is a very common occurrence among new immigrants. Mothers explained that the feeling of loneliness was coupled with great guilt because they had left their children. The paralyzing fear of not being able to 'make it' also added to women's woes when settling into another country. The pressure to be successful added to their sense of isolation and depression and in some instances led to insomnia and chronic anxiety. Isolation and loneliness have been linked to a wide range of mental and physical health problems, including depression, anxiety, and in some cases

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[67] The ties to family and friends are a dominant feature in Caribbean culture. This is because of the smallness of the islands. Families and friends constantly communicate and share close-knit bonds.

mortality (see Hawkley et al., 2010; Grenade and Boldy, 2008). Therefore, the impact of isolation is very important when focusing on the implications of migration for immigrants. I found isolation to be a direct result of racial, ethnic and cultural background and heritage. Bhugra (2004) identifies the differences between ethnicity and racial identity. He explains:

> Ethnicity is a common heritage shared by a particular group and will include history, language, rituals, preference for music and food. Although there may be an overlap between race and ethnicity each has a different social meaning. Racial identity refers to a sense of group or collective identity based on the perception that the individual shares a common racial heritage with a particular racial group. (Bhugra 2004: 133–134)

There were many stories of isolation caused by culture and race. Most of the women felt like misfits in the society they were now a part of. Race and ethnicity are part of the cultural make-up of an individual and influence their identity. The Caribbean is unique in this way because many varying peoples have migrated there (see Chapter 1). As a result of this melting pot (as it is called locally), we have a unique way of life and have forged a distinctive identity.[68] When participants migrated to another country they experienced cultural isolation from those who shared their Indian or African lineage. Even though some of their practices were similar, they could not relate to other groups.

There was a particular account given by Jamie (32: USA), in which she explained that natives did not understand the culture she came from and usually mistook her for another race. She shared a story of always being mistaken for Hispanic or Latin American. She felt isolated because of the way she looked. Being black Caribbean, Jamie explained that she wondered where her place was and what she should identify with. She said she would usually feel lonely because of her inability to feel connected to a cultural heritage. Deena (36: USA) shared a similar story in which she was always mistaken for another race and as a result of this misidentification found herself on the receiving end of prejudicial treatment.

Rose (44: UK) is of East Indian descent and her story is one that I thought was very significant. She said that she felt excluded from the British Indian community. Rose follows the practices of Hinduism. She is a descendent of indentured labourers and was

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[68] Trinidad in particular received great numbers of immigrants from India and slaves from Africa. Therefore there are many descendants of Africans and Indians living in Trinidad.

born to an East Indian working-class family in Trinidad. She explained that she has always been a spiritual person and was born into a very strict Hindu home. She travelled to India on many occasions with her family for religious pilgrimages. Rose said that when she migrated to Britain she wanted to find Hindus like herself and searched for places to worship. Her experiences while trying to fit in to the Indian community left her feeling excluded.

> I came to Britain with the same notions of how we lived in Trinidad with everybody getting along, Hindus, Muslims, and Christians. But it was not the same at all, when I went to temple or had club meetings they [Indians] would not speak to me, I had to speak to them and when I did they would sometimes ignore me. It became overbearing and one day I confronted them because this was the place I worshipped so it bothered me. The women eventually told me, 'you are not Indian, and you are not one of us.' Another said she felt ashamed for me coming from Trinidad and being an ex-indentured immigrant. Then the whole group erupted asking me questions about how I felt to be a mixed raced person, it all was very insulting […] I couldn't identify with the Caribbeans because the groups and clubs formed specified that it was for 'black Caribbean only' and on the other I wasn't 'Indian' enough for the Indians. (Rose, 44)

Like Rose, many other Caribbean immigrants find themselves struggling to identify with the diversity of cultures presented to them in their host country. They wonder if they should identify with their ancestors from Africa, India, the Caribbean or with this new world they now belong to. This usually leaves them feeling more disconnected. In his biography, Naipaul writes:

> The future is as black as ever. Nobody loves me, nobody wants me. In England I am not English, in India I am not Indian. I am chained to the 1000 sq. miles that is Trinidad; but I will evade that fate yet. (Naipaul 2008: 115–116)

He uses this experience to explain how he felt as an immigrant living in Britain but not British, as East Indian but not from India and how he struggles with the identity of being Trinidadian. This feeling of multiple exclusions persists in that, like Naipaul, participants felt as though they did not know how to relate to their new environments or what to identify themselves as. In most cases, the Indo-Trinidadians felt that they were not 'Indian' enough for the South Asian community and not 'black' enough for the Caribbean immigrant community.[69] One of the reasons for this was Indian cultural retention, such as

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[69] I noted that Indo-Trinidadian immigrants felt more displaced and isolated than Afro-Trinidadian women.

religion, food, dress and music, during the time of indentureship. This made them less able to assimilate into the mainstream culture in the receiving country. Afro-Trinidadian women, when compared to Indo-Trinidadian women, had little cultural retention from their African heritage.[70]

According to Guibernau (1996: 72), identity is 'a definition, and interpretation of the self that establishes what and where the person is in both social and psychological terms.' My participants felt as though they had been stripped of what they considered to be their identity. They also felt lost because they did not know what their true identity was. Additionally, many Indo-Trinidadian women said that they were usually mistaken for Latin Americans or Mexicans in the USA and this proved to be an obstacle for them in adjusting to the new culture.

> I am firstly an immigrant in a foreign country trying to make an honest living. Added to that I am mistaken for another race. So that makes me a Hispanic domestic worker, which makes it even more difficult for me because stigmas are usually attached to certain races. That is the situation that we live in back there [in the USA] because I get mistreated for being something I'm not. (Kay, 29)

Kay told me that certain races undertook certain types of jobs, which contributed to this misidentification and its associated stigma. Hayley's experiences were similar:

> When I first migrated and even now people always tell me I am a Mexican. The Mexicans would usually come up to me and talk and ask me things in Spanish. I remember this one time, I went into a department store and the security would always follow me and watch my every move. Just after that a lady was observing and she said it's because you're Mexican. I was disturbed that people would be that stereotypical and there are many other stories I could tell you. It really made me feel lost and disenchanted a bit. (Hayley, 43: USA)

Hayley, like Kay, felt as though she was mistreated for being something she was not. From their stories, I gathered that this affected them negatively. They were racially discriminated against and stigmatized based on the way they looked. This added to their feelings of disenchantment with their new environment. Bella experienced worse prejudice than other participants; in her case she was mistaken for a Pakistani.

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[70] See Chapter 1 for a discussion of slavery and indentureship, cultural retention and erasure.

> People would usually think I am a Pakistani. There were even some places I couldn't even go to because people would call me names […] look at me funny. It was very shocking. I didn't know how to cope sometimes. I remember when I just came I was afraid to even go out because I was afraid of people and what they would say. (Bella, 30: USA)

Bella's fears were exacerbated by the experiences she had with gang-related violence in her neighbourhood. Leah also experienced of racial discrimination, which made living in the United States difficult. She described how alone she felt and disengaged from the larger community.

> I didn't understand where to fit in. People would always mistake me for something I wasn't. I felt a little lost […] maybe it was because in Trinidad we are very laid back, we embrace everybody. But I had to endure a great deal of racism and prejudicial treatment. (Leah, 29: USA)

Sources of social and cultural isolation may come in various forms. However, regardless of race or educational background, all of my participants experienced some form of disconnection and exclusion from mainstream culture and society in the receiving country. This was one of the most negative impacts of migration on their lives and it was a major issue for them in settling into another country. This feeling of alienation persisted for a long period after settlement. When they were able to assimilate into the culture of the country and found people of similar background it helped them.

Deena (36) described feelings of guilt and loss at having left her family behind. She explained that when she left for a new country she felt isolated. This did not come from the unknown culture or the country itself, she said, but from her own self. She was driven to work very hard so that when she came home she would feel tired and fall asleep. Doing this made it impossible to think about her child whom she had left behind. Deena also said she felt guilty and ashamed when she went out, even if it was to buy groceries. This guilt and shame came from within, because she explained that her aim was not to socialize, go to parties, or shop, but to support her family.

She described a very grim picture as days passed during which she did not see or talk to anyone. Deena was aware that her seclusion was her own choice. Similarly, Callie (39: UK) found herself becoming isolated because of her own fear of not being able to 'make

it'. She explained that after her arrival she was constantly afraid: of not being accepted by her new co-workers, of not being successful (which was her greatest fear) and of unknown places and situations. She felt anxious when she thought about work and having more responsibilities placed on her shoulders. She was constantly troubled and anxious at the thought of living in a foreign country and failing. Callie's inability to cope with her new life, and the stress of being a success and supporting her family, placed her in a state of constant fear.

Perceptions and imageries of the receiving country are another significant reason leading to the social and cultural isolation of women. Technology is one of the means of carrying certain images to immigrants in developing countries. It is through television, the internet and telephones that 'would be' immigrants learn of the advantages of travelling to more developed countries. Salazar (2010) explains:

> Old and new information and communication technologies –from snail mail, fax and fixed telephones to mobile telephony and the Internet allow people to travel virtually and meet others, hereby transcending geographical and often social distance as well. Especially visual media such as television, photography, film and websites give people the opportunity for imaginative travel. (Salazar 2010: 6)

This growing availability of media influences individuals' perceptions of life in developed countries, thus influencing their decision to migrate. These perceptions and dreams[71] that immigrants have about receiving countries are not always accurate. When people arrive in the destination country and these expectations are not met, this may lead to feelings of isolation and disenchantment. Reality versus imagination was a recurring concern in all my interviews. The idea of travelling to the 'motherland'[72] or the 'big apple'[73] meant that there was a great deal of expectation and anticipation.

Through television, news, friends, and even churches, immigrants from all over the world have been drawn to what they imagine to be the American Dream (Stoll, 2009). Stoll (2009) argues that the American Dream is the supposition that, no matter how poor someone is, there are endless opportunities to build a better life for themselves and their children. Additionally, Pollina (2003) explains that there are two major components to the

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[71] I refer to this as the 'imagery of the developed world.'
[72] Referring to those women migrating to Great Britain.
[73] Referring to those who went to New York.

American Dream, which are freedom and opportunity. It is because of freedom and opportunity that migrants are drawn from countries where these conditions do not exist (ibid). Del Cid (2011: 11) notes that the American Dream 'attracts people who want an opportunity to climb the social ladder and achieve the life that the United States promises to anyone who is willing to work hard.' According to Pillai et al. (2009), America is considered to be the land of opportunity; many Americans believe in liberty, equality, hard work, and eventual prosperity and it is these suppositions that immigrants believe to be true.

In many cases, what migrants experience when they arrive is very different from what they imagined. This disconnection between dream and reality results in exclusion and disillusionment. The idea of a diasporic movement being fuelled by fantasy and the projection of hope is fictionalized in many Caribbean writers' work on migration.[74] In the case of the UK this typically portrays the story of a perceived 'motherland' that does not deliver. In Levy's *Small Island* one of the main characters, Gilbert, engages in a monologue in which he captures feelings of the motherland by saying:

> Let me ask you to imagine this. Living far from you is a beloved relation whom you have never met. Yet this relation is so dear a kin she is known as Mother. Your own mummy talks of Mother all the time. 'Oh, Mother is a beautiful woman – refined, mannerly and cultured.' Your daddy tells you, 'Mother thinks of you as her children; like the Lord above she takes care of you from afar.' There are many valorous stories told of her, which enthral grown men as well as children. Her photographs are cherished, pinned in you own family album to be admired over and over. Your finest, you best, everything you have that is worthy is sent to Mother as gifts. And on her birthday you singsong and party. Then one day you hear Mother calling – she is troubled, she need your help. Your mummy, your daddy say go. Leave home, leave familiar, leave love. Travel seas with waves that swell about you as substantial as concrete buildings. Shiver, tire, hunger – for no sacrifice is too much to see you at Mother's needy side. This surely is adventure. After all you have heard, can you imagine, can you believe, soon, you will meet Mother? The filthy tramp that eventually greets you is she. Ragged, old and dusty as the long dead. Mother has a blackened eye; bad breath and one lone tooth that waves in her head when she speaks. Can this be that fabled relation you heard so much of? This twisted-crooked weary woman. This stinking cantankerous hag. She offers you no comfort after your journey. No smile. No welcome. Yet she looks down at you through lordly eyes and says, 'Who the bloody hell are you?' (Levy, 2004:139).

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[74] See Andrea Levy's (2004) *Small Island* and Samuel Selvon's (1956) *The Lonely Londoners*.

For my participants, the feelings of alienation were deepened when in most circumstances the receiving country did not deliver. Although women said that they knew to expect a difficult life after migrating and were prepared to deal with it, the reality of that difficulty was something they were unprepared for. The National Archives (2013: 1), in reference to the movement of Caribbean migrants to Britain in the 1940s, explains: 'Contrary to popular legend, no one expected the streets to be paved with gold, and almost every migrant had heard travellers' tales about how cold the climate was, and how difficult the conditions could be.' In my study, this proved to be true; there were no misconceptions[75] in terms of Britain or the USA being paved with gold or offering an easy life. All my participants said that they knew they would have to work hard in order to succeed. However, the reality of what that meant and the stresses created by life in the receiving country proved to be too much for some of them. I believe that, although participants said there were no misconceptions, they still held high expectations of what the receiving countries had to offer. I also believe that, because they desperately wished for a better life, they underestimated the problems they would face and the life they would have to lead in the receiving countries.

I noted that many of my participants (even those from the USA) saw Britain as being bourgeois, a place where only educated, skilled individuals could succeed.[76] Rose (44) explained: 'before I went to the UK, I always thought that it was more traditionalist and superior than North American countries. I was under the impression that if someone wanted to live there they needed proper qualification and vocation.'

The relationship between Britain and her ex-colonies has helped in perpetuating a fantasy of a mother and her children. Migrants are drawn to a life which they perceive as being like a fantasy or fairy-tale. Pearl says that she was drawn to a life in Great Britain because she imagined she would be living like the queen, in a country filled with aristocrats. She loved the British accents and believed that anything was possible in the queen's country once she worked hard.

> I believe growing up in Trinidad you wonder what it would be like going back to the mother country and seeing these places you would read about in books. I

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[75] The reality of settling, dealing with the cold British weather and the difficulties faced during everyday living proved to be challenging.

[76] This is shown in the number of skilled workers migrating to Britain as compared to the USA.

thought England was a place where anything could happen, I could become anything I wanted to and things would be easier and dreams more accessible. It meant more opportunities that Trinidad could not have possibly offered. But then you arrive and you just know that like every other place you have to work just as hard and sometimes even harder. I worked night and day to make things happen, what I dreamed it would be like and what it really was like were two different things. I felt depressed because of it. (Pearl, 62: UK)

Participants felt alienated in a place that was not as welcoming as they had been led to believe prior to migration. Renee describes her feelings when she first travelled to the United States as being a very low point in her life:

I was led to believe that everybody spoke to everybody and were friendly, mannerly, and polite. When I went there I never saw my neighbours, I didn't speak to anybody because I never saw anyone. People never said good morning/good night, they were all really in their own world. Even my relatives wouldn't even come visit, everyone was so busy. This place that I imagined in my mind, a house with a white picket fence, it didn't exist. I felt alone, I felt as if I made a wrong decision. (Renee, 49: USA)

I had an interesting conversation with Cece (38: UK), who related a story in which she described herself as being the odd one out, the outsider, and felt very awkward because she had not imagined life in London to be what she encountered.

*Diane:* So what were you expecting?

*Cece:* I was expecting a better life, one that was better than here [Trinidad]. When I went people wouldn't speak to me, they were a bit unfriendly [*laughs*]. I hardly saw my neighbours and when I did they would hussle in their houses before anybody would offer a word. In work the conversations were pleasant but nothing too personal or long, just short hellos, how are yous.

*Diane:* How did that make you feel?

*Cece:* I would usually wonder if I made the right choice, because I felt so unhappy. I felt cut off from the world. It was just work and home, nothing else. Sometimes I would feel depressed and go take a walk to clear my head but I would always feel lonely because I missed my family, my friends and

neighbours. I would feel as if I was an alien, an outsider; in every situation I would feel uncomfortable. It was as if I was living in a pseudo-reality where what I thought was far removed from what was real and this made me question myself and what was going on around me, it made me feel disconnected from reality.

Most of the women expressed similar feelings. Their expectations of the developed world in most cases were not accurate. Participants felt that hard work, dedication and perseverance would propel them towards a successful life. They agreed that, while they had better opportunities financially, they had painful experiences socially and it was because of these financial opportunities that they stayed and helped to make their dreams a reality. Isolation, disconnection, grief and fear were costs they were willing to pay for the improvement of their lives.

Despite the hardships they endured in trying to cope with the reality of their situation and their new life, they struggled with the idea of belonging and making things work. 'Though I was lonely, though my heart broke every day because I left my children behind, I had to move away from that and love my new life by force because it was the smarter thing to do rather than sit and cry' (Celia, 48: UK). They had ideas of going back home but they concluded that admitting failure and returning home was not an option for them, so they endured. 'There was no pressure from anyone, only the pressure I put on myself and I was never going to succumb and go back home' (Celia, 48).

Mobile phones, computers and the Internet made them feel less isolated. [77] They used the Internet to keep abreast of local news by reading newspapers and streaming Trinidadian programming. They said it helped them maintain a connection with their home country. 'Having the Internet made me feel like I wasn't missing anything back home. I was very much in tune with the local bacchanal,[78] the internet really helped me keep updated with local news' (Lily, 38: UK). Thomas-Hope et al. (2010), in their study of female domestic workers in Singapore, pointed out that:

> […] the mobile phone was crucial for facilitating a sense of absence from their physical present. Were it not for these personal phone calls or text messages, their

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[77] The advantages of technology for migrant women and their families will also be discussed in Chapters 6 and 7.

[78] A local term used by Trinidadians to refer to 'gossip'.

communication would mainly be with their employers since they were mostly housebound. With the mobile phone they could 'escape' and maintain an existence, however fleeting and intangible, which extended beyond their lives as maids. (Thomas-Hope et al., 2010: 6)

Although most of the women in my study were not live-in maids, they all said that technology made them feel connected to their family and friends. Additionally, residing in communities where there were many immigrants also helped them feel less disconnected and more integrated into society. These communities reminded them of their homeland and relationships and new bonds were formed. Gordon (1964) points out that ethnic groups create a sense of 'peoplehood'. Similarly, Marger (2011: 8) writes: 'this sense of community or oneness derives from an understanding of a shared ancestry, or heritage. Ethnic group members view themselves as having common roots, as it were.' I noted that ethnic group relations made participants feel less isolated and helped in easing their anxiety and depression. When they eventually found other people of similar background who understood them they felt less detached. Other participants, especially skilled women, said that after the initial stages of settling they grew accustomed to life in the receiving country and formed new relationships with people at their jobs.

Participants said that they had found a community of Caribbean women like themselves in comparable positions. The people they formed relationships with were also in search of a better life and because of these networks they felt less lonely and more at ease with their decision. They overcame isolation, depression and even managed to form new relationships. However, employment and wages seemed another burden they had to deal with during their period of settlement.

## For Better or for Worse? Work and Wage Discrimination

The definition[79] provided by the ILO emphasizes that any preferential or partial treatment of one group of persons against another based on personal ascriptions is considered to be discriminatory. There has been much research dedicated to highlighting discrimination

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[79] Any distinction, exclusion, or preference made on the basis of race, colour, sex, religion, political opinion, national extraction, or social origin, which has the effect of nullifying or impairing equality of opportunity and treatment in employment or occupation (ILO, 2003: 16).

against immigrant men and women in terms of work and wages (See Reimers, 1983; Altonji et al., 1999; Trejo, 1997). Studies have shown that one of the main concerns of immigrant women is survival (see Raghuram and Kofman, 2004; Man, 2004). This concern with survival has encouraged them to set priorities for family-related economic adaptation instead of pursuing their own choices and rights. Work and wage discrimination show varying results when it comes to native and foreign-born female workers. Beach and Worswick (1993), in their analysis of the Canadian labour market, found that wages were not significantly different for immigrant women and native Canadian women; however, immigrant women who were highly skilled and educated earned less than those who held the same job and were natives.

Conversely, Rubin et al. (2008: 45) argue: 'Migrant women, in a sense, face a double battle; first to migrate and integrate as foreign born people in their host country, and then to overcome the gender bias in the labour market.' Shamsuddin (1998) found in his study that there exists a 'double negative' discrimination effect on wages received by immigrant women because of the fact that they are women as well as foreigners. However, he argues that gender discrimination and wages are more relevant than discrimination by birthplace and origin. Hayfron (2002) found that there does indeed exist a double negative effect on female immigrant earnings in his examination of Norway. Nicodemo and Ramos (2011), in summarizing the literature about immigrant women and wages, conclude:

> Female immigrants experience a double wage penalization: first, they suffer discrimination versus native people, and, second they have less advantage in the labour market with respect to immigrant men. (Nicodemo and Ramos, 2011: 4)

Participants had mixed views about their experiences when it came to work and wages. Wage and work discrimination depended on the legal or illegal status and the educational background of the immigrant woman. I found that the immigrant status of unskilled women determined the type of work and wages available to them. The women in my study were domestic and care workers, doctors, nurses, and teachers. Their accounts were different in that I did not find the typical view of an immigrant woman being taken advantage of to be true in all cases. Some women did experience discrimination in the workplace and also in the wages being offered to them because of their status as illegal

immigrants, while others never experienced any such discrimination. The Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants (PICUM 2013) points out:

> Undocumented women are often excluded from the general system for accessing basic social rights, including health services, housing support and violence against women shelters, and they face particularly disadvantageous terms when seeking access to justice and equality before the law. (PICUM 2013: 2)

This proved to be the reality that undocumented migrant women faced in my study. They experienced hardships in accessing jobs and in addition their employers usually underpaid them. 'I went to the US and stayed illegally and it was because of this I believe I had a lot of problems getting work' (Joy, 31).[80] These women accessed their jobs as domestic and care workers through relatives and friends who had migrated earlier. 'My relatives who lived in the US helped me because they had a lot of friends. So because of this I got odd jobs cleaning and baby-sitting' (Jamie, 32). A community had been formed among these migrants both prior to migration and post migration and they usually helped each other when it came to getting employment because they all undertook similar work.

The skilled professional migrants on the other hand were not undocumented workers and had migrated through legal channels. Still, they experienced a different type of discrimination; they explained that they were usually underpaid and received less money than their native counterparts. Trejo (1997), in his analysis of the USA, argues that returns on education and experience are generally greater for US natives than for immigrants. Participants who were skilled stated that, during the early days of their settlement, they did not receive the same salaries as their local friends undertaking similar work.

> When I first came I was very excited because I was getting the opportunity to work in a better environment with better equipment, so I was happy. Of course, the wages were far better than what I was earning in Trinidad but what I realized is that my friends who were British nationals would get higher pay than me. So I investigated the matter because I was unsure whether or not they had more experience or more qualifications. As it happened this was not the case, I was just offered less pay, and this went on for years until eventually things changed. I always referred to it as my hazing days, being incorporated into the new working environment. (Lily, 38: Nurse, UK)

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[80] Women in my study who had emigrated and stayed illegally were initially hesitant to reveal this fact. As the interviews progressed, they became more relaxed and offered additional information to help me in understanding what they had undergone in terms of employment.

There were other stories from those undertaking skilled work who were dissatisfied with the wages they were paid. Rose (44) explained that when she first migrated to the United Kingdom she was underpaid. She said:

> Initially I was underpaid. I didn't get as much money as the other teachers, but what could I do? I was happy at least it wasn't so bad as what I was earning back home. (Rose, 44: Teacher)

Some participants were of the opinion that the low wages they received initially were a life lesson teaching them to work hard. Hilda describes her initial years after migrating as the most difficult and that she had to work her way up.

> In my experience I had to work my way up and build experience in the new job. I was placed under another nurse to learn what had to be done even though I was more qualified. She taught me everything there was to know about the new equipment we were working with and showed me how to go about doing simple bookkeeping. I caught on quickly but still the wages never changed. (Hilda, 43: Nurse, UK)

There were also some participants like Celia, who were content with the money they earned, even though it was lower than that of their counterparts in the same job. Participants like Celia were grateful that they were obtaining better wages after migrating than they were earning in their country of birth.

> Of course I didn't get pay as compared to those other nurses and to tell you the truth I didn't mind…All I was concerned about was the fact that I at least was getting more than what I was earning back home. (Celia, 48: Nurse, UK)

Cindy (39) explained had found a job through a recruitment agency and had heard about the opportunities in England through friends who were also nurses. She explained that when the offer was made for her to go to England and work in the local health service she was aware of the wages. She agreed when she considered her earnings in Trinidad since the wages offered to her in England were greater. However, Cindy said that when she first started working she realized she was being underpaid when she compared her pay to other workers in her group. She told me that all the other migrant nurses from Nigeria, Bangladesh and Jamaica were also being underpaid. Two years after her arrival in

England, however, she began to receive wages that were similar to native nurses as a result of the expertise she had gained in England.

Many skilled, professional migrant women had similar experiences in which they would be given wages that were less than those of their native counterparts. However, they all said that they were still earning more than they had earned in Trinidad prior to migration, which made their choice more tolerable. 'Yes I was getting underpaid, and yes I was fully aware of it at the time. But the fact remained it was still better than what I was getting in Trinidad' (Roselyn, 45: Special Education Teacher, US).

The dependence on both skilled and unskilled workers from developing countries is increasing in more developed countries. Kofman (2007) points out that, because of this growing need for and dependence on skilled labour, the rights of entry and the accompaniment of family, residency status and work permits are easily granted. Conversely, unskilled workers are more vulnerable to insecurity and exploitation. According to Yeates (2008):

> Unskilled migrants enter as contract labour, tied to employers by work permits that are issued to the employer, not the migrant, greatly increasing their vulnerability to abuse by restricting migrants' ability to leave their employment, arrangements that are close to 'bonded' labour. (Yeates, 2008: 242)

This was not the case for any of my participants. Some participants who were initially undocumented workers experienced an alternative type of discrimination. They were not only underpaid but were mistreated by their employers. Their illegal status forced them to undertake jobs that they would not normally do, but they were willing to do anything to make enough money to send home to their families. 'Initially I was illegal. I was willing to do anything because I was illegal and I needed the money so I was going to put up with any mistreatment without saying anything' (Lisa, 54, USA). Accounts from domestic workers show that they were underpaid by employers and were given more work than they were paid to do. 'I was being underpaid and given a lot of work. They [her initial employers] did not care and they did not pay well' (Lisa). In some cases, women said that their employers would make them do other odd tasks that were not a part of their work and they did not get paid for these. 'In the early days I had to put up with all sorts of things. I had to clean, do laundry and then they [her employers] would leave their children with me

to take care of, which wasn't my job' (Lisa). She said that her initial treatment by employers upon arriving in the USA made her feel as though she had made the wrong choice to emigrate. Not only did Lisa have to take any work available to her, but also when employers found out that she was there illegally they would increase her workload and underpay her. But she explained that, as the years passed, her experiences changed and she met a 'lovely Jewish family' (with whom she now lives). They helped her obtain her residency and she feels as though they are her second family.

Pauline (40: Domestic Worker, USA) explained that her initial experiences after arriving in the USA made it a very difficult period for her in terms of work. She went to the USA in the hope that she could earn more money to support her family back home. When she started to work, she would undertake four jobs a day cleaning various apartments, but some of her employers were extremely difficult to work for. Apart from being underpaid, she would also have to take care of the children, which was not part of her job. She said she would have to walk the dogs and work through her lunch hour because her employer would remind her that they did not pay her to spend time in leisure. Pauline (40) said:

> I would thieve calls from my employer phone because I was angry [...] they would have me working through without rest. They monitored my work. I had to spray the crutches of their underwear. My employer would model in thongs and asked me if it looked good. If I ignored her she would insult me and take money out of my pay for being insubordinate.

Unskilled women who undertook domestic and care work usually had similar stories of low pay and mistreatment. The question arose as to why women undertook domestic work in the receiving country and did not find alternative employment. They all gave the same response: domestic work was readily available to them. They already possessed the skills needed to undertake such work. They saw it as an easy way to obtain money and there were no questions asked or strings attached in terms of them being undocumented workers. The idea of cleaning for money did not strike participants as something menial or to be treated with scorn. Instead they were all grateful that they had stable employment and felt confident and independent because they were working hard and earning wages. 'I always remembered being abused and dependent. I didn't care if I had to scrub toilets for a living because I did it with pride knowing I was earning an honest living' (Bella, 30, USA).

Kathleen (35) shared her life-changing story of working as a domestic in the USA for over fourteen years. Kathleen explained that when she first arrived she would clean four to five apartments a day, depending on the distance between them. She said that she was offered a job to be a live-in maid to a very rich family living in the Long Island area and she accepted. After accepting the job and moving in, she was mistreated. Her wages would usually be late and instead of getting paid monthly she would sometimes have to wait for two or three months' pay at once. In addition, she would have to endure insults and harsh remarks from her employers' older children. She said they would threaten her that if she ever left her job they would contact immigration services to have her deported. It was unclear how she managed to escape from her situation, as she did not want to disclose this, but she said she is thankful for her friends, who supported her through that time. Now she has a better job and is in a better situation. Despite initial experiences of discrimination and exploitation, things improved for most of these women and they gained experience in terms of handling various situations and moved into a much better position.

> As time passed things changed. I still do domestic work but it's now become a type of small business and the money is very good. It pays very well and I have very good relationships with my employers. (Farah, 45: Domestic Worker, USA)

It is clear from the accounts above that both skilled and unskilled women faced discrimination in terms of wages and in their work. Although the forms of discrimination against skilled and unskilled female migrants were different,  they tolerated it because they earned more than they were accustomed to in their home country. 'I was doing better in the UK and though I experienced these things [unfair treatment/wages] I did not want to go home because I was doing this for the sake of my family' (Farah, 45). I noted that participants put up with mistreatment, discrimination and alienation for the sake of improving the lives of their families. One of the major reasons for staying was to save their earnings to send home to their families. With the stress of unemployment and rising costs, they had to manage their money wisely. One of the most efficient ways of cutting expenses was to rent a cheap place, which was usually a basement or studio apartment in an undesirable neighbourhood.

## Basement Mentalities: A Story of Perseverance

A typical Caribbean house is made up of at least two bedrooms, a living room, a kitchen and a verandah, or what Trinidadians refer to locally as a 'gallery' or 'look out'. A feature of life on a Caribbean island is the love of its nationals for the outdoors, enjoying warm weather and beaches. Many Caribbean people have more outdoor space than those residing in congested cities in Europe or North America. The layout of a house is unlike that of the more developed countries. Whether in the rural or urban parts of the island, garden space for recreation is seen as important when purchasing property. Typically, in Trinidad, a house says something about the financial status of an individual. However, participants did not live in large houses with white picket fences when they migrated. 'Back home the bigger your house is, the richer you are seen in the eyes of people. I live in a basement so what does that say about me?' (Farah, 45). What emerged was the number of women residing in basement apartments in foreign countries.

> I wanted to find a cheap apartment where I could live cheap and did not have to pay a lot of money. I wanted to have my own place, be independent but I also did not want to over-spend because my reason for coming was to get as much money I could get to support those who needed me back home. (Farah, 45)

As they took on the pressures of providing for their families and securing a future for themselves, these women's lives were marked by great sacrifice[81] and selflessness. Some 17 out of 25 respondents said that they had lived in or were currently occupying a rented basement apartment. They did this because they wanted to pay as little as possible for rent and to save as much money as they could. Kay (29) said, 'I had to remember my goal and not get side-tracked by a glamorous lifestyle. So I got the cheapest apartment and saved most of my money.' I was shocked at the remarkable lengths to which these women were willing to go in order to provide for their families and secure a better future. Their willingness to do so reflects the role of Caribbean women as breadwinners and their independence in looking after themselves.

> I do housework; I have a couple of jobs a day. Like they say a woman's work is never done. I don't have a man to see about anything for me. It's all on me. If I leave things as is nothing will get done. That is why I do everything. I work from

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[81] My participants did not think it a sacrifice to provide better for their families. But they viewed leaving their families behind as a great sacrifice that had to be made.

> morning until it gets dark from one place to the next cleaning, then I come home and get things done. Upon all of that I have to keep myself on a strict budget and make sure all my bills are up to date. That is why I live in a basement. Cheap rent. My family comes visit me and turn up their nose because they expect some glamorous New York penthouse [*laughs*] they ask me why I live like that when back home I have a house. But I say they don't know the struggle in Trinidad, they don't know the hardship. I am happy in my basement. (Pauline, 40)

There were many cases like Pauline's where women chose to live in basements or one-bedroom apartments in what they termed 'bad neighbourhoods' to control the amount of money they would have to spend on rent. MRCF (2012: 9) states: 'Many migrants are not entitled to social housing, leading to an increased dependence on the private housing sector and an accompanying exposure to overcrowding and inflation.' Among my participants such private housing usually consisted of illegal spaces converted by landlords with the intention of making a profit. Hence, in their inability to access public housing, they are vulnerable to being exploited. These women told me that they had better living arrangements in Trinidad, where they lived in spacious houses, whether it was by themselves or with their families, whereas now they live in a smaller place described by many as having no windows, no patio, and no garden.

> The apartment I occupied had no windows, there was one door and of course a yard was out of the question. The house I lived in back home was bigger, more spacious, it didn't mean I was rich or anything; I just had a bigger house back home. (Farah, 45)

IHC (2008) found that immigrants in New York were three times more likely than native-born New Yorkers to live in overcrowded conditions, and often lived in illegally converted basement apartments or other available spaces. The conditions under which immigrants live in New York are very poor, rats and mice live in their buildings and there is the common characteristic of having cracks and holes in their apartments. The number of illegally constructed rooms and spaces in houses in New York has been steadily increasing over the last few years, especially in immigrant neighbourhoods (IHC, 2008). New York and Florida[82] were two states in the USA to which participants migrated. They explained that finding suitable places to live was extremely hard because

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[82] Over the years, Caribbean immigrant groups have clustered in specific US states. As in the first half of the twentieth century, they remain heavily concentrated in New York, while Florida maintains its long tradition of attracting refugees from Cuba (Thomas, 2012: 8). See Bibliography for full article.

154

of the number of immigrants residing there. Knowing full well the perceptions of Trinidadians and the link between their house and financial status, I felt the need to understand whether they felt as though they were merely surviving and whether life was worth living in a basement rather than a house. A main reasons they had given for migration, as well as taking care of their family more effectively, were for a more stable life, higher income and professional actualization The fact that so many were living in basement apartments did not reflect a life conducive to all these things.

The stigma of poverty and lower social status is attached to the basement apartments that immigrants rent. In the light of this, why did women subject themselves to living in apartments that were not as stable as the arrangements they were accustomed to in Trinidad? The answer I found was simple; living under such conditions was seen as the first stepping-stone to a successful life. Jamie (32) explains that there are not many options for immigrants in terms of housing and that rent is particularly expensive in the New York area, but. The cost of living is quite low compared to Trinidad. Jamie said that it was a bargain she was willing to make. The living arrangements were not what she was accustomed to in terms of space and amenities. However, she expressed her love of shopping for groceries and clothes and being able to buy many things with far less money. Individuals migrate because of the economic benefits derived in the country of destination. However, 'making it'[83] requires a degree of sacrifice. The first major sacrifice that they had to make, as highlighted by these 17 participants, was the willingness to live under conditions that they would not normally consider in their native country. In an action typically referred to as 'rent control',[84] these women sought to spend as little as they could while working and saving most of their earnings for the family whom they had left behind. For women, settling down meant not only settling in a house, but also making a house a home. They described how they transformed their apartments into more welcoming places and emphasized the fact that the upkeep of the apartment was a reflection of their own ambitions.

> I think the way you keep your house reflects something about you. The place I lived was not glamorous; it was a one-bedroom basement apartment. Everything

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[83] The term '*making it*' was used by participants throughout the interviewing process to describe a situation that they considered to be the height of success. It was used to refer to a state of enjoying financial independence. They saw this as being in a position to afford to live and support themselves and their dependents comfortably.

[84] Rent control was a term used to describe the amount of money they saved by renting basement apartments.

was cramped together. But that did not deter me from buying nice things, fixing it up, getting cheap curtains, flowers, and furniture. It's funny really [*laughs*] you cleaning for others but you can't keep your own house clean and tidy. Not me […] I am not that person. I don't like to come home and meet a dirty house. (Lisa, 54, USA)

Similarly, Reese shares what she did to make her living arrangements more comfortable. Like many other women, Reese viewed her initial position as a constant reminder of the sacrifices she was willing to make to improve her life.

My apartment was not much but I had to make it liveable; that was my job. When I came home I cleaned nearly every day. Things sold cheaply so I would always buy small things piece by piece to make the place look better. When I look back on those times it was something that had to be done. I think about it as a stepping-stone […] starting from the bottom and working my way up. Things are not handed to you, you have to work for it […] be willing to make changes, do without certain things so that in the long run you see some benefits. (Reese, 29, USA)

Farah described to me how proud she felt renting her own place and how happy she was. She said that, based on her hard work and sacrifice, she believed she would one day be successful. Despite living in a basement, she was persevering and felt a sense of achievement that she could afford to pay her rent and live independently.

The basement I lived reminded me daily of what I came to do. A lot of people when they reach America they forget and get side-tracked and want to live like they born and grow up there. I kept it clean, I decorated it, and I wasn't ashamed of it because that is what I could afford, I wasn't an American, I was an immigrant. I was proud of my basement and I learned plenty things there. It was a stepping-stone for me and a chance at getting a better life. (Farah, 45, USA)

Like Lisa, Reese and Farah, many of these women explained the importance of keeping their apartments neat and tidy; they claimed it was a reflection of them as women. The fact that they saw their living arrangements as a stepping-stone to a better life is very significant. They believed that one day with hard work, diligence and perseverance they would have a better life. In the immigrant neighbourhoods where participants lived (in both the USA and the UK) there was gang-related violence, petty crimes such as theft as well as drug-related crimes.

After first moving to Britain, Lily (38) lived in Manchester in a one-bedroom basement flat. She explained that as a woman without the security of a man in a foreign, unfamiliar country she did not feel secure in her apartment or walking the streets after certain hours. She reminisced about the times when she would feel edgy. The noises that she heard were amplified because of her fear of living alone in an area riddled with gang-related violence. Most women still chose to live in these neighbourhoods because of the low rent. It also helped them to feel less socially isolated because they were among immigrants like themselves.

There were both advantages and disadvantages to living in immigrant areas. I also noted that the stories of immigrant areas differed; some women thought it was a hindrance while others thought it helpful. Some explained that living in these apartments assisted them in assimilating into their new lives and facilitated them in fostering a 'home away from home' feeling. Cindy (39) has lived in Britain for over eleven years and explained that she gravitated to the neighbourhood in which she currently lives because it reminds her of her home country. She explains:

> When I first visited my friend in Manchester I fell in love with her neighbourhood because it seemed familiar. Walking around, I heard familiar accents of Trinidadians, Jamaicans and Barbadians. Looking into the shops I saw products from back home. The curry, the snacks, the beer, it just seemed right being around people similar to me and it made me feel as if I was back home and that is why I moved. (Cindy, 39, UK)

Like Cindy, many women chose to live in these communities because of the familiarity of the people, the fostering of their home culture in the receiving country, the shared identity they formed as a collective unit, lending support to each other, as well as the affordability of the living spaces in these areas. 'I loved living in Queens because it reminded me of home' (Cayla, 27). Furthermore, Celia (48) explained: 'I found support in my community; it was also a cheap alternative to where I previously lived.' Foner (2001), in her description of West Indian migrants, writes:

> Like other newcomers, West Indians gravitate to areas with kinfolk and friends, where they find comfort and security in an environment of familiar institutions. Yet racial discrimination and prejudice put severe constraints in their way. West Indians, as Croder and Tedrow's analysis shows, are as segregated from whites as American blacks. Real estate agents often steer West Indians to black

neighbourhoods or withhold information on housing availability elsewhere, and West Indians themselves often prefer communities where they can avoid racism and rejection. (Foner, 2001: 11)

Participants explained that they chose a neighbourhood where they felt most comfortable. In many cases these neighbourhoods acted as a support system for them, helping them not to feel alone and alienated during times of gloom. While Lily (38) felt afraid and unsafe, Kay (29) described her neighbourhood as a family where she felt safe and protected because she knew her neighbours. She said:

> When I first moved to this neighbourhood I was taken by the fact that my neighbours actually cared to come by and introduce themselves. I would pass them on the streets and they would stop and have long conversations with me about everything and anything; it reminded me of home in that way. They looked out for me and it was just different, not like any other place I lived where you don't know your neighbours and hardly ever see them or hear them. (Kay, 29, USA)

What draw women to these communities is not only the allure of being around individuals of similar background but also the feeling of being more incorporated into a community of people so that they could 'be themselves'. 'One of the greatest advantages is cheaper and more affordable rent. This made the decision very appealing. Also I found that I could be myself' (Rose, 44). They have formed a type of international identity for themselves, mixing their home culture with their new way of life. They have not completely stripped themselves of the person they used to be. They have a feeling of satisfaction knowing that they have found a place for themselves and have overcome the feelings of dislocation they experienced when they first arrived.

In my study, participants who settled predominantly in immigrant-concentrated communities in Britain said there was a heavy presence of West Indians where they found a greater sense of identity. When I first sat down with Deena (36), she started off by saying how lonely she felt. She said she was isolated from mainstream society during her settlement. She described how living in a predominantly immigrant community made her life better. Deena is a nurse residing in New York, having emigrated five years ago. She said she had saved enough money to afford a place of her own and she chose to live in a community in Queens where she was surrounded by people similar to her. She explained

that she was missing Trinidad and felt as though she did not belong. She frequently missed her friends, the food, the weather and lifestyle, until she moved to the new neighbourhood where she now lives. She described it as her home away from home, and said:

> I used to miss the local food, when I was cooking it just wasn't the same and then upon familiarizing myself with New York I discovered this place in Queens where you could get anything from Trinidad because immigrants like myself owned shops and I could have gotten anything from home. I can't describe to you how I felt but I just was very excited because I was so very homesick. (Deena, 36, USA)

Many of my participants said that they enjoyed living in immigrant communities because they could purchase imported products from their country of birth. I realized that living spaces in immigrant communities meant more to women than cheap rent or acceptance. It gave them a chance to present their own culture from their home country on an international stage. 'I think one of the greatest things I noticed moving into that neighbourhood is that people were proud to show that they were not native to America but were in fact immigrants' (Farah, 45). Some of the accounts given by participants described how they found themselves being initially shy to even speak in the destination country. However, having moved into new communities, they eventually found a place where they were proud of their home country and not afraid to identify themselves as immigrant women. Teelucksingh (2010: 152), in his examination of the migration of Indo-Trinidadians, found:

> […] some East Indians have sought to formulate an identity among a racially and ethnically diverse population in Canada, the United States and Britain. The accent of Indo-Trinidadians is probably the most prominent trait, which makes these groups unique in public. Thus, many East Indians retain this linguistic characteristic rather than modify or adopt a new accent.

Some participants spoke in similar ways to their Trinidadian compatriots. Others had North American or British accents but still spoke in broken or creole English. They felt very proud of their Trinidadian accents and explained that they were proud of the way they spoke because it identified them as Caribbean natives. Some women explained that they could communicate in their native accents in the communities where they lived and this made them confident. Renee (49) said that her car and house are always adorned with her national colours of red, white and black and she always has her Trinidadian flag on display

159

in her car. She said that during the earlier stages of settling she did not know where to fit in and felt lost in a big country struggling to find an identity. However, she feels that she is now past that stage and although she has lived in the USA for over twenty years she still considers herself one hundred percent Trinidadian. Lily (38) also explained how living in an area surrounded by immigrant groups made her experience a better one; she said that if she did not have friends who understood the diversity of her background and culture she would have returned to Trinidad.

> Living in Britain, though it was difficult at the beginning, I quite enjoy it now. I will always consider myself first and foremost a Trinidadian because that is my home, it is where I grew up. After I moved and came to Britain I was lost and I didn't understand where to fit in but now I think I found a niche; it took a little time and getting used to but now thanks to my new flat it has given me new friends, a new life really. (Lily, 38)

Whereas in the earlier stages of settlement these women had felt lost and uncertain, with some even ashamed to be seen as an immigrants, as time progressed, they assimilated into their new lives and became confident women who were not ashamed to identify with their country of birth. Most participants explained that living in basements and immigrant communities had empowered them to make a difference. They have created a greater presence for their culture on an international stage and have assisted in bringing about meaningful change in Trinidadian communities.

## Conclusion

In this chapter, I have examined the lives of emigrant women during the settlement period and the impact of migration on their lives. The settlement period emerged as one of the most difficult times for participants because of guilt over leaving their children and social and cultural isolation, along with housing problems, discrimination and exploitation at work and experiences of racism. Initially, therefore, they felt that they did not belong, but as time passed they became less lonely as a result of networking and community through which they became better integrated.

Migration has both negative and positive effects on the lives of migrant women. They have experienced hardships as well as benefitting through this process. These benefits include a

better life, greater earnings and a chance at self-actualization in terms of career. The drawbacks of migration are social and cultural alienation, discrimination and separation from their children. Although there are disadvantages to international migration, all my participants agreed that their lives are better because of it. They have experienced drawbacks, especially during the initial stages of settling, but believe that the advantages of migration outweigh the disadvantages. They explained that because of their struggles they were better rewarded. Therefore, their struggles are seen as worthwhile. One of the most satisfying feelings was being able to provide for the families whom they had left behind. In the next chapter I will discuss how migration has impacted upon these families.

# Chapter 6
# International Migration and the Caribbean Family
## *'I did it all for the Improvement of my Family'*

The shift to women migrating independently has meant changes in the Caribbean family. As a result of this shift there have been challenges to patriarchy in the household, especially in East Indian families (see Chapter One). There has also been a growing concern over the impact of migration on the family. Many researchers have sought to understand the impact of migration on children, and by extension the family, who are left behind. Usually these studies have focused on negative impacts on children, including neglect and abandonment, the prominence of delinquency, health deficiencies, abuse and educational decline. The main advantage emphasized is economic, whereby the family receives financial assistance (see Bakker et al., 2009; Dillon and Walsh, 2012; Alcaraz et al., 2012). In contrast, I found that international migration has impacted on children but it may not be as negative as some studies suggest. Children belonging to immigrant mothers in my study have been described as understanding and contented individuals. I questioned whether migration resulted in families descending into a state of confusion and disorder or whether it simply led to a reordering of family life.

Familial disruption is cited in some cases as a consequence of the migration of one or more family members (Larmar, 1996; St Bernard, 2003). I argue that the Caribbean family unit is not chaotic or falling apart. Instead it is a natural progression of reorganizing what we have commonly understood as 'family'. It is important to bear in mind here the prevalence of matrifocal families in the Caribbean, the marginality of fathers and women's roles as both providers and carers. My aim in reiterating this point here is to highlight gender biases within the understanding of family in the Caribbean. A migrant mother is seen as one who abandons her children, while the father is and has often been marginal but is not blamed or held accountable.

In researching the migration of women, I looked at how this has affected the ordering of the family and its impact on the children left behind. There seemed to be a trade-off between economic stability and emotional instability. Since I was not able to talk to the children of these immigrant women, I relied on the accounts of mothers. They discussed in

detail the effects of migration on their children. In some circumstances I had the opportunity of observing children when I was invited to conduct the interviews, which gave me a little more insight into their. One reason for the migration of mothers is to afford a better life for their children. The role of remittances is significant since it has both symbolic and material value and will be discussed in relation to the need of women to provide for their families. One major issue was whether women were trying to compensate for their absence by sending gifts and money. I therefore address possible pressures placed on women to provide, and the degree to which there was a sense of obligation to send money and other material goods to their families.

## The Family Left Behind

Within the past decade, migration and its impact on the family has become significant due to increases in international migration. The composition of the Caribbean family has certain distinctive features, including the allocation of roles, responsibilities, relationship structures and living arrangements. Staab (2004) points out:

> In the countries of origin, caring for migrants' children is normally the responsibility of other women in the family (grandmothers, sisters, older daughters). Without their contribution, it would not be possible for the women to migrate. When women with children migrate, there is also an impact on the children themselves. A number of studies have analysed these impacts in the destination country, but it is also important to ascertain the consequences for the sons and daughters who remain behind with other family member in the country of origin. (Staab 2004: 13)

Hence, the international migration of mothers has meant that it is the responsibility of grandparents and other relatives to care for the children left behind. International migration in the Caribbean is usually a family decision. I found that mothers could not migrate if it were not for the help of their relatives. The rising rates of international migration among women in Trinidad and Tobago have impacted on the arrangement of the family. There are many studies examining the impact of parental migration on children (see Jokhan, 2007). Yeates (2008) points out the importance of what she terms 'distant carers'. She explains:

> Migration does not close down migrants' roles or identities as carers; instead, it transforms them into 'distant carers' who are incorporated into informal care

provision that relies on family, neighbours and friends living in close vicinity to the elderly parent or child. (Yeates 2008: 236)

The international migration of women, especially mothers, has resulted in studies portraying mothers abandoning their children, carelessly leaving them with incapable relatives while they leave for a better life in more developed countries. I found that this was not the case; children were not abandoned and those caring for them were not incompetent. They made great sacrifices for the betterment of their children's future. They did not neglect their responsibilities as mothers but played an active role in their children's lives. They kept in constant contact with their families, making sure that their children were well cared for.  At the same time many of these women earned money abroad by working as domestic or health care workers. They are thus involved in care, paid and unpaid, in both their original and destination countries. Furthermore, as Straub argues:

> At both points, origin and destination, it is necessary to accord greater value to the reproductive work of female migrants and non-migrants. In destination countries, migrants' work in domestic service (paid reproductive work) enables other women, who lead more privileged lives to free themselves from household chores and take up paid work outside the household. (Staab, 2004: 13)

Thus, there is not only continuity in migrant women's care work, but they are also, especially in the case of domestic workers, taking up part of the burden of other women's caring responsibilities.   Migrant women, especially those from the developing world, are therefore contributing to enabling more privileged women to pursue careers. .

> Women migrant workers have also extended the economy of care internationally. So that middle-class women can work or the elderly can receive care in the home, many thousands of women travel to undertake domestic work or work as carers to the sick and elderly. (Siddiqui, 2007: 10)

Women who migrate to care for children, the sick and the aged leave others to care for their own children, the elderly and the sick in their home countries. Yeates (2005) and Hochschild (2005) refer to this phenomenon as global care chains. According to Ehrenreich and Hochschild (2003: 3) 'migrant workers often leave their children in the care of grandmothers, sisters and sister-in-law.' This does not, however, mean that these children are necessarily neglected or that it disrupted their lives. The characteristics of

Caribbean families are crucial to understanding the situation in which children were left when their mothers migrated.

Women in my sample who were single, divorced, or in a visiting-type relationship usually lived in the same house as their parents, or other relatives. 'I was living with my parents at the time before I migrated so I had to help where I could' (Pearl, 62). These women said they helped in the upkeep of the house. They assisted in paying bills, buying groceries and making sure everything was working smoothly, both before and after migration. I understood that the children were not opposed to living with their grandparents, uncles or aunts because they were already occupying the same house. Therefore, the transition was not difficult. 'Yes it hurt my children when I was leaving, it is natural to miss someone. But they loved their grandparents because we were all living in the same house' (Pearl, 62These mothers did not abandon their children but left them with capable relatives with whom they already lived.

Participants told me that their children were initially unhappy about them migrating. They would usually have tantrums and cry, but the idea of having a better life overshadowed the temporary loss they felt. Participants thought they would migrate first and then their children would follow after. They believed that their absence was only temporary. The promise of reunification made their children feel less sad and abandoned. They felt that their mothers were going to make life better for them and one day they would be reunited. In most cases, as time passed, children were less inclined to follow their mothers to foreign countries to live because of the bond they shared with relatives and friends. Participants were independent women working and taking care of their children to the best of their abilities. Their families were close knit and they maintained strong bonds with their parents. Women who were not married and who raised their children without the help of a husband or father tended to share the same house as other relatives, which constituted an extended family household. According to Yeates:

> Transnational families and care practices are not historically new phenomena. Historical research shows that the raising of migrants' children has often been a collective endeavour involving extended family members and the wider community in a range of slave, colonial and settler societies. (Yeates, 2008: 237)

Participants' parents played a major role in their lives and the lives of their children and were a major support to them both before and after migration. Dudley-Grant (2001), in her examination of extended Caribbean families, gives an example of an elderly grandmother who is responsible for taking care of seven to ten grandchildren and commands respect from them. She explains that the grandmother is not a strict disciplinarian but, because of cultural values instilled in children, they respect adults. I found that Caribbean families were not chaotic and the children of these homes were not neglected. Instead, I found a different type of household being formed; one that was extended and in which the role of grandmothers was central to the functioning of the family.

The grandmother was seen as the head of the house and her advice was taken without question. There was no denying the admiration my participants held for their mothers, whom they praised as having more skill at raising their children. 'My mother is far better with children than me. The children love her and respect her, to this day I always question if their love for their grandmother is greater than their love for me' (Pearl, 62). As Plaza (2000) points out, in the Caribbean, contemporary familial practices of caring for migrants' children are consistent with culturally established roles of (maternal) grandmothers in the social reproduction of family.

During the period of slavery, stable family life was not possible (see Chapter 1); what did exist were strong ties between mother and child (Higman, 1978). International migration has strengthened women's role as providers in the home. Although they may be absent, women provide for their children both financially and emotionally more than men do even when supposedly present. Migration has meant greater opportunities for women, but it has also meant that, like men, the women are absent. However, absence should not be confused with marginality in that, although the woman is not physically present, she still plays an integral role in the lives of her children and family. In my sample, 18 out of 25 women had children before they migrated, which meant that these participants left their children behind. Children usually stayed with their mother's parents or siblings. There were no strong ties with the father's family or the father himself. Fathers were in most cases absent and did not take an active role in the lives of their children (see Chapter 4). Most participants at the point of leaving the country were in common-law relationships, visiting-type relations or single. Hence, those who had children had the sole responsibility of caring for them.

Most women who had children prior to migration shared similar stories. Their husbands or partners were not around and if they received financial help from their men it was irregular and ad hoc. 'I never received any money or any help from the children's father. It was like he had no children and they did not exist' (Pauline, 40). It is generally understood in developed countries that the father's role is as an economic provider, protector and disciplinarian, but this is not so in the Caribbean. Fathers are not actively involved in day-to-day childcare; they believe that women are better with children. Participants said that the fathers of their children rarely provided for their needs financially and were not involved in caring for their children. Lisa (54) said that her partner ill-treated both her and her children and would usually be abusive towards her. She said the only communication between her children and their father was one of disciplining, which she explained bordered on being verbally abusive.

> On the rare occasions the children saw their father when they were younger before I migrated he would be intoxicated. He would curse them and tell them all sorts of hurtful things because he was taking out the anger on them. They refused to live with him and he always thought they choose me. They would run and hide the few times he would come home to see them. He would never even give money and I never asked because I myself didn't want any altercation with him. (Lisa, 54)

In cases where participants (Celia, Pauline, Joy) were in common-law unions, I found that their partners were inactive in terms of employment and did not support them financially. In relationships such as these, it was noted that abuse and neglect had been a prominent feature and acted as a reason for migration. Children in these homes did not have close relationships with their father or his relatives. This was as a result of their father's substance abuse, his absence from the home and his violence. 'The children have no relationship with their father or his relatives. They don't acknowledge him because he did not do anything for them' (Iris, 42).

Pauline explained that her children were always fearful of their father and did not have any type of relationship with him. She said that they would always run away and hide when he came home during the night, especially if he was drunk, in fear of him becoming violent. Like Pauline, other mothers said that it was their duty to go to any school function or lend

support to anything that their children were involved in. Participants said their partners would not go to a graduation ceremony or a birthday party for their children and it was up to the mothers to take time off from their jobs to support their children. Pearl (62) said: 'I had to do everything, the children's father did nothing for them and it was really a waste of time asking him because he never showed up.'

Those women who were married (Roselyn, Rose, Deena,) said that their husbands did play an active role in their children's upbringing and were a major help to them. However, the main breadwinners in the family were women and they helped in keeping the family financially stable by migrating while their husbands took care of their children with the assistance of the mothers-in-law. Where women migrated and left their husbands, as in the case of Deena and Roselyn, their husbands were unfaithful to them in their absence and would neglect their children and leave them for countless days with their grandparents.

> My husband was unfaithful to me when I left and would leave the children by my parents. He tried very hard to conceal what he was doing but it came out when he kept bombarding me for more and more money. The children would usually complain that they were not being well taken care of, no food, any clothes, fees just kept piling up and bills. They would complain that their father had no time for them and would be agitated all the time and scold them. He would drop them by my parents for weeks on end and then eventually he said he didn't want the marriage anymore. But he never said he didn't want the children, but that happened too. They never saw him unless on birthdays. (Roselyn, 45)

The problem here, as in many cases was not maternal neglect but paternal neglect: it was fathers who played little part in their children lives or who had a negative impact on them; most were either marginal figures or had been abusive. Although mothers were absent, they remained actively involved with their children, whether they were in Trinidad or not. Women assisted in the emotional and physical development of the children. Their children were never neglected or abandoned by their mothers but instead most were a part of a loving and healthy environment provided by grandparents and other relatives. In some cases the children were said to be in a better environment than before their mothers left, because they had escaped from abusive or indifferent father figures. Thus, although mothers said that the children initially felt sad and a sense of loss, this was seen as a normal human reaction and as temporary.

In many cases migration could be seen as a means of stabilizing the family unit. Women, who had experienced abuse and had lived in constant fear of their partners, were able to obtain employment abroad and provide a better environment for their children. In such cases migration proved not only beneficial financially but gave the children a stable environment with relatives who cared for and about them. Relationships with men were a source of instability prior to migration. Even if men were not abusive they were seen as failing to provide support, squandering money and generally lacking in responsibility for their families.

Hilda (43) is a nurse and currently lives in Manchester. Despite much pleading, Hilda's children refused to migrate to England and join her, but stayed with their grandparents to continue their education locally. Although Hilda says she would have loved it if they had come to finish their education in the UK, it was much cheaper for her when they stayed. This is because the Trinidadian government offers free education. She says that her children refused to come to live with her because of the love and close bonds they shared with their grandparents and friends. Although she misses them, she knows that her parents would experience great pain and loss if she took them away. Hilda explained that she had been married and had divorced her husband of many years before migrating. When she moved to Great Britain to become a nurse she knew that she would only leave her children with her parents. Hilda, like most mothers who left their children with their parents, highly praised their parenting skills and ability to take of children. She said her children are now grown and will not be migrating to live with her because they are doing very well at school, but she wants them to pursue their studies abroad. Hilda's husband has no relationship with their children and has remarried, migrated and has a new family. She explained that she had to solely support her children because she did not receive financial assistance from her husband after they separated. She said that she knew she had to take an active role in providing for her children, and this resulted in her migrating.

> I left those two [*pointing to her children*] with their grandparents. My parents are strict, they don't tolerate nonsense […] when I was younger I would get a lot of licks[85] and education was always the priority. I was not allowed to have a boyfriend and if I did badly in school I had to endure long hours of extra lessons. My parents are not as lenient as me so I knew my children would not go astray, especially with them [*her parents*] taking care of them. And look at them now,

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[85] Local slang used by Trinidadians to refer to scolding.

> my eldest daughter is preparing for her final exams in CAPE[86] and my youngest just wrote SEA[87] and passed for her first choice. (Hilda, 43)

Like Hilda, other participants praised their parents and other carers of their children as being highly capable. The children themselves were praised by their mothers as being well behaved and well adjusted. Based on my observations of some of these children, in the cases where I had a chance to see them, they seemed contented. On some occasions the mothers would show me pictures, and awards that their children had won in various competitions. Mothers even showed me report cards, which signified that their children were not underperforming and some of them were above average. I interpreted this gesture by mothers as indicating two things. First, I believed mothers were trying to show me that their children were doing fine even though they were absent. Secondly, I thought that mothers were displaying to me the degree of their involvement in their children's lives even after migrating. By showing me how involved they were as absent mothers, they were 'displaying family' (Finch 2007).[88] By taking the time to show me the accomplishments, awards and achievements of their children, mothers were indicating how involved they were in their children's lives.

Celia (48) is a very good example of a distant mother who is involved in her children's lives. She explained that before she migrated she had three children and was in a common-law relationship with her children's father. She was abused for many years, both physically and verbally, and her partner would take the money she worked for and waste it on gambling and drinking. She said she eventually left and went to her parents' house to live and made the decision to migrate. Celia indicated that it was not a difficult transition to leave her children because they were already accustomed to living with their grandparents, but it did affect the children when she left.

> My children were upset when I left, they started performing poorly at school and would always call and cry and tell me that they missed me and wanted me to come home. My youngest did not want to go to school but they never gave

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[86] CAPE is an examination taken by sixth form students. Results from this exam determine tertiary education placement.
[87] SEA is an examination that is taken at the end of primary schooling. Performance in this exam determines placement into a secondary school.
[88] Janet Finch (2007) defines displaying family as, 'the process by which individuals, and groups of individuals, convey to each other and to relevant audiences that certain of their actions do constitute "doing family things" and thereby confirm that these relationships are "family" relationships' (Finch, 2007: 67).

trouble in any other way. They just missed me that was all, their father would visit them but that didn't help and eventually they got over it. They realized mummy was doing the best she could for them and they warmed up to the idea of me not being there. Now two of my children live in England and the other in Canada. My oldest is a teacher at a secondary school and is married, my second child is a nurse like me and works in a hospital in London and my youngest is pursuing postgraduate studies in electronics. (Celia, 48)

Similarly, Lisa (54) expressed feelings comparable to those of Hilda and Celia. Lisa had two children prior to migrating, whom she left with her parents. Her partner at that time was abusive towards her and her only option was to migrate. Lisa said it was very difficult for her children to adjust to the fact that she would not be there with them because their father was not active in their lives. What made it even more difficult, Lisa stressed, was the lack of cheap ways to communicate with her children.

When I left Trinidad all those years ago, emails and skype and all these other technologies were not available. Calling was expensive so I had to reduce communication through calling once per week. I remember I would put pen to paper and write letters and my parents would send me pictures and cards from my children. But now with technology I think things are made quite easier. You have webcams, facetime and skype and it makes you feel like you're literally physically with the person. (Lisa, 54)

Yeates (2008) points out the existence of what she terms 'globalized families' or 'transnational families', which are the result of a household internationalization strategy that is associated with international migration. Yeates (2008: 235) argues that these families are those: 'whose members may reside in different countries but which sustain active, regular links and connections with one another, often across large geographical distances.' Many participants maintained very close links with their families. They called home as often as possible to hear the familiar voices of their families. Communicating with relatives in the home countries also helped them to feel less isolated and more involved in their children's lives. Basch et al. (2008)[89] point out that:

These connections, assisted by travel and communications technologies (television, internet, radio, email, text messaging), reproduce the family bond and cultural contact despite the vast distances involved, forging and sustaining 'multi-

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[89] See Yeates (2008) *Global Migration Policy*.

Mothers such as Lisa (54) agreed that technology has made it easier for migrant mothers and children and has afforded mothers the luxury of being able to speak to their children more regularly. Farah (45) migrated to the United States eight years ago. She mentioned that her daughter showed her how to use a computer and said this made it easier for them to communicate. 'I felt as though I was there with them when they had a problem, for their birthday or any special occasion I was there with them. The computer sure did make life easier' (Farah, 45). Cindy (39) and Callie (39) were grateful for technology that allowed them to keep in contact with their parents and children. Both women explained that when they migrated it was difficult not being able to afford telephone calls. They said that days would pass until they were able to call their family. Strom (2002) points out that, for migrant workers, phone calls are essential for providing support and enabling people to stay connected with family members.

Uy-Tioco (2007) found that mobile phones allowed Filipina migrant workers in the USA to assert their roles as mothers. They preserved their love for their children through text messaging and sustained their presence at home despite the geographical distance. Women in my study expressed similar sentiments, saying that they were very grateful for modern technologies that enabled them to keep in contact with their family and friends. In most cases they said it made them feel less alone. 'I'm very grateful for the Internet because I get to keep in contact with my family so it's like I've never really left and my mother always says how grateful she is for skype' (Jamie, 32). Their families were grateful for mobile phones and the Internet because the strain of not being around was hardly felt.

Deena (36) explained that she would regularly speak to her family back home. She was always updated with news and gossip, which made her feel as though she was still in Trinidad. These modern conveniences have made the transition from one country to the next easier for participants, their families and friends. They said that because of the benefit of the Internet and mobile phones, after their move from one country to the next it was easier for them to contact family. Technology has also helped them to feel less alone and

disconnected from their homeland. 'I felt less abandoned, less afraid knowing I could talk to them at any time. I felt a sense of relief which made things easier' (Jamie, 32).

These communication technologies helped participants to be a part of the everyday lives of their families, making them feel that they were not missing out on memorable moments. They said that keeping in contact with their families through the Internet and phones allowed them to stay updated with important issues like financial needs and to respond to emergencies. Farah (45) said:

> I am so grateful for the Internet and phones. I always have emergencies with my children, which needs attention. Whether it is with their health, education, or any other issue I find out about it faster because of the Internet. I also use this to find out about their financial status and make sure everything runs properly in the house.

Like Farah (45), most of the mothers use technologies to keep abreast of the economic and other needs of their children, who would use skype to talk to them over the Internet and tell them what their needs were.

> All my children would come on the phone one by one, and tell me 'mom I need this' or 'mom can you buy me that'. Even my parents, uncles, and cousins would email me with their lists of things to get. I don't mind. I think it's great to be able to provide for family. (Celia, 48)

With the convenience of cheap ways of communicating, participants felt less detached from their home country and family. Mobile phones and the Internet played a major role in helping participants to stay in contact with their loved ones. These technologies also made them aware of the needs of their families, thus prompting remittances. Baldock (2000) notes that, while migrants are not able to assist with the daily tasks of caring for their family and other related activities, they provide emotional and practical support from afar through the provision of health advice and assistance in the organization of finances. Parreñas (2001) highlights that even in her absence the migrant not only contributes financially but also provides care by sending 'care packages' and emotional support through letters, photos, phone calls, text messages, emails and videos. I noted that mothers

do not simply abandon their children in search of a better life, nor do they neglect them after they have emigrated.

Through conversations with their families they better understood what was needed. Celia (48) said: 'I listened to what they wanted and I made sure they had it. Isn't that the purpose of me migrating?' Most mothers thought similarly to Celia. They made sure they knew the needs of their families and worked hard to provide for them. Celia (48) explained that she made it a priority to send money and other gifts home for her family because it showed that she had not forgotten them. She also said it gave her great joy to hear the happiness in her children's voices. I found that remittances played a significant role in family relations. There was implicit symbolic value and obvious material value attached to these remittances.

## The Material and Symbolic Value of Remittances

The growing importance of remittances[90] is significant to Caribbean development and contributes to improvements in the lives of migrants' families. As I noted in Chapter Four, the most powerful force motivating the migration of women was their attempt to provide for their families; this is done by remitting both cash and care items. Yeates (2008) points out:

> Migrant remittances are a key financial flow, crucial to the maintenance of transnational familial and community relations and, moreover, constitute a source of international welfare financing. They are used to meet basic health and welfare needs (enabling the purchase of food and medicine, payment of school fees and house repairs) and support family businesses. (Yeates 2008: 235)

Women work extremely hard and save money to send to their home countries. 'I worked hard and saved most of what I earned so that I could send for my family back home' (Kathleen, 35). Samuel (2005: 3) argues that: 'the issue of remittances arises only because there was a prior decision to migrate, thus the analysis of remittances cannot be divorced from an analysis of the factors which motivate migration.' I found that

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[90] Transfers made from earnings or the accumulated stock of wealth by individual migrants to their country of origin. They can be viewed as a form of co-insurance payments, which arise from an implicit contract between the individual migrant and his/her family (Samuel 2005: 2).

remittances played a key role in successfully giving their families a better life. Women did not only send cash but provided for their families by sending barrels of goods for their children and other members of the family.[91] These barrels are filled with clothes, shoes, books, toys and even healthcare items.

The women in my sample were more than able to provide for their families because of the increase in income gained through migration and their own frugal habits (see Chapter 5). I found that remittances not only carried material value for participants but were also symbolic of their independence and self-sufficiency. The symbolic value of remittances, however, went deeper. Sending material goods and cash was a way of showing their loved ones that they were not forgotten. The main aim of sending these items, as explained by participants, was to maintain contact with their families in their home country and show them that they were still the main reason motivating migration and that they cared for and about them. Kay (29) describes her experiences of sending home boxes of items. She explains:

> When I send things for my family I do it because things sell cheaper and I buy these things because I know that they would not be able to afford [them]. I don't feel pressured or believe that I have to send them things; I do it because I want to. It is my way of showing them that I care for them. (Kay, 29)

Sending money and barrels of goods was an important factor when women considered why they migrated. Reese (29) explains that when she sends barrels or boxes to her family it is her way of sharing with them a piece of her experience in the USA.

> I sometimes feel disconnected from my family…and by sending things to them I know that they appreciate it…they know that they are not neglected and I did not forget them. I also want them to experience what I experience so that is why I pack these barrels so that they could also have a little American experience too. Things are so cheap there when compared to home I try to help them out as much as possible so that they won't have to unnecessarily overpay for things that I could get for them at a much cheaper price. (Reese, 29)

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[91] Barrels refer to hollow cylindrical plastic containers, which are used by Caribbean nationals to send items to their home country. These barrels of goods often feature in migration studies in the Caribbean because migrant parents sent their children care items in barrels. For this reason, children with migrant parents are referred to as 'barrel children'.

These barrels of goods and cash are not only beneficial in assisting their family but also act as a way for the migrants to share their experiences of their new life. It is their way of taking care of their families from afar and making sure they are not neglected. It was clear that remittances play a major role in continuing to justify women's decision to migrate and in mitigating the impact of migration on the family left behind. Women attempted to send cash and care items as frequently as they could. Regardless of the time spent abroad, their age, or what profession they undertook; what was constant was the importance of sending home any item to show care. I also found that sending items and money back home gave participants a feeling of immense pride and accomplishment.

> Sending money back home and knowing I could provide for them made me feel happy. I always cry when I think about the children father and how he beat and abuse me. I know he hears how well I doing. I single-handedly caring for my children and that makes all my sacrifices worth it. (Hilda, 43)

The painful experiences of abuse and neglect, and the struggle participants faced in trying to improve their lives, were seen as worthwhile because they were able to provide for their children. Remittances carried deep meaning. They symbolized payment for hard work and sacrifice. Celia (48) said that she would have great self-doubt and thought that migration did not make sense. She felt she had failed her family by not being there for her children. It upset her that she was hurting them because she was not there to comfort them when they cried or console them when they were sad. She told me she also felt like a bad mother. However, seeing the joy on her children's faces when she sent them things gave her a great sense of achievement.

The women, especially mothers, placed great pressure on themselves to provide for their families because they saw it as their duty. They did not want to abandon or neglect their children as their partners had done. All participants saw it as an obligation to remit items to their homelands, but there were differences in the pressures to do so; some said that they pressured themselves, while others felt subtle form of pressured from their families. Joy (31), who fell into the latter category explained:

> I would feel like I owed them [her relatives]. They wouldn't say anything but I knew sending back things was a sign that I was grateful for what they did for me. I didn't want them to think that I had forgotten them too because I know they

would think that way. Even though they didn't say it, I just knew it is something unspoken and expected that you have to do certain things. (Joy, 31)

On the other hand, some women said they felt guilty leaving. Sending home items and money helped them feel less guilty. They explained that if they did not do this they would feel as though they had abandoned their families. Kathleen (35) said: 'I felt better when I knew I was able to send stuff for them. And when I wasn't able to I made sure that I made it up to them when I could.' Cayla (27) expressed comparable feelings: 'I didn't want them to think I moved away and forgot them so I felt as though I had to always keep in contact with them by sending things.' Sally (33) said: 'I felt better knowing I could give them something in return for their sacrifices. I wasn't obligated, they never asked but it was my way of showing gratitude and showing them that they were always in my thoughts.'
I found that the aim of remitting, like migration, is to improve the standard of living and the quality of life for themselves and their families. By remitting, women have helped in the development of small businesses, advancing their children's education, and the improved access to healthcare and the enhanced quality of life their family enjoys.

Women usually remitted based on the needs of their family and would put aside some of their savings after all their expenses were paid. Wahba (1991) discusses four types of remittances; women in my study fell into the category of potential, fixed and discretionary remittances.[92] I also noted that the amount women remitted was based on the length of time they lived in the receiving country. According to Wahba (1991) potential remittances are monies available to migrants after they have met all expenses in the host country; discretionary remittances were derived from the monies added to fixed remittances where there were no set amounts; fixed remittances however, are those funds that migrants send to their families to meet basic needs. Samuel (2005: 2) states: 'Fixed remittances arise from the basic motivation for migration, such as diversification of sources of income, household size and other contractual obligations.' Participants explained that they initially engaged in fixed remittances, because the main aim of migrating was to meet the basic needs of their relatives in receiving countries. They made it a priority to put aside some of their earnings for the sole purpose of sending to the home countries.

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[92] Wahba (1991 identified four types of remittances: potential remittances, fixed remittances, discretionary remittances and saved remittances. For an in-depth discussion of these types of remittances, see Wahba (1991) 'What Determines Workers Remittances?'

Those who had migrated a number of years previously (Celia, Iris, Rose, Cece, Lily, Renee, Pearl, Callie, Bella, Hayley, Kathleen, Cindy) were more likely to engage in discretionary remittances[93] in which they would add to monies and items already set aside and did not have a budget as to how much they would send. There were no fixed amounts and no factors dictating the maximum or minimum amount. Pearl (62) said that she would send money and gift items to her relatives without having a strict plan as to how she should go about giving. When family needs arose, she would meet those needs to the best of her ability. Renee (49) said that there was definitely a planned way of remitting when she initially migrated but as she settled and became more financially stable, her sending was less planned and the money and items remitted increased.

Women were motivated to remit because of pure altruism[94] and pure self-interest. I found that pure altruism came naturally to all women because of the love they had for their families, it means that migrants were acting with their family in mind and not for their own benefits only (Lucas and Stark, 1985). On the other hand pure self-interest, according to Lucas and Stark (1985), encompasses three reasons for making remittances. The first is where a migrant feels that once she has had an input into taking care of her family she will inherit a large portion of the family wealth. This did not apply to the women in my study; they were not interested in taking wealth away from their families. The other forms of pure self-interest identified by Lucas and Stark were the two most popular reasons for sending remittances given by my participants: building up assets in their country of origin so that their families will be maintained and live comfortably, and to enable them to return home. As a result, they invested in ventures in their country of birth so that when they decided to return home they could live comfortably.

Farah (45) said that she wanted to return home one day. She said she wanted to be a business owner so that she could have a steady flow of income. Women sent money for the upkeep of their families and because they were saving in preparation for their future activities. Most of them said that they had plans to give back to their home country. Some

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[93] According to Wahba (1991) these are transfers that are added on to fixed remittances.
[94] Lucas and Stark (1985) highlight three major types of remittances, which they divided into three groups: Pure Altruism, Pure Self Interest and Tempered Altruism or Enlightened Self Interest. I used this to understand why migrants remit to their families. These three interests were used to group participants based on their motivations for remitting.

started setting up businesses; nine of them had small shops selling goods that they imported, four were in the process of identifying business opportunities, and six were in the course of actually starting their business and setting up. Samuel (2005) notes:

> The investment of remittances in new businesses or into the expansion of existing family businesses is one of the ways that these flows contribute to economic development. These remittances need not be in the form of cash but may be in the form of capital goods, inventory or raw material. (Samuel 2005: 11)

The importance of remittances in Caribbean development has always been a well-documented area. Remittances are very important, acting as a source of foreign currency in the country of origin (Faini, 2002). Not only are remittances significant in the general up-keep of families, but they are also very important in the development of Trinidad and Tobago. Yeates (2008: 236) points out that: 'migrant remittances are a key source of external revenue for governments in the country of origin.' The sending of foreign currency assists the overall development goals of the government.  In the case of participants in my sample, this was not merely a by-product of remittances to their families, but also in some cases because of their involvement with charities working in Trinidad and Tobago. They explained that they undertook such ventures because they were very keen to develop the communities they came from.[95] By doing this, women were helping the economic development of their country and aiding in long-term development goals. They said they wanted to help alleviate the incidence of poverty and dependence on welfare. Sally (33) said that she wanted to help young people in her country because they were the most vulnerable. She has made donations and is deeply involved in non-governmental organizations helping disadvantaged young people. Women are not only helping their families but are also generating foreign aid through mobilizing help in immigrant communities during times of natural disaster and social or political upheaval.[96]

While the importance of remittances to the Caribbean is widely acknowledged, motivations to remit have not been a well researched.[97] I identified a number of reasons

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[95] I will discuss this further in Chapter 7.

[96] Immigrant communities in receiving countries and their benefit to the country of origin will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 7.

[97] A study was conducted by Agarwal & Horrowitz (2002) to identify why migrants remit in Guyana. See *Are International Remittances Altruism or Insurance? Evidence from Guyana Using Multiple-Migrant Households*.

women invested time and money in remittances. First they expressed a felt need to remit because it makes them feel more connected to their country of origin. In this case, female migrants feel a deeper connection to their country of birth because their children and loved ones live there. They put familial needs before their own. Some of these migrants wanted to return to their home country once they were financially secure and stable. Therefore, they set up businesses, built houses and invested in their home country. Cayla (27), Sally (33), Deena (36), Farah (45) and Hilda (43) all said that it was their intention to one day return to Trinidad when they were successful and in a better position. They told me that their aim was to save as much money as they could and invest it wisely so that upon their return they would be financially stable (which was also one of their motivations for remitting). Already, the women have helped to provide healthcare for sick family members, aided in small-business trading and renovated their family homes in Trinidad. This was as a result of the money and goods they remitted.

## Conclusion

The most significant findings of this chapter are those relating to the family. Prior to my fieldwork, I was under the impression that women who left their children did so without remorse. I believed that these children were usually delinquents and high-school drop outs. I pictured a mother abandoning her children in search of a better life for herself. I believed her to be neglectful, leaving her children with ill-suited guardians who were incapable of raising them. However, I found accounts that were very different. I argue that mothers do not abandon or neglect their children in search of a better life for themselves.

My argument stemmed from the fact that women have always been the centre of the Caribbean family while their male partners have often been absent or marginal. Additionally, I found that carers of children do not abuse or mistreat them. Migrant women do not neglect their children and this is seen in the sacrifices they make to provide for them through remittances. The fact that one of the most important motivators for all mothers is their children is another reason why children are not considered to be abandoned. The guardians and carers of these children are in fact grandparents and other relatives who are very capable of caring. In most cases, these children were already living in an extended household prior to their mother's migration. Some mothers now have adult children who

have pursued I therefore conclude that the family unit is not chaotic or dysfunctional. Instead, of disorder I see migration as leading to a reordering of the Caribbean family. Grandparents take care of their grandchildren, while mothers are breadwinners and the distant carers.

The symbolic value of remittances also indicates that migrant mothers did not forget their children. The ability to support their families plays a major role in women's decision to migrate and remittances have major implications for the family. Remittances in cash and care items are very important in improving the standard of living of the receiving family. They are able to afford better access to healthcare, start up small businesses and invest the monies received. Children also enjoy a better standard of living and education. In search of a better life, participants have been through a series of high and low points. They said that hearing the joy in the voices of their children and loved ones made their sacrifices worthwhile. However, I noted that many women were still unsure of their future because of the volatility of their lives in the receiving country.

The current lives of participants and their future plans were of great interest to me. In the next chapter, I present a comparative analysis of international migration to Britain and the United States and women's lives in the two countries. Thus far, I have examined migrant women as a singular group. However, obvious differences between women who migrated to the United States and the United Kingdom have emerged. These differences include employment, education, race and the channels by which they migrated. I examined the various stages of migration, starting with the decision-making stage (see Chapter 4) and moving on to the settling stage (see Chapter 5). In Chapter Seven, I describe the current lives of women in their destination countries. By comparing migration to these two countries, I discuss similarities and differences in 'how' women build new lives. This in turn will help in understanding migration in a more global setting.

# Chapter 7

## Britain vs. the United States

### *A Comparative View of Migration to Britain and the United States*

Pienkos (2006: 11) points out that: 'three main extra regional destinations for Caribbean migrants are Canada, UK, and the USA. Two of which (Canada, USA) are also countries of traditional settlement immigration.' One of the most significant findings that emerged from my study was the contrast between the migration experiences of those who settled in the UK and those who went to the USA. Participants viewed the old world[98] and new world[99] differently, which affected their migration plans. Britain was perceived as a place of hard work, a polite, conservative society marked by elitism, while the USA was seen in terms of dreams of low-lying fruit easy for picking, where the proverbial river flows with milk and honey. These perceptions can be understood as a result of four major factors: the historical relationship between Britain and the West Indies, modern-day technology, globalization and the mass media. The geographical proximity of the island to the North American continent is another influence on international migratory patterns.

Migration to the USA is very different from migration to Britain in that many of those migrating to the new world buy into the 'American Dream' because of what they see in the mass media. Globalization, relaxed immigration policies and an increased number of international flights have assisted in increasing the movement of Caribbean people to North America. According to Waters and Zukerman (2008), the number of undocumented immigrants in the USA has overtaken the number in Britain. The ties created between the North American countries and the Caribbean is partly a result of geography.

My aim in this chapter is to compare the migration choices of women from the Caribbean who went to Great Britain and the USA. These two countries attracted different groups of women, for example in terms of education and race. I discuss possible reasons for this based on the evidence I found in my study. This will then lead to a discussion of the types of occupations and jobs women undertake when they migrate to Great Britain and the USA and the relationship between occupation and pathways to migration, legal and illegal. The

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[98] The old world in my study refers to Great Britain.

[99] This term was first coined by Amerigo Vespucci to refer to the Americas. In my study it is used to refer to the United States of America.

ideas of a brain drain and a care drain will also be discussed, and how Britain and the USA contribute to these phenomena in Trinidad and Tobago.

Life in Britain as described by my participants was not the same as life in the USA. Migration for both groups of women was indeed difficult, they experienced great struggles in settling and familiarizing themselves with their new environment, but how they adjusted, how long it took them and how they judged the success of their decisions to migrate differed. I use my findings to compare the views of the two groups of women and what they believe is a successful life. I will examine their current lives and the continued impact the host country has had on their lives. Among my participants, 13[100] have resided in the receiving country for more than ten years, and in these cases I will discuss their views of living and 'making it'[101] in an MDC and their future plans.

## Education and Race

Race and education are important when conceptualizing international migration and are relevant when identifying both the demographic characteristics of migrants to particular destinations and the patterns of discrimination they are likely to experience. These factors are also important in understanding the brain drain and care drain from the sending country. Racial characteristics and educational background are especially important in the study of migration. Among my sample, racial and educational backgrounds are linked. It is no secret that female migrants are an extremely vulnerable and disadvantaged group: 'women migrants face multiple forms of discrimination, in that the factors of class, race/ethnicity, and legal status intersect with their status as women' (Staab 2004: 14). Women face many challenges when migrating. If they are illegal or black they may experience even greater discrimination and exploitation. Therefore, the demographic characteristics of international migrants from sending to receiving countries are important in gaining insight into the movements of people across borders. My intention was not to obtain participants from any particular racial, ethnic or educational background. My main approach was to find women willing to participate in my study that had migrated from

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[100] The views of the remaining twelve participants were somewhat dissimilar to those who had been living in the receiving country for a longer period of time. This is because they had resided in the destination country for a shorter period of time. Their views and plans will also be discussed separately.
[101] This was a term used throughout my interviews by my participants to refer to the act of becoming successful in the receiving country.

Trinidad and Tobago to either Great Britain or the USA (see Chapter 3). These differences, however, proved to be quite marked among the women I interviewed.

Tables 6 and 7 illustrate some details of the 25 women who participated in my study. Table 6 shows the racial characteristics of women who emigrated from Trinidad and Tobago to the USA and to Britain. There were twelve women of Afro-Trinidadian descent and 13 of Indo- Trinidadian descent. The table shows that a larger number of African Trinidadian women travelled to Britain, whereas among those migrating to the USA Indian Trinidadians outnumbered African Trinidadians. It is unclear from my data why more Afro-Trinidadian women chose to migrate to Britain and more Indo-Trinidadian women migrated to the USA, but race and education seem to be interconnected factors in the migration of Caribbean women, at least in my sample. Table 7 shows the level of education of women migrating to Britain and the USA. Most women in the sample had secondary school education, but women migrating to Britain were more likely to have received tertiary education, which can be attributed to the fact that Britain receives a greater number of skilled professional migrants from the Caribbean.[102] Women who migrated to the USA had only completed secondary or primary school education, more often the former.

**Table Six: Racial Composition of Women who Emigrated to the USA and Britain**

| Race | Britain | USA | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| Afro-Trinidadian | 9 | 3 | 12 |
| Indo-Trinidadian | 1 | 12 | 13 |

**Table Seven: Education Level of Women Emigrating to the USA and Britain**

| Highest Level of Education | Britain | USA | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| Primary Schooling | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| Secondary Schooling | 1 | 12 | 13 |
| Tertiary Schooling | 9 | 1 | 10 |

Women who were of African Trinidadian descent and had completed some sort of tertiary-level education were more likely to migrate to Britain, while women of Indian Trinidadian

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[102] There is a connection between educational attainment, employment and migration, which will be examined further in this section and the next.

descent who had completed secondary school had a greater probability of migrating to the USA. Sally is a 33-year-old medical doctor; she is a former national scholarship winner and pursued a bachelor of medicine and surgery degree at the University of the West Indies, Trinidad and Tobago. She then interned in the San Fernando General Hospital.[103] Sally's story was significant in conceptualizing skilled, professional migration from Trinidad to MDCs. Having been away from Trinidad for over five years, she explains that it was always her dream to go to the United Kingdom.

> My aspiration was to study as hard as I could and get a good job. I always excelled in my studies, it came naturally to me and then I loved the sciences, it fascinated me. I was an all-rounded student in high school, and I was a part of a lot of activities at university as well. After I got through to Mt Hope[104] I knew I wanted to go to London and specialize. It was amazing the opportunities being offered in Britain in specializing, it was not like Trinidad where there wasn't much you could do in terms of speciality. So during my internship I made arrangements and it was then I decided that instead of returning I would stay and get a job. (Sally, 33, Medical Doctor)

Sally's initial plan was to go abroad for study. However, upon further consideration, she had a change of mind and decided to settle in Britain. I asked her why she chose to migrate as an educated woman who seemed to have many opportunities available to her. She responded by saying: 'I wanted to specialize in cardio and I did not like what my options were in Trinidad.' Educational advancement and learning played an important role in Sally's choice of migrating. Other women who moved to Britain had similar stories in that they were searching for greater opportunities in terms of education or jobs. Women who were more educated and skilled wanted greater financial and other returns for their achievements.

I found that women who migrated to Britain (who were mostly skilled) saw it as necessary to do so and did not contemplate any other MDC. There were three significant factors underlying this choice (and more generally in determining the country to which women

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[103] This is a hospital in the southern part of the island of Trinidad. It is a state-owned and operated hospital and provides medical care for the public.
[104] A branch of the UWI St Augustine Campus in Trinidad where individuals pursue studies in the medical field.

migrated): their existing networks[105] in the country of destination, their level of schooling, and their financial status before leaving Trinidad.

Celia (48) described her migration decision as resulting from her need for financial security, so she went where she could access the help she needed in finding suitable employment. At that time Britain offered exactly that. She explained:

> At that time I knew Britain was the right choice for me, because there were so many opportunities I heard about from friends of mine who were also nurses. And Britain seemed the right place to go. When I decided, there wasn't much opportunity outside of Britain in other countries, and if they were I never knew about them because I had little or no connection to the medical field anywhere else. (Celia, 48, Nurse)

Of the ten women interviewed who migrated to Britain, six said that they had dreamed of going to Britain one day in hopes of furthering their education or their career. 'I always was of the opinion that British education was better than American education. That is one major reason I choose Britain' (Sally, 33). The financial status of women prior to migration played a major role in their decision. Those who had migrated to Britain came from economically more stable backgrounds than those who had migrated to the USA. They explained that they worked hard, some of them saved money in order to be able to move successfully; their parents also a played a major role in their movement from Trinidad to Britain. 'I worked hard and saved even more, I knew Trinidad was not the end for me so I saved until I was secure and I could leave. The choice was easy. Britain or nowhere' (Lily, 38, Nurse).

Most of the women migrating to the USA said that it was the only option available to them at the time. 'I had very little when I migrated, with the abusive background. It was either America or nothing. I had no money for anything else' (Lisa, 54, Maid). Women who migrated to the USA described the process as very difficult and a tumultuous time for them. 'I had to scrape every last penny I had for visas and to pay for the trip. Then I had to think about when I arrived how I would survive. So money was difficult' (Kathleen, 35, Domestic Worker). When I asked participants who had migrated to the USA why they did

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[105] Networks were also significant in obtaining employment and greatly impacted on where they chose to migrate. This will be discussed in greater detail pertaining to employment in the next section.

not choose to migrate to Britain, they all explained that they could not afford to go to Britain and living in Britain was believed to be more expensive than the USA; hence, making the USA a more reasonable choice. Kathleen explained that Britain was not an option for her: 'I was struggling to get enough money to migrate to America, and Britain was not even an option for me because the cost of living there is very expensive.'

Educational attainment proved to be a very significant factor in determining where individuals chose to migrate. Those who migrated to Britain saw it as a way for them to realize their fullest potential in terms of their respective fields of work. Those who had achieved higher educational qualifications had greater opportunities, because prior to migration they were working and being sufficiently well paid. Those who were less educated had fewer options available to them and had to undertake low-wage feminized jobs and were usually underpaid. Since educational background determines the types of job that are available to an individual, the jobs that were undertaken by women prior to migration to the USA were mostly temporary or seasonal work as secretaries, domestic workers, school cleaners, carers in geriatric homes and housewives. All these characteristics were interrelated. Education determined occupation, occupation determined financial status and financial status determined where women could afford to migrate.

## Occupational Hierarchies: Skilled vs. Unskilled Labour

I interviewed women who had migrated both illegally and legally. International migration is sometimes viewed as an advantage in terms of exporting surplus unskilled sectors of the population. This eases the pressure placed on government to spend money on welfare schemes and provide employment for a rising population.

> Migration of unskilled and semi-skilled workers eases the pressure to create employment on the governments of sending countries. Indirectly it also contributes to the creation of employment in those countries. Facilitation of migration creates different kinds of jobs in public and private sectors in the sending countries. (Siddiqui, 2007: 2)

At times, out-migration is disadvantageous to an economy; especially where skilled workers are concerned, in that the government funds education but does not fully reap the

benefits of this expenditure. Moreover, the loss of skilled professional labour contributes to a 'brain drain' from the island. Another aspect of women's migration is the 'care drain'. This can be seen in the cases of women who are carers for their parents, children or the sick in Trinidad who migrate to MDCs. It became apparent from my data that women who migrated to Britain were predominantly a skilled group who were leaving the country. Women who migrated to the USA undertook mostly care and domestic work. Both groups of migrant women added to the care and brain drain affecting the country. In the case of Trinidad and Tobago, migration has meant a loss of both skilled and unskilled labour because of the growing need of the MDCs for skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled labour.

The fact that many women who migrated took up professional work as nurses in Great Britain and as domestic workers in the USA added to my understanding that there was a great demand for both formal and informal workers in both these countries. Sassen (2003) also highlighted the fact that in global cities there is a growing need for low-wage workers to undertake domestic, care and other feminized jobs.

> Parallel to the needs of the people in the poorest countries, the more economically developed countries, especially Europe and the United States, continue to show demand for formal and informal foreign labour, while at the same time imposing increasingly restrictive entry requirements. (Staab, 2004: 14)

Women who had migrated to the USA explained that it was not an easy task. Migrant women who left for the United States said that it was difficult to gain entry into the country. They found it easier to find suitable, well-paid employment but had a harder time entering the country due to the severe restrictions placed on obtaining visas. 'It was very difficult getting a travel visa to visit the US because I had no security tying me to Trinidad' (Pauline, 40, Domestic Worker).  Most of the women migrating to the United States, therefore, did so on visiting visas and stayed illegally. As shown in Table 8, women who travelled to the USA, initially as undocumented workers, usually undertook unskilled[106] domestic or care work.

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[106] For the purposes of my research, I use the term 'unskilled' to differentiate between professional work and domestic work. In no way am I saying that domestic work does not require a great amount of skill.

**Table Eight: Types of Work Women Undertook after Migrating to the USA and Britain**

| Type of Work | Britain | USA | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| Domestic | 0 | 8 | 8 |
| Care | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| Administrative | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Teaching | 3 | 1 | 4 |
| Nursing | 5 | 1 | 6 |
| Medical Doctor | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Unemployed | 0 | 2 | 2 |

Those who migrated to the USA also said that at first they had no idea what they were going to do for work when they arrived. Their prospects were very limited since they did not have any work permits or much skill or educational background. 'I had no idea what I was going to do, work was limited and I had no skill. Upon all this I was staying illegally' (Reese, 29, Domestic Worker). Given their status as women and as illegal immigrants, they were susceptible to discrimination and exploitation. In some cases in other countries, women face greater challenges; they are sometimes desperate to leave a country and are vulnerable to being trafficked (Siddiqui, 2007). In this study, this was not the case.

Trinidadian women did not find themselves in such circumstances. Although they were desperate to migrate for the sake of their families, they did not run the risk of being trafficked, despite being illegal immigrants. They were, however, afraid and aware of the gamble they were taking. Lisa (54) is now legally residing in the United States as a live-in maid. She migrated to the USA illegally over 23 years ago on a non-immigrant tourist visa. Kathleen (35), Bella (30) and Farah (45) all migrated to the USA on non-immigrant tourist visas and initially overstayed the six-month period.

> I had just finished high school and my aunt had promised to buy a ticket for me to come for a holiday. She sent me a letter of invitation, which I took to the embassy and was granted a tourist visa. When I went to America, after about three months I recognized I had no plans back home for employment and university wasn't in my future, my aunt got jobs for me taking care of children and the money I got was far better than anything I could get back home, so I stayed. And then I wasn't legal at first but my relatives had friends who helped me out and now I have a green card. (Cayla, 27, Baby Sitter)

Women migrating to Britain were skilled medical professionals or teachers. All of them had completed secondary schooling and nine held tertiary educational qualifications. Women who immigrated to both the USA and Britain relied on networks they had developed over the years in the receiving countries and these networks shared information about employment. Networks and recruiting agencies made it possible for women to migrate. Roselyn (45, Teacher) explained the importance that networking had played in her movement from Trinidad to the USA. She explained that she had few or no connections anywhere else and most of her family and friends had migrated to the USA, making it easier for her to settle there.

When I asked participants from the USA why they did not migrate to Britain, in addition to financial constraints all 15 said that they did not have significant ties to Britain. Any relatives or friends who had migrated to Britain did not share any great connection with them. Hence, they knew nothing about migration to Britain and they also believed that migration to the USA would be better since it was closer. Of my participants, 21, whether unskilled or skilled, migrating to Britain or the USA, pointed out that one of the main reasons they chose their country of destination was because of the relationships and connections that had already existed prior to migration. The women who migrated to Britain, who had done so legally and had work permits, undertook what they termed 'legitimate' work.

> I came to work in Britain because I knew of employment opportunities through my friend who had been working in a hospital in Britain. I called her and she said she would get back to me, when she returned the call she told me about a work being offered in another hospital that was recruiting doctors. After that, I got help with the necessary documents needed for my journey and I left. (Sally, 33)

Like Sally, Pearl went to Britain to undertake legitimate work. She explained that when she migrated she did so through the legal means of obtaining visas and work permits.

> I heard about a job through a recruiting agency and then had my aunt who lived in Britain to check it out for me to see if it was really legitimate or a scam. When we confirmed it was real, I had to organize my documents, go into the ministry, the embassy and get my permit and visa which my aunt also helped me with. (Pearl, 62, Teacher)

Unlike women who migrated to the USA, women migrating to Britain were certain about employment, having secured jobs before leaving, and emigrated through legal means. However, in both cases networking with friends or relatives in the destination country was helpful. Networks assisted in movement and in discussing available opportunities in the receiving country. Migration networks formed in Britain were more complex than those formed in the USA. I found that women who migrated to Britain experienced greater complications precisely because they did so legally and therefore had to deal with a number of agencies and bureaucratic procedures.

> In recent times migration processing has become extremely complex by involving different parties: governments of sending and receiving countries, recruiting agencies and their sub-agents of sending and receiving countries, employers in receiving countries. Along with these actors, social networks of migrant workers in the destination countries and in the source areas also play an important role in migration processing. (Siddiqui, 2007: 8)

I was told by Sally (33) that: 'One did not just migrate. There has to be something, anything that the person knows about the country before they leave to settle.' I was told that friends, family and employers in the receiving country helped with migrations procedures. Women explained that migration would not have been possible if they had not had the support of various agencies and individuals who helped them obtain visas, passports, employment and work permits. Some women said the roles of relatives, friends, recruiting agencies and government ministries were also very important in informing them of foreign opportunities.

Networking, then, was a means of learning about the opportunities available abroad and finding help to move from one country to the next. For those who were unskilled, migration was especially difficult. Thus, they needed all the help they could get. Because the women migrating to the USA lacked financial security and had little or no skill or education, they opted to utilize their existing networks in the USA, thus resulting in more unskilled women leaving to go to the USA and to undertake domestic or care work. Hochschild (2005) points out that there has been an increase in middle-class women in the workforce in first-world nations, which has led to a demand for domestic workers.

Experiencing discrimination in the host country was common among the women, but those who migrated to the USA faced greater discrimination from their employers, while women who migrated to Britain experienced wage discrimination.[107] Discriminatory practices by American employers were associated with Caribbean women undertaking jobs such as domestic and care work and were exacerbated by their illegal status.

Women said that their employers took them for granted and verbally degraded them. Women who were illegal and undertaking domestic work were sometimes mistreated and had to endure long hours of work without proper payment. They explained that they experienced poor treatment because of their illegal status. 'I remember my employers would speak to me as if English was not my first language. They mistreated me because I was illegal and I am coloured […] to them my status was automatically no better than a beggar' (Kay, 29). Many of the undocumented domestic workers told me that during the initial stages they were susceptible to ill treatment from employers but took solace in the fact that their situations would eventually change. Kay said that her employers were aware that she was illegal and would shout at her if anything went wrong in their house. Women like Kay said that they could not complain to anyone because they needed the money and that they did not have anyone to complain to. Others said that they saw it as retribution for leaving their children behind. Lisa said, 'the environment under which I lived was punishment for leaving my children behind. I could not live well after leaving them without a parent.'

> The problems faced by domestic workers are well documented. Confinement within private homes, long working hours and low pay, physical and verbal abuse are some of the problems faced by them. Domestic work does not fall under labour laws of receiving countries. It is not recognized as wage employment and thus the rights enjoyed by other types of workers are not applicable to them. (Sidiqqui, 2007: 10)

Because they lacked the basic rights of other workers, the women who undertook domestic work and were initially illegal found themselves voiceless and vulnerable; their workload and daily duties were also very strenuous (see Appendices 2 & 3). The more skilled and legal immigrants to Britain also faced discrimination but this was usually related to the

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[107] This is highlighted in Chapter 6 as an implication of migration on the lives of women.

wages they were paid; they were not as exploited or mistreated as those women who migrated to the USA.

In the Caribbean literature,[108] concerns are raised about the brain drain and the loss of skilled professional workers. I would argue that the care drain from the island is just as important a topic. In my fairly small sample, 18 of the 25 women are mothers, seven out of 25 are either nurses or doctors and two participants are baby sitters. This suggests that the care drain is just as significant to the country as the loss of skilled women. A 'care drain'[109] according to Hochschild (2005) results when women who would normally care for sick, old and children migrate from poorer countries to undertake jobs in richer nations. Women who migrated to the United States were paid for work they were undertaking in their home country for free. Whether it is a mother of children or a skilled professional woman undertaking jobs in the medical profession, international migration has meant a decrease in those who undertake work (within or outside of the home) as carers.

Caring is typically seen as a woman's role. In the Caribbean, women have a long history of undertaking both caring roles and the role of breadwinner in their families. There appears, however, to be an unspoken hierarchy when discussing brain and care drain from the Caribbean. Skilled care workers are viewed more favourably than those who are nannies or domestics and their loss to the country is seen as more significant and more worthy of study. Further research into the care drain is important in the case of the Caribbean in order to understand and explain the specific form it takes.

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[108] See Mishra (2006) 'Emigration and Brain Drain: Evidence from the Caribbean' and Thomas-Hope (2002) 'Skilled Labour Migration from Developing Countries: Study on the Caribbean Region'.
[109] I use the term 'care drain' in my thesis to refer to skilled and unskilled women who have children or tend to the sick/old. Migration of women is multi-faceted. Not only are developing countries losing skilled labour but they are also losing carers. Researchers tend to lump migrants together, categorizing them based on education. However, whether women are skilled or unskilled, the islands still lose valuable resources.

## Bright Lights, Big Cities: A Comparative View of *'Making It'*[110] in the UK and the USA. Did they? Didn't They? Future Plans

In the Caribbean, we use the expression 'making it' to describe a feeling of success. It is usually used when referring to those who have migrated in search of a better life, who are seen as taking a journey towards 'making it' in the country of destination. I undertook this research because I was interested in documenting the lives of immigrant women. Discovering whether they had found success and whether they were satisfied with their current level of success was important. Regrets about the choice they had made to migrate, and whether they considered their lives to be better because of migration were also significant. Here, as elsewhere, the stories of those who migrated to the USA and to Britain differed; not all immigration success stories were the same.

Renee (49) and Hayley (43) are both housewives and they are the only two women in my sample who migrated with their entire family. Both currently reside in the USA, and they do not undertake employment outside of the home. Their stories are very different from those of the women who migrated independently. Renee explained that her life in the USA was everything she had hoped for and dreamed about since she was a little girl. She said that when she first arrived with her family she was quite overwhelmed and missed home but the feeling faded as her life became more routine. Renee sees herself as living the American dream (as she describes it). She has a nice house in a good neighbourhood, with a white picket fence; her children are all excelling in their studies and are on the honour roll. Renee (49) said:

> My life has turned out the way I planned and I am very thankful for that. We took a risk and sold everything we owned and migrated, people said that was stupid, but we took a risk and I am happier for that. I have no regrets, my husband is happy, my children are happy and so am I. I live comfortably and I love my life in America.

Hayley shared similar feelings of happiness and satisfaction with her decision to move to the USA. She is a mother of two and has been married for many years. She impressed me as someone very much in control of her life and her family. She in no way represented a

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[110] I use the phrase 'making it' because it was popular among my participants. They used this expression to denote their level of success and achievement. They saw emigrating as a chance of 'making it', the opposite to this was failure in their eyes. Failure meant the inability to successfully utilize the opportunities that were available to them in the receiving country. Failure also depended on their own perceptions of themselves and how others in their home country saw them.

docile motherly figure but one who was used to taking the reins and being in charge. Hayley said the decision for her family to migrate was a collective one in which she and her husband sorted everything out. Although the initial days in the USA were tough, Hayley said that after a tumultuous first year of settling in, she always thought that leaving Trinidad was the best decision she had ever made and she did not regret migrating.

> I live a quiet life. Yes, we are not immune to struggle but we made it through these years. Now I have two children who are college graduates and have good jobs. I always love travelling back home to Trinidad and it will always be my home, it gave me life…. but America gave me a living and I love it there. I simply have no regrets. If I had to, I wouldn't change my decision. (Hayley, 43)

These two women explained that they had no regrets about moving to the USA; their answers were very different from those of the women who had migrated by themselves. When asked if they believed they would ever consider returning to Trinidad to live, they both said that they always dreamt about returning but were not sure at this point what they wanted to do in the future. Because these women had migrated as a family, their experiences of pain, loss and isolation were less than those of the women who had migrated by themselves. Both Hayley and Renee explained that they relied heavily on their husbands for support, which had made the process of migration less difficult. Also, becoming successful in the receiving country proved to be easier for them because they had the assistance of their husbands.

> I did not have to work actually; I was never obligated to work. My husband always handles everything like that… He pays the bills; he buys the cars, he sees about the house. I consider myself very lucky in that respect because I never had to worry about anything. When I was younger I took up employment when we arrived but it wasn't necessary because my husband is more than successful in what he does and we live comfortably on his salary alone. (Hayley, 43)

Renee, like Hayley, explained that her husband had been a great help and had taken up the role of providing for their family.

> My husband works and pays for everything and I never had to worry about anything, not in Trinidad or the US. If it wasn't for him I don't think life would have been so easy for me. (Renee, 49)

195

For those women who migrated by themselves, life was not this easy. Their stories were accounts of struggle and perseverance during which they had to be successful through their own strength and effort. Women who migrated independently painted a picture of hard work, sacrifice and an enduring, undying need to be successful. Callie (39), for example, said that she refused to go back home until she considered herself a successful person. Women who had migrated to Britain were harder on themselves than women who had migrated to the USA. Their perceptions of making it and of what they deemed to be success were different and this is of significance in understanding how they saw themselves and their current lives.

Those women who had migrated to Britain did so because they not only wanted a better life but, most importantly; they wanted to actualize themselves in their careers. As career-oriented women, they based their perceptions of success on their jobs, whereas women who had migrated to the USA evaluated their success in terms of having enough materially and being able to provide for their families in Trinidad. Careers meant everything to most participants who travelled to Britain; they tied their level of success with the advancement of their careers in the receiving country. Sally (33), who migrated to Britain, explained that it was her dream in coming to Britain to advance her career and she said that she would only consider herself to be successful if her professional life as a doctor was more than satisfactory. Conversely, Jamie (32), a domestic worker residing in the USA, said that the life she lives now is more than satisfactory. She said she considers herself very successful because she has a stable job that pays her very well and is able to afford more than she could have afforded in Trinidad. For her, success is tied to her ability to afford material goods and give support to her family financially. She explained:

> When I think about how my life was in Trinidad, it was just survival and now I think I am actually living. Every day I was worried about finding and maintaining a job; how I was going to get money to pay bills and now I don't have to worry about that. I could afford to both pay my bills and buy luxurious things to treat myself. I would say I am definitely successful. (Jamie)

Many women who travelled to the USA have comparable stories and share similar feelings. They consider their lives to be more successful because of international migration and have few regrets.

> I consider success as being in a better situation than when I started and I believe that is exactly what has happened to me; I am definitely in a better position today. I live comfortably, I don't have to worry about not being able to pay my bills or afford the things I want. I no longer have to prioritize and buy things I need only but I can now afford to live better. I am independent. I have my own money, I don't need to depend on a man to support my children or me or subordinate myself to abuse to support my family. (Farah, 45, USA)

Bella considers herself to be very successful since her migration. She believes that she is a success story because she has been able to provide for her family. She provides opportunities for her child that she would not have been able to prior to migrating. She explained:

> I have made it in America. I went up there knowing what I had to do and though my work is not fancy and some people may consider it demeaning it is better than sitting at home doing nothing. I now support myself, I was able to send my child to school and she is very successful all because of the money I got looking after other people's children and houses. I left home, left the abuse and violence behind and I fought to improve my life. So yes I do believe I have made it far better than what I would have done back home. (Bella, 30)

Women in Britain, however, had different priorities. Although most of them alluded to the fact that they may be able to afford more than they could in Trinidad, they would only consider themselves successful if they had a satisfying career.

> I did not want to return home until I was satisfied that I was in a better position professionally than what I was in prior to emigrating. My aim was to move to Britain and actualize myself in terms of my job, which was something I didn't think I could have done in Trinidad. I consider myself to be very successful now, because I stuck it out in Britain and though it was difficult I was one of the best senior nurses in the hospital. (Cece, 38, UK)

Lily also associated success with her career. She explained that if it were not for the furtherance of her career she would not have been able to meet the needs of her loved ones. Family was also important for women who were career-oriented and had migrated to Britain. However, they felt that if their careers were not successful their family life would become strained. Like Cece, Lily wanted to migrate to further her career. She explained:

> When I think about success I always think about my career, I went to Britain with the intent of doing better for myself, which meant a lot of things, not only providing for my family but also succeeding in my profession. (Lily, 38, UK)

Another example is Callie, who strongly believed that hard work and sacrifice had brought her great success in her career. When she said she did not want to go back to visit her country of birth until she was successful, she discussed this in terms of satisfaction with her career.

> My life is successful because I worked hard at stabilizing my career. I recognized it was hard work but I tried not to think about it at the beginning. I used to always tell myself that I wouldn't go back Trinidad until I was sure that I had made it with my career. Until I was satisfied with what I accomplished, then I went back to visit. (Callie, 39, UK)

Even though these women were in a position to assist their families and themselves, they still tied their feelings of achievement to 'making it' in their careers. While the two groups of women had different views of success, they all agreed that they had to challenge themselves to achieve whatever goal they had set. Coming from similar places of being carers for their families, usually also breadwinners, and in in some cases having suffered abuse and mistreatment, succeeding meant that they had to prove to themselves and others that they could make it in a country that is not their own.

One major theme was regrets. Women who were mothers or carers for their parents said that they did what they had to do for the betterment of their children and families' future. They may have had regrets during the early stages following migration, but they decided it was all part of the risk they took.

> I did what I had to do for my family. I have no regrets. I was abused, mistreated and in a very bad situation. My life, my career was going nowhere and I could not let that happen to my children. People made all sorts of comments about my parenting ability, said I was neglecting my children and a careless mother. I paid no mind to them even though it hurt me, but now my children are grown and have a far better life than what their mother had at that age. (Iris, 42, UK)

Iris is confident that she did the right thing for the improvement of herself and her family. Cindy (39) also explained that, as a mother and a daughter, she made sacrifices for the betterment of her family. She said that she was willing to accept not being there on a daily basis in order to provide for them better.

> I love my child and I love my parents. I did all I had to do for them. So my answer to your question is: no, I didn't feel inadequate but I did feel empowered; I was now picking up the pieces of my life and putting things in place to secure a better future for my family. My relatives, neighbours and even friends would always say I abandoned my children to live my life as a free agent and magnify the little things they did wrong. But with time it proved them wrong and I also proved to myself that I made the right decision for their sakes. (Cindy, UK)

Like Cindy, Celia found herself doubtful at times. She worried about whether she would be able to make it. She explained that she focused on what she had to do even though it was the most difficult of times. She describes her situation as a Cinderella story and knew that she had to persevere despite her lack of confidence and support.

> I consider myself as being a great success because when I had doubts I proved myself wrong every time. When I thought I couldn't take another day, I worked harder for their [her family's] sakes and now we are all living much better than how we used to. My life is better because I carried the thought of them with me and it made me work harder. I don't consider myself a bad mother and my children don't consider me a terrible person for leaving them, they knew it was for the best, especially knowing how life with their father was. (Celia, 48, UK)

Pauline (40) considers herself a realist and said that this is the way she wants her children to be brought up, knowing that hard work and sacrifice bring success. She explained that her idea of success is being able to give her children the kind of life that she was not fortunate enough to have.

> My children understand that I did all this for them. I don't consider myself to be less than any other parent who has the luxury of being with their children every day. I wish I had that luxury but I don't, I have to be the one to fight for their futures because their father would not do it. I am the one making sure they have food in their plates, clothes on their backs and they want nothing. They know I love them, I tell them that every day. (Pauline, USA)

The women said that the driving force behind their success is their children and their family. Many of them stated that they have no regrets and although international migration is a gamble, the benefits have outweighed the drawbacks. They all consider themselves to be successful and although some of them are relatively new immigrants they consider themselves to be in a better position today than they were prior to migration. Participants also explained the advantages of living in big cities in a more developed country. Although they experience persistent feelings of alienation and loneliness, they welcome life in a big city because of the many opportunities available to them.

> There is always something new to see and never a dull moment. Sometimes I just get lost in the beauty of the place and I can't believe where I am sometimes. Life is never stagnant. (Jamie, 32, USA)

Jamie expressed her gratitude for her current position and said that she has learnt to love her new life in the new city where she lives. Sally (33), too, is more enthusiastic about life and is more optimistic at the beginning of each day.

> I feel grateful every time I walk out the door because I know there is something new that would await me every day, some new to see, to experience. Life is never boring, actually I live in anticipation of what a new day would bring. (Sally, UK)

Renee also shares similar experiences. She did admit that she has moments of nostalgia and misses Trinidad. However, she feels a sense of contentment and welcomes the start of a new day.

> I never thought I would have liked a big busy city like New York, but I love my life and have no regrets. Every day I wake up I know there is always something new to experience, I live for experiences and I literally live in the city that never sleep and I love that excitement. (Renee, 49)

Having migrated, participants said they missed Trinidad but they are sure that their future and that of their families is better because of their decision. They now enjoy their lives in their destination countries and believe that one day they will return to Trinidad. 'I have learnt never say never. My life has taken many weird turns but I do intend to return' (Jamie). They have dreams of helping in any way they can to improve the lives of their

families, and some of them are also very much involved in helping the communities from which they came. Participants maintained that leaving their family and friends was a difficult decision for them to make, but they would not have had it any other way. They all believe that migration has forever changed the course of their lives. They believe they can now make a difference in their country of origin and help women like themselves who fall victim to physical and verbal abuse. Some participants were involved in non-governmental agencies. They acted as advocates for women facing various types of abuse and who were socially excluded. They acted as mentors and gave financial assistance in support of agencies. During Christmas and Carnival, some women also gave material goods and organized celebrations for agencies spreading holiday cheer. They also assist children in need and are convinced that migration has made them more successful and their lives more meaningful.

## Conclusion

My aim in this chapter was to look comparatively at migration to the UK and the USA. Certain patterns emerged from my data; in particular, the differences between skilled professional women who had higher levels of education and chose to migrate to Britain as compared to the less educated women who went to the USA.[111] Also, Afro-Trinidadian women more often migrated to Britain and Indo-Trinidadian women to the USA.

The women had strong connections with their home country even though some of them had migrated many years previously. Women who had migrated more than ten years previously explained that there were times when they regretted their decision to leave Trinidad. However, they felt that their lives would not have been as successful if they had not moved to their respective destination countries. Being successful meant various things to participants, to those who are living in the USA it meant being able to afford material goods and provide for their families. Conversely, most women now residing in Britain tied their level of success to their jobs and careers. Coming from backgrounds of abuse and dependence, those residing in the USA placed much emphasis on emancipating themselves from their old lives by working and being able to afford material goods. Singh and Gopal

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[111] For information pertaining to the daily duties of skilled and unskilled women, see appendices 2, 3, 4 and 5.

(2002) explain that immigrants who live in the USA often manage to achieve economic success in a matter of a few years and the success rates of immigrants are higher than those of people who were born and grew up in the country. My findings suggest that this is because of their status as immigrants and the hope of a better life that propels them to be successful.

Women travel to other countries in order to obtain better opportunities; therefore they are aware that much is needed in order to achieve the dream of a better life.
I have highlighted many differences between migrant women in Britain and the United States. However, one major similarity is that in many ways immigrant women felt a deep connection to their country of birth and gave assistance where possible. Migrant women in both Britain and the USA have helped to improve the lives of their families. They go a step further in giving aid to those less fortunate in Trinidad and Tobago, specifically targeting women and children. While remittances play a significant role in international migration for both groups of women, other transnational relations brought about by migration are also important factors. Both groups are closely involved in the support of their loved ones at home and remain strongly connected through technologies such as the Internet and mobile phones. They also take an active role in promoting the culture, food, music and way of life of the Caribbean on an international stage.

While they have made new lives for themselves in Britain and in the USA, all the women felt a deep connection with Trinidad and continued to refer to it as their home. There are great similarities between how these two groups of migrants view themselves; they see themselves primarily as Trinidadians and lay claim to the country as their own. While many migrated from Trinidad years ago and others have been away for a shorter period of time, they all expressed their wish to one day return to the country they call home. 'Oh I wish one day to return to my country of blue waters and skies, fireflies and hummingbird, steel pan and carnival' (Sally, 33). However, this wish is tempered by many conditions which entail making Trinidad a better place to live. Migrant women resident in both Britain and the United States are actively pursuing means to a safer and improved country to return to and hope that one day they can be of benefit to their home country, supporting women like themselves.

# Conclusion

So you have seen them
with their cardboard grips,
felt hats, rain-
cloaks, the women
with their plain
or purple tinted
coats hiding their fatten-
ed hips
These are The Emigrants
Brathwaite (1973: 51)

Barbadian scholar Kamau Brathwaite wrote the poem of which the above is an extract, entitled *The Emigrants*, in 1973. It depicted Caribbean emigrants living in Europe and the Americas struggling with their new lives and identities. They were no longer in familiar surroundings but in a land far removed from home, fighting against the odds to make a better life. They later come to realize (post migration), that they are all seen simply as 'The Emigrants', those who are invisible, misfits, outsiders, 'the others'.

In my study, this was also the story of 25 women; the theme of alienation and isolation was pervasive, especially during the initial stages of settling in another country. I sought to examine international migration through a gendered lens, giving an account of why women emigrate and its impact on their lives. I have noted that the migration process does not end with a woman leaving home and travelling to an unfamiliar country with the intention of settlement. The process should also include her time settling into the destination country, finding employment, struggling to make a new 'home', and building new networks.

My time with participants has taught me that the migration process is much more complex than I had initially thought. International migration is seen as a strategy to improve the status of family and my participants saw migration as the most viable option to achieve this. The Caribbean has had a long history of migration, one result of which is women's role in the family as both carer and breadwinner. I found that in some cases women's earnings are the only stable form of income that their families enjoy.

Coming from a family of immigrants, I was always keen to observe other families that were similar to my own. My grandmother migrated for the love of her family; as a single parent, she acted as the sole provider for her six children without assistance from her

estranged husband. When I set out to undertake this research I was eager to hear the stories of other women and mothers to learn whether they had had similar experiences to my grandmother. I found that limited opportunities and stagnation in life are two of the major reasons why women emigrate; I also found that women's decision to emigrate is emotionally driven. They often think about the impact of migration on their own lives and those of their families before they make a solid decision to migrate. When remembering my grandmother, I recalled her resilience despite the many struggles she faced. Her tenacity and love for her children propelled her to make the decision to migrate in order to better the family's situation.

My data do not support the image of the Caribbean family as a chaotic group disrupted by migration; instead, there was a reordering of the family unit. There are increasing numbers of transnational families in Trinidad because of women migrating, but women (even those who are absent) also play important roles in these families. The maternal grandmother is seen as an important figure when migrant mothers are absent, as highlighted by Dudley-Grant (2001) and Plaza (2000); this was noteworthy when considering familial arrangements post migration. Emigrant women in most cases were already living with their parents or siblings prior to migration. Thus, leaving their children in the care of their parents was not a case of abandonment or disruption. Additionally, the impact of parental migration on the children of emigrant mothers was not as I had envisaged prior to my fieldwork (see Chapter 3). There has been much debate over mothers being self-seeking, leaving their children in the care of others. Children in these transnational households are pitied, while their migrant mothers are vilified. I have heard accounts from mothers who often put themselves through great pain because of the emptiness they feel after they migrate. Although I do not under-estimate the hurt felt by the children left behind, I also highlight the loss, pain and isolation a mother feels having left her children, placing herself in a vulnerable position. Women are faced with discrimination, not only in terms of their cultural and racial background, but also in terms of the work they undertake and the wages they are paid.

Carrying out this study opened my eyes to new areas of migration. While thinking critically about the data presented, I realized that there were three areas I found particularly fascinating. These areas were discussed in the four analysis chapters; however, I would like to further emphasize and summarize the importance of these findings.

# Unincorporated Group

*Migrant Women as Outsiders*

A gender-centred approach to migration is necessary when highlighting the specific experiences of women (see Chapter 2). Women make up one of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups in society, along with children and the elderly. This vulnerability is increased when they migrate as undocumented workers. Whether legal or illegal, I emphasized the issue of immigrant women being considered 'outsiders' in receiving countries. When women make the decision to migrate they find themselves in a country that is alien to them. They are faced with unknown practices, language barriers, and unfamiliar customs; they cannot relate to the receiving society and must adapt.

The story of settlement that emerged from the women's accounts emphasized that it was a very sensitive period for them, during which they endured depression, isolation, and alienation (see Chapters 5 and 6). According to Oberg (1960) and Bennett (1998), the experiences of culture shock may have adverse effects on individuals in terms of their emotional and mental state when placed in an unfamiliar environment; this proved to be the reality that my participants had to live with. They experienced a sense of longing for their previous life, which was familiar to them, and felt great grief and loss at having been separated from their families, friends and children. However, a story of perseverance is told; despite early days marked with gloom and depression, the women persisted in struggling to secure a better life.

The complexities women face is related to their incorporation into receiving countries. A woman's place in the receiving country is determined to a great extent by the culture from which she came, by her place in the sending society, her attitudes towards work and family and the values with which she grew up. These factors significantly affect her assimilation into the destination country. In terms of Trinidadian migrants, the idea of the woman as an 'outsider' is particularly complex as a result of cultural and ethnic variations within Trinidad.

Caribbean women come from an array of different backgrounds (see Chapter 1), which has resulted not only in segregation from the mainstream in the receiving society but also alienation from other immigrant groups as well. Caribbean women are a heterogeneous group comprising Trinidadian Africans, Trinidadian Indians, and others of mixed origins;

it is therefore difficult to assimilate with other groups from the African and Asian continents. There were accounts from women who were of Trinidadian Indian descent who felt as though they were not accepted by others who, like themselves, were from the Caribbean but were of a different racial and ethnic background. Women who were Indo-Trinidadian experienced what I called 'triple segregation' in that Indians from India and Afro-Caribbean groups did not accept them and they were also isolated from other majority and minority ethnic groups in the host country. The problem of incorporation and assimilation in the receiving country goes beyond the divide between immigrants and the receiving society. It also includes divisions between groups within the immigrant community.[112]

The Trinidadian migrant women whom I interviewed all described situations in which they felt alienated from the workplace and from general day-to-day activities. Their accounts suggest that incorporation into mainstream and immigrant communities is based on race, profession, ethnic background, and in some cases religion. Caribbean women face a difficult time assimilating and they find themselves more susceptible to mistreatment and exploitation. Their roles as women are questioned, especially in the case of the female Indo-Trinidadian migrant. She not only finds herself an outsider in terms of mainstream cultural norms but is also cut off from those who immigrated directly from South Asian countries and other Indian diasporic groups (see Chapters 5 and 7). They do not accept her because she is not considered 'Indian' enough; neither is she considered 'black' enough for Afro-Caribbean migrants. Teelucksingh (2010: 152) argues:

> The Indo-Trinidadian experiences the 'snowflake phenomenon' in which they
> appear similar to other groups but only on closer examination can their differences
> be detected. The dilemma of the Indo-Trinidadians is that they belong to both the
> sub-groups of Indo-Caribbean and West Indian, whilst also sharing physical
> features and ancestral ties with the larger family of Asian Indians.

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[112] There have been many Caribbean women activists lobbying for the rights of Caribbean women in North America, particularly advocating for Caribbean immigrants to be more incorporated into American society, such as Felicia Persaud the founder of Carib ID, an organized group lobbying for the rights of Caribbean peoples. This group secured various bills in the USA Congress and Senate in 2008 (Fraser, 2014). One such bill was to provide opportunities for those Caribbean nationals living in the USA to be able to identify their Caribbean ancestry as an ethnic background in censuses. The aim of this was to enable governments, policy makers and other interested groups to have an idea of the number of Caribbean nationals residing in the USA. More importantly, it was lobbied for because those with Caribbean roots should have a sense of inclusion and incorporation into the USA. Recognizing their ethnic background on official documentation meant that they were now given a place in society and their differences were acknowledged.

Patriarchal values and the Indian woman's role in the family are also factors in the differences between Caribbean Indian women and other Indian diasporic groups. My participants were not trailing wives or dependent daughters; some were unmarried, or in common-law relationships, and travelled alone. Their accounts suggest that they were excluded from the Indian immigrant communities because they were looked upon as outsiders and misfits, bearing little or no similarity to Indians except for the way they looked. Additionally, some were isolated from these groups because they were single mothers and explained that they were seen as outcasts and unclean, having come from the Caribbean.

I have noted that women's experiences as 'outsiders' are specific to their status as women. Immigrant women are cut off from the receiving society based on factors ranging from the work they undertake to the way they dress and speak, and the networks they form. The experience of being an outsider may also endanger their human rights in that:

> Female victims are often invisible because the dominant image of the political actor in our world is male. However, many violations of women's human rights are distinctly connected to being female – that is women are discriminated against and abused on the basis of gender. (Bunch and Carrillo, 1991: 3)

Women in my study told me that they sought to overcome the idea of being alienated and unincorporated by finding a place for themselves in society. Although this was initially extremely difficult, they knew that in order to survive and be successful they had to fight against all odds. When I remember the stories told to me by my grandmother, I recall that she encountered great difficulty during the settling period. She felt lost and missed her children, friends and family. However, she was determined to be seen less as an outsider and eventually made new friends. Although she was never really seen as belonging, she was successful. There were also contradicting feelings among participants, even though they believed that they could not relate to other immigrant groups they still felt that being a part of communities that were made up of immigrants had a positive impact on their lives. Settling into communities where they could see some familiarity among people made them feel less isolated. Although it took them time to form new networks, they found themselves at ease living among people who were immigrants themselves.

## Invisible Work/Invisible Workers

*Stories of Trinidadian Migrant Domestic Workers*

Eight out of my sample of 25 women undertook domestic work, and their stories raised important issues. In addition to feeling like outsiders in an unfamiliar country, these women did work that made them feel invisible. They shared stories of employers wanting them to work when they were not at home and finish their cleaning before they returned, so that they would not see them. Much like the elves and the shoemaker, these women felt as though they were undertaking tasks that were taken for granted and felt that their hard work was neglected and unseen. Shin (2008: 313) states:

> Migrant workers are not widely dispersed across the occupations, but they are rather concentrated in certain occupations and niche industries at low wages, in precarious jobs – which local workers are reluctant to take on – and without proper labour protection.

Caribbean migrant women undertake jobs typically stereotyped as 'female'. I found that unskilled women leave the Caribbean without locating job opportunities in advance and usually fall into care and domestic work. This unincorporated group of women has little or no protection when it comes to policy or laws because of their status as illegal immigrants. Domestic workers usually migrated illegally because they did not have any other option and the only employment available to them was as domestic and care workers. As Ehrenreich and Hochschild (2003: 6) point out, 'female migrants overwhelmingly take up work as maids and domestics.'

Caribbean women in this situation find themselves moving from one job to the next hoping that they will get all their work done before their employers get home. Additionally, their illegal status adds to their invisibility. They have no rights, they cannot report ill treatment, abuse or discrimination because they are undocumented. These workers contribute significantly to more developed countries but find themselves in positions where they are exploited and ostracized. This is so because they have no other way of earning a living. It has been found by other researchers (Kempadoo and Doezema, 1998; Brennan, 2003; Sassen 2003) that when women are desperate and vulnerable the most easily available

option is to become sex workers. This is beyond the scope of this study but, like sex workers who live in inhumane circumstances, domestics also face considerable hardship.

The majority of women undertaking domestic work in my study were not live-in maids. Their work was constructed differently and they were not seen as a threat to families in the developed world. Lan (2003: 178) explains: 'By hiring a foreign maid, women employers not only solve the problem of child care but also avoid arguing with their husbands over who does the laundry and dishes.' Additionally, families in more developed countries enjoy the luxury of getting unwanted work done at a cheap and affordable price.

Among the women in my sample, unskilled migrants faced greater exploitation than skilled migrants. Domestic workers in the initial stages of migration encounter more hardship and it takes them a longer period of time to settle and become independent. Although my sample of domestics is small, I noted that the stories they told were quite similar. This suggests that Caribbean women working as domestics in more developed countries live with considerable stress. They find themselves in disadvantageous positions undertaking visible work but both the work and the women themselves are treated as invisible.

## Family Re-ordering

I have argued that the Caribbean family is neither disordered nor is it chaotic but rather has taken on a new formation as a result of historical influences and international migration. The first stage of this new construction was based on the influences of slavery and indentureship. Among Indo Trinidadians, families were predominantly patriarchal in nature. Men usually made important decisions, were sole breadwinners, and were seen as authoritive figures in the household. However, I noted from my study that most Indo Trinidadian women who were mothers were the sole breadwinner and carer in their households and had little or no help from their male partners. This led me to conclude that the Indo Trinidadian family has been significantly re-ordered over the past decades with significant changes in the roles of men and women. Matrifocality, typically synonymous with Afro Trinidadian women is now increasingly prevalent among Indo Trinidadian families, which was the case in my study.

Eighteen out of 25 women in my study were mothers; this is particularly important in understanding how Caribbean families are being re-ordered as a result of migration. Most

mothers had to undertake various roles in their children's life as carers and breadwinners with little support from their partners. As a result of migration, mothers still do undertake important roles in the lives of their children as distant carers. Though mothers are not present to interact with their children on a daily basis they still make tremendous sacrifices to be involved in their lives through the use of the Internet.

What is also increasingly significant is the role other relatives especially grandmothers play in caring for children in the absence of their mother. In most cases, children were living with their grandparents prior to migration of their mothers. The bond between children and grandparents was found to be extremely strong and what was noteworthy was the fact that most children refused to follow their mothers because of their familiarity and bond with grandparents. Increased migration of women has also birthed a new form of Caribbean family, the transnational family. The composition of both Afro and Indo Trinidadian families have now been re-ordered; where mothers are the distant carers and their children stay with grandparents or other relatives.

In any qualitative research there are bound to be sample particularities that impact on the findings of the study; in my study these particularities were both advantageous and disadvantageous. The fieldwork was conducted in Trinidad and I recruited women who were returning to visit their family; this automatically excluded those struggling migrant women who could not afford to return on vacation to their country of birth. Additionally, because participants were able to return freely to Trinidad, the sample also excluded those women who were possibly undocumented or illegal from participating. As a mark of having 'made it' and being viewed as 'successful' participants were more open to share their stories because they could afford to return freely to their country of birth. Those who had not 'made it' may well have been reluctant to speak.

Although my sample was in a sense skewed, I did interview women of diverse ages, educational background, occupation, marital status, various years of settlement and different ethnicities, which all contributed to the significance of the findings. As a result of this diverse nature of the sample, it became clear that gender intersected with class and education and this is seen in the types of occupation women undertook or their routes of migration. A further advantage in recruiting women in their country of birth was that it

allowed me to observe their relationships with their family, friends, and country. They were also more relaxed because they were on vacation and this made interviewing easier.

## Attainable Dream

I found that many women emigrated because they hoped for a better life for themselves and their families. Through their accounts it was evident that their experiences as migrants were often very difficult and their transition from the familiar to the unfamiliar was also very challenging. The idea that they could one day provide for their children to the best of their abilities motivated them to persevere, even during times when they felt that they were on the threshold of giving up.

International migration for these women was seen as an answer to their many hopes and dreams. Migration theory proposes that there are greater opportunities propelling women to move from one country to the next. Many participants started sentences with: 'I dreamed of', 'I wished for', or 'I hoped for'; as a group they all shared similar dreams and hopes of what international migration had to offer. Many of these women had dreams that were tied either to the successful furtherance of their careers or an improved way of providing for their families, but all shared the dream of a better life and future.

Women's stories of migration tell of a vulnerable and disadvantaged group whose members have dreams of one day challenging themselves to rise above their situation. Realizing this dream initially seems a daunting task because they often face perilous times working their way up the socioeconomic ladder. Women encountered innumerable challenges: many came from abusive relationships, and some of them migrated without knowing anything about what awaited them. Women's struggle to do better, to become what they dreamed for themselves, was lived out through migration.

The dream of a better life stirred the hopes of women to migrate, and the hope of a better life for themselves and their families sustained them. This belief of betterment was thwarted temporarily upon settlement. However, despite their struggles, the women's dream is indeed ultimately attainable; while it is seen as difficult in the beginning, participants all said that they were satisfied with their current lives and that they have accomplished or are on their way to accomplishing everything they set out to achieve.

Although there have been setbacks, all the women have focused their efforts on securing the best outcome available to them through migration. They have shown that through hard work and perseverance their dreams could be attained.[113]

## A Way Forward

*Recommendations for the Future*

I set out to undertake a small exploratory study to help understand migration from a Caribbean perspective. Through a sample of 25 female migrants, I explored why women made the decision to migrate, leaving their families behind. Although the sample is small, much information was yielded that was helpful in explaining why women migrate and the impact of migration on their lives. My main aim was to discuss the out-migration of women, but I also noted while undertaking this study that there were areas that emerged for future research. I have mentioned briefly in the body of this research some of the emerging themes I found that are beyond the scope of this study. These areas include:

- o A study of the lives of Caribbean domestic workers.
- o An examination into Caribbean immigrant communities and their cultural impact on receiving countries.
- o A comparative study of the experiences of male and female Caribbean migrants.
- o An investigation into the migratory patterns of the various races in Trinidad and Tobago.

I propose that, in order to gain greater understanding of a gendered approach to migration, migrant men should also be studied in a comparative exploration of the experiences of men and women. Furthermore, studies dedicated to understanding international migration from a gendered perspective should also highlight the implications of migration for shaping women's attitudes and behaviours, and changing gender relations in countries of both origin and destination.

The journey to the completion of this research has truly been a learning experience for me. When I was a young girl I always knew that my family was different but I did not realize

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[113] Women who felt they had 'made it' were more open to interviews. Those who agreed to speak to me considered themselves to be successful. I felt that those who did not consider themselves as having 'made it' were reserved and did not want to share their stories. Therefore, these women did not give full consent.

how different until I got older. I was a child born into an immigrant household. Although I was Trinidadian, there was always a feeling of difference. It was only much later that I heard of the great sacrifice made by my grandmother for her six children; leaving home without knowing what she was doing or what awaited her in a foreign land.

To conceptualize why women migrate and what drives them is difficult. I can conclude that it is love that drives them and love that sustains them. In the absence of men as partners, husbands or fathers, women make decisions that are in the best interests of those under their care. They are breadwinners, and carers in their households; they embody the old adage that a woman's work is never done. My grandmother, a former schoolteacher, had six young children and an absent and abusive husband. Leaving her country, her children, her friends and family, she made a lone journey to a strange land. Her many struggles have never gone unnoticed and, although she is no longer with us, her children owe much of their success to her sacrifice. Without her tenacity, bravery, perseverance and love, their achievements would not have been possible. The stories of determination and courage of the many brave and resilient women who participated in my study touched me. Through great adversity, they have made a better life for themselves and their families.

# Appendix 1

## List of Abbreviations

| Abbreviation | Meaning |
|---|---|
| CSME | Caribbean Single Market and Economy |
| ECLAC | Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean |
| GDP | Gross Domestic Product |
| IHC | Immigrant Housing Collaborative (New York) |
| ILO | International Labour Organization |
| IMF | International Monetary Fund |
| IOM | International Organization for Migration |
| MDC | More Developed Countries |
| MRCF | The Migrant and Refugee Community Forum |
| OJT | On the Job Training |
| OSAC | Overseas Security Advisory Council |
| PICUM | The Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNDP | United Nations Development Programme |
| USA | United States of America |
| UWI | University of the West Indies |
| WB | World Bank |

# Appendix 2

Daily Schedule of Jamie (32)
A Domestic Worker

6:00AM    Wake Up/ Prepare

7:00AM    Seek Transportation  (Buses, Trains)

7:45AM    Start First Job (Cleaning/Laundry)

11:00AM   Finish First Job/ Travel to Another (Buses, Trains)

11:45AM   Start Second Job (Cleaning/ Laundry)

3:00PM    Finish Second Job/ Travel to Another (Buses, Trains)

3:45PM    Start Third Job (Cleaning/Laundry)

7:00PM    Finish Third Job/ Run Personal Errands Before Going Home

9:00PM    Arrive Home/ Do Laundry/ Clean/Cook/ Prepare for the Next Day

12:00PM   Sleep

- Jamie explained that even though she has routine customers, her schedule changes daily depending on the time taken from one work to another. She tries to fit four jobs in one day but it depended on the distance between jobs.

# Appendix 3

Daily Schedule of Kay (29)
Domestic Worker

5:00AM    Wake Up/Prepare

5:45AM    Leave House   (Buses/Trains)

6:00AM    Personal Errands

7:00AM    Arrive at First Job

12:00PM  Leave First Job to go to Second

1:00PM    Arrive at Second Job

3:00PM    Undertake cleaning along with taking care of children after school.

6:30 PM   Leave Second Job/ Home time

8:00PM    Arrive Home/ Clean/Cook

10:00PM  Speak to family (In Home country)

11:00PM  Sleep

- Kay said that these are the activities she undertakes from Monday to Wednesday, however, on Thursday to Sunday her days are busier because she works more.

# Appendix 4

Daily Schedule of Cindy (39)
Nurse

7:00AM     Wake up

8:30AM     Leave Home

9:00AM     Personal Errands

11:30AM   Go Home/ Sort through groceries/ Cook/ Clean

12:30PM    Leave for Work

1:30PM     Arrive at work (Start of Shift)

8:30PM     End of Shift  (Leave Work)

9:15PM     Arrive Home (Prepare for Next Day)

10:30PM   Sleep

- Cindy said that her shift changes and she sometimes work at earlier times. On those days her daily routine is similar with minor changes to how she runs her errands and prepares her home.

# Appendix 5

Daily Schedule of Rose (44)
Teacher

5:30AM     Wake up/ Get Dressed

6:30AM     Prepare Breakfast

7:15AM     Leave for Work (Drive)

7:45AM     Arrive at Work

3:00PM     Finish Work

3:00PM     Run Errands

4:15PM     Return Home

4:30PM     Cook/Clean/Laundry

6:00PM     Overlook Lessons for Following Day/Correct School Work

8:00PM     Prepare for next day

9:00PM     Sleep

# Appendix 6

Field Diary of Diane Prashad (Researcher)
Day One (Entering the Field)


November 2013 (10:53PM)


Today was my first day going into the field. I conducted interviews with two participants. I felt somewhat shy because of unfamiliarity. I think I was lacking researcher confidence, however I gained a level of understanding and 'know how', which showed in the way I managed to relate to the second interviewee. I believe I was nervous because I did not know what to expect. I felt ill at times which made the process even more difficult. I think it was a shaky start. I arrived for my first interview on time but the interviewee was not at home and I had to wait for over an hour for her. The second was scheduled for that same day and was delayed by three hours. Luckily for me I knew the second interviewee (somewhat) and was allowed to conduct the interview.

My first interview was with a domestic worker living in the United States for over three years. I met her through a church organization and her story was quite gripping. She came back to Trinidad to spend some time with her family for the Christmas season. I met her at her parent's house, a two level concrete house with big walls and an electronic gate. I was quite surprised and shocked to see the size and the design of the house. It had few trees with a lot of colourful flowers and small plants lined the front of the house; the yard was filled with potted plants and the trees were manicured into neatly shapes. Their house was big and imposing. Inside the house was just as beautiful as the outside; it was well lit with fancy chandeliers and lights; the curtains and furniture looked expensive. Her parents, sister and her sister's husband occupied the house.

The second interview was conducted thirty minutes away from my home, which made things a lot easier. My second interview was with another domestic worker who migrated to the United States almost twenty-three years ago. She was staying with her parents for the holiday period. The house was simple and they had a small shop at the front. This interview lasted for more than three hours.

I did experience problems in terms of transportation and getting things ready in time for the interview. There were situations that occurred that were beyond my control, which included heavy rainfall and flooding. Ultimately I was impressed with the start of my fieldwork and also proud of the fact that I stuck to my schedule and was able to complete two interviews in one day. In the future however, I would not be scheduling two interviews in one day except in situations where it becomes necessary.

Both stories were compelling and interesting; though they undertook similar jobs their motivations were different. There were shocking revelations pertaining to the topic. My plan is to transcribe interviews after I conduct it. I will start transcribing these two interviews tomorrow. Some areas to work on for future interviews are scheduling, transport, and making better use of tape recordings and shorthand note taking.

# Appendix 7

Field Diary of Diane Prashad (Researcher)
Final Day (Leaving the Field)

April 2013  (1:26AM)

When I look back on how I started this journey of understanding the lives' of migrant women I did not anticipate how life changing it would have been for me as a researcher and a person.

I started this research in November 2013 and it came to an end today. Initially, I thought I knew what to expect however, going in the field is different from what I imagined. Conducting research has taught me to take a deeper look and not judge things at face value. I have seen cases where women went from being abused, with little money or prospects, living in 'cardboard' houses transformed into managers, and entrepreneurs in their own businesses. I have heard firsthand the shocking truths concerning why some women opt to leave the shores of their country of birth and heard the damage domestic violence can cause a family. I have seen how perseverance and persistence can change the lives of women.

I have learnt that even with a meticulous plan to conduct research, there are always unforeseen circumstances that one cannot plan for. As a researcher I believed that I could control everything however, I realized that things happen that I cannot anticipate. At the beginning of my fieldwork I was constantly ill and in December I was hospitalized for the first time in life, which, made this study difficult to continue. I could not see the end product and was very close to giving up, but I am thankful that I did not because if I did I would not have met all these beautiful and outstanding women, who gave me the fortitude carry on.

Indeed this project would not have been possible if it was not for my participants, not only because they shared their stories with me but because through their stories I was encouraged to carry on even in worst times.

Research wise I have become a bit more confident in myself and I believe I have left the field more informed about my topic than when I first came in. I do believe that I have matured into a deep thinker. Today my last day of interviews, I knew that I would miss the field, particularly in relation to hearing the first-hand accounts of seasoned women, which I believe have become my therapy on the road to recovery.

I am deeply saddened that my field work is over, but I am also extremely happy because I now get to put all these thoughts into writing and give a voice to those women who don't have any. I am optimistic and I look forward to documenting the lives of these women. I leave the field contented with what I have accomplished and I look forward for the next part of this journey.

# Appendix 8

## A Map of Memorable Dates in Trinidad and Tobago's History

1498 ⟶ Arrival of Christopher Columbus

1532 ⟶ Arrival of Spanish Colonizers (Appointment of a Governor)

1630s ⟶ Introduction of Sugar cane by Dutch Settlers

1781 ⟶ Tobago captured by the French; transforming it into a sugar-producing colony

1797 ⟶ Britain captures Trinidad from Spain

1807 ⟶ Abolition of the slave trade

1834 ⟶ Slavery Abolished

1834 ⟶ Beginning of Indentureship (Chinese, Portuguese)

1838 ⟶ Emancipation of Slaves

1845 ⟶ Introduction of East Indian Indentured Labourers

1857 ⟶ Discovery of Oil in La Brea (South Trinidad)

1884 ⟶ Hosay Massacre (Race Riots East Indians/Blacks/British)

1889 ⟶ Trinidad and Tobago administratively combined as a single British Colony

1917 ⟶ End of Indentureship Period

1945 ⟶ Universal Suffrage

1956 ⟶ Eric Williams founds the People's National Movement

1958 ⟶ Trinidad and Tobago joins the West Indies Federation

1959 ⟶ Britain grants Trinidad and Tobago internal self-government

1962 ⟶ Trinidad and Tobago becomes an Independent nation with Eric Williams as Prime Minister

1968 ⟶ Trinidad and Tobago becomes part of CARICOM

1970s ⟶ Black Power Movement

1976 ⟶ Trinidad becomes a Republic

# Appendix 9

Intercensal Emigrants by Sex and Municipality, 2000 – 2011: Trinidad and Tobago

| Municipality | Total | Males | Females | Not Stated |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO** | **15455** | **6421** | **8745** | **289** |
| **TRINIDAD** | **14596** | **6050** | **8270** | **276** |
| City of Port of Spain | 664 | 289 | 368 | 7 |
| City of San Fernando | 546 | 222 | 312 | 12 |
| Borough of Arima | 480 | 202 | 263 | 15 |
| Borough of Chaguanas | 875 | 357 | 494 | 24 |
| Borough of Point Fortin | 222 | 89 | 119 | 14 |
| Couva/ Tabaquite/ Talparo | 1459 | 610 | 830 | 19 |
| Diego Martin | 1669 | 718 | 936 | 15 |
| Mayaro / Rio Claro | 236 | 80 | 139 | 17 |
| Penal Debe | 937 | 393 | 526 | 18 |
| Princes Town | 1018 | 412 | 569 | 37 |
| San Juan / Laventille | 2091 | 917 | 1157 | 17 |
| Sangre Grande | 533 | 217 | 306 | 10 |
| Siparia | 847 | 356 | 454 | 37 |
| Tunapuna / Piarco | 3019 | 1187 | 1797 | 35 |
| **TOBAGO** | **859** | **371** | **475** | **13** |

Source: Trinidad and Tobago 2011 Population and Housing Census
http://cso.planning.gov.tt/sites/default/files/content/images/census/TRINIDAD%20AND%
20TOBAGO%202011%20Demographic%20Report.pdf

# Appendix 10

Intercensal Emigrants by Country of Destination, 2000-2011 Trinidad and Tobago



Source: Trinidad and Tobago 2011 Population and Housing Census
http://cso.planning.gov.tt/sites/default/files/content/images/census/TRINIDAD%20AND%
20TOBAGO%202011%20Demographic%20Report.pdf
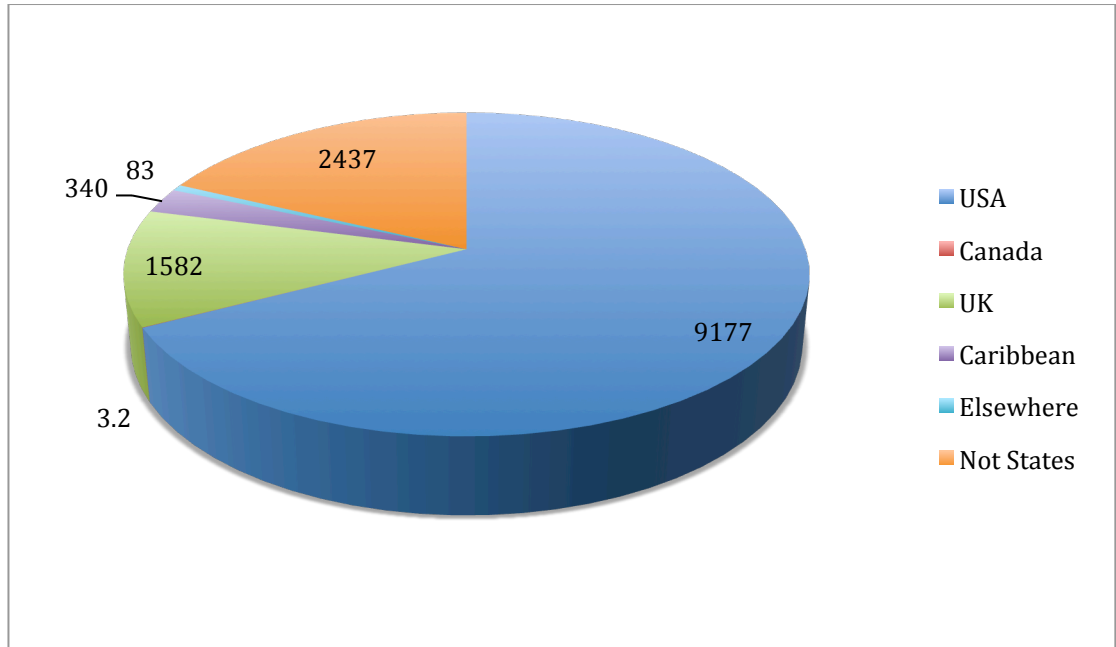
# Appendix 11

Persons Who Emigrated by Age Group, Sex, and Country of Destination (0yrs-39yrs)

| Country Grouping & Country of Destination | All Ages | 0-4 | 5-9 | 10-14 | 15-19 | 20-24 | 25-29 | 30-34 | 35-39 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **BOTH SEXES** | | | | | | | | | |
| **AGE GROUP** | | | | | | | | | |
| **Trinidad&Tobago** | **15,455** | **525** | **298** | **609** | **2,177** | **2,325** | **1,858** | **1,229** | **734** |
| USA | 9,177 | 93 | 184 | 419 | 1,493 | 1,398 | 993 | 692 | 448 |
| Canada | 1,835 | 17 | 39 | 62 | 283 | 288 | 242 | 166 | 111 |
| UK | 1,582 | 13 | 13 | 43 | 162 | 336 | 305 | 175 | 78 |
| Caribbean | 340 | 6 | 4 | 4 | 56 | 75 | 63 | 26 | 15 |
| Other | 83 | 3 | 0 | 3 | 4 | 14 | 12 | 11 | 4 |
| Not Stated | 2,437 | 393 | 58 | 78 | 178 | 215 | 243 | 159 | 77 |
| **TRINIDAD** | **14,596** | **509** | **278** | **571** | **2,006** | **2,165** | **1,735** | **1,165** | **693** |
| USA | 8,643 | 92 | 166 | 387 | 1,374 | 1,306 | 924 | 660 | 420 |
| Canada | 1,779 | 17 | 38 | 60 | 269 | 280 | 237 | 160 | 107 |
| UK | 1,460 | 13 | 13 | 42 | 149 | 299 | 283 | 163 | 73 |
| Caribbean | 312 | 6 | 4 | 4 | 48 | 69 | 55 | 22 | 15 |
| Other | 73 | 2 | - | 3 | 3 | 13 | 11 | 10 | 4 |
| Not Stated | 2,327 | 380 | 57 | 74 | 164 | 199 | 225 | 151 | 74 |
| **TOBAGO** | **859** | **16** | **21** | **38** | **170** | **160** | **123** | **64** | **41** |
| USA | 534 | 1 | 18 | 32 | 119 | 91 | 70 | 32 | 29 |
| Canada | 56 | - | 1 | 1 | 15 | 8 | 5 | 6 | 3 |
| UK | 122 | - | - | 1 | 14 | 38 | 222 | 13 | 6 |
| Caribbean | 27 | - | - | - | 8 | 6 | 8 | 5 | - |
| Other | 10 | 1 | - | - | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | - |
| Not Stated | 110 | 14 | 1 | 3 | 14 | 16 | 18 | 8 | 3 |

Source: Trinidad and Tobago 2011 Population and Housing Census
http://cso.planning.gov.tt/sites/default/files/content/images/census/TRINIDAD%20AND%20TOBAGO%202011%20Demographic%20Report.pdf

# Appendix 12

Persons Who Emigrated by Age Group, Sex, and Country of Destination (40yrs-80+yrs)

| BOTH SEXES | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| AGE GROUP | | | | | | | | | | |
| Country Grouping & Country of Destination | 40-44 | 45-49 | 50-54 | 55-59 | 60-64 | 65-69 | 70-74 | 75-79 | 80+ | Not Stated |
| **Trinidad & Tobago** | **518** | **461** | **299** | **199** | **122** | **70** | **29** | **22** | **32** | **3,948** |
| USA | 338 | 332 | 224 | 145 | 84 | 49 | 18 | 14 | 23 | 2,231 |
| Canada | 62 | 36 | 21 | 22 | 10 | 10 | 7 | 2 | 2 | 457 |
| UK | 49 | 34 | 16 | 9 | 14 | 5 | - | - | - | 329 |
| Caribbean | 15 | 9 | 4 | 5 | - | - | 1 | - | - | 53 |
| Other | 1 | 5 | 5 | - | - | - | - | - | - | 21 |
| Not Stated | 52 | 46 | 29 | 18 | 14 | 6 | 2 | 3 | 7 | 859 |
| **Trinidad** | **496** | **443** | **289** | **192** | **118** | **70** | **29** | **22** | **30** | **3,783** |
| USA | 325 | 320 | 217 | 140 | 80 | 49 | 18 | 14 | 21 | 2,131 |
| Canada | 59 | 32 | 21 | 22 | 10 | 10 | 7 | 2 | 2 | 446 |
| UK | 44 | 33 | 16 | 9 | 14 | 5 | - | - | - | 305 |
| Caribbean | 15 | 9 | 4 | 5 | - | - | 1 | 2 | - | 52 |
| Other | 1 | 5 | 3 | - | - | - | - | - | - | 17 |
| Not Stated | 52 | 44 | 27 | 16 | 14 | 6 | 2 | 3 | 7 | 832 |
| **Tobago** | **22** | **17** | **10** | **7** | **3** | **-** | **-** | **-** | **2** | **165** |
| USA | 14 | 11 | 7 | 6 | 3 | - | - | - | 2 | 99 |
| Canada | 3 | 3 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 10 |
| UK | 5 | 1 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 24 |
| Caribbean | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 1 |
| Other | - | - | 1 | - | - | - | - | - | - | 3 |
| Not Stated | - | 1 | 2 | 1 | - | - | - | - | - | 27 |

Source: Trinidad and Tobago 2011 Population and Housing Census
http://cso.planning.gov.tt/sites/default/files/content/images/census/TRINIDAD%20AND%20TOBAGO%202011%20Demographic%20Report.pdf

# Appendix 13

Information Sheet

# Labour Migration:
# A Study of Trinidad and Tobago
# Women and Migration

Thank you for showing interest in being a part of my research. This leaflet is to inform you of the nature of the research project.

## The Aim of the Project
This research as the title suggests is geared towards the understanding of migration from the Caribbean. It specifically targets women from Trinidad and Tobago who have left the country and permanently reside in Britain or North America.
This project has two main aims:

- To discuss migration as it relates to the Caribbean and women.
- To look at the impact migration has had on the individual and her family.

## Who is doing the study?
The study is based at the Centre for Women's Studies at the University of York, UK and is being conducted by Diane Prashad, under the supervision of Professor Stevi Jackson. The research is for my PhD project and your help is appreciated. The study is funded by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, National Scholarship Funds.

## What will I Be asked to do?
I would like to talk to you about leaving your country of birth. The discussion would be informal so that I can listen to your experiences. I would also like to discuss the reasons why you emigrated and how this choice has affected your family and relatives. By being a participant in this research you will be required to make some time (no more than two hours) where I can conduct an interview with you. This may involve me visiting your home or any other agreed upon location. I would like to audio record the interviews because I would like to express your views as accurately as possible in my project. I will ask you about this before I start. I am using a tape recorder, if you would prefer not to be tape-recorded, I will take detailed notes.

**Do I have to take part?**

The choice of being a part of this research rests entirely in your hands. If you decide to take part and later change your mind, you have a year to withdraw before formal write up begins. You do not have to give a reason.

**What will happen to the information?**

All the information you give me is confidential.  I will not discuss what you have told me with anyone other than my supervisor and I will not disclose that you are taking part. Reports from the research will not identify anyone who has taken part. Real names will be withheld and pseudonyms will be used.

When I have completed the research, I will produce a thesis based on the information gathered by interviews including yours. If you are interested in the finished product, you can express your interest on the consent form and I will be more than happy to send you a copy of the summary of my findings.

**How can we remain in contact?**

If you would like to get in touch with me, please feel free to email me: Diane Prashad at (dbp504@york.ac.uk) or by phone (+447587336303). Alternatively you can mail me at my postal address 57 Farrar Street, York, UK YO10 3BY. Or feel free to contact my supervisor: Professor Stevi Jackson at stevi.jackson@york.ac.uk about any questions or concerns you may have.  I do have every intention to keep you informed about the progress of this research every step of the way.

**Thank you for reading this leaflet. And again thank you for your interest in my study.**

# Appendix 14

Consent Forms

**Title of Project:** Labour Migration: A Study of Trinidad and Tobago Women and Migration
**Awarding University:** The University of York, UK
**Name:** Diane Prashad
**Programme:** PhD in Women's Studies
**Supervisor:** Professor Stevi Jackson

Dear Participant,

This form is for you to state whether or not you agree to take part in the study. Please read and answer the following questions and if there is anything you do not understand or want more information on feel free to ask. Please note that all information collected in this interview will be highly confidential and all ethical and governing regulations concerning data collection protocol will be observed. Anything that is said and or divulged in these interviews will be protected in the strictest confidentiality.

**Please initial box**

1.) I confirm that I have read the above information

and am willing to be a participant of this research. ☐

2.) I understand that my participation is voluntary and ☐
that I am free to withdraw at any time up to a year after the interview, without giving a reason.

3.) I give my consent to be taped using a digital audio recorder. ☐

4.) I understand that the information I provide will be ☐
held in confidence by the researcher?

5.) I agree to take part in the above study. ☐

Please indicate below if you would like to read/amend the final transcripts of this interview.

Yes ☐      No ☐

Please indicate below if you would like a summary of the findings.

Yes ☐                No ☐

If yes, to both questions above, give your preferred way of correspondence.

Email: _____

Postal Address:

_____

_____          _____
 Signature of Participant                                              Date

_____          _____
Signature of Researcher                                              Date

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