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**CARIBBEAN REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION:  
TRANSNATIONAL DIMENSIONS**

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## INTRODUCTION

Migration is a basic tenet of Caribbean<sup>1</sup> social life. Fashioned from the successive importations of populations from Europe, Africa, and India, the artificially constructed societies of the Caribbean, suffering under the twin legacies of colonialism and slavery, have persisted in a state of perpetual underdevelopment and dependency; migration has been a primary survival strategy of their populations. Unemployed and underemployed Caribbean workers fueled the engines of development in whatever locales they could reach, first in regional growth poles like Panama, Costa Rica, Trinidad, Barbados, Guyana, and Cuba, and when their economic buoyancy receded, in the world's metropolises — England, France, Canada, and the United States.

The migration tradition spawned by these conditions has been well documented. In some parts of the Caribbean migration has become almost a "rite de passage" for Caribbean youth. One commentator, writing in the 1960's after the movements to England and Canada had begun, described the mindsets of young Caribbeans as focused anyplace but in the Caribbean. "This place, I tell you, is nowhere, it doesn't exist. People are just born here. They all want to go away" (Naipaul quoted in Lowenthal 1972:216). "..... tens of thousands of West Indians would prefer to live anywhere rather than in the West Indies" (also quoted in Lowenthal).

But there is another side to these massive population outflows and to the ethos of emigration; for many West Indians the migration trajectory involved eventual return home, sometimes after short seasonal stints, and in other cases after longer stretches abroad often when conditions in the host society deteriorated. The sojourner — in the person of the seasonal cane cutter, or

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the pan boiler, the canal worker, the railroad builder, the oil worker, and the trafficker — is a familiar image on the canvas of West Indian history.

While away, several migrants kept in touch with kin and institutions at home, which in many cases paved the way not only for the emigration of kinsmen, but for the migrants' eventual return home; many also sent remittances to

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close neighbors. Its similar entanglement in the web of external control exerted by the United States, which pulls its own nationals to the mainland, combined with its uneven although relative economic buoyancy vis-à-vis its

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Papademetriou 1983), such ties are a logical response to the conditions which underlie contemporary migration.

This paper further argues that the maintenance of transnational ties between migrants and their home societies is a creative response on the part of migrants to the forces of international capitalism that necessitate and perpetuate outmigration. These ties soften the migration experience for migrants and those remaining at home, creating a less hostile environment, and also provide a larger canvas for social, economic, and political activities. The flip side, however, is the cultural ambivalence evoked among immigrants who, because they belong to two societies or solidly to neither, have difficulty making commitments in either place; the loneliness that attends the perpetual family separations endemic to migration; the economic underdevelopment that results from constant labor losses in labor intensive societies with fragile resource bases; and the cultural domination fostered by the ongoing political and cultural involvements migrants maintain with home.

divergent structural conditions and ideologies of the host countries, and especially their configurations of race, class, and ethnic relations; and the different structures of economic relations that underpin the two migration streams. Before describing the ways these transnational ties are maintained, we turn to a brief description of the research methodology, and then to a comparison of the two migration streams and the immigrant populations studied.

#### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research in Trinidad and New York utilized two basic methods: (a) systematic indepth interviews with 131 Grenadians and Vincentians in 78 households in New York and with 98 migrants in 72 households in Trinidad, focusing on their work experiences, kin and gender relations, associational ties, linkages with relatives and friends in their home societies, and their assessments and perceptions of the migration experience; and (b) participant observation among immigrants in their homes, voluntary organizations, and at political meetings and other kinds of social and cultural gatherings. The samples included individuals over 18 years of age who had been in New York or Trinidad a minimum of two years, which meant they were somewhat settled at the time of the research and had an experience to reflect upon, and who had arrived in the host countries after 1965.

Because of problems with documentation, migrants, realistically fearful of the authorities, are difficult to count. To overcome this problem, we utilized a snowball method of identifying the samples: looking to migrants' networks, to church leaders, community activists, and in the case of New York, to the Missions to the United Nations from St. Vincent and Grenada, for our populations. Relatively equal numbers of women and men were interviewed, and an effort was made to keep the samples representative of the sociocultural

spread in the Vincentian and Grenadian populations in both host settings. To do this, rough portraits of the migrant populations in New York and Trinidad were drawn, using the limited censal and immigration data available.

In St. Vincent and Grenada, structured open-ended interviews, constructed along the same dimensions as those in Trinidad and New York, and participant observation were employed. Utilizing a parallel approach in the host and home societies allowed us to compare reactions to the migration experience at both ends of the migration stream. Approximately half the samples were identified through migrant kin living in New York and Trinidad; the other half was located through a snowball method similar to that developed in New York and Trinidad, looking to church and community leaders, to schools, and to personal networks. The analysis is based on both qualitative and quantitative techniques. SPSS statistical programs were utilized for the quantitative analysis in all four samples.

## THE TWO MIGRATION STREAMS

The Donor Societies: Economic and Political Factors. St. Vincent and Grenada, two of the smallest West Indian nations, each with populations of 100,000, have traditionally been emigration societies. Among the most economically impoverished islands in the Caribbean, their per capita incomes — \$415 per annum for St. Vincent in 1978 in contrast to a reported \$1,701 for Trinidad and Tobago (Chernick 1978:267; Toney 1985) — reflect their economic situations. Agriculturally based, both economies are dependent on a few crops produced mainly for export in the world market. Bananas, arrowroot, and various ground provisions are the mainstay of St. Vincent, while nutmeg, cocoa, and bananas provide the basis of Grenada's economy. These crops are highly vulnerable to local climatic conditions — to hurricanes and, in the case of

St. Vincent, to volcano eruptions as well — and to fluctuations in world market prices. Unemployment, a chronic condition at all socioeconomic levels, is reported to be well over 20% in each. Yet, despite their continuing economic underdevelopment, St. Vincent and Grenada have literacy rates of over 85% (Wiltshire-Brodber and Wiltshire 1985), a factor which in these economic circumstances induces further emigration. Furthermore, the absence of opportunities to develop local managerial, entrepreneurial, and technical enterprises means that the few individuals who have developed those skills tend to leave as well.

The relatively fragile political arrangements in both St. Vincent and Grenada have also increased emigration flows, especially during certain periods. In the late 1970s in St. Vincent, when wide-scale strikes in both education and health care were harshly suppressed, large numbers of teachers and nurses emigrated to New York. Political turbulence and instability have played an even stronger role in emigration from Grenada. In the mid and late 1970s, the atmosphere of manipulation and repression created by then prime minister Eric Gairy spawned relatively high levels of outmigration; and the subsequent rise and then fall of Maurice Bishop's People's Revolutionary Government between 1979 and 1983, followed by the American invasion of Grenada, again produced heightened outmigration.

Contrasting Economic and Social Structures: New York and Trinidad.

According to official counts, there are 2,700 Vincentians and 5,000 Grenadians in New York (U.S. Department of Commerce 1980) — figures that could probably be doubled if undocumented migrants from these islands were included as well — out of a total of 250,000 West Indians.<sup>2</sup> The push factors generated by St. Vincent's and Grenada's fragile political economies in the 1970s dovetailed not only with changes resulting from the 1965 loosening of U.S. immigration

restrictions for Third World immigrants, but with the restructuring of New York City's economy in the late 1970s. These changes vastly increased the number of jobs in the service sector (see Sassen-Koob 1985:303) and created a pull for Caribbean labor supplies, for they had the backgrounds to fill these positions. Vincentians and Grenadians interviewed in our sample were employed as bank tellers and loan officers, clerical workers, health care professionals, data processors, and were located in import-export firms and in communications as well.

The increasing number of West Indians responding to these employment opportunities has created a dynamic enclave employment sector in New York as well. In Caribbean sections of Brooklyn West Indians are engaged as professionals — dentists, lawyers, accountants — and in a widening array of entrepreneurial activities which have emerged to service this expanding and increasingly income-stratified immigrant community. Vincentians and Grenadians in New York own small shipping companies, beauty shops, record and music stores, restaurants, and catering establishments. Some are also entertainers — calypsonians, dancers, actors, musicians — and others write for and own newspapers that cater to West Indians (Basch 1985).

There are 21,127 Grenadians and 13,500 Vincentians in Trinidad (Wiltshire-Brodber and Wiltshire 1985), a country with a population of little over a million. In contrast to the more recent migration to New York, Vincentians and Grenadians have been emigrating to Trinidad since the end of the nineteenth century to work in its late developing agricultural — and more recently industrial — undertakings. As in the past, Trinidad, with its present petroleum-based economy, occupies a relatively privileged position within the Caribbean economically; the country's GNP and per capita incomes are much higher than those of neighboring islands. Yet, because of development



The experience of the last twenty odd years has served to debunk many of these claims. It has been found that very often foreign capital does not bring capital [UN 5, McIntyre 4, Farrell 1]. In fact, it engenders a net capital outflow. Neither has it proven particularly efficacious at creating jobs, solving the unemployment problem or solving the foreign exchange crises of the poor countries. Its provision of entrepreneurship, markets and exports turns out to be little more than the necessary concomitants and statistical manifestations of its organization of Third World resources for metropolitan use. Its 'contribution' to tax revenues has been the occasion of much bitterness on the part of Third World governments. In fact revenues have only been satisfactory in the cases where governments have the will and the capability to wring decent revenue levels out of the resisting companies.

Both research and experience have combined to erode the notion of foreign capital as some sort of Santa Claus dispensing a cornucopia of benefits to host underdeveloped countries if they would only behave themselves and be good little boys and girls. But while the claims made for it as a provider of employment, foreign exchange, capital and markets have been increasingly qualified, where not rejected, its importance and even indispensability with respect to the transfer of technology has continued to receive much stress [Ward 7].

Now what is interesting about this claim is that in many cases, underdeveloped countries have played host to foreign capital and the multinational corporation for several decades. If foreign capital indeed transfers technology, there have been several cases in which more than an adequate span of time has elapsed for such transfer to have been completed and its effects observed.

The mineral resource industries in some underdeveloped countries are cases in point. Trinidad-Tobago for example has had foreign capital involved in its petroleum industry since

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In our research here we therefore have to be concerned with the extent to which Trinidad-Tobago possesses a technological capability with respect to its petroleum industry. However, in evaluating whether the petroleum multinationals operating in the industry have transferred technology, we cannot look to these companies to create a *technological capability*. That is because elements (3) and (4) of a technological capability — organizations with probensol mechanisms — are really the responsibility of the host country's government to create. Therefore, one has to look at the existence of dynamic technology, which is the major building block for a technological capability.

### Nationalization and the Problem of Critical Skills

Before we move into a discussion of the actual empirical research, there is one last conceptual problem that needs to be worked out. We have been talking about the issue of dynamic technology and technological capabilities. These relate to the country's ability to run an industry in its interests over time.

But for nationalization there is a more proximate issue that has to be resolved. The development of a full technological capability, is a medium — or long-term development. But the immediate task for an underdeveloped country nationalizing an industry is just to keep it going while it makes the necessary adjustments and rearrangements required to make the industry fully viable under local control.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, the first question has to be whether the country can run the industry at all, even in the short run.

To run an industry over time, as we have seen, requires the deployment of a complex of skills or technologies, both static and dynamic. To run it in the short run requires the deployment of a certain minimum sub-set of these skills. This minimum core may be described as the *critical skills*, and these have to be identified across the spectrum of the industry's activities or functions.

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9. Chacon Metal Works	Pipeline Construction	n.k.	n.k.
10. Carib Welding Construction	Pipeline Construction	n.k.	n.k.
11. Caribbean Bechtel	Construction	Foreign	n.k.
12. Condor Petroleum Services	Well Repairs	n.k.	n.k.
13. Corbie, R.A.	Draughting	Local	Resident
14. Damus Ltd.	Tank Building	Foreign	Resident
15. Delta Oil Well Services	Well Repairs	n.k.	n.k.
16. Directional Services	Directional Drilling	n.k.	Resident
17. Dynadrill	Dynadrilling	Foreign	Non-Resident
18. Eastman Whipstock	Directional Drilling	Foreign	Non-Resident
19. Eccles Engineering	Plant Construction	Local	Resident
20. Edeco		Foreign	Resident
21. Four Square Services Co.	Well Services, etc.	Local	Resident
22. Gengab Construction Ltd.	Pipeline Construction	n.k.	n.k.
23. Gaffney, Cline & Associates	Consultants	n.k.	n.k.
24. Halliburton, T'dad	Cementing, etc.	Foreign	Resident
25. Henderson Oil Tool Co. Ltd.	Well Repairs	n.k.	Resident
26. Hydrocarb	Gravel Packing	Foreign	Resident
27. Ingram Contractors	Offshore Construction	Foreign	Non-Resident



problems stemming from Trinidad's status as a minor oil producer — and its increasing reliance on this single product — Trinidad exports labor to the more buoyant metropolitan economies of North America and Britain, which requires it in turn to import labor from near-by English-speaking territories.

The recent oil boom in Trinidad (1975 to 1983) generated a spiraling of activity in the service and construction sectors, the areas which have provided the greatest avenues for Vincentian and Grenadian migrant labor over the past decade. And as in the past, there has been room for the highly skilled — for engineers and managers — as well from these islands.

Thus, the close proximity of Trinidad to both St. Vincent and Grenada has meant not only a similar colonial history, but Trinidad's relative wealth combined with its underpopulation has led to a somewhat shared population as well. The continuous flows over the past 125 years of the surplus labor of St. Vincent, Grenada, and other nearby Caribbean territories to Trinidad's cocoa, citrus, and coconut estates, its sugar plantations, its asphalt and oil fields, and its growing towns and ports planted the seeds of today's migration, at the same time shaping the country's social structure.

In contrast, New York's greater geographic distance as well as its structure of race relations have meant a West Indian immigration of much shorter duration. Although Vincentian and Grenadian immigrants who possessed the social and economic resources to make the journey started coming to New York in the earlier part of this century, they did not begin to make a demographic difference until the 1970s, when social, legal, and economic changes coalesced to provide a more welcoming environment for West Indians.

The most significant differences between New York and Trinidad lie in their different structures of race, class, and ethnic relations, and the impacts these different configurations have on immigrant consciousness and



identity. Although both societies are ethnically and racially plural, <sup>3.</sup> in Trinidad the segments are horizontally rather than vertically arranged as in the United States. Vincentian and Grenadian immigrants to Trinidad find themselves absorbed into a culturally similar Afro-Trinidadian population that enjoys equal status with any other racial group in the society. In the United States, in contrast, race has overlapped with class in a way to place Black Americans generally in a proletarianized and culturally problematic category. Identified with Black America by mainstream U.S. society, West Indians struggle against this low status allocation as they attempt to chart a separate course of economic and social mobility. Although sharing the outrage felt by the racially and culturally similar Black Americans against the country's racial stratification, within the larger context of class and race relations West Indians also want to preserve their own cultural system.

#### MIGRANT PROFILES

Vincentians and Grenadians in New York. Despite the severe economic conditions in St. Vincent and Grenada, immigrants in New York from these islands, similar to other Caribbean immigrants (see Foner 1983; Georges 1984; Pessar 1982), do not originate in the lowest socioeconomic sectors of their societies. Rather, they seem to come from a large middle stratum: 82% possessed some secondary school education — still an expensive commodity in the resource-impooverished eastern Caribbean islands — and almost one-third had skill training, especially in the teaching or health care fields. Very few had more advanced education or degrees. Despite their previous training, the immigrants' first jobs were usually at a lower skill level than what they had done at home; for example, most worked initially as security guards, tradesmen, domestic workers, building superintendents, and low level clerical workers.



Yet, the migrants' educational and skill levels enabled them to take advantage of the education and training opportunities available in New York. Within the sample, 60% went beyond a high school diploma and 27% gained a university or postgraduate degree; several of these individuals were then able to move into white collar and supervisory and managerial positions by their second jobs.

Most of the Vincentians and Grenadians interviewed were able to "make good" materially by their standards. Income-wise, roughly 33% of the 130 employed individuals in the households we studied earned annual incomes between \$11,000 and \$20,000; another 20% brought home between \$21,000 and \$30,000; and 15% earned between \$30,000 and \$50,000. Less than 30% drew incomes smaller than \$10,000 in a given year. Fifty percent of the immigrants possessed their own homes, usually in a modest section of Brooklyn, as well as a myriad of consumer goods such as stereos, pianos, cars, and video recorders.

Despite the seeming economic success of the immigrants, the ability to buy homes and costly consumer goods often depends on the participation of at least two household members in the labor force at a given time. Three quarters of the 78 households studied had more than one employed member and at least one third reported between three and four workers.

Many of the people we interviewed were satisfied with the education and economic strides they had been able to make. Yet despite their material gains, they perceive the urban environment as hostile and ominous. The images they invoked during interviews to characterize New York City — lonely, crime-ridden, racially-biased, cold, dirty — conveyed their sense of alienation. To lessen this loneliness and isolation, Grenadian and Vincentian immigrants cluster in West Indian enclaves in the Crown Heights and East Flatbush sections of Brooklyn, their immediate neighbors usually from their home islands. Social life in New York focuses around extended kin and close friends from home.

Almost all social activities outside the home are anchored in the shops, restaurants, pubs, churches, and avenues of Brooklyn, all of which project a distinctly West Indian tone.

Grenadians and Vincentians in Trinidad. Grenadians and Vincentians are the numerically largest immigrant populations in Trinidad. In contrast to the predominantly working/middle class character of the migrants to New York, the Trinidad sample is tripartite in character, consisting of a well educated stratum, usually university graduates; highly skilled tradesmen, who have generally been resident in the country for a long period; and semi-skilled construction workers, carpenters or masons, most of whom are currently in Trinidad without documents. This structure is reflected in the entry statuses of the immigrants: 39% came in as immigrants, 2% as students, 43% as tourists, and 4% as traffickers, a breakdown that suggests that at least 47% (the tourists and traffickers) entered without documents.

Again in contrast to the migration to New York, most of the migrants in the Trinidad sample had completed their educations in Grenada and St. Vincent. Because of the absence of accessible training institutes in Trinidad like those that have become characteristic of New York, there was no significant change in the immigrants' educational or training levels following migration. Although there is a branch of the University of the West Indies in Trinidad, the majority in the sample who had university degrees (11%) had earned them in Canada and Britain. These individuals, for the most part, preferred to work in the Caribbean rather than confront the racial discrimination that limits the social and economic mobility of their cohorts in the United States or Canada. Significantly, no one in the New York sample had entered the U.S. with a university degree, suggesting that the antecedents of the New York sample, although generally grounded in the middle class of their home islands, were in

a lower socioeconomic category than some of the more educated migrants entering Trinidad. The occupations of this educated sector of the immigrants to Trinidad suggest they were responding to that country's most pressing labor needs: 4% were engineers, 9% teachers, and 7% were employed in administrative and managerial positions. There were more migrant men with postgraduate professional degrees than women, although 7% of the women in the sample had university degrees as well.

The highly skilled tradesmen, who for the most part entered Trinidad before independence in 1962 or in the decade immediately following, were employed in Trinidad's more developed and lucrative oil or cement industries in the South or in the port in the North. They own their homes, and many have become Trinidad citizens, although most maintain connections with their home societies as well. These migrants, as the well educated, generally become integrated into Trinidad's institutions: political parties, trade unions, churches, friendly societies, and lodges, where several have even taken on leadership positions. They live residentially interspersed with the rest of the Trinidad population. None belongs to a distinctly Vincentian or Grenadian organization; in fact, no such organizations were identified during our study.

Thirteen percent of the sample were construction workers who had entered Trinidad during the oil boom that began in 1975. Many were well-trained in St. Vincent's or Grenada's technical schools as carpenters, masons, welders, and plumbers. The majority of these workers, however, have been trapped in an illegal limbo in Trinidad by the reluctance of the Trinidad government to give work permits in the face of what officials are convinced is a transient economic boom. Thus, despite the inroads made into Trinidad institutional life by the earlier waves of immigrants from St. Vincent and Grenada, these most recent immigrants remain somewhat on the margins of Trinidad social, cultural,

and political life because of their illegal status and fears of deportation. Because family reunification is not a possibility for these workers, many live separated from spouses or in temporary relations often as transient as their own status.

## THE MAINTENANCE OF TRANSNATIONAL TIES

### THE FAMILY

The cornerstone in the maintenance of transnational ties is the family. Highly flexible and resilient, the West Indian family is a somewhat amorphous structure — usually large — comprised of conjugal and nuclear units, as well as consanguineal segments that link blood relations across generations. These units are capable of a variety of permutations that can be broken down into smaller kin segments. The current shape of the West Indian family derives from slavery and the circumstances of continual outmigration. Under these conditions, the household did not evolve as the dominant locus of economic production as it did elsewhere, and the family was not necessarily residentially based. Rather, families were linked through mating, children, and consanguineal support networks (Wiltshire-Brodber 1986). The early circum-Caribbean migrations to Panama, Costa Rica, Cuba, and elsewhere, selecting for physical strength and thus drawing on the labor of men, were characterized by barrack housing, short-term contracts, low wages, and an absence of family reunification provisions. Families — wives, children, parents, siblings — remained behind and constituted a base to which migrants sent remittances when they could and to which many eventually returned, especially during hard times. Among the migrants we interviewed, 70%, when considering their own family

biographies, could name at least two family members who had emigrated and returned home.

Today it is the West Indian family, spread across national boundaries, that both shapes and perpetuates transnational linkages, drawing kin in different migration situations into a single field of action. In this role it facilitates adaptation to new and strange contexts, constitutes a bridge between migrants abroad and institutional life and activities in the home society, and serves as a continuing anchor in the home society. The transnational family operates, as R.T. Smith (n.d. 13) once aptly observed of the West Indian family in general, as the "major tissue .. sustaining human relations throughout a turbulent .. history." Its various segments, separated by large geographic distances, function as interdependent networks that share resources and decision-making, and provide sustaining social support.

Separation and Reunification. When asked, most migrants we interviewed gave as their main reason for migrating their own economic betterment or that of their children. Families endure a range of hardships, including long separations, to achieve these goals. Spouses are often split, a process that occurs at all social levels. For example, 53% of the migrants in the New York sample were married at the time of their migration, but only 20% were initially accompanied by their spouses and children. Sixty-nine percent migrated alone.

Parents also leave children behind with relatives, for both economic and legal reasons. Unable to obtain "green cards" in St. Vincent or Grenada, many migrants first enter the U.S. as tourists, a proposition which, because of the long periods of unemployment likely to be involved, is much less risky without children. Moreover, the domestic and health care jobs now seeking women workers in New York, which has meant that large numbers of women rather than men now migrate first, have become a major means for Caribbean women to

regularize their status. Domestic work, however, which usually requires a minimum of two years to obtain a green card after suitable employment is located — a process which in itself can take some years — involves long family separations.

These split nuclear units are often reconstituted, once economic and legal conditions permit. Thirty-three percent of the migrants in the New York sample migrated to join a spouse. Paradoxically, in geographically and culturally closer Trinidad, recent economic recessions have led to stricter immigration policies; this makes permanent residence and family reunification for migrants now virtually impossible, except for those migrants possessing the education and higher level skills needed in Trinidad's intermediate economy.

Despite immigration restrictions, in both New York and Trinidad the bias among the immigrants is toward the coresidential nuclear household, although this ideal is often achieved late in the domestic cycle. In the New York sample, for example, 57% of the households were nuclear units, as were 49% of the households in the Trinidad sample. The following vignette involving a Grenadian family that migrated to Trinidad, typical of the situation in both migration streams, demonstrates the hardships and separations migrants must endure, as well as the resilience of the nuclear unit.

The Sinclair family is from a poor, rural section of Grenada. Mr. Sinclair is a skilled worker, Mrs. Sinclair a dressmaker. Mr. Sinclair migrated to Trinidad some thirty years ago, leaving his wife and one child behind. After two years, when he had found a job and established his own home, Mr. Sinclair asked his wife and child to join him. During their separation, he had sent money home regularly, although his wife also relied heavily on the emotional support and assistance of extended kin. Following their reunification, two children were born in Trinidad. In Trinidad, the three Sinclair children have been able to receive secondary educations, and two also earned university degrees.

Although within two years the Sinclairs were transformed from a separated transnational nuclear unit into a coresidential nuclear household, they remain a transnational extended family as well. They maintain links with extended kin in Grenada, own property there, visit



annually even after thirty years of living abroad, and plan to retire in Grenada.

As the example of the Sinclair family demonstrates, even when nuclear units are reunited abroad, consanguineal or extended kin remain a crucial part of the transnational network. In contemporary migrations, as historically, consanguineal kin constitute an important element in the migration kaleidoscope. Thirty-four percent in the New York sample upon arrival in New York moved into households with consanguineal or extended kin, and many nuclear households in the sample included consanguineal relations as well — siblings and cousins most often. Moreover, 38% of the migrants in the New York sample listed consanguineal kin as the persons they could count on the most. It is also fairly common for extended kin, with their nuclear families, to cluster together in the same or adjacent dwellings in both New York and Trinidad.

The Act of Maintaining Bonds. Transnational bonds between migrants and their kin at home are sustained through several mechanisms; these include regular communications (correspondence, telephoning, and visits), the provision of social support and mediation, economic remittances, and child-minding.

Communications and Visits. By any standards, the frequency of communications between migrants in Trinidad and New York and their kin at home is high. Eighty-three percent of the migrants in the New York sample interact with a relative at home at least twice a year, and many speak on the phone or correspond with each other as often as twice a month. The situation is not very different in the Trinidad sample. Some 58% of the Trinidad migrants' relatives in St. Vincent and Grenada had heard from the migrants within the month previous to the interview, 22% had heard from them during that same week, 33% had spoken on the phone within the past week, and 49% had seen them within

the year. These communications continue despite long intervals of living apart, in some instances upwards of ten or even twenty years. Migrants visit home frequently as well. Once migrants in New York gain legal status, they visit home on the average of at least every five years; this figure includes migrants in all socioeconomic categories.

Social Support and Mediation. Family networks play an important role in the migrants' adjustment to the host society. When migrants first arrive in New York and Trinidad, it is family members who receive them and assist with their adaptation — for example, locating accommodation, arranging papers, finding the first job. The magnitude of the movement of Grenadian and Vincentian migrants into Trinidad beginning in the late nineteenth century and in smaller numbers to New York in the first decades of this century, have forged an extensive receiving community for migrants in both contexts.

For migrants to Trinidad, the relative largeness and complexity of the host country compared to the very small, close-knit home societies from which they come represents the greatest problem in adjusting to the new setting. The adjustment to New York is even more difficult; the strictly maintained racial stratification and the physical and cultural harshness of the urban milieu create conditions highly discrepant with the secure and familiar tempo of life in St. Vincent and Grenada. Almost all migrants interviewed in the New York sample — even those with strong support networks — focused on the loneliness and isolation they experience. As one migrant said: "I had heard how hard it would be to migrate, but I never thought it would be so painful." In this alienating context, receiving networks of kin are critical.

Economic Remittances. Economic transactions between migrants in the host society and relatives at home in the form of cash remittances and goods, a central means of sustaining transnational linkages, are an ongoing



feature of migration to both New York and Trinidad. The importance of these remittances to individuals and families has been well-documented (see Chaney 1978; Frucht 1972; Marshall 1979), even though their effects on local development are less certain, as the next chapter indicates. The migrants in our study remitted money and goods frequently. Among the New York migrants, 66% reported sending money home at least annually, a practice corroborated by their kin interviewed at home, although the majority — 56% — sent money more often. Some 54% sent goods at least annually, but again, several remitted goods more than once during the year. The most frequent recipients of these remittances were mothers, siblings, extended kin, and close friends; as we have noted above, few spouses remained behind at the time of our study.

These transactions occur at all income levels, although they are attuned to the needs of the recipients at home. For example, 60% of the households in the samples in St. Vincent and Grenada with annual earnings under \$10,000 received more than \$1,000 in remittances each year; while 63% of the households earning more than \$25,000 per year received small remittances or perhaps just the occasional barrel of goods at Christmas or on birthdays. Remittances appear to make a significant difference in the life histories of individual households in all socioeconomic categories. In fact, many in these donor countries believe that the emigration of kin has afforded them a better standard of living, and it is likely that remittances make it easier for them to remain in St. Vincent or Grenada; certainly, assistance with daily subsistence, building and maintaining a home, paying education fees, and even making the occasional trip abroad — the exigencies of life remittances are usually used for — can add to the "quality of life" of those at home.

In addition to providing basic support for kin at home, these economic transactions assure the migrants a continuing base in the home society. Kin at

home take care of the migrants' land and houses — 49% own property at home, and significant in terms of the transnational character of this migration, 41 % own property both at home and in New York — and pay their taxes. They are also on hand to mind the migrants' children and sustain local institutions, such as voluntary associations, charitable organizations, and cultural activities like carnival, that migrants return to on their visits home and think about when dreaming of retirement.

Child-Minding. The care of children by extended kin — child-minding — is institutionalized within the West Indies. Usually it is female relatives, most often grandmothers or aunts, who are the caretakers. Historically, this practice has been an important facilitating factor in the outmigration of young men, and more recently of young women. Even when migrants send for spouses, it has often been more convenient to leave children at home, where it is felt they will receive not only love, attention, supervision, and a better education in the primary grades, but where they can be shielded from the tensions of immigrant life. Thirty-two percent of the households in the samples in St. Vincent and Grenada had migrants' children living with them.

The practice of child-minding, almost more than any other, involves on-going transactions between migrants and kin at home. Parents send money and goods regularly for their children's care: 83% of the child-minders in the sample received remittances several times a year, 23% biweekly and 15% monthly, with the largest interval between deliveries being six months. Parents abroad also participate in decisions about their children's education and other needs through phone calls, letters, and visits when their legal status in the host country permits. And when the parent's status is not regularized, children are brought to visit them when the visa requirements of the host are not too

strict. (In the case of both New York and Trinidad, the granting of tourist visas seems to vary with the economic conditions of the given moment.)

In recent years, however, continuous child-minding has dwindled and seems to have become more of an interim strategy. In both the Trinidad and New York samples, parents said they left their children behind for economic or legal reasons primarily. At the time of the study, only 29 of the New York migrants' children were being cared for by kin in St. Vincent or Grenada; of these, only 19% remained behind because their parents felt the education at home was superior or because they were fearful of the New York environment. Moreover, the majority of migrants in both samples, once their status was regularized, sent for their children within two to five years of becoming settled.

This trend away from child-minding is related to a range of demographic, economic, and emotional factors. Although rearing by grandparents has been a common feature of West Indian family life (Soto 1987), this occurred in an environment in which parents — and especially mothers — were available at varying intervals to provide love, attention, and supervision. In present migration situations, however, the time lapses between meetings are usually great and many parents have encountered extreme difficulty in exercising supervision over, or demonstrating love to, children separated from them for long periods (Gordon 1983). Moreover, grandparents, who are most often the childminders, as they age are not able to ensure that the children in their care will receive sufficient supervision or adequate schooling at institutions usually located far from their homes.

Furthermore, as migrants become economically more successful and as the demographic balance in the host society shifts toward larger migrant populations, migrants are able to make an impact on host society institutions, and in the case of New York where the values are less consonant with those at

home, even to create their own. For example, West Indians in New York, in addition to influencing the public schools their children attend through P.T.A. and School Board activities, have begun to establish "West Indian" schools with West Indian teachers, standards of discipline, and education.

The Transnational Family: A Case Example. Migration, and the separations it forces, is a wrenching and highly disruptive experience for most migrants. The family, through its transnational networks, provides the migrants not only with support but lends a coherence to their lives that too often has been stripped away by migration. Through drawing together kin segments spread across several locales, the transnational family is able to function as a resource-sharing, decision-making unit, maintaining its integrity despite interminable separations. The Carringtons are a family split between St. Vincent, New York, and Trinidad. The migration biography of this family illustrates the extreme difficulties migrants encounter in reconstituting their families, but also demonstrates how the transnational family, by providing members with a larger field of action in which to operate, enables West Indians to cope with the poverty, dependency, and limited economic opportunities that frame their reality.

Mavis Carrington came to New York in 1970 at the age of 23 on a student visa, sponsored by her father's sister, and armed with the equivalent of a sixth grade education and some secretarial training. In New York she took on various part-time clerical, factory, and domestic jobs to support herself while completing the high school equivalency certificate and attending secretarial school. After eight years, in 1978, she took a job as a full-time domestic worker, deciding that was the only way to obtain a green card. Mavis's papers came through in 1981. Her trip home to get them, and thus legalize her status, was the first visit home she had made in 11 years and was the first time she had seen her mother and brothers since leaving home. Despite the long separation, Mavis kept in close touch with her mother in St. Vincent, and sent money regularly to help build a family home.

Mavis chose New York as a destination because of the encouragement of kin — a paternal aunt — and because she knew that as a woman she could find employment as a domestic worker, if nothing else. Her three brothers, all auto mechanics, confronted with similarly limited

opportunities in St. Vincent, opted for a different fate. They emigrated to Trinidad, where they also had relatives, because they knew that as tradesmen they would not find jobs easily in New York or qualify for green cards. Although they could gain entry and locate employment relatively easily in Trinidad as skilled workers, because they are not professionals they have not been able to obtain work permits. This means that similar to Mavis before she got her green card in New York, they have been virtual economic prisoners in Trinidad, unable to leave for fear of not being able to reenter.

The situation in Trinidad is particularly thorny for Mavis's brother Elton, who is married to Sandra, with whom he has three children. Unwilling to risk the precariousness of undocumented life in Trinidad in which migrants without papers are at various times "rounded up" and put into prison, Sandra and the children have remained in St. Vincent, where Sandra is employed as a secretary.

Despite the separations, Mavis in New York, Elton in Trinidad, and Sandra and Ms. Carrington in St. Vincent, all participate together in various ways as an extended resource sharing unit. In fact, the youngest brother in Trinidad, despairing of the hard times that have hit that country over the past couple of years, recently phoned Mavis in New York to ask for money so that he could return to St. Vincent.

In addition to sharing economic resources, the Carringtons make many decisions together. Because of the economic problems in both Trinidad and St. Vincent, last year Sandra decided to emigrate to New York as a domestic worker in search of a green card and a viable locale where her immediate family could reside together. Because domestic work means "living in", which makes child-rearing difficult, Sandra opted to leave her children in St. Vincent with her mother and mother-in-law, Mrs. Carrington, a decision they all decided was best. But before acting on this plan, she went to Trinidad to discuss the matter with Elton and obtain his consent.

Mavis estimates that it will take another five years for her family to be reunited — in either New York or St. Vincent. Her immediate plan is to help her mother get a green card under family reunification provisions. Although her mother does not want to settle in New York, she has been refused a tourist visa to New York lately, which means she cannot visit Mavis, who has just been married.

## TRANSNATIONAL POLITICS AND ORGANIZATIONS

New York and Trinidad in Contrast. Vincentian and Grenadian immigrants in both Trinidad and New York maintain active political ties with their home societies: they keep abreast of the intricacies of home politics, avidly debating local issues from the vantage point of the diaspora, at times even



returning home with their new ideas to campaign for favorite candidates, advise local politicians, or run for political office themselves. Joshua, the first prime minister of St. Vincent, brought change-inducing ideologies home from the oilfields of Trinidad, while Gairy, Grenada's first prime minister, formulated his radical ideas in the oilfields of Aruba.

Although political links with home are maintained by immigrants in both Trinidad and New York, there are significant differences in form and content: transactions from New York are maintained through organizations while those from Trinidad are sustained by individuals generally acting alone. In fact, next to the family, the strongest channels of ongoing communication between Vincentians and Grenadians in New York and the home society are voluntary organizations. These organizations, through their various cultural, welfare, and political activities in both the immigrant community and the home society, forge strong collective bonds between the immigrants and kin and friends at home, keep immigrants in New York informed of the political discourse at home, and broaden the world view of those remaining behind by bringing into their consciousness the experiences, knowledge, and ideas immigrants gain abroad.

On the face of it, there may seem to be a disproportionally large number of voluntary organizations among Vincentians and Grenadians in New York. There are 18 voluntary organizations within the Vincentian community and 20 within the Grenadian. The fact that there are no such organizations among these immigrants in Trinidad can most easily be explained by the different structures of race, class, and ethnic relations in the two contexts, and the greater marginalization experienced by West Indians in New York from the centers of social and economic power and decision-making.

In Trinidad, the immigrants' cultural and racial similarity to a dominant group, the Afro-Trinidadians, has meant that they are more easily absorbed into

existing friendly societies, labor unions, social and political clubs, and church organizations. In fact, these organizations have served as important mediating institutions between the immigrants and the host society. Moreover, the historical depth and size of the Vincentian and Grenadian migrations to Trinidad assure these migrants a place in the history and institutional life of this essentially immigrant society. Butler, the labor leader, and Sparrow, the calypsonian, both from Grenada, are counted among Trinidad's heroes. The tripartite class structure of this immigrant population — educated elites, tradesmen, and laborers — also militates against organizations based on ethnicity. In the culturally congenial environment of Trinidad, it has been easier for these distinct groups to see their interests merged with analagous class groupings in Trinidad society rather than with each other. In fact, a Vincentian organization, sensitive to and even articulating the subtle exclusion felt by immigrants who are also viewed as "small islanders" in Trinidad, that attempted to form around St. Vincent's 1979 volcano eruption, failed miserably.

The situation in Trinidad contrasts markedly with that in New York, where the racial structuring has led West Indian immigrants to find greater commonality among themselves than with comparable class segments in the wider society. In New York, where immigrants confront racial discrimination, street crime, unkempt neighborhoods, loneliness, and isolation, voluntary organizations are a buffer; they provide an important texturing to daily social and cultural life not necessary in Trinidad.

Transnational Linkages. Voluntary organizations, through articles in their newsletters and discussions at meetings, through their cultural festivals, dances, cocktail sips, and beauty contests — all patterned after those at home — constantly bring the images and issues of the home society

into the consciousness of migrants in New York. The many excursion flights they sponsor at Carnival and Christmastime also solidify connections with home. By and large, these organizations provide an important thread of contact with home, one that in the geographically and culturally proximate society of Trinidad is filled informally by traffickers, boat captains, and sailors who ply back and forth between St. Vincent, Grenada and Trinidad, by radio programs from home that can be heard in Trinidad, and by the many sports, performing, and social groups from home that visit Trinidad.

Organizations in New York also perform many explicitly political functions, not only uniting the migrants around a focus on home, but linking them to the politics of home as well. When government officials from St. Vincent or Grenada visit New York to discuss development plans with the immigrant community and solicit their active participation in the political economy at home, voluntary organizations, most of which have no more than 25 to 50 members, join together to mobilize between 500 and 1,000 immigrants to hear these leaders. Moreover, when organizations in New York have an important celebration — such as their anniversary — they often invite a dignitary from home as the guest of honor, an act which lends stature to the event.

These actions are strongly encouraged by the home society governments. Both the Vincentian and Grenadian immigrant communities in New York are treated as active constituencies of their home societies; in fact, Maurice Bishop used to say that Brooklyn was Grenada's largest constituency. Politicians from home, in the belief that immigrants play an important role in electoral processes at home, carry their campaigns into the halls of Brooklyn, where they try to shape immigrant opinions. During the 1984 Grenada elections, four candidates spoke in Brooklyn more than once during the campaign and shortly after the election the prime minister and two cabinet ministers were again in



Brooklyn to explain projected plans. There is some reality to the politicians' respect for this immigrant "power"; in point of fact, fund-raising events sponsored by immigrant organizations during the last Grenada election yielded between \$500 and \$1,000 each, and leaders of immigrant organizations went home to campaign for favored candidates in the 1984 elections in both Grenada and St. Vincent. As one leader said, "If people at home see prominent people coming back behind X, it will make a difference." In addition, both Vincentians and Grenadians living in New York were candidates in these recent elections, and one is currently a government minister in Grenada.

In contrast to the political transactions carried on with home through immigrant organizations in New York, the transactions from Trinidad are left up to individuals. Nonetheless, immigrants from Trinidad also campaign in elections at home, provide financial contributions to favored candidates, and fuel forces spearheading change. In fact, the common perception among our samples in both St. Vincent and Grenada is that migrants living in Trinidad bring home a more radical perspective than those in New York. Certainly in the late 1970's, migrants living in Trinidad helped spread the revolutionary ideology being formulated for Grenada, and then, along with others living abroad, streamed home to Grenada in the dozens to give shape to Maurice Bishop's Peoples' Revolutionary Government.

Although the incursions into home politics on the part of individual Grenadian and Vincentian migrants to Trinidad have at times — as in the cases of Joshua and Gairy — had a strong impact, the organizational base of the immigrants in New York provides them with a particularly powerful political lever. Ambassadors to the United Nations have been picked from among New York migrants, lending an aura of power to this immigrant community in the eyes of those at home; and leaders of voluntary organizations based in New York are

assured an audience with political leaders at home, if their party affiliations are correct. What accounts for the different approaches to politics at home by the immigrant groups in the two host settings? Certainly, the reciprocal exchanges between home politicians and migrant leaders and organizations seem to have a deeper meaning for immigrants in New York than for those in Trinidad, both pragmatically and symbolically. Pragmatically, political activity in the highly personalized societies of the eastern Caribbean provides a possible avenue for return migration. Some migrant organizational leaders speak of returning home to run for political office, a possibility for the most part denied these relatively new "small island" immigrants in New York, while others see political connections paving the way for the establishment of businesses at home. This is in contrast to Trinidad, where Vincentian and Grenadian migrants are quickly incorporated into local political parties, the toehold having been achieved by earlier waves, and indeed, where many immigrants presently hold leadership positions. But most important for the New York migrants, their political ties with their home societies symbolically legitimate the immigrant communities as valid and important constituencies of the home society and, by the easy access they provide to the political arena at home, create an alternate arena of prestige for migrants who otherwise feel dehumanized as Blacks and immigrants in the alienating and racially stratified context of New York.

#### TRADE NETWORKS

Beyond familial and community remittances and exchanges, close economic linkages between the host and home societies are sustained through active trade networks involving immigrants in Trinidad, and to an increasing extent New York, and close associates in St. Vincent and Grenada. These trade

connections, which take divergent forms in the two host countries, further encourage and reinforce the transnational character of this migration. Similar to the political transactions, trade networks involving immigrants in Trinidad are more individualized, while those including New York migrants, beyond those fostered by the numerous small shipping companies now emerging, are largely the creations of immigrant organizations.

Trinidad Networks. The trade networks maintained between the immigrants in this host society and St. Vincent and Grenada date back to the end of the nineteenth century. Since then produce vendors — of bananas, nutmeg, saffron, and cinammon, for example — from those islands who were settled in Trinidad have carried on an active trade with home through the traffickers and boat captains, usually from their home villages, who regularly brought these agricultural goods into Trinidad and returned home laden with the dry goods needed on the smaller islands. Many of these vendors in Trinidad, through dealing with specific traffickers and boat captains, were able to develop well-stocked stalls in Trinidad's larger markets; some have been operating these businesses for over 30 years. In some instances these transactions have engaged entire families and the returns have been adequate to pay the school and university fees for younger family members.

Today, as most probably in the past, several immigrants depend on boat captains from their home villages for their very survival in Trinidad, especially during hard times. Some Vincentian and Grenadian women interviewed in Trinidad described going to the boats the day they dock to collect the left-overs, those goods not sold, which they then use for their own subsistence and sell to neighbors. Beulah's experience is somewhat typical of this category. A lottery vendor by trade, Beulah, aged 50 with no one to assist in her support and who had been in Trinidad fifteen years, went to the docks every Wednesday

to meet the boat piloted by a man from her home village. The left-overs she was able to amass weekly and sell to her neighbors constituted an essential part of her livelihood. Another poor immigrant woman, a match vendor, used to travel 60 miles each week to meet the boat captained by an old friend from home. Several middle-class immigrants as well go to the docks to collect left-overs from boat captains they know, which they also use for their family's subsistence. Migrants pay for this produce with cash or in some cases offer over-night accommodation or goods to the boat captain or trafficker.

This trade, for the most part still informal, and the markets they nurture, impact on agricultural productivity in the home society, and in so doing, provide a potential platform upon which more formal trade networks and a stronger, more creative agricultural infrastructure could be established. As the next chapter reveals, however, this potential remains largely untapped. In part, the inability of these networks to stimulate productivity may be an effect of their individualized nature. Nonetheless, these transactions constitute an important channel of ongoing interaction between the immigrants and their home societies, which presumably could be strengthened.

The New York Connection. The trade emanating from immigrants in New York differs from that focused on Trinidad for several reasons. First, a large West Indian immigrant population in New York is a relatively new phenomenon; second, the immigrant enclave ideology — an effect of the terms of racial and economic incorporation of immigrants into New York — shapes the immigrants' exchanges with home in different ways; and finally, restrictive U.S. laws selectively and arbitrarily limit the importation of agricultural goods, the main products of donor societies such as St. Vincent and Grenada, into New York.

Exchanges between immigrants in New York and their kin at home occur informally as well as formally. On the informal level there are the exchanges involving money and finished goods, ranging from packaged cereal and clothing to televisions and refrigerators, sent home regularly, a process facilitated by the growing number of small shipping companies owned by Vincentian and Grenadian immigrants. These immigrant entrepreneurs, who play an analagous role to the boat captains in the Trinidad trade, hustle their business by visible activities in the immigrant enclave such as sponsoring beauty shows, weekend boat trips, and excursions to the countryside; they are important mediators of ongoing transactions with the home society.

Potentially even more important are the formal links in the process of formation, that are being created through the efforts of New York-based organizations. These in particular are a result of the transnational character of this migration and the urge of immigrants in New York, despite their increasing integration into host structures, to remain actively involved in their home societies. For example, the fledgling Caribbean-American Chamber of Commerce comprised of West Indian immigrants from several islands, has been able to sponsor trade exhibitions with funds from the U.S. Department of Commerce at which goods from the Caribbean — crafts, batiks, preserves, dried spices, perfumes, and juices to name but a few items — are displayed along with American products that American companies would like marketed in the Caribbean. At the most recent exhibition, held at a major hotel in Manhattan, the keynote speakers were the Minister of Trade from Trinidad and Tobago and an official of the U.S. Department of Commerce.

The prime mover in this organization is a Grenadian immigrant who has been in the U.S. eleven years. A policeman in the Caribbean and a security guard when he first arrived in the U.S., this immigrant began his move to

prominence through organizing a block association among residents on his street in a marginal neighborhood in Brooklyn and through active participation in Grenadian voluntary associations in New York, such as the Ex-Police Association. Using these organizations as his base, he became a pivotal figure in Caribbean efforts to back Mayor Koch for reelection. He has been assisted in his efforts by a number of immigrant volunteers; one, a Vincentian who for a time served as St. Vincent's Ambassador to the United Nations and who also worked briefly for the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America as a trade officer.

In their efforts to organize a trade fair in New York, these immigrants gained access to U.S. Department of Commerce officials through the Caribbean Basin Initiative (CBI) program, and by emphasizing their roles in the immigrant community and in their home societies. They also met with senior trade officials in Trinidad, Barbados, St. Vincent, Grenada, and other Caribbean islands, largely on the basis of their roles in immigrant organizations in the host society, and were in fact able to encourage them to send products to be exhibited. Most significant in terms of our argument that a single migrant field of interaction is being created linking both the host and home societies, these immigrants, by using their connections in each society were able to gain access to senior officials in the other as well as to bring representatives of the two societies together in a single activity. While no concrete formal trade arrangements have yet emerged from these exhibitions, channels for implementing such transactions have been created.<sup>4</sup>

These economic initiatives by West Indian immigrants in New York are reinforced by government officials from home who exhort West Indians in New York to foster markets for West Indian products and to serve as both consumers and intermediaries. In a speech to the Grenadian immigrant community in



Brooklyn last year, the former Minister of Trade, Tourism and Industry from Grenada charged the immigrant community with aiding agricultural productivity at home by convincing relatives that farming could be a noble activity in the service of the national interest rather than the heinous occupation associated with servitude and slavery. At the same time the immigrants were asked to assist in generating interest in Grenadian products in the U.S., and at the very least to form a dedicated block of consumers. The successful sale of "exotic" Surinamese flowers in Holland was cited as the model.

In part because of their own close ties to home, immigrants are responsive to these solicitations from politicians and officials from their islands of origin. Some New York-based immigrant cultural organizations regularly sponsor craft exhibitions and festivals that display crafts, arts, foods, and perfumes created in St. Vincent or Grenada and in the immigrant community.

While the trade networks between immigrants in New York and their home societies lack the momentum of those involving immigrants in Trinidad, they portend the creation of more formalized linkages. Several factors — such as geographic distance and the histories of the two migration streams — account for the differences. A key factor in the formation of these networks is the developing power of the West Indian immigrant community in New York as a self-defined organizational entity, a posture fueled in large part by institutions and practices of the wider host society which engender and cultivate strong racial and ethnic consciousness. One result has been immigrant enclave communities buttressed by increasingly strong immigrant ethnic associations. This ingredient is missing in Trinidad. Also significant is the pan-Caribbean flavor of organizations such as the Caribbean-American Chamber of Commerce, which involve Haitians as well as West Indians. Although largely incipient

(see Basch 1987 for the difficulties such pan-Caribbean endeavors encounter), these joint initiatives are nonetheless emerging as elements to be reckoned with on the sociopolitical landscape. Again this element is missing from the Trinidad situation, where most immigrants are absorbed into Trinidadian political, labor, social, and cultural associations, and foresee the possibility of taking on an unchallenged Trinidadian identity, if their accents and mannerisms are right. As one informant claimed, "some Vincentians in Trinidad are more Trinidadianized than Trinidadians".

### CONCLUSIONS

Ongoing ties maintained by immigrants with their home societies, a not well-reported phenomenon in the literature, continue into the present and influence immigrant behavior in significant ways, as this study of Vincentian and Grenadian immigrants in Trinidad and New York has demonstrated. In fact, the intensity of these connections has been augmented in recent years as the ties have become increasingly multi-stranded. This intensification is due to a variety of post World War II sociopolitical and economic factors; a chief variable being the expanding internationalization of capital that links donor to recipient societies in an ever tightening web of dependency. In this study of immigrants in Trinidad and New York, ties were maintained with the home societies through family networks, political linkages — and immigrant organizations in the case of New York — and through informal and incipient formal trade networks.

The paper has argued that these overlapping ties with home create a transnational arena of activity encompassing both host and home societies.



Within this single broad field individuals, ideologies and beliefs, and economic and political goods flow back and forth, making the symbols and cultural meanings of the two societies increasingly intelligible in each . Because of this single interactive arena, migrant families spread across different locales can more easily continue to operate as a single extended unit, as the description of the Carrington family demonstrated. Similarly, immigrant activists are able to build up political capital in one society and then transfer and use it in the other, as exemplified by the New York immigrants who were appointed to key diplomatic and political positions in St. Vincent and Grenada because of their immigrant activities. In this paper, we also saw that immigrant activists, using their pivotal positions in the New York immigrant community, were able to liaise with senior government officials in St. Vincent, Grenada, and Trinidad and convince them to send goods to the trade fair in New York; in turn they used the power derived from these linkages to draw key U.S. officials into their activities as well. This single interactive arena also creates a fertile environment for the formal trade networks in the process of formation in New York as well as for the more informal economic transactions that have been ongoing, especially between immigrants in Trinidad and New York and family members and close social networks at home.

The intensity of the linkages maintained by the immigrants with their home societies is related to a variety of factors such as geographic proximity in the case of Trinidad, the increasing ease of communication and travel in the cases of both New York and Trinidad, and the increased economic opportunities occurring in both contexts as a result of political autonomy in the West Indies and the Civil Rights and Black Power movements in the U.S., which have made it easier for immigrants to accumulate the requisite wealth to travel back and

forth. The economic mobility of the immigrants in both New York and Trinidad testify to the impact of these changes. Also key has been the heightened nationalism occurring in both home societies, a result of the decline of the colonialism which previously governed all societal sectors and of the recent political independence in these countries; these twin events have meant fewer people now want to emigrate. For example, among the 178 individuals in our study interviewed in St. Vincent and Grenada, 74% claimed they did not wish to leave. One effect of this orientation is a continuing base of kin and friends at home for migrants who want to visit home and perhaps retire there some day.

While transnational linkages were maintained by immigrants in both Trinidad and New York, the shape and intensity of the linkages varied in response to the different conditions in the two host societies. Family networks that crossed national boundaries were the most similarly sustained in both migration streams, yet the more restrictive immigration policies emerging in Trinidad of late have meant a larger number of split nuclear units in that stream. Nonetheless, relations with extended kin, most often the critical node in West Indian kinship, have retained the same intensity in both contexts.

There has been more variability in the realms of politics and trade. Paradoxically, it is in the more geographically distant New York that Vincentian and Grenadian immigrants have emerged as more defined groups with increasing political clout vis-à-vis their home societies. This paper has argued that the significant factors accounting for this disparity are the greater alienation West Indian migrants experience in New York as a result of U.S. racial inequities and the extreme cultural differences they perceive between themselves and the host population, including Black Americans. The immigrant enclave ideology resulting from these conditions — which has been a characteristic of all distinctive minority immigrant populations of any size

entering the U.S. — has nurtured and strengthened these groups, thereby enabling immigrant activists from New York to have a more organized political and economic impact on their home societies than in the case of the Trinidad migrants. Through the cultural, financial, and political inputs of immigrant organizations, the hand of New York migrants is present in the shaping of party directions, in the focus of development policies, and in attempts to develop formal trade connections that could facilitate an expanded flow of West Indian goods into the U.S.

But the effects of the overlapping transnationalized ties migrants maintain with home and the bidirectional flows they encourage between migrant receiving societies and the more dependent donor countries are paradoxical as well as multifaceted. On the one hand, linkages with home have the potential to enhance local development through the ongoing economic and political investments immigrants make at home, albeit informally, and through the skills and knowledge many speak of taking home. In fact, Vincentian and Grenadian government officials constantly encourage immigrants to invest in government projects. While for the most part these pleas by officials from home are not yet backed by feasible programs for investments and loans, they keep immigrants' imaginations alive to the possibilities of such efforts, and in so doing stoke a continuing transnational ideology. But this thrust is double-edged; the compatibility of skills and technology between West Indian islands and the United States that makes the transplantation of such enterprises conceivable follows from a larger patterning of asymmetrical relations that link West Indian countries to the U.S., and to a lesser extent, that connect economically weaker West Indian islands to more powerful ones. Within this framework, the importation of yet more technology, knowledge, and goods into these Caribbean countries reinforces U.S. political and cultural domination;

while the increased demand for U.S. goods this importation creates serves to stunt local initiative and confidence.

Moreover, the ongoing transactions between host and home societies, again despite their positive development potential for donor countries, when combined with the entrenched migration tradition that envelops the region have further negative effects. By expanding a welcoming base abroad, they foster the continuing outmigration of the young and the skilled. Because these human resource losses from labor intensive economies with scant resource bases cannot be replaced despite the heavy remittance flows, they thus serve at base to perpetuate the countries' underdevelopment.

It would appear, therefore, that in the case of New York in particular, the ongoing familial, political, organizational, and economic linkages maintained with home, so meaningful to individual migrants and their families, at the level of the nation serve to tighten the yoke of dependency that draws Caribbean societies into a deeper relationship of clientage with external forces such as the United States. The Trinidad situation is somewhat different. Although the human resource losses to Trinidad are equally devastating for St. Vincent and Grenada in one sense, on the other hand the structural realities of Trinidad and St. Vincent and Grenada vis-à-vis the world economy are more similar than different. It can be argued then that transnational migration, because it keeps immigrants constantly involved in the home society, fosters a wider regional understanding.

We now turn to the next chapter, which deals in more detail with the contradictions for the home societies posed by this transnationalized migration, and assesses the differential implications of regional and international migration for the Caribbean.

## End Notes

1. The term West Indian is used in this chapter to describe the people, characteristics, and societies deriving from the former British Caribbean territories. The term Caribbean has a wider meaning; it refers to all the islands lying in the Caribbean Sea between North and South America and includes the countries along the northern rim of South America as well — namely, Guyana, Surinam, and French Guyana.
2. The numbers of Vincentians and Grenadians are quite small relative to immigrant populations from other islands such as Jamaica which, according to U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service figures, sent 180,884 individuals to the U.S. between 1967 and 1979.
3. Following the end of slavery, Trinidad's population needs were enormous. In addition to West Indians from nearby islands, indentured laborers from China and then India were imported to work on Trinidad's developing sugar plantations. Today the country's population consists of approximately equal numbers of Afro- and Indo-Trinidadians, the two largest ethnic groups on the island.
4. Reinforcing these economic efforts are the more avowedly political activities of the Caribbean Action Lobby, formed six years ago. Also pan-Caribbean in its membership, this organization, dedicated to the "economic, social, and cultural development of the Caribbean and its people both at home and in the U.S." (Caribbean Action Lobby: New York Regional Chapter n.d.), aims to articulate Caribbean aspirations — both in the U.S. and the Caribbean — to the centers of American political power (Basch 1987). Its membership comprised largely of immigrants whose backgrounds are grounded in the West Indian educated elite, this organization has joined forces with the U.S. Black Congressional Caucus to sponsor workshops in Washington, to which both Caribbean and U.S. officials have been invited and which they both attend. Similar to the Caribbean-American Chamber of Commerce, this immigrant organization provides the seeds for more formalized economic and political transactions between Caribbean home societies, the host country, and immigrants in the U.S.

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